



Wingate and Bronza Parks, by Mary Parks Harding, 3 August 2005

#### The Martha Lewis

Mary Parks Harding, of Cambridge, shares her childhood memories and her experiences growing up in the community of Wingate on the Honga River. Mrs. Harding is the daughter of legendary shipwright Bronza Parks, whose vessels included the famed sister skipjacks *Rosie Parks*, *Martha Lewis* and *Lady Katie*.



#### Life in Wingate - the Way it Was

Growing-up without electricity? without TV or videogames? If this sounds like a boring time for a child, you have not heard Mary Harding describe her fun-filled childhood in Wingate. Mary gives a vivid description of everyday life in Wingate before WW II.

She described the one-room school in Wingate she attended and then the students moved to the three-room high school in Crapo. She also described the corrugated roads built from oyster shell and pine logs. Most houses had cattle and wire fences to keep them from roaming. There were high ditches to control the water but the land at Wingate was not as low as it seems now. Families shared wells for water and it was the duty of the children to carry all the water for the household as far as a mile. All enjoyed the bounty of the Bay with crabs, oysters, fish and geese. In the winter, there was skating on the Honga. In the days before electricity, come evening, women would gather by lamp-light to have small quilting parties and the men played dominoes. Without electricity, wood was chopped for cooking and heating water for washing and bathing. Later on, the Parks boatyard had its own electricity from a 32 volt Delco plant so electrical power tools could be used along with those of gasoline power. Boats ready for launching were moved on a special rig drawn by oxen. At one time, as many as 5 boats were being built at the same time. Children invented their own games and made playhouse from pine branches. The community was close knit and all helped each other in time of need. Wingate provided all anyone could want, a quiet world by itself.

As the daughter of the famed shipwright, Bronza Parks, she remembers his accomplishments.. He built more than 400 vessels in his Wingate boatyard, including the famed skipjacks, *Rosie Parks*, *Martha Lewis* and *Lady Katie*, constructed simultaneously in 1955. The *Rosie Parks* is on permanent display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels. The *Martha Lewis* is currently based in Havre de Grace, Maryland and sails as a cruise and demonstration boat. The *Lady Katie* was recently restored by the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and is owned by Captain Scott Todd of Cambridge, MD