

GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, MORIN NET SHED  
(Lovrovich Net Shed)  
3811 Harborview Drive  
Gig Harbor  
Pierce County  
Washington

HAER WA-186-B  
*HAER WA-186-B*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, MORIN NET SHED (Lovrovich Net Shed)

HAER No. WA-186-B

- Location:** 3811 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531064.29 E, 5242477.23 N  
The coordinate represents the approximate center of the building. It was derived from Google Earth Pro v5 on November 12, 2010. The imagery dates from June 12, 2010.
- Present Owners:** Gregg, Timothy, and Thomas Lovrovich
- Present Use:** Net and tool storage, net repair, workshop, cooking, social gathering place.
- Significance:** The seventeen extant net sheds in Gig Harbor, Washington, are significant as remnants of the community's cultural heritage and economic development. Families, mostly of Croatian ancestry, have passed down the net sheds and fishing vessels for several generations. Many of the extant net sheds are an integral part of successful commercial fishing operations and are used for storing and mending fishing nets as well as repairing the equipment used for commercial vessels. Except for the remaining commercial fishing boats in the harbor, net sheds are the only surviving architectural connection between the community and what was once one of the most successful fishing fleets on the West Coast.
- Historian:** Shelly Leavens, summer 2009
- Project Information:** The City of Gig Harbor has taken steps to provide incentives for property owners who retain historic net sheds, and in 2006, conducted a general survey of the seventeen remaining structures lining the harbor's waterfront. In 2008, Mildred Andrews of the Andrews Group completed an independent survey of Gig Harbor's historic downtown. The city secured grant funds from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to document the net sheds with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior in 2009. Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program, supervised the documentation team, which consisted of Brian Diveley and Shelly Leavens, both

Sally Kress Tompkins Maritime Documentation Interns. A survey team of students from Bates Technical College in Tacoma, Washington, also lent support to the documentation effort. The documentation team's liaison to the net shed owners is the City of Gig Harbor's Special Projects Coordinator, Lita Dawn Stanton.

Other net sheds documented as part of the Gig Harbor Net Shed survey include the following:

Gig Harbor Net Sheds	HAER No. WA-186
Gilich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-A
Morin Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-B
Bujacich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-C
Ivanovich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-D
Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-E
Ancich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-F
Castelan-Jerkovich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-G
Puratich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-H
Stanich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-I
Gilich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-J
Novak Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-K
Ross Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-L
Skansie Brothers Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-M
Babich Net Shed (Rickard)	HAER No. WA-186-N
Babich Net Shed (Pont)	HAER No. WA-186-O
Skansie Net Shed (Morris)	HAER No. WA-186-P
Mojean Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-Q

## **Part I: Historical Information**

### **A. Physical History:**

- 1. Date of Construction:** 1951
- 2. Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
- 3. Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Unknown
- 4. Original Plans:** None found
- 5. Alterations and Additions:** A south-facing door was added at an unknown date to the building and leads to low, attached floats for vessel moorage. Originally the Morin Net Shed's location in the inner harbor, which is subject to low and minus tides, precluded the Morin and Lovrovich families from mooring fishing vessels at the shed since it could only be accessed at high tide. Instead, the shed was used to store gear and repair boats if necessary. The space extending into the harbor from the net shed has been leased from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) since approximately 1996.

**B. Historical Context:** According to present owner Gregg Lovrovich, brothers Sonny and Nick Morin hired contractors to build the dock and utilized it for commercial purse seining operations until its sale to the Lovrovich brothers in 1994.<sup>1</sup> The Lovrovich brothers are third generation Croatians with a long history of family purse seining. They started fishing with their father, George Lovrovich, at the ages of 12 to 14, which is typical of other fishing families. Gregg Lovrovich, born in 1954, proudly noted in an interview that he is 100 percent Yugoslavian. His grandparents, John Lovrovich and Dumica Malich, emigrated from Croatia between 1912 and 1916.

George Lovrovich and Nick Morin knew each other from the Gig Harbor shipyards. Prior to purchasing the Morin's dock, the Lovrovich family used the Bujacich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-C) for vessel moorage and stored their nets and other fishing gear behind the Nick Babich home. (Nick was a cousin of the Lovrovich brothers). Over the years, the Lovrovichs have moored their vessels at multiple docks in the harbor, including the Ancich dock (see HAER No. WA-186-F) and have paid month-by-month for use. In addition to using the waterfront net shed, Gregg and Tim both have other storage sheds near their inland homes. As the brothers noted, the Morin Net Shed only has enough space for one person's fishing gear.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2006 survey by the City of Gig Harbor designated Martin Morin Sr. as the original owner of the dock.

Gregg stated in an interview that the Lovrovich family, as a fishing name, will end with the current generation of fishermen because none of the brothers have children that will carry on the family legacy.<sup>2</sup>

## Part II: Structural/Design Information

**A. General Description:** The Morin (Lovrovich) Net Shed property measures 22'-4" wide x 96'-4" long, while the shed is 22'-4" wide x 90' long.

The 1982 Pierce County Cultural Resource Survey states the net shed is "a single story wood frame building with a gable roof and exposed rafter tails. There is a small gable roof building on the rear with a walkway leading to it. The entire complex is on pilings. Windows are six pane casement. On the water side there is a recessed porch area which has wood post supports. The posts are on an enclosed railing."<sup>3</sup> A 2009 site visit confirmed that this 1982 site description is still accurate. All interior and exterior doors are on upper rails and slide. The west facing, inner room serves as a usable kitchen filled with family memorabilia and ephemera. The main, interior net shed storage and work space is open for examining, mending and loading nets, while the perimeter is lined with work benches equipped with tools, shelving for storage, and an unused pit toilet. Exposed rafters are used to store nets, long pieces of wood, and other large pieces of fishing gear. An east-facing dock is located at the front of the shed and used for loading and unloading nets to vessels. A ramp extending from the south-facing door of the shed leads to a low float where the Lovrovich brothers keep their fishing vessels as well as lease moorage to other fishermen. There are four windows on the south facing wall of the shed.

**1. Character:** The Morin Net Shed is intact and retains its original character.

**2. Condition of Fabric:** Good

**B. Site Information:** The Lovrovich-owned parcel is situated at the northern end of the harbor. The parcel starts at 6.92' at Harborview Drive, then extends out in a pie shape to about 12' on either side of the dock into Gig Harbor (44.6' at its widest point). Parcels A and B, extending from the shed, are leased from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and have floats and pilings used for fishing vessels. According to Gregg Lovrovich, the family has grandfathered free, multi-vehicle parking on the street as long as the shed is

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<sup>2</sup> The transcribed notes from the interview are in the field records accompanying this documentation.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Gallacci, "Net Shed (PC-133-3a)," Pierce County Cultural Resource Survey, 1982.

used for fishing purposes. There is no home on the uplands associated with this net shed.

The adjacent parcel directly north and parallel is the Gilich (Blair-Moller) Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-A). The harbor parcel to the south is void of structures.

### **Part III. Operations and Processes:**

**A. Operations:** The Morin Net Shed was used in commercial fishing operations, specifically purse seining, and for storage and repair. A purse seine is a large net hauled out by a smaller boat or “skiff” to form a large circle. Fishermen pull the bottom of the netting, “pursing” it closed to capture schools of fish. Once the net is pulled aboard by a “power block” or “reel,” the final length of net full of fish is either pulled on-board or a smaller “brailing” net is used to scoop the catch and load it into the vessel’s hatch. A cannery boat or “tender” typically transfers the fish to the cannery. Historically, fishermen of Gig Harbor have used this method to catch salmon, sardine, and herring.

In the 1930s and 1940s, fishermen tarred their cotton seine nets in order to maintain the shape and prevent rotting. The community had a large vat at the current site of the Millville Marina (see HAER No. WA-186-G) where fishermen would soak netting in hot tar, wring the netting in rollers, stack the netting in the back of trucks, and transport them a nearby field to be spread out. As the nets dried, the crew would take the net strips and tear them apart to prevent the pieces from sticking together. Typically, a crew would tar and mend nets every two to three months prior to leaving to fish as part of overall preparations. Cotton nets required more mending and patching than nylon nets, which did not come into use until in the early 1950s.

**B. Machines:** A large Puretic power block, invented by Croatian fisherman Mario Puratić and patented in 1953, is affixed to the front of the building to haul and manage nets. An article originally published in *Fishing News International* noted the Puretic power block “has mechanized the hauling of nets in the tuna, anchovy, sardine, herring, menhaden, pilchard, mackerel, and salmon fisheries” and has been used on a number of vessel types. It was described as a “free-swinging, mechanically-powered, V-shaped pulley with a rubber-coated sheave” into which a net could be fed. This invention “became the linchpin in the mechanization of purse seining” and “combined with fluid hydraulic power technology and new large, synthetic nets, it changed the whole character of purse seine fishing.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Quote from “MARCO, the Puretic Power Block, and Purse Seining,” originally published in *Fishing News International* and available from [http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History\\_MARCO\\_FNI.pdf](http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History_MARCO_FNI.pdf), accessed July 2010.

**C. Workers:** In the early 1960s, the Lovrovichs would fish with a crew of seven, but now they fish with crews of five (including the skipper). Gregg Lovrovich noted this was due to the advent of fishing technology and marked the decline of the industry. He cited the Boldt Decision, a 1974 court case in which the right of Washington State tribes to fish salmon was affirmed, as a major reason for increasingly fewer fishing families operating in Gig Harbor. He went on to say that in order to be a successful fisherman, one needs to devote all of his/her time, year round, to commercial fishing. The Lovrovich brothers currently spend two-and-one-half months fishing in Alaska (leaving mid-June, depending on the season) and one month in the Puget Sound. They operate three purse seiners (one for each Lovrovich brother) and utilize the workspace in the net shed. During the off-season, the brothers work for shipyards.

**D. Associated Vessels:** Vessels associated with the Morin Net Shed include the following:

George Lovrovich: Purse seiner *Alaskan*  
Worked cannery boat *Mark R.*  
Purse seiner *Tradition* (passed to Tom)  
Purse seiner *Sea Gem*, sold in 2002

Gregg Lovrovich: Purse seiner *Sea Fury*

Tim Lovrovich: Purse seiner *Harbor Gem*

Tom Lovrovich: Purse seiner *Tradition*

#### **Part IV: Sources of Information**

##### **A. Primary Sources**

Lovrovich, Gregg, with brothers Thomas and Timothy present. Interview by Shelly Leavens, June 17, 2009. (Transcript of interview retained in field records accompanying this documentation.)

##### **B. Secondary Sources**

Ancich-Stanton, Lita Dawn. "Gig Harbor Net Sheds Survey." City of Gig Harbor, 2006.

Andrews, Mildred. "Andrews Group Report." The Andrews Group, 2008.

Bolton, Jack. "Record of Survey Parcel # 0221053091." Pierce County Auditor. 1996.

Gallicci, Caroline. "Net Shed (PC-133-3a)." Pierce County Cultural Resource Survey, 1982.

Harbor History Museum photo archives. Accessed June 2009.

Lepow, Hannah. "Washington's Fishing Sheds Get Boost." National Trust for Historic Preservation. July 8, 2008. Available from <http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2008>, accessed June 2, 2009.

"Living on the Edge: Most Endangered Historic Properties List – 2008." Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008.

"MARCO, the Puretic Power Block, and Purse Seining." Originally published in *Fishing News International*, available at [http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History\\_Marco\\_FNI.pdf](http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History_Marco_FNI.pdf), accessed July 2010.

### **C. Like Sources Not Yet Investigated**

The remaining relatives of the Morin family as well as Pauline Lovrovich, mother of the Lovrovich brothers, have not yet been interviewed. Considering the nature of this shed and its kitchen (which served as a gathering place), Mrs. Lovrovich may have historic images of the shed in use.

ADDENDUM TO:  
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