

Gig Harbor Net Sheds, Ancich - Tarabochia Net Shed
3615 Harborview Drive
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-E
HAER WA-186-E

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, ANCICH-TARABOCHIA NET SHED

HAER No. WA-186-E

- Location:** 3615 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531195.61 E, 5242392.59 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:** George Ancich and Nick Tarabochia, Jr.
- Present Use:** Shed is partitioned for leased office space and the art studio of Lita Dawn Ancich-Stanton (daughter of George Ancich). Exterior dock is used for net and tool storage.
- 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 extant 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, of the 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	HAER No. WA-186-P
Mojean Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-Q

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History of Buildings

1. **Date of Construction:** ca. 1920s
2. **Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
3. **Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** A man named “Zulavich” is cited as the shed’s builder
4. **Original Plans:** None found
5. **Alterations and Additions:** The dock was extended in 1957 and another section added ten years later. In 1962, a low float and ramp were added, allowing boats to moor in the harbor. The addition of the pier provided drive-on access for loading and unloading net and gear during high tides. Since the early 1970s, the dock has been used by local commercial fishing fleets to load and unload nets and gear at the beginning and end of each season.

During the U.S. Coast Guard’s lease of the space, the shed received new siding and windows in 1971-1972. Use of the outdoor space by the Coast Guard required that the nets be moved further out, so the dock extension was covered. The interior of the net shed has been significantly altered, including partitioning of the once open space into multiple rooms, adding a ceiling over the open rafters, and installing dry wall over the frame. The floorboards are original.

Other exterior alterations resulting from maintenance include the occasional replacement of pilings and rotted boards. A new roof was installed in 2004.

B. Historical Context: In the early 1900s, George Ancich’s grandmother was living in Croatia and had just lost her husband, leaving her with three little girls. She heard from a friend in Tacoma, Washington, that there was a husband for her, so she immigrated with her daughters through Ellis Island and crossed the United States on a train. She married into the Tadich family and had three more children: John, Andy, and Katie.

The Ancich family established themselves in the commercial fishing industry of the area around 1915. George Ancich, born in 1925, started fishing with his brother-in-law, Nick Tarabochia, while he was still in high school in the early 1940s. They partnered in fishing for a couple of years until Nick bought a dock at the south end of the harbor (see HAER No. WA-186-Q). George leased the dock

and shed to the U.S. Coast Guard, and after one year, they rented the original family home as well, which became the chief's quarters and office.

George Ancich and Nick Tarabochia, Jr. still own the dock together. Currently the interior space is partitioned for use as an office, an art space for George's daughter Lita Dawn Stanton, and a space for son Paul's fishing gear. Paul now owns and operates what was once George's boat, the *Memories*. In an interview, George expressed frustration with the value of property in Gig Harbor and the cost of keeping the shed, saying "the taxes are eating us alive." However, he noted that he is not interested in selling the property but would rather pass it on to his children. George also expressed his desire that his children keep the property in the family due to its historic value.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed is approximately 1,500 square feet. The property is 36' wide x 88'-2" long, and the building is 26'-6" wide x 58'-4" long. The net shed is a single-story wood frame building with a gable roof and exposed rafter tails. The entire shed and dock are on pilings. On the east facing harbor side there is a recessed porch area, which has wood post supports. In this area, Paul Ancich stores nets and other fishing gear. The main net shed's interior is partitioned into five to six rooms, which include a bathroom, a hallway, office spaces, and an art studio. From the dock a ramp leads to a low float where Ancich and Tarabochia lease moorage to recreational and commercial fishing vessels.

1. Character: The Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed is typical of Gig Harbor net sheds.

2. Condition of Fabric: The shed is in good condition, although it has been substantially remodeled.

B. Site Layout: A large driveway upland and along the south portion of the property leads past a house to a pier dock, which provides walk-in access to the covered area of the Ancich-Tarabochia net shed dock. As part of a cluster of four net sheds, the Ancich-Tarabochia net shed is bordered directly to the north by the Ivanovich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-D), and to the south by the Ancich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-F) on the other side of the pier.

Part III. Operations and Processes

A. Operations: The Ancich-Tarabochia 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 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, then wring it in roller. The netting was then stacked in the back of trucks and transported to 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 the early 1950s.

B. Workers: A crew of five men generally operated each purse seiner. Prior to restrictions on large vessels, the advent of the nylon seine net and the power block in the 1940s and 1950s, seine vessels usually had crews of eight to ten men.

C. Associated Vessels: George Ancich operated the purse seiner *Memories*, which he gave to his only son, Paul Ancich. Martin and Anna partnered with Lee Makovich, Sr. to operate the *Mermaid* and *Mermaid II*. Other boats built and operated by Anna and her sons after the death of her husband were the *George A* and *Anna A*. George also owned and skippered the *Sea Star*, *Barbara S*, and, for a short time, the *Defiance*.

Part IV. Sources of Information

A. Primary Sources

Ancich, George. Interview by Shelly Leavens, summer 2009.

Ancich, George, George Bujacich, Nick Tarabochia, and Andy Blair. Video-taped interview with Ross Whitney, August 27, 2008.

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.

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.

ADDENDUM TO:
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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