

Gig Harbor Net Sheds, Gilich Net Shed
(Cfabella's Clubhouse)
3802 Harborview Drive
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-J
HAER WA-186-J

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, GILICH NET SHED (Arabella's Clubhouse)

HAER No. WA-186-J

- Location:** 3802 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531513.26 E, 5242215.60 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 Owner:** Stanley (Stan) Stearns, Arabella's Landing, Gig Harbor Marina, Inc.
- Present Use:** Clubhouse
- 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	HAER No. WA-186-P
Mojean Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-Q

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

- 1. Date of Construction:** ca. 1950s (the original net shed, dating to the 1930s, burned sometime in the following decade)
- 2. Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
- 3. Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Andrew and Tony Gilich
- 4. Original Plans:** None found
- 5. Alterations and Additions:** In 1985, Stan and Judy Stearns purchased the Gilich Net Shed from Paul Gustafson, who had begun developing the property as a marina. Stan Stearns and his Texas-based company, Gig Harbor Marina, Inc., renovated the net shed from a storage space to a marina clubhouse that is used by boaters, permanent tenants, and transient moorage guests. The renovation included capping pilings, re-roofing, re-siding, and adding a new floor, interior walls, doors, and windows. New low floats are equipped with 125V service at 20, 30, or 50 amps, or 250V service at 50 amps.

B. Historical Context: Andrew and Antone (Tony) Gilich built the original net shed at this location in the 1930s, but it burned in the 1940s. The replacement shed, which still stands, was constructed in the 1950s. It remained in the Gilich family until Paul Gustafson purchased it in the early 1980s for development.

The land occupied by the shed is within the historic Millville plat (the original Gig harbor settlement) and zoned “Waterfront Millville (WM)” by the City of Gig Harbor. The complete remodel of the Gilich (Stearns) net shed resulted in Arabella’s Landing Marina Clubhouse in 1985, which was prior to the designation of the area as historic.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Gilich Net Shed is approximately 1,800 square feet. The building is 24’ wide x 75’ long. The frame structure has a gable roof clad in shingles and is rectangular in plan. The exterior siding consists of horizontal old growth cedar clapboards. There are a variety of multi-light double-hung windows and double doors. A dock extends into the harbor, and both the shed and dock are elevated and sit on pilings. The open rafters have been enclosed for attic storage space, while the main level has been left open for multiple uses related to the shed’s function as a marina clubhouse.

1. Character: The net shed, which now serves as Arabella's Clubhouse, was completely renovated in 1985. The original character of the net shed remains in its form and massing though.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in good condition but has lost most of its original fabric.

B. Site Layout: As of 1999, "the Stearnses own four-and-one-half contiguous lots on the Gig Harbor waterfront, comprising 1.7 acres upland and 1.3 acres tidelands."¹ The Gilich Net Shed occupies one of those lots. The marina area is heavily landscaped, and the net shed can be accessed via a large parking lot, from which a paved path leads through the marina complex.

Part III. Operations and Processes

A. Operations: The Gilich 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. A smaller "brailing" net is sometimes 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 location of the Millville Marina (see HAER No. WA-186-G) where fishermen would soak the netting in hot tar, wring the netting in rollers, stack them in the back of trucks, and transport the netting 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, though before the advent of nylon nets (post-World War II) and the power block (1954), seining crews were usually made up of eight to ten men.

¹ Stearns v. City of Gig Harbor. Court of Appeals Decision II, State of Washington. See <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=wa&vol=229129&invol=o01>.

C. Associated Vessels: None known

Part IV. Sources of Information

A. Primary Sources

Moist, John, Arabella's Landing Manager. Interview by Shelly Leavens, June 16, 2009.

B. Secondary Sources

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

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 at <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.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Interviews with the remaining members of the Gilich family could be conducted.

ADDENDUM TO:
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