

Gig Harbor Net Sheds, Castelan - Jerkovich Net Shed
(Tillville Marina)
8200 Novak Street
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-G
HAER WA-186-G

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

ADDENDUM TO:
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, CASTELAN-JERKOVICH NET SHED (Millville Marina)

HAER No. WA-186-G

- Location:** 8200 Novak Street, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531324.06 E, 5242372.23 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 Owner:** Alan Rencowski
- Present Use:** Contains storage lockers used by Millville Marina Condominium owners
- 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. 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:

1. **Date of Construction:** 1930s
2. **Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
3. **Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Unknown
4. **Original Plans:** None found
5. **Alterations and Additions:** Jay Jerkovich (descendent of John Sr.) recalled that the dock was extended around 1947 to allow boats to tie up on all sides of the dock. Prior to that, pilings located in deeper water were used.

Owner Ron Ray lowered the roof of the net shed to improve the view from the nearby condominiums in the 1950s.

The Castelan-Jerkovich Net Shed was significantly altered during its conversion to storage space for the nearby Millville Marina Condominiums. The roof, siding, doors, windows, decking, and interior space have been covered, removed, or replaced as a result.

B. Historical Context: Nick and Mike Castelan, along with John Jerkovich, Sr., built the net shed and dock for commercial fishing use in the 1930s. Prior to building the net shed, the two families (related through marriage) utilized vacant lots near their homes to organize and dry their nets and gear before and after setting out to seine fish in the Puget Sound and Alaskan waters.

The Castelans and Jerkovich sold the net shed to Ron Ray, who converted the property to a condominium development. Gary Glein bought the development, and later sold it to Alan Rencowski, the current owner.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Castelan-Jerkovich Net Shed is more than 2,000 square feet. The property is 38' wide x 113' long, and the building is 25'-4" wide x 81'-6" long. The rectangular frame building is clad in horizontal siding and has a front-gable roof with composite shingles. The dock extends into the harbor, and both the dock and the net shed are elevated and sit on pilings. The windows and doors are all modern.

1. Character: Although heavily altered, the structure retains the basic form of the net sheds located in Gig Harbor because the wood frame is intact.

2. Condition: The Castelan-Jerkovich Net Shed is in good condition but has lost most of its original fabric, aside from the frame and some siding and decking.

B. Site Layout: The Millville Marina Condominiums are located just upland from the net shed. A private path leads to the site, or it can be accessed by boat from the east or south docks.

Part III. Operations and Processes

A. Operations: The Castelan-Jerkovich 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 of hot tar at this site for fishermen to soak their netting. The fishermen would then wring the nets in rollers, stack them in the back of trucks, and transport them 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.

C. Associated Vessels: Vessels used in conjunction with this net shed include the following:

John Jerkovich: purse seiner *Washington*
purse seiner *New Washington*
86’ sardine boat *Pacific Raider*

82' sardine boat, *Corregido*

Tom Jerkovich: *Pacific Mistress*

John Jerkovich: *Pacific Dawn*

Nick Jerkovich: built purse seiner *Pacific Knight*

Nick Jerkovich, Jr.: purse seiner *Pacific Raider*

Part IV. Sources of Information

A. Primary Source

Ancich, George. Interview with Shelly Leavens, June 18, 2009.

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 2008.

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 could be conducted with Nick Jerkovich, Jr., Alan Rencowski, Ron Ray, and Gary Glein.