

Gig Harbor Net Sheds, Puratich Net Shed  
3421 Harborview Drive  
Gig Harbor  
Pierce County  
Washington

HAER WA-186-H  
*HAER WA-186-H*

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, PURATICH NET SHED**

**HAER No. WA-186-H**

**Location:** 3421 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington

**UTM Coordinates:** 10, 5314390.11 E, 5242346.15 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:** Joseph and Robert Puratich

**Present Use:** Net and tool storage, workshop

**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:** ca. 1950 (the original net shed was built in the 1920s and burned sometime in the 1930s or 1940s)
- 2. Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
- 3. Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Paul Puratich
- 4. Original Plans:** None found
- 5. Alterations and Additions:** Interviews with the Puratich brothers revealed that the original net shed (dating to the 1920s) burned in the 1930s or 1940s. Their father, Paul Puratich, re-built the net shed around 1950. The new design had the shed built further into the harbor while the roof extended over the south side of the building to cover a section of the dock, termed “the runway.” The Puratich brothers also stated that at one time the building was clad in tin siding and had a tin roof, although it now has horizontal wood siding and a shingled roof. The Puratich brothers have altered the net shed very little since its initial construction.

Due to the diverse nature of the Puratich fishing business and the relatively small size of the original net shed, the Puratich brothers built a larger net shed upland measuring approximately 3,024 square feet in 1992. This shed is now their primary workspace for repairing and building nets.

Like nearly all the net sheds in Gig Harbor, the Puratich shed is subject to tidal fluctuations that only allow a boat to be pulled up at the end of the shed’s dock at mid to high tide. To allow for consistent moorage, the Puratich brothers contracted Marine Floats to add an aluminum ramp (4’x50’) leading to two low floats (6’x150’) and (6’x40’) in 2005. At that time, they also replaced seven pilings.

**B. Historical Context:** The Puratich family immigrated to Gig Harbor from Croatia ca. 1918. The original family home on the historic Millville Plat was located directly adjacent and to the south of the current Puratich site. Paul Puratich inherited the property from his father, which included the home, pier, net shed, and dock for the family fishing business. Sons Robert (Bob) and Joseph (Joe) began fishing with their father around age 10 and have since continued in the business.

Unlike most of the other fishing families still living in Gig Harbor, the Puratich family continues to seine fish pollock, sardines, and salmon, trawl and pod fish

for cod, and catch Dungeness crab and squid. This results in the Puratich brothers being away from Gig Harbor for seven to nine months out of the year. With such a large operation, their current storage needs are not fulfilled by the two net sheds in Gig Harbor, and they have storage in ports up and down the West Coast as a result. Joe and Bob estimated that 90 percent of their fishing gear (mostly nets) is stored somewhere else. The Puratich brothers have kept the shed well maintained for active use as a commercial fishing structure and plan to continue to do so. They noted in an interview their desire to continue to have the ability to drive a forklift on the dock, which means it must be well maintained.

## Part II. Structural/Design Information

**A. General Description:** The Puratich Net Shed is nearly 1,700 square feet. The property is 34' wide x 60' long, and the building is 34' wide x 48'-6" long. The single-story wood frame building has a low-pitch gable roof. The exterior is clad in horizontal wood siding. On the south side, the roof extends over the dock, creating a covered walkway. Entrance to the shed is made from an open, covered dock area on the south side of the structure, where a large door on an upper rail slides open. There are six-light windows and sliding doors on upper rails. An east-facing dock extends from the front of the shed for loading and unloading nets. The building and dock are elevated and sit on pilings.

This net shed is used for storage and workspace, and the interior is consequently equipped with a shelving system holding tools, hardware, and fishing gear. The interior perimeter is lined with work benches and more shelving. The exposed rafters inside and outside of the shed are used to store long pieces of wood and large pieces of fishing gear. Almost all on-site nets are stored in the upland shed, which has an interior power block and forklift for managing the nets.

**1. Character:** The net shed, along with the nearby Puratich residence, is described as "one of only a few historic family fishing 'compounds' that survive on the waterfront."<sup>1</sup>

**2. Condition of Fabric:** The Puratich net shed is in good condition.

**B. Site Layout:** A long driveway from Harborview Drive provides access to (in order) a garage, a large upland net shed, a house, and a long pier. The pier extends over the tidelands and leads to the original Puratich Net Shed and dock. From the east-facing end of the open dock area, an aluminum ramp (4'x50') leads to two low floats (6'x150') and (6'x40').

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<sup>1</sup> Mildred Andrews, Historic Property Inventory Report for Puratich Net Shed, Gig Harbor 2008 Update, April 24, 2008.

The Puratich property is bordered directly to the north by Millville Marina Condominiums (see HAER No. WA-186-G). The Ancich (Ellsworth) Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-I) can be seen two lots to the south.

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

**A. Operations:** The Puratich Net Shed was historically 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. Sometimes 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 location of the Millville Marina (see HAER No. WA-186-G) where fishermen would soak netting in hot tar and then wring it in rollers. The nets would be 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 operated each purse seiner. There are three purse seiners (one belonging to each Lovrovich brother) operating off of the Morin (Lovrovich) dock and utilizing the work space of the net shed. In the early 1950s, the Puratich family would fish with a crew of seven, but now they fish with a crew of five, including Bob and Joe who work the same boat (the *Marauder*). The Puratich brothers currently spend nine months of the year fishing along the west coast, mostly in Alaska and California (leaving mid-June, depending on the season).

**C. Associated Vessels:** The following vessels are associated with the net shed:

Paul Puratich: purse seiner *Emancipator*, 1918  
purse seiner *St. Anthony*

Joe and Bob Puratich: purse seiner *St. Anthony*, sold in 1991  
purse seiner *Marauder*, built 1991 While a purse seiner,  
this vessel serves the purposes of multiple types of

commercial fishing along the west coast, including (but not limited to) sardine, anchovy, salmon, pollock, crab and cod.

#### **Part IV. Sources of Information**

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

Puratich, Robert and Joseph. Interview by Shelly Leavens, June 17, 2009. (Copy of interview 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 #5970000131." Pierce County Auditor. 2000.

Harbor History Museum photo archives. Accessed June 2009. Image No. HV-283-GH.

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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