

Gig Harbor Net Sheds, Ancich Net Shed
(Rainier Yacht Net Shed)
3618 Harborview Drive
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-F
HAER WA-186-F

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 NET SHED (Rainier Yacht Net Shed)

HAER No. WA-186-F

- Location:** 3618 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531218.00 E, 5242382.37 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:** Bruce Steel of Rainier Yacht Harbor, LLC
- Present Use:** The net shed is no longer in active use. It has been registered as an historic property under Resolution #743-A, adopted March 10, 2008, by the Gig Harbor City Council.
- 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:** 1954; the original net shed built by Peter Ancich Sr. in this location burned in the late 1920s
- 2. Architect/Engineer:** Peter Ancich, Jr.
- 3. Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Peter Ancich, Jr.
- 4. Original Plans:** None found
- 5. Alterations and Additions:** The shed originally had an approximately 500 square foot south-facing structure attached to it that abutted the bulkhead and served as the entrance. This structure was demolished in 2007, prior to the completion of the Gig Harbor Historic Registry nomination.

B. Historical Context: Peter Ancich, Sr. built the original net shed for the family's commercial fishing operation. Peter Ancich, Jr. re-built the net shed in the early 1950s after a fire destroyed the original one; it had been completed by 1954. Peter Jr. worked with his son, Joseph, on various fishing vessels. Peter passed the property on to his nephew, John Ancich, Jr. After John tragically died on his purse seiner (*Heritage*) in 2001, the estate sold the property in 2005 to Bruce Steel of Rainier Yacht.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Ancich net shed is approximately 1,068 square feet. The property is 43'-9" wide and 110'-11" long, and the building is 24' wide and 44'-5" long. The net shed is a one-story, wood frame building that is rectangular in plan with a gable roof. The worn, deep red and brown colors of the horizontal wood siding (typically Douglas fir), and the corrugated metal roof give this net shed a unique historic appeal. The building and open dock extending into the harbor are elevated and supported on pilings. The gable end facing the harbor features double sliding doors with cross bracing that hang from upper rollers.

- 1. Character:** The shed is typical of Gig Harbor's net sheds.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** The Ancich Net Shed is no longer in use and is therefore deteriorating and in poor condition. The exterior siding has missing planks, and the corrugated metal roof shows evidence of oxidizing and corroding. The large, east-facing, sliding door that provides entry to

the shed was not functioning at the time of the site visit in 2009. The interior is bare except for piles of nets. The wood plank flooring is missing some boards, and there are other gaps and cracks.

B. Site Information: The Ancich Net Shed is one of a cluster of four sheds along this section of the harbor shoreline. The cluster includes the Ivanovich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-D), the Bujacich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-C) and the Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-E) to the north.

The Ancich Net Shed is accessed via a small overgrown path from the west, and a deteriorating, elevated wood plank walkway leads to the door. An associated, overgrown gravel parking lot is located just upland from the shed, while debris is scattered along the tidelands.

The vacant uplands area and oral history indicate that the site once included a small house owned by the Castelan family, which burned in the early 1950s. A well was located onsite 15' from the Anna Ancich property line, halfway down to the waterfront. Peter Ancich owned the second-class tidelands (from John Novak), which encompassed the low water to inner harbor line.

The faint remainder of grid irons can be seen east of the site. These were used for copper painting of hulls at low tide.

Part III. Operations and Processes

A. Operations: The Ancich 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. At this net shed, a 16' x 16' "bake tank" from a tuna clipper (fishing vessel) was located upland of the net shed and used for tarring nets. Tar from Tacoma (Pacific Tar) was brought in 50-gallon barrels and heated in the tank over a wood fire. Two very large pear trees and two apple trees were cut down to create sufficient space for drying nets. The tank was removed in the 1960s. 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: With the advent of new fishing technologies, fewer crew members were needed for commercial fishing operations. Currently, crews of five men operate each purse seiner, while traditionally it would have required eight to ten.

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

Peter Ancich: purse seiner *New World*, 1937, the first boat Peter owned; it was tied off on a piling on the family property.

Peter Ancich: purse seiner *Invader*, the second boat Peter owned. Peter Ancich partnered with Pete Skarponi since his son Joseph was still too young to run it. After three to five years, Joe and Peter Ancich bought Pete's share.

Peter and Joe Ancich: sardine boat *Mary Joe*; operated for two seasons

Peter and Joe Ancich: purse seiner *Voyager*, 1946; sold and ran company boats thereafter

John Ancich, Jr.: purse seiner *Heritage* (formerly the *Julie S*); operated mid-1990s by Joe's nephew John Jr. who died tragically on the boat.

Part IV. Sources of Information

A. Primary Sources

Ivanovich, Frank and George Ancich. Interview by Lita Dawn Ancich-Stanton, January 31, 2008. (Copy in field records accompanying this documentation.)

B. Secondary Sources

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

Gallicci, Caroline. "Peter Ancich House (PC-133-31a)." Pierce County Cultural Resource Survey, 1982.

Harbor History Museum photo archives. Accessed June 2009. Image Nos. Bfsh-213-net shed, HV-164-GH.

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.

Workshop for Architecture and Design. “City of Gig Harbor, Historic Registry
Nomination Description.” 2008.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Bruce Steel, current owner of the net shed, could be interviewed.