

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fishtown Historic District

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: West River Street, West Cedar Street, and West Avenue A

City or town: Leland State: MI County: Leelanau

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

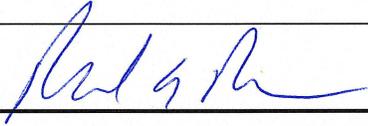
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national X statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

 _____ SHPO	11/22/21 _____ Date
Signature of certifying official/Title:	
<u>Michigan State Historic Preservation Office</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

*James Gabbert*  
Signature of the Keeper

1-11-2022  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

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Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

FISHTOWN RESOURCES IN LELAND HISTORIC DISTRICT*		RESOURCES IN FISHTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT		
Contributing	Noncontributing	Contributing	Noncontributing	
11	5	5	4	Buildings
0	0	1	0	Sites
0	0	9	1	Structures
0	0	0	0	Objects
11	5	14	5	<b>Total</b>

\*These resources were listed as part of the Leland Historic District (NRHP Ref. No. 75000951) in 1975.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 10

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/fishing facility

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

TRANSPORTATION/water-related

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

DOMESTIC/hotel

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

INDUSTRY/ PROCESSING/ EXTRACTION/waterworks

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/fishing facility  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store  
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant  
TRANSPORTATION/water-related  
LANDSCAPE/natural feature  
DOMESTIC/hotel  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
INDUSTRY/ PROCESSING/ EXTRACTION/waterworks

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/fish house  
OTHER/net shed  
OTHER/ice house  
MODERN MOVEMENT/Modernistic  
OTHER/trap net boat  
OTHER/skiff  
OTHER/gill net tug  
OTHER/passenger ferry

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, concrete, asphalt (rolled and shingle), metal

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Fishtown Historic District is located in the unincorporated village of Leland, Michigan. The village is located in Leland Township, Leelanau County, in the northwest Lower Peninsula of Michigan, along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. The property consists of twenty-four

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contributing resources and five noncontributing resources situated within an irregularly-shaped 1.86-acre site. These resources are arranged on both sides of the Leland River (a contributing site) at its confluence with Lake Michigan. The river is the district's defining landscape feature, averaging forty feet in width and four hundred feet in length from the Leland River Dam to its mouth. Because of the river's pivotal role in shaping both landscape and cultural activity, the district is interpreted as a cultural landscape that evolved through use by individuals involved with the commercial fishery and the Manitou ferry. It remains a working waterfront that is home to an active commercial fishery, – an interrelated complex of natural and manmade elements used for commercial fishing and fish processing. This complex includes essential open space as well as twelve resources that continue to be used for commercial fishing (see Traditional Cultural Use Map). The most important contributing buildings are modest, vernacular wood-clad former and current commercial fishery buildings, most built by the fishermen prior to 1930. Additional wood-frame vernacular buildings are associated with the historic Manitou Island ferry service. Four buildings constructed in the mid-twentieth century relate directly to tourism, including two large concrete Modernistic buildings on either side of the Leland River Dam. The district maintains its historic and architectural integrity and conveys a distinct sense of place through location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The river continues as home to Fishtown's commercial fishing vessels, *Joy* and *Janice Sue*, along with charter boats and private recreational vessels, all of which moor at the wooden docks that line both sides of the river. The *Mishe-Mokwa* ferry, operated by Manitou Transit under a National Park Service concession, typically docks at a slip located at the western edge of Fishtown's north side.

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## Narrative Description

*Introductory note:* Fishtown Preservation Society (FPS) owns twelve buildings (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18), the four commercial fishing vessels (M.1, M.2, M.3, N), the northside dock (P) and portions of the southside dock (O), and two smokehouses (A, F). Apart from the publicly owned dam, the other buildings and structures are privately owned. Since acquiring its first buildings in 2007, FPS has commissioned planning reports and worked with preservation architects to ensure that this historic working waterfront maintains its integrity and connection to maritime history, traditions, and experiences. Central to this mission has been restoration and repair of the working fishing vessels and ensuring that the site continues to meet the needs of commercial fishermen and processors. This is an unusual preservation model for a commercial fishery, but it has succeeded in saving and preserving Fishtown from the development characteristic of many of Michigan's former working waterfronts. It is also a model, as described in Part 8, that began as the vision of a local fishing family. Fishermen and fish processors continue to be key partners with FPS.

## SETTING OVERVIEW

Fishtown is demarcated on the west by a township beach and Leland Township Harbor and on the east by the boat basin/turnround (a widening of the river), a waterfall/dam (Structure R) that averages a six-foot drop, and two large Modernistic buildings (11 and 12). The distant Manitou Islands, with their important Lake Michigan fishing grounds, dominate the vista to the west. West River Street borders the district to the north and provides parking access. The southern boundary is shaped by West Avenue A (a private gravel road) and a natural area of township dune and beach formed in part by dredged material from the 1960s harbor construction. The area just north of Fishtown and West River Street is now a large parking lot for the Leland Township marina. Before the marina's construction in the late 1960s, this area was industrial space for a

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nineteenth-century ironworks that – after 1900 – morphed into open space and a community park. The Village of Leland’s Main Street (also highway M-22) is located immediately east/northeast of Fishtown.

The narrow ribbon of the Leland River shaped Fishtown’s intimate “north side/south side” setting that is both beautiful and distinctive. Changing water levels cause fluctuations in the river’s length, width, and depth but not the intimacy of scale. Fishtown’s early footprint was already well established when E.E. Chandler’s Second Addition (Leland) was platted in 1908. The south side is comparatively quiet with its fishing operations, while the north side is the retail and tourism hub of Fishtown. Topography has shaped use and site configuration. The rear lot lines are deeper on the south side and less so on the north side (see Photos 1 and 2, and Maps). To the north, West River Street starts at a higher grade before sloping down toward the harbor. This higher grade confined Fishtown’s northside development to the lower ground adjacent to the river. Between the two rows of northside buildings is an area known as Fishtown’s “Main Street,” the location of a former dirt service road during the peak fishing period. This area is now a gravel walkway. The southside includes essential open space comprised of current and former dune that continues to house commercial fishing operations. Historically the southside dunescape allowed more expansion for commercial fishing support buildings such as ice houses and net sheds plus a reel yard; only Building 17 remains, but newly constructed Building 18 (2016) also serves as commercial fishing support.

### **Fishtown Site Organization**

With the river as their starting point, early twentieth-century fishermen established Fishtown’s spatial template into three basic activity zones: the river with docks and boats (dock operations zone); the adjacent fish shanty zone, with simple fisherman-built buildings; and the support and circulation zone – auxiliary structures such as net sheds, ice houses and reel yards (wooden reels used to dry and repair nets) situated to the rear, with access roads to facilitate transport of fish and delivery of ice and other equipment. Although the reel yards are no longer needed, the rest of this efficient, utilitarian arrangement remains the template for Fishtown’s present-day site configuration (see Site Map, Photo 6, and Figure 10). Two newer buildings that serve tourism functions evoke an ice house (10) and fish shanty (9) respectively and were situated in the appropriate activity zone. The two large Modernistic concrete buildings (11 and 12) dwarf the rest of Fishtown in terms of scale, but they – like the diminutive shanties – sit directly adjacent to the river. These two buildings are architect-designed and feature cedar shake roofing to complement use of cedar shake siding on historic fish shanties.

The former Manitou ferry warehouse (13) also followed the historic activity zone template in its placement adjacent to the river. It was replaced during the 1970s and 1980s by Manitou ferry buildings 3 and 4, built at the opposite end of Fishtown. Buildings 3 and 4 are situated near the water but not directly adjacent to the dock operations zone. Both maintain the scale and wood-cladding characteristic of earlier Fishtown buildings. Building 3 rests on infill that now extends the western portion of the district.

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### **Distinguishing Qualities**

Fishtown is distinguished from its surroundings by the character-defining features of resources that have been continuously used for the commercial fishery and support associated traditional cultural practices, and those of former commercial fishing properties – now adaptively reused – that provide essential historic and architectural context for the working waterfront.

The primary defining feature is the Leland River (Site Q), which has been a working waterway for more than 150 years. The unique geography of the river at Fishtown – a narrow channel between the dam and the confluence with Lake Michigan – has shaped the district’s distinctive intimacy of scale. The river also shaped site configuration with the buildings clustered along both river banks, each bank with its own character. Many buildings are partially supported by piles in the river. At Fishtown, the landscape and waterscape are interdependent, reflecting ongoing connections between land-based architecture/activities and the Lake Michigan fishing grounds. The river links the two. The working waterfront at Fishtown – characterized by docks, smokehouses, commercial and charter fishing boats, a ferry, and ongoing traditional cultural practices related to the fishery– is an especially significant feature.

Transience, change, and adaptation also continue to shape Fishtown’s character. Fishermen, like farmers, have a make-do, do-it-yourself approach to their work environment. Buildings and structures have been constantly repaired or even replaced due to the ravages of weather, ice, and shifting lake levels – from the piers and shanties destroyed or damaged by fierce storms of the past to today’s shanty-lifts that address record lake levels and seiches. Other changes resulted from the need to keep the fishery functional over time. These include changing location and numbers of buildings, structures, and objects; change to building, boat, and roof color; a dynamic Lake Michigan shoreline; change to the shape of river and boat basin; changes to the surrounding landscape and reel yards; and changing numbers and types of boats.

The utilitarian function of a working fishery also prompted periodic alterations and additions to buildings. One of the biggest changes occurred circa 1960 with the end of the ice house era and the resulting addition of coolers and ice machines to the working fish shanties. Changes notwithstanding, two buildings retain important ice house-era architectural elements. These include the front and rear dormers on Building 16 and the ladder on the south elevation of Building 2 (see Photos 9, 16, and 17). As former fishing buildings transitioned to tourism and retail functions, alterations included enlarged display windows and new or additional doors. These changes should be viewed within the context of Fishtown’s aesthetic of functional adaptation and change.

Vernacular materials and design also contribute to Fishtown’s character. The district’s simple wood frame structures are similar in material and form to farm outbuildings of the region. Although Fishtown is associated with weathered and unpainted exteriors, this has not always been the case. FPS has reintroduced colors based on historic photographs as part of their ongoing care and maintenance of the property.

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## FISHTOWN'S EVOLVING FOOTPRINT

Fishtown's building footprint has constantly changed. As the commercial fishery grew, the footprint expanded. In addition, at least sixteen former buildings were demolished between 1900 and 1960 due to the ravages of weather and the changing needs of both commercial fishermen and the Manitou ferry and mail boat. Building numbers preceded with an "X" in the footprint maps are no longer extant. Although some changes occurred during decades not shown here, the maps and period photos illustrate major trends in Fishtown's footprint.

### Footprint 1900-1910

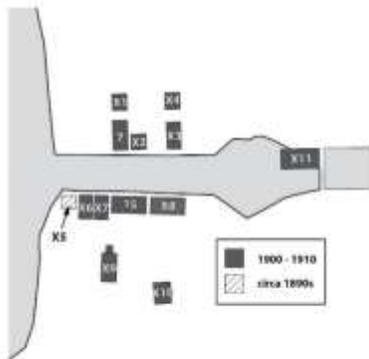


Figure 1, Timeline of Development 1900-1910. Figure 2, Circa 1905-1906, the fishing village at Leland looking west from the dam. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

### Footprint 1920s-1930s

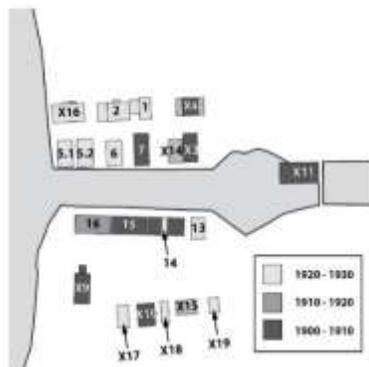


Figure 3, Timeline of Development 1920-1930. Figure 4, Circa 1930s, the fishing village at Leland looking west from X11 (former power house), courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

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Figure 5, Timeline of Development 1960-1980. The current footprint was established by 1980. A few additions have occurred since (see Site Map), but the basic footprint remains. Figure 6, Fishtown circa 1966 looking west from the construction site of Building 12. Photo by Mike Brown.

## EVOLUTION OF FISHTOWN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The following overview highlights significant geographical and topographical features, especially the changing shape and use of the Leland River; manmade features and relationships making up the historic and contemporary landscape; descriptions of vegetation and plant materials; and landscape features listed in National Register Bulletin 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, such as “cultural traditions,” “response to natural environment,” and “land uses and activities.”

## 1800-1850, OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA FISHING CAMP AND VILLAGE



Figure 7, 1800-1850, OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA FISHING CAMP AND VILLAGE, adapted from Map of Leelanau County by Abram S. Wadsworth, Deputy Surveyor of an area Geological Survey, 1851. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

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The Leland (historically Carp) River is the district's defining landscape feature. The earliest written descriptions come from Bela Hubbard, part of the Michigan Geological Survey of 1838. According to Hubbard, the clear, shallow river – just thirty feet wide at its mouth – ran swiftly into Lake Michigan, falling fifteen feet from its source in Carp Lake to its outlet in the big lake. An Ottawa village was built north of the Carp River mouth, situated on a fifteen-to-twenty-foot bank “composed entirely of shell marl with thin layers of sand.” The stratum appeared almost white, Hubbard noted, “and abounds here with recent shells (planorbis, lymnea), a species of helix. The soil above is dark sand, which is made by the limey substrata very rich. It bears a luxuriant growth of maple, beech, oak, fir.”<sup>1</sup> As indicated in Figure 7, an 1851 survey map by A.S. Wadsworth locates the Ottawa village north of present-day Fishtown's northern boundary.

### 1850-1900, SETTLEMENT, EARLY COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY

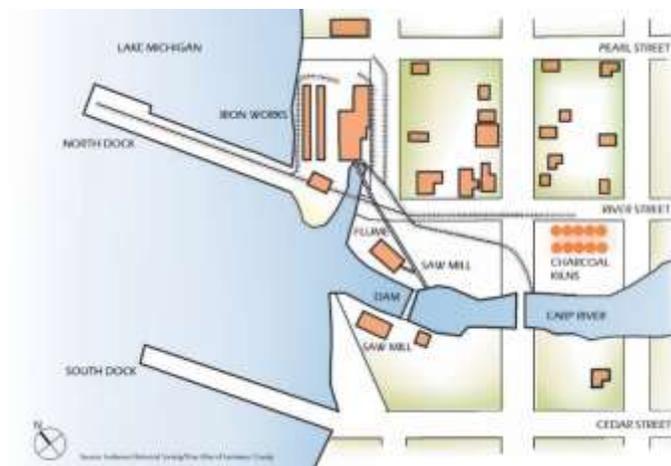


Figure 8, 1850-1900, SETTLEMENT, EARLY COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY. Adapted from *Atlas of Leelanau County, Michigan*, compiled and drawn for the publisher by E.L. Hayes (1881). The southside sawmill locations are inferred from Henry J. Barnard's recollections of Leland in 1864, as reported in the *Leelanau Enterprise*, September 15, 1927. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the Ottawa village disappeared, and the landscape became an industrial site dominated by sawmills and by the Leland Lake Superior Iron Company (1870-1884), which existed under various names until the enterprise went bankrupt. The shoreline location facilitated transport of milled timber and ingots of pig iron to Great Lakes ports. The river – first dammed in 1853 to facilitate upstream navigation – played a key role in this industrial transformation. Although the actual smelting furnace was located north of present-day Fishtown on the site of the current marina building and parking lot, the company owned all the land south to the river, and this intensive industrial use resulted in dramatic changes to the landscape around the waterfront. The once clear lake and river became choked with sawdust and slag. The company re-shaped the river itself, carving a northward channel to the furnace and

<sup>1</sup> Bela Hubbard Papers, 1814-1896, July 4, 1838 in Box 1, Survey Notebook 2, Field Notebooks May 19-July 24, 1838, Peninsula Coast Survey, Detroit to Chicago, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Joseph Littell. *Leland, An Historical Sketch*. Leland: The Print Shop, reprint 1959 of 1920 original. 4-5.

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constructing a large dock.<sup>2</sup> What had been a pristine natural landscape was irrevocably altered. Remnants of native plants and pioneer species that thrive in disturbed locations became established in the edges, nooks and crannies of the landscape that were not utilized by the iron company or sawmills. A review of the available photographs from the late 1800s and the early 1900s shows a mix of grasses, other herbaceous plants, and scattered small woody plants on the embankments around the dam and in other edge areas. In areas of high traffic volumes, only bare dirt is visible. Primarily south of the river, where the commercial activities were less extensive, some remnant of the native vegetation from the original beach plant community likely remained.<sup>3</sup>

By 1900 the site finally was available for other uses, giving rise to the growth of a commercial fishing village after the turn of the twentieth century.

### 1903-1960, COMMERCIAL FISHING



Figure 9, 1920s-1930s, PEAK COMMERCIAL FISHING. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

Photo 3 (circa 1905-06) provides a visual benchmark for Fishtown's evolving cultural landscape: the latest iteration of the dam (foreground) separating the upper and lower river and marking the eastern boundary of Fishtown; Lake Michigan and fishing grounds to the west; fishing boats moored in the river next to rudimentary docks; the widening of the river for boat turnaround near the dam; shanties facing the river with a second tier of buildings (typically ice houses and net sheds) to the rear; larger shanties located on the south side (long elevations parallel to the river) and smaller ones on the north side (gable ends facing the river); the beginnings of what by the 1920s would become a sizable reel yard behind the southside shanties; fishing-related objects such as fish or net boxes, pound net stakes, and buoys; and remnants of the pier or breakwater at the mouth of the harbor – here destroyed by storms. The photo also reveals the tenuous position

<sup>2</sup> Frederick W. Dickinson, *A Short History of the Leland Iron Works*. Leelanau Historical Society, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> This and subsequent descriptions of historic period vegetation come from Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio's work for *The River Runs Through It, Report on Historic Structures and Site Design in the Fishtown Cultural Landscape* (2011).

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of the fishermen-built vernacular wood buildings and structures – subject to ice, wind, and waves – and underscores how weather would re-shape Fishtown’s footprint over time.

Extant buildings originally associated with the commercial fishery were constructed from 1903-1960. On-site smokehouses – periodically replaced and rebuilt – became important to Fishtown’s traditional commercial fishing activity beginning in the 1950s, although fish smoking in off-site smokehouses began much earlier. In keeping with usage as a working waterfront, the landscape was littered with fish boxes, buoys, kettles for boiling nets, new and old equipment of all kinds, and tools used for boat building. Two access roads on the north side, one north of the support and circulation zone and one between the support buildings and the fish shanties, facilitated transport of fish and equipment. In addition, a power house at the dam (built 1908 and demolished circa 1950s) generated electricity. A fish ladder built at the dam during the early 1920s was defunct by the early 1940s.

Although similar activities occurred on both sides of the river, the two sides developed their different characters during this period. The south side – which had not been impacted by the iron works – retained more of a beach and dune landscape and had more room to accommodate the sizable reel yard that emerged in support of the gill net fishery in the 1920s and 1930s. The Manitou ferry and mail boat docks between Building 13 and the dam, with their associated deliveries and freight, also shaped land use on the south side (see Photo 4). On the north side, the open space at either end of the row of shanties housed pile drivers (used for setting pound nets) and boat storage and repair. At the east end was the “boatyard” (Photo 4 foreground) where local boat builder John Johnson and his son Adolph – assisted by fishermen – built wooden boats for both Tracy Grosvenor’s Manitou mail and ferry service and for various local fishermen. On the north side fishermen placed net reels in double rows between the shanties (see Photo 5). Organization of these elements evolved and grew incrementally.

Site geography also extended inland and outward to Lake Michigan. Local farms offered the space needed for drying and repairing the large pound nets. Nearby Lake Leelanau was the scene of the annual winter ice harvest, when men from the community cut blocks of ice to fill ice houses for the coming season. The landscape also connected with the waterscape. The river provided the essential conduit to the all-important Lake Michigan fishing banks. Multiple generations of fishermen passed on the traditional environmental knowledge of the banks’ names and characteristics.

As was the case during the last half of the nineteenth century, the landscape character of the Fishtown area was driven by utility and likely consisted of remnant native and volunteer plants. Period photographs show a mix of grasses, herbaceous vegetation, and small woody plants. These plants can be seen in areas of steeper slopes that could not be utilized for the fishing and boatyard operations, such as the embankments on either side of the dam. They also flourished along the edges and in smaller spaces that were out of the way of the fishing activities and circulation. Photographs reveal only a few larger trees. Native vegetation from the original beach plant community likely remained along the sandy waterfront, particularly south of the river where the commercial activities were less extensive.

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## 1960 TO 2010, GROWTH OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM



Figure 10, Fishtown's present-day site characteristics. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio. See also Photos 1 and 2. The Fishtown Historic District Traditional Cultural Property Site Map shows the few changes that have occurred since 2010.

During the 1960s the site character reflected the growth of recreation and tourism. Benchmarks of this change include the first fisherman-built shanty intended expressly for tourist retail (Building 9, 1969), the first former fish shanty converted to tourist retail (Building 6, early 1960s); construction of a new harbor of refuge and associated marina and parking lot just beyond the boundaries of Fishtown (1966-69); and, perhaps most significantly, construction on either side of the dam of two massive concrete and stucco Modernistic buildings for a restaurant and hotel (Building 11, The Cove Restaurant, 1967; and Building 12, Falling Waters Lodge, 1966).

By the 1970s commercial fishermen shared the dock operations zone with growing numbers of charter fishermen and tourists, changing the look of the riverscape. The owners of the Cove Restaurant (Building 11) built a large bar and deck along the river, now known as Rick's Café, which sits on the site of the former boatyard. The loading docks for the Manitou mail boat and ferry were removed during the mid-1960s prior to construction of Falling Waters Lodge (Building 12). The Grosvenor family already had relocated their base of operations to the river's mouth and in 1972 built a new ticket office (Building 4). Their newest building (3, 1980) rests on crude property – formed in part by rubble from the old courthouse – that extended the western border of Fishtown on the river's north side (please see Figure 42).

The present landscape character of Fishtown still has much in common with preceding periods. Other than the naturalized beach area on the south side of the river, vegetation is limited and secondary to existing land uses. It is generally unplanned and simple, with few trees or shrubs. On the north side, turf grass is planted around the base of some buildings. This is the main tourist area, so the ground has been covered with aggregate surfacing (see Photo 2 and Figure 41). The south side retains its more utilitarian, unplanned character behind the riverfront buildings (see Photos 17 and 18). This area consists of an informal gravel parking area generally defined by

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wood fencing, scattered sheds for storage, objects stored in the open, and small areas of lawn or grass. During 2020, this landscape was a construction zone during the shanty-lift of Buildings 14 and 15. The area around Buildings 11 and 12 features limited ornamental landscaping – groundcover, turfgrass, and flowering annuals or perennials.

Fishtown’s site also includes scattered commercial fishing objects past and present, including net reels, buoys, fish boxes, anchors, bases for net drying poles, and fish smoking racks. As a result of Fishtown Preservation’s interpretive plan, the north side FPS properties are interpreted with sandwich board signage about fishermen who built and used the buildings for their fishing operations.

## CONDITION

The district is in fair to good overall condition, although individual buildings are in varying states of repair. Given the location adjacent to the Leland River and Lake Michigan, constant maintenance remains a necessity. Record lake levels in 2019 and 2020, along with water run-off from West River Street, caused flooding throughout much of Fishtown. To address flooding repercussions along the riverfront, FPS raised emergency funds for “shanty-lifts” for Buildings 8, 14, and 15 that removed buildings from their sites, raised foundations, conducted necessary repairs, and then replaced them in the original location.

Since acquiring the first eight Fishtown properties in 2007, FPS has sought to preserve the historic integrity of Fishtown. In 2010 it completed preservation architect Richard Neumann’s rehabilitation plan for Building 7 and in 2011 commissioned an historic structures report (HSR) that guides subsequent ongoing work. Preservation architect Gene Hopkins of HopkinsBurns Design Studio and his team conducted physical assessments for the HSR and crafted a preservation objective and treatment approach to address the long-term maintenance of the Fishtown site. These were designed to respect its history and significance, the existing conditions of the buildings and landscape, and its continued use as a fishery. The preservation objective for Fishtown is to acknowledge and respect its unique place in American history as a historic Great Lakes working waterfront. Due to the property’s 1975 listing in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Leland Historic District, all recommendations are guided by *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties*. The result has been a rigorous commitment to a cyclical maintenance program. Its goal is to ensure the lasting integrity of the historic materials by 1) only facilitating changes where required to prevent further deterioration; and 2) only repairing damage that has occurred to the resource over the previous year. This approach maintains the historic integrity of the site and its character-defining features. At the same time, it incorporates the updates needed to preserve and enhance sustainability, reduces the visual effect of major changes to the resource, and allows for the evolution of the property.

Repairs and preservation treatments for individual buildings and structures are ongoing, both as part of the long-term preservation strategy and in response to emergency situations such as the 2019-2020 record high water levels. Both Gene Hopkins of HopkinsBurns Design Studio and Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio (the latter landscape architects) have built on their work for the

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HSR and continue to be involved in maintenance and repair. Significant maintenance took place in 2013, 2015, and 2019-2020.

Private property owners also conduct their own maintenance. The owners of Falling Waters Lodge (Building 12), for example, did major interior upgrades, re-roofing, and balcony work between 2017 and 2019.

## INVENTORY

*Inventory Note:* Reflective of its time, the 1975 National Register of Historic Places nomination for Leland Historic District does not provide a count of contributing and noncontributing resources. The nomination text discusses “fishing shanties and boats,” and notes the presence of “ice houses, smoke houses, a net shed, a gas house and an oil shed.” The text also notes the presences of “intrusions,” ostensibly noncontributing resources, including “two new gift shops... Falling Waters Lodge... and Fisherman’s Cove Restaurant.” The accompanying map and “Key to Map of Leland Historic District,” enumerates sixteen total resources.

*A Note on Interior Spaces:* Adaptive reuse of the former fishing buildings has meant that interiors have changed to accommodate retail or residential use. These changes vary from building to building, but all retain wood cladding. For resources associated with traditional cultural practices, interior changes relate to use. Building 14’s interior is in near original condition since its primary use in recent decades has been for storage (see Figure 32). Building 5, as a fish processing facility, has been completely changed to accommodate United States Department of Agriculture, and other food processing, regulations (see Photo 25).

Inventory entries are arranged in numerical order for buildings and alphabetic order for structures and sites. Note that certain small outbuildings used in Fishtown Preservation’s internal identification system are not included in this nomination. As a result, the alphabetic IDs are not necessarily consecutive.

Contributing resources for this nomination were determined by construction dates (1972 or earlier), historic or architectural integrity, continued historic patterns of use (in the case of resources that support traditional cultural activities), and association with Fishtown’s two areas of significance: maritime history (commercial fishing and transportation) and commerce/tourism. Most of the buildings within the current district boundaries were included in the 1975 Leland Historic District. Several resources listed as contributing in 1975 were in poor condition at the time and no longer exist. Others that were relatively new in 1975, and hence noncontributing at the time, are now more than fifty years old and contribute to Fishtown’s post-1960 significance (9, 11, 12).

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**Building 1, Henry Steffens Net Shed (Fishtown Welcome Center); circa 1926, circa 1990s; presumably partners William Harting and Otto Light and possibly also Henry Steffens Sr.; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 1 is a simple, vernacular former net shed, framed with wood and resting on a temporary concrete block foundation. It is in good condition. The exterior finish is horizontally installed Dutch lap siding. The gabled roof, covered in red three-tab asphalt shingle, has an overhang with exposed rafters at the underside, wood fascia board, and, on the gable end, wood rake boards with exposed OSB roof sheathing. None of the windows are original. As a net shed, the building had no or minimal windows (no clear photo exists). Various styles of window were added after the shed was converted to retail use. The entrance door consists of a pair of hinged leaves constructed of horizontal wood siding that matches the building. It is not clear if the doors are original. When first constructed, the shed was connected to the adjacent ice house via a smaller shed (see Figure 12). Circa 1960, fishermen Henry Steffens Jr. and Leo Stallman removed the deteriorating smaller shed and rotated the building 90 degrees to its present east-west orientation. After locating here in 1967, renter Kenneth Krantz added a six-light rectangular window in the gable end above the door and installed dormers and large 15-pane display windows on the north and south elevations, with the assistance of Ed Marshall. These changes enhanced the building's new retail use. The biggest alterations to Building 1 occurred during the 1990s after a fire. Fishermen Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder could save only the floor and framing. They re-roofed, replaced interior walls, and installed new siding, dormer bays, and windows, recreating the pre-fire appearance. The historic use of Dutch shiplap cladding has been retained. Despite these changes, Building 1 retains integrity of setting, feeling, and association. Its reconstruction duplicated the look of the original materials. As such it remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photo 2 and Figures 12 and 13.

**Building 2, Harting and Light and Henry Steffens Ice House (Ice House); circa 1926; likely William Harting, Otto Light, and Henry Steffens Sr.; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 2 is a two-story wood frame vernacular former ice house in fair to poor condition. It is clad in the horizontally installed shiplap characteristic of ice house design. Green three-tab asphalt shingle covers the main roof above overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and wood rake boards on the gable ends. "Ice houses were specially designed, simple-framed buildings with well-ventilated eaves," wrote Mike Heuer in the *Leelanau Enterprise*. "Many had the sheathing or walls on the inside so that they wouldn't 'pop' off from the pressure of the ice and sawdust packed inside."<sup>4</sup> Figure 12 shows the characteristic ice house dormer – here a shed roof dormer, since removed – with vertical openings to the eaves line ["doors"] that were covered with removable planks as ice was loaded and off-loaded. Fishermen accessed the ice through these doors using ladders, such as the one visible in Figure 12. There were originally ladders on both north and south elevations. Early photos show a ventilation opening at the point of the gable end on the east side (probably the same on the west gable end), and a small square window or

<sup>4</sup> Mike Heuer, "Ice was 'harvested' before electricity" *Leelanau Enterprise*, February 27, 1997 (courtesy of TAHS archive).

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covered opening in the east gable end for light and ventilation, which at one time was covered with a shutter. The original floor was dirt. The exterior was covered with wide-board shiplap. Deliveries of cut ice from Lake Leelanau came on both sides, as the present “Main Street” pathway to the south was originally more of a road. Fisherman Bill Carlson, whose family used the ice house, recalled, “there was one floor; it went from the bottom of the ladder there to the ceiling... And this door went all the way up from the bottom of the ladder all the way to the top, and that’s how they got ice in and out. And there were two doors, one on the bottom and one on the top. So, if they were working up above, they just opened the top door.... There was paneling on the inside. If I remember correctly, it was all paneled with shiplap.... There wasn’t anything other than that.”<sup>5</sup>

During the early 1970s, conversion to retail use, the small windows in the gable ends were enlarged and various new multi-light windows added to both north and south elevations – most acquired at a local salvage yard – to maintain the building’s historic integrity. A local contractor and carpenter installed a new wood floor at the northside street level and added a stair to the new southside entrance. The building was originally one-and-a-half stories high, with the higher grade on the north elevation and the lower grade at the (south) river level. During the 1980s, Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder used a railroad jack to raise the building three feet to make space for lower-level retail shops. They repaired the footings after the back wall caved in and added a new concrete floor. The attached access ladder on the south elevation – an important character-defining feature from the historic ice house era – is now three feet off the ground. Two doors, stacked one above the other, currently occupy the space once used for off-loading ice. Although the doors are not original, they evoke the central “door” space of the active ice house era. The building’s main (north) entrance door is also situated in an original ice house door opening, now accessed by a raised porch and stairs (the latter rebuilt in 2015). The west elevation features a one-story wood-framed shed wing with sloping shed roof and exposed rafter tails that appears original to the building. Its south facade has been converted into the entrance to a separate retail space, with fifteen-light double doors and shed-roof canopy. Despite changes related to changing use, Building 2 retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photos 7 and 9, and Figures 12 and 13.

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<sup>5</sup> Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder interviewed by Laurie Sommers, May 25, 2010.

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Figure 12, Fishing village at Leland looking south toward the north elevations of the northside buildings, circa 1930s. Building 2 is painted white, with Building 1 to the left attached by a small connecting shed that has since been removed. The characteristic ladder and roof dormer are clearly visible. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 13, East and north elevations of Buildings 1 and 2 in 2018, looking southwest. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society.

**Building 3, Manitou Island Transit (Manitou Transit Gift Shop); 1980; David Ball with Mike Grosvenor and Jim Eggart; 1 Noncontributing building**

Building 3 is the westernmost building in Fishtown, resting on crude property formed in part by rubble from the old courthouse to which the Grosvenor family (legacy operators of the ferry service). The vernacular wood building rests on a concrete block foundation with a concrete floor. It features vertical board and batten wood cladding, a gabled roof clothed with asphalt shingle, double-hung windows with wooden casings, and overhanging eaves with barge boards. There is a large double door on the lean-to extension of the main east elevation. Two large anchors outside the building were salvaged from shipwrecks in South Manitou Island's harbor. Because of its 1980 construction date, it is noncontributing; however, the building blends well with Fishtown's historic shanties in terms of scale and materials. It is in good condition. Please see Figure 42.

**Building 4, The Porthole Building, Manitou Ferry Service Ticket Office (Manitou Transit Ticket Office); 1972; George Grosvenor (ferry captain) and George Stevens; 1 Contributing Building**

Unlike Building 3 – the newer Manitou Transit building – Building 4 is located within the historic boundary of Fishtown. The one-story vernacular wood building sits on property originally occupied by Building 5.1; its current location is immediately adjacent to Building 5. Unlike the historic fishing shanties, however, it faces Leland Harbor and Lake Michigan. This orientation is more in keeping with its function for the ferry service to South Manitou Island. The simple, one-story board and batten building rests on a concrete slab foundation. Grey three-tab shingles cover the gabled roof, above exposed rafter tails and rake boards. It is in good condition. The building was constructed using cedar plank lumber from South Manitou Island. The antique port hole window, located on the south elevation, comes from an old boat. Building 4's original side-by-side doors on the west elevation have been replaced by a double-wide shed door. A second larger double-hung window was added to south side of the west wall. The original

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nautical-themed sign – with the name “Port Hole” etched in nautical rope – has been replaced by the current Manitou Island Transit sign. The interior ticket counter was crafted with three-inch maple boards from South Manitou.

Building 4 retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photo 8.

**Building 5: Nelson and Maleski Shanty/Kaapke and Firestone Shanty (Carlson’s); 1928 (5.1); 1926 (5.2); Peter Nelson and John Maleski (5.1); Roy Firestone and Claude Kaapke (5.2); 1 Contributing Building**

Building 5 is a one-story vernacular wood shanty with a one-and-one-half-story east addition and one-story west addition. It is in poor condition. Beginning in the mid-1960s, it was composed of two historic rectangular-plan fish shanties – 5.1 and 5.2 – that were combined into one irregular-shaped plan. Building 5.1 was skidded from its original location just west of 5.2, rotated ninety degrees, and became the retail portion of the historic Carlson’s Fishery. It retains its original white paint color, but new doors and windows were added to the north elevation to enhance the public entrance. Building 5.1 is a simple, one-story, wood-framed building clad in horizontally installed Dutch shiplap siding with corner boards. The gabled roof is covered with gray three-tab asphalt shingle above overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails, and wood rake boards on the gable ends. Building 5.2’s riverside lot slopes gradually downward toward the river. The building rests partially on pilings. 5.2’s exterior cladding is unpainted, although historic photographs show a coat of paint at the time of construction. Building 5.2 retains its original riverfront door and window configuration on the south elevation. The west elevation, which originally featured two small windows, now has two larger windows in new locations. Please see Figures 14 and 15.

As a resource that supports ongoing traditional cultural practices, Building 5 has been continually repaired and modified. It is now “so cobbled together,” in the words of fisherman Jim VerSnyder, that it is hard to determine what is original. An emphasis on original features, however, obscures the building’s function and integrity as a working commercial fishery building that has undergone planned and ad hoc changes to address wear and tear, changing technology, and mandated regulations. These changes accelerated after 1960 and the end of the ice house era. Fishermen needed shanty space for ice machines and cooling rooms. The new emphasis on local fresh market sales, in lieu of shipping fish to more distant markets as was the case in the past, required a room for brining fish, an enlarged and updated fish processing area, and more retail space. USDA and other government regulations have caused the interior to be completely revamped. Since Carlson’s has been the only fully working shanty since the 1970s (the others being used for storage and occasional net repair), it is the one that has seen the most change, including fishermen-built east and west additions beginning in the 1970s (see Figures 16 and 17).

These changes do not detract from the building’s integrity; rather, they represent Fishtown’s best example of functional continuity and change in a resource associated with traditional cultural

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practices. Building 5 retains integrity of setting, feeling, and association. It remains crucial to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district and to its character as a working waterfront. Please see Photos 10 and 11.



Figure 14, (looking east, circa 1930s), Far left Building 5.1; second from left Building 5.2; third from left Building 6; second from right former power house; far right Building 16. Photo courtesy of Bluebird Restaurant. Figure 15 (looking northeast), South elevations of buildings 5.2, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Photo by Amanda Holmes, 2016.



Figure 16 (looking west/northwest), Building 5.2 south and east elevations with the east addition and roof-top ice machine constructed by fishermen Jim VerSnyder to address changing needs. These additions were replaced by others during the 1980s, as regulations continued to evolve. Photo courtesy of Malcolm Chatfield, early 1980s. Figure 17 (looking west), Building 5.2's east addition. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 4, 2020.

### **Building 6, Harting and Light Shanty (Tug Stuff); circa 1926; William Harting and Otto Light; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 6 is a modest one-story vernacular wood shanty supported by wood pilings. During the 1980s, Easling Construction rebuilt the foundation with wolmanized lumber, and Jim VerSnyder, installed new spiles underneath. It retains horizontally installed Dutch lap siding with corner boards. When new, Buildings 6 and 5.1 were similar in appearance, and both were painted white. The gabled roof is covered by red tab asphalt shingle with fascia board and exposed rafter tails below the overhang. Windows and doors are in their original locations, although only the north elevation window appears unaltered. Windows on south, east, and west elevations were enlarged to accommodate retail use beginning in the 1960s. The interior is the least changed of Fishtown's

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adaptively reused buildings, with original tongue and groove flooring, exposed rafters, and, in the north one-quarter of the building, ceiling joists. Building 6 also has one of the least changed exteriors and is in good condition. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photo 9 and Figures 14 and 15.

**Building 7, Johnson and Carlson Shanty and Henry J. Steffens Shanty (Steffens & Stallman Shanty/Diversions/Bead Hut); 1905; Severt Johnson and Nels Carlson, possibly assisted by Nels' son, Edwin Carlson; 1 Contributing Building**

The one-story wood framed shanty is supported by at least the third iteration of underlying wood piles. Cedar shake cladding is a character-defining feature. Wood vertical board hinged doors in their original configurations are located on both north and south elevations. A small lean-to addition with a shed roof has been constructed along a portion of the east elevation. The overhanging roofline features exposed rafter tails and wood fascia on the underside. Early photos show a wood shingle roof, replaced with hexagonal multicolored asphalt shingle in the summer of 1934 (see Figure 18), and then by green asphalt rolled material during the 1950s. The original building featured a brick chimney rising from the north end of the gabled roof ridge board. A small square window pierced the east wall, while doors and a single window punctuated both north and south elevations. By the 1940s, fishermen added a window to the south gable end and installed a wood canopy – suspended from above by tie boards and suspended from below by brackets – which extended the width of the south elevation from the bottom of the gable peak (see Figure 18). The canopy was removed during the 1950s. About 1960, fisherman Leo Stallman Sr. (with help from young Glenn Garthe) added the small east addition – with its cement blocks and poured concrete insulation – used as the first cooler after the end of the ice house era.<sup>6</sup> After the Carlsons acquired the building in 1977, they re-roofed, re-wired, and replaced the floor. The east addition was adapted for retail use with addition of windows, doors, and awning, a function that continues.

Building 7 was the first to undergo historic preservation rehabilitation and set the standard for such work in Fishtown. In 2010, Easling Construction completed rehabilitation work on the badly deteriorated and sagging shanty according to the Secretary of Interior's standards, following the preservation plan by architect Richard Neumann of Petoskey, Michigan. New cedar shingle siding was applied; wooden doors and windows – repaired and replaced in their enframements – were painted to match historic white and gray samples found in historic photographs and on the building itself. The rehabilitation also included new green asphalt rolled roofing (see Figure 19). The building is in good condition.

Building 7 is one of Fishtown's least changed historic former fishing shanties and retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. The rehabilitation took care to replicate materials and workmanship from the peak fishing period. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photos 9, 12, and 22, and Figures 18 and 19.

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<sup>6</sup> Glenn Garthe, interviewed by Amanda Holmes, 15 November 2007.

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Figure 18, Building 7 (looking northwest) with Building 6 just visible to the left. Courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society, circa 1940. Figure 19, Building 7 (looking north) after implementation of the rehabilitation plan by architect Richard Neumann. Photo by Laurie Sommers, summer 2010.

**Building 8, Louis Steffens Shanty (Village Cheese Shanty); circa 1959-1960; local builder (Art Borsch?), Leo Stallman Sr.; 1 Contributing Building**

In 1959 fisherman Louis Steffens hired a builder, possibly Art Borsch, to construct his “modern” shanty, distinguished by the cement floor (for ease of maintenance) and a concrete block chimney (see Figure 20; Building 8 is pictured far right). The building was originally a simple rectangle, expanded to L-shape via an east addition built by Leo Stallman Sr. (by 1963), T-shape (1980s), and, beginning in the 1990s, a wider L-shaped plan with a separate southeast corner storage unit that, in 2020, was permanently attached to the main structure with removal of the north and west walls. The current floor plan is basically rectangular. Green three-tab asphalt shingle covers the gabled roof (new in 2020 and replicating the original roof color) above overhanging eaves, fascia boards and exposed rafter tails. The roofline is a lower slope than is the case with earlier shanties. The building’s board and batten and vertical board siding has been painted brown since its construction. The two six-light windows on the south elevation are original. Other windows were altered for retail use during the 1970s and both windows and doors altered again during the 1990s. Unlike the other shanties, Building 8 never had a door on the south elevation facing the river. The original east-facing door was eliminated during various iterations of the east addition. Today the main entrance is to the north off “Main Street” (see Photo 2). In 2020 Biggs Construction, Kasson Contracting, and Team Elmer’s oversaw the shanty-lift project to address persistent flooding from record water levels. The building was lifted off its foundations, the failed and flooded foundation removed, and a new higher base for the building constructed. A steel retaining wall provides further protection. Utilitarian additions to the west side, all re-sided, also occurred at this time. Following this work, the building is in good condition.

Despite functional alterations over the years that supported both commercial fishing and retail use, Building 8 retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photos 2 and 12, and Figures 20 and 21.

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Figure 20, Building 8 (brown) next to former boatyard site, looking west-northwest from dam (Structure R), mid-late 1960s. Photo by Paul Serraton courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society. Figure 21, (looking west/northwest from the dam (Structure R)), Building 8 (brown) is center right, to the left of Building 9 and the riverside café of Building 11, both of which occupy the former boatyard site. June 4, 2019. Photo by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

**Building 9: Historic Name – Reflections (Dam Candy Store); circa 1969; Richard Braund; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 9 is a one-story wood frame vernacular building that rests on a concrete foundation and floor. The north elevation features two modified double-hung windows and a single swing hinge door made of vertical board. A hinged double door provides further access on the west elevation. The builder, Richard Braund, designed Building 9 to emulate historic shanties in the use of shiplap cladding, wood window casings, corner boards, a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles, overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and fascia boards. This building has been moved to a riverfront location in the fish shanty zone. It originally occupied the site of Building 10 (see Figure 22) and anchored the eastern boundary of Fishtown’s “Main Street” that runs behind the riverfront shanties. After 1977, it was moved to its present riverfront location. This new (and current) location is more in keeping with Fishtown’s historic site layout. A board and batten shed roof storage addition was built off the east elevation sometime after the move.

Building 9 exhibits minor changes consistent with its historic retail use. It is in good condition and retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. It emulates the feeling and association of the historic fishing shanties, despite being built expressly for retail use. Its move to its current location contributes to that feeling and association. Please see Photos 12 and 13 and Figures 22 and 23.

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Figure 22, (looking east), West and south elevations of Building 9 in its original location, circa early 1970s. Building 1 is to the left and the former Smokehouse F is to the right. Building 10 now rests on this location. Photo by Paul Serratori. Figure 23, Building 9 (north elevation looking south) in its current riverfront location immediately east of Building 8. Building 10, far left, now occupies the original site of Building 9. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, August 2, 2018.

**Building 10, Cheese Shop and Reflections Art Gallery (Leland Beach Company and Reflections Art Gallery); 1979; Bill Carlson and George Stevens; 1 Noncontributing Building**

Building 10's two-story wood frame rests on a concrete floor and concrete block foundation. Board and batten siding covers the exterior. The unusual trapezoid-shaped footprint and dual-level entry results from topography and lot size: the building backs into a bluff and is constructed to accommodate the grade, allowing for street access to the upper floor north elevation and pedestrian access at the lower floor west elevation (see Photo 13). Although a noncontributing building due to its 1979 construction date, the building was designed to blend with the historic vernacular buildings of the district in terms of scale and materials. Its location in the historic support and circulation zone (in the vicinity of the historic Price Ice House that once stood nearby) and its two-story height were intended to evoke the feel of a historic ice house. The building is in good condition. Please see Photos 12 and 13.

**Building 11, Fisherman's Cove Restaurant (The Cove); 1967; Roger Hummel and client Jack Hollinger, architects, with Ben Hohnke, builder, and foreman Art Bufka; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 11 is a large, irregularly-shaped concrete building with shiplap siding located on the north side of the Leland dam, across the river from another large concrete building, Falling Waters Lodge (Building 12). The two buildings anchor Fishtown's eastern boundary along the river and are connected by a narrow wooden footbridge. Both were designed in a Modernistic style by Suttons Bay architect Roger Hummel, of the firm Hummel and Arai (although changes to Building 11's design by client Jack Hollinger caused Hummel to disavow it). Their unique dam-side locations were made possible by J. Fred Hollinger's 1962 purchase of the dam (Structure R) from Consumers Power Company. As a result, a portion of Building 11 was built over bay #4 of the dam. The two-story restaurant is notable for multiple sizes and shapes of its overhanging mansard roof, clad in cedar shake and intended to complement the much smaller fishing shanties nearby. A smaller bonnet roof covers a portion of the building on the lower level. The main (upper) floor is partially cantilevered over the dam and river. Vertical shiplap

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clads the exterior, but the dominance of the roof emphasizes the cedar shake roofing. Guests enter the main entrance on the upper level from the north (West River Street side), but the orientation of the building is to the river where many rectangular windows of various sizes provide views of the water and dam. The owners of the Cove Restaurant altered the entrance and added a western two-story addition and a large bar and deck along the river, now known as Rick's Café, which sits on the site of the former Fishtown boatyard. A shed roof porch extends along a portion of the deck on the south side of the building. The northerly (main) entrance recently was altered again by an open wood porch with a central pediment. Inside, the two levels are connected by a spiral staircase, with river water running down the side. This is one of the surviving features of Hummel's design.

Building 11 is in good condition and retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photo 14 and Figures 24 and 25.



Figure 24, Building 11, looking northwest, before the additions. Photo by Glenn Garthe, mid 1970s. Figure 25, Building 11 looking northwest with Rick's Café. Photo by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio, 2019.

**Building 12, Falling Waters Lodge; 1966; Roger Hummel, architect, with Ben Hohnke, builder, and foreman Art Bufka; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 12 is a large, truncated U-shaped concrete and stucco edifice built on the south side of the Leland River Dam, across the river from Building 11. The two buildings anchor Fishtown's eastern boundary along the river and are connected by a narrow wooden footbridge. Both were designed in a Modernistic style by Suttons Bay architect Roger Hummel, of the firm Hummel and Arai. Unlike the Cove, Hummel took credit for the design of Falling Waters. Also, unlike the Cove, Falling Waters has more of a Prairie Style influence, with long, low lines that are designed to fit the contours of the site with river, bluff, and dam. Hummel chose a mansard roof (as opposed to the gabled roof type that characterizes the rest of Fishtown) to keep the building envelope lower to the ground. The cedar shake roofing was intended to complement the weathered wood exterior of the fish shanties, some also clad in cedar shingles. The roof is pierced by recessed dormers framing rectangular windows of differing size. The window type varies by the type of lodging: 12 studio apartments, 8 apartments, and a penthouse. The main

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body of the building consists of two levels, with balcony walkways facing the river. The “U” is composed of two mansard-roofed towers of different size that house third and fourth floors. On the south elevation, away from the river, the roofline comes close to the ground, due to the elevation change of the site.

In a 2010 interview, architect Roger Hummel recalled the challenges of working on the project: “You weren’t going to imitate the old Fishtown shacks, because of the scale of everything. The question was, ‘How are you going to get something of that scale on that site?’ That’s a tough site structurally.... You’ve got water percolating through the bank. You’ve got the dam.... Water’s swirling around here. It could undermine, rot the basic structure, the walls or floors, everything – could eat it right out, keep eroding.” Hummel solved the problem by constructing a coffer dam to keep the construction site dry. “We constructed grade beams out of concrete...and coming into these are concrete-filled steel pilings – tubes – driven into the soil.” The coffer dam was built on top of this grid of concrete beams and pylons. “Otherwise,” Hummel remembered, “The soil was lousy. It’s a problem to get something that’s stable and going to hold.”<sup>7</sup> During construction of the coffer dam, workers discovered the enormous wood piling from the old power house that once stood at the dam. Hummel used it to support the northwest tower.

Due to its unique location, the building needs constant maintenance. Since taking over the building in 2017, the owners have renovated the guest rooms, replaced the roof, installed new balcony railings, and replaced some windows in the original style. All original furnishings have been replaced. Building 12 is in good condition. It retains its integrity as a local example of Modernistic architecture built as Fishtown was transitioning to a tourism-based economy. This is reflected in integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Please see Photos 15 and 16, and Figures 26 and 27.



Figure 26, Building 12 under construction, north and west elevations looking south/southeast, circa 1966. Photo by Mike Brown. Figure 27, Building 12, north elevation looking southeast. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, September 26, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Hummel, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, August 26, 2010.

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**Building 13, North Manitou Ferry Line Warehouse and Post Office (Nicholas and Suzann Lederle Residence); 1928; additions 1980, 1987, 2012; Sarah Bourgeois Architects; 1 Noncontributing Building**

Building 13 is a two-story, gabled roof building that rests on steel piles. It occupies a narrow 16-foot lot and is separated from Building 12 to the east (Falling Waters Lodge) by a wooden wall and dock. The building is fronted by a narrow dock along the river's edge that continues past Buildings 14, 15, and 16 (flooded for much of 2019 and 2020 due to record high water). The roof has a narrow slope with exposed rafter tails and is covered with asphalt shingles. The building now has an assortment of window types in keeping with the shift from transportation to residential use (see Photo 18). Building 13 remained little changed from the time of its construction in 1928 until 1980. Early photographs show a one-story Dutch lap-clad building with a gabled roof. It was painted white (see Figure 28). The current building retains the first story framing, parts of the east wall, and original weathered Dutch lap cladding on the remaining portions of the 1928 building. In 1980 several significant changes: a rear bathroom addition and covering over the eastside door in 1980; and in 1987 a second floor that overhangs the original building on the river side (see Photo 15). Another major addition in 2012, designed by Sarah Bourgeois Architects of Traverse City, more than doubled the original footprint to the rear (south). Although the 2012 addition is clad in cedar shingle to complement other Fishtown buildings, the envelope is radically changed (see Photo 18 and Figure 29). Building 13 was classified as a contributing resource in 1975. Although it remains compatible in terms of materials and location, Building 13 is now classified as a noncontributing resource because its subsequent second story additions negatively impact integrity (see Site Map). Due to recent flooding, the lower level is in fair condition. The upper levels are in good condition. Please also see Photos 15 and 16.



Figure 28, Building 13, looking southeast, still in its original one-story condition, circa 1960. Photo courtesy of Leelanau County Historical Society. Figure 29, Rear of Building 13 looking north, showing the post-1980 additions. Photo was taken while adjacent Building 14 was lifted off its foundation for repair. Photo by Evan Hall, August 20, 2020.

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**Building 14, Smith-Buckler Shanty (Morris Shanty); circa 1904-05, 1910s, 1928, 2007-08, 2020; likely William W. Smith Jr. and William Buckler; Curt Richter and Easling Construction; Biggs Construction; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 14 is a resource associated with ongoing traditional cultural practices and the southside shanty most emblematic of the Fishtown aesthetic of continuity and change: parts of it have been moved and/or re-combined at least twice. The shanty retains an original door and central square window from the earlier shanty that was moved across the river and reconfigured into Building 14 during the 1910s (see Figure 11). By the 1920s the entire building was clad in cedar shake, a characteristic that endures. Perhaps the most important character-defining feature is the different colored shingles in the center, the result of one of Fishtown’s more creative building adaptations. In 1928 fisherman Will Buckler – who then owned Building 14 – cut the shanty in two, and in Buckler’s words, “put a piece in between to make it a little bigger”<sup>8</sup> (see Figure 30).

Building 14 retains its riverfront appearance as a one-story wood frame shanty. The building is oriented with the gable ends facing east/west and the longer elevation fronting the river – a site placement typical to shanties located on the river's south side. The doors are the wooden shed type typical to Fishtown. Green three-tab asphalt shingles cover the roof, with exposed rafter tails at the underside of the overhang. A wood fascia board exists at the overhang with wood rake boards on the gable ends. A small addition projects from a portion of the south elevation, its roof connecting to and extending from the main roof. During the 1940s, fishermen replaced the original brick chimney with metal and added a window to the north elevation. Fisherman Ross Lang enlarged the window during the 1980s and during the mid-1980s added a secondary floor because of high water. In 2007, the building underwent maintenance repairs by Easling Construction with Curt Richter as foreman. The central shed behind the south elevation, present at least by the 1970s, was incorporated into the roofline during re-roofing work. Other work included shoring up structural weaknesses; adding a new roof to maintain the historic “sag” in the roofline; replacing rotting shingles on all but the middle section; replacing window jams; and rewiring by Young Electric.

Building 14 became the second in Fishtown to undergo a historic “lift” to address record high water levels and flooding. The floor had been underwater since 2019. Biggs Construction, Kasson Contracting, and Team Elmer’s oversaw the project. During the autumn 2020 lift, the shanty had to be separated from its floor and foundation. Boards were salvaged where possible. The shanty was replaced on new, higher pilings after repairs to the damage. It is now in good condition.

Building 14 is the “poster shanty” for commercial fishermen’s creative alterations, moves, and adaptations. Despite this – or perhaps because of it – the shanty has a high degree of integrity. Building 14 retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Figures 30, 31, and 32, and Photos 15, 16, 18, and 24.

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<sup>8</sup> Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1991.

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Figure 30 (looking southeast), Building 14 with the center portion added by Will Bucker in 1928 after cutting his shanty in two. Building 13 is visible to the far left. Photo by Erhardt Peters, 1930s, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 31, Building 14 looking south, after the 2020 lift. (Building 15 is just visible to the rear, still lifted off its original site.) Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, December 27, 2020.



Figure 32, Interior of Building 14 (looking west) is remarkably unchanged and retains its historic commercial fishing use. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, February 2018.

**Building 15, Cook and Brown Shanty (The Otherside); 1903, 2000 (remodeled); George Cook and Marvin Brown, remodel architect David Hanawalt, with builders Bill Wright and Jeff Houdek; 1 Contributing Building**

This vernacular two-story wooden shanty is clad in white cedar shingles with rake board trim and corner boards. The foundation is a combination of wood pilings and steel posts on concrete footings on the river side and a concrete pad on the other side. The gabled roof has a normal slope, exposed rafter tails, and four dormers inserted to create more space on the second floor – three on the north elevation and one on the south. It is covered in black architectural asphalt shingle. All windows are contemporary replacements with false divided lights. There are multiple sets of French doors and, on the west facade, one aluminum screen door. There is also a large wood deck with steel pipe balustrade that has been added to the south facade for access to the second floor. In keeping with the building's historic commercial fishing use, fishermen made

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alterations as the need arose. The earliest photographic evidence shows shiplap cladding, a chimney located near the peak of the east gable end (removed by the early 1920s) and, on the south elevation, a central door with one square six-pane window to the right. By 1907, photographic evidence suggests that fishermen Cook and Brown covered the original shiplap siding with cedar shakes (see Photo 3). During the 1910s, an addition on the west elevation served as an ice house. By 1920, this addition was removed in conjunction with the construction of neighboring Building 16, which had its own ice house in the eastern half. From the 1940s-1960s, fishermen working out of the shanty altered windows and doors to make the building more functional. When Carlson Properties acquired the shanty in 1977, the building was in poor condition. Jim VerSnyder repaired the rotten flooring and almost lost the building in the river during the process. "I had it jacked up on the railroad jack," he recalled. "I had it all up where I wanted it, and there was quite a bit of water at that time, and the whole thing started shifting toward the river. And the big old box elder tree up behind there, I put a chain on it...and straightened it up."<sup>9</sup>

The major change, however, came between 2000 and 2001, when Carlson Properties hired Suttons Bay architect David Hanawalt to develop plans to remodel the former fish shanty into vacation rental units. When Hanawalt began the project, the building was in poor to fair condition. The roof was caving in, and the roofline was in a "whaleback" shape. Hanawalt tried unsuccessfully to persuade the builders to replicate this curve in the renovations. The interior of the building originally had a second story loft composed of rafters and joists that extended the length of the building. The loft was used for storage and drying nets. Hanawalt designed the remodel to keep within the original building envelope: doors and windows are new but in their original locations. New cedar shake siding emulates the longstanding cladding used on the building. The most significant changes are the addition of dormers (intended to replicate the ice house motif on neighboring Building 16) to both the north and south elevations, and the addition of a deck and stairway on the south elevation. The original loft is now a second floor. Builders Bill Wright and Jeff Houdek made the dormers bigger than called for in Hanawalt's plans.<sup>10</sup> During the remodel, the original roof was removed and replaced by a new one with the dormers. The exterior core of original shanty remains (please see Figure 34).

The shanty was lifted in fall 2020 to address buckled, moldy, and rotted floors caused by flooding from record high water and seiches. As with other shanty-lifts and repairs, Biggs Construction, Kasson Contracting, and Team Elmer's oversaw the project. Building 15, previously in poor condition, will be in good condition once the shanty is relocated on its original site and repairs completed.

Even though the building has lost some architectural integrity with the addition of dormers, it retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association through footprint, scale, proportions, and cedar shake siding. It remains integral to the overall integrity of the district. See Photos 3, 16, and 21, and Figures 33 and 34.

<sup>9</sup> Jim VerSnyder interviewed by Laurie Sommers, May 25, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> David Hanawalt phone conversation with Laurie Sommers, June 29, 2010.

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Figure 33, (rom left looking southwest), Buildings 14, 15, and 16. On the right is one of the Price shanties that was demolished to build Building 8. Photo by Janice Fisher, early 1950s. Figure 34, Building 15 during the 2000-2001 remodel, looking southeast. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society.

**Building 16, Price and Carlson Shanty (Hall Shanty); circa 1918 (original construction), 1956-early 2000s (remodeling/repairs); Warren Price, Hall Family, Biggs Construction; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 16 is a one-and-one-half story vernacular wood shanty that rests on wood pilings and a concrete block foundation. Like the other southside shanties, Building 16's longer elevation parallels the river. The gabled roof is covered in green three-tab asphalt shingles with wood fascia board at the overhang, exposed rafter tails at the underside of the overhang, and wood rake boards on the gable ends. Two different types of wood siding clad the building: the east elevation has both clapboard and cedar shake, while the north, west, and south elevations have clapboard with corner boards. Several of the windows are salvaged and reused, while others are contemporary replacements that mimic the older windows' mullion patterns. There are several types of doors. The north facade retains the historic shed door from its shanty days. The east wall contains a pair of contemporary double doors, and the south door is eclectic in nature. A wood-framed canopy and balcony exists over the west doors, interpreting the historic canopies that at one time occurred on other shanties (see Figure 18). The most important character-defining features are the dormers on the eastern half of the north and south elevations that date to historic use as an ice house.

The earliest photo of Building 16, circa 1918-early 1920s, shows painted clapboard cladding with wood window casings, corner boards, and fascia boards painted in a contrasting color. The rear ice house dormer is barely visible (see Figure 35 with Building 16 far right). The building remained little changed until its purchase by William F. Hall in 1956. When his son Charlie Hall first saw the shanty, "The floor was completely missing and the thing was falling in the river... He [Bill Hall] went and found one of the local building kind of guys...They went out in the county and found abandoned barns and brought the wood back [to repair the shanty], and they righted it. The first thing they did was jack it up and put new pilings under it. They did it in the same traditional way that all the other village pieces were all done. You water jack and air jet up

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a [cedar] piling in, right it, and lock it together with a cross piece, and lay your floor on it and start to build up from there.”<sup>11</sup> Hall preserved as much wood as possible from the old ice house portion. The doors were rebuilt to look like the originals. Charlie Hall recalled that his father also added two large sash windows on the north and south elevations and replaced the ice house shutters with windows. From the 1970s through the early 2000s, the Halls added a balcony to west, double doors on the west elevation, and new windows, including in the location of the original ice house openings. Biggs Construction did work during the 1990s, including reinforcement underneath, electrical, and replacement windows. The current building features a deck extending west toward the lake (see Photo 16, 17, and 21, and Figures 35 and 36). Due to recent flooding, the building is in fair condition.

Despite its change in use, Building 16 retains integrity of location, design, setting, (some) materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, especially with the former ice house dormers. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district.



Figure 35, Building 16, far right, looking east, circa 1918-early 1920s. Courtesy Leelanau County Historical Society.  
Figure 36, *Joy* in front of Building 16, looking south/southeast. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 2019.

### **Building 17, Shed; prior to late 1960s; unknown builder; 1 Contributing Building**

Building 17 is a modest vernacular shed with exposed rafter tails under the overhang of the hipped roof. It rests on concrete blocks and features horizontal shiplap siding and various styles of window, some likely added later. There is a hinged wood door on the west elevation. Building 17 is in poor condition but retains integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photo 18.

### **Building 18, Shed; 2016; Ken Richmond, architect with builders Brian Price and volunteers; 1 Noncontributing Building**

This one-story board and batten shed with an overhanging corrugated metal roof was designed by architect Ken Richmond of Traverse City as storage for equipment in active use by the

<sup>11</sup> Charlie Hall, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, June 28, 2010.

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commercial fishing operation. It sits along West Avenue A in the back of Fishtown's south side in what was traditionally the support and circulation zone. It is in excellent condition. Please see Figure 37.



Figure 37, Building 18, looking northwest along West Avenue A toward Buildings 15 and 16. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 2020.

### **Structure A (smokehouse); 2013-14; HopkinsBurns architects with Easling Construction; 1 Contributing Structure**

Structure A is one of two active smokehouses in Fishtown. Two smokehouses also were mentioned in the 1975 National Register nomination in roughly the same locations: behind Buildings 5 and 6 (A) and between Buildings 7 and 8 (F). Structure A is constructed of poured concrete with steel smoke chambers and doors (previous smokehouses had wooden doors). It abuts a storage building. The structure rests on concrete slab and has a 4-inch reinforced concrete slab roof. Structure A is the larger of the two, with double quarter-inch thick fire chamber doors and a smaller adjoining fire chamber, the latter used for smoking turkeys. HopkinsBurns, in consultation with workers at Carlson's Fishery, adapted design features of the previous smokehouse in this location built by fishermen Jim VerSnyder and Bill Carlson. The Carlson/VerSnyder design differed from older smokehouses on site. After Structure A's completion, VerSnyder extended the chimneys to improve the draw. Structure A is not historic and, like its predecessors, will be replaced at some point. What is important, however, is that smokehouses remain in Fishtown to continue their role in supporting traditional cultural practices. Smokehouse A is integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. It is in good condition. Please see Photo 19 and Figures 38 and 39.

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Figure 38. Predecessor double smokehouse to Structure A, looking northwest. Jim VerSnyder, left, and Alan Priest remove racks of smoked fish from structure built by VerSnyder and Bill Carlson. Photo by Laurie Sommers, summer 2010. Figure 39, Smokehouse A looking north. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 4, 2020.

**Structure F (smokehouse); 2013-14; Easling Construction; 1 Contributing Structure**

Structure F is one of two active smokehouses in Fishtown. Two smokehouses also were mentioned in the 1975 National Register nomination in roughly the same locations: behind Buildings 5 and 6 (A) and between Buildings 7 and 8 (F). Of the two, Smokehouse F is more like the historic smokehouses of Fishtown with its concrete block construction. It has a steel smoke chamber and door and abuts a storage building. (Previous smokehouses had wooden doors.) Structure F rests on a concrete slab and has a 4-inch reinforced concrete slab roof. It is not historic and, like its predecessors, will be replaced at some point. What is important, however, is that smokehouses remain in Fishtown to continue their role in supporting traditional cultural practices. Smokehouse F is integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. It is in good condition. Please see Figures 40 and 41.



Figure 40, Fishtown's "Main Street," looking west with earlier concrete block smokehouses in the vicinity of Structure F built by Steffens-Stallman in the 1960s. Building 1 is in the right foreground. Photo by Paul Serratoni, 1970s. Figure 41, Fishtown's "Main Street" looking east. From left, Building 1, Building 10 (center), Building 8, Smokehouse F (concrete block). Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, October 9, 2020.

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**Structure L, Mishe-Mokwa ferry (Manitou Island Transit)<sup>12</sup> ; 1963; Official Number 292688; J.W. Nolan and Sons, Inc.; 1 Contributing Structure**

The steel-hulled *Mishe-Mokwa* measures 61.9 feet long, 17.33 feet wide, and 11 feet deep. The vessel weighs 49 gross tons and 33 net tons. She features a tall forward pilot house, interior passenger seating with a row of windows on both starboard and port sides, open-air seating on the top deck surrounded by handrails, and a diesel engine. Longtime captain Mike Grosvenor described the characteristics of the *Mishe-Mokwa*: “it was built narrow, for economy and for its head sea-ability. They tried to make up for that by having a different hull design. In the back – the further back you go – the more the chine goes backward, so the bottom of the boat is a deep ‘V’, but it’s got kind of a ‘W’ shape to it. So, when it tends to roll, those indentations were meant to scoop in and stabilize the boat.”<sup>13</sup> The builder of *Mishe-Mokwa*, J.W. Nolan and Sons of Erie, Pennsylvania, crafted a variety of fishing, excursion, and cargo boats from the 1940s to 1984. The *Mishe-Mokwa*’s steel hull has the sleek lines characteristic of the Nolan and Son’s excursion boats from the 1960s, many with similar designs. “Nolan boats were characterized by long steel panels that could be bent and welded simultaneously.”<sup>14</sup>

The vessel is in good condition and retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains integral to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Figure 42 and Photo 20.



Figure 42, (from left looking northwest), Structure L (Mishe-Mokwa), unidentified charter boats, Building 3, Building 4, Building 5. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 5, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> *Patricia*, Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, Bowling Green State University <https://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/item/439334>)

<sup>13</sup> Mike Grosvenor interviewed by Daniel Stewart, October 9, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> David Frew, *Dreams Afloat, A Pictorial History of the Nolans & Erie Boat Building*. Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie County Historical Society (2007): 72.

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**Structure M, *Joy* (M.1), skiff *Titanic* (M.2) and new skiff (M.3) (Fishtown Preservation trap net boat); 1981; Official Number 646089; Ross Lang and George Stevens (*Joy* and *Titanic*); New Skiff; 2012; Joel Petersen and Geoff Niessink; 3 Contributing Structures**

The *Joy* (M.1) is a locally built steel-hulled trap net vessel and one of two working fishing boats operating out of Fishtown. The vessel when new weighed fifteen gross tons and ten net tons. Her significance as a structure less than fifty years of age is addressed in Part 8. The *Joy* is a typical trap net boat in terms of design. When launched she measured 40.3 feet long, 12 feet wide, and 3.2 feet deep. Trap-netters have a long open deck between the pilot house and the stern to facilitate retrieval of the “pot” or entrapment section of the net. The low sides also make it easier to set and lift nets. The *Joy* has splash guards at the bow, a black rub rail separating the white and green paint of her hull, five scuppers on each side, and handrails below and on top of the pilot house. When launched in 1982, she had a 275-horsepower turbo-charged diesel engine, a pilot house paneled with cedar ceilings to reduce moisture, carpeting to reduce engine noise in the pilot house, and a 24-inch propeller.

When FPS acquired the *Joy* as part of their 2007 purchase, she had been inactive since 2003. Recognizing the importance of keeping working boats in Fishtown, FPS raised funds for restoration of both the *Joy* and *Janice Sue* by Manitou Boatworks and Engineering in nearby Northport, Michigan. In 2008, Mark Nugent, owner, and Ryan Valerio, his “steel specialist,” surveyed the boats for mechanical, electrical, structural and safety issues and recommended improvements to the existing support structures. Work was done at the Northport Bay Boatyard between 2008 and 2009. Pro-Tech Environmental and Construction Services of Grand Rapids was hired to sandblast the metal hull. Geoff Niessink (grandson of Manitou Ferry captain Tracy Grosvenor) did the steel structural work, adding more structural supports and replacing sections of the one-eighth-inch steel that had rusted thin. In the spring of 2009, the *Joy* returned to fishing.<sup>15</sup>

More work has occurred since, in keeping with FPS’s philosophy that “this is a working boat that needs to adapt.”<sup>16</sup> In 2010, workers removed and then re-installed the engine in its proper position. Niessink and Joel Petersen (current captain of the *Joy*) replaced the original steel hatches, which are awkward and dangerous for the fishermen to use, with larger, aluminum ones, and moved the engine ahead two inches to allow for at least a half inch of clearance between the hull and the lowest point of the engine. The pilot house wood interior is basically intact. The original captain's chair was placed in storage, and a bench seat was installed to accommodate up to three fishermen. Another alteration occurred in 2015, when the *Joy*’s sides were raised one foot to increase stability. When the *Joy* came out of the water, she also received a new propeller and new motor for the net-lifting hydraulics. Periodic maintenance continues by Niessink and Petersen.

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication from Amanda Holmes and Al Parker, “Leland Loves Iconic Fishing Tug,” *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, September 7, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Amanda Holmes, electronic mail correspondence with Laurie Sommers, March 10, 2010.

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Crews of trap-netters also use a skiff when setting (putting the nets out) and pulling (retrieving) nets. Skiffs are replaced periodically, unlike the trap net boats. The *Joy's* skiff (M.3) was built in 2012 by Joel Petersen and Geoff Niessink to replace the *Titanic* made by Ross Lang and George Stevens in 1981 (see Figure 43). Lang had been in the *Titanic* at the time of his fatal accident in 1998. The *Titanic* (M.2) has a welded steel hull with a rub rail along the sides and a notched bow. When active she had a rear-mounted outboard motor along the squared stern. Compared with the current skiff, the *Titanic* has a shallower draft, and fishermen had to kneel to use her. Although FPS still owns the *Titanic*, the current crew found her heavy, unwieldy, and dangerous. The new welded steel skiff follows Joel Petersen's family design. It measures fifteen feet long and four feet and eight inches wide and features a flat deck with no ribs; flat bottom and nose; pointed bow; rub rail; high sides (twenty-six inches to the top of the pipe at the gunwales) and stern; and motor placement in the well for easy access to the propeller.<sup>17</sup>

The *Joy* retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Changes are in keeping with her role as a resource associated with traditional cultural practices. She remains essential to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Both the *Joy* and her skiff are in good condition. The *Titanic* is in fair condition. Please see Figures 43 and 44, and Photos 16, 21, and 22.



Figure 43, Structures M.1 and M.2 (*Joy* and the skiff *Titanic*) in Fishtown when new, 1980s, looking south in front of Building 14. Ross Lang drowned in 1998 when the skiff flipped in an accident. It is no longer used. Photo courtesy of *Joy* Lang Anderson. Figure 44, (looking northeast), New skiff (M.3) pulled up on the river's south bank just west of Building 16, with the *Joy* (M.1) in the background. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, March 18, 2021.

**Structure N, *Janice Sue* (Fishtown Preservation gill net boat); 1958; Official Number 277009<sup>18</sup>; James Derusha of Marinette Marine Corporation, Marinette, WI (hull); Louis Steffens, Leland, MI (cabin); 1 Contributing Structure**

<sup>17</sup> Amanda Holmes, "A New Skiff for the *Joy*, an Interview with Geoff Niessink." *Fishtown Preservation Society Newsletter*, vol. 6 n. 1 (Summer 2012) 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Janice Sue*, Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, Bowling Green State University <https://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/item/436011>

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The *Janice Sue* features a raised pilot house on the square stern, a design typical of recent-generation steel hull gill net tugs. She measures 37.8 feet in length, 12.4 feet in width, and 4.6 feet in depth, with a weight of twenty-two gross tons and fourteen net tons. Her specific hull design is characteristic of the maker, James Derusha of Marinette Marine Corporation, Marinette, Wisconsin. The *Fishing Gazette* reported that the *Janice Sue* and her sister boat, *Mary Ann*, had the first full skeg design used in the region, allowing the fishermen to work closer to their nets for a longer period without rolling and drifting.<sup>19</sup> Other features include splash guards at the bow, rub rail separating the steel hull from the wood cabin, porthole windows on port and bow sides, and rectangular windows and gangway door on the pilot house.

As remembered by nephew Glenn Garthe, Louis Steffens constructed the cabin in the tradition of the old wooden fish tugs, “with oak frames for the cabin, cedar siding and roof decking, and then he tar-papered and tarred the roof.”<sup>20</sup> Gill-netters are designed with enclosed cabins so that fishermen are protected from the elements and can stay overnight if necessary. The cabin is very much a working space, open from stern to bow, with features typical to gill net tugs, including a stove to provide needed warmth during cold weather, a Crossley net lifter, and a lifting table for removing fish from the nets and dressing them during the trip back to port (see Figure 47). There are two wheels, one in the pilot house and another at the lifter door.

The *Janice Sue* has been repaired and adapted to maintain her functionality as a working fish tug. During the mid-1970s, for example, Carlson’s Fisheries built a new fiberglass cabin. She was completely restored in 2008 and 2009 to return her to usable condition: internal electrical work; new navigation system; and hydraulics repaired in the turning mechanism. Other major work included “three coats of epoxy to the hull, a new fuel tank, rebuilding the turbocharger, and repair to the wooden cabin, including replacement of the cabin windows and some of the portholes. High-capacity bilge pumps replaced the existing gasoline-powered pump.” Mark Nugent, owner of Northport’s Manitou Boatworks and Engineering, and Ryan Valerio his “steel specialist,” surveyed the boats for mechanical, electrical, structural and safety issues. The Boat Doctors of Frankfort completed repairs and the vessel sailed to the nearby Northport Bay Boatyard, where Geoff Niessink did the restoration. Pro-Tech Environmental and Construction Services of Grand Rapids was hired to sandblast the metal hull.<sup>21</sup> The *Janice Sue* resumed fishing in spring 2009.

Repairs have been ongoing. In 2011, the exterior was re-painted, and interior paint and flaking rust was sanded. The original ballast rocks were removed and replaced. In 2019, Geoff Niessink repaired the cabin, retaining most of the original oak framing and replacing the rotted wood areas with marine-grade plywood. The *Janice Sue* is currently stored in Arcadia, Michigan and is undergoing maintenance by Joel Petersen. Her pre-maintenance condition was fair.

The *Janice Sue* retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Changes are in keeping with her role as a resource associated with ongoing

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<sup>19</sup> “Two New Great Lakes Fish Tugs,” *Fishing Gazette*, April, 1959, pp. 94D and 94E

<sup>20</sup> Glenn Garthe, interviewed by Amanda Holmes, November 15, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> *Fishtown Preservation Society Newsletter*, Summer 2009.

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traditional cultural practices. She remains essential to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Figures 45, 46, and 47, and Photos 22 and 23.



Figure 45, Structure N's (*Janice Sue*'s) first voyage in October, 1958, looking southwest. Photo courtesy of Marilyn Stallman. Figure 46, *Janice Sue* moored in front of Building 14, facing southwest. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, August 18, 2016.



Figure 47, Structure N, *Janice Sue*, interior with lifting table and mechanical lifter. Photo by Laurie K. Sommers, October, 2017.

**Structure O (south docks); construction date unknown with periodic repairs, most recently in 2020; unknown commercial fishermen, Biggs Construction, Team Elmer's, Kasson Contracting (2020); 1 Contributing Structure**

There have been docks along the river in Fishtown since the first shanties were built. As Fishtown grew, the length of the docks grew also, with different sections constructed by fishermen in front of each shanty, often with different widths. The current docks are built of timber beams and joists, with local hemlock decking supported by cedar piles. The decking is irregular. The south dock is narrower than its northerly counterpart (although historically this

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wasn't the case). The docks on the south side end with Building 16. Dock framing lasts 30-50 years, but decking is more ephemeral, requiring periodic replacement. During the current high water, parts of Structure O have been under water with other portions in poor condition. After the shanty-lift of Building 14, FPS repaired the frontage dock by salvaging existing wood where possible. Replacement wood is of the same type as the original, including boards from FPS's stash of locally milled hemlock. Team Elmer's drove the piles, Kasson Contracting did the cross-bracing, and Biggs Construction did the framing and decking. Structure O retains integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. As structures that support traditional cultural activity, the docks remain essential to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photos 1, 4, 15, 16, and Figures 30, 43, 48, and 49.



Figure 48. Structure O (south dock) and Structure P (north dock), looking west, late 1930s. Postcard courtesy of Traverse Area Historical Society. Figure 49. Structure O (south dock) and Structure P (north dock), looking west. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, March 2019.

**Structure P (north docks); construction date unknown; unknown commercial fishermen, Jim VerSnyder and Bill Carlson (mid-1980s); 1 Contributing Structure**

There have been docks along the river in Fishtown since the first shanties were built. As Fishtown grew, the length of the docks grew also, with different sections constructed by fishermen in front of each shanty, often with different widths. The north dock is longer (approximately 200 feet) and wider on the east half; it also is wider overall than its southern counterpart. This longer length dates to the 1920s and the construction of Buildings 5.1 and 5.2. Fishermen raised Structure P during the high water of the mid-1980s. Dock framing lasts 30-50 years, but decking is more ephemeral, requiring periodic replacement. The current docks are built of timber beams and joists, with local hemlock decking supported by cedar piles. The decking is irregular. It is in poor condition. Structure P retains integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. As structures that support traditional cultural activity, docks remain essential to the overall historic and architectural integrity of the district. Please see Photos 1, 5, 11, 12, and Figures 48 and 49.

**Site Q, Carp River (Leland River); 1 Contributing Site**

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The Leland (historically Carp) River is an important circulation network for working and recreational vessels. It is also the natural feature that defines Fishtown both visually and spatially. Structures L, M, and N — all vessels — dock in the river, and the district’s buildings and structures cluster along both its banks. The river at Fishtown is the lower course of the Leland River that flows approximately .9 miles from Lake Leelanau to Lake Michigan. The Fishtown portion (below the dam) averages forty feet in width and four hundred feet in length from Structure R at Fishtown’s eastern boundary to its mouth at Lake Michigan and Leland Harbor to the west. The river bed is primarily sand, and its banks are lined with wooden docks (Structures O and P); Manitou Transit’s ferry slip and parking; and natural riverbank just west of Building 16 on the south shore. The river has changed over time. The earliest written descriptions come from Bela Hubbard, who visited the shore of what is now Fishtown as part of the 1838 Michigan Geological Survey. According to Hubbard, the clear, shallow river – just thirty feet wide at its mouth – ran swiftly into Lake Michigan, falling fifteen feet from its source in Carp Lake [now Lake Leelanau] to its outlet in the big lake.<sup>22</sup> The river has been dammed near the site of current Structure R since 1853, when early Leland settler Antoine Manseau and his son built a dam and sawmill. After the 1870 construction of the ironworks on the river’s north side, the iron company reshaped the river to accommodate industrial use, building a flume and channel to the main ironworks buildings on the north side (see Figure 8). After 1900 and the emergence of the fishing village, the flume and channel disappeared, and the river banks became lined with shanties, docks, and ice houses. The area just west of the dam was enlarged for a boat turnaround in the otherwise narrow channel (see Figure 9). The river has since shifted somewhat in width and length due to erosion and lake levels, but its basic configuration follows the outlines established during the peak commercial fishing period of the early 1900s to the 1940s. As a site that supports traditional cultural activity, the river is a key character-defining feature that contributes to the district’s integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Please see Photos 1, 3, 12, and 22, and Figures 48 and 49.

**Structure R, Leland River Dam; 2006-2007; 2019 (safety repairs); A. Rieli & Associate, LLC of Highland, Michigan (2006-2007 rebuilding design); 1 Noncontributing Structure**

A dam has anchored the eastern boundary of Fishtown from Leland’s founding to the present. The current structure is situated on the site of historic rapids in the Carp (now Leland) River. The present concrete and metal structure is a “high hazard” dam measuring 60 feet long by 50 feet wide. High water in 2020 flooded the control room and necessitated repairs. Also added were a remote greasing system and mechanical interlock to protect the occupational health of the operations staff. Regular inspection and maintenance mean that the dam is in good condition. Because little or no historic construction material remains, this is not a historic structure and hence is listed as noncontributing; however, a dam and waterfall in this general location are essential to the district’s historic landscape character and integrity. Please see Photos 1, 14, and 15, and Figures 50 and 51.

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<sup>22</sup> Bela Hubbard Papers, 1814-1896, July 4, 1838 in Box 1, Survey Notebook 2, Field Notebooks May 19-July 24, 1838, Peninsula Coast Survey, Detroit to Chicago, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Joseph Littell. *Leland, An Historical Sketch*. Leland: The Print Shop, reprint 1959 of 1920 original. 4-5.

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Figure 50, (looking east), the old Powerhouse, dam, and fish ladder, circa 1920s. Unknown photographer, courtesy of Leelanau County Historical Society. Figure 51, Structure R looking east. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, October 30, 2018.

## **INTEGRITY**

Fishtown retains historic integrity in four important ways. First, the district exhibits integrity of setting and location. The river's commercial function as a fishing and ferry port has meant that Fishtown's footprint evolved in relation to it. The proximity to Lake Michigan is also key to landscape integrity. Fishtown developed at the confluence of the river and the lake with access to fishing grounds and the historic communities of the Manitou Islands. Lake Michigan's changing and often punishing weather conditions contributed to the weathered, rugged appearance that characterizes Fishtown's historic fishing shanties and ferry buildings.

Second, the district retains integrity of workmanship and materials. Local fishermen built most of the historic resources on the site, using local materials. They were simple, functional buildings that were not intended to last for decades, but – miraculously – they have. The weathered wood cladding is a defining feature. Most of Fishtown is comprised of simple one- and two-story wood frame buildings that feature the following components: gabled roofs covered with wood shingles, asphalt roll, or asphalt shingles; board and batten, Dutch lap, shiplap, or cedar shake exterior cladding; overhanging eaves – some above fascia board or exposed rafter tails; simple square or rectangular windows framed by wooden window casings; corner boards; and shed doors (some now replaced with various modern doors) and, historically, a door on front (river side) and opposite side of each shanty. Many shanties retain this latter feature. Buildings constructed after 1960 emulated the scale and wood cladding of earlier structures. The exceptions are the two large Modernistic architect-designed concrete buildings that frame the eastern boundary on either side of the dam. Their cedar shingle roofs were intended to complement the look of the historic shanties.

Third, Fishtown exhibits integrity of association and feeling of a historic Great Lakes commercial fishing village. This is due in large part to the continuing presence of resources that support traditional cultural practices in the working waterfront, and to the essential role of former

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fishery buildings in providing visual continuity with Fishtown's commercial fishing heyday. Although most buildings are now adaptively reused for low impact commerce and tourism – with restaurant, deli, lodging, and specialty shops – great care has been taken retain the character-defining features of Fishtown and to preserve its historic working waterfront.

Fourth and finally, the Fishtown Historic District Traditional Cultural Property retains integrity of use for those resources that support ongoing traditional cultural practices. Fishtown reflects fishermen's adaptations to the changing technologies, consumer demands, and state regulations governing Michigan's commercial fishery. These adaptations are key to Fishtown's ongoing significance as a working waterfront. As a result, Fishtown exemplifies both continuity and change. Buildings have been constantly repaired or even replaced due to the ravages of weather, ice, seiches, and shifting lake levels. Ad hoc maintenance is the norm. Throughout Fishtown's history, fierce storms destroyed piers and made buildings – especially those closest to Lake Michigan – vulnerable to damage and destruction, necessitating constant repairs to exterior cladding, docks, spiles, and especially roofs. While Fishtown's site configuration has remained constant, its footprint has changed significantly. Within this dynamic landscape, fishermen built vernacular wood structures they could move, repair, and replace as needed.

### **Moved Resources**

Fishermen have a make-do, do-it-yourself approach to their work environment. They have moved buildings to the site and within the site, in one case reportedly sliding a shanty across the river on poles during the early twentieth century. Shanties were joined, rebuilt, jacked up, and torn down. This is part of the aesthetic and utilitarian function of a working waterfront.

Buildings 1, 5, 9, and 14 have been moved. Buildings 5 and 14 support ongoing traditional cultural practices associated with the maritime history area of significance. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Building 5 became a combination of two historic shanties, originally located side-by-side. One of the two – the historic Maleski Shanty (5.1) – had been empty. It was gifted to the Carlsons (owners of neighboring shanty 5.2), moved, and joined to the north elevation of 5.2. According to Mike Grosvenor, his grandfather, Tracy, "gave Gordy [Gordon] Carlson his shanty, and they skidded it up and moved it across to where the Carlson shanty is now (5.2) and joined them together for more space."<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, Building 14 incorporated another shanty that was moved across the river on poles before 1915. Oral accounts and photo documentation suggest that sometime between 1909-1912, fisherman William W. Smith, Jr., then working out of a shanty directly across from present-day Building 14, moved the building across the river. Early fisherman William Buckler witnessed this feat first-hand, and the account was passed down to his son Roy and grandson, Terry: "It used to sit on the north side of the river. It was slid across on poles, probably straight across, so said my father."<sup>24</sup> The long-standing gap between Buildings 7 and 8, the site where Smith's

<sup>23</sup> Mike Grosvenor, interviewed by Daniel Stewart, October 9, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Terry Buckler's history of Fishtown buildings, in handwritten notes by M. Hadjisky, 4 May 1999. The story is also related in *Lee-Land Views* (Summer 1984), a newsletter of Carlson's Fishery researched by Dawn Carlson (now

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shanty likely stood, lends further credence to the account. Photographic evidence indicates that, after the move, the shanty was turned ninety degrees so that the longer elevation was parallel to the river, as is the case today, and an addition was built to the west (see Figure 11).



Figure 11 (looking west), Fishing village at Leland circa early 1910s with the ferry Lawrence moored to the right and newly moved Building 14 second from left. Building 15, third from left, has an ice house addition to the west. Postcard courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

National Register Bulletin 38, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, underscores that, “where a property is intrinsically portable, however, moving it does not destroy its significance, provided it remains located in a historically appropriate setting.” In this case, the buildings remain within a historically appropriate setting.

Buildings 1 and 9 also represent fishermen’s ideas of appropriate use of the site, although in different ways. Building 1, the Historic Henry Steffens Net Shed (circa 1926), is the oldest surviving net shed in Fishtown. It was turned ninety degrees during the 1960s, part of fishermen-driven conversion of former (often abandoned) commercial fishing buildings to retail use. The move – more a rotation on the same site – kept the building within the historic support and circulation zone. Building 9 was built for the Steffens-Stallman family of commercial fishermen in 1969 as the first new “shanty” to house retail for Fishtown’s emerging tourist trade. After the Carlsons acquired the building in 1977, it was moved to its current riverfront location to be more in keeping with the historic site configuration. Bill Carlson recalled in a 2007 interview:

When I bought the property, this [the location] didn’t look right. It looked like somebody dropped it out of an airplane...So I took it, put it on rollers, and we pushed it over there. We put a foundation down, and we towed it, and we blocked and tackled, and got it over there, and put it where the old Price building was [historic shanty demolished in the 1950s].<sup>25</sup>

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Fisher): “Originally on the north side of the river, this shanty was moved to the south side of the river by William Smith, who fished until 1919 and sold to William Buckler, a long time fisherman in the area.”

<sup>25</sup> Bill Carlson, interviewed by Amanda Holmes, August 9, 2007.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MARITIME HISTORY  
COMMERCE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1903-Present

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1903

1928

1966

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Please see continuation page

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Fishtown Historic District is significant as a Traditional Cultural Property under National Register Criterion A with the themes of maritime history and commerce at the state level of significance. Fishtown is a rare surviving Great Lakes commercial fishing village that preserves the history and vernacular architecture of Michigan's important and endangered commercial fishing heritage. The district is more than buildings and structures, however. Fishtown is also a cultural landscape. Its intimate character derives from the clustering of structures along both banks of its defining feature – the Leland River. The river in turn serves as a gateway to Lake Michigan fishing grounds and the Manitou Islands. It has been shaped by patterns of land use that reflect traditional occupational and social activities of commercial fishermen and fish processors. As a working waterfront, the district includes resources still associated with the commercial fishery. Fishtown is also locally significant under Criterion A for its associations with the historic Manitou ferry and mailboat that have linked Fishtown with the nearby Manitou Islands for over a century, and for vernacular and Modernistic buildings associated with Fishtown's role as a tourist destination.

The Fishtown Historic District is contained within the previously-listed Leland Historic District (1975). In 1975 local residents feared that both the commercial district of the Village of Leland and Fishtown would be negatively impacted by the new Harbor of Refuge, hence the boundaries drawn in 1975 include both. Fishtown, however, has long been a distinct area. Its boundaries, independent identity, and patterns of use were established during the early 1900s, distinct from the resources in the Village of Leland that were part of the 1975 Leland Historic District. This nomination recognizes Fishtown's independent significance as a Traditional Cultural Property, as a place that reflects the identity and culture of a group of people who continue traditional cultural practices associated with commercial fishing and fish processing.

The Fishtown Historic District is composed of resources associated with the historical and ongoing commercial fishery. The significant and contributing resources of the district are part of Fishtown's commercial fishing legacy, and those associated with transportation and tourism themes. The overall period of significance begins with the 1903 construction of Fishtown's earliest surviving resource and its oldest commercial fishing shanty (Building 15) and extends to the present in recognition of Fishtown's continuous use as a working waterfront. Significance is ongoing. Within the 1903-present timeframe are additional significant dates: 1928, construction of the first Manitou Ferry building (13) near the dam; and 1966, completion of Falling Waters Lodge (12), a large Modernistic concrete hotel that changed the ambience of Fishtown's eastern boundary and, along with its sister building the Cove (11, 1967), visually demarcates the importance of the tourist economy to Fishtown.

Listing Fishtown separately and acknowledging its continuity as a working waterfront will provide the prestige of the National Register as FPS works to preserve both historic resources

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and traditional cultural practices. The latter are under threat from a variety of sources, including restrictive state regulations. Just as the original 1975 nomination was written in response to a very real threat, so too does this nomination. As a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), it underscores the historic and ongoing importance of Fishtown's commercial fishery.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Introductory note:* Fishtown is documented by a remarkable collection of historic photographs owned by FPS and the Leelanau Historical Society. FPS also maintains an ever-expanding image collection of the contemporary fishery. Many appear as figures or photos for this nomination. Oral histories from the 1970s to the present complement the photographic record. As a result, Fishtown is Michigan's most richly documented commercial fishery, adding to its significance.

## **FISHTOWN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Though known today as Fishtown, the cluster of buildings and fish tugs on the Leland River did not become commonly known by that name until the 1930s.<sup>26</sup> Fishtown previously was called names such as Leland fishing village and, because there was no harbor of refuge until the 1960s, Leland Harbor. Fishtown today is a working waterfront, tourist destination, and artist's subject matter. It is a place of memory and tradition. In essence, it embodies the continuity of Leland's commercial fishing heritage.

The favorable location at the confluence of the Carp (now Leland) River with Lake Michigan attracted the first European American settlers. The area previously supported subsistence and commercial fishing for Ottawa and Chippewa bands. The French-Canadian Antoine Manseau is credited with founding the village of Leland in 1853. Like many other nineteenth-century communities throughout the Great Lakes, Leland sustained intensive extractive industries – iron smelting and lumbering – at the same time as the fishing industry. The cluster of commercial fishing buildings that became known as Fishtown began to grow and take shape by the early 1900s. During the peak fishing period of the 1920s through early 1940s, eight fish tugs were based in Leland harbor, and the Manitou mail boat served a small colony on nearby North Manitou Island. The peak fishing era ended by the mid-1940s when the invasive sea lamprey decimated the whitefish and trout populations. Fishermen persevered, although by the late 1950s the number of fish tugs had dropped to four, and Fishtown's physical condition was deteriorating.

Leland and its commercial fishing village also were part of northern Michigan's late-nineteenth century tourism boom, when Leland developed its reputation as a summer resort. As commercial fishing waned, tourism grew. Artists and photographers – present since the early 1900s – featured Fishtown's picturesque ambience, further enhancing the tourism cachet. By the 1960s, former fish shanties morphed into low impact retail shops, run by fishermen and by merchants

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<sup>26</sup> The *Leelanau Enterprise* referred to the area as "fish town" in a July 27, 1939 article. This is the earliest use of the name "Fishtown" known to date.

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whose rent helped keep Fishtown afloat. Carlson Properties, spearheaded by fourth-generation Leland fisherman Bill Carlson, had the vision to buy property as it came up for sale, preserving Fishtown as a result. The appreciation of the public for Fishtown, including its fish tugs, docks, and vernacular buildings, has served as the means of its survival, culminating in purchase of much of Fishtown, two fishing licenses, and the commercial fishing boats *Joy* and *Janice Sue*, by Fishtown Preservation Society in 2007.<sup>27</sup> Several properties remain in private hands; these include those servicing Manitou Transit (heir to the historic Manitou ferry), a Modernistic restaurant and a lodge built in the 1960s, and two private residences – one a former fishing shanty and the other the historic ferry mail room and warehouse.

## **MARITIME HISTORY (COMMERCIAL FISHING)**

The shores of the Great Lakes and their islands were once fringed with commercial fisheries. Commercial fishing was important to early settlement and development of Great Lakes ports. Social, technological, and environmental changes over time have altered the landscapes and lives of fishermen, erasing the vernacular buildings and other physical elements of working waterfronts. Fish tugs, fishing docks, shanties, and net reels – the icons of Great Lakes fisheries – have nearly disappeared, taking with them the memories of the extensive role that the commercial fisheries once played in the Great Lakes. In Michigan, the situation is exacerbated by the state’s policy, since the 1960s, of managing the lakes for recreational use. In Fishtown, there are just enough fishermen in business to maintain its character as a *real* fishing village.<sup>28</sup>

## **Native American Subsistence and Commercial Fishing**

Commercial fishermen have plied Michigan’s Great Lakes waters for more than four centuries. Anishinabek peoples traded fish commercially at Mackinac as early as the 1600s. By the 1830s merchant account books document trade with about twenty native fishermen in Leelanau County. Subsistence and commercial fishing often overlapped. The river mouths and lakeshore locations of the Grand Traverse region, including the Leelanau Peninsula, were used by the Ottawa and Ojibwe to gain access to the rich fishing grounds of Lake Michigan and Grand Traverse Bay.<sup>29</sup> The area north of the Leland River mouth and present-day Fishtown was the site of a pre-1830 Ottawa village called (with various phonetic spellings) “Shamagobeg.”<sup>30</sup> The town and associated cemetery are noted in State of Michigan archaeology site files as 20LU10 and 20LU11.<sup>31</sup> The exact date and location of this site is not known, but young Bela Hubbard made

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<sup>27</sup> Portions of the historic overview are drawn from Amanda Holmes’ historic overview for the “Steffens and Stallman Shanty Preservation Plan,” by Richard Neumann, architect, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> From Amanda Holmes’ history in the 2009 Steffens and Stallman Preservation Plan.

<sup>29</sup> James McClurken, Affidavit, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians v. Director, Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Leland Township; and Village of Northport, United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, April 14, 1995, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Various spelled as Shemagobing or Che-ma-gobing.

<sup>31</sup> Dean Anderson, email message to Amanda Holmes, 24 October 2008. The original Indian settlements at Carp River were Ottawa; however sometime in

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drawings and descriptions when he arrived by boat at Carp River (the historic name for the Leland River) on July 4, 1838, as part of the Michigan Geological Survey.<sup>32</sup>

In this and other shoreline villages, men made gill nets from fibers gathered by women; men did the actual fishing while women smoked or dried the catch on triangular racks.<sup>33</sup> By the mid- nineteenth century, Ojibwe and Ottawa craftsmen were building sail-powered Mackinaw boats, an open surf boat of Native design that was well-suited to Great Lakes waters. There are no records of Mackinaw boat construction in Shamagobeg, but by 1850 one had been built across the peninsula in Peshawbestown. These Native American fishing skills and technologies shaped the way European American commercial fishermen later utilized the Great Lakes.<sup>34</sup>

Shamagobeg had mostly disappeared by the time of Leland's founding by European Americans in 1853. The Ottawa and Ojibwe continued commercial fishing in the Leelanau County vicinity through the early 1900s, when they were no longer able to compete with their better capitalized European American counterparts. By this time, Fishtown was well established, populated by fishermen whose heritage included Scandinavian, English, French, Scots, and Prussian descent.

### **European American Commercial Fishing in the Nineteenth Century**

Historically, Lake Michigan housed the largest concentration of European American commercial fishing operations in the state. While the earliest of these dates to the 1830s, Leland's first documented commercial fisherman, Michael Daly, appeared in local records by 1864. Leland's fishery was first described in the U.S. Fish Commission Report of 1872. There were just two known fishermen by the 1880s, when, for example, North Manitou Island had nine fishermen, Charlevoix had thirty-five, and Beaver Island – which in 1885 was the “nation's largest freshwater fishing port” – had 164 full-time commercial fishermen.<sup>35</sup> The Leland fishing fleet

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the early 1800s Chippewa or Ojibwa also settled in the Grand Traverse region. Helen Tanner's map of the Leelanau County Indian settlements, circa 1830, identifies the Carp River location as Ottawa/Ojibwa. This map, from her 1987 *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, is reprinted in Eric MacDonald and Arnold R. Alanen. *'Tending a Comfortable Wilderness,' A History of Agricultural Landscapes on North Manitou Island*, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Michigan. Omaha, NB, Midwest Field Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000, page 20.

<sup>32</sup> Bela Hubbard Papers, 1814-1896, Box 1, Survey Notebook 2, Field Notebooks May 19-July 24, 1838, Peninsula Coast Survey, Detroit to Chicago, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Beattie Bogue. *Fishing the Great Lakes, An Environmental History*, 1783-1933. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> Michael J. Chiarappa. "Great Lakes Commercial Fishing Architecture: The Endurance and Transformation of a Region's Landscape/Waterscape." In Kenneth A. Breisch and Alison K. Hoagland, eds. *Building Environments, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vo. X (2005): 220.

<sup>35</sup> "The Charlevoix Fisheries," *Grand Traverse Herald*, 18 December 1888, courtesy of James McClurken Library, Lansing; Paul G. Connors, 1999, page 311.

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remained small for several reasons: 1) prevailing winds limited the range of the old sailing boats at the Manitou Islands, and the treacherous waters of the Manitou Passage were often impassable due to storms and ice;<sup>36</sup> 2) Leland-based fishermen lacked a natural harbor, making sailing in and out of the river unpredictable; and 3) industrial activity along the river (Leland Iron Works and various sawmills) occupied most of the available land until 1900. Although Leland's fishing village was smaller and later developing than many commercial fishing ports, its history mirrors the rise and fall of Michigan's Great Lakes commercial fishery, in particular the Lake Michigan fishery.

### **Emergence of the Commercial Fishing Fleet**

By 1900, Leland's fishing economy was poised to expand: "a few fishermen, the Cooks, the Prices, and the Clausses, put out from the mouth of the river below the dam and its abandoned sawmill to their fishing grounds in Lake Michigan in sailboats. There was not a power boat among the fishing fleet."<sup>37</sup> These early fishermen occupied shanties clustered at the mouth of the river, served by a single ice house to the rear (see Photo 3). The buildings and adjacent spaces housed the shore work essential to a working fishery. By 1907 the fishing fleet – as reported by the Michigan Fisheries Commission – had grown to seven operations employing a total of 37 men. The rigs consisted of John Harting and son William, George F. Cook and Martin Brown (operating out of Building 15), William Cook and Peter Nelson, Severt (also spelled Siebert) Johnson and Nels Carlson (operating out of Building 7), Alex Mason, Michael E. Clauss, and the Price Brothers – Warren, Oscar, and Alvin. The catch during this era was more varied than in later years. In 1907 the Leland fleet tallied 54,000 pounds of herring, 78,000 pounds of whitefish, 135,000 pounds of lake trout, 300 pounds of sturgeon, and 5,000 pounds of suckers, ranging in price from 1½ cents per pound for the lowly sucker (sold to kosher markets in Chicago), to 11 cents per pound for sturgeon, highly valued smoked and especially for their caviar. The total value of the catch was more than sixteen thousand dollars.

By 1907 all the fishermen save Mike Clauss had converted from sail-powered Mackinaw boats to steam-powered tugs, also called "gas-boats" which, prior to about 1910, used boiled gasoline or naphtha to create vapor that powered the engine. The shift had begun in Leland by 1903. After 1910 fishermen converted to internal combustion engines. Those who fished with the old-timers thought of them as iron men in wooden boats. Jim VerSnyder remembers when "they used to set the nets of the open back decks of the old wooden fantail fish tugs. They were right out in the elements, just spinning the nets in the cold weather. There was ice on their hands – I mean, they were tough.... To this day I'm still in awe of what those guys did, without the equipment, you know, open back decks.... Going out there on those old wooden boats with gasoline engines – were dangerous as heck. They were really incredible guys."<sup>38</sup>

Fishermen invested in boats, nets, land, and buildings. "Most of the equipment used by the fishery was contracted through salesmen who visited the town, representing companies in

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<sup>36</sup> Leland National Register Historic District working file, State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing.

<sup>37</sup> Littell, 1920, page 32.

<sup>38</sup> Jim VerSnyder, May 12, 2008, interviewed by Daniel Stewart.

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Chicago, Two Rivers, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee. The fishermen themselves would cast their own leads, make their own buoys, and built nets to their own specifications.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Peak Commercial Fishing Period**

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Leland’s fishermen developed a close-knit fishing village bound by ties of family, community, and occupation. Most shanties, sheds, and ice houses were constructed between 1903 and 1928. Of these, nine remain in 2021. The ravages of wind and weather took their toll on numerous former buildings. The peak fishing period occurred from the 1920s through the early 1940s. Third-generation fisherman Pete Carlson began fishing in 1926 at age sixteen. “It was quite an industry back in those days,” he recalled. In addition to the families directly involved in commercial fishing, “indirectly, there was quite a few more, such as those that took the fish to the train, and the ice harvest crew, and different families like that.”<sup>40</sup>

Most boats used during this era were locally made gill-netters, skiffs, pound net boats, and stake boats (used in the pound net fishery). The boatyard was located on the sites of Buildings 9, 10, and 11. Its most prolific and best-known boat builder was Swedish immigrant carpenter John Johnson. Few of Johnson’s boats survive. One exception is the *Helen S* made for Henry Steffens Sr. in 1927 (see Figure 77). The Steffens family fished with her through 1958, when her aging hull was critically damaged by ice floes off Leland Harbor. Her near fatal mishap occurred just prior to the local transition to steel-hulled tugs. [After conversion to a yacht when her fishing days were over, the *Helen S* has come full circle and is now owned by FPS.]

By 1930 Michigan had the most extensive fishery of any Great Lakes state, engaging 2,237 men in the business and producing 2.5 million pounds of fish annually. Leland was a microcosm of the larger picture, with eight fish rigs employing six dozen people. The federal government’s 1935 harbor report estimated the value of the local catch in 1933 at fifty thousand dollars, and observed, “although the commerce is small in actual tonnage and value, it is of vital importance to the islanders [North and South Manitou] and to the fishermen at Leland.”<sup>41</sup> The *Leelanau Enterprise* in 1931 listed the rig owners as follows: “Oscar Price, Henry Steffens [Building 7], Harting and Light [Building 6], Kaapke and Firestone [Building 5.2], John Maleski [Building 5.1], William Buckler [Building 14], George Cook [Building 15], and [Will] Carlson and [Warren] Price [Building 16].”<sup>42</sup> Each boat carried at least two men. Sometimes these were fishing partners; in other cases, there was at least one hired man on the crew. See Photos 4 and 5, and Figure 48.

<sup>39</sup> Moore, 1975, no page numbers.

<sup>40</sup> Pete Carlson, interviewed with Roy Buckler, Leelanau Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>41</sup> “Michigan Leads in Great Lakes Fishing Industry,” *Leelanau Enterprise*, 27 March 1930; “Leland Harbor, Michigan,” Letter from Chief Engineers, United States Army, Report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors on Review of Reports Heretofore Submitted on Leland Harbor, Mich., With Illustrations, May 17, 1935.

<sup>42</sup> *Leelanau Enterprise*, March 5, 1931.

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The completion of the long-awaited harbor of refuge in 1937 was a boon the local fishing community. Storms had repeatedly ripped out the fishermen-built piers at the river's mouth. The damage peaked in the late 1920s, when fishermen were forced to rebuild five times.

The life of commercial fishermen cycled with a seasonal round of activities. During winters of the peak fishing period, as remembered by Pete Carlson and Roy Buckler, "We didn't fish too much...after the first of January, why, we were just about all done then. The boats were all pulled up on the beach and whatnot." In January and February, "We used to cut our ice off Lake Leelanau every winter, store it in an ice house, cover it with sawdust, and hope it would last through the summer. Which it always did."<sup>43</sup> Winter was time to hunker down next to the potbellied stove in the shanties to repair equipment for the coming season (see Figure 52).



Figure 52, Percy Guthrie mending nets, with potbellied stove to provide needed wintertime warmth. Fishermen repaired a torn net seated, as above, or by spreading a dried net on a reel. Photo by Erhardt Peters, circa 1930s, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

As spring approached and the Lake Michigan ice began to thaw, men readied the boats to head into Lake Michigan to set the first gill nets of the season. The first set typically occurred in March or April.<sup>44</sup> During the summer, in addition to the regular round of setting and lifting gill nets, the fishermen also set their pound nets for a lucrative haul of whitefish (see Figure 53). In the fall, fishermen collected spawn under special Department of Conservation permits. They carefully removed the eggs from the female trout while picking fish from the lifted nets. The spawn was then shipped to state fish hatcheries. Fall was also the time when agents from Chicago typically contracted for fish, during the period of the "big lift," and then negotiated with fishermen throughout the rest of the season according to market prices.

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<sup>43</sup> Pete Carlson and Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>44</sup> Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1991.

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Figure 53, Fishermen lifting their summertime catch from a pound net, circa 1930. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

During the peak period, fishermen harvested primarily lake trout and whitefish, with pound nets in near shore waters and gill nets in more distant fishing grounds. Whereas initially whitefish was the most prized catch, by the 1920s trout, as remembered by Roy Buckler, was the “money fish. Chubs were not worth anything back then, you got a dime a pound. I used to fish them in the summertime, with pound nets when you couldn’t catch trout. But trout – trout was a money fish here.” Whereas trout fetched five to seven cents per pound in 1908, Buckler recalled that during the peak fishing period, “Fifteen to eighteen cents was the going price for trout and whitefish.”<sup>45</sup> “In the old days, when they’d pack fish, they didn’t use cardboard like they do now,” Glenn Garthe recalled. “We had wooden boxes that were built out of scrap wood. Emil LaBonte used to build them over here in Leland. We put one hundred pounds of fish in the box and covered it with ice. Every fisherman had their own tag, whatever fishery it was, and they would write on it, “100 pounds.” And that was stapled onto the end of the box.”<sup>46</sup> Roy Buckler recalled, “Our market in those days was practically all Chicago.” The market later expanded to New York, Detroit, and Grand Haven. At one time, Leland fishermen Warren Price and George Cook both worked as fish buyers. A. Booth and Company dominated distribution and marketing throughout the Great Lakes, but their involvement with Leland’s fishermen is unclear.

### **Sea Lamprey Incursion and the Decline of Fishtown**

By the late 1930s, when the first documented use of the name “Fishtown” occurred, the future seemed rosy. Leland’s fishermen reported record catches. Then everything changed. Throughout the Great Lakes, invasive sea lamprey combined with overfishing to decimate the lucrative lake trout and whitefish populations. In Lake Michigan the lamprey was first documented in 1936, but in Fishtown its devastating effects were not felt until a decade later. An article in the August 7, 1947, *Leelanau Enterprise* carried the stark headline, “Commercial Fishing Very Low at Leland,” and the article observed:

<sup>45</sup> Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Glenn Garthe, interviewed by Amanda Holmes, November 15, 2007.

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Leland fishtown is having an unprecedented lull in fishing success. It was noted last week that not a single net was on the reels on the south side of the river. Main activities now consist of mending nets, painting boats, and hoping for better days.<sup>47</sup>

Bill Carlson reflected on the changes that he witnessed firsthand:

In this area in the '40's the fishing collapsed. The lamprey ... had taken a devastating hold on whitefish and lake trout. We were getting 80 percent scarring on the fish which means the mortality rate's just enormous...And whitefish and trout were the bread and butter of the fishery. Our family struggled in the late '40's and early '50's. We switched our fishing techniques to fishing chubs. There wasn't a lot of money in fishing chubs, but it was a life, and I remember my father getting other work because of that. My mother opened a bakery and went to work at – our family had a restaurant in town [the Bluebird]. She went to work there. We did whatever we had to do, but we continued fishing. We were fortunate in that we had ...summer people here who came down and bought fish regularly, and there was a bit of a tourist business at that time, too. So, in the summertime we were able to sustain ourselves by selling the fish directly to the consumer rather than shipping it in large volumes out of state or to processors. But a lot of the year we weren't fishing because there was either no market, no money, or no fish...It was a struggle through the '50's. It was a struggle through the early '60's.<sup>48</sup>

The bloater chub, a species of deep water cisco, became a mainstay of Lake Michigan commercial fishermen from the 1940s through the 1960s, when chubs were outcompeted by alewives – another invasive – and overharvested. The initial prevalence of chubs caused fishermen to start fish smoking businesses, and Fishtown followed suit.

By the late 1950s the number of fish tugs in the Leland River had dropped to four as the earlier generations of fishermen died, retired, or were forced out of business. Several unused shanties deteriorated, some literally sliding toward the river. Nonetheless, in 1959-1960 fisherman Louis Steffens built Building 8, the first new shanty in thirty years. In 1958 he and his brother Hank, along with Hank's partner Leo Stallman, Sr., brought the first steel-hulled gill net tugs – the *Janice Sue* and *Mary Ann* – to Fishtown. This ended decades of reliance on wooden boats and mirrored the transition taking place throughout the Great Lakes. The *Janice Sue* (Structure N) is one of two working boats remaining in Fishtown.

### **The 1960s and Beyond: Challenges, Continuity, and Change**

During the 1960s, the numbers of commercial fishermen in Michigan dropped over 60 percent. From the 1960s through the 1970s they faced one setback after another. These included a State

<sup>47</sup> *Leelanau Enterprise*, August 7, 1947

<sup>48</sup> Bill Carlson, interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, May 26 and 27, 1999.

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of Michigan limited entry rule that prevented part-time commercial fishermen from renewing their license (a policy that forced Fishtown's Steffens-Stallman commercial fishing operation out of business); an explosion of the invasive alewife; pesticide concerns; a botulism scare that devastated the market; a deliberate strategy by the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources to manage the Great Lakes for the recreational fishermen; and a state ban on the use of gill nets on the Great Lakes. In Fishtown, the three remaining commercial fishing operations – Bill Carlson, Ross Lang, and Terry Buckler – survived by luck, teamwork, and resilience. “I was put out of business eleven times in ten years, for one reason or another,” Bill Carlson recalled. “A lot of it had to do with regulations, some with contamination, some with the fish stocks and the exotic species, and the whole environmental change in the lakes.”<sup>49</sup> Carlson was lucky – literally – when, in 1975, he secured by lottery one of the few Department of Natural Resources research licenses for chub fishing with gill nets. He also joined forces with Lang and Buckler to form the Leland Fish Company. Together they received a grant from the Michigan Sea Grant Program to research and pioneer the successful introduction of a purse seine boat to fish whitefish on Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay.

The purse seine operation ended with the landmark 1979 Fox Decision, which made Grand Traverse Bay off limits to Leland's fishermen. The ruling stipulated that in signing the 1836 Treaty of Washington, treaty tribes retained Great Lakes commercial and subsistence fishing rights.<sup>50</sup> Subsequent consent agreements allocated Great Lakes fishing harvests, zones or home waters, and limited gill net use in fishing grounds north of Leland to the treaty tribes, including the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

After the Fox Decision Terry Buckler quit fishing, but Bill Carlson used his chub license with the *Janice Sue* to continue fishing out of Building 5. Carlson had acquired the boat after Louis Steffens' death. Ross Lang, based in Building 14, joined other former gill net fishermen who made the expensive conversion to trap nets, a whitefish harvesting technique that had less by-catch and was deemed more sustainable. The large-mesh gill net ban had forced fishermen to quit or change to the completely different gear and boat needed for trap netting. Lang reduced costs by building his own boat, the *Joy*, in 1981. Although Lang tragically lost his life in a fishing accident in 1998, the *Joy* remains Fishtown's most active commercial fishing vessel.

By the 1960s, Leland and Fishtown had become a major tourist destination, and the fishery began marketing to tourists. The Steffens-Stallman family and the Carlsons both smoked fish for local sale, but the former operation ended in 1973, leaving the Carlsons to carry on the tradition. By that time, the Carlson operation had shifted to direct consumer sales: catching, processing, and selling in Building 5. They developed new products such as whitefish pâté and smoked trout sausage. They developed the local market and began supplementing their catch with fish purchased from other fishermen, including local members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. These adaptations mirrored trends across Michigan, as commercial

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<sup>49</sup> Bill Carlson, interview, August 9, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Bill Rastetter, 1836 Treaty – Time Line re: Reserved Usufruct Rights (Prepared for Grand Traverse Band members), <http://turtletalk.files.wordpress.com/2007/09/1836-treaty-timeline-obh-current-version.pdf>, accessed June 4, 2011.

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fishermen struggled to maintain their livelihoods. After the Fox Decision, tribal and nontribal commercial licenses were counted differently, but numbers continued to fall. By 1981, state commercial fishing licenses (nontribal) had dropped to 120. In Fishtown, the number dropped to two.

Fishermen today face challenges from new invasive species, ever increasing state regulations, and market pressure from fish farms and operations outside of the Great Lakes. In response to new restrictions imposed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in late 2020, the Michigan Fish Producers Association, in January 2021, filed a class action lawsuit against the DNR and two of its officials. Lake Michigan is no longer the most active fishery; Lake Erie has the Great Lakes largest catch, but most of that comes from Canadian waters. There are currently fifty-one state (nontribal) commercial fishing licenses in Michigan held by twenty-six fishers. Of these, sixteen are active. In Lake Michigan there are only seven nontribal licenses that have been actively fished in recent years. These represent just four businesses.

The threatened nature of the fishery underscores the significance of the commercial fishing resources currently listed on the National Register. In addition to Fishtown, Michigan listings include the gill net tug *Katherine V* (Alpena); the Edison Fishery (Rock Harbor, Isle Royale); Minong Traditional Cultural Property, which includes active fishing grounds but no historic buildings (Isle Royale); and Bay Port Commercial Fishing District, which preserves the Bay Port Fish Company in Saginaw Bay (Bay Port). The latter's 1977 listing predates National Register Bulletin 38, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. Bay Port is the only other working waterfront and, like Fishtown, is threatened. Seven other commercial fishing listings come from Wisconsin and Minnesota. One of these, The Two Rivers Fishing Village Historic District (Two Rivers, Wisconsin), also predates Bulletin 38. It is the only other Great Lakes "fishing village" listed in the National Register. Lake Michigan commercial fishing continues in the vicinity but, unlike Fishtown, not within the boundaries of the historic district.

Fishtown's historic significance has been recognized previously with listings on the State Register of Historic Sites (1973); the Leland Historic District, of which Fishtown is the centerpiece (20 November 1975); and the Michigan Historical Marker program (1977). This new Fishtown Historic District Traditional Cultural Property Nomination recognizes Fishtown's individual significance and underscores its increased importance due to the sharp decline in both historic fisheries sites and active commercial fishery operations. It is one of two remaining historic "fishtowns" (a village as opposed to a single-family operation) in the Great Lakes and the only one in Michigan.

## **FISHTOWN AS A TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY**

Fishtown's historic and architectural significance transcends its active commercial fishery; however, resources associated with ongoing traditional cultural activities notably enhance that significance. Fishtown's buildings, structures, working landscapes, and waterscapes provide the context for orally transmitted knowledge and traditional cultural practices of workers involved in commercial fishing and fish processing. Roughly 50 percent of the district is used as space where

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traditional cultural practices occur (see Traditional Cultural Use Map). These still revolve around shore work and lake work, fluctuate with seasons, and depend on the accumulated knowledge of previous generations. Specific examples are described below under “Lake Work,” and “Shore Work.” Fishtown’s shore architecture and fishing grounds are complimentary and interrelated: one doesn’t exist without the other. In addition, “Narratives, Customs, and Occupational Terminology” describe important intangible resources linked to lake work and shore work. Please also see “Inventory of Use” for photos and discussion of traditional cultural practices associated with particular resources.

### **Tangible and Intangible Traditions of Lake Work**

In the words of fourth-generation commercial fisherman Bill Carlson, “It isn’t a job; it’s a way of life.”<sup>51</sup> Great Lakes commercial fishermen say that their unique occupation gets in their blood. “Once you learn how to do it,” Jim VerSnyder observes, “You’re your own boss. You’re working with a guy that’s paying you, but you go out there, you laugh and joke. It’s hard work, but it’s out in the elements.”<sup>52</sup>

In the crucible of accumulated experience on Lake Michigan, Fishtown’s fishermen learn the essential knowledge and skills of their job: setting and lifting nets; the best way to repair a torn net or dress a fish on the way back to shore; mooring, loading, and unloading the large, heavy vessels; predicting the weather; deciding whether to ride out a storm or seek shelter; navigating in a rough sea; understanding the ways of fish and the best places to set a net; the names of fishing banks. In the words of Alan Priest, “You gotta learn the banks. Over years you just learn where spots produce better at certain times of the year, at what depth of the water. You keep a log book and ever since I started running the boat, I just bought myself a big binder. And write down every day when we leave the dock. Sometimes I write the weather conditions.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jan Weist, “A Model Leland Fisherman Casts Lot with Tradition.” *Detroit News*, October 24, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Jim VerSnyder, interviewed by Daniel Stewart for Fishtown Preservation Society, 12 May 2008, Leland, Michigan.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Priest, interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, May 29, 1999. Fish for All Project, Cedar, Michigan. Courtesy of Michael J. Chiarappa and Great Lakes Research Library, South Haven.

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Figure 54, Joel Petersen doing ad hoc net repair on board the *Joy*. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society, June 16, 2012.



Figure 55, Darryl Herman with marker buoy toss, used when setting trap nets. Fishermen use steel conduit to build the buoy. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society, May 8, 2013.

Of necessity, fishermen have always been weather experts. During the peak fishing period, as remembered by Roy Buckler, fishermen would head to Fishtown before dawn to assess the conditions and decide “whether or not it’s fit to go on the water and lift nets.” Fishermen like Buckler were adept at reading weather signs. Buckler and Carlson observed:

You go down, and you look at it, you try to get a weather report, which you don’t believe, and talk it over with the crew...Of course, in later years, we all had radios, got the weather report from the Coast Guard and you believed all you wanted to of it. If you thought you could still go out and lift, well, you went

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anyway. Of course, sometimes the weather report was right, and you didn't get your work done, you come home, had to go back, and finish the next day.<sup>54</sup>

Even with today's sophisticated weather tools, a good fisherman still knows how to read the weather. Alan Priest, for example, has learned the signs of danger in cold, snowy conditions. "When water hits a certain temperature when it snows, it'll freeze. Then it'll kind of – I call it snowballs. Like you'll start with a snowflake and then it'll freeze and roll. And you can get some of them [rolls] that are as big as this building. Then they pack in here. You get a southwest wind and it just packs in here. You gotta be careful if you're out in the lake and you get ice drifting around, you gotta get home."<sup>55</sup>

A fisherman's day was and is unpredictable. During the peak fishing period, as Pete Carlson recalled, "We would many times leave the harbor at four-thirty, five o'clock in the morning. Sometimes we'd get back before dark, and sometimes it was after dark. Sometimes we wouldn't get through work until eleven, twelve o'clock at night. So, it really made a long day." Today's fishermen still leave the harbor before sunrise, but typically return to port by early afternoon. As Carlson explains, the difference between today and his era is that "they have much faster boats, of course. They do things so much easier and so much faster. They lift just about as many nets as we used to."<sup>56</sup>

The thrill of a good lift never grows old. Brian Price, who crewed on the *Joy* with the Langs, describes setting trap nets as a shell game. "You're always trying to outsmart the fish, even more than with the gill net fishery. When you hit it right, trap nets can be wildly successful. You're starting to pull the net up, and as the fish rise through the water – maybe the net's in 80 or 90 feet – you see the water start to boil because they're expelling air from their air bladder. It's just fun."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Roy Buckler and Pete Carlson, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>55</sup> Alan Priest, interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, 1999.

<sup>56</sup> Pete Carlson and Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>57</sup> Brian Price, interviewed by Clair Gornowicz with Abraham Hohnke for Fish for All Project, courtesy of Michael J. Chiarappa and the Great Lakes Research Library, South Haven, 28 May 1999.

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Figure 56, Dipping whitefish from a trap net on the *Joy*, 2010. Photo by Meggen Watt Petersen.

On gill net tugs, the captain has the tricky job of positioning the boat as the nets come through the mechanical lifter, a device in use since the 1890s. Crew pick the fish out of the nets and clean them on the boat, skills that Jim VerSnyder calls “hand work” (see Figure 57). (Trap-netters, with their live catch and open deck, bring the fish back to shore to process.) The tug’s stove still functions for needed warmth on cold weather runs and for cooking fish wrapped in paper and soaked in a bucket of water. “When you put it on top of the stove it’s like you are steaming your fish,” Jim VerSnyder explains. “Man, that was incredible tasting. It was some of the best fish I have ever eaten. In the summer, some guys just cooked them on the boat’s manifolds. They’d wrap it up in aluminum foil and put it on a manifold. We would do the same thing.”<sup>58</sup>



Figure 57. Albert Gunderson using the dressing block, special knives, and lifting table aboard the *Janice Sue* to dress chubs on the trip back home. Photo by Meggen Watt Petersen, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> VerSnyder, interview, 2010.

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Commercial fishermen know how to navigate in a rough sea and develop the wisdom to seek shelter or return to port when conditions dictate. Jim VerSnyder recalls a late November blow during the 1970s, when it was “just flat-out howling on the northeast channel bank. It was blowing so hard we just untied the nets in the middle of a box [of nets], and it was a hell of a ride home. It was about as bad as it gets.” The other Fishtown rigs, with Langs and the Bucklers on board, were weathering the same storm on the west side of North Manitou Island. “The Langs took water through the side of their lifter door,” VerSnyder remembered. “There was solid green coming in. Old Fred Lang took a knife and cut his own nets. There was no untying or anything. He was that scared. They had to run in and find some lee to get the water pumped out of her. That was a real dangerous situation.”<sup>59</sup>

### **Tangible and Intangible Traditions of Shore Work**

Shore work takes place in and around the shanties, docks, and smokehouses and in the open space of the south side. Traditional cultural practices include making and repairing buoys, casting replacement leads for the nets, “slugging” or repairing nets, and dressing, filleting, brining, and smoking fish. (see Photos 19, 25, and 26 and Figures 58, 59, and 69). Fishermen-carpenters also have customarily built and rebuilt cabins for the boats, a practice that occurs both in Fishtown and off site. Other essential activities occur off site of necessity: welding work to repair boats and repairing, cleaning, and drying the large trap nets.



Figure 58, *Joy* captain Joel Petersen casts leads for weighting trap nets in the newest Fishtown shanty, Building 18. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 11, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> VerSnyder, interview, 2010.

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Keeping nets in good working condition is essential to a commercial fisherman's success. Oldtimers boiled cotton gill nets in a cast iron kettle or vat. "It was a lot of work back then," Bill Carlson recalled. "When they had cotton nets, they had to bring the nets in about every ten days or two weeks to dry them, scald them, treat them so they wouldn't rot. And now we can fish nylon nets and we never have to bring them in except to repair them. They just don't deteriorate. They wear out after a while."<sup>60</sup> Unlike gill nets, trap nets are treated periodically in a vat filled with a special latex paint preservative and then set out to dry, a modern variant of the old boiling technique.

Fishermen use special needles to repair or "slug" nets. The *Janice Sue's* gill nets are repaired on site using net reels. Alan Priest explains, "Right here in the shed is 90 percent of your fishing, working on nets because if you don't keep your nets up, the holes that you have in them, you're not gonna produce anything (see Figure 70)."<sup>61</sup>

Fish processing is another essential skill for a successful commercial fishery. Although all shanties housed processing in the past, since the mid-1970s Fishtown's fish processing has been based in Carlson's (Building 5). Fresh market sales began in the former Building 5.1 in the mid-1960s after it was connected to Building 5.2. Although government regulations and the current biology of Lake Michigan mean that Fishtown's commercial fishermen presently cannot provide all the fresh fish that Carlson's requires for its processing operation, Fishtown's commercial fishing and processing remain symbiotic activities. Many workers here have or still do crew on the boats and vice versa.

Since the 1960s, the fresh market retail function has grown considerably, but the fundamental techniques are unchanged. "I'm the fifth generation of Carlson's Fishery," said co-owner Nels Carlson, "we do everything by hand. We process all our fish by hand. There are fewer and fewer fisheries like us."<sup>62</sup> Carlson described how he began "scrubbing boxes like the kids are doing now, washing the dock down, taking smoked fish off the racks. That's how everybody starts at the Fishery."<sup>63</sup> The fillet table – the locus for dressing fish and filleting, including removal of the pin bones – is a prized job (see Photo 25). Specialized knives must be kept well sharpened. Those who work here have earned the privilege after mentoring with more experienced individuals, learning in the traditional manner by imitation and example. Workers also make fish sausage and pâté, brine fish for smoking, and place the filleted and brined fish on the smoking racks. As Nels Carlson explained, "there aren't many places where you get to work with

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<sup>60</sup> Bill Carlson, interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, for Fish for All Project, courtesy of Michael J. Chiarappa and the Great Lakes Research Library, South Haven, May 26-27, 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Alan Priest, interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, 1999.

<sup>62</sup> Kim North Shine, "U-M Alum's Carlson's Fishery: A piece of Leland history leaving its mark on the local economy, state tourism and Michigan's waters. "This is Michigan, Stories of Our State. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, circa 2012. <https://impact.govrel.umich.edu/carlsons-fishery/>

<sup>63</sup> Kim Schneider, "Personalities of the Peninsula: 5th Generation Fishmonger Nels Carlson." *Leelanau Ticker*, June 21, 2021. <https://www.leelanauticker.com/news/personalities-of-the-peninsula-5th-generation-fishmonger-nels-carlson/>

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ingredients that fresh and directly pass it on to the consumer. People wonder how we get our fish to taste how we do. We brine our fish in saltwater, smoke it with maple, and that's it. It's not rocket science. It's more about getting it right all the time."<sup>64</sup>



Figure 59, Alan Priest removes fish from the brine tank at Building 5 and sorts them by type in the fish boxes in preparation for smoking. Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers, summer 2010.

The smokehouses (Structures A and F) use maple wood fires and require careful monitoring, since – despite modern gauges and equipment – the smoking process is still dependent on weather. Fish sausage and pâté are more recent products, dating the 1970s as part of fishermen's efforts to increase their market. Fish smoking goes back to the early twentieth century but increased in importance beginning in the 1950s. Along with fresh fish, these products are traditional foodways associated with the fishery. Please see Photo 19 and Figure 71.

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<sup>64</sup> Schneider, "5th Generation Nels Carlson." 2021.

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## Narratives, Customs, and Occupational Terminology

Fishery workers maintain a rich body of verbal and customary occupational folklore, with jokes, stories, and specialized vocabulary. These intangible cultural traditions are an important legacy of Fishtown's traditional cultural community and are directly related to the place itself. Lake work and shore work have shaped these intangible traditions and provide the setting for their transmission. As National Register Bulletin 38 states, "properties and their intangible attributes of significance must be considered together." Stories, customs, and occupational terminology would not exist without Fishtown's continued existence as a cultural landscape and working waterfront. Stories revolve around personalities, storms and ice on the Big Lake, accidents and close calls, and the uncanny skill of old-timers. The occupation has its own specialized terminology: "pin-boning" (removal of pin bones when dressing fish), "clinkers" (burned slag from freighters sometimes caught in nets), and "slugging" or repairing nets are just a few examples. There are also customary traditions such as initiating greenhorns, marking the end of the season, and parties in shanties. These in turn feed into more occupational stories.

The father-son team of Ross and Fred Lang have a favorite story called "Brian and the Clinker." The story involved teasing their young greenhorn crew member, Brian Price. "Brian was a college student," remembered Ross' wife, Joy. "He studied geology and thought he knew a lot about the lakes. One day they were pulling nets, and they got a clinker. So my father-in-law said to him, 'Well Brian, we don't know what this is. Could you tell us?' So Brian goes on and on with some long story about what this clinker was. Of course, the guys just had the best time over it because they knew it was a clinker."<sup>65</sup>

Of the many stories of Fishtown, one stands out as a metaphor for its survival. The story of the accident with the Carlson's tug *Diamond* is also Fishtown's best known story. On August 5, 1941, Will and Pete Carlson were fishing in 16 Fathom Shoals, perhaps the fishing bank farthest from port, when a broken gas line ignited a fire that destroyed their boat. In a 1987 interview, Pete Carlson himself told the story:

We decided that we'd have to take to the water, my father and I, which we did, with two life preservers. So, we took to the water about eight o'clock in the morning. We left the boat, it drifted away from us, and we started out for North island. And about noon or one o'clock, I don't know exactly when, ...my father died from exposure. And I kept him with me.

Carlson carried his father in his arms for seven more hours, as the Coast Guard boat from South Manitou, knowing the two men were overdue, mounted a search. When the Coast Guard went by, and Carlson could not attract their attention, "I had to let go of my father then. In the meantime, I was trying to make shore, and of course, knowing this afterwards, why, most

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<sup>65</sup> Joy Lang, interviewed by Michael J. Chiarappa, Fish for All Project, 29 May 1999, courtesy Michael J. Chiarappa and the Great Lakes Research Library, South Haven.

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everybody was out looking for us.”<sup>66</sup> He was finally rescued by some fellow fishermen after 20 hours in the lake. Afterwards, Pete was unsure if he had the emotional or financial resources to start over. The community stepped in, understanding the value of commercial fishing and its fishing families to Leland and Fishtown. They raised funds to buy a Pete Carlson a new boat that ensured continuity into the next generation. Carlson named the vessel the *Good Will* after both his father Will Carlson and the “good will” of caring townsfolk.

### **The Fishtown Model for a Traditional Cultural Property**

Fishtown’s working waterfront sustains a modern fishery on the site of an historic fishery, with continuity of traditional cultural practices and intangible occupational traditions passed down by generations of fishery workers. National Register Bulletin 38, outlines a process for applying the criteria to locations whose “significance [is] derived from the role the property plays in a community’s historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices.” Despite the ups and downs of the larger Great Lakes fishery, Fishtown has been a locus for traditional occupational beliefs, customs, and practices continuously from the 1860s to the present. Calling attention to traditional cultural practices within the district focuses on use and the many individuals who worked – and still work – here. National Register Bulletin 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, emphasizes that “continued use and occupation help maintain a property’s historic integrity if traditional practices are carried on.” Bulletin 30 also suggests important ways that intangible cultural resources contribute to the district’s integrity. “Integrity of feeling and association,” for example, derives from a site’s “continuing or compatible land uses and activities.” “Integrity of relationship” applies if the historical connection between the site and its associated traditional cultural practice remains strong, as is the case in Fishtown. Recognizing Fishtown’s remaining commercial fishery buildings, structures, and sites as resources supporting traditional cultural practices – within a larger context of former shanties that provide essential historic and architectural context – acknowledges the significance of that historic continuity.

During the mid-1970s, when Fishtown was threatened by development, University of Michigan master’s student Alan Moore completed a study for Michigan Sea Grant on policy and preservation considerations in Michigan’s historic fisheries. He subsequently co-wrote the Leland National Register Nomination that includes Fishtown. Bulletin 38 did not yet exist; nonetheless, Moore concluded that in Leland’s unique Fishtown, “a modern commercial fishing operation should be maintained at all costs.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in 2009, Peter Fricke (sociologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service) underscored Fishtown’s uniqueness, based on his nearly thirty years of historical assessment of the nation’s fisheries. “The collection of waterfront properties and buildings is a vernacular expression of the real world of commercial fishing over the past one hundred years. The

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<sup>66</sup> Pete Carlson and Roy Buckler, interviewed by Leelanau Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>67</sup> Kathryn Eckert, email to Laurie Kay Sommers, April 1, 2012; Alan William Moore. “Michigan Historic Fisheries: Policy and Preservation Considerations Involved in Their Establishment in a Michigan Shoreline Community.” MS Thesis, Natural Resources, University of Michigan, 1975: 104,107.

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shanties, smokehouses and Carp (Leland) River docks have a purposeful and authentic aspect which museum collections such as Sturbridge and Williamsburg lack. In an era when historic docksides and waterfronts are being gentrified with condominiums and fishing activities pushed aside, Fishtown retains a fish processor, active fishing vessels, and a community which wants to keep its roots intact.”<sup>68</sup>

Notably, fisherman Bill Carlson’s vision for saving Fishtown was to save the fishery and its traditions, not just the buildings. “My whole idea was that this is a living history of what’s happened,” Carlson explained in a 2007 interview, “and that it’s pretty much self-evident what’s going on here. We catch fish, we clean fish, we smoke fish, and we sell fish, and that’s what’s happening today. We show people how we do that, right now.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Traditionally Associated Community**

Fishtown’s traditionally associated community is and was bound by ties of occupation and place. Within this community, the occupational knowledge and traditional cultural practices of the commercial fishery still are transmitted orally by imitation and example among fishery workers. As Bill Carlson says, “It takes more than one generation to make a fisherman.”<sup>70</sup>



Figure 60. Young Carlson’s crew learn the essential skills of a working fishery from more experienced workers, continuing the transmission of the fishery’s traditional cultural practices. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 3, 2019.

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<sup>68</sup> Peter H. Fricke, Support letter for Jeffris Heartland Fund application by the Fishtown Preservation Society, September 26, 2009, courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society.

<sup>69</sup> Bill Carlson, interviewed by Amanda Holmes, August 9, 2007, Fishtown Preservation Society, Leland, Michigan.

<sup>70</sup> Piet Bennett, “Long Family Tradition Nearing End for Many Lake Michigan Fishermen,” *Ludington Daily News*, 27 October 1977.

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Historically, the traditional community at Fishtown was comprised of local fishermen, their families, and those in the community who provided support to the fishing industry: truckers, farmers who made fish boxes, men who helped with the ice harvest, etc. At its peak in the 1920s, there were eight fishing rigs (today there are two). Even by the standards of the time, however, Fishtown's commercial fishing community was relatively small. Numbers have fallen since the peak period, but a small fishing community has persevered – a testament to the resilience of Fishtown's traditional occupational community. When the sea lamprey decimated lake trout and whitefish in the 1940s, for example, many fishermen quit or retired. Local media announced a requiem for Fishtown. The remaining fishermen here as elsewhere shifted to fishing chub and began fish smoking businesses. Fishtown's commercial fishing community survived. In the 1960s, when invasives, pesticides, government regulation, and a botulism scare all threatened the state's commercial fishing, Fishtown's remaining fishermen made the strategic move to cater to the growing tourist market as a means of survival for the fishery. The commercial fishing community survived. When gill nets were outlawed for state-licensed commercial fishermen in the 1960s, fishermen began the change to trap nets, a process that in Fishtown culminated in the launch of the *Joy* in 1981.

The small community associated with Fishtown's current commercial fishery, numbering one to two dozen, is part of this legacy of continuity and adaptation, today coping with invasive species, climate change, and restrictive government regulation. Alan Priest, the *Janice Sue* captain who also worked at Carlson's for years, explains the essence of working in the fishery. "It doesn't pay a lot of money. There's no benefits to it. You gotta do it because you love it."<sup>71</sup> The community includes the captains and fluctuating crew of the two working boats (current and former), truckers, carpenters, welders, and workers at Carlson's who are involved in all phases of fish processing. Many of these individuals wear more than one "hat," working on the lake and on shore. This small size is typical of other commercial fishery operations in Michigan. It is not the size of the community that matters, however, but rather the fact that Fishtown is a place that maintains traditional cultural practices of its longstanding commercial fishery.

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<sup>71</sup> Alan Priest interviewed by Michael Chiarappa, 1999.

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Figure 61, Crew of the *Joy* and workers from Carlson's help unload boxes of fish, with a young apprentice and visitors looking on. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 12, 2019.

Generational continuity has been essential to Fishtown's survival and continues to be an important characteristic of Michigan's commercial fisheries overall. As Alan Priest says of his mentors, the father-son team of Fred and Ross Lang, "They taught me how to work. I mean, you can't--if you want to be successful, you gotta work at it. You just can't show up for work and jump on the boat and go out and catch chubs. It doesn't work that way."<sup>72</sup> To survive and be successful, each generation has benefitted from knowledge inherited from its predecessors. During the 1970s, for example, Brian Price (now an FPS board member) crewed with the Langs and realized that his college degree only went so far on a fish boat. "It's not a random 'go out on the lakes with your nets and hope for the best,'" Price emphasized. "These people have generations of lore that they're going by, plus their own observations and their own gut instincts about where they can find fish."<sup>73</sup> Similar generational continuity has shaped shore work, where experienced workers informally train newer ones. Today's fishery workers include a mix of local residents and generational fishing families.

The family connection is typical of Michigan's commercial fisheries. Carlson's, for example, is co-owned by fifth-generation Nels Carlson, named for the first Carlson to fish here in the early 1900s. "Fishtown and the Fishery has always felt like home to me," Carlson says. "Continuing a tradition and a sense of community and heritage, that makes me very proud."<sup>74</sup> Other Carlson descendants currently crew on the *Joy* and work at Carlson's' as well as a descendant of the Maleski family that originally built Building 5.1. In addition, the Petersen family, historically

<sup>72</sup> Alan Priest, interviews by Michael Chiarappa, 1999.

<sup>73</sup> Brian Price, interviewed by Daniel Stewart for Fishtown Preservation Society, 21 May 2008, Leland, Michigan.

<sup>74</sup> Kim North Shine, "U-M Alum's Carlson's Fishery: A piece of Leland history leaving its mark on the local economy, state tourism and Michigan's waters. "This is Michigan, Stories of Our State. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, circa 2012. <https://impact.govrel.umich.edu/carlsons-fishery/>

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based in Muskegon, now also fish out of Fishtown, with current *Joy* captain Joel Petersen working on the vessel for more than a decade; his fluctuating crew may include his father, cousin, and wife in addition to workers from Carson's and elsewhere.

Fishtown's community has also benefitted from those who have moved here. Early generations of fishermen moved to Leland from North Manitou Island. During the 1940s and 1950s, Clarence Nash, originally from Grand Rapids, fished out of Building 15 with his partner L.J. Strayer from Whitehall. Fred and Ross Lang, Upper Peninsula natives, came to Fishtown in the 1960s via Alpena. Recent *Joy* captains Jerry VanLandSchoot and Joel Petersen, from Munising and Muskegon respectively, are now part of Fishtown tradition, as is *Janice Sue* captain Alan Priest, a longtime Leland resident who was born and raised in Lansing but has worked in Fishtown since the 1970s.



Figure 62. Alan Priest, once a mentee, now mentors youngsters in the skills of a commercial fishery. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, June 4, 2019.

There is also a broader community of commercial fishermen that connect with places like Fishtown. As the numbers of commercial fishermen have shrunk throughout the Great Lakes, those that remain have banded together in mutual support of their shared occupation. This includes formal organizations such as the Michigan Fish Producers Association, which is currently fighting the State of Michigan on behalf of its members, and as an informal support community where information, stories, and concerns are shared, and fish is sold from one producer to another. Carlson's, for example, now supplements local catch with fish from Cross Fisheries in Charlevoix, Petersen's Fishery in Muskegon, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, among others.

For the members of Fishtown's associated cultural community, this work is a job, but it is more than that. There is heritage and the experience of working with your hands in a special place.

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Bill Carlson speaks of the work as “tradition.” Jim VerSnyder talks about the brotherhood of the lake. Alan Priest puts it even more simply. “It’s not just a place. That’s my whole world.”<sup>75</sup>

## MARITIME HISTORY (TRANSPORTATION)

The Manitou Islands, especially the geographically closer North Manitou Island, have played an important role in the evolution of Leland and Fishtown. The islands were populated before the mainland, and many early European American settlers came to Leland via the Manitou, among them fishing families Clauss, Firestone, Maleski, Carlson, Johnson, and Buckler, and the Grosvenors with the mail boat and ferry. Leland also was the closest mainland port to North Manitou and the staging ground for a vital supply link to an island community that peaked around two hundred between 1910 and 1920.<sup>76</sup> Generations of mail boats doubling as ferries plied the Big Lake between the two, as the island enterprises morphed from sawmilling and cordwood production, commercial fishing and farming on cutover lands, resort colony, a revival of logging, corporate farming of the North Manitou Association, to private hunting preserve. Both Manitou Islands are currently part of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

During the nineteenth century, men with boats – including fishermen – provided impromptu ferry service across the Manitou Passage. In 1904, John Paetschow commissioned the *Lawrence*, a gasoline-powered launch that was the first boat built expressly as a passenger and mail boat. The *Lawrence* was longer in length than fish boats built at the same period (see Figure 11). A covered cabin was added in 1909 as protection for passengers, mail, and freight. From his base in Fishtown, Paetschow began operating his North Manitou Ferry Line during the peak era of Cottage Row, North Manitou’s resort colony, and occasionally brought excursions to Leland from the island.

In 1917, Tracy Grosvenor – John Paetschow’s brother-in-law – began assisting on the mail runs.<sup>77</sup> A member of the Grosvenor family has run the mail boat and ferry service since, each with a period of mentoring before assuming the helm. When Tracy Grosvenor joined the North Manitou Ferry Line, there was a growing need to transport passengers, timber, cherries, apples, and livestock. His son, George, recalled that “a small compass was his father’s only piece of navigation equipment. ‘He sailed by instinct more than anything else...he knew the waves.’”<sup>78</sup> John A. Johnson, the prolific local boat builder, made Tracy a new mail boat in 1919, most likely the *Bob*, which was his first boat after the *Lawrence*. Various vessels followed, some locally made, and others repurposed, such as the former Coast Guard cutter *Fern-L* and the John Johnson-built fish tug *The Smiling Thru*. The latter, in service from 1950-1964, was the last Leland-built ferry.

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<sup>75</sup> Alan Priest, interviewed by Daniel Stewart, February 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Based on 1910 and 1920 census data for North Manitou Island, duplicated in MacDonald and Alanen, *Tending a Comfortable Wilderness*, 2000, pp. 381-387.

<sup>77</sup> The *Michigan State Gazetteer* first lists Tracy Grosvenor as captain in the 1921-1922 edition.

<sup>78</sup> Tom Montgomery, “Manitou ferry ‘carryin’ the mail’ for 71 years, *Leelanau Enterprise*, Looking Back Issue, February 27, 1986 (Section 3, p 3).

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During the winter months, the mail boat was the lifeline for the small, otherwise isolated North Manitou community, bringing groceries from the Leland Mercantile, medical supplies, a doctor in times of emergency, and the comfort of the mail. The comings and goings of the mail boat were a frequent topic in the *Leelanau Enterprise* and even statewide papers, as in the 1931 *Detroit News* article “Defies Death To Get The Mail Through” with the caption, “The Needle’s Eye – with a handbreadth to spare between the boat and the icy piers; Capt. Grosvenor brings his boat into Leland’s harbor” (see Figure 63).



Figure 63. Fishtown fishermen help Tracy Grosvenor into port during a difficult winter crossing of the Manitou ferry and mail boat, 1931. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

The act of piloting a boat in the gales and ice floes of Lake Michigan created a special bond between fishermen and the mail boat captains. As Tracy’s grandson Mike Grosvenor described it:

Through the generations, just that whole Fishtown community seems to be kind of a brotherhood. And being able to be part of that brotherhood is to have those experiences that you share...It was a tight community, that you were all concerned over one another. You made sure everybody was home when they were supposed to be home.<sup>79</sup>

One such occasion occurred after World War II on George Grosvenor’s first trip out with his father Tracy. The boat “became locked in a grinding mass of ice which threatened to destroy the craft and take the crew to the bottom. They were trapped thirteen hours, but at dawn the ice broke enough to allow two fishing boats to force their way through and rescue the mail boat.”<sup>80</sup> And the bond was reciprocal. The *Smiling Thru*, for example, was part of the search party for

<sup>79</sup> Mike Grosvenor, interviewed by Daniel Stewart, October 9, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> “Postman Braves the Lake Alone.” *Leelanau Enterprise*, n.d. (circa 1958), Grosvenor Collection.

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Will and Pete Carlson after their boat the *Diamond* burned in 1941, and it towed the new hulls of the Steffens' fish tugs *Janice Sue* and *Mary Ann* from Marinette, Wisconsin, to Leland in 1958.

The ferry and mail boat lacked its own building in Fishtown until 1928, when the Manitou Island Association (MIA) funded construction of the new North Manitou Ferry Line warehouse and mail building (Building 13; see Photo 4) on a 16-foot-wide strip of riverfront near the dam. The MIA was a quasi-corporate entity of Chicago businessmen and professionals, successor to the earlier Manitou Island Syndicate, which by 1923 owned most of North Manitou Island and controlled the island's social and economic life. The MIA employed Tracy Grosvenor at the time. The Grosvenor's' ferry boats were moored in front of Building 13 until circa 1960, when the *Smiling Thru* no longer met government requirements for passenger boats. The *Namaycush* (1959) – renamed the *Manitou Isle* – became the first in a succession of new and larger boats. The latest is the *Mishe-Mokwa*, built in 1963 by J.W. Nolan and Sons of Erie, Pennsylvania and acquired by the Grosvenors from the Mackinac Island's Star Line in 1981. Larger boats were difficult to maneuver in the boat basin in front of Building 13, so the Grosvenors moved operations to the west end of the river. The move necessitated construction of two new ticket office and gift shop buildings in 1972 and 1980 respectively, built to be compatible with the historic shanties [Buildings 4 and 3]. After various uses, Building 13 became a private residence in 1980 and has since undergone significant change to its footprint.

The ferry service received a major boost as part of the Fishtown tourism boom. In 1946, when George Grosvenor started sailing with his father, tourist traffic was only seven hundred a year. Numbers increased with the establishment of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in 1970, and most importantly, the inclusion of South Manitou Island by the early 1970s and North Manitou Island in 1984. Renamed *Manitou Transit*, but still operated by the Grosvenors from Fishtown, the company first received the National Park Service concession for ferry service to the islands in 1986. By 2010, they carried more than ten thousand passengers a year.

In 2020, for the first time in over a century, the ferry did not operate due to unsafe dockage on South Manitou related to high lake levels. *Manitou Transit* ran again in 2021.

## COMMERCE (TOURISM)

Fishtown and Leland were part of the tourism boom that shaped Lake Michigan's coastal towns beginning in the late nineteenth century. Leland's reputation as an idyllic summer retreat had drawn wealthy summer resorters to the vicinity since the late 1800s. Recreation and tourism increasingly became the main economic engine for Leland during the twentieth century.

By the 1950s, Fishtown's abandoned former commercial fishing buildings faced an uncertain future. Several longtime summer residents purchased some of these buildings and became part of the preservation of Fishtown. In 1956, William F. Hall, a second-generation summer resorter from Ft. Wayne, Indiana, became the first non-fisherman to own a Fishtown shanty. He bought then-abandoned Building 16 from the Will Carlson estate as a place for holding parties. Hall's son, Charlie, was sixteen at the time of the purchase. "All I remember is, when I first saw the shanty, it was just falling in the water, literally. The floor was out of it or falling into the water.

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The walls were wrecked, crooked. The board was basically deteriorated – an abandoned building that was used as an outhouse by people in Fishtown.” Although the Halls did not acquire their shanty with preservation in mind, Bill Hall renovated the sagging structure. It remains a summer retreat for the Hall family.

In 1959, former fishermen Fred and Robert Buehrer sold their northside shanty (Building 6), originally built by Harting and Light. The purchaser was Carey Realty of Indianapolis, a family entity associated with summer resorter Alan Appel. Appel wanted dock space for his pleasure boat and had little interest in the building. Beginning in the early 1960s, he was the first to rent a shanty for retail use.<sup>81</sup> Commercial fishermen Hank Steffens Jr. and Leo Stallman Sr. followed suit, renting Building 1 – the old Steffens net shed – to artist Kenneth Krantz, who remodeled it as a retail shop. In 1969 summer resident Richard Braund built Building 9 for Steffens and Stallman as a “new shanty” that housed Braund’s gallery. In 1970, third-generation summer resident Lana Gits of Chicago renovated Building 2, the ice house, for retail. (Ice houses became obsolete after 1960 when fishermen adopted electric freezers.) Retail offered a low impact means to re-purpose abandoned shanties as the fishing economy continued to decline.

By the 1960s Leelanau County’s Economic Development Committee listed tourism, not commercial fishing, as fundamental to Leland’s future. Its report portrayed “colorful old Fishtown” as an artist mecca and “the most photographed spot in Leelanau County,” a historic rather than active fishing village (despite the presence of four working fish tugs).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Dan C. Appel, interviewed by Laurie Kay Sommers for Fishtown Preservation Society, July 30, 2010, Leland, Michigan; Ken Krantz, interviewed by Laurie Kay Sommers for Fishtown Preservation Society, February 5, 2001, Suttons Bay, Michigan.

<sup>82</sup> *Leelanau County “Land of Delight” Overall Economic Development Program for Leelanau County*, State of Michigan, submitted to the Economic Development Administration by the Leelanau County Economic Development Committee, 1966, pp. 52 and 58.

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Figure 64, George Cook at a north-side net reel, while tourists watch, circa 1950s, courtesy of Traverse Area Historical Society.

In addition to the adaptive reuse of abandoned shanties, two new (and at the time controversial) Modernistic buildings were constructed for the growing tourism market. Completed in the mid-1960s, Fisherman's Cove Restaurant (Building 11) and Falling Waters Lodge (Building 12) anchored Fishtown's eastern boundary. The Leland River Dam was then privately owned by J. Fred Hollinger, for whom Falling Waters was built. The Hollingers hired the local architectural firm of G. Tsutomu Arai and Roger Hummel in part because the firm had a reputation for design of summer homes and cottages for clients with a taste for Modernism. Hummel was a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Architecture, and Falling Waters was his first large project. His subsequent plans for the Cove Restaurant, owned by Hollinger's son Jack, were so altered by his client that he disavowed the building. Hummel was acutely aware of Fishtown's location and experimented with various designs. Ultimately, he chose something completely different, preferring not to mimic Fishtown's shanties but rather allude to them through use of cedar shake roofing material.

The completion of Leland's long-awaited harbor of refuge in 1969 coincided with the Department of Natural Resources' wildly successful salmon planting experiment. Pacific Coho

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and Chinook salmon boosted the sport fishery and served as predators for the exploding invasive alewife population. The harbor completion further bolstered tourism to Fishtown and facilitated the emergence of charter boats based in the river alongside the remaining commercial fishing tugs. Fishtown's first two full-time licensed charter fishermen, Jim Munoz and Jack Duffy, began in 1972, and those two are still in operation in 2021.

By the mid-1970s Fishtown was attracting an estimated two thousand to three thousand tourists daily. Some residents became concerned that the new developments were compromising the community's sense of place. While the new harbor and marina provided an economic boost, they also brought increased pollution and crowds that changed the character of Fishtown. Leland was beginning to revise its zoning ordinance to protect its waterfront and small-town atmosphere from unwanted development. Residents called on Michigan's newly instituted State Historic Preservation Office to move forward with the Leland Historic District Nomination, which included Fishtown and Leland's historic downtown.

For Bill Carlson, the turning point was the construction of the Cove and Falling Waters Lodge (Buildings 11 and 12). Carlson felt that the two massive concrete buildings "changed the authenticity of Fishtown." He had a different vision, grounded in his experience as a fourth-generation fisherman.<sup>83</sup> He and his brothers Mark and Leon formed Carlson Properties and, in 1977, began buying former fishing buildings as they became available. Their efforts began with two purchases: Building 7, the Steffens and Stallman building on the river's north bank, and Building 15, the former Cook and Brown shanty to the south. He and fellow fisherman Jim VerSnyder did much of the repair and renovation themselves. Bill Carlson also developed his own retail businesses to occupy former fishing buildings and keep tourism growing. Carlson's underlying philosophy was to replicate Fishtown of the 1930s and 1940s. He strove to keep the site layout true to its past. The original location of Reflections gallery, for example [Building 9 built by Richard Braund for the Steffens], seemed out of place – a shanty look-alike situated back from the river where an ice house used to be. He relocated the building to the river's edge near the site of the former Price shanties and in 1979 built two-story Building 10 to emulate the look and feel of an ice house. He placed it near the former site of Oscar Price's ice house.

The last resource Carlson purchased, in 2001, was Building 6, the old Harting and Light shanty then belonging to the Appel family. By this time Carlson Properties was seeking another entity to take over Fishtown. "We founded the Fishtown Preservation Society to try to keep us in the fishing business," Bill Carlson recalled. "We set this all up in 2001, saying 'Fishing is my life, not Fishtown. If I can't fish, I'm going to sell Fishtown.' That got things started."<sup>84</sup> The mission of FPS soon shifted to saving Fishtown as an active fishery and to preserving the historic integrity of its buildings. From the beginning, Carlson hoped he would find a buyer who shared his vision. Fortunately, in 2004, the Carlsons turned FPS over to a group of dedicated citizens who sought to purchase and preserve the property. By 2007, FPS completed acquisition of the land and structures between the Cove Restaurant and *Manitou Transit* on the north side of the

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<sup>83</sup> Bill Carlson, interview, August 9, 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Carlson, interview, 2010; Bill Carlson, interview, August 13, 2007; Bill O'Brien, "Historic Fishtown faces sale, uncertain future," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, June 12, 2005.

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Leland River, the two fish tugs *Joy* and *Janice Sue*, and their equipment and licenses. Fishtown was saved, but the challenging work of maintaining, sustaining, and interpreting a historic working waterfront was just beginning.

## **INVENTORY OF SIGNIFICANCE AND USE (CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES)**

\*\* Designates resources that support traditional cultural practices.

*Introductory note:* this inventory of building use is organized numerically (buildings) and then alphabetically (structures and sites). Headings provide: the resource number or letter, then its historic name, and its common name in parentheses.

### **Building 1, Henry Steffens Net Shed (Fishtown Welcome Center)**

Building 1 is significant as the district's remaining historic net shed that dates to c. 1926 and the peak commercial fishing era. Along with the neighboring ice house to which it was once attached (Building 2), it represents continuity of the historic support and circulation zone on Fishtown's north side. It served fishermen originally operating out of Building's 6 and 7: William Harting and Otto Light, and Henry Steffens Sr. After Harting and Light retired in 1948, Steffens stored gill nets and fuel here. Following Steffens' 1954 retirement, he leased the building to son Hank (Henry Jr.) and son-in-law Leo Stallman Sr.; however, during the early 1960s, the botulism scare and state licensing changes put Steffens-Stallman out of the fishing business and ended the building's commercial fishing use. Building 1 then became the second Fishtown building to transition to adaptive reuse for the growing tourism market. Steffens and Stallman began renting the building in 1967; the first renter was artist-architect Kenneth Krantz, who relocated his Studio 2 art and collectables store here from its original location in Building 6. Since the 1970s, various merchants have rented the building, among them Stained Glass Cabinet Company, Phyllis LeMar (t-shirts, resort clothing and fudge), and Tug Stuff (fish tug-based apparel). It currently houses the FPS Welcome Center.

### **Building 2, Harting and Light and Henry Steffens Ice House (Ice House)**

Building 2, circa 1926, is one of two surviving ice houses that historically fulfilled the crucial function of storing ice used to cool and pack fish. It is the only one on the north side. At least six ice houses once stood on the site, all linked to communal ice harvests that occurred on nearby Lake Leelanau. "They put ice in," remembered Bill Carlson, "and then they'd fill up with sawdust, and put another layer of ice. It was all sawdust inside... They'd bring the trucks down and fill it. Mostly they filled it from the [north] side. They had a little conveyor of guys doing it, and they'd fill it up. 'Cause there was a higher bank on the [north] side. And then we took the ice out on this side [south]... They could just drive the ice trucks down there (referring to the road). I helped... We'd throw [the ice] out... As you filled it up with ice, you'd put slats across, and as you took it out, you'd pull the slats out and then you'd throw the blocks of ice out and drag them down to the river and wash them off, and then go shave them. Crushed ice."<sup>85</sup> Together with Building 1 – the historic Steffens net shed – Building 2 is the only vestige of the historic north side support and circulation zone. Fishing partners William Harting and Otto Light reputedly built this ice house in 1926, the year they also constructed their riverfront shanty (Building 6). By 1928, Henry J. Steffens Sr. (fishing out of Building 7) shared the ice house. Steffens may also

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<sup>85</sup> Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder. Interview by Laurie Sommers, May 25, 2010.

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have assisted in its construction, which coincided with new regulations for icing fish during the 1920s. By the 1950s, Building 2 had become the sole northside ice house and was owned by the two remaining northside fishermen, the Carlsons and Steffens-Stallman. Co-owner was Carey Realty, a business owned by the Appel Family of Indianapolis – Leland summer residents who had purchased Building 6 in 1959. With the rise of electric freezers during the 1960s, ice houses became obsolete. Building 2 fell into disuse. Please see Figures 52 and 53.

The 1960s coincided with the growth of tourism and the adaptive reuse of Fishtown. One of the early shopkeepers, Susann Craig, used the ice house lower level for storage for her store Limited Ltd., then based in nearby Building 6. The retail transformation of the ice house began in 1970, when 18-year-old Lana Gits, the daughter of summer residents, renovated the building into the “Ice House” gallery and retail space. Another summer resident, Phyllis LeMar, opened a gift shop, also called the Ice House, during the early 1970s. LeMar was the first to sell t-shirts in Fishtown. Later, fisherman Bill Carlson used the building for Carp River Trading Company, part of his effort to harness local tourism as a strategy to save Fishtown. Various retail shops subsequently occupied the building. Since the mid-1980s, when fishermen Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder raised the building three feet, both the lower and upper levels have been used.



Figure 65, Interior of unidentified ice house, with Percy Guthrie setting an ice block with special ice tongs. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 66, Loading a long demolished southside ice house with a runner slide, circa 1930s. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

#### **Building 4, The Porthole Building, Manitou Ferry Service Ticket Office (Manitou Transit Ticket Office)**

Building 4 was built in 1972 with repurposed lumber from South Manitou Island for the Manitou Ferry Service’s new location at the river’s mouth. It has served as the Manitou ferry ticket office and gift shop from its construction to the present.

#### **\*\*Building 5, Nelson and Maleski Shanty; Kaapke and Firestone Shanty (Carlson’s)**

This building combines two shanties: the circa 1926 Kaapke and Firestone shanty (5.2) and the 1928 Nelson and Maleski shanty (5.1). It is the district’s most significant building: without it Fishtown would lose its most vital living link to the commercial fishing heritage. Shanties historically served a dual function. The front half closest to the river was used for packing and processing fish; fishermen used the rear for storage and repair of nets and equipment. Photo 24, of a different shanty, illustrates this traditional use of space. This use shifted in 1965 when the two historic shanties (5.1 and 5.2) were combined: 5.1 became the retail portion of the building,

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and 5.2 the fish processing portion. Fish smoking, an important traditional cultural activity today, also has historic antecedents in both original shanties. Traditional cultural practices are on view daily during the season as crews in Carlson's sharpen specialized knives, dress fish at the fillet table, brine fish and place them on the smoking racks, and make whitefish pâté and trout sausage. Workers frequently educate visitors about their occupation, describing the traditional skills of a commercial fishery operation and the history of Fishtown. Please see Figures 59 and 69, and Photo 25.



Figure 67, The shanty's that make up present-day Building 5 have been in continuous use for shore work since their construction in the 1920s. Here, Gordon Carlson mends gill nets, likely in Building 5.2, circa 1940s. Photo courtesy of Dick Carlson. Figure 68, Smoking chubs at Carlsons, circa 1970s, showing the rack and nail system for hanging chub, used by Carlsons since the 1940s. Photo courtesy of Alan Priest.



Figure 69, This shanty has been the site of fish processing since its construction in the 1920s. Here, Nels Carlson and Alan Priest of Carlson's place chunked whitefish on the smoking rack. Chub is rare in today's fishery. Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers, 2010.

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### **Building 6, Harting and Light Shanty (Tug Stuff)**

Building 6 is significant as an adaptively reused former commercial fishing shanty with a high degree of architectural integrity. Commercial fisherman used the areas in and around shanties for net building, cleaning, and repair; filling needles used to repair nets; casting leads for nets; building and repairing buoys; and filleting and packing fish. From circa 1926 and continuing for 20 years, brothers-in-law William Harting and Otto Light based their commercial fishing operation here. Then, from 1947-1958, a younger generation of commercial fishermen—brothers Fred and Bob Buehrer—continued the building's use as a fish shanty. Building 6 also is significant as the first former fishing building converted to retail use. Beginning in the early 1960s, Jim Sawtelle located his dive and shipwreck furniture shop, Treasure Cove, in the building. In 1959, Carey Realty of Indianapolis had purchased the former fishing shanty to provide space for docking the family boat. The realty was a family company that included Leland summer resident Allen Appel. This was the third shanty repurposed by summer residents beginning in the late 1950s. The Appels rented the building to various shopkeepers through 2001, among them artist-architect Ken Krantz, who, in 1966, opened the Leland branch of his Inter-Arts Studio, called Studio 2, before relocating to Building 1 the following summer; and then Susann Craig, a women's wholesale clothing representative in Chicago, who – with a brief hiatus – housed her clothing stores Limited Ltd. and Lima Bean, Too, from 1978-2001. In 2001, Carlson Properties purchased the building as the last piece of their Fishtown acquisitions on the north side of the river. FPS acquired the building in 2007. Chrissy Chatfield rented Building 6 through 2015 for the Fishtown branch of her popular girls' clothing store, the Crib. It currently houses another retail shop, also owned by Chatfield, Tug Stuff.

### **Building 7, Johnson and Carlson shanty and Henry J. Steffens Shanty (Steffens and Stallman Shanty; Diversions)**

The significance of this shanty stems from its relatively unchanged appearance; its status as the oldest surviving former commercial fishing building on the north side (dating to 1905); and its association with two venerable Fishtown commercial fishing families—the Carlsons and the Steffens'. Commercial fisherman used the areas in and around shanties for net building, cleaning, and repair; filling needles used to repair nets; casting leads for nets; building and repairing buoys; and filleting and packing fish. The shanty's builders, Norwegian immigrant Severt Johnson and Swedish immigrant Nels Carlson, represent the movement of early commercial fishing families from North Manitou Island to Leland. Nels was the first of the five generations of Carlsons to work in the local commercial fishing industry. By 1919 he had transferred his shanty to the young Henry Steffens, beginning an association of the Steffens with this building that lasted until 1973. In keeping with the familial ties endemic to Fishtown, Steffens leased the shanty to his son, Hank Jr., and son-in-law, Leo Stallman Sr. Stallman's son Leo Jr. was the last of the line to work in the building, smoking fish here from 1971-1973. Building 7 was purchased by Carlson Properties in 1977, and the building soon shifted to retail use. Long-time tenant Phil Anderson, with his retail shop Diversions, began renting here in 1978. After FPS acquired the building in 2007, it became the model for their approach to rehabilitation; in 2010, Easling Construction completed rehabilitation work on the badly deteriorated and sagging shanty according to the Secretary of Interior's standards, following the preservation plan by architect Richard Neumann of Petoskey, Michigan (see Figure 18).

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### **Building 8, Louis Steffens Shanty (Village Cheese Shanty)**

Building 8 is significant as Fishtown's last commercial fishing shanty and the only one constructed by an outside contractor rather than by a fisherman. At the time of its completion in 1959-1960, it was the first new fishing shanty in 30 years and the first "modern" shanty with concrete floors. Louis Steffens, son to Henry Sr., had the shanty built by a local contractor. Steffens and his brother Hank had brought the first steel-hulled fish tugs to Fishtown; Louis Steffens' boat, the *Janice Sue*, is one of Fishtown's working commercial fishing vessels. His premature death from cancer in 1964 ended his use of the building, and his father Henry Sr. housed his fish smoking operation here. During the late 1960s, the Steffens' built two concrete block smokehouses nearby; one of these is an antecedent to Structure F. During the 1970s, the building had various retail tenants, both before and after Carlson Properties acquired the building in 1977. Its tenants have operated a cheese and sandwich shop since circa 1980, first Eloise Telgaard Fah's Cheese Shop (Fah was Bill Carlson's aunt), and Dave Kareck's the Village Cheese Shanty (circa 1999-present). The building was the first of the FPS "shanty-lifts" in 2020 that addressed record high water and flooding. Please see Photos 2 and 12, and Figure 20.

### **Building 9, Reflections (Dam Candy Store)**

Building 9 is significant as the first fisherman-owned "shanty" built expressly for Fishtown's growing retail and tourism market. Steffens and Stallman hired Richard Braund, a long-time Leland summer resident, to construct the building, and Braund became the first tenant with his art gallery, Reflections. After Carlson Properties 1977 purchase, Bill Carlson moved Building 9 to its present riverfront location to be more in keeping with Fishtown's historic site configuration. He and his (now former) wife Dawn opened the Fishtown Candy Company here to cater to the family tourism market. Bill Carlson later renamed the building the Dam Candy Store.

### **Building 11, Fisherman's Cove Restaurant (The Cove)**

Building 11 was designed by Suttons Bay architect Roger Hummel of the firm of Glen T. Arai and Roger Hummel. The firm also designed summer homes for clients with a taste for Modernism. Hummel disavowed the building during construction, citing extensive changes to the original design by client Jack Hollinger. The building is notable for its unique dam-side location, Modernistic design with cantilevered sections over the dam, and contribution to Fishtown's tourism appeal.

### **Building 12, Falling Waters Lodge**

Building 12 is Fishtown's first architect-designed building, also by Suttons Bay architect Roger Hummel. The building is notable for its unique dam-side location and creative adaptation to a challenging site, Modernistic design with Prairie School influences, and contribution to Fishtown's tourism appeal. After considering various designs, Hummel opted for this large Modernistic concrete building with a cedar shake roof. The roof is intended to complement Fishtown's wooden shanties, but Hummel decided his design should not mimic Fishtown's wooden shanties. At the time of completion, Falling Waters was controversial and seen as detracting from Fishtown. Its construction motivated Bill Carlson to begin his efforts to save Fishtown by purchasing shanties as they became available.

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**\*\*Building 14, Smith-Buckler Shanty (Morris Shanty)**

Building 14 is significant as the oldest southside building in continuous use for commercial fishing, used as such since the early 1900s. It is also the only shanty purchased by a summer resident with the intention that it be used exclusively for commercial fishing purposes. For more than a century, this shanty has housed traditional cultural activities associated with shore work and provided the context for passing occupational knowledge and narratives from generation to generation. In 1959, summer resident Adelia Ball Morris purchased the shanty to ensure its commercial fishing use. A long-time friend of fisherman Roy Bucker, she made this extraordinary gesture at a time when many shanties were vacant or being purchased for private use. In 1985, Morris secured the building's future by gifting it to the Leelanau Historical Museum for use by Fishtown's commercial fishermen. FPS took over the lease in 2007, and in March 2016 purchased the building from the Museum. Now renamed the Morris Shanty, Building 14 is used to store equipment and repair nets, continuing over a century of commercial fishing use. Please see Figures 30, 32, and 55, and Photo 24.



Figure 70, There are no extant photos of net repair in this shanty from the peak fishing period, but we know the building has been in continuous use for this and other commercial fishing use since the 1910s. Here, Unknown fishermen build nets in an unidentified shanty, circa 1930s. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 71, Alan Priest, captain of the *Janice Sue* slugs (repairs) gill nets in Building 14, continuing its historic commercial fishing use. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, 2010.

**Building 15, Cook and Brown Shanty (The Otherside)**

Building 15 is significant as the oldest surviving building in Fishtown and its oldest fishing shanty. Commercial fisherman used the areas in and around shanties for net building, cleaning, and repair; filling needles used to repair nets; casting leads for nets; building and repairing buoys; and filleting and packing fish. It has been associated with a succession of prominent local fishermen, among them George Cook and his son Marvin, Clarence Nash and L. J. Strayer (the latter originally from Whitehall, Michigan), Louis Steffens, and Fred and Ross Lang (originally from Fayette, Michigan who came to Leland via Alpena). George Cook was a particularly colorful individual who became the subject of paintings, photos, and tourist interest in later life. Carlson Properties purchased the building in 1977 and, in 2001-2002, converted it to a vacation

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rental condo with plans by Suttons Bay preservation architect, David Hanawalt. Please see Figures 58 and 59.

### **Building 16, Price and Carlson Shanty (Hall Shanty)**

Building 16 is significant for its association with two early and important commercial fishing families – Price and Carlson – and as the first fishing shanty to be purchased by a summer resident. Commercial fisherman used the areas in and around shanties for net building, cleaning, and repair; filling needles used to repair nets; casting leads for nets; building and repairing buoys; and filleting and packing fish. Builder Warren Price began on his own before partnering with Will Carlson in 1924. In 1941, Will was based in this shanty when he and son Pete had their tragic accident: their boat the Diamond caught fire, and Will drowned. During the 1940s, various fishermen worked on nets in the west half of the building (the east half at one time was an ice house). It then fell into disuse. In 1956, summer resorter William F. Hall of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, purchased the badly deteriorated and abandoned building from the Will Carlson estate and converted the former shanty into a place for family gatherings and parties. As remembered by Hall’s son Charlie, “The price was about 600-700 bucks.”<sup>86</sup> The Halls subsequently acquired crude property to the west toward Lake Michigan, originally created from dredging and construction of the new harbor during the late 1960s. They eventually gifted much of the land to the Leelanau Conservancy. The Hall family continues to use the building as a cottage.

### **\*\*Building 17, Shed**

Building 17 is significant as the only surviving support and circulation zone building on the south side. Along with shanties and ice houses, net sheds and storage sheds have been an important feature of commercial fishing landscapes. Utilitarian and basic in design, they are nonetheless essential. Like Building 17, they were placed to the rear of the shanties. Building 17 is the only historic shed still used for commercial fishing. It has been used to store ice making equipment. Please see Photo 18.

### **\*\*Structures A and F, Smokehouses**

Smokehouses are ephemeral structures that support the traditional cultural activity of fish smoking. Structures A and F, built between 2013 and 2014, replaced older structures, and those in turn were not the first in Fishtown. Although Fishtown fishermen smoked sturgeon for sale beginning in the early 1900s, fish smoking expanded during the late 1940s when fishermen turned to smoked chub as a source of livelihood in the wake of the sea lamprey devastation. Initial fish smoking activities took place off site. The Carlsons were the first in the Leland area to smoke chub. The *Grand Rapids Herald* reported in 1958, “they sell about 500 pounds of smoked fish a week. Others in the area, fishermen and even store keepers, intrigued by smoked-fish profits made by the Carlsons, soon followed suit until a brisk competition has been built up in the past 10 years.”<sup>87</sup> The present smokehouses rest on the approximate locations of previous structures that served the smoking operations of the Steffens and Carlsons respectively – both families with deep commercial fishing roots in Fishtown. Today the entire process is heavily regulated by the government, with temperature requirements, special probes, and thermometers,

<sup>86</sup> Charlie Hall, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, June 28, 2010.

<sup>87</sup> *Grand Rapids Herald*, July 20, 1958.

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although there is still the element of “feel” based on experience. Originally, however, fishermen had no modern technology to tell when the fish were done, instead judging readiness by the look of the eyes and skin color. Today, smoked fish is a mainstay of Carlson’s Fishery. Carlson’s uses both structures A and F and has expanded their product line to include whitefish, trout, farm-raised salmon (since they are not allowed to fish salmon), smoked whitefish pâté, and trout sausage, in addition to beef and turkey jerky. Chubs are in decline and are rarely available. Please see Figures 60 and 61.



Figure 72, Terry and Roy Buckler removing chubs from the predecessor to Structure F, 1960s. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 73, Freshly smoked fish on the smoking rack are removed from Structure A. Photo by Amanda Holmes, July 3, 2018.

### **Structure L, *Mishe-Mokwa* (Manitou Island Transit Ferry)**

The *Mishe-Mokwa*, built in 1963, is the latest in a series of ferries used by Manitou Island Transit and its predecessors. Members of the Grosvenor family have operated the ferry service since 1917. Along with the commercial fishing boats, the Manitou ferries have been part of the working waterfront in what is now Fishtown since the nineteenth century. Originally the service had smaller boats docked in front of Building 13 near the dam. With the arrival of larger vessels, the ferry operation moved to the river’s mouth. In keeping with the typical life of many working boats, the *Mishe-Mokwa* was not new when purchased by the Grosvenors. Built as the *Patricia* in 1963 by J.W. Nolan and Sons of Erie, Pennsylvania, the vessel – renamed *Sunshine City*, was owned by the St. Petersburg (Florida) Cruise Lines from 1974-75; by the Argosy Boat Line in St. Ignace, Michigan, from 1975-78; by the Star Line Mackinac Island Passenger Service in St. Ignace Michigan and renamed *LaSalle* from 1978-80, and by Manitou Island Transit as the *Mishe-Mokwa* since 1981. While the ferry originally carried freight, mail, and passengers, the *Mishe-Mokwa* serves tourism with sunset cruises and excursions to South Manitou Island under a National Park Service concession. Please see Photo 20.

### **\*\*Structure M (*Joy*); Structure N (*Janice Sue*): the Working Boats**

Fishtown’s existence is tied to the proximity of the Lake Michigan fishing grounds and the boats that connected landscape to waterscape. The latest of these, the gill-netter *Janice Sue* (1958) and the trap-netter *Joy* with the associated skiff (1981/2012) are essential to the maintenance of traditional cultural practices in the working waterfront. They keep the waterfront “working.” The *Joy* has been in continuous use since her initial launch, excepting a period six years, from 2003 to 2009. The *Janice Sue* has been in continuous use except for the same 2003 to 2009 period and

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since 2012, when she has fished only occasionally due to declining chub populations. She will resume fishing when the chub population rebounds. The *Joy's* current skiff, needed for setting and collecting nets, has been in continuous use since its completion in 2012. Fishtown's commercial fishermen have passed down traditional environmental knowledge of the names and locations of fishing banks; techniques for setting, pulling, and lifting nets; setting buoys; and navigation in bad weather. Traditional cultural activity on each vessel is somewhat different, as described in the "Daily Life" section. Please see Figures 43, 62 and 63, and Photos 16, 21, and 22.



Figure 74, *Joy* Captain Joel Petersen (left) setting trap nets at dawn with his father, Alan Petersen, May 27, 2017. Photo by Raquel Jimenez, Fishtown Preservation Society. Figure 75, Alan Priest and Albert Gunderson setting gill nets on the *Janice Sue*, 2010. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography.

### **\*\*Structures O and P, Docks**

As historic and ongoing places for commercial fishery activity, the Fishtown docks are essential locations for the maintenance of traditional cultural practices. The Fishtown docks continue their historic use as a space for mooring boats and loading and unloading fish and equipment. Please see Figures 30, 64, and 65.



Figure 76, Unloading the day's catch on the north dock, circa 1930. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 77, Joel Petersen (right) and Darryl Herman unloading the day's catch from the *Joy* on Structure O, the north dock, looking west. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography, July 24, 2015.

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### Site Q, Leland River

The Leland (historically Carp) River is the reason for Fishtown's existence, the physical link between shore work and lake work, and the hub for traditional cultural practices associated with the commercial fishery, past and present. Please see Photos 1, 3, and 22, and Figures 78 and 79.



Figure 78, The *Etta* moored by Building 5.2, as Henry Steffens and the *Helen S* head out of the Leland River, circa 1930. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society. Figure 79, Captain Joel Petersen and crew guide the *Joy* into the Leland River after fishing in Lake Michigan. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography, 2016.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF RESOURCES LESS THAN 50 YEARS OF AGE

Two resources, Building 4 and Structure M, achieved significance in less than fifty years. They are both integral parts of a district in which most resources are over fifty years old.

Building 4, the Manitou Transit Ticket Office, is a contributing building within the transportation subtheme of the maritime history area of significance. It dates to 1972. Building 4 meets the requirements of National Register Bulletin 22, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*, for including resources that are less than fifty years old but are integral components of a historic district. Its wood construction and scale are compatible with Fishtown's historic shanties. The Grosvenor family – associated with the ferry service since 1917 – constructed the building using cedar planks from an old South Manitou logging camp in homage to the ferry's historic connection with the island. The building occupies the original site of the historic Nelson and Maleski Shanty (Building 5.1) and represents the circa 1960 relocation of the Manitou ferry operation from Building 13 to its present site at the west end of Fishtown near the river's mouth.

Structure M, the *Joy* trap net boat (M1), is a pivotal resource built in Leland in 1981 by George Stevens and fisherman Ross Lang. Together with the gill-netter *Janice Sue* (Structure N), the *Joy* represents the continuity of commercial fishing boats in Fishtown and the latest in a series of changing boat types. The *Joy* is Fishtown's first and only trap-netter. Although trap nets had been used in the Great Lakes as early as the mid-nineteenth century, their current dominance in the lakes represents the latest chapter in the region's commercial fishing history, as state regulations forced many gill net fishermen, like Lang, to make the costly switch to trap net gear

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and boats. Of Fishtown's two working boats, the *Joy* fishes the most regularly and is integral to ongoing commercial fishing operations. The presence of working commercial fishing boats in the river visually distinguishes Fishtown from most other waterfronts in the state. The *Joy* has exceptional significance within a district where most resources are more than 50 years old. The *Joy* is associated with two skiffs, the *Titanic* (M2) and the new skiff (M3). The former was built along with the *Joy*. The latter replaced the *Titanic* in 2012. Skiffs are used for setting and pulling nets and are only used in conjunction with the main vessel.

The predecessors to Structures A and F, both contributing smokehouses, were noted in the 1975 Leland Historic District. Due to the ephemeral nature of smokehouses, the current iterations of A and F date to 2013-14. Despite the recent construction date, however, these resources are integral to traditional cultural activities at Fishtown. Fish smoking is a longstanding traditional practice among Fishtown's commercial fishermen and important within the maritime history area of significance. Fishtown documentation lacks specific information on the design and construction techniques of the earliest smokehouses. Photos from the 1960s and 1970s show concrete block buildings with wood doors. The immediate predecessors to current Structures A and F were built by fishermen Bill Carlson and Jim VerSnyder. Carlson welded the fireboxes for both. Smokehouse F follows the older designs and is similar to a fisherman-built smokehouse that once stood north of Building 8. The two men came up with their own design for the earlier version of Smokehouse A, which in turn shaped the design of current Structure A. When Structures A and F were built in 2013-14, architect Gene Hopkins of HopkinsBurns Design Studio consulted with Nels Carlson, Joe Campo, and Alan Priest of Carlson's Fishery on specifications. Among other modifications, doors are now steel rather than wood. The fireboxes were locally welded but not by fishermen. The continuing presence of smokehouses and fish smoking is essential to maintaining the traditional cultural significance of Fishtown.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Fishtown Preservation Society, Leland, MI

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

Fishtown Historic District  
Name of Property

Leelanau County, MI  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 1.86

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 45.023970 | Longitude: -85.762038 |
| 2. Latitude: 45.023142 | Longitude: -85.761056 |
| 3. Latitude: 45.023066 | Longitude: -85.760831 |
| 4. Latitude: 45.022805 | Longitude: -85.760962 |
| 5. Latitude: 45.022877 | Longitude: -85.761158 |
| 6. Latitude: 45.022751 | Longitude: -85.761292 |
| 7. Latitude: 45.023176 | Longitude: -85.762606 |
| 8. Latitude: 45.023513 | Longitude: -85.762075 |
| 9. Latitude: 45.023661 | Longitude: -85.762478 |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Fishtown Historic District  
Name of Property

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

From Norwest corner of tax parcel 009-610-207-00 where it meets Leland Harbor [latitude/longitude (1)] approximately 410 feet southeast to latitude/longitude point (2) along the southern edge of West River Street; continue easterly approximately 63 feet to latitude/longitude point (3); continue south along the east boundary of tax parcel 009-610-401-10 approximately 112 feet to latitude/longitude point (4); continue west approximately 66 feet along the north bank of the Leland River to the northeast edge of the Leland Township Dam at latitude/longitude point (5); continue south approximately 68 feet to the southeast corner of tax parcel 009-610-201-00 at latitude/longitude point (6); continue west along the south edge of W. Avenue A approximately 362 feet to the southwest corner of tax parcel 009-610-205-00 at latitude/longitude point (7); continue north approximately 179 feet along the western boundary of tax parcel 009-610-205-00 to latitude/longitude point (8); continue northwest along the south bank of the Leland River approximately 103 feet to latitude/longitude point (9); continue northeast across the river approximately 186 feet to latitude/longitude point (1).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries follow the general historic and geographic boundaries of Fishtown as well as the outer boundaries of the relevant tax parcel lots.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Laurie Kay Sommers  
organization: Laurie Kay Sommers Cultural Consulting  
street & number: 4292 Tacoma Blvd.  
city or town: Okemos state: MI zip code: 48864  
e-mail: folklaurie@gmail.com  
telephone: 517-899-6964  
date: September 29, 2021

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**Additional Documentation**

Fishtown Historic District  
Name of Property

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Fishtown Historic District

City or Vicinity: Leland (Leland Township)

County: Leelanau

State: MI

Photographer: Various, see entry

Date Photographed: Various, see entry

Fishtown Historic District

Leelanau County, MI

Name of Property

County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 22. Fishtown looking west from the dam (Structure R) along Leland River (Site Q) toward Lake Michigan. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. July 3, 2019.
- 2 of 22. Fishtown's "Main Street" looking southwest with Buildings 8 and 7 on left; 1 (foreground), and 2 on right. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. June 30, 2019.
- 3 of 22. Aerial view showing Fishtown's site configuration and environs including the marina parking lot to the north and the village of Leland to the north and east. Photographer: Rick Lahmann. c. late 1990s.
- 4 of 22. North elevation of Building 2, looking south. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 5 of 22. District Buildings 4 and 5, looking northeast, west and south elevations of Building 4, with porthole window on the south elevation and Building 5 to the east. Photographer: Leelanau Historical Society. October 9, 2019.
- 6 of 22. From left, south elevations of Buildings 6, 2, and 7, looking north. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 7 of 22. North elevation of Building 5.1, looking south. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 8 of 22. West and south elevations of Building 5.2, looking east. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 9 of 22. North side of river, from left, Buildings 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, looking west/northwest toward Lake Michigan. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. October 8, 2020.
- 10 of 22. From left, Building 10 (in the original location of Building 9) and Building 9, looking southeast from West River Street. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. December 17, 2020.
- 11 of 22. Building 11, west and south elevations, looking northeast from across the river. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 3, 2020.

Fishtown Historic District

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- 12 of 22. From right, looking northeast: Building 14 west and north elevations (taken when Building 15 was lifted from its riverfront site to the west and placed behind Building 14); Building 13 west and north elevations; Building 12 west and north elevations. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. December 17, 2020.
- 13 of 22. Fishtown's south side from left, looking northeast: Buildings 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, with the *Joy* uncharacteristically moored in front of Building 15, since high water made Building 14 unusable. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 14 of 22. Rear of southside shanties looking northeast, with west and south elevations of Building 16 (far left) with Building 15 just beyond. Building 16's former ice house dormer is clearly visible with the long multi-light window in what was once the ice house "door" opening. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 4, 2020.
- 15 of 22. From left (looking northeast), south (rear) elevations of Buildings 13, 14, 15 with Building 17 in the foreground. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. June 18, 2020.
- 16 of 22. Fish on smoking racks about to enter the double smokehouse, Structure A, looking northwest. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 22, 2018.
- 17 of 22. Structure L (*Mishe-Mokwa*), moored at mouth of Site Q (Leland River) west of Building 3, facing northwest. Photographer: Evan Hall. August 20, 2020.
- 18 of 22. Structure M (*Joy*) in front of (from left) Buildings 15 and 16, facing southwest. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. June 6, 2020.
- 19 of 22. Structure M.1 (*Joy*) pulling Structure M.3 (new skiff), with *Janice Sue* (Structure N) in the background. Building 7 is to the far left, facing northeast. May 3, 2019.
- 20 of 22. Structure N (*Janice Sue*) in drydock in Arcadia, Michigan. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. October 27, 2019.
- 21 of 22. Building 5. Dressing fish at the filet table. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. June 5, 2018

Fishtown Historic District

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22 of 22.

Building 18. Joel Peterson repairs buoys in Fishtown's newest commercial fishing building. Photographer: Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society. May 9, 2019.

## Figure Log

Figure 1, Timeline of Development 1900-1910.

Figure 2, Circa 1905-06, the fishing village at Leland looking west from the dam. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 3, Timeline of Development 1920-1930.

Figure 4, Circa 1930s the fishing village at Leland looking west from X11 (former power house), courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 5, Timeline of Development 1960-1980. The current footprint was established by 1980. A few additions have occurred since, but the basic footprint remains.

Figure 6, Fishtown circa 1966 looking west from the construction site of Building 12. Photo by Mike Brown.

Figure 7, 1800-1850, OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA FISHING CAMP AND VILLAGE, adapted from *Map of Leelanau County* by Abram S. Wadsworth, Deputy Surveyor of an area Geological Survey, 1851. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

Figure 8, 1850-1900, SETTLEMENT, EARLY COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY. Adapted from *Atlas of Leelanau County, Michigan*, compiled and drawn for the publisher by E.L. Hayes (1881). The south-side sawmill locations are inferred from Henry J. Barnard's recollections of Leland in 1864, as reported in the *Leelanau Enterprise*, September 15, 1927. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

Figure 9 1920s-1930s, PEAK COMMERCIAL FISHING. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio.

Figure 10, Fishtown's present-day site characteristics. Graphic by Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio. See also Photos 1 and 2. The Fishtown Historic District shows the few changes occurring since 2010.

Figure 11 (looking west). The fishing village at Leland circa early 1910s with the ferry *Lawrence* moored to the right and newly moved Building 14 second from left. Building 15, third from left, has an ice house addition to the west. Postcard courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

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Figure 12, Fishing village at Leland looking south toward the north elevations of the northside buildings, circa 1930s. Building 2 is painted white, with Building 1 to the left attached by a small connecting shed that has since been removed. The characteristic ladder and roof dormer are clearly visible. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 13, East and north elevations of Buildings 1 and 2 in 2018, looking southwest, photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society.

Figure 14, (looking east). Far left Building 5.1; second from left Building 5.2; third from left Building 6; second from right former power house; far right Building 16. Photo courtesy of Bluebird Restaurant, circa 1930s.

Figure 15 (looking northeast), South elevations of buildings 5.2, 6, 7, 8, and 9 in a 2016 photo by Amanda Holmes.

Figure 16 (looking west/northwest), Building 5.2 south and east elevations with the east addition and roof-top ice machine constructed by fishermen Jim VerSnyder to address changing needs of the fishery. These additions were replaced by others during the 1980s, as regulations continued to evolve. Photo courtesy of Malcolm Chatfield, early 1980s.

Figure 17 (looking west), Building 5.2's east addition. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 4, 2020.

Figure 18, Building 7 (looking northwest) with Building 6 just visible to the left. Courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society, circa 1940.

Figure 19, Building 7 (looking north) after implementation of the rehabilitation plan by architect Richard Neumann, photo by Laurie Sommers, summer 2010.

Figure 20, Building 8 (brown) next to former boat yard site, looking west-northwest from dam (Structure R), mid-late 1960s. Photo by Paul Serratoni courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society.

Figure 21, (looking west/northwest from the dam (Structure R)), Building 8 (brown) is center right, to the left of Building 9 and the riverside café of Building 11, both of which occupy the former boat yard site. June 4, 2019. Photo by Johnson-Hill Land Ethics Studio.

Figure 22, (looking east), West and south elevations of Building 9 in its original location, circa early 1970s. Building 1 is to the left and the former Smokehouse F is to the right. Building 10 now rests on this location. Photo by Paul Serratoni.

Figure 23, Building 9 (north elevation looking south) in its current riverfront location immediately east of Building 8. Building 10, far left, now occupies the original site of Building 9. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, August 2, 2018.

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Figure 24, Building 11, looking northwest, before the additions. Photo by Glenn Garthe, mid 1970s.

Figure 25, Building 11 looking northwest with Rick's Café. Photo by Johnson-Hill Land Ethics Studio, 2019.

Figure 26, Building 12 under construction, north and west elevation looking south/southeast, circa 1966. Photo by Mike Brown.

Figure 27. Building 12, north elevation looking southeast. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, September 26, 2019.

Figure 28, Building 13, looking southeast, still in its original one-story condition, circa 1960. Photo courtesy of Leelanau County Historical Society.

Figure 29, Rear of Building 13 looking north, showing the post-1980 additions. Photo was taken while adjacent Building 14 was lifted off its foundation for repair. Photo by Evan Hall, August 20, 2020.

Figure 30 (looking southeast), Building 14 with the center portion added by Will Bucker in 1928 after cutting his shanty in two. Building 13 is visible to the far left. Photo by Erhardt Peters, 1930s, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 31, Building 14 looking south, after the 2020 lift. (Building 15 is just visible to the rear, still lifted off its original site.) Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, December 27, 2020.

Figure 32, Interior of Building 14, remarkably unchanged, retains its historic commercial fishing use. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, February 2018.

Figure 33, (from left looking southwest), Buildings 14, 15, and 16. On the right is one of the Price shanties that was demolished to build Building 8. Photo by Janice Fisher, early 1950s.

Figure 34, Building 15 during the 2000-2001 remodel, looking southeast. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society.

Figure 35, Building 16, far right, looking east, circa 1918-early 1920s, courtesy Leelanau County Historical Society.

Figure 36, *Joy* in front of Building 16, looking south/southeast. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 2019.

Figure 37, Building 18, looking northwest along West Avenue A toward Buildings 15 and 16. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 2020.

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Figure 38, Predecessor double smokehouse to Structure A, looking northwest. Jim VerSnyder, left, and Alan Priest remove racks of smoked fish from structure built by VerSnyder and Bill Carlson. Photo by Laurie Sommers, summer 2010.

Figure 39, Structure A looking north. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 4, 2020.

Figure 40, Earlier concrete block smokehouses in the vicinity of Structure F built by Steffens Stallman, and Carlsons in the 1960s and located along Fishtown's "Main Street," looking west. Building 1 is in the right foreground. Photo by Paul Serraton, 1970s.

Figure 41, Fishtown's "Main Street" looking east. From left, Building 1, Building 10 (center), Building 8, Smokehouse F (concrete block). Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, October 2020.

Figure 42, (from left looking northwest), Structure L (*Mishe-Mokwa*), unidentified charter boats, Building 3, Building 4, Building 5. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 5, 2019.

Figure 43, Structures M.1 and M.2 (*Joy* and the skiff *Titanic*) in Fishtown when new, 1980s, looking south in front of Building 14. Ross Lang drowned in 1998 when the skiff flipped in an accident. It is no longer used. Photo courtesy of Joy Lang Anderson.

Figure 44, (looking northeast), New skiff (M.3) pulled up on the river's south bank just west of Building 16, with the Joy (M.1) in the background. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, March 18, 2021.

Figure 45, Structure N's (*Janice Sue*'s) first voyage in October, 1958, looking southwest. Photo courtesy of Marilyn Stallman.

Figure 46, *Janice Sue* moored in front of Building 14, facing southwest. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, August 18, 2016.

Figure 47, Structure N, *Janice Sue*, interior with lifting table and mechanical lifter. Photo by Laurie K. Sommers, October, 2017.

Figure 48. Structure O (south dock) and Structure P (north dock), looking west, late 1930s. Postcard courtesy of Traverse Area Historical Society.

Figure 49. Structure O (south dock) and Structure P (north dock), looking west. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, March 2019.

Figure 50, (looking east), Old Powerhouse, Structure R (dam) and fish ladder, circa 1920s. Unknown photographer, courtesy of Leelanau County Historical Society.

Fishtown Historic District

Name of Property

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Figure 51, Structure R looking east. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, October 30, 2018.

Figure 52, Percy Guthrie mending nets, with potbellied stove to provide needed wintertime warmth. Fishermen repaired a torn net seated, as above, or by spreading a dried net on a reel. Photo by Erhardt Peters, circa 1930s, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 53, Fishermen lifting their summertime catch from a pound net, circa 1930. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 54, Joel Petersen does an ad hoc net repair on board the *Joy*. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society, June 16, 2012.

Figure 55, Darryl Herman with marker buoy toss, used when setting trap nets. Fishermen use steel conduit to build the buoy. Photo courtesy of Fishtown Preservation Society, May 8, 2013.

Figure 56, Dipping whitefish from a trap net on the *Joy*, 2010. Photo by Meggen Watt Petersen

Figure 57, Albert Gunderson using the dressing block, special knives, and lifting table aboard the *Janice Sue* to dress chubs on the trip back home. Photo by Meggen Watt Petersen, 2010.

Figure 58, *Joy* captain Joel Petersen casts leads for weighting trap nets in the newest Fishtown shanty, Building 18. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, May 11, 2018.

Figure 59, Alan Priest removes fish from the brine tank at Building 5 and sorts them by type in the fish boxes in preparation for smoking. Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers, summer 2010.

Figure 60, Young Carlson's crew learn the essential skills of a working fishery from more experienced workers, continuing the transmission of the fishery's traditional cultural practices. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 3, 2019.

Figure 61, Crew of the *Joy* and workers from Carlson's help unload boxes of fish, with a young apprentice and visitors looking on. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, July 12, 2019.

Figure 62, Alan Priest, once a mentee, is now a mentor to youngsters in the skills of a commercial fishery. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, June 4, 2019.

Figure 63, Fishtown fishermen help Tracy Grosvener into port during a difficult winter crossing of the Manitou ferry and mail boat, 1931. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

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Figure 64, George Cook at a north-side net reel, while tourists watch, circa 1950s, courtesy of Traverse Area Historical Society.

Figure 65, Interior of unidentified ice house, with Percy Guthrie setting an ice block with special ice tongs. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 66, Loading a long demolished southside ice house with a runner slide, circa 1930s. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 67, Shanty's that make up present-day Building 5 have been in continuous use for shore work since their construction in the 1920s. Here, Gordon Carlson mends gill nets, likely in Building 5.2, circa 1940s. Photo courtesy of Dick Carlson.

Figure 68, Smoking chubs at Carlsons, circa 1970s, showing the rack and nail system for hanging chub, used by Carlsons since the 1940s. Photo courtesy of Alan Priest.

Figure 69, Fresh fish is still the basis of fishery occupational traditions. Here, Nels Carlson and Alan Priest of Carlson's place chunked whitefish on the smoking rack. Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers, 2010.

Figure 69, Gordon Carlson mending nets, likely in Building 5.2, circa 1940s. Photo courtesy of Dick Carlson.

Figure 70, There are no extant photos of net repair in this shanty from the peak fishing period, but we know the building has been in continuous use for this and other commercial fishing use since the 1910s. Here, Unknown fishermen build nets in an unidentified shanty, circa 1930s. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 71, Alan Priest, captain of the *Janice Sue* slugs (repairs) gill nets in Building 14, continuing its historic commercial fishing use. Photo by Amanda Holmes, Fishtown Preservation Society, 2010.

Figure 72, Terry and Roy Buckler removing chubs from the predecessor to Structure F, 1960s. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 73, Freshly smoked fish on the smoking rack are removed from Structure A. Photo by Amanda Holmes, July 3, 2018.

Figure 74, Joy Captain Joel Petersen (left) setting trap nets at dawn with his father, Alan Petersen, May 27, 2017. Photo by Raquel Jimenez, Fishtown Preservation Society.

Figure 75, Alan Priest and Albert Gunderson setting gill nets on the *Janice Sue*, 2010. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography.

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Figure 76, Unloading the day's catch on the north dock, circa 1930. Photo by Erhardt Peters, courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 77, Joel Petersen (right) and Darryl Herman unloading the *Joy* on Structure O, the north dock, looking west. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography, July 24, 2015.

Figure 78, *Etta* moored by Building 5.2, as Henry Steffens and the *Helen S* head out of the Leland River, circa 1930. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Historical Society.

Figure 79, Captain Joel Petersen and crew guide *Joy* into the Leland River after fishing in Lake Michigan. Photo by Meggen Watt Photography, 2016.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Fishtown Historic District
Name of Property
Leelanau, Michigan
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number   8   Page     

**Architects**

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Bourgeois, Sarah  
Hanawalt, David  
Hopkins, Gene  
Hummel, Roger  
Rieli, A. & Associates  
Richmond, Ken

**Boat Builders**

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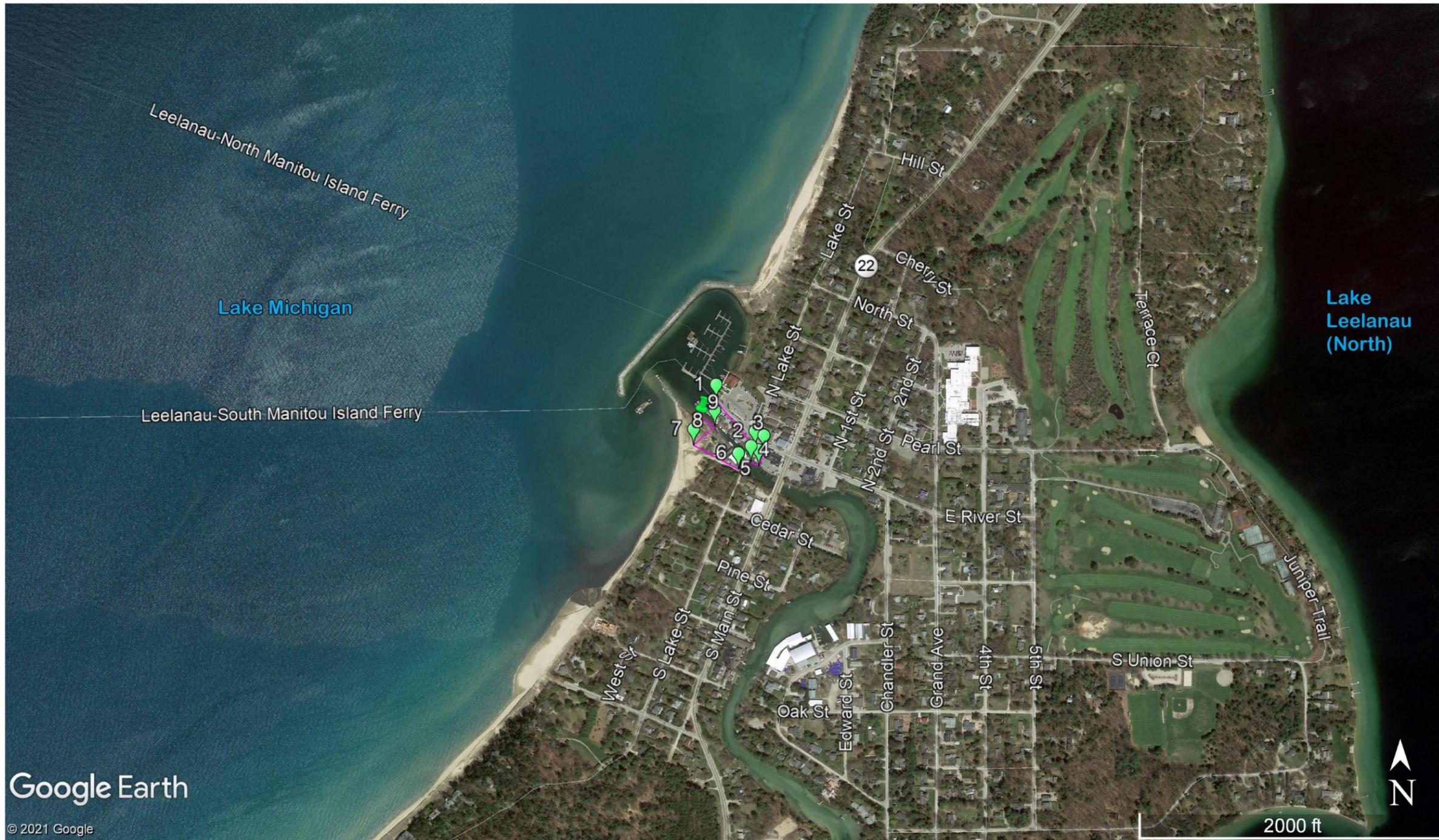
Derusha, Jim  
Lang, Ross  
Niessink, Geoff  
Nolan, J.W. and Sons  
Petersen, Joel  
Steffens, Louis  
Stevens, George

**Builders**

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Ball, David  
Biggs, Bob and Biggs Construction  
Braund, Richard  
Brown, Marvin  
Buckler, William  
Bufka, Art  
Carlson, Bill  
Cook, George  
Carlson, Nels  
Eggart, Jim  
Firestone, Roy  
Harting, William  
Johnson, Severt

Kaapke, Claude  
Grosvenor, Mike  
Hall, Bill  
Hohnke, Ben  
Light, Otto  
Maleski, John  
Nelson, Peter  
Price, Brian  
Price, Warren  
Smith, William W. Jr.  
Stallman, Leo Sr.  
Steffens, Henry Sr.  
Stevens, George  
VerSnyder, Jim

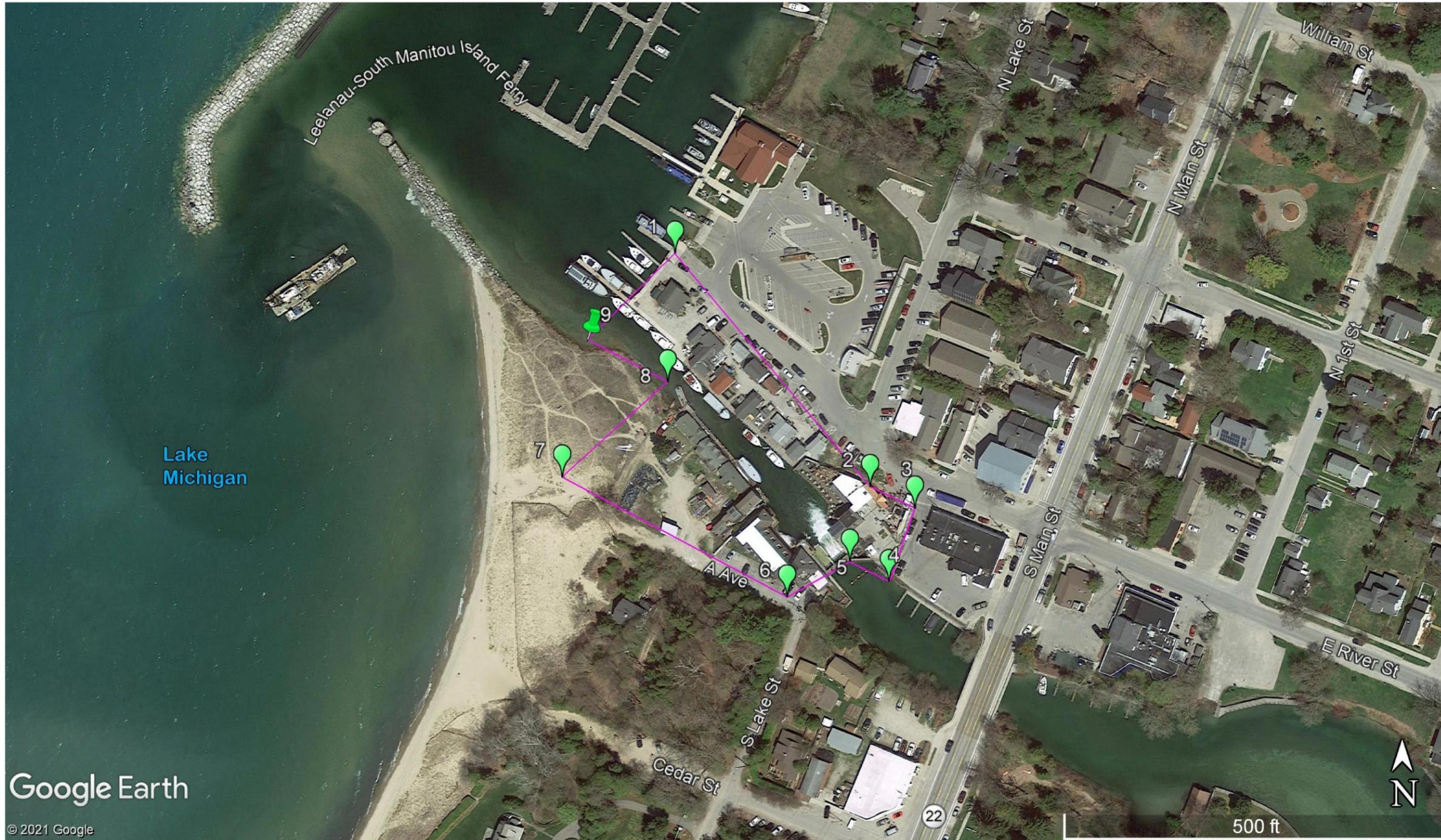


**Fishtown Historic District**

Leland Township (Leland), Leelanau County, Michigan

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| 1. Latitude: 45.023970 | Longitude: -85.762038 |
| 2. Latitude: 45.023142 | Longitude: -85.761056 |
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| 8. Latitude: 45.023513 | Longitude: -85.762075 |
| 9. Latitude: 45.023661 | Longitude: -85.762478 |



Google Earth

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**Fishtown Historic District**

Leland Township (Leland), Leelanau County, Michigan

1. Latitude: 45.023970	Longitude: -85.762038	6. Latitude: 45.022751	Longitude: -85.761292
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4. Latitude: 45.022805	Longitude: -85.760962	9. Latitude: 45.023661	Longitude: -85.762478
5. Latitude: 45.022877	Longitude: -85.761158		

# FISHTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY - 1930s

LEELANAU COUNTY, LELAND, MI

LAKE MICHIGAN

PARK

BANK

PILE DRIVERS

BOAT YARD

POWERHOUSE

CARP RIVER

BOAT TURN  
AROUND

DAM WITH  
FISH LADDER

FISHING GROUNDS

NET REELS

BANK

REEL YARD

BREAKWATERS BUILT IN 1937

-  NET REELS
-  FISH SHANTY
-  ICE HOUSE
-  NET SHED/SHED



Reference: Fishtown Survey 1965

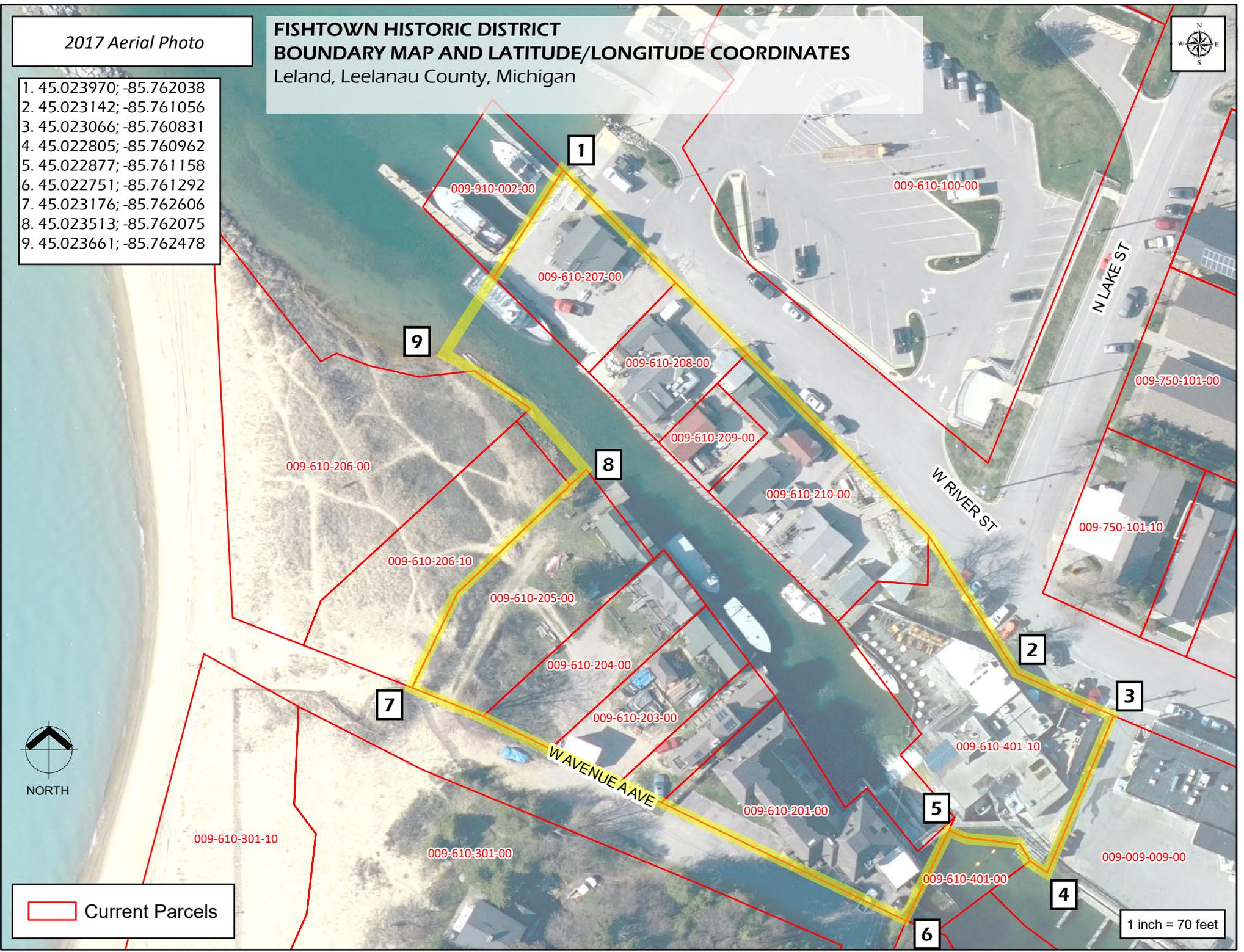
2017 Aerial Photo

# FISHTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP AND LATITUDE/LONGITUDE COORDINATES

Leland, Leelanau County, Michigan



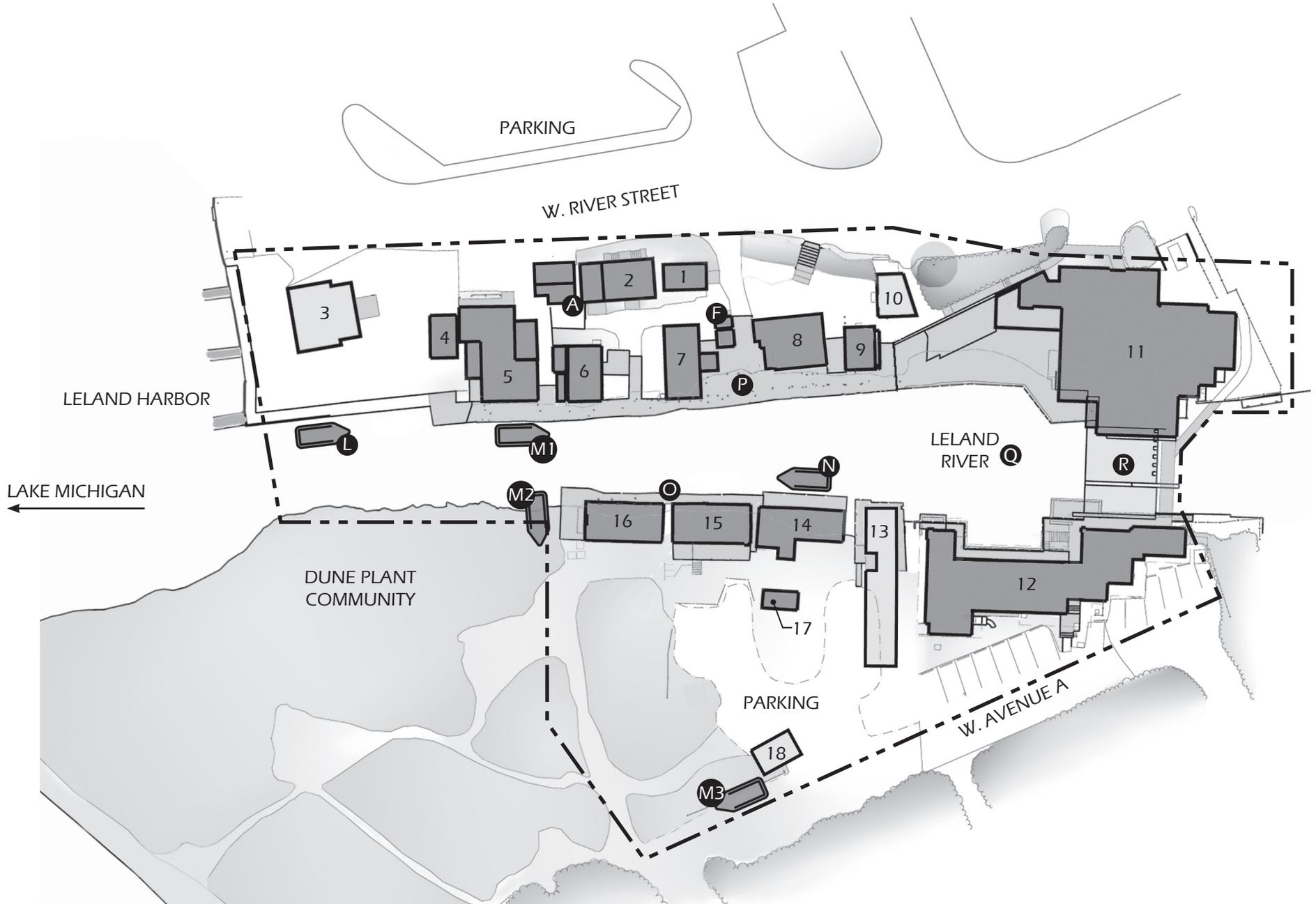
1. 45.023970; -85.762038
2. 45.023142; -85.761056
3. 45.023066; -85.760831
4. 45.022805; -85.760962
5. 45.022877; -85.761158
6. 45.022751; -85.761292
7. 45.023176; -85.762606
8. 45.023513; -85.762075
9. 45.023661; -85.762478



NORTH

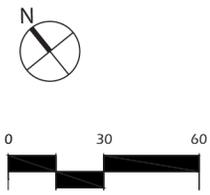
Current Parcels

1 inch = 70 feet



**LEGEND**

- CONTRIBUTING
- NON-CONTRIBUTING
- CONTRIBUTING (1975/2021): 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 17
- NON-CONTRIBUTING (1975)/CONTRIBUTING (2021): 4, 8, 9, 11, 12
- CONTRIBUTING (1975)/NON-CONTRIBUTING (2021): 13
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY

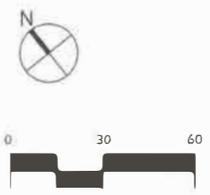


Resource Map  
**Fishtown Historic District**  
 Leland, Leelanau County, Michigan



**LEGEND**

- CONTRIBUTING
- NON-CONTRIBUTING
- CONTRIBUTING (1975/2021): 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 17
- NON-CONTRIBUTING (1975)/CONTRIBUTING (2021): 4, 8, 9, 11, 12
- CONTRIBUTING (1975)/NON-CONTRIBUTING (2021): 13
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY



**Areas of Traditional Cultural Use  
Fishtown Historic District**  
Leland, Leelanau County, Michigan



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0001



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0002





  
Carlson's Fisheries

NO SMOKING



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0008



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0011



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0012





MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0017



MI\_Leelanau County\_Fishtown Historic District\_0018