

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY**CRAIG CANNERY, MAINTENANCE BUILDING**

(Machine Shop)

- Location:** Craig Cannery, Main Street, Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area, Alaska
- The Maintenance Building is located at latitude: 55.477074 N, longitude: -133.154041 W. This point was obtained on January 30, 2022, using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.
- Significance:** The Maintenance Building is significant at the local level as a contributing resource to the Craig Cannery, which is significant for its association with the Alaska fishing industry and settlement and incorporation of the City of Craig.¹
- Description:** The Maintenance Building is a one-story wood frame building with an attic and side gable roof. The building is rectangular in plan, clad with corrugated metal siding, and has a side gable roof covered in corrugated metal. The building is constructed on a log pier foundation.
- The primary façade faces north toward the water and features three entries. On the far east, a paneled wood door provides access to a storage room. To the east, a heavy wide insulated flush wood door allows access to cold storage space. Toward the east end of the primary façade, a paneled wood door provides the primary entry to most of the building's interior. The primary façade is sheltered by a wide roof-overhang porch that runs the length of the north façade. The porch roof features wood gutters, and a wooden boardwalk runs the length of the open-sided porch. The compressor for the cold storage space is located on the building's exterior, under the porch.
- Fenestration consists of six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows. The windows are boarded over with plywood on the building's north and east facades. A shed-roofed projection with matching corrugated metal siding and roof covering is present on the building's south façade at its southeast corner. A paneled wood door provides access to the projection.
- The interior of the cold storage area has plywood flooring and narrow plank wall cladding, while the rest of the building features wide plank wood flooring and beadboard wall and ceiling paneling. In addition, flat board surround is present on interior doorways and windows.
- The building is located on the corner of the gravel driveway that runs from Main Street, north to the Administrative Building, and west to the Web Loft. The Maintenance Storage Building faces the water, and the Cannery gangway is

¹ Pierce 2014

directly opposite the building. The east façade of the building faces the Administrative Building, while the west façade is a few feet from the Maintenance Storage Building. The area around the south façade is heavily vegetated with shrubs and undergrowth.

Character-defining features of the building include its orientation to the water, utilitarian wall cladding and roof covering, wood sash windows, and paneled wood doors. The cold storage facility, flush insulated wood door, and compressor also attest to the building's association with the Cannery.

History:

The Craig Cannery's first documented year of operation was 1912,² when Lindenberger Packing Company opened the Cannery. Lindenberger Packing Co., owned and operated by brothers Robert and Bernard Lindenberger, operated the Cannery until 1917, when they dissolved their partnership³ and sold the Cannery to Sea Coast Packing Co.⁴ By 1928, the Sea Coast Cannery was packing over 70,000 cases of salmon.⁵ In 1929, Libby, McNeill & Libby acquired ownership of the Cannery from Sea Coast Packing Co.⁶

In the early years, the Cannery workers were hired and brought up from Seattle. Edith Rosenberg Lindenberger, the wife of Robert Lindenberger, one of the Cannery's original owners, noted most of the Cannery workers during the Lindenberger years were of Chinese descent and brought by steamer ship up from Seattle.⁷ She explained that the Cannery would purchase fish from local Alaska Native fishermen, and if additional labor was needed, local Alaska Native workers were hired.⁸

Crew manifests from the Cannery's early Libby, McNeill & Libby years indicate Cannery positions were segregated, with primarily Japanese workers working Cannery lines and white workers in most other jobs.⁹ Throughout the 1930s, Libby, McNeill & Libby contracted with Geo Y. Nishimura in Seattle to hire and supply the Japanese crews.¹⁰ The crews were segregated onto different Cannery-bound ships - a ship for the white workers and a ship for the non-white workers.¹¹ By the late 1930s, Libby, McNeill & Libby substantially increased the percentage of local residents hired for Cannery positions.¹²

² ADFG 1949

³ Lindenberger 1973

⁴ ADFG 1949

⁵ Pacific Fisherman, January 1929

⁶ Pacific Fisherman, September 1929

⁷ Lindenberger 1973

⁸ Lindenberger 1973

⁹ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Seasonal Employees, Canneries & Ships, 1936, 1938, 1939"

¹⁰ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Synopsis of Chinese Contracts, Years 1917 to 1932 inc."

¹¹ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Seasonal Employees, Canneries & Ships, 1936, 1938, 1939"

¹² Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Seasonal Employees 1939"

Despite the depression, fluctuating salmon prices, and union activity and labor unrest that characterized the salmon canning industry throughout Alaska and the west coast in the 1930s,¹³ Libby, McNeill & Libby's ownership instituted a period of consistency for Craig Cannery operations that continued up through the 1950s. Often Cannery supervisors opted to return year after year.¹⁴

Table 1. Libby, McNeill & Libby Craig Cannery Supervisors between 1930-1956¹⁵

Years Operated	Name of Supervisor
1930	Charlie Carlson
1931	Harry Berry
1932	No supervisor named
1933	Minard
1934-1939	Albert L. Dorks
1940-1944	A.R. Pearmain
1945-1954	J.A.(Al) Torwick
1955-1958	A.R. Pearmain

The Craig Cannery was expanded in 1935, and despite government requisitioning of Cannery resources such as boats, the Craig Cannery operated through WWII.¹⁶ By the mid-1950s, however, with declining fish stock and falling fish prices,¹⁷ Libby, McNeill & Libby reduced operations, consolidating Craig operations with the Nakat Packing Co. Waterfall Cannery on western Prince of Wales Island, south of Craig.¹⁸

In 1958, the Wards Cove Packing Co., owned by A.W. (Alexander Winterbourne) Brindle and family, acquired, in partnership with the Columbia River Packers Association Inc., the Alaska salmon canning operations of Libby McNeill & Libby.¹⁹ As a result, all Libby McNeill & Libby operations, including the Craig Cannery, were consolidated under the Columbia Ward Fisheries name.²⁰

That same year, a catastrophic fire destroyed much of the Cannery. The fire was concentrated within the cannery operations buildings constructed over water, and all were destroyed.²¹ Also burned was the original web loft building.^{22 23}

¹³ Arnold 2008

¹⁴ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Record and History of Libby, McNeill & Libby Operations"

¹⁵ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Records and History of Libby, McNeill, & Libby Operations"

¹⁶ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Records and History of Libby, McNeill, & Libby Operations"

¹⁷ Pierce 2014

¹⁸ Guy V. Graham Collection: Folder "Records and History of Libby, McNeill, & Libby Operations"

¹⁹ Johnson 1993

²⁰ Stanley and Charles 1996

²¹ Pierce 2014

²² Pierce 2014

²³ Paulu T. Saari Collection, Ketchikan Museums

Saved from the fire were the administrative building, warehouse, shop, bunkhouses, and other buildings and facilities located to the south, up the hill, and away from the beach and water. Ralph Mackie, a local Craig resident, remembered the fire as follows:

"I remember the night of the fire. The fire hall siren went off, and my Grandpa Tom grabbed his coat and rushed out the door. A couple hours later a man knocked and told Grandma Jessie that we needed to leave the house and head down to Shelter Cove, because the Standard Oil tanks might explode, and the whole town could burn. We bundled up and hurried in the dark down to Maudi Richard's place, where the floatplane dock is now. I looked out her kitchen window to the west, and the whole sky was blood red.

They fought the fire all night, but it was a losing battle, and by morning much of the Cannery was destroyed. Somehow they got word to Carl [Aspelund, Cannery Superintendent that year], who was down at Dall Island on his way home to Seattle for the winter. When he flew back in to Craig the next morning, he said the burnt pilings were glowing like a sea of birthday candles"²⁴

Following the fire and the Cannery's purchase by Columbia Ward, the Craig Cannery ceased canning operations permanently and became "a major maintenance and supply station"²⁵ for the purse-seine fleet. Fishermen would offload their catch at the Craig Cannery and sell it to a tender, who would haul the fish to a cannery elsewhere. Seiners used the Craig Cannery as a base. They could store gear and mend and maintain their nets in the Web Loft and haul their boats onto the semi-submerged grids, wait for the tide to go out, and then perform boat maintenance work during the few precious hours of exposure at low tide.²⁶ Grids located above high tide on the beach in front of the Administrative Building were used as a dry dock for the seine boats in the winter.

During its time of operation (both as a cannery and as a seine fleet support center), the Craig Cannery was "like a vital organ, the heartbeat of town and the primary source of livelihood and activity."²⁷ Ralph Mackie recalled that as a child in the 1960s, the Cannery provided annual seasonal excitement:

"it was a fantastic playground. The large green lawns were freshly mowed, and we were allowed to play there. We gathered for games of steal the flag and various forms of tag. At noon the cannery cook rang a big triangle,

²⁴ Mackie 2018

²⁵ Mackie 2018

²⁶ Mackie 2018

²⁷ Mackie 2018

calling the crew to lunch, and all the kids in earshot to the back door of the kitchen for cookies...the sandy beach in front of the cannery office was our favorite spot to go swimming. The low grids...were just right for wading on and jumping off of, depending on how high the tide was.”²⁸

Over the years, the Cannery became known as the Wards Cove Cannery (not to be confused with the Wards Cove Cannery on Revillagigedo Island near Ketchikan). In 2002, Wards Cove Packing Co. ceased Alaska salmon operations, shuttering its Alaska facilities, including the Craig Cannery. In 2006, the City of Craig purchased the Cannery complex and has used the buildings for various community-related purposes since that time.

Historical aerial photographs indicate the Maintenance Building was constructed after 1929²⁹ but before 1956.³⁰ The building was likely built during cannery expansion activities in 1935. The Maintenance Building is thought to have housed Cannery equipment and machinery and provided cold storage. After the closure of Cannery operations following the 1958 fire, the Maintenance Building provided storage to support the seine fleet. Since the purchase of the building by the City of Craig, the building has functioned as extra storage space for the City.

Sources:

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²⁸ Mackie 2018

²⁹ US Geological Survey 1839-2008: Alaska Aerial Survey Expedition Photographs 1926-1929

³⁰ Paulu T. Saari Collection, Ketchikan Museums

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Historian: Tracie Krauthoefer, Corvus Culture, 2021-2022

Project Information: The Maintenance Building was documented in October of 2021 under the guidance of Brian Templin of the City of Craig Planning Department per a draft Memorandum of Agreement between the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the City of Craig. Brian Templin provided helpful information on the history of the use of the buildings, and Anjuli Grantham assisted with Cannery research leads. Tracie Krauthoefer completed the short form report and field photography.



Figure 1. Maintenance Building, North (Primary) and West Facades. View looking S.E.



Figure 2. Maintenance Building, Primary (North) Facade. View Looking S.



Figure 3. Maintenance Building, North and East Facades. View Looking W.



Figure 4. Maintenance Building, East Facade. View Looking W.



Figure 5. Maintenance Building, South and East Facades. View Looking N.



Figure 6. Maintenance Building, Representative Paneled Wood Door. View Looking W.



Figure 7. Maintenance Building, Cold Storage Door. View Looking S.



Figure 8. Maintenance Building, Cold Storage Compressor.



Figure 9. Maintenance Building, Wood Gutter. View Looking W.



Figure 10. Maintenance Building, Wood Gutter. View Looking E.



Figure 11. Maintenance Building, Southeast Corner Projection. View Looking E.



Figure 12. Maintenance Building, Interior Cold Storage. View Looking S.



Figure 13. Maintenance Building, Interior. View Looking N.W.



Figure 14. Maintenance Building, Interior. View Looking S.



Figure 15. Maintenance Building, Interior. View Looking E.



Figure 16. Maintenance Building, Interior. View Looking S.W.