

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Washington
COUNTY:	Skagit
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	APR 24 1974

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
LaConner Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: LaConner

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: #2 - Honorable Lloyd Meeds

STATE: Washington

CODE: 53

COUNTY: Skagit

CODE: 057

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Multiple ownership

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Skagit County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE: 53

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: None

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

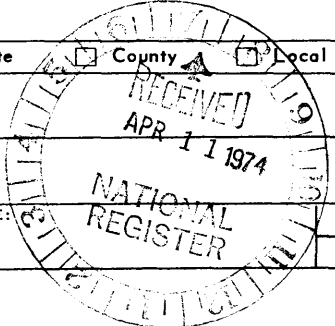
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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

LaConner is a small waterfront community serving the needs of the rich agricultural regions located nearby. The town is situated on Swinomish Channel, a north-south flowing body of saltwater strikingly affected by tidal changes. This channel is the main inside waterway for small craft traveling between Puget Sound to the south, and Bellingham Bay and other coastal regions to the north.

LaConner is situated on a easterly bluff running parallel to the channel. On the mainland behind the town are the rich, fertile Swinomish Flats, which are the result of ages-old deposits from the Skagit River. Much of this land was reclaimed from tidal and spring flooding by diking projects first undertaken by early settlers. A village of the Swinomish Indian Reservation is situated directly across the channel from LaConner.

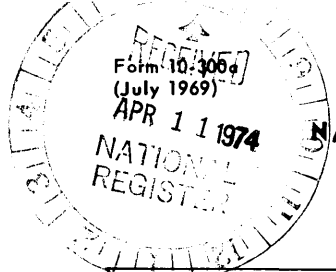
The main focus of this nomination is LaConner's main business area which runs along First Street and parallel to the Swinomish Channel. Docks and pilings at the rear of some of the buildings extend out onto the waterway (see photos #1 and #2). Most of LaConner's businesses are wood frame buildings, but there are some brick structures.

The Town Council has adopted, with the approval of the Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the LaConner Historic Preservation District Ordinance (1972) for the business area, and authentic restoration and refurbishing projects have proceeded rapidly resulting in increased tourist activity. John Frisbee, the Western Field Representative for the National Trust, visited the town in late 1973 and noted that the business area "includes a number of fine late 19th Century commercial buildings as well as two or three examples of late Victorian residential architecture". Frisbee also considered the business section to be a "legitimate historic district". In general, the district has suffered few intrusions through the years and remains today as a contiguous whole. The northern portion of the district, however, has much open space between the buildings (see map), and two notable visual intrusions: a modern post office, and a grocery store housed in a Quonset hut.

The historic names of the structures are used in the following descriptions. Of all the business establishments, the mercantile stores tend to dominate in size. Included among these are the Fair Store (2), the Nelson-Pierson Grocery (3), and the Wiggen's Store (4):

The Fair Store (2), built in the fall of 1890, was originally a three-story wood frame structure with a mansard roof and dormer windows. Later, the top story was removed and a flat roof added. The store retains full length front windows and the top of the front facade terminates in a decorative semi-arched cornice which relieves the rectangularity of the building. The store has recently been refurbished and repainted, and is now a tourist shop.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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#7 - Description

LaConner Historic District (1)

The Nelson-Pierson Grocery (3) was erected in 1908, and is irregularly wedge shaped with an end blunted for the front facade. Standing one and a half stories high, this structure is covered with shiplap and capped by a hip roof. Large sliding doors are located on the sides for loading merchandise and freight. The street entrance has the decorated false-front and large full length windows common to most of LaConner's businesses.

The Wiggen's Store (4) (see photo #3) exhibits the most ornate exterior woodwork of the large mercantile establishments. This false-front building has two square oriel windows on the second floor, and two false gable-dormer projections on the top cornice. A unique feature is the double repetition of the stylistic elements, causing the structure to have a double-building appearance. This attractive brown and white structure is now occupied by a mercantile store and a realty office.

The most common type of structures in the LaConner business area are the smaller false-front and square-faced wood frame buildings. The front facades of these structures usually have full length windows, and the top portions are generally capped by bracketed frieze bands and decorated cornices. Following is a list of these structures:

The Puget Sound Mail Building (1) was erected in 1889 and the exterior has seen little alteration. This one-story structure once housed the printing office of the Puget Sound Mail, a local newspaper.

The LaConner Drug Store (5) -- Tile material now covers the false front of this building and large windows have been added. A flat-roofed rectangular addition on the north side was built on later. This structure has always been used as a drug store.

Harry Rock's Harness Shop (6) has been covered with composition material, and a few of the openings have been covered. However, the building still retains the original shape and details.

Vahn's Store (7) is a fine example of the false front structure (see photo #4). This building has the equivalent of three store fronts, with each front having a separate inset entrance. This building has the usual bracketed frieze bands and ornamental cornices, and today is occupied by The 1890 Inn and a bookstore.

Colman Queen's Saloon (8) was later used as the Palace Meat Market, the name of which is still readable on the front (see photo #5).

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#7 - Description  
LaConner Historic District (2)

Brewster Cigar Store (9) and Mrs. Cook's Restaurant (10) are connected and are occupied today by the LaConner Tavern. Both are one-story, but the Cigar Store originally had a second floor used for hotel rooms. A continuous frieze band and modillioned cornice run the full length of both fronts. The parapet on the restaurant, however, is lower than that on the Cigar Store.

Kastner's Department Store (11) and Hooke's Restaurant (12) are attached. Each has a central entranceway flanked by windows, false eaves, and short parapets. Kastner's has a marquee projecting over the sidewalk.

The Coast Guard Building (13), now occupied by the office of a marine towing company, was built in the early 1900's after an earlier structure had been destroyed by fire. This building has a stucco front and an inset entrance flanked on each side by large windows.

The Fred Erye Grocery (19) was originally located on First Street, but was later moved to this location. This false front building has a central entranceway flanked by double bays of French windows.

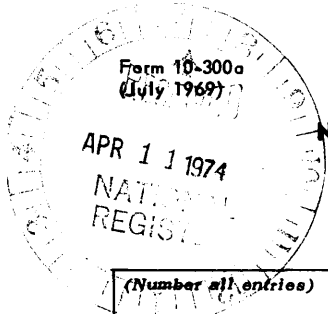
The Meek's Building (22) was constructed about 1914, and has a false projecting eave.

The August Stoud Cobbler Shop (24) is a typical false-front structure with a central door flanked by large picture windows. The front is topped by a simple frieze and cornice.

The Palace Meat Market (25) -- This is the second structure in LaConner which once housed the Palace Meat Market. This building was constructed in about 1915, and today has been remodeled to serve as a delicatessen (see photo #6). At the rear, a two-story hip roofed structure of weathered wood has recently been added. The main entrance was once at the front, but was changed to the side when the building was remodeled.

Wainwright Livery Stables (26) -- This building, which now serves as the LaConner Volunteer Fireman's Museum, has been remodeled and now has three large windows on the front facade.

George Undkarte Building (28) -- This structure served as George Undkarte's barber shop, and as a restaurant operated by his wife. Constructed in 1908, this building has a projecting false eave, a short parapet, and multi-paned windows.



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#7 - Description  
LaConner Historic District (3)

A few wood-frame structures which do not have the characteristic false-front or square-faced facades also stand in the business area. These buildings include:

The LaConner Civic Garden Club (18), currently listed in the Washington State Register of Historic Places, is situated on the bluff above the main portion of the district, and is a large two and a half story structure with a gable roof (see photo #6). A bell cupola rises from the roof ridge. The only changes to the exterior has been the addition of a small garage and porch on the north side.

The Stables (27) -- Originally there were other stables nearby, but only this one remains. These large stables were designed to shelter both horses and buggies.

The Polson-Wilton Warehouses (29) are two large, plain structures sitting side by side on piers projecting out over the Swinomish Channel. Covered with weathered shiplap, these gabled structures cast a dark bulky profile against the nearby water.

The historic district does have five brick and masonry structures. Included among these are the following:

The Legion Hall (14) was built in the early 1900's, and is composed of brick which has been stuccoed. This two-story rectangular structure has a flat roof and is undecorated.

The Bank Building (15), now serving as the City Hall, is a flat-iron style building constructed in 1886 (see photo #7). The front facade is white stucco, and a plain cornice divides the first and second stories. Windows on the front are high and narrow, and capped by raised, three-pointed arches. At present, the building has a weak foundation and a stairway in need of repair.

The two-story Nevada Bar (20) was constructed in 1890. This building is composed entirely of brick except for the first-story front facade and a few other decorative features done in white painted wood. Two wooden piers capped by a flat beam form a large bay across the front. The windows and doors on the front have fan lights which produce a palladian effect. The first story is separated from the second floor by a simple cornice with dentils. The front is capped by a wooden bracketed frieze and cornice. All the remaining windows are topped with scrollwork arches, and a decorative brick band extends the full length of the building on

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#7 - Description  
LaConner Historic District (4)

the Commercial Street side.

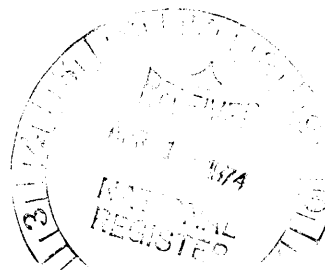
The Planter Hotel (21), built in 1907, is a two-story concrete structure exhibiting the Chicago School influence. The first story is divided into bays, and the front facade is topped by a decorative cornice and a central scrolled parapet with "Hotel" and "1907" inscribed in large letters. The building has an enclosed garden court at the rear.

Fletcher's Saloon (23), built in 1895, is now the Puget Sound Mail office (see photo #8). Originally, this weekly newspaper was housed in building #1, described earlier. The brick face of this structure is unchanged, but the rear was destroyed by a rock slide in the 1950's. The damage was repaired, and a wooden structure has been added to the north side. The former entrance at the northwest corner of the building has been enclosed and the main doorway is now on the west side.

And finally, there are two examples of domestic architecture located on top of the bluff in the southeast corner of the district:

The Calhoun House (16) is a traditional saltbox house, with an addition to the north side. This extension has a gabled roof and large bay windows. A front porch supported by heavy wood piers extends across the front of the original portion of the house. Shiplap siding, white paint, and shuttered windows add the final touch of charm to this one and a half story home.

The Gaches House (17) constructed in 1883, is a large ornate two and a half story structure (see photo #9). The top floor was destroyed by fire in the summer of 1973, but the lower stories remain intact. Having an octagonal tower, faceted gable ends, steeply pitched roofs, and a full length porch, the Gaches House stands as an excellent example of late Victorian domestic architecture. The home was being used as an apartment house when the fire broke out. Early in 1974, however, a group of active citizens known as the LaConner Landmark Committee began efforts to acquire and rebuild the damaged house for use as a library and community center.



**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1867

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | osophy   | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first white settler to occupy the future site of LaConner was Alonzo Low, who established an Indian trading post at this spot in 1867. Finding business unprofitable, Low abandoned the post after fourteen months to a mulatto named Clark. Shortly thereafter, trader Thomas Hayes took over the Swinomish post, which also became a designated post office.

In 1869, John S. Conner and his wife purchased the post. The town of LaConner was platted in 1872 by Conner, who named the site after his wife Louisa Ann, by adding the initials of her first and middle names to the family name. From these early beginnings, LaConner rapidly grew into a center for transportation, commerce, government, agriculture, and fishing. LaConner was the major port between Seattle and Bellingham when steamboats played a vital role in connecting the communities on Puget Sound. Located adjacent to rich farmlands, LaConner became the key shipping and supply point for the nearby rural area.

Beginning at about the time of the founding of LaConner, settlers on the frequently flooded Swinomish flats began diking and draining the wet marshlands and river delta. A flood in 1874, however, destroyed the three miles of dikes that had been erected. Reconstruction of dikes began anew; and in 1875, oats were exported from the region. Eventually, these pioneer reclamation projects and subsequent efforts resulted in the construction of two hundred miles of dikes, the reclaiming of 25,000 acres of land, and the creation of a multi-million dollar hay, grain, and truck farming industry.

The Puget Sound Mail, founded at Whatcom in 1873, was relocated in LaConner in 1879. Henry McBride, operated this newspaper prior to becoming the fourth Governor of the State of Washington (1901-05). The Puget Sound Mail remains today in LaConner and is the oldest continuing weekly in the state.

LaConner was incorporated on November 20, 1883, and eight days later became the first seat for Skagit County. In 1884, however, the county seat was moved to Mt. Vernon. Interestingly, the residents of LaConner passed a petition repealing incorporation in 1886. Evidently, the populace felt they had been hasty in assuming cityhood. But by 1890, LaConner was once again incorporated.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Hunt, Herbert and Kaylor, Floyd C. Washington West of the Cascades.  
Seattle: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917.

(An) Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Interstate  
Publishing Co., 1906, pp. 201-06.

Puget Sound Mail (LaConner, Washington), 1879-1972.

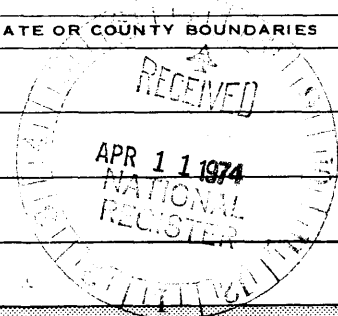
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	48 °	23'	34"	122 °	29'	53"			
NE	48 °	23'	34"	122 °	29'	38"			
SE	48 °	23'	16"	122 °	29'	38"			
SW	48 °	23'	16"	122 °	29'	53"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **14.3**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



NO  
11/11/74  
10

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Ross F. Hart, Consultant**

ORGANIZATION: **Town of LaConner Historic Preservation Commission** DATE: **October 18, '72**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Town Hall**

CITY OR TOWN: **La Conner** STATE: **Washington** CODE: **53**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Charles H. Odegaard  
Charles H. Odegaard

Title Director - Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

Date April 4, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

R.A. Martensen  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/24/74

ATTEST:  
Wm. J. Smith  
Keeper of the National Register

Date 4.23.74



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STATE Washington	
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#8 - Significance  
LaConner Historic District

Around the turn-of-the century, LaConner had a population of about one thousand, and it was becoming increasingly evident that a much anticipated railroad connection was never going to materialize. LaConner was destined to remain a "steamboat" town. However, this era was a high point of prosperity and most of the structures now designated in the LaConner Historic Preservation District were constructed at this time.

The population and size of LaConner has stabilized in the Twentieth Century. In 1960, for example, LaConner had 638 citizens, whereas eleven years later the population was 640, an addition of only two. LaConner still retains the function of serving as a hub for commercial, agricultural and fishing activity for the local region, but tourism and pleasure boating are becoming increasingly important, as evidenced by a large marina developed by Skagit County to the north of the town. Artists and craftsmen are also taking interest in LaConner, particularly during the summer months when tourist activity is most prevalent.

A majority of the historic buildings in LaConner have remained remarkably unchanged through the years. About a score of original buildings have disappeared, but thirty still exist. Many of the structures on the waterfront extend on pilings over the channel, reflecting LaConner's early and important ties with water related industries. LaConner still retains a rural character and the slow, easy pace common in such regions. The styles of the buildings in the district are characteristic of the commercial architecture common at the turn-of-the century. Most striking are the many false-front structures which line First Street. Few new structures have been built to replace the twenty or so historic buildings which are gone. As a consequence, there is considerable open space between structures at the northern end of the district. The southern portion of the district, however, has few gaps and the buildings are more closely compacted.

