

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Longbranch School Gymnasium
other names/site number N.A.

2. Location

street & number Gig Harbor-Longbranch Rd. not for publication
city, town Lakebay vicinity
state Washington code 053 county Pierce code 053 zip code 98349

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Rural Public School Buildings in Washington State

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] SSUPO 5-20-87
Signature of certifying official Date
State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

[Signature] 9/28/87
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social: Meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Rustic style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls stoneweatherboardroof metal (over wood shingle)other concrete (buttresses)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Longbranch School Gymnasium is a massive gabled roof, Rustic style structure located on Key Peninsula in Pierce County, Washington, near the community of the same name. The well preserved building sits on its original site and is surrounded by forests and small farms. The gym was constructed using local logs, stone, and timber in 1939 as a Works Progress Administration project.

The single story building is rectangular in shape and constructed of a log frame with stone and concrete walls and a steeply pitched gable roof which shelters a cavernous interior. The gable roof slopes to the top of the first floor where concrete buttresses continue the slope to the ground. Buttresses line the building on the north and south sides and have been scored to simulate blocks. The highly pitched gabled roof has exposed log rafters. It has metal sheathing over the original wood shingles, a brick chimney (near the ridge), and a newer metal stove pipe. The east gable end is sided with weatherboards and is pierced by a rectangular louvered vent. On the west gable, besides the siding and vent, are a row of two and a row of three 24-light wood frame fixed windows.

On the front (north) side of the building are six groups of four wood frame six-light fixed windows placed between each buttress. Four groups are to the left of the main entry and two are to the right. The group directly below the new stove pipe has been partially covered with compatible stone. The entry has a shed metal roof with exposed log ends and log supports. The double doors are constructed of vertical boards joined by tongue and groove.

The rear (south) of the building has wood frame 24-light fixed windows covered on the inside with wire mesh. Two on the east end have been covered with paneling. Four steps lead to a rear door constructed of vertical wood boards with tongue and groove joints. The east end has two 10-light and one 12-light wood framed fixed windows and a wood paneled door. The west end has a single story shed roof weatherboard addition with an exterior brick chimney and wood paneled door.

The building was constructed as a gymnasium for a school which was never built. The interior consists of a large central space where one can see the log framing members exposed above. On the west is a stage with two corner auxiliary rooms. Small auxiliary rooms, including a kitchen, are located on the east end. The grounds are not kept landscaped although newer playground equipment and a play field are located on the north of the building adjacent to an undeveloped parking lot.

The building is presently owned by a local community organization that attempts to keep the structure maintained. It is in fair condition. The only known alterations are the metal siding on the roof, several windows covered with plywood, and stone infill below the stove pipe. The roof can be returned to original because the original wood shingles remain beneath the metal. The plywood window covers can be removed.

 See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Works Progress Administration

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Longbranch School Gymnasium is historically significant for its association with the development of education on the rural Key Peninsula of Pierce County, Washington. The well preserved gym reflects the county's last period of rural school expansion, when the state was urging construction of multiple use community facilities and the adoption of physical education--and when the federal government provided direct aid to local school districts. Constructed in 1939, the structure was built as a Works Progress Administration project and is one of the few school structures in the county to reflect the Rustic style and employ local materials. Moreover, the gymnasium is the only remaining school building in this area of Key Peninsula and the only extant public building of any kind associated with Longbranch community history.

Historical Background: Like other counties in the Puget Sound region, Pierce County was settled in the mid and late 19th century by Americans from more eastern states and by European immigrants attracted by the area's vast forests, rich mineral deposits, fertile farmland, and saltwater harbors. Given these physical features, it is not surprising that the economy was dominated by extractive industries--principally logging but also mining, fishing, and farming. Even in the 1930s, when other industries (notably manufacturing) had developed in urban areas, the county's rural economy was fueled by the products of its forests, fields, and the Sound.

This economic base led to the creation of widely scattered rural communities (usually unincorporated) close to natural resources but often inaccessible to urban areas except by difficult water or overland transportation. While Tacoma had a diversified economy based on heavy industry, trade, and transportation, the sparsely settled rural areas were independent and isolated communities characterized by a single economic mainstay.

Without exception, each of these small rural communities established a school district shortly after the first settlers arrived. As elsewhere in the state, the creation of a district and the construction of school buildings signalled the formation of a community and reflected a belief in both the importance of universal education and the permanence of the community itself. The school buildings were often the first and sometimes the only public structures in the area, and thus served as social and cultural centers as well as centers of education. The typical schoolhouse served all school age children in the area and often doubled as a meeting place for their parents. Between 1853, when Washington became a territory, and the 1940s, when rural school consolidation resulted in the construction of larger schools serving several communities, the small community schoolhouses were the primary public structures on the Pierce County rural landscape and today they often are the only surviving evidence of the once thriving rural communities that dotted the county.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Along the Waterfront: A History of the Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula Areas, Peninsula School District, Gig Harbor, 1975.
Auditor's Annual Exhibit, Pierce County, Washington, Bell Press, Tacoma, 1910.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Pierce County Dept. of Planning & Development, Tacoma, Washington

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one

UTM References

A

1	0	5	1	8	2	9	0
Zone		Easting				Northing	

C

Zone		Easting				Northing	

B

Zone		Easting				Northing	

D

Zone		Easting				Northing	

Quadrangle name: Longbranch
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Longbranch School is located on the west side of the Gig Harbor-Longbranch Road north of Lakebay in Section 14, Township 20 North, Range 1 West, W.M., legally described as Parcel No. 00-20-14-4-008.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner (Edited by L. Garfield, OAHP)
 organization Pierce County Planning Division date December 20, 1986
 street & number 2401 S. 35th St. telephone 206/591-7172
 city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98409

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Pierce County's rural schoolhouse construction reflected three general periods of development. Shortly after initial settlement, a one-room log or frame schoolhouse was constructed on land usually donated by an early homesteader. As the community grew, two or four-room frame schoolhouses were constructed, indicating increased community stability, the growth of the school age population, and the expansion of the school curriculum. Schools built between statehood (1889) and World War I often reflect this second period of growth and expansion. A third phase of growth is reflected in buildings constructed after World War I, when many frame buildings were replaced by larger brick structures and ancillary structures--including gymnasiums and play shelters--were constructed adjacent to the schoolhouse. This period, which lasted through the 1930s, included structures built by the federal Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. This third period ended by 1940 when the last WPA projects were constructed and the move toward full-scale rural school consolidation was well underway.

In the early 1850s, Charles Taylor became the first permanent settler on Key Peninsula. Because the forested area was remote from the Pierce County mainland, it developed slowly. Between 1871 and 1889, however, eight small communities were settled, each in the vicinity of a major cove or bay with water providing the only means of transportation. All the settlements had a school district and the communities followed a familiar pattern of development with logging companies serving as a nucleus around which later diversified farms grew.

The community of Longbranch started as an undeveloped summer resort and was named for Long Branch, New Jersey. But the first permanent settlement was in the late 1880s and logging was the first major economic activity. Gradually, settlers cleared small farms and a small business community evolved along the western edge of Filucy Bay. North of Longbranch the community of Lakebay had earlier been established in 1871 by William Creviston and his wife. It was here, in 1878, that the first school district on either the Gig Harbor or Key Peninsulas was formed. In 1884, a shipyard was constructed followed by a boat dock. As at Longbranch, from this activity a small business community evolved. More recently, however, both communities have developed into summer and commuter communities for those living and working on the Pierce County mainland,.

Six years after the formation of a school district at Lakebay, Longbranch created its own district and constructed a one-room wood frame school at the north end of Filucy Bay. A second room was added in 1910 to accommodate increased enrollment. This building was used as a schoolhouse and community center until 1941 when the consolidated Peninsula School District was formed. Two years before consolidation, however (1939), the Longbranch Gymnasium was constructed as part of a Works Progress Administration project which was to include a new school building as well. The school was never constructed and when the districts were consolidated, the older wood frame building was sold to a private owner and demolished and the gymnasium was sold to the Longbranch Improvement Club which continues to use the building for community activities.

Criteria Consideration: Although the structure is less than 50 years old, the Longbranch Gymnasium is eligible for the National Register because of its exceptional architectural and historical significance. Architecturally, the gymnasium reflects the Rustic idiom associated with the WPA. The exterior design--utilizing a massive gabled form and employing local stone and log and concrete buttresses--is unique among school buildings in Pierce County. It is the only extant enclosed gymnasium reflecting the

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rustic idiom in the county. (The Vaughn School gymnasium, also constructed as a WPA project, is a wood frame building.)

In addition, the gymnasium is the only building which has retained the historic integrity to convey its associations with education in the Lakebay and Longbranch communities. The standing Lakebay School, a single story, two-room brick schoolhouse, has been drastically altered. The original wood frame Longbranch School (constructed in 1884) and the original Lakebay School (1878) have been demolished. Of other community buildings in the area, only one church has not lost integrity.

The gymnasium is one of only five WPA-constructed school buildings in the county. All five, built between 1934 and 1939 in this area of the county, represent the anticipation of increased settlement which was expected to result from the completion of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, connecting the waterfront peninsula communities with the county mainland. The bridge was completed in 1940 and collapsed shortly thereafter and the peninsula was not finally connected to the mainland until the second bridge was completed in the 1950s.

Methodology: The project of surveying and documenting Pierce County's rural schools was conducted by James Widrig, architect of the Pierce County Landmarks Board, and Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner for Pierce County. The nominated schools were drawn from a list of 84 school buildings and associated sites included in the countywide historic sites survey. The project followed federal survey guidelines and the results are filed in the Washington State Inventory of Cultural Resources at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia. Each property was physically evaluated to determine its integrity. In addition, traditional research methods were used to place the building in its local historic context as well as to evaluate the property within the statewide context of rural public education.