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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name McCurdy Smokehouse

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number East Side of Water Street at Junction of School Street N/A not for publication

city or town Lubec N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Washington code 029 zip code 04652

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James S. Thurmond 6/9/93
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
 State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper <u><i>Belmont Byron</i></u> Entered in the National Register	Date of Action <u>7/15/93</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

McCURDY SMOKEHOUSE
Name of Property

WASHINGTON, ME
County and State

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
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
9	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Processing/Extraction/
Processing Site

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: smoked Herring Facility

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood Piles

walls Wood/Shingle

roof Metal/Tin

other Most Buildings Stand on a Pile Wharf

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

Period of Significance

1907-1943

Significant Dates

1907

c. 1921-33

c. 1933-41

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

McCURDY SMOKEHOUSE
Name of Property

WASHINGTON, ME
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.2

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 9	6 5 9 3 2 0	4 9 6 9 2 5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1993

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/287-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333-0065

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Standing on a pile wharf at Lubec's waterfront, the McCurdy Smokehouse is a complex of one and two-story wooden frame buildings which appear to have been erected between the mid-nineteenth century and about 1940. Although most of these buildings are now linked together, the majority were originally freestanding. Various expansions of the operation resulted in the construction of new buildings in previously undeveloped spaces between existing ones, as well as the acquisition of additional buildings along Water Street not previously associated with the business. The following description of the individual buildings is keyed to the attached locational map with names assigned by their function in the complex.

INVENTORY LIST**1. Warehouse/Cooler - By 1898, Moved and Enlarged c. 1898-1903**

The facade of this modest two-story shingled building features a wide recessed entryway separating two large display windows, one of which is located in a narrow shed that is attached to the north side. There are three window openings on the second story, all of which are boarded over.

The building appears to be shown on the 1898 Sanborn map as a one-and-a-half-story structure located about fifteen feet north of its present site. A small one-story building stood at the rear of this alley. On the 1903 edition of the Sanborn map, it seems that the structure has been moved adjacent to the present building #2 and both extended to the rear and a full second story added. The small building displaced by this action was moved to the opposite side of the subject property. A blacksmith occupied the first story and a business indicated simply as "painting" was located on the second floor. The building appears to have been incorporated into the smokehouse complex between 1921 and 1933 when it is designated as a storehouse.

2. Fish Boning and Processing Building - By 1898

This two-story shingled building, whose window and door openings are boarded over, appears to have had a large central opening which has since been altered by the insertion of windows and flanking doors. There are two second floor openings and three on each story of the south side elevation.

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Like its counterpart (1) to the north, this building predates the establishment of the smokehouse. As indicated on the Sanborn maps as early as 1898 it was used as a carpentry shop. It subsequently housed a boat shop, a furniture store, and the offices of Western Union.

3. Storage Building - c. 1933-1941

Sanborn maps indicate that this one-story gable roofed building was added to the complex between 1933 and 1941 during a period of expansion that included the adjoining Fish Boning and Storage Building (4). The Storage Building is sheathed in wood shingles and has a trio of window, and one door along its south elevation.

4. Fish Boning and Storage Building - c. 1933-1941

This one-story, wood shingled building features a steeply pitched gable roof whose ridge is punctuated by a brick flue near the west end. There is a large sliding door at the southeast corner and four small windows symmetrically located across the balance of the south side. Their size and position indicate the presence of an interior work bench used in this aspect of the operation.

A comparison between the 1933 and 1941 editions of the Sanborn maps suggests that a portion of the original smokehouse (5) was removed to accommodate the erection of both this new building and the storage building (3).

5. Smokehouse - c. 1907

One of two smokehouses in the complex, this two-story building has a steeply pitched gable roof with a full length ridge vent. In its design, this long building actually contains three totally distinct sections or "houses" which are evident on the exterior by the three large first story sliding doors. A platform mounted above the doors runs the length of the building to allow access to the second story vents. There are thirteen of these vents on each side of the building, each of whose covers can be moved to permit air circulation and light when necessary. The three separate "houses" are further divided internally into eight or nine "bays" consisting of a framework of parallel slats on which the herring laden sticks are hung during the smoking process. The slats begin at a

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point about eight to ten feet above the floor and continue up to the ridge. The floors themselves are composed of a top layer of gravel over a plank subfloor. Use of gravel provides a fireproof bed for the fire piles which are placed directly on it, and it also serves to absorb grease and brine from the herring.

6. Pickling Shed and Pumphouse - c. 1907

The Pickling Shed and Pumphouse is a broad, low one-story building that is sheathed in wood shingles and covered by a gable roof. It has a large door on the west end, eight window openings along the south side, and a slightly taller gabled projection at the southeast corner which houses the pumping facility. Its interior contains the wooden pickling tanks and their related chutes which deliver the fish to them, as well as the long stringing table at which the herring are put onto the sticks for smoking.

7. Sawdust Building - c. 1921-1933

Originally constructed for fish storage, this building was subsequently used to store the sawdust that permits the development of a smoldering fire. It is a one-story, gable-roofed structure that is covered with wood shingles and tar paper. A variety of openings punctuate the north, east, and west elevations, and a small ridge vent is located near the east end.

8. Smokehouse - c. 1921-1933

Although it is somewhat smaller than the original smokehouse (5), this building is identical in its overall composition and internal configuration. It is divided into three "houses" and features long platforms on both side elevations with eleven vent doors arranged across the second story.

Judging from the Sanborn insurance maps, this smokehouse was erected between 1921 and 1933 and was part of a substantial expansion of the business in that period.

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9. Warehouse - c. 1860

The oldest building in the complex, this two-story Greek Revival style building is also remarkably well preserved. Its facade has a three-bay storefront including a central entrance, each bay of which is separated by a broad paneled pilaster with a sawtooth-shaped decorative insert below the cap. The four pilasters rise to a wide entablature which is framed by but does not extend to narrower corner pilasters and gable end returns. There are two openings on the second story and a variety of doors and windows on the rear elevation. A narrow cornice extends along both sides.

This building is shown on the 1881 Washington County Atlas, although its use at that time is not indicated. By 1898 it was in use as a drug and jewelry store and later housed a grocery store. Between 1921 and 1933 it had been converted into a storehouse, quite probably becoming part of the present complex.

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McCURDY SMOKEHOUSE

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Initially constructed about 1907 and enlarged at various times up to World War II, the McCurdy Smokehouse consists of a complex of wooden buildings - most of which stand on a pile wharf - designed to produce smoked herring. It is representative of a type of industrial facility which was common in the Lubec area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This example is believed to be the most intact - if not the only one - left in Maine. Furthermore, at the time of its closing in 1991, the McCurdy Smokehouse is said to have been the only commercial plant of its type in the United States. The smokehouse is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion A for its association with an historically significant fisheries industry and criterion C for its depiction of the traditional building form used in the production of smoked herring.

The McCurdy Smokehouse was originally developed by Robert B. McBride upon his acquisition of the wharf on which it stands in July, 1907. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1898 and 1903 clearly show an unimproved wharf, whereas the 1911 edition reveals a somewhat enlarged structure on which is a long L-shaped building labeled "Robt. G. McBride Smoked Fish." McBride's immediate effort to erect his smokehouse in mid-1907 is borne out by the fact that he appears in the 1908 edition of the Maine Register as a manufacturer of smoked herring. This may not, however, represent his first association with the industry, since the McBride Brothers are listed in the Register under this same heading in 1906.

In 1908, McBride was one of thirteen smoked herring manufacturers in Lubec, a number which was reported as being considerably higher in 1913 when the State Department of Labor and Industry took a census of firms in Maine. The statistics gathered in this study show that McBride operated his smokehouse for an average of seven months employing eight men and five women. By comparison to the other firms, his was a medium-sized operation where the smallest employed four persons and the largest forty-four. Unfortunately, no source has as yet been located that provides comparable data for the amount and value of products.

McBride operated this smokehouse until his death in 1922 having possibly made a small addition to the Pickling Shed and Pumphouse (6) prior to 1921. The following year his heirs sold the property to Cadwallader Kelley who owned the business until 1948 and, with Dorothy C. Kelley, from 1954 until 1959. It was probably under Kelley's initial ownership that the facility was significantly enlarged by the addition of a second Smokehouse (7) the present Sawdust Building (8), the Fish Boning and Storage Building (4), and the Storage Building (3). Garnett L. Green acquired the property in 1948, but sold it back to the Kelley's in 1954 who then transferred it to Arthur P. McCurdy in 1959. McCurdy's son John P. McCurdy, Jr. still owns the smokehouse.

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The history of the smoked herring industry in Maine provides an important glimpse into both the development of a very specialized industrial facility and the shaping of commercial waterfronts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From its beginning at the turn of the eighteenth century through its rapid commercial expansion a century later and then its subsequent collapse, the rise and fall of this industry illustrates the dramatic impact of the commercial fisheries on Maine's coastal communities.

According to tradition, the smoking of herring was begun in Lubec in 1797 by one Daniel Ramsdell, although another source states that it originated in Eastport in 1808 and Lubec in 1812 (Report of Commissioner, 1898). While little is known about the early years of the trade, it has been estimated that between 1845 and 1865 some 500,000 boxes of herring were smoked annually. Demand for the product declined after the Civil War, a market condition which, when combined with the tremendous importation of British smoked herring during the period of the Washington Treaty (1873-85), substantially reduced the local industry. By 1880, Maine's annual output was slightly over 370,000 boxes as compared to a ten-fold increase in imports equal to two-and-a-half times the domestic output. After 1885, however, the industry began to expand once again, and by 1900 there were twenty-three manufacturers of smoked herring in Washington County, all but four of which were located in Lubec (Maine Register). The 1896 Report of the U. S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries stated that the principal markets for smoked herring were Boston and New York. It also noted that 539 persons, exclusive of fishermen, were employed in the industry which had a product amounting to more than 1.2 million boxes.

Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the smoked herring industry existed along side of the even more rapidly developing canned sardine industry. Since the sardine industry was also using locally abundant herring, their processing plants were likewise concentrated in the Lubec-Eastport area and frequently adjacent to smokehouses. In some cases, a single company might be engaged in both branches of the business. From its inception in 1875, the sardine packing industry grew at a phenomenal rate and quickly outpaced the much older smoked herring business in terms of the amount and value of the herring used, and the level of employment. In 1896, for example, 4,404 persons were employed at the more than 60 factories then in existence in Maine with a value of produce over ten times that from the smokehouses.

The discussion of the sardine industry is mentioned to underscore the following point; namely, that whereas the packing of sardines utilized technological processes of canning and preserving fish in specially made tin cans, the smoked herring industry relied on traditional methods which were probably little changed from its inception. Both the nature and the division

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of labor as well as the buildings themselves, particularly the smokehouses, reflect these patterns. The lengthy description of these aspects of the industry that appeared in the 1896 Report are practically identical to the process described nearly a century later in an article on the McCurdy Smokehouse which appeared in Salt magazine. The following description of the smoked herring process by L. C. Burns, who worked in Lubec smokehouses, provides a clear sense of both the traditional pattern of work and the function of the individual buildings:

An average sized smokehouse would usually handle thirty-five hogsheads of herring at a time. The herring were scooped by hand, hoisted from the hold of the carrier by tub, and sluiced to the pickling shed. There they would remain in the brine tanks for about five days. A "spudger" (paddle-like instrument) was used periodically to keep the salt evenly distributed in the tanks. When properly pickled, the herring were ready for stringing. They were carried in baskets to tables where "stringers," with salt sacks tied around their waist for aprons, were ready to do battle. I say battle, as stringing was a piece-work operation. Each stringer was supplied with a bundle of 100 sticks, tapered on one end. A right-handed stringer held the stick in his or her left hand and threaded the herring onto the stick by slipping the thumb beneath the gill and guiding the herring onto the stick. Each stick held approximately 18 to 25 herring, depending on their size. The herring-laden sticks were then placed on a sturdy wooden rack, referred to as the "horse." When the horse was full, with approximately 40 to 50 sticks of herring, it was carried into the smokehouse. There a team of nimble-footed climbers, perched in the lofty rafters, proceeded to "bay" up the herring. The "bays" were an extensive array of two by fours that transected the smokehouse in athwartship fashion, and extended from about eight feet above the floor to the peak. The performance of the smokehouse men would rival most any dare-devil act. High off the ground, legs spread-eagled, feet barely touching the grease-laden rafters; the would-be aerial artists not only had to maintain their balance, but had to bend, reach and lift the heavy sticks of herring.

Six-hundred sticks of herring was a good day's work for the average stringer. Fast stringers could slip the herring onto a stick quicker than you could bat an eyelash.

Those of us that strung herring were saddled with the unbecoming title of "herring choker". Considering that the larger smokehouses held an average of 400 hogsheads, you might say we were guilty of choking a great many of them.

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After the herring were "bayed" up, the smoke tenders took over, butting salt water driftwood, or hardwood in triangular fashion, igniting with kindling and kerosene, and banking with sawdust to hold the flames down and generate the desired smoke affect. Tending the smouldering fires was an awesome responsibility. The fire had to be properly ventilated at all times. Over-drafted, the fires would flare up, the excessive heat causing the herring to drip fat onto the fires, fanning the flames higher, and resulting in burned, dried up herring. Under-drafted, the fires might sputter out, allowing the clammy dampness to pervade the smokehouse and its valuable stock. Each major shift of wind, whether at one o'clock in the afternoon, or two o'clock in the morning, brought the smoke tenders on the run to adjust the upper-storied "bay" doors.

But the finished product took on many sizes and shapes, from the typical 10 lb. box of skinless, to the 3 lb. and larger size boxes of unskun herring, often referred to as "bloaters." Skinning herring was also piece work and kept a crew of women and men busy throughout the winter months. Clad in oil cloth aprons, and armed with scissors and paring knives, they perched themselves on stools before a long wooden bench, heaped with intact herring. Hour after hour, day after day, throughout the long, cold winters, they would snip and pare away at the herring, their fingers chafed and raw from the slivery bones and rough skin of the fish, not to mention the cuts and abrasions inflicted by scissors and knives.

Since its closure, the McCurdy Smokehouse has been unused but very well maintained. Its future is uncertain. Recently, however, discussions in Lubec have been underway to consider the complex for preservation as a museum to the community's maritime history. Listing of the property in the National Register will, hopefully, assist this effort.

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McCURDY SMOKEHOUSE

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Burns, L. C. "Dying Embers-Lubec Remembers." The Quoddy Tides (Eastport).
June 8, 1979.

Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics
for the State of Maine, 1900. Augusta: Kennebec Journal Print. 1901.

French, Hugh T. "Smokehouse: Last of a Breed." Salt. #28, October, 1986.

Report of the Commissioner for the Year Ending June 30, 1896. Part XXII.
U. S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. Washington: GPO. 1898.

Second Biennial Report of the Department of Labor and Industry of the State
of Maine, 1913-1914. Waterville: Sentinel Publishing Company. 1915.

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McCURDY SMOKEHOUSE

WASHINGTON, ME

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies the Town of Lubec Tax Map 15, Lots 18, 19, and 22. See map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary embraces the entire three village lots occupied by the McCurdy Smokehouse complex. Two of the lots (18, 19) are contiguous whereas the third (22) is separated from the principal buildings by an intervening lot.

