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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 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 Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number N/A N/A not for publication  
city, town Safety Harbor, North Captiva Island  vicinity  
state Florida code FL county Lee code FL 071 zip code 33091

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>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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] State Historic Preservation Officer Date 3/14/89  
Florida Department of State-Division of Historical Resources  
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. Entered in the National Register 4/20/89  
 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 of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE-fishing facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC-camp

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: utilitarian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation wood

walls wood

roof aluminum

other

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**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)

Maritime History

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1924-1939

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1924

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Rose, J. T. - Builder

\_\_\_\_\_

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

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acresage of property less than one acre

**UTM References**

A 17 379150 2942410  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Boundary includes only the platform supporting and surrounding the ice house and the cistern. The pilings supporting the structure (platform inclusive) are not included.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

Boundary lines are drawn to include only those portions of the site designed as a part of the mobile ice house, and as such, is treated similar to a vessel. Pilings are a consistent renewable resource and do not merit inclusion in the boundary.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Gladys Cook; Vicki L. Welcher-Historic Sites Specialist  
 organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date March 13, 1989  
 street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333  
 city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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## SUMMARY

The Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House is located off the north shore of the entrance to Safety Harbor, on North Captiva Island in Lee County, Florida. The one story, rectangular wood frame structure rests on a wooden platform supported by wood pilings submerged in shallow water. The roof is a gable-on-hip and is clad in V-crimp and corrugated aluminum sheets. Exterior material is horizontal drop siding original to the building. A hooped barrel rain cistern rests on separate pilings off the south side of the structure.

## SETTING

The Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House was located in the shallow waters at the north entrance of Safety Harbor at North (Upper) Captiva Island. North (Upper) Captiva is a barrier island for Pine Island Sound. To the east is Pine Island, which created the channel for the Caloosahatchee River at Fort Myers, Florida. The barrier island was covered in native bush such as mangrove trees and scrub oaks; the harbor was relatively shallow and provided shelter from storms approaching from the north and the west. Pine Island Sound provided protected passage for the fishing boats and other vessels operating between Fort Myers and Punta Gorda.

The present setting for the Ice House is the same as it was during the historic period. The only exception is the addition of a small number of cottages around the harbor. Only one of the structures is partially visible from the Ice House.

## PRESENT APPEARANCE

The Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House was built in 1924 by J. T. Rose of the Punta Gorda Fish Company. The one story wood frame building was constructed on a wood deck and supported by wood pilings in shallow water near a natural channel at the entrance to what is today know as Safety Harbor on North Captiva Island.

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Decking for the ice house is supported by a system of wood headers, constructed in a style similar to steel I-beams, attached directly to wood pilings. Rough cut 2x4 pine stringers run perpendicular to the headers and support a second set of stringers, again set perpendicularly. Decking is rough cut 1x6 pine/cypress. A door in the floor of the ice house served to provide access to the chute used to remove the fish. As a utilitarian structure, it does not have a main facade. Rather, all sides are plain and provide access. The interior of the structure is an open floor plan, necessitated by the early function of the building as an ice house.

The east end of the building has had the exterior wall extended under the shed roof and has a wood panelled door opening on to the wood deck that surrounds the building. There are no windows on this elevation, but there is a small louvered opening at the gable end. The north elevation features two shuttered windows and one door. Windows are unglazed and are simple screened frames with operable shutters to allow for maximum ventilation. This elevation has a lower dock for the mooring of small boats. The west elevation has one original wood door and one shuttered window. The gable end has a louvered vent window identical to that of the east elevation. The oversized eaves are bracketed with wood supports. The south elevation contains one door and two shuttered windows. A wood cistern is located on the south side of the building and is supplied by a pipe which runs from a metal gutter system encircling the eaves of the building. The cistern rests on a separate wood deck and is constructed of vertical barrel staves with three metal hoops encircling the cistern.

Today, the structure is used on an occasional basis as a weekend retreat. The structure is in stable condition and is relatively unaltered. Repairs to rotted or storm-damaged wood have been made. No early photographs of the building could be located; however, examination of the building and interviews with area fishermen indicate few alterations to the structure.

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Alterations

The extension of the east wall appears to be the only alteration to the structure outside of jalousie windows and boarding of fenestration.

Due to the maritime nature of the structure, there has been some replacement of materials in the pilings, headers and stringers as a result of weather rot. These can be noted in the stringers located at the east end in Photo #1. However, even these replacement boards have retained original construction techniques as seen in Photo #2. Cross beaming is not viewed as modern due to the extensiveness of the cross beaming. This would support the premise that cross beaming was necessary to secure pilings jetisoned in by hand, and not modern machinery.

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## SUMMARY

The Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House at Upper Captiva Island, Lee County, Florida, is significant under Criterion C at the state level as an excellent example of a structure built to accommodate the functional needs of the commercial fishing industry in Florida after the turn of the century. The structure is significant under Criterion A at the state level for its association with the fishing industry, a vital resource of the region and Florida.

The Ice House is one of few remaining buildings documenting the system of remote, water-based fish industry ice houses. The structure was built by the Punta Gorda Fish Company as an ice house to serve the commercial fishing system as it developed in Florida during the first part of the twentieth century. The ice house and other scattered water-based fish shacks are all that remain of this era. The coming of improved transportation, both by water and land, and a change in marketing techniques, led to the demise of the system.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

### Early Fishing Industry

Fishing has been an integral part of the economy of the west coast of Florida for centuries. From 1513, when Ponce de Leon first established contact with the local Calusa Indians, it has also been a significant source of trade between Florida and Cuba. Early Spanish records indicate a system of small Indian villages strategically placed to take advantage of the migrating fish in the area of Pine Island Sound. Fish were caught by various methods, dried, cured with salt, and transported to Havana, Cuba.

Dried and salted fish became the largest stable industry for this area from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. In the mid-nineteenth century, the acquisition of Florida by the United States increased the number and variety of local fishermen. Thousands of pounds of various species of fish were dried and cured by Indians, pioneer homesteaders and Spanish fishermen illegally encroaching into territorial waters. Although the concept of iced fish was introduced to Florida in the mid-1880s, the salted fish market in Havana remained a

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profitable business for Florida fisheries. Instead of closing the salted fish market, iced fish opened the more lucrative and easily accessible american market.

### Late 19th and Early 20th Century

The arrival of the Florida Southern Railroad to Punta Gorda in 1886 revolutionized the fishing industry in Charlotte Harbor. A major ice plant was constructed on a spur of the railroad. Local fishing now could supply fresh fish directly to northern markets and leave the salt fish market to the Cuban interests. A 4200 foot railroad dock was completed in 1886 to accommodate the large steamers plying the harbor. The Morgan Line docked there, along with several major seafood dealers whose fish houses lined the wharf. A. K. Demere, Carnes and Monk, Bill Lewis and others operated an extensive system of icing and procurement of fresh fish from as far south as Estero Bay.

The fisheries operated a system of "run" boats that ran to a string of water and land based buildings built throughout Charlotte Harbor, Bull Bay and Pine Island Sound. The run boats would make rounds delivering ice to the remote houses and pick up fish to be off-loaded on the railroad wharf for shipment to northern destinations.

The commercial fishing industry in Punta Gorda was among the largest in Florida. The 1897 study estimated 230 persons worked the offshore fisheries with 25 onshore. One hundred and forty vessels operated. Gill netting for mullet formed the vast majority of the fishing industry in Punta Gorda. The 1895 catch, according to the study which included those fish caught incidentally in the mullet fishery, amounted to 1,627,015 pounds, for which the fishermen received \$43,573. Spanish mackerel, oysters and channel bass were also major catches.

The ice plant at Punta Gorda was the core of the fishing industry. Originally powered by steam boilers, the plant was converted to commercial electric in 1913. Tons of ice were produced for use on the north bound trains, the run boats and the ice houses in the harbor.

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One of the largest fish companies was the Punta Gorda Fish Company. All of the company skiffs, run boats, fish houses and land based buildings were painted yellow. Joe Goulding and J. T. Rose were captains. Captains owned their boats and furnished gasoline. They ordered groceries for the crews of ten to twelve men who netted the fish aboard pole skiffs or row skiffs in the harbor. The fish would be taken to the ice houses scattered throughout the harbor. When a fisherman arrived at the ice house, the ice house keeper would lower a "daisy bucket" and haul up the fresh which were weighed and separated. The ice house keeper would give the captain a receipt or fish ticket for the fish caught. When the men settled at the fish house, the money due the fishermen was divided equally among them. The captains got a full share plus one third of each man's share. The fishermen's wives picked up a sum each week from the fish house regardless of whether the fisherman had used up his allotment while fishing in the harbor.

Dock workers would arrive at 4:00 a.m. year around to load the run boat with 300 pound blocks of ice, groceries, personal items for the fishermen, numbering 400 in the 1920s and 1930s. Merchandise was also carried for the islanders and businesses located throughout the harbor. After the deliveries were made, the run boat crew would lay over until the next morning and then on the return, collect the days catch at the ice houses. Thousands of pounds of fish were lowered through chutes in the ice house floors into the hold of the run boat. The ice house man would use a pole to push the last of the fish through the chute into the boat.

Residential stilt houses were built surrounding the ice house. These buildings, along with the ice houses were easily transportable so they could be moved to follow the catch. The ice house at Upper Captiva is one that has not been moved from its original location; most of the others throughout the harbor were moved during the historical period.

At low tide, two barges flanked the building and slid large beams underneath. When the tide rose, the barge and beams lifted the buildings off their pilings and the barge was able to move to another location. A low tide would lower the building on to the newly set pilings. A building could be moved 20 miles in 12 hours.

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The remote fishing buildings continued to be used throughout the first part of the twentieth century. With the improved technology of gasoline engines, and the construction of roads to Pine Island where other fish houses were built, fishermen began to be able to make a daily run to the land based fish houses. The stilt buildings served as shelter for extended fishing trips land were otherwise abandoned.

## HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Criterion A

The Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House is directly associated with the events of modern commercial fishing in the State of Florida. Commercial fishing flourished through new technologies and transportation opportunities in southwest Florida at the turn of the century and into the Land Boom Period. The ice house was built by one of the major commercial fishing companies of Punta Gorda and remained in the ownership of that company until the company was terminated in 1957. As the long dock in Punta Gorda, where all of the fish companies were located, burned in 1939, the period of significance is determined to be 1924-1939.

The structure is of significance to the commerce of the region and the State of Florida as an early representation of an industry that forms a major portion of modern Florida's industry as well as image. The production and trade of seafood has been an activity of the area for many centuries and continues to play a vital role today. The early fish houses and ice houses of Charlotte Harbor are testimony to the older traditions of this commercial activity. It reflects the revolution of the industry through the use of ice to preserve fresh fish instead of drying and curing with salt.

Criterion C

The structure possesses integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and is rare example of the utilitarian type structure used to store ice and fish. The ice house is significant as a representation of the system of transporting fresh fish from its source to its market.

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The role of the ice house in that system was to store the fish, avoiding wastage, so it could be transshipped to port and again transshipped to rail.

The structure was built as an ice house to serve the fishermen and run boats in the loading, unloading and storage of freshly caught fish. The functional characteristics of the building are intact and available for further study. The structure is a specialized form designed to function under potentially adverse weather conditions, relative isolation, and the possible requirement to relocate the building to follow the migration of the fish. As it were, this particular ice house was never moved. It has withstood the storms and other weather extremes of its configuration upon submerged wood pilings at the mouth of a small harbor on North Captiva Island.

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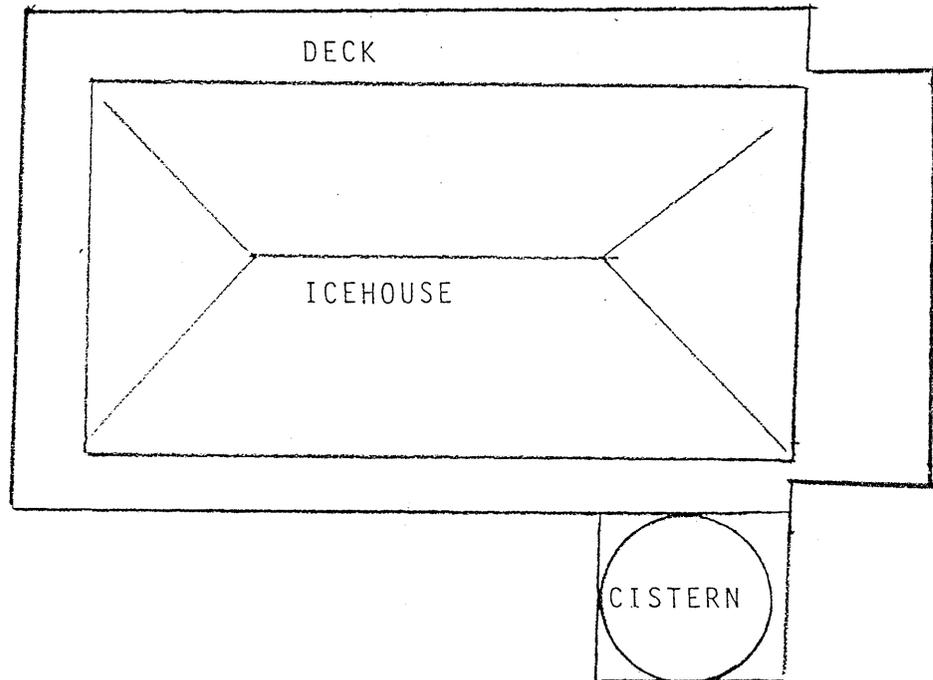
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1. Punta Gorda Fish Company Ice House
2. Safety Harbor, Lee County, Florida
3. Gladys Cook
4. 12-19-87
5. Historic Preservation Consultants
6. South and East Elevations Facing Northwest
7. Photo #1 of 5

Items 1-5 are identical for all photographs

6. East Elevation facing west
7. Photo #2 of 5
  
6. North and East Elevations Facing Southwest
7. Photo #3 of 5
  
6. West Elevation Facing East
7. Photo #4 of 5
  
6. South Elevation Facing Northeast
7. Photo #5 of 5

UPPER  
CAPTIVA  
ISLAND



PUNTA GORDA FISH COMPANY ICE HOUSE  
UPPER CAPTIVA ISLAND  
LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Drawing Not to Scale 