

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUN 15 1977  
DATE ENTERED OCT 18 1977

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
Colbert House

AND/OR COMMON

### LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Quaker and Lake Streets  
CITY, TOWN  
Ilwaco  
STATE  
Washington  
VICINITY OF  
3rd - Donald L. Bonker  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
3rd - Donald L. Bonker  
COUNTY  
Pacific  
CODE  
049

### CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

### OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
Mildred and Catherine Colbert

STREET & NUMBER  
Quaker and Lake Streets

CITY, TOWN  
Ilwaco  
STATE  
Washington

### LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Auditor's Office, Pacific County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
Cowlitz and Vine Streets

CITY, TOWN  
South Bend  
STATE  
Washington

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE  
January, 1975  
\_FEDERAL  STATE \_COUNTY \_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN  
Olympia  
STATE  
Washington

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located in the coastal village of Ilwaco, Washington, at the mouth of the Columbia River, the Fred Colbert House is the modest home of an early day trap fisherman. The house was built in increments over the last three decades of the 19th Century, the earliest portion having been transported by barge from its original location at Chinook Point. The building is a fine example of vernacular architecture adapted to functional living and to climate. It is situated on Lake Street which, prior to the creation of a boat basin, fronted Baker Bay on the south more closely. The chief entrance to the house actually occurs on the Quaker Street elevation to the west. To the north is Spruce Street, originally a part of Ilwaco's race track.

The appearance of the surrounding property has changed over the years. A stable with a hay mow and four stalls for cows and horses once stood at the northwest corner of the house. A woodshed, privy, and playhouse, as well as a garden and grindstone for knife sharpening, were also situated on the property. Presently a frame garage stands immediately to the rear of the house. Further down Lake Street near the waterfront was Fred Colbert's web shed, where the tarred, twine nets used in trap fishing were stored and mended.

The one and one-half story Colbert House is of "box construction", i.e., vertical planks attached to sills and plates, and rests on a foundation of wooden posts. The centermost section of the house forms a cross-gable perpendicular to sections on the north and south. These latter units have cross gables which add variety to the massing of the house on its west facade. In contrast, the entire east elevation consists of two major planes with only the central cross gable interrupting the linearity of the roofline. It has been written by a Colbert daughter that Fred Colbert, in his admiration for sea-going vessels, insisted upon maintaining that undisturbed expanse of wall as a monument to the unbroken lines of a ship. The exterior surface of the house, on its west and north sides, is clad with shiplap siding. To provide additional insulation against the strong southeasterly winds off the Columbia, Fred Colbert applied plain and fancy-butt shingles to the south and east facades. This weathered shingle siding is still in place today, and creates a rich and varied texture that characterizes a number of Ilwaco's historic dwellings. The roof of the Colbert House is wood shingled as well. Three ornamental brick chimneys originally connected to wood heaters are still used in this capacity.

As the Colbert family grew in size and the complexity of Fred Colbert's salmon fishing business increased, the house was enlarged accordingly. The central portion, with its gable oriented east-west, was constructed by Colbert in the early 1870's at Chinook Point some five miles to the southeast. When the young family moved to the growing settlement of Ilwaco, c.1883, they floated the small house by barge to newly purchased lots on Quaker Street. Several years later an addition was made on the south, consisting of a front parlor, staircase and entrance hall, as well as an upstairs bedroom. A second addition to the north or rear of the house replaced an early shed kitchen, and included a dining room, kitchen, pantry and bath. Upstairs a large open workroom was created in this wing which served as a dormitory for Colbert's crew members. The dormitory is reached by a staircase which originally led from the back porch.

Fenestration on the Colbert House consists of early four-over-four and six-over-six light, double-hung sash. The plank surrounds generally have mouldings at their heads and lug sills below. Vertical board storm shutters on the south elevation are non-original elements.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fred Colbert House - the oldest portion of which dates from the 1870's - is representative of vernacular architecture at its best. The house is located in Ilwaco, a coastal fishing village in southwestern Washington. Its history and design reflect the role which it played in the area's early salmon fishing industry. Prior to their marriage in 1870, Fred Colbert and Catherine Petit had both settled in western Washington in the 1860's. Colbert was to become one of the first trap fishermen on the lower Columbia. While helping to establish and expand the fish-trapping industry on Baker Bay, he was drawn into the bitter "salmon wars" of the 1880's between gillnetters and trappers. The Colbert House has undergone remarkably little change since it was occupied by the young, active family. One of the Colbert daughters still resides in the house and has taken care to retain some early fishing gear and many of the family furnishings.

At the age of seventeen, Fred Colbert shipped out of Gotenborg, Sweden and sailed the seas for some nine years. In 1866 he left his ship at Port Madison in the Washington Territory and crossed overland to Westport, Oregon, and eventually on to Astoria. In 1870, Colbert married Catherine Petit of Chinookville. Catherine was one of seven children of Amable Petit and his wife Amelia. The Petit family had moved from eastern Washington to Portland in 1865. During the first winter there, the family suffered from malaria and were advised to move to the coast. Amable acquired a schooner, packed his family and supplies aboard, and headed down-river. None aboard knew how to sail upwind, so that the 100-mile voyage to Chinookville took one month, much of it spent waiting for favorable tides and winds. In September, 1866, the Petits arrived in Chinookville and moved into a modest shack 20 feet by 20 feet in dimension. Amable Petit engaged in seine fishing along the Columbia.

When Fred and Catherine married in Chinookville in 1870, they built a one and one-half story gabled cottage of "box construction". Colbert at first practiced seining along the beach and gillnetting for salmon in the river. In 1879 or 1880, the Oliver P. Graham family from Michigan introduced trap fishing on Baker Bay, a method similar to that used in the Great Lakes. Colbert joined in this business, in which permanent traps made of webs and hand-driven piles were stretched out from shore. This methodology proved so successful that an influx of midwestern fishermen resulted. Many of them settled in the village of Ilwaco on the northwest shore of Baker Bay.

Ilwaco grew rapidly and soon built a public school. Catherine Colbert convinced her husband that with four school age daughters they should relocate across the bay. In 1882 or 1883, they made the move, living at first in a summer tourist cottage on the beach. Soon Colbert purchased two Quaker Street lots and returned to Chinookville to arrange for the transport of their old dwelling house. In the years to follow, major additions were made to the original cottage.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
JUN 15 1977
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED OCT 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

To the rear of the house, adjoining the garage, is a covered back porch partially enclosed with sash. On the west facade at its forward or Lake Street corner once stood a covered verandah with a deck. A portion of the original jigsawn balcony rail was salvaged, and is presently in use as a small landing rail at the front entrance to the house.

The interior of the Colbert House is remarkable in its lack of intrusive modernizations. Changes that have occurred were, for the most part, undertaken at an early date by Mrs. Catherine Petit Colbert herself. Throughout the house, wall surfaces have never been plastered. Instead, the unplanned vertical planks were covered with "house-lighting", and wallpaper. All of the various layers of wallpaper applied over the years remain in place, which will permit eventual study of the house's earliest decorative scheme.

The central portion of the house, dating from the early 1870's, has plank ceilings with beveled edges. Moulded, four-panel doors with their original plank surrounds and quarter-round mouldings are visible here and elsewhere on the ground floor, as are 3-inch floor boards and broad baseboards. The entrance hall (included in the earliest addition to the south) has a tongue-in-groove panelled ceiling and a narrow corner staircase with turned balusters. Upstairs are family bedrooms which retain original floors, plank ceilings, woodwork and doors. To the rear of the house at second-floor level are the fishermen's quarters, where crew members were housed and where the family quilting and weaving later took place.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 15 1977

DATE ENTERED OCT 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

At approximately the same time, a bitter controversy was brewing amongst Columbia River fishermen that was soon to erupt in a series of violent confrontations known as the "salmon wars". The first white fishermen to work the lower Columbia had been gillnetters - for the most part Finns and Slavs whose boats and gear were similar to those used on the east coast. The gillnetters had become increasingly alarmed at the proliferation of fish traps in all of the choice locations for gillnet drifts. Their livelihood threatened, the gillnetters rose in force in 1884 to drive out the big webs. Ilwaco was heavily populated with both gillnetters and trappers, so that it was often the scene of violence in the years to follow. Fred Colbert's family and business were drawn into the conflict on more than a few occasions.

Physical attacks by gillnetters were often aimed at cutting the mooring lines of the salmon traps' power-driven piledrivers, setting them adrift. Each trap had a watchman housed in a shack above on piles or on shore, and these men were frequently terrorized in midnight raids. One of the first episodes of violence in Ilwaco was an attack on Fred Colbert's watchman Miller, who was stationed on Colbert's piledriver. One night gillnetters boarded the trap, roped his neck and threatened to hang him from the gins. In the dark of the night they transferred him to a freight scow and duped him into believing he was being shanghaied, an event which might easily have occurred on Astoria's waterfront. Following the destruction of traps on that particular occasion and on others, trappers banded together to patrol the river for the remainder of the season with a boat and gun from nearby Fort Canby.

Another threat to the trap-fishers' gear was the arson of their webs, twine nets which, prior to their use, were dipped in vats of hot tar to strengthen and darken them. Webs were hauled out of these vats with large wooden reels which typically lined the shores in trap-fishing areas. The heavy nets were then drained and spread on the ground to dry. When rumors of a raid by Astoria gillnetters began to circulate, Fred Colbert hired the Indian Tom Tilson to guard the webs which he had spread in front of his house on Lake and Quaker Streets. Three well-respected local citizens, possibly friends of Colbert's, arrived one night to "check-up" on Tilson. In the dark they lit a match, and Tilson opened fire as he had been instructed by Colbert, killing one and wounding another.

Similar incidents of useless violence continued well into the 1900's. Both fishermen and canneries were embroiled in strikes and raids that resulted in numerous casualties and eventually required the involvement of the Washington National Guard and federal troops. Nevertheless, the use of fish traps continued to increase until 1935 when they were banned in the state of Washington. Fred Colbert eventually turned away from the sea and opened a livery stable which he operated in Ilwaco for many years.

The Colbert House is presently occupied by Catherine, the youngest daughter of Fred and Catherine Colbert. Over the years, family members have taken pains to preserve the house as it existed at the turn of the century. Little or no modernization, notably in terms of heating systems and kitchen equipment, has taken place. Furnishings and artifacts, tools

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 15 1977

DATE ENTERED OCT 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

and gear of the Colbert's trap-fishing years are still openly in evidence. Upstairs to the rear of the house, the crew's barracks remains the open, unfinished dormitory and workroom that it once was. Gracefully aging, the Colbert House exhibits authentic charm and clearly reflects an aspect of pioneer life in the Pacific Northwest about which very little is known.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 15 1977

DATE ENTERED JUN 16 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Colbert, Catherine. (daughter of Fred and Catherine Petit Colbert) Personal interview. March 11, 1977.

Colbert, Mildred. Letters and articles in the files of the Pacific County Historical Society. "Fred Colbert. Ilwaco, Washington", October 8, 1964.

"One Hundred Years in Pacific County for the Amable and Amelia Petit Family"

"The Colbert Home is 100 Years Old".

McDonald, Lucile. Coast Country: A History of Southwest Washington. Binfords and Mort. (Portland, Oregon, 1966).

Trick, Betsy. (granddaughter of Fred and Catherine Petit Colbert) Personal and telephone interviews. March 11, 1977 and subsequent.