

Trap shed, nominated for historic register, is demolished



All that remains

Salvatore DelDeo (left) holds his oil painting of the old trap shed in Provincetown, the last remnant of the structure which might have become a museum. With him are his wife, Josephine, who was instrumental in getting the shed nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, and George

Bryant, who made several calls to federal officials in Washington in an attempt to preserve the structure. Behind them are the remains of the shed. (Staff Photo by Neil G. Nickerson)

By NEIL G. NICKERSON

PROVINCETOWN — The old trap shed, off the site of the former Atlantic Coast Fisheries plant in the West End, which had been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places, was demolished early Friday, and is now a shambles along the waterfront.

The trap shed had been designated the last such structure to signify Provincetown's once thriving trap fishing industry and plans had been made to create a fishing museum of the town.

However, this came to naught early Friday, when persons who had demolished most of the balance of the plant hauled it down, despite many efforts to save it, including telephone calls to the Dept. of Transportation in Washington, D. C.

A telegram was sent out from First Coast Guard district, signed by Chief of Staff Capt. N. L. Scherer, to the Live Fish Co., owners of the land where the Coast Guard hopes to build, requesting delay of the demolition of the trap shed for a least three weeks.

Lt. Tom Schaeffer, assistant to capt. Gilbert Kraine, chief of engineering, 1st Coast Guard District, was contacted Friday and told of the demolition, and expressed great surprise, in view of the fact the telegram had been sent out.

Mrs. Josephine DelDeo, secretary of the Historic District Study Committee, who had been informed that the shed was recommended for the National Register by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, has been at the front of the attempt to preserve the structure for many months.

She first learned it had been torn down from her husband, Salvatore DelDeo, who operates a restaurant in the Cold Storage area, and who had gone to the restaurant to do some work.

He said he tried to put a stop to the demolition proceedings, but to no avail. Later there was no one on site, fish company officials or demolition workers and no one could say who gave the order.

However, attempts were being made to contact the ones who had demolished it, to clean up the mess littering the waterfront.

Earlier this week there were many calls to top officials to try and save the trap shed, and it was felt success had been made, until the actual demolition. Mrs. DelDeo said the study committee had telegraphed the Secy of Transportation to secure the trap shed, and George Bryant, member of the committee, talked with Robert Crecco of the Department of transportation, who also was upset to hear of the demolition.

Officials at Coast Guard headquarters in Boston appeared upset to learn of the demolition as they were only aware of the telegram from Capt. Scherer requesting the delay.

Lt. Schaeffer, when apprised of the tearing down of the structure, expressed amazement in view of the telegram, which he read over the telephone, as follows:

"Coast Guard hereby requests that you delay the demolition of the trap shed on the Atlantic Coast Trust Property in Provincetown, Mass., for three weeks to allow the Historic District Study Committee additional time to locate a suitable site and commence the relocation of the trap shed to that new site."

The telegram was signed by Capt. N. L. Scherer, chief of staff, and was sent to Bernard Benkowitz, representing the Live Fish Co., who had been in Provincetown earlier this week, but could not be found.

It was learned that the telegram was sent out Wednesday, and should have arrived in time. Chairman of Selectmen Marion Taves said he had contacted police to try to get to the ones demolishing the shed, to clean up the mess from the waterfront.

Mrs. DelDeo, who had worked many months trying to preserve the trap shed, and who spoke for this museum at the Coast Guard open meeting on March 17, was upset at the result, but said it did appear that the Coast Guard had tried to preserve the shed.

She said that in no way would the shed and pier deter from the Coast Guard activity, and said she still wanted the Coast Guard to be in Provincetown. At the forum she said the museum would aid the town in taxes lost from the sale of the property to the government.