

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area

9-9		AU	GLO.1342
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Photo 1. View southwest from Harbor Loop. L to R: Buildings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9.

Town/City: Gloucester

Place (neighborhood or village):
downtown

Name of Area: Parmenter, Rice & Co.
(a.k.a. Empire Fish Co.)

Present Use: industrial

Construction Dates or Period: ca. 1880 to 1966

Overall Condition: good to poor

Major Intrusions and Alterations:

Asbestos siding (M 20th c) - Siding, dormers, and fenestration at Bldg 9 (E 21st c)

Acreage: 1.14 acres

Recorded by: Kathleen K. Broomer and Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Gloucester Historical Commission

Date (month/year): d r a f t – June 2016

Locus Map



see continuation sheet

INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

GLOUCESTER

PARMENTER, RICE & CO.

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

The Parmenter, Rice Co. Complex is located on the western side of Duncan's Point, which projects southeast of the main thoroughfare of Rogers Street into Gloucester's Inner Harbor. The property is set between a roadway now known as Harbor Loop and the inlet of Harbor Cove. Approximately rectangular in shape, the property extends northeast/southwest across both land and water. The roughly U-shaped complex consists of nine heterogeneous, attached structures that were constructed of diverse materials and building types between the late 19th and mid 20th centuries.

The site incorporates land, back-filled granite wharf, and outer piers supported on older wood and newer concrete pilings. The one and two to two-and-a-half story buildings that occupy the site range from late 19th century wood frame structures to early 20th century concrete, to modern corrugated metal sheds. Industrial in character and use, they are characteristically vernacular or astylistic. The buildings frame a deep courtyard that opens onto Harbor Loop; it is paved with asphalt at its inland (Harbor Loop) end and with concrete at its southwestern end. A large steel-frame superstructure spans about three-quarters of the width of the courtyard near its southwestern end; it supports a chute for loading trucks from above and is connected to the end building of the complex (Building 5) by a cluster of tubes held high in the air by steel posts. The separate structures that comprise the complex are described sequentially in geographic order, beginning with the northeastern end of the complex.

The Parmenter, Rice & Co. Fish Ware House, Building 1 (ca. 1884-88, Photos 1, 2, 3), is a two-story wood frame structure with a gable roof aligned parallel to the courtyard. It measures 35 feet deep by 62 feet long. The building's courtyard façade (northwest elevation) is clad with asbestos shingles and features irregular fenestration, including loading bay doors on both the first and second floors. Windows on this wall consist of 6/6 double-hung sash with wood casings and band molding. A blank, concrete end wall with a stepped parapet faces Harbor Loop. Other elevations are not visible from the street.

Extending at a slight angle from the back of Building 1 is the Parmenter, Rice & Co. Fish House, Building 2 (ca. 1884-88, Photos 2, 3, 7), which reaches nearly to the adjacent Coast Guard property to the east; it measures 44 feet deep by 27 feet long (adjacent to Building 1). Building 2 rises two stories from a concrete foundation to a shed roof that is pitched down from the street edge. Its northeast elevation, facing Harbor Loop, is another blank concrete block wall. Its east elevation, facing the Coast Guard property, is sheathed with asbestos siding and contains one pair and one triplet of windows on its second story, which appear to contain 6/6 double hung sash and wood casings with band molding. Other elevations are not visible from the street.

Seven bays long, the Empire Fish Co. Fish Packing Building, Building 3 (ca. 1917-49 and ca. 1949-60, Photo 4), is constructed of concrete block with prominent piers marking the bays. Measuring 37 feet deep by 104 feet long, it rises a tall one story and culminates in a flat roof with a layering of flat wood fascia boards. There is no fenestration on its courtyard (façade) elevation.

Another Empire Fish Co. Fish Packing Building, Building 4 (ca. 1917-49, Photos 4, 7), is a relatively small, utilitarian, wood frame building clad with asbestos siding. It rises one story to a flat roof. Its only visible fenestration is a large, open entrance at its far north corner, adjacent to Building 3. The back (southeastern) portion of the building extends over the harbor, supported on wood piles.

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The Empire Fish Co. Fish House, Buildings 5 and 6 (ca. 1917-49), terminates the inner courtyard of this complex. Building 5 (Photos 4, 7, 8, 9) consists of a steel frame structure sheathed with corrugated metal panels and a steeply pitched, front-gable roof. This large structure appears to be set completely over the water, supported by concrete piers and buffered by wood piles. The northeast (façade) elevation contains a large, open vehicular entrance that is set off-center. The floor inside is concrete.

Building 6 (Photos 7, 8, 9) extends from the back of Building 5 into Harbor Cove. Similarly constructed with corrugated metal panels but with a lower-pitched gable roof, this structure too is set over the water on concrete piers. It is edged with a narrow wood deck at its outer gable end and is buffered with wood piles on three sides. Together (as they are depicted on the assessors' maps), Buildings 5 and 6 together measure 64 feet wide by 104 feet long.

A narrow gap (once closed by an infill structure) separates Building 5 from the Empire Fish Company Packing Building, Buildings 7 and 8 (ca. 1917-49). Building 7 (Photo 8) is a relatively short block measuring 32 feet deep by approximately 40 feet long. This wood frame structure rises two stories to a shallow-pitched gable roof with boxed wood eaves; it is sheathed with wide clapboard siding on the interior and possibly with wood shingles on the harbor-side elevations. Fenestration includes a door on the second level of the courtyard elevation, accessed by a utilitarian wood stairway, and irregular 1/1 windows, some of which are paired. The south elevation contains a band of windows at the upper level and what appears to be a variety of hoisting devices. The southern end of this structure is propped out over the harbor on wood piles and beams.

The largest building on the site, Building 8 (Photos 1, 4, 8) is a rectangular block measuring 110 feet long by 32 feet wide. It rises 2 stories to a gable roof with wood fascia boards. Walls are clad with asbestos shingles on the courtyard façade and clapboards on the north elevation. Utilitarian industrial doorways are irregularly arrayed across the façade. Windows are typically paired 2/2 windows with band molded trim, regularly spaced across the top floor. An enclosed exterior stairway rises up the northern end of the courtyard façade.

The Parmenter, Rice & Co. Storage Building, Building 9 (ca. 1884-89, Photos 1, 2, 6), has been significantly renovated in recent years. Measuring 32 feet wide by approximately 48 feet long, it rises 2 ½ stories from a concrete foundation to an end gable roof with long shed dormers on each side. Of wood-frame construction, its walls are clad with wood shingles, including bands of decoratively patterned shingles at the second floor and the gable peak. Two doorways are located on the east façade of the ground floor level, beneath modern shed roof canopies, with four pairs of windows on the second floor. A modern, gabled pavilion on the north elevation contains the main entrance, beneath another shed-roofed canopy, and a stairway to the second floor. Windows are 1/1 replacement sash with flat casings. The 1993 MHC inventory form shows this structure looking more barn-like, with four single windows on the second floor of its façade, no dormers, irregular fenestration and an upper level entrance vestibule on the gable end, and two widely spaced single windows in the gable peak.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this relates to the historical development of the community.

The wharf and buildings associated with Empire Fish Company, Inc. encompass an intact fish-processing complex on Gloucester's Inner Harbor dating largely from the mid-1880s to the 1940s. The earliest buildings in the complex were constructed by Parmenter, Rice & Company, fisheries and wholesale fish dealers. Company buildings survived the 1960s urban renewal that incorporated the former Duncan Street into Harbor Loop

Gloucester residents Henry A. Parmenter, Stillman Rice, and George L. Garland formed Parmenter, Rice & Company, fish dealers, by 1880. Parmenter, Rice operated from Battery Wharf, as this wharf was once known, from the 1880s to at least 1909. On 22 July 1884, a fire on Duncan Street destroyed buildings associated with a number of businesses,

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among them a stable, carriage house, shed, and tenement building owned by Parmenter, Rice. Lynn, Salem, and Beverly sent companies to help engine companies from Gloucester fight the fire, which was so large and wind-swept that roofs of four buildings at East Gloucester, across the Inner Harbor, caught fire and had to be extinguished. Map and atlas research indicates that current buildings on this parcel all post-date the fire, though

strenuous efforts were made to prevent [Parmenter, Rice & Co.] buildings from burning, as if the fire had obtained a foothold there, it would have swept around to the Atlantic Co.'s premises, Parkhurst's Railways, the Gloucester Steamboat Company's wharf, and thence to the premises of A. W. Dodd & Co., where were some two thousand barrels of inflammable oil in the tanks [Somes, 192-196].

In 1885, the firm was named among the most important businesses in Gloucester devoted to "boxing and putting up" boneless codfish for table use, along with Cunningham & Thompson, John Pew & Son (see area form for Gorton's of Gloucester), and Stanwood & Company. Only a few years after its establishment, in 1885 this industry in Gloucester produced an estimated 25 million pounds of dried boneless fish each year, and employed three hundred men [Webber, 17]. Parmenter, Rice built an extension to its wharf in the mid-1880s. After the fire, the firm apparently constructed three of the buildings still extant at the head of the wharf, using Building 1 as a fish ware house, Building 2 as a fish house, and Building 9 as an outbuilding with a dwelling on the upper floor.

By 1890, Henry A. Parmenter was the only partner still with the firm, which was then known as Parmenter & Company. In addition to this business, Parmenter served as president of City National Bank. His only son, Frank C. Parmenter, was employed with the business when Henry Parmenter died 2 December 1891. In 1903, William B. Lantz, a cooper, manufactured casks from a former fish ware house at the end of the wharf. Some sources as late as ca. 1917 describe this wharf as Lantz (or Lantz's) Wharf. This two-story wood-frame building was demolished between 1917 and 1949, and replaced by the steel-frame buildings on piles described in this form as Building 5 and Building 6. Parmenter & Company still owned this parcel (wharf and buildings) in 1909, though the Sanborn map that year notes that most buildings were vacant, "seldom used," or "not in operation."

Atwood & Payne Company, a wholesale fish dealer, operated here from 1909 through at least 1922, though it is not clear how long the business remained at this location. The firm incorporated in 1909, and had capital of \$10,000 in 1913. William M. Payne served as president, William I. Atwood vice-president, and John W. Atwood manager [1913 directory, 45]. Further research is needed to confirm the sequence of bank foreclosures involving this parcel in the 1920s and 1930s. Cape Ann Savings Bank of Gloucester deeded the wharf and buildings in 1925 to George P. Mellow of Gloucester, and again in 1939 to R. J. Ederer Company of Chicago, a manufacturer of fishing nets [Essex County deeds, 2264:556, 3174:466].

Salvatore J. Limone and James A. Bordinaro of Gloucester established Empire Fish Company and purchased the wharf and buildings thereon from R. J. Ederer Company in 1943 [Essex County deeds, 3348:401]. Sanborn maps indicate Buildings 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 appear to have been constructed between 1917 and 1949, though it is not clear whether they were built by Empire Fish Company, R. J. Ederer Company, George P. Mellow, or Atwood & Payne Company, all of whom owned the parcel during that period. Additional research may determine more precise construction dates. In 1949, Empire Fish used Buildings 5 and 6 as a fish house. Fish packing operations were located in Buildings 3, 4, 7, and 8, with an addition built by 1960 on the east side of Building 3 for cold storage. Improvements in freezing fish were evident at the plant after World War II, as Buildings 1 and 2 were converted from office and storage uses to house compressor and freezer units on the first stories with storage above. Also reflecting a change from the male-dominated fish-processing industry were the ladies' rooms installed on the second floor of Building 9, also between 1917 and 1949. Empire Fish Company sold the property in 1965. The City of Gloucester, as part of its waterfront urban renewal efforts, abandoned Duncan Street in 1966, replacing the loop road through Duncan's Point with the current road, known as Harbor Loop [Essex County deeds, 10955:62].

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Somes, John J. *The Gloucester Fire Department. Its History and Work from 1793 to 1893*. Gloucester: Steam Fire Association, 1892.Stone, Orra. *History of Massachusetts Industries*. Vol. I. Boston-Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930.Webber, John S., Jr. *In and Around Cape Ann: A Handbook of Gloucester, Mass., and its Immediate Vicinity*.

Gloucester: John S. Webber, Jr., 1885.

AREA DATA SHEET*Addresses reflect current Assessor's records.*

Map-Block	Sketch Map	MHC #	Historic Name	Address	Date	Style
9-9				11 Harbor Loop		
	1	GLO.>>>	Parmenter, Rice & Company Fish Ware House		ca. 1884-1888	Utilitarian
	2	GLO.>>>	Parmenter, Rice & Company Fish House		ca. 1884-1888	Utilitarian
	3	GLO.>>>	Empire Fish Company Fish Packing Building (and east addition)		ca. 1917-1949, ca. 1949-1960	Utilitarian
	4	GLO.>>>	Empire Fish Company Fish Packing Building		ca. 1917-1949	Utilitarian
	5-6	GLO.>>>	Empire Fish Company Fish House		ca. 1917-1949	Utilitarian
	7-8	GLO.>>>	Empire Fish Company Packing Building		ca. 1917-1949	Utilitarian
	9	GLO.>>>	Parmenter, Rice & Company Storage Building		ca. 1884-1889	Utilitarian

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SKETCH MAP



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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Photo 2. L to R: Buildings 2, 1, 9. View west.



Photo 3. Building 1, northeast (façade) and northwest elevations.



Photo 4. L to R: Buildings 3, 4, 5, 8. View southwest.



Photo 5. Building 8, southeast (façade) and northeast elevations.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Photo 6. Building 9, southeast (façade) and northeast elevations.



Photo 7. L to R: Buildings 6, 5, 4, 2. View southwest.



Photo 8. L to R: Buildings 7, 5, 6. View northeast.



Photo 9. Building 6. View northeast.

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[Delete this page if no Criteria Statement is prepared]

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by _____
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.