T-1153 1964-66
Bellevue Seafood Company
Bellevue
Private

The Bellevue Seafood Company packinghouse, located on a tributary of Tar Creek in the community of Bellevue, is one of two surviving structures representing African-American owned seafood businesses on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The only other is the W. A. Turner & Sons facility located directly adjacent. (See T-1154) The Bellevue Seafood Company packinghouse, erected between 1964 and 1966, was built on a linear plan with the processing rooms arranged in a line from the shore of Tar Creek. The crabs were steamed in the end room closets to the water's edge and the product moved through the building to the cooler at the opposite end after being packed. The building retains its essential exterior and interior character.

Samuel Turner, Sr. established the Bellevue Seafood Company to process clams, initially sharing the W. A. Turner Company plant with his brother. Bellevue Seafood continued to pack oysters on a small scale, but the companies' main emphasis during the summer months was buying and dredging clams for shucking and selling in the shell. Samuel Turner Sr. found that there was a better market for shucked clams than for clams in the shell, and he built the Bellevue Seafood Company as a separate facility next to the W. A. Turner plant, beginning in 1964. The new building opened for business in 1966, and the company incorporated on October 2, 1967. Some people worked for both companies, moving back and forth depending on supply. Bellevue Seafood continued to process clams, and in 1992, they constructed a separate space within the clam plant for processing crabmeat. They added two walk-in coolers, one for live crabs and one for the picked meat. Bellevue Seafood remained in business until December 1998.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1153

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Bellevue Seafood Company, Inc.

other

2. Location

street and number 25800 Avonia Lane __ not for publication

city, town Bellevue vicinity

county Talbot

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Hayward Turner

street and number 25800 Avonia Lane telephone 410-745-5658

city, town Royal Oak state Maryland zip code 21662

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talbot County Land Records liber 666 folio 650

city, town Easton tax map 46 tax parcel 69 tax ID number 2--085062

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ Contributing Resource in National Register District
_____ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
_____ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Recorded by HABS/HAER
_____ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
_____ Other:_____

6. Classification

Category
__ district
x building(s)
__ structure
__ site
__ object

Ownership
__ public
x private
__ both

Current Function
__ agriculture
__ commerce/trade
__ defense
__ domestic
__ education
__ funerary
__ government
__ health care
x industry
__ landscape
__ recreation/culture
__ religion
__ social
__ transportation
__ work in progress
__ unknown
__ vacant/not in use
__ other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

_____

7. Description

Inventory No. T-1153

Condition

___ excellent ___ deteriorated
x__ good ___ ruins
___ fair ___ altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Bellevue Seafood Company packinghouse, located on a tributary of Tar Creek, is a long, single-story concrete block and frame structure that occupies a high ridge of land in the African-American community of Bellevue, Talbot County, Maryland. The packinghouse is oriented with a gable end facing the creek and the principal roof follows a northwest/southeast axis. Principal entrance to the property is provided by two dirt roads that are extensions of Bellevue's village streets. The road on the north side of the property is the main entrance, and it passes directly past the south gable end of the packinghouse.

The southeast end of the packinghouse is defined by a single-story concrete block wall topped by a framed gable end which follows a shortened bascilica roof shape with a taller center section and flanking shed roofed wings. Each roof slope has a low pitch, and the gable end is finished flush with a plain bargeboard. A pair of louvered openings pierce the gable end above the level of the concrete wall. Bellevue Seafood Co., Inc. is spelled out along the concrete wall in large block letters. The shed roofed section on the southwest side is pierced by a single width door opening, and the room is served by a metal stove pipe.

The northeast side of the packinghouse is a long asymmetrical façade with a variety of double-door and window openings. Open as well as enclosed shed roofed sections extend from the main concrete block structure, which is covered by a low gable roof. There is a low pitch to the shed roofs of the sections to each side. Piercing the concrete walls of the shed roofed section on the northeast corner is double-door entrance flanked by rectangular window openings. The concrete walls rise to a framed overhand and plainly finished eave to the shed roof cornice. The northwest side of the shed roofed section is pierced by a rectangular window as well. The shed roofed section houses a small ante-room to the side of the packinghouse and weighing room.

The center of the packinghouse is devoted to the shucking room, which is lighted by a series of rectangular window openings. At the north end of the main building is a set of double doors that provide access to a cross hall that separates the shucking room from a crab picking room installed in 1992 that was distinct from the rest of the interior work space. The double door opening is sheltered on the exterior by a shed roofed porch supported on metal posts with a concrete porch floor that extends to a double-door opening that provides access to the north end of the structure. The concrete porch floor extends as well along the northeast side of the building in the form of a ramp. Another set of double doors opens into the boiler and retort room at the north end of the packinghouse.

The interior of the packinghouse is finished with a poured concrete floor, exposed concrete block walls, and a board ceiling. Even though the facility has not been used since 1998, the interior retains much of its furniture and equipment for processing oysters or crabs. At the south end of the packinghouse is a cooler, which is directly adjacent to the packing and weighing room. The center of the building is devoted to a long uninterrupted space used for shucking oysters or other shell fish. A separate room for picking crabs is located at the north end of the main block on the opposite side of a cross hall.

8. Significance

Inventory No. T-1153

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
__ 1600-1699	__ agriculture	__ economics	__ health/medicine	__ performing arts
__ 1700-1799	__ archeology	__ education	__ industry	__ philosophy
_ 1800-1899	architecture	__ engineering	__ invention	__ politics/government
x 1900-1999	__ art	entertainment/	__ landscape architecture	religion
__ 2000-	__ commerce	recreation	__ law	__ science
	__ communications	__ ethnic heritage	__ literature	__ social history
	__ community planning	__ exploration/	__ maritime history	__ transportation
	__ conservation	settlement	__ military	__ other:

Specific dates 1964-66 **Architect/Builder**

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register _____Maryland Register ____x____not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Bellevue Seafood Company packinghouse, located on a tributary of Tar Creek, in the community of Bellevue, is the one of two surviving structures representing African-American owned seafood businesses on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The only other is the W. A. Turner & Sons facility located directly adjacent. (See T- 1154) The Bellevue Seafood Company packinghouse, erected between 1964 and 1966, was built on a linear plan with the processing rooms arranged in a line from the shore of Tar Creek. The crabs were steamed in the end room closest to the water's edge and the product moved through the building to the cooler at the opposite end after being packed. The building retains its essential exterior and interior character.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT OF BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY, INC.

W. A. Turner and Sons was founded in Bellevue, Talbot County, Maryland by African-American William Aubrey Turner and his sons John and Samuel E. Turner. They packed oysters and crabs.

In 1937 schooner Captain William A. Turner had four people shucking oysters for him in a shed behind his house. He wanted to buy land and go into the seafood packing business himself, but the primary landowner was seafood processor William H. Valliant, who would not sell him land for a competitive packing operation. One of his sons, Samuel E. Turner, worked for a year in a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Virginia, and had saved $300. This money was used as a down payment on two acres of land, part of "Clay's Hope" next to the town dump, supposedly to raise chickens.[1] After the war, the local canning industry began to collapse and the large Wm. H. Valliant packing company closed in 1946. Turner was able to expand W. A. Turner and Sons in 1946, employing as many as 45 people picking crabs. The company was supplied by the many family members and other local watermen. Most of the crabmeat was sold to J. M. Clayton in Cambridge, who packed it under their own label.[2] Some was sold to stores and there was a retail walk-in trade.

[1] John E. Aliyetti, "The Bellevue Seafood Company," *The Weather Gauge*, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Fall 1997, p. 5. Land Records of Talbot County, 239/266, May 18, 1937.

[2] John E. Aliyetti, "The Bellevue Seafood Company," *The Weather Gauge*, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Fall 1997, p. 7.

In the 1950s Samuel Turner, Sr. began a soft-shell clam processing operation in one part of the plant. Workers who moved up from Crisfield in the 1950s lived in a house owned by the Turners against the packinghouse. Many of these people became residents of Bellevue. In September 1956 William A. Turner died while working on an addition to the seafood processing plant. His son John continued to operate as W. A. Turner & Sons, but within a year stopped oyster processing to concentrate on the crabmeat business. Samuel Turner, Sr. operated a separate business processing clams, the Bellevue Seafood Company, Inc., initially sharing facilities with his brother. Bellevue Seafood continued to pack oysters on a small scale, but the companies' main emphasis during the summer months was buying and dredging clams for shucking and selling in the shell.[3]

Samuel Turner Sr. found that there was a better market for shucked clams that for clams in the shell, and he built the Bellevue Seafood Company adjacent to the W. A. Turner Company, beginning in 1964. The new building opened for business in 1966 and the company incorporated on October 2, 1967. Some people worked for both companies, moving back and forth depending on supply. Most of the crab pickers were women, most of the oysters shuckers were men, while both men and women shucked clams.[4]

Bellevue Seafood Company never had a distinctive packing label; all their product was packed for dealers and bore their labels, such as the J. M. Clayton Company in Cambridge, Hanks Seafood in Easton, and Carnabuci Seafoods in Grasonville, H. B. Kennerly in Nanticoke, Old Salt Seafood in Easton, Dill Seafood in New Jersey, Bay Food Products in Baltimore, Rock Hall Seafood, United Shell Fish in Grasonville, Harrison Oyster Company in Tilghman, and Cook Seafood in Virginia.[5] In 1969 Samuel's son, Hayward, returned to Bellevue from a tour in Vietnam to join his father in the business. They were joined in 1970 by another son, Edzel, who had worked for the Federal Government from 1964 to 1970. Both these men graduated from Morgan State University. The business prospered until June 1972 when Hurricane Agnes virtually wiped out the soft-clam population.[6]

This began a series of difficult years for both Bellevue Seafood and W. A. Turner & Sons, with a fluctuating supply of oysters and a decline in the blue crab catch. When the raw product was not available locally, Bellevue Seafood purchased clams and oysters from watermen in Kent Island, Grasonville and Tilghman Island, and as far away as Solomons, Edgewater, and Rock Hall, transporting the catch to Bellevue in their own trucks for processing. In 1977, Bellevue Seafood employed up to 45 people who processed soft-shell clams and oysters, while W. A. Turner & Sons (John W. Turner, president; Leon K. Turner, treasurer; Samuel E. Turner, secretary) employed 26 people processing crabmeat.[7] In the off-season, they caught eels that were cut and salted for bait for watermen. In 1983 Turner's workforce remained stable while the

[3] Conversation with Hayward Turner, Bellevue, Maryland, January 17, 2002.
[4] Conversation with Hayward Turner, Bellevue, Maryland, January 17, 2002.
[5] Conversation with Hayward Turner, Bellevue, Maryland, January 17, 2002.
[6] John E. Aliyetti, "The Bellevue Seafood Company," p. 10.
[7] *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1977-1978*, p. 347.

Bellevue Seafood Company's workforce had shrunk to 20 people.[8] Bellevue Seafood began to process clams differently in the mid 1980s when it was found that blanching clams made them easier to pick. The clams were submerged in 180 degree water for half a minute, then dumped in cold water to chill.

In 1991, Bellevue Seafood employed a dozen shuckers and sold oysters primarily to a seafood market in Jessup, Maryland and to buyers in New Jersey.[9] In 1992 the company began picking crabs and constructed a separate area at one end of the building for the crab operation. They added two walk-in coolers, one for live crabs and one for the picked meat. W. A. Turner & Sons closed in 1996 and the Bellevue Seafood Company closed in December 1998.[10]

[8] *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1983-1984*, p. 294.
[9] Lila Line, "Bellevue Seafood Marketer Casts a Practiced Eye On The Oyster Harvest," *Cambridge Banner*, November 13, 1991.
[10] Conversation with Hayward Turner, Bellevue, Maryland, January 17, 2002.

Bellevue Seafood Company, Inc.
25800 Avonia Lane
Bellevue, Talbot County, Maryland 21662
Map 46, Parcel 69

Chain of title

666/650 Samuel Edward Turner and Hazel T. Turner

to

3/13/1989 Bellevue Seafood Company, Inc.

Said parcel of land being shown as Lot III on a certain plat, "Map Showing Partition of Turner property in the Village of Bellevue, Talbot County, Maryland, December 1943, Plat Records for Talbot County, Liber TJF 1/217

....Together with a right of way running from Avonia Avenue to the waters of Tar Creek to be used in common with the owners of the four lots shown on said plat....

329/509 Lee S. Gillis and Florence Marie Gillis

to

3/2/1956 Samuel Edward Turner and Hazel T. Turner

Parcel 1 and 2 surveyed December 30, 1943, said parcels of land being shown as Lots II and III on a certain plat entitled "Map Showing Partition of Turner Property..." ....together with the right-of-way running from Avonia Avenue to the waters of Tar Creek

329/507	Samuel Edward Turner and Hazel T. Turner
	to
3/2/1956	Lee S. Gillis
	By date of even date herewith and about to be recorded among the land record books of Talbot County immediately prior hereto...
257/86	William Reddie
	to
12/31/1943	Samuel Edward Turner
	Parcel 1 and Parcel 2 surveyed December 30, 1943, said parcels of land being shown as Lots II and III on a certain plat entitled, "Map Showing Partition of the Turner Property....together with a right-of-way running from Avonia Avenue to the waters of Tar Bay....
257/85	William A. Turner and Sarah J. Turner Samuel Edward Turner and Hazel Turner
	to
12/31/1943	William Reddie

239/266	William H. Valliant and Mary D. Valliant
	to
5/18/1937	William A. Turner and Samuel Edward Turner
	Two acres being part of the tract called "Clay's Hope" (now Bellevue) in Ferry Neck in St. Michaels Districts of Talbot County $1,025.00
131/145	Louis A. Watkins and Hattie J. Watkins
	to
4/24/1899	William H. Valliant
120/484	Alexander Stuart
	to
9/21/1894	Louis A. Watkins

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. T-1153

Interview with Hayward Turner, Januaary 17, 2002.

Talbot County Land Records, various volumes, Easton, Maryland.

(For a full list of resources consulted see footnotes)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	1 acre		
Acreage of historical setting	2 acres		
Quadrangle name	Oxford, Maryland	Quadrangle scale:	1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian and Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian		
organization	Private Consultants	date	1/28/2002
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

S-1153, Bellevue Seafood Company
—Oxford, Maryland Quadrangle
1942

BELLEVUE SEA D CO. INC.

T-1153

BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY

BELLEVUE, TALBOT COUNTY, MD

SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEG./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

1 OF 7

BELLEVUE SEAFOOD CO. INC.

T-1153
BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY
BELLEVUE, TALBOT CO., MD.
SOUTHEAST ELEVATION
1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER
NTC/MD HISTORICAL TRUST
2 OF 7

T-1153

BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY

BELLEVUE, TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

NORTHEAST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEC/MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

3 OF 7

T-1153

BELLEVUE SERVICE COMPANY

BELLEVUE, TALBOT CO., MD.

NORTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOUMEY, PHOTOGRAPHER

MHG/MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

4 OF 7

T-1153
BELLEVUE STAVES COMPANY
BELLEVUE, TALBOT CO., MD.
PACKING ROOM
1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER
NEG./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
5 OF 7

T-1153
BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY
BELLEVUE, TALBOT CO., MD.
PICKING AND SHUCKING ROOM
1/2002, PAUL TOWNS, PHOTOGRAPHER
NEG/MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
6 OF 7

T-1153
BELLEVUE SEAFOOD COMPANY
BELLEVUE, TALBOT CO., MD
PICKING AND SHUCKING ROOM
1/2002, PAUL TOUMET, PHOTOGRAPHER
MER./MD HISTORICAL TRUST
7 OF 7