

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 18). 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 San Luis Obispo Light Station
Historic name San Luis Obispo Light Station (Port Harford Lighthouse)
other names/site number _____

MAY 7 1990

2. Location Port San Luis Harbor District
street & number Box 249 N/A not for publication
city, town Avila Beach vicinity
state CA code CA county San Luis Obispo code 079 zip code 93424

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>3</u>	_____ sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>7</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		_____ objects
			<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Light Stations in California
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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.

Kathryn Weather _____ Date 11-5-90
Signature of certifying official
California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Robert C. ... HPO _____ Date 7/19/91
Signature of certifying official
U.S. Department of Transportation
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet. _____ Autonville deCee _____ 9/2/91

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 Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: water related.

Domestic: institutional housing.

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: water related.

Domestic: institutional housing.

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Stick/Eastlake

Other: Lighthouse

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood

roof Wood Shake

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The San Luis Obispo Light Station is located on a hillside ridge near the point of land that marks the entrance to San Luis Obispo Harbor. It is a relatively intact station comprised of 7 detached buildings and 3 structures. The station stands as an excellent example of a late Victorian lighthouse complex done in the wood-frame "stick" style. All of the original 1890 buildings are grouped together on one portion of the site. The non-contributing, modern Assistant Keepers' duplexes are located to the east of the older unit. Except for the remodeled carpenter shop, the architectural integrity of the original buildings' exteriors is generally excellent. The station once contained a barn, landing wharf, and Victorian duplex--all since destroyed. Mature Cypress Trees--originally part of trimmed hedges--give unity and a picturesque quality to the site.

1. LIGHT TOWER/KEEPER'S RESIDENCE (1890)--CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

A 40 foot tall, square lighthouse tower attached to the southwest corner of a 2 story, wood-frame, Keeper's quarters. Both structures rest on a raised basement of brick (with concrete repairs). The plan of the structure is irregular with covered porches found on the north, east and south facades. A gabled, wood-shake roof caps the Keeper's residence while wood-shake shed roofs cover the exterior porches. The lighthouse tower is topped with an 8 panel, glass and iron lens room, which in turn is capped with a cast iron, segmented conical roof. A prominent wooden balustrade balcony surrounds the lower portion of the lens room. Vertical board-and-batten siding covers the tower structure, while horizontal clapboards cover the residence. The architectural integrity of the structure is largely intact with the only exterior modification being the rear laundry room addition, probably constructed not too many years after the station was built. A modern kitchen and bathroom have been constructed in the interior. The original 4th Order Fresnel Lens has been relocated to the San Luis Obispo County Historical Museum. The structural condition of the building is very good, although the interior would need some attention if a use was ever to be made of the building. It is presently unoccupied.

The lighthouse Keeper's quarters represents a fine example of a late Victorian lighthouse structure done in the wood-frame "stick" style. Between 1874 and 1892 a total of seven similar wood-frame Victorian lighthouses were built in California. Each had a characteristic square tower arising above (and attached to) the adjacent Keeper's dwelling. Four were built with elaborate "Stick-Eastlake" ornamentation. Three were built in a more simplified pure "Stick" style. Today, only two of the Stick-Eastlake lighthouses remain and San Luis Obispo is the only survivor of the original purely Stick structures.

2. FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (1892)--CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A one-and-one-half story, rectangular, wood-frame building with one story, rectangular wings flanking

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

both ends. The center chamber (boiler room) housed the mechanical equipment for the fog-signal; the two wings contained the watch room and tack room, respectively. The center section and wings each have peaked gable roofs covered in red-stain wood shingles. The exterior of the entire building is covered with horizontal clapboards and is unadorned except for prominent arched brackets under each gable end. The interior of the center chamber is of open-beam, exposed truss construction. A raised wooden platform, formerly supporting the fog horns, is built into the exposed beams of the upper level. Vertical tongue-and-groove panelling, painted white, is found throughout the interior of the structure. The north and south facades are identical; each contains a central set of double doors flanked by four windows. A set of paired windows in the upper level is located directly above each double door. Except for the brackets under the gable ends, the east and west facades are featureless. The foundation is concrete. Flooring in the central chamber is concrete slab. In the two side rooms the flooring is wood-base covered with tile. Some mechanical equipment of the fog-signal system remains in place on the floor of the center chamber.

The light station building is identical or very similar to the standard light station buildings built in California in the late 19th/early 20th century. Most had one large center chamber with two small rooms off to each side. Double doors were always located on the front facade and often--as is the case in San Luis Obispo--on the rear as well. The exteriors were usually unadorned, reflecting their utilitarian function. In this case the wooden brackets under the gable ends are more elaborate than in most stations. This probably reflects an effort to match the "stick" style brackets of the nearby tower/ Keeper's residence--both built in the same year. The building is in very good condition and its integrity is generally whole.

3. OIL HOUSE (1890)--CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A one story, 8' X 10'6", brick building with an iron door formerly used to store oil. It is similar to the other California oil houses in that it is small, rectangular, is built of non-combustible material, and is located apart from other structures (in this case approximately 50 yards from the tower/Keeper's residence). It is different than most oil houses, however, in that it is built of brick and not concrete, it has a peaked metal roof similar to oil houses in the East (California's are usually flat), and its decorative brackets give it a certain style not found in the usual strictly utilitarian oil houses. An attempt appears to have been made to visually tie the oil house into the stick Victorian design of the entire complex.

4. PRIVY (1890)--CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

One story, wood-frame, peaked roof privy located behind Assistant Keeper's quarters. This building dates from the construction of the station.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

5. CISTERNS AND CATCH BASIN (1890)--CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:

A 120' X 120' hillside concrete catch basin is located behind the Keeper's residence. Two cisterns are located between the Keeper's quarters and the Assistant Keeper's quarters.

6. ASSISTANT KEEPER'S QUARTERS (1961)--NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS:

Two duplexes for Assistant Keepers were constructed in 1961 replacing the Victorian Assistant Keeper's residence on the same site. These newer structures are non-contributing due to their recent construction and character.

7. CARPENTER'S SHOP (1890)--NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

Although this building dates back to the original station it has been remodeled so extensively over the years to house navigational equipment, that very little remains of its historical integrity.

The San Luis Obispo Light Station consists of four contributing structures, three contributing buildings, and three non-contributing buildings.

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

Transportation

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1890-1949

Significant Dates

1890

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

U.S. Lighthouse Board, 12th District

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

San Luis Obispo Light Station meets the requirements for registration as defined in the multiple property submission "Light Stations in California." The station's significance is evaluated with respect to the historic context Maritime Transportation in California: 1842-1940. The station derives significance under Criteria A and C. Criteria A is satisfied by the association of the complex with California's critical reliance on maritime transportation and the aids that made navigation possible. Criteria C is met by the outstanding example the station provides of a late 19th century, wood-frame lighthouse complex built in the "stick" Victorian style. San Luis Obispo is one of only three remaining wood-frame Victorian lighthouses existing in California, and it is the only survivor reflecting the pure, simplified stick style.

The station fully meets registration requirements for its property type. It contains an intact lighthouse tower (minus lens) and several associated historical buildings. The historic architectural integrity of the site is very high. The original lighthouse tower/keeper's quarters, fog-signal building, oil house and carpenter's shop (now altered) are grouped together in a cohesive whole in one portion of the site. Modern, non-contributing buildings are to the west, on the other side of the water storage system. The exterior integrity of the individual buildings is generally excellent. The integrity of the lighthouse tower itself is complete (except for the lens). Mature Cypress Trees that are remnants of a once-pruned hedge give unity and a picturesque quality to the site. The only original structures no longer standing include a barn, landing wharf, and Victorian duplex (replaced with the present modern duplexes in 1961).

The San Luis Obispo Lighthouse and Fog-Signal was established to assist and promote coastal trading and navigation. It also served as an entrance to San Luis Obispo Harbor and to Port Harford (now known as Port San Luis). By the mid-1880's Port Harford had become one of the most active ports between San Francisco and San Diego. There were no lighthouses on the south-central coast between Point Arguello and Piedras Blancas--a distance of 94 miles. The sinking of the ocean steamer Queen of the Pacific on April 30, 1888, added to the justification for a light at Port Harford. In 1888 the federal government appropriated \$50,000 for the 30 acre site, but the station was not completed until June 30, 1890.

The particular significance of the individual structures and buildings on the site are as follows:

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

LIGHTHOUSE TOWER/KEEPER'S QUARTERS (1890)

The lighthouse tower is of significance as the principal element of the lighthouse complex. It is attached to the southwest corner to the Keeper's dwelling. Seven such wood-frame tower/Keeper's quarters structures were constructed in California between 1874 and 1892. Four were built in the more elaborate Stick-Eastlake style and three, including San Luis Obispo, were built in the more simplified pure "stick" style. Only three of the structures survive today and San Luis Obispo is the only survivor of the pure stick style. Similar structures were built in other areas of the United States. These structures always contained a smaller order Fresnel Lens (in this case a 4th Order) and usually were used to mark the entrance to harbors.

The architectural integrity of the structure is mostly intact. A small laundry room addition at the rear, probably built not too many years after the building was constructed, does not measurably detract from the historic appearance of the structure. All exterior Victorian trim and ornamentation appears to be in place and in very good condition. The interior integrity of the tower is good although the lens has been removed. The interior integrity of the Keeper's quarters is fair-to-very good. Kitchen and bathroom improvements have altered the historical character somewhat. Vandals have taken some historical features as well. Nevertheless, much of the original historical character remains and could be restored if resources become available.

FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (1890)

The fog-signal building is significant as a contributing element of the light station complex. The building meets the requirements for registration of its property type. It is very similar in design to the standard fog-signal buildings built in California in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Most had one large center chamber (the boiler room) with two small rooms off to each side. Double doors were always located on the front facade and often on the rear side as well (as in San Luis Obispo). The exteriors were usually unadorned, reflecting their utilitarian use. In this particular building, however, the brackets under the gable ends are very prominent and ornate--exactly duplicating the bracket treatment of the nearby Keeper's quarters. This nicely unifies the elements of the light station into a stylistic whole not found in most light stations. The fog-signal building in San Luis Obispo is in very good condition and its integrity is generally whole. Some mechanical equipment from an earlier fog-signal system (probably not the original) remains in the fog-signal building.

OIL HOUSE (1890)

The oil house building is significant as a contributing element of the light station complex. The building meets requirements for registration of its property type. It is structurally and functionally similar to other oil house buildings in the late 19th/early 20th century, but its design is unusual in the following ways:

1. It is made of brick and not concrete.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

2. It has a peaked roof similar to comparable structures in the East (California's oil house roofs were generally flat).
3. Its elaborate brackets (and peaked roof) tie it into the design of the station as a whole--rare for such a utilitarian structure such as an oil house.

The building's integrity appears to be complete and it is in very good condition.

Since its establishment in 1890 this station has had continued importance and significance. Significance has not been shown to be exceptional in the last 50 years, however, although the light station continues to play a role in maritime transportation and navigation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Angel, Myron. A History of San Luis Obispo County. Oakland: 1883.
Kreiger, Daniel. Looking Backward Into The Middle Kingdom. San Luis Obispo: 1988.
San Luis Obispo Telegraph Tribune, various dates.
San Luis Obispo Daily Republic, various dates.
U.S. Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, various dates.
Gibbs, Jim. West Coast Lighthouses. Seattle: 1974.
Holland, F. Ross. America's Lighthouses, Their Illustrated History Since 1716.
Brattleboro: 1972.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 30 acres

UTM References

A	10	704004	3893145	B	10	704445	3893180
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	10	704400	3892925	D			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

San Luis Obispo County Assessors Parcel Number Book 076--Page 182--Lot # U.S.A.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the San Luis Obispo Light Station embraces the buildings and immediate setting historically associated with this complex.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Jack Bookwalter</u>	date	<u>October 6, 1989</u>
organization	<u>Sonoma State University</u>	telephone	<u>(707) 526-3197</u>
street & number	<u>767 Southwood Dr.</u>	state	<u>CA</u>
city or town	<u>Santa Rosa</u>	zip code	<u>95407</u>

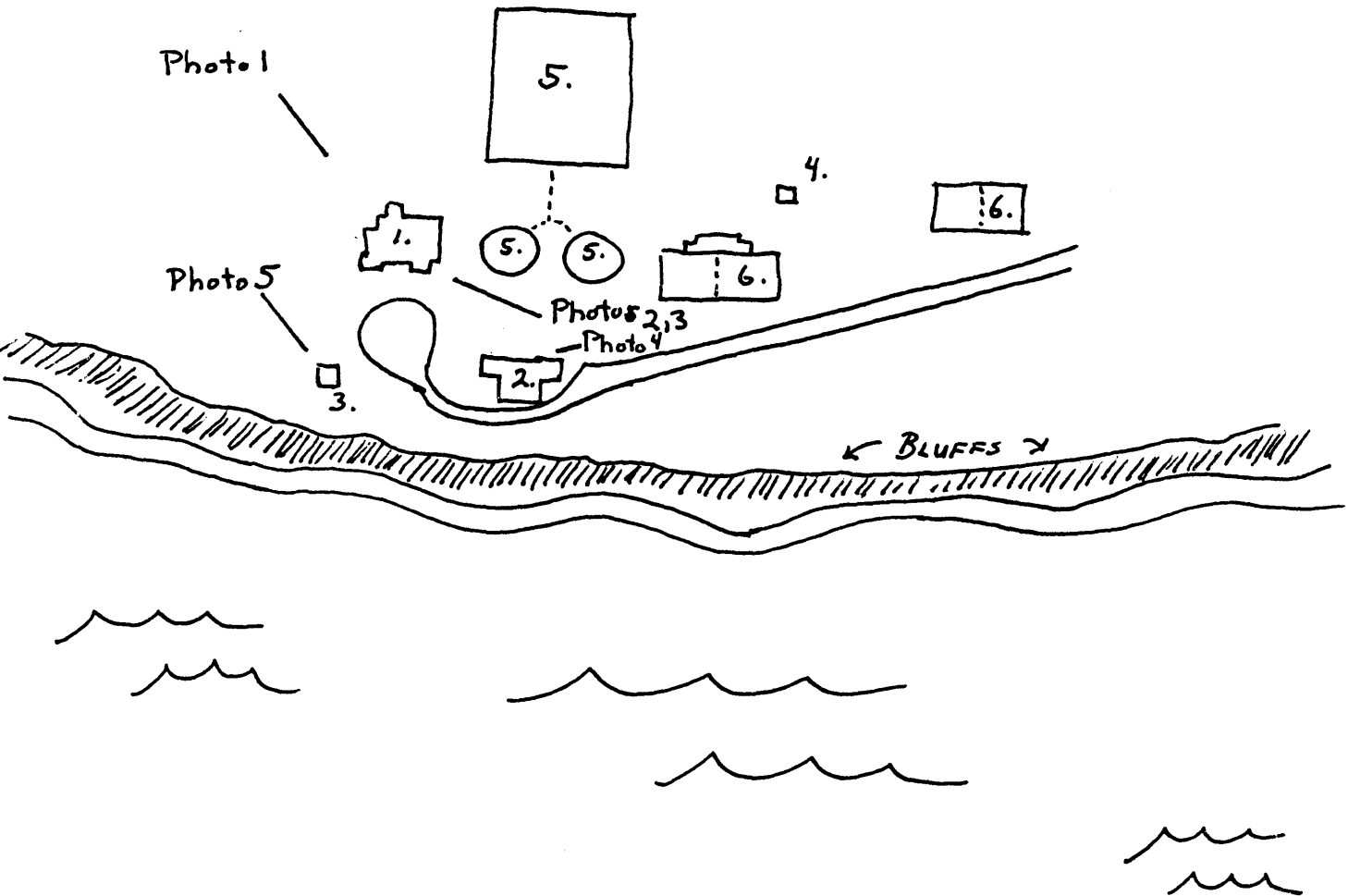
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

San Luis Obispo Light Station
Port San Luis Harbor District
Avila Beach, California
San Luis Obispo County

Section number _____ Page _____

↑ SAN LUIS OBISPO
SKETCH MAP
Not to Scale



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91001093 Date Listed: 9/3/91

<u>San Luis Obispo Light Station</u>	<u>San Luis Obispo</u>	<u>CA</u>
Property Name	County	State

Light Stations of California MPS
Multiple Name

 This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

<i>Antoinette J. Lee</i>	<u>9/3/91</u>
for _____ Signature of the Keeper	_____ Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Statement of Significance: The Period of Significance is amended to read 1890-1940.

This information was confirmed with David Reece of the U.S. Coast Guard.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)