

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 3 1987

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 16). 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

historic name Portsville Lighthouse
other names/site number S- 743

2. Location

street & number North side of County Road 493 not for publication
city, town Portsville vicinity
state Delaware code DE county Sussex code 005 zip code 19931

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

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.
Signature of certifying official John Altem Date 6/4/1987
Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official NA Date _____
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.
 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 Almus Byer Date of Action 9-8-87

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwellingDomestic: secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwellingDomestic: secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Architectural Folly

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brickwalls wood/shingle

roof asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Portsville "Lighthouse" is an irregularly shaped vernacular structure composed of three primary elements: the original structure which is a small one-room-plan house with attached mid-19th century kitchen wing; a one-and-a-half story rear wing facing Broad Creek which was originally a late 19th century shirt factory and was moved to its present site in 1932, and a six-story wood frame and shingle tower erected between 1932 and 1934. The structure sits on a rise on the south side of Broad creek in southwestern Sussex County, Delaware.

The original house consisted of a one-room-plan, one-story, gable-roofed, wood-fram structure dating from the first quarter of the 19th century. This structure is extremely typical of vernacular buildings in Sussex County during that period, and retains much of its original interior detail including an original mantelpiece, floorboards, some exposed beams and other details.

During the course of the transformation of the pieces into a "lighthouse", Judge Koch made substantial changes to the original structure, including the addition of dormer windows in the second floor of the one-room-plan section and the construction of a terrace on the east side of the house. Very little original detailing remains to indicate the original appearance of the shirt factory which Koch moved from the adjoining property. In any case, it was probably a simple rectangular, gable-roofed structure with wood frame and siding. In its present manifestation, most of the first floor of the structure is one large room with a screened porch on the north or Broad Creek end. Judge Koch had large shed-roofed dormers added to the roof to create a second-floor bedroom. A partial basement is located beneath the south end of the shirt factory section to hold a furnace. From beneath the house it is possible to see the original hand-hewn beams beneath the front or original part of the house.

The tower section is approximately 20 feet square at the base and tapers inward as it rises to approximately 10 feet square at the top. The rooms at each level have banks of casement windows on all exposed sides and each floor served as a bedroom. An original small chamber on top of the tower, which would correspond with the light room in a real lighthouse, was destroyed in a wind storm in 1979 and has not been replaced. The height of the tower makes this one of the tallest buildings in Sussex County outside of the resort area along the Atlantic Coast.

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)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1930 - 1934

Significant Dates

1930 - 1934

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The Portsville "Lighthouse", which sits on a rise overlooking Broad Creek in the southwestern Sussex County, Delaware, village of Portsville, is significant under National Register Criterion "C" as an unusual example of early 20th century architectural folly in Delaware. Although it is composed of individual elements which in are either early or significant to the history of the village of Portsville, the present significance of the structure centers around its status as an unusual, even eccentric, example of an early 20th century summer/vacation retreat. Although the building is believed by many area residents to have been a lighthouse because of its design and location, it never, in fact, served as one. It was instead a whim, an architectural fantasy created by its owner, Judge Edward R. Koch, a New York State supreme court justice who acquired the property in 1930. The Lighthouse is significant for two other reasons as well. The first being the only extant example of a pre- World War II architectural folly in Delaware. (There are two others and they date to the 1950's. One is a chuck wagon shaped restaurant and the other is a Babylonian Temple being used as a home). Follies were popular elsewhere in the country but never caught on in Delaware. The second reason is that Judge Koch created a light house from elements that by themselves left in place would have today been a small rural crossroads historic district consisting of a house, general store and a shirt factory.

At the time of Judge Koch's acquisition, the property was the site of an early 19th century one-room-plan house with a one-story kitchen addition. This structure served as the nucleus of Judge Koch's new structure. His first step was to have the former late 19th century Portsville shirt factory, which stood just to the west of the house, moved over and attached to the rear of the house. Then he began construction of the six-story tower or "lighthouse." It was built between 1932 and 1934 by local carpenters. Its primary timbers were cypress spars cut from the edges of Broad Creek. Koch also acquired the former early 19th century Portsville General Store which originally stood across the road from the house and had it moved down the hill to the edge of Broad Creek, where it was converted for use as a boat house. The overall effect of the "lighthouse" was and is arresting, particularly since it sits on a prominent curve in the creek and is visible for a considerable distance in either direction. Over the years

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Historical information on the structure was provided through interviews with Mr. and Mrs. William Pederson, local Portsville historians.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

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 184

UTM References

A

1	8	4	4	0	3	2	5	4	2	6	0	7	4	2
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated acreage is the western portion of the legal parcel. It excludes a small state park on the eastern portion. It is defined and shown on the map as a 300' x 214' x 300' x 300' rectangular figure bounded by Road 493, the Broad Creek and the legal parcel line on the west. The east boundary is parallel to and 300' east of the west parcel line.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The acreage included is that land surrounding the lighthouse and boathouse and extending from the road to the Broad Creek. It excludes the east portion of the legal parcel which is being utilized for a small public park and fishing area.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard B. Carter, Sussex County Historical Preservation Planner

organization Sussex County Preservation Office date January, 1986

street & number P. O. Box 589 telephone (302) 856-7701, Ext. 361

city/town Georgetown state Delaware zip code _____

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

At the time of construction the entire structure, including the original weatherboarded front section, was sided with sawn wood shingles. The original wood shingle roof has recently been covered over with a new asphalt shingle roof.

The former general store building which now serves as the boat house, is also sided in sawn wood shingles and has a gable roof. It has corner pilasters and is typical of the type of construction common in Sussex County in the mid-19th century. The only other structure on the property is shed-roofed garage dating from the 1930's. Running across the front of the property in front of the house is an ornate fence with picket sections supported by brick piers.

The garage is not a part of this nomination. It lies on a part of the total property that is used as a public fishing and boat launch facility. That area is to the east of the nominated portion.

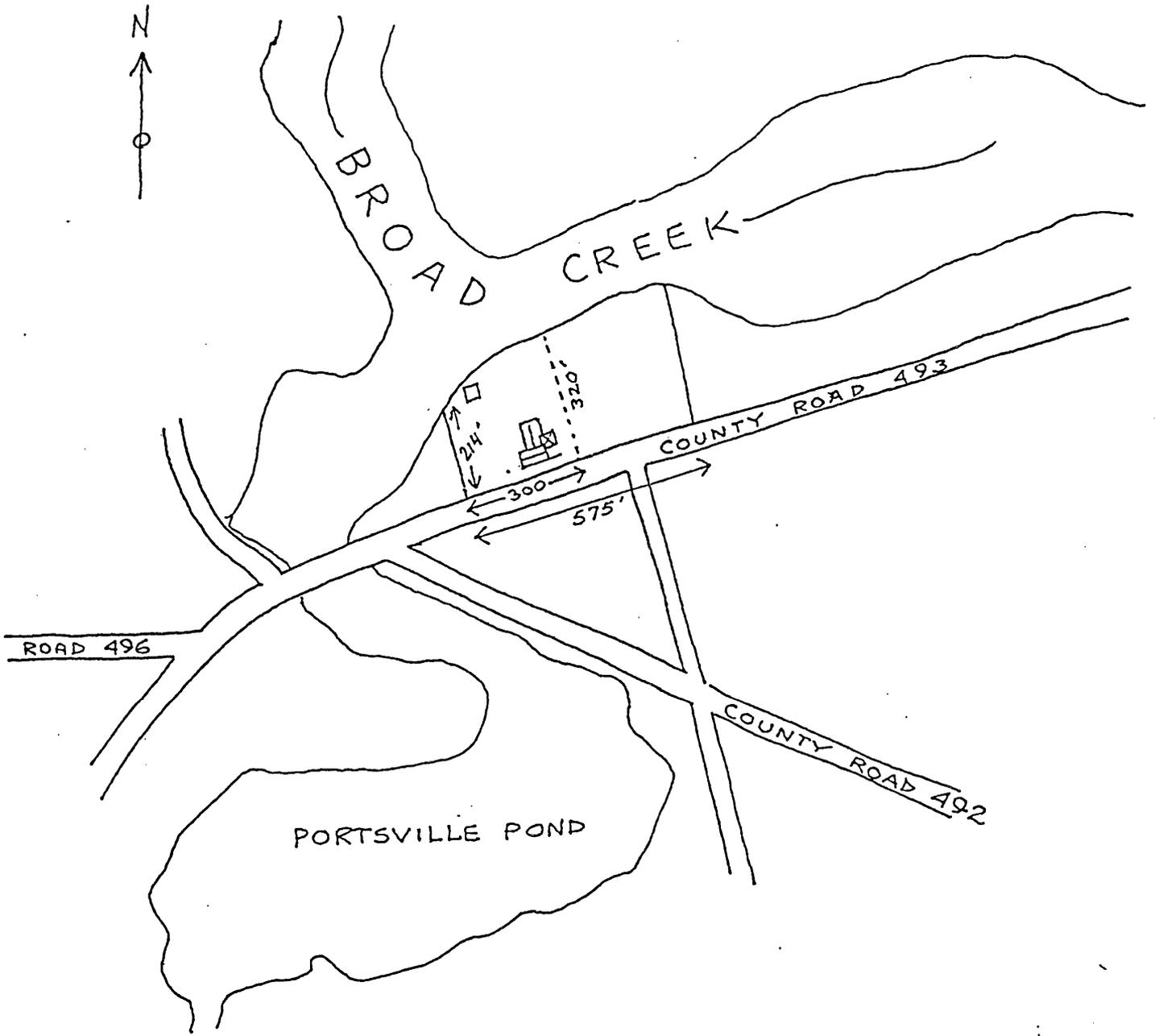
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

the Portsville Lighthouse, as it is known in the general area, or "the tower" as it is generally referred to by persons living in the immediate neighborhood, has become one of the best-known buildings in southern Delaware. Judge Koch, who died in 1969, left a life interest in the property to a nephew with instructions that it ultimately be turned over to the State of Delaware. Judge Koch's nephew, the last private owner, deeded the property to the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control in 1984. The land adjacent to the lighthouse has since been turned into a public fishing area by the state.

SITE MAP OF PORTSVILLE "LIGHTHOUSE."



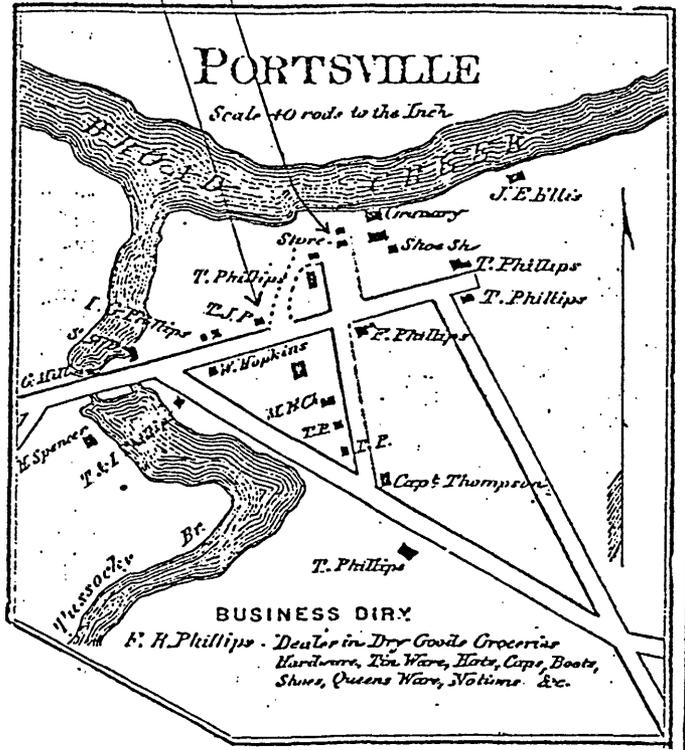
SCALE: 1" = 400'

TOTAL ACREAGE OF
TRACT - 4.26 ACRES

TOTAL NOMINATED
AREA - 1.84 ACRES ±

ORIGINAL HOUSE WHICH "EVOLVED" INTO PORTSVILLE TOWER.

STRUCTURE WHICH WAS LATER MOVED TO SIDE
OF CREEK AND CONVERTED TO
BOAT HOUSE



PORTSVILLE MAP WHICH APPEARED AS
DETAIL ON LITTLE CREEK HUNDRED
MAP, POMEROY & BEER'S ATLAS OF
DELAWARE, 1868