

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 7 1982

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Sharps Island Light

AND/OR COMMON

Sharps Island Light

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tilghman Island

VICINITY OF

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

CODE

24

COUNTY

Talbot

CODE

041

2 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | <i>N/A</i> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Navigatio |

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (if applicable)

Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District

STREET & NUMBER

431 Crawford Street

CITY, TOWN

Portsmouth

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23705

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Same As # 4

STREET & NUMBER

Logistics & Property Branch

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

NONE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The first light was a small wooden house with lamp housing on top, 30 feet above the ground on the northwest tip of Sharps Island.

With the threat of further erosion of the island, a new screwpile structure was erected approximately one (1) mile east of the previous position. In 1881, the house was carried away by ice causing the need for a third structure.

The third and present structure is a 14' diameter steel shell over brick, on a 30' diameter steel caisson having four stories plus the light tower and a basement. The interior was much like some of the other caisson towers built on the Bay, consisting of kitchen, O-I-C Quarters, watch room and quarters for two assigned watchstanders.

The 54 foot high brown tower, which was once painted purple, is situated in 10 feet of water. The nominal visibility is 10 miles to sea.

On October 1, 1957, the light was converted from 10V battery pack to electricity.

The light started to lean as early as 1973 and leans even further as the result of extremely heavy ice in the winter of 1976.

The 4th order lens was removed May 3, 1977 and replaced with a 250 MM plastic lens. The installed fog alarm system sounds from 15 September to 1 June.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Navigation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1882

BUILDER/ARCHITECT N/A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sharps Island Light was required to guide mariners away from the shoals off Poplar Island and Black Walnut Point. The Lighthouse Service decided on the location even though it was known from earlier maps and charts that the island was suffering severe erosion having diminished from 700 acres in 1675 to 480 acres in 1838 when the first light was built.

An act by the Maryland General Assembly on April 6, 1874 provided for "the relinquishment to the United States, title and jurisdiction over land for sites of lighthouses, beacons and other aids".

Ten acres of land was acquired by deed in fee simple and in consideration of the sum of \$600.00 from Joseph A. Reynolds and his wife Ann, on August 13, 1837 for the construction of the first light. The structure built by Thomas Evans was designed so it could be easily moved in the event that the severe erosion of the island further threatened the light.

As anticipated by the Lighthouse Service, the light was in fact threatened and plans were made to relocate the light.

A tract of land measuring 10.2 acres assessed at a value of \$1,022.00 was acquired by condemnation on June 13, 1848. By this time the size of the island had decreased to 438 acres.

In 1864 the Lighthouse Board reported to Congress that "the lighthouse at Sharps Island in Chesapeake Bay is in imminent danger of being destroyed by the washing away of the bank on which it stands". The absence of the usually severe winter in 1865 granted the lighthouse a reprieve. In 1866 a second structure was built but it too was ill-fated. On February 10, 1881, the house was lifted from it's foundation and carried away by the heavy moving ice floes.

The following year, in 1882, the present lighthouse was built on a five acre circular plot deeded from the state of Maryland on February 16, 1878.

A 1950 U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey chart showed the island to be about 300 yards long near the center. There is nothing in the records on hand to indicate the size of the island at the time the light was automated in August 1951.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

de Gast, Robert; The Lighthouses of The Chesapeake
 Baltimore; The John Hopkins University Press, 1973

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 (under water)

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------------------|---------------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 1, 8 | 3, 8, 0, 9, 3, 5 | 4, 2, 7, 7, 3, 4, 0 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundary of property 263.3 feet out from center in any direction.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

CW04 D. M. HANLEY - Special Projects Officer

ORGANIZATION

Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

431 Crawford Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 398-6356

CITY OR TOWN

Portsmouth

STATE

Virginia 23705

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

5/28/82

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

7/22/82

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER #8

PAGE 2

The site was visited by a Coast Guard Survey Board on August 3, 1955. Their report states the island had diminished to about 300 yards. The total acquired acreage (25.2) was deeded back to the state of Maryland by deed dated October 8, 1957 to clear the real estate records. The island has completely disappeared.

The light is presently serving as an unmanned aid to mariners in the area.