

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0281018 DATA SHEET

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED | OCT 8 1975 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAR 1 1976 |

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Stonington Harbor Lighthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Old Lighthouse Museum

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

7 Water Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Stonington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd - Christopher Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

__ VICINITY OF

CODE

09

COUNTY

New London

CODE

011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Stonington Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Whitehall - Route 27

CITY, TOWN

Stonington

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Stonington Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

78 Elm Street

CITY, TOWN

Stonington

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

~~Historic American Engineering Record~~

~~New England: an Inventory of Historical Engineering and Industrial Sites~~

DATE

~~1974~~

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

~~Library of Congress~~

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

DC

Not considered a NPS site until it has been...
...with...
...with...
...with...

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Stonington Harbor Lighthouse consists of an octagonal stone tower and an attached keeper's house. The tower is about ten feet in diameter at both its base and its top, and is 35 feet tall. It is surmounted by a cylindrical plate glass lantern, about six feet in diameter, which in turn supports a weathervane. The focal plane was 62' 00" above sea level, and the light could be seen from a distance of fifteen miles. The keeper's house, like the tower, is built of large irregular granite blocks. It is one and a half stories tall and about 30 feet square. On each side two small chimneys arise from the slate shingled gable roof.

The original lighting equipment was designed and supplied by I.W.P. Lewis, the foremost critic of the Federal Government's lighthouse policies. The fixed light was created by 8 lamps fitted with 16 inch parabolic reflectors. In 1856 this system was replaced by a sixth-order Fresnel harbor light, also fixed, which remained until the lighthouse was discontinued in 1889. It is now in the museum in the keeper's house. Both lights were fueled by whale oil. No other signaling equipment was used.

The chief architectural feature of the lighthouse is the forceful corbelling which encircles the tower at its midpoint and again at its top. Corbels also support the heavy granite lintels above the doors and windows, and the overall effect is one of mass and stability. This impression is enhanced by the ponderous stonework, the windowless side walls, and in the interior, by the massive blocks which form the spiral stairway in the tower. Apart from any reference to Lombard architecture, the sturdy design of the lighthouse had a special appeal to local inhabitants: this building replaced an earlier lighthouse which was plagued by erosion from without and a collapsing staircase within.

A one story wooden frame ell, probably of late nineteenth-century construction, has been added to the rear of the house. In 1925 the interior was completely remodeled, but external changes were mainly limited to the installation of diamond-paned windows in the front. In the nineteenth century, the lighthouse was painted, probably white, but this finish has been removed.

The lighthouse is situated on a large open lot at the southern end of Stonington Point. The gable end of the house and the tower attached thereto face the street. Originally, the lighthouse was the last building on the street, but in 1908 the Federal Government constructed a house next to it for the breakwater lightkeeper.

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| Stonington Harbor Lighthouse | 6 | one |

Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historical Resources
1975 - State

Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1840 BUILDER/ARCHITECT John Bishop, builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Stonington Harbor Lighthouse is a significant historic property because it typifies the history of American lighthouse policy and because it is an essential element in the physical preservation of Stonington's maritime heritage.

The period between 1820 and 1850 was one of tremendous expansion in the number of lighthouses in America, and a large number of these, like the Stonington light, were intended to guide local coastal traffic and serve as harbor markers. There was very little professional input into key locational or constructional decisions, however, and fully 40% of the nation's lighthouses were found to have structural problems, and even more had inadequate lighting.

The first Stonington lighthouse, built in 1823, was located further down the point from the present one, and was similar in proportions: a stone tower 30 feet tall and a detached stone house. The choice of site was poor, however: an inspector in 1838 found that 22 feet of the original property had been swept away by the sea, and the government was forced to choose between building a sea wall or replacing the \$2500 structure.

The lighthouse now standing was built in 1840 using stones from the original building. Its new location avoided the danger of erosion and at the same time raised the focal plane 15 feet. Nevertheless, its lighting system, installed at a cost of \$1900 (including the lantern), was just as inadequate as the earlier one. Even though its reflectors were larger, it was prone to the same kind of deterioration which affected the first light: the official reflector polishing powder wore off the silver coating very quickly. Moreover, such lights were long obsolete, ever since the invention in 1822 of the Fresnel lens, a prismatic device for concentrating light. Because of personalities and vested interests, this development was ignored until Congress intervened in 1851. Finally, in 1856, the Stonington Lighthouse received a Fresnel lens, and operated effectively for the next thirty years. With few exceptions, all American lighthouses were converted in this decade. The Stonington Lighthouse with its early problems and long-delayed solutions is representative of the many lighthouses of this period. It was discontinued when the harbor light was moved out to the breakwater.

Because it served as a sentinel for Stonington Harbor, the lighthouse is important in preserving the town's past. The major activities in 19th century Stonington were shipbuilding and refitting whaling and sealing vessels. These produced a large amount of commercial activity, and hence the life of the town depended upon the harbor. The significance of the lighthouse is increased by its location at the southern end of Stonington Borough, an area rich in 18th and 19th century buildings.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Barber, John W. Connecticut Historical Collections. New Haven: Durrie & Clark, 1838.
- Haynes William. The Stonington Chronology, 1647-1949. Stonington: Pequot Press, 1949.
- Holland, Francis R. America's Lighthouses. Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1972.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

820

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|-----|-----|-------|------|---------|----------|--|
| A | 1,9 | 25,6 | 8,5,0 | 4,5 | 7,9 | 0,7,0 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | |
| C | | | | | | | D | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

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

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Bruce Clouette

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

July 8, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

(203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

John W. Shumaker

TITLE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

9/29/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

1/1/76

ATTEST:

Ronald W. Greenberg

DATE

12/30/75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

act

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Finally, in its fortress-like construction and detailing, unusual for a lighthouse, and in its thematic unity - solidness, as befits its function - the Stonington Harbor Lighthouse is an architectural resource.

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| Johnson, Arnold B. <u>The Modern Lighthouse Service</u> . Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890. | | |
| Palmer, Henry R. <u>Stonington by the Sea</u> . Stonington: Palmer Press, 1913. | | |
| U.S. Congress, Senate Executive Document No. 28, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., (1840), Serial 617. | | |
| U.S. Lighthouse Board, <u>Annual Reports</u> , 1852-1889. | | |
| _____. <u>Documents Relating to Lighthouses, 1789-1871</u> . Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871. | | |
| U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, <u>Statement of Contracts Relative to Oil, Lighthouses, Beacons, Etc.</u> Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1824 (18th Cong., 2d Sess., Serial 116). | | |
| U.S. Treasury Department Fifth Auditor, <u>List of Lighthouses, Beacons and Floating Lights</u> . Washington: C. Alexander, 1848. | | |