

PH 0666394

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 5 1978

DATE ENTERED NOV 21 1983

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC PILOT ISLAND LIGHT

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER PORTE des MORTS PASSAGE

CITY, TOWN Hills Rock vic. VICINITY OF DOOR COUNTY

STATE WISCONSIN CODE 35 COUNTY DOOR CODE 29

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) NINTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT

STREET & NUMBER 1240 East Ninth Street

CITY, TOWN Cleveland, Ohio VICINITY OF STATE Ohio 44199

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, DOOR COUNTY COURTHOUSE, REGISTER OF DEEDS
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN STURGEON BAY, WISCONSIN STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE NONE KNOWN

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

Biblio. Ref.

(1) By Executive Order, a small island located in the Porte des Morts Passage, Wisconsin was withdrawn from the Public Domain on 28 May 1858 for use of the Lighthouse Service. The island, now named Pilot Island, is a 3.5 acre island of rock and stone in Door County, Wisconsin and lies two miles to the East of Plum Island, which earned this name by being located "plum center" in the Porte des Morts Passage. (1)

The buildings of the station, which was established here in 1858, were constructed primarily of stone in an architectural style commensurate with its time and comparable to the Cana Island and Chamber Island lighthouses which are on the National Register and are all located in Door County, Wisconsin.

The Pilot Island Station was decommissioned and the light automated in June 1962.

At the time the Lighthouse Service obtained this property it was called Porte des Morts Island and the light established thereon in 1858 was called Porte des Morts Light. Sometime during the end of 1874 or the beginning of 1875, the island and light became known as the Pilot Island Light on Pilot Island. This has been determined by the Lighthouse Service's Annual Reports dated 1874 and 1875. The 1874 report had reference to the Porte des Morts Light and the 1875 report did not reference the Porte des Morts Light but did list the Pilot Island Light.

There are three buildings on Pilot Island, they are:

- Lighthouse dwelling constructed in 1858 *CONDITION-GOOD*
- Fog Signal Building constructed in 1900 (EST) *CONDITION-GOOD*
- Frame Storage Building constructed in 1940 (EST) *CONDITION-GOOD*

The light is 48 feet above the water and located at Lat. N 45 17.1 Long W 86 55.2

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) <u>None</u>
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Biblio.

Ref.

(2) Pilot Island is little more than a rock in the sea and a very dreary place. The island was frequently enveloped in fog and in spite of the fog signal and light, navigation through the Porte des Morts Passage was considered a perilous journey. As it was the scene of a number of wrecks, the depressing name Porte des Morts, which translate to "Deaths Door" was bestowed upon the Passage by the early French fur traders. (2)

(3) The island was practically inaccessible in a storm and one keeper noted in his log that he went to Washington Island for his mail and couldn't get back for three weeks. But it was the ten inch steam whistle which blasted out every thirty seconds in foggy weather that made the station so trying. Since the island was shrouded in fog most of the time, the monotonous bellow was nerve wracking, but its biggest drawback was that if deprived the keeper of poultry and fresh milk. The vibration from the fog horn was so intense it killed the forming chicks in the eggs before they could hatch and curdled milk within a matter of minutes. It was further reported that John Boice, an assistant keeper, cut his throat on June 20, 1880. (3)

(4) As the island was the site of many wrecks it was also the site of a number of daring rescues, the most dramatic probably occurred in the fall of 1892. The keeper, Martin Knudson saved the ten men crew of the schooner "J. C. Gilmore" and the six men crew of the "A. P. Nichols" during that storm. (4)

ccsdg) As the island fog signal is no longer considered an essential aid to Great Lakes shipping, it was removed at the same time the station was decommissioned, June 1962.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- (1) OLD PENINSULA DAYS, HOLLAND, Pg 238,239
- (2) KEEPERS OF THE LIGHT, ADAMSON, Pg 321-322
- (3) WISCONSIN TRAILS, AUTMN 1966, Pg. 26
- (4) LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS OF 1874 & 1875

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.5

UTM REFERENCES

506310			310						
477.640.0			4200						
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C	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

3.5 ACRE ISLAND LOCATED IN THE PORTE DES MORTS PASSAGE NE OF THE DOOR COUNTY PENINSULA.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NONE			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: W. E. BAYER, REALTY SPECIALIST

ORGANIZATION _____ DATE 29 Nov 77

NINTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT

STREET & NUMBER _____ TELEPHONE 216-522-3975

1240 EAST NINTH STREET

CITY OR TOWN _____ STATE _____

CLEVELAND, OHIO 44199

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO _____ NONE _____

Richard Remy
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 *Robert H. Gussard* DATE 3/30/78

TITLE E.O. 11593 DOT REPRESENTATIVE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Bob Gussard DATE 4/21/83

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: _____ DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

7. DESCRIPTION

A Congressional appropriation for construction of a lighthouse at Port du Mort was approved on August 14, 1848 for \$3,500.00. The first light on the island was established in 1850. It was not until May 28, 1858, however, that the island was actually set aside by Executive Order for lighthouse purposes. The lighthouse now standing was built in 1858 and consists of a rectangular brick Keeper's house measuring 45 feet by 32 feet. It is a two story building with a gable roof. The light tower penetrates through the gable roof at the west end. The light tower is a square frame structure 8 feet 0 inches on a side, surmounted by a ten-sided cast iron lantern with an inscribed diameter of 7 feet 5 inches. The lense, originally a Fourth Order Fresnel made by Henry Lepaute is no longer in place and has been replaced with a 12 volt lamp. The brick fog signal building, constructed in 1900, measures 22 feet by 32 feet. The fog signal equipment has been removed. The only other structure at the site is a wood frame storage building constructed ca. 1940.

In addition to the buildings presently at the site there were eight other structures that have been removed over the years. The original fog signal building was converted to the Second Assistant Keepers dwelling in 1900. There was also a privy, an oil house, a boathouse, two docks (one on the east side and one on the west side of the island), workshop and woodshed.

The name of the island has been the cause of some problems. There is evidence that the name Pilot Island was already in use in 1850. The island may have been the home of early pilots who guided sailing vessels through the passage or the island itself was considered to be a landmark for "piloting" unfamiliar mariners through Death's Door to safe waters in Green Bay.

The Lighthouse Establishment, however, chose the name Porte des Morts (Death's Door) for the name of the lighthouse itself. The Annual Report of the Lighthouse Service for 1875 is an exception to this and refers to the light as Pilot Island. Except for that one exception, however, the light was originally known as Port du Mort and then Porte des Morts until the name was officially changed on December 1, 1910 to Pilot Island Light. In June 1962 the light was automated and all resident personnel were removed.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Historically, Death's Door Passage, is one of the most treacherous areas on the Great Lakes. The area became significant quite early due to the fact that it is the most direct route from Lake Michigan into Green Bay. It was first navigated by La Salle in 1679. During that season La Salle established a trading post at what is now Green Bay, Wisconsin and navigation in the area has been extant ever since. By the 1840's the influx of immigrants to the area from Europe in search of farmland greatly increased the number of vessels traversing the Passage. Consequently, Congress approved the establishment of a lighthouse at Port du Mort on August 14, 1848. The original lighthouse stood 25 feet high from the base to the focal plane and 37 feet above the water.

The original light was not considered effective and in 1858 the present structure was built, being 35 feet from the base to the focal plane and 46 feet above the water. The patterns of navigation in this area made the lighthouse quite significant. Even with the lighthouse and fog signal in operation wrecks were not uncommon and it often fell to the lightkeeper to perform rescues as well as tend the light. One of the more significant rescues involved the schooner "A. P. Nichols" that stranded on the island on November 4, 1892. The keeper Martin Knudson, upon discovering the wreck, waded out onto the reef at the height of the storm in the dark and, one by one, led the crew members to safety. In all, Knudson saved six people from the "Nichols". The week before, Knudson had rescued the ten man crew of the schooner "J. C. Gilmore". Due to the continuing stormy weather it had not been possible to get anyone to the mainland and Knudson was faced with entertaining sixteen uninvited guests. Fortunately, the weather did subside on the 5th and everyone was safely transferred to the Door Peninsula.

Death's Door is still an important artery in the navigational pattern of the Great Lakes. Coal, fuel oil, cement and pulp products regularly pass through "the Door" on vessels trading between Green Bay and Lake Michigan. In addition to commercial shipping, recreational boating, ferry service and commercial fishing are extant in the area.

Pilot Island Light is an important and integral part of the history of navigation in the Door County area.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Holland, Hjalmar R. Old Peninsula Days.
Ephriam : Pioneer Publishing Co., 1943.

Annual Reports of the Lighthouse Service, Washington, 1874, 1875, 1880
1889, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1899 and 1901.

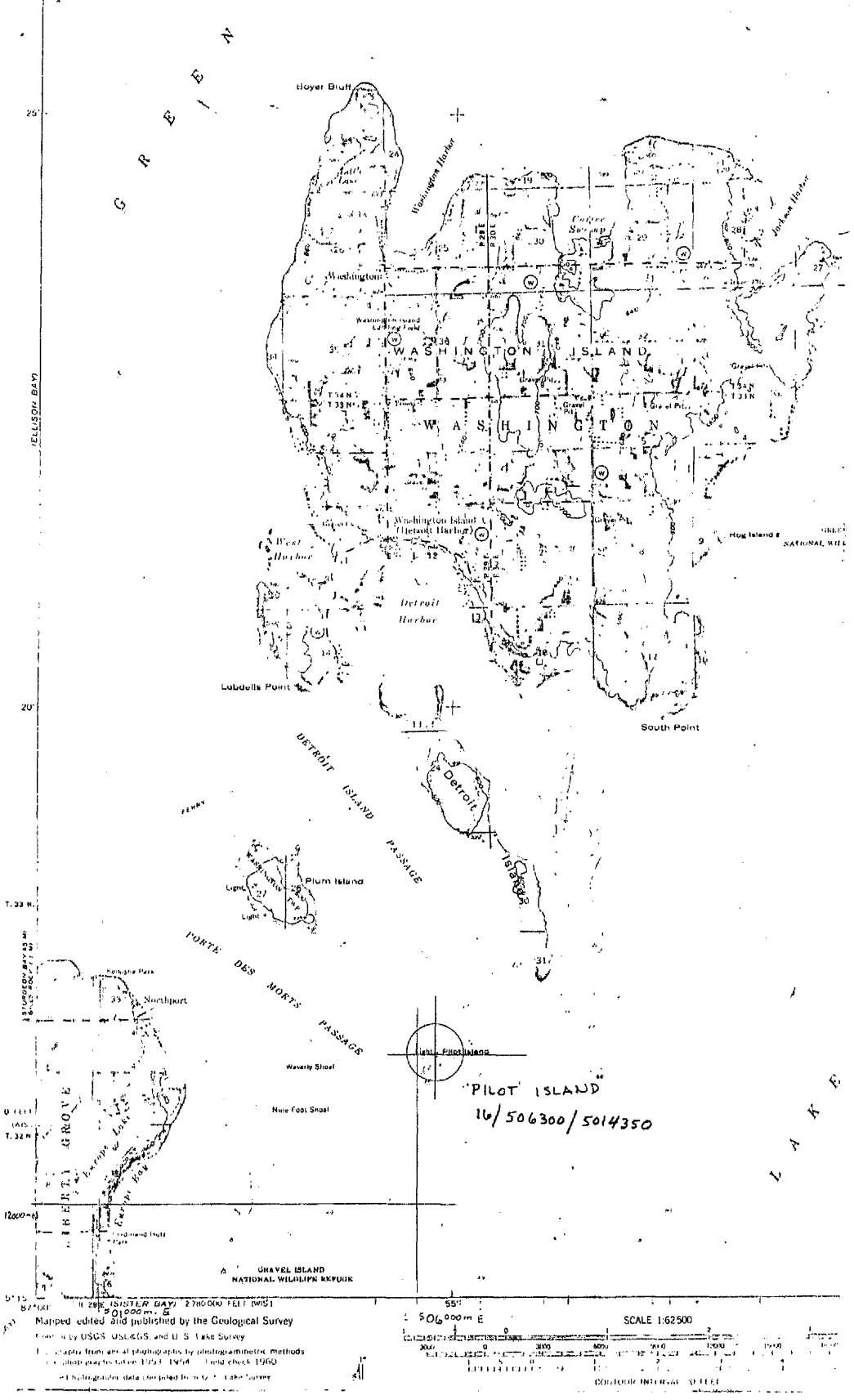
Laws of the United States Relating to the Establishment, Support and Management of the Lighthouses, Light-Vessels, Monuments, Beacons, Spindles, Buoys and Public Piers of the United States from August 7, 1789 to March 3, 1855.
Washington, 1855.

Adamson, Hans Christian. Keepers of the Lights. New York: Greenburg, 1955.

Description of Light - House Tower, Buildings and Premises at Porte des Morte,
May 18, 1910.

The Advocate, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin
Saturday, November 5, 1892.

Light - House Board. List of Light-Houses, Lighted Beacons, and Floating Lights of the United States. Washington: William A. Harris, 1858.



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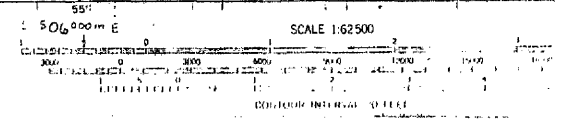
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SCALE 1:62500

DETERIOR INTERVAL 0 FEET

Maped, edited and published by the Geological Survey

Drawn by USGS, USCGS, and U.S. Lake Survey

Charts from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods

Charts from 1953, 1954, and check 1960

Hydrographic data compiled by U.S. Lake Survey

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