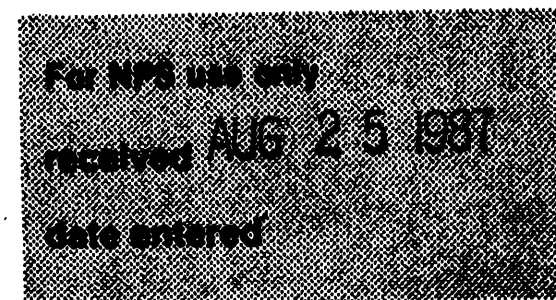


United States Department of the Interior
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NAME: Poplar Point Lighthouse
LOCATION: 1 Poplar Avenue
North Kingstown, RI
Washington County

CLASSIFICATION

Category - buiding(s)
Ownership - private
Status - occupied
Accessible - yes, restricted
Present Use - private residence

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Elmer R. and Virginia F. Shippee
1 Poplar Avenue
North Kingstown, RI 02852

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Town Clerk's Office
North Kingstown Town Hall
80 Boston Neck Road
North Kingstown, RI 02852

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

North Kingstown, Rhode Island
Statewide Historical Preservation Report W-NK-1, 1979
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

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DESCRIPTION

Condition - good / altered / original site

Poplar Point Light occupies a one-and-a-half-acre site at the southern side of the entrance to Wickford Harbor. Built in 1831 and no longer an active light, it has undergone some alterations and additions since passing to private hands in 1894.

The house is a rambling, shingled structure laid out in the shape of a Y; with the original 1831 keeper's dwelling and roof-mounted light tower at the north end nearest the tip of Poplar Point. Although the outside of the keeper's dwelling is now covered with shingles, its walls are made of cut stone. Three bays long and one-and-a-half stories high, with two small dormers on each side of the gable roof, the dwelling features a full-width bow window in the north gable end overlooking the harbor. Inside is a dining room and a living room on the first floor, separated by a central chimney and center stairway, with two bedrooms above.

Rising through the dwelling's roof at the north end is a three-story wooden octagonal light tower sided with clapboards. At the top is an octagonal cast-iron lantern with a spherical roof ventilator and an iron balustrade around the outer edge of the gallery deck. The lens and lamp have been removed.

Attached to the south end of the dwelling are two shingled wings added in 1894. These form the top half of the building's Y shape. The larger wing, which overlooks Narragansett Bay, to the east, is a two-story, gambrel-roofed addition containing a large living room on the first floor with bedrooms above. On its east side is a central shed dormer flanked on either side by two large gabled dormers. On the west side of this wing, is the main entrance into the house from the driveway. Two small dormers are located on the sides of the cross-gable. A porch added also in 1894 extends along both the west and east sides of the original dwelling as well as along the east side of the larger addition. Originally, it wrapped around the south end of the addition as well, but this section has recently been enclosed to create a sun room.

The other Shingle Style wing is a one story gable roofed addition with two adjoining cross-gables at the west end. This contains a kitchen and another bedroom. A one story flat roofed garage is attached to the wing's west end. The entire building

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is in good condition.

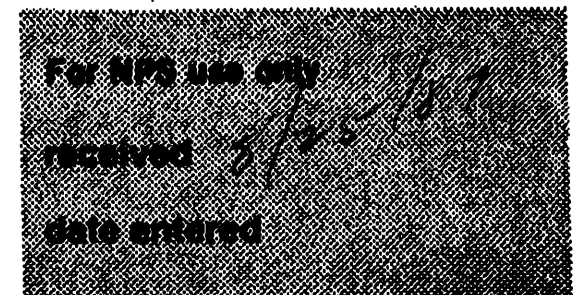
A plaque embedded in a stone in the middle of the driveway refers to a Revolutionary War battle that took place on the site. It reads:

On this point during the Revolution stood a cannon protecting Updike's Newtown now Wickford against enemy excursions on the main. It was manned by the Newtown rangers whose charter was granted April 17, 1777.

Although a separate boathouse was built near the lighthouse, the property on which it stood has been separated. A dwelling built on this site may have incorporated parts of the original boathouse into its construction.

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SIGNIFICANCE

Period: 1800-1899

Specific dates: 1831

Established in 1831 at the entrance to Wickford Harbor on the site of a Revolutionary War battle, Poplar Point Light is significant as the oldest surviving lighthouse in Rhode Island on its original site. Earlier lights were established at eight other locations, but only one of these structures survives. It, however, is not on its original site and was disassembled during the move. Although the Poplar Point lantern is not original and the dwelling has been altered and added to since the light's active period, the oldest section is a good early example of a keeper's dwelling with an attached tower.

The tower and dwelling were constructed in 1831 by Charles Allen of Kingston at a cost of \$1,888. In 1869 the Lighthouse Board recommended that the dwelling, which was in need of repairs, be renovated, and that the original lantern be replaced. This was done two years later, but in 1878 the Board cited the need for an additional navigational aid to mark the entrance to Wickford Harbor. It proposed the establishment of another lighthouse on Old Gay Rock, 500 yards north of Poplar Point. When the new Wickford Harbor Light was completed on November 1, 1882, Poplar Point Light was discontinued after fifty one years of service.

The government retained ownership of the light until 1894 when it was sold at public auction to Albert R. Sherman of Pawtucket, who remodeled it as a residence. Sherman commissioned the architectural firm of Straight and McKenzie to design the gambrel-roofed additions. Shingles were applied to the outside of the original dwelling at that time. The lighthouse continues to be used as a private residence.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: 63,865 square feet (1.47 acres)

Quadrangle name: Wickford, RI

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

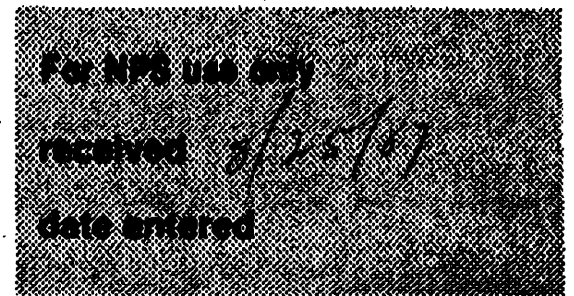
UTM References: A 19 296590 4604800

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property occupies all of lot #212, North Kingstown Assessor's Plat #91; this boundary includes the entire resource.

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Level of Significance: State
SHPO Certification

Frank C. Williams

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The period of significance extends from 1831, the date of construction for the light/keeper's house, to 1882, when the light was deactivated and no longer served as part of a system of navigation aids. Some alteration of the 1831 section has taken place since 1882, principally the covering of stone walls with shingles and the construction of porches on both sides of the keeper's house. However, these are both reversible alterations which do not, in any case, seriously diminish the design integrity of this section of the structure; the crucial design elements are a tall octagonal tower rising up through the gable roof of a lower building--and both of these elements are clearly well preserved and evocative of their time and place.

The two separate and later wings which form the "Y" shape of the total structure do not participate in the significance of the 1831 section; they are not related either to the light's significance as an element of a transportation system, nor to its significance as a representative example of lighthouse architecture. On the other hand, they do not substantially affect the integrity of the 1831 structure which remains a clearly distinguishable element. They are interesting, albeit non-contributing elements of the complex.

(It is possible that these two architect-designed additions may later prove to have additional and separate significance of their own--as an exemplar of the adaptation of utilitarian structures into picturesque summer residences, a pattern whose significance has not yet been fully evaluated.)