

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

SEP 25 1986

date entered

FEB 18 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Mispillion Lighthouse and Beacon Tower

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Northeast end of County Road 203 not for publicationcity, town Milford vicinity of congressional districtstate Delaware code 10 county Sussex code 005

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant bldg.

4. Owner of Property

name Lighthouse Property: Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Racz SEE ALSO ATTACHED SHEETstreet & number R.D. 1, Box 417; Mispillion Lighthouse Roadcity, town Milford vicinity of state Delaware 19963

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sussex County Courthousestreet & number The Circlecity, town Georgetown state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Cedar Creek Hundred Survey S-441 has this property been determined eligible? yes nodate 1984 federal state county localdepository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservationcity, town Dover state DE

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	Beacon tower moved in 1929.
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>Lighthouse on original site.</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mispillion Lighthouse is a two-story, wood-frame, carpenter gothic structure with a wood-frame lighthouse tower rising from it. The entire structure is approximately 65 feet tall. Atop the tower is a steel and glass light chamber with a conical metal top. The building is "L" shape in plan with the tower rising from the point where the two sides of the "L" meet. The two lower stories are presently sided with red-painted asbestos shingles, while the lower portion of the tower below the light chamber is sided with machine-sawn, unfinished wooden shingles. Portions of the original wood weatherboarding which once covered the exterior of the entire structure are still visible at the rear of the building.

The lighthouse is largely unaltered in shape except that the original front and rear porches have been removed and the original octagonal railing around the outside of the light room is gone. In addition, the original six-over-six window sashes were replaced at an unknown time in the early 20th century with three-over-one sashes and one-over-one sashes in all but two windows. A 1953 painting of the lighthouse shows that the newer window units had already been installed at that time, and that the light room railing was already gone, though the porches remained.

The wood-shingled roof of the lighthouse is pierced by two original brick chimneys with arched brick tops. The gable ends retain their original simple Stick-style decorations, which include purlins and diagonal brackets at the bases of the roof planes with collar ties and king posts. The gable ends are finished with decorative sawn vertical board and batten trim. The building sits on original brick piers. Early photographs show it surrounded by a fence, but no trace of this remains.

Also on the lighthouse property are three more modern structures, none of which is associated with the historical function of the lighthouse. These include a two-story restaurant structure, a small bait and ice house, and a one-story concrete block dwelling. Only the bait and ice house is in the nominated area, however.

Also included in the nomination is a steel skeleton beacon tower, 60 feet in height, which has held the light since it was moved from the lighthouse in 1929. The beacon tower was originally built by the U.S. Coast Guard at Cape Henlopen in about 1924 to replace the Cape Henlopen Light, that structure having become unstable because of erosion. Cape Henlopen Lighthouse collapsed in 1926 and the site was deactivated. In 1929, the decision was made to move the tower to Mispillion and reerect it there. The beacon tower occupies one corner of the original lighthouse property which is still owned by the U.S. Government. The parcel of land it occupies is approximately 108 feet by 75 feet and it is located at the northernmost corner of the parcel. The tower is approximately 20 feet square, including its concrete supporting piers, at its base, tapering as it rises. The beacon was deactivated by the Coast Guard in 1984, although there are plans to reactivate it.

THIS PROPERTY CONTAINS ONE CONTRIBUTING BUILDING AND ONE CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1873 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Mispillion Lighthouse is the sole surviving wood-frame lighthouse in the State of Delaware and one of only three Delaware Bay lighthouses still standing on Delaware soil (the other two are iron lighthouses at Taylor's Bridge and Port Penn, both of which are listed in the National Register). The Mispillion Lighthouse is significant under National Register Criterion "C" as a building which embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of architecture important to the history of Delaware. The present Mispillion Lighthouse dates from 1873 and is the third such structure to have marked the entrance to the Mispillion River since 1831. The first lighthouse fell victim to erosion. The second, which was deactivated in 1859, was later sold and moved into the nearby community of Milford where it was converted into use as a storehouse. The present building was also deactivated in 1929 and was replaced by a 60-foot standard skeleton steel beacon tower. This steel structure was moved to Mispillion Light from Cape Henlopen where it had earlier been erected behind the old Cape Henlopen Lighthouse when that structure became seriously threatened by erosion. After the Henlopen Light collapsed in April, 1926, the decision was made to abandon the location as a lighthouse site and the steel tower became surplus. It was moved to Mispillion, where it still operates, because the wood-frame lighthouse was in poor repair and it was deemed less expensive to replace it with the steel tower than to repair it. The steel tower and a small plot of land on which it stands continue to be owned by the federal government. Because of its importance to this site and Cape Henlopen the tower is also nominated.

At the peak of its activity in the late 1800's, the Mispillion Light Station had a full-time lighthouse keeper. The station was located on a 2.161 acre tract of land, one of the original owners of which was former Delaware Governor Charles Polk. In addition to the combined lighthouse and keeper's dwelling structure, the station also had such structures as a barn, a storage building, a cow shed, a pig pen and a privy. In 1911 the original oil-powered lighting mechanism was replaced by an automated "4-tank AGA acetylene lighting system" which operated from acetylene gas produced in a small power house behind the lighthouse and stored in storage tanks inside the lighthouse structure. The introduction of this system made the position of lighthouse keeper unnecessary, but the lighthouse service made the decision to hire a local waterman as caretaker, paying him \$60 per year and allowing him to live in the keeper's dwelling free of charge since, "it is anticipated that the total abandonment of the dwelling at this isolated point might invite occupancy and possible vandalism by the fishing contingent which operates in this vicinity."

In 1932, the federal government sold the lighthouse and most of the light station property to two local businessmen for \$400, retaining the land on which the newer steel beacon tower stands. After acquiring the property, the purchasers erected a restaurant and a small house on the property and built a dock along the waterfront for use by local fishermen. Although the Mispillion light has continued to operate atop the steel tower with several brief interludes ever since, the days of its primary importance when wooden sailing vessels plied the river and newly-built boats from the Milford boatyards passed by on their way to the Delaware Bay are distant memories.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Scharf, J. Thomas, History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888. Vol. II, Page 1255.

Hurley, Edward Millis "A Short Narrative History of Milford," contained in the volume entitled, A History of Milford, Delaware. Milford Historical Society, 1962.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property (22,500 square feet) .52 acres

Quadrangle name Mispillion River, Delaware

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

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4	3	1	0	7	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

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

organization Sussex County Preservation Office date January, 1986

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

city or town Georgetown state Delaware

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director/ Division of Hist. and Cult. Affairs date 23 Sept 86

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date 2/18/87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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9/25/86

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Continuation sheet	Item number	Page
OWNER OF PROPERTY	4	1

The steel beacon tower and the 108.4 x 75.15 foot parcel on which it is situated are owned by the U.S. Government. A specific address is as follows:

U.S. Coast Guard
Third Coast Guard District
Office of Aids to Navigation
Governor's Island, Building 135 A
New York, N.Y. 10004

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

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Continuation sheet

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2

Misphillion Light House Steel Beacon Tower

The steel Tower at the Misphillion light is an important and contributing element of the Misphillion Light House complex. It was originally built to replace the Cape Henlopen Light when that structure was about to collapse. This type of structure is not common to Delaware and a survey of coastline cultural resources has not uncovered any similiar structure. There are nineteenth century steel beacon navigation towers along the coast but they are markedly different than the open tower at the Misphillion Light House.

Because the beacon town is a unique resource in Delaware and continues the tradition of a beacon light (it is about to be reactivated by the coast guard), it is a contributing structure as noted on page 1 of the description.

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Continuation sheet	Item number	Page
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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES	9	2
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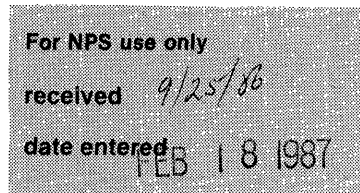
National Archives; General Services Administration; Washington, D.C.

Record Group 26, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard:

1. Selected Records from Lighthouse Site File, Delaware, No. 19.
2. Excerpts from the Annual Reports of the U.S. Lighthouse Board, 1857-1907, contained in "Clipping File."
3. Correspondence of the U.S. Lighthouse Service for the period 1900-1939, contained in "File No. 1047."

**United States Department of the Interior
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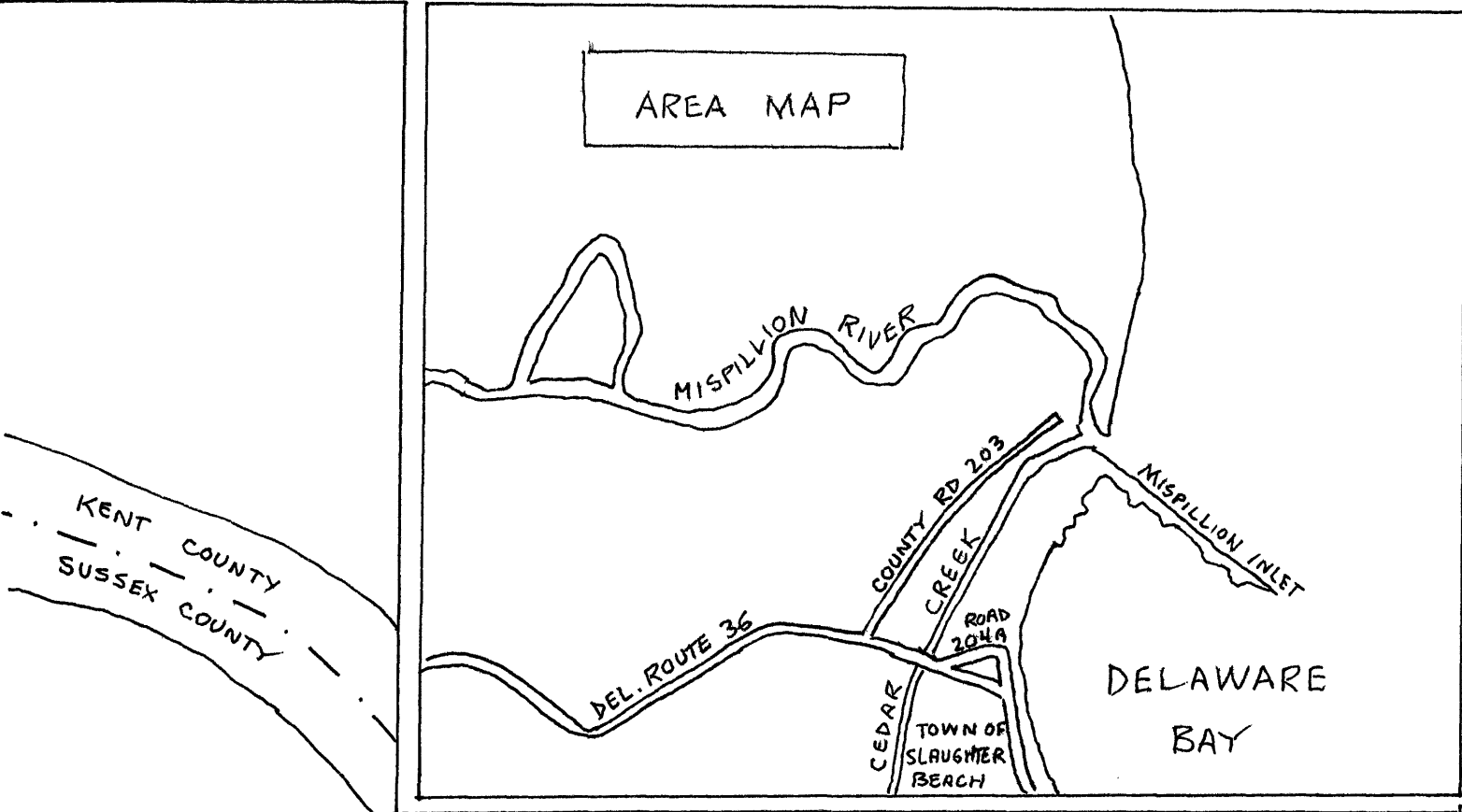


Continuation sheet	Item number	Page
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION	10	1

The nominated area is a rectangle enclosing both the Mispillion Lighthouse and the steel U.S. Government beacon tower. The rectangle includes the entirety of the U.S. Government property at the site (a smaller rectangle of 75.15 feet by 108.4 feet) and a portion of the larger privately-owned property on which the Mispillion Lighthouse is situated. The nominated area is at the northeastern end of County Road 203 and at the northwestern end of the Mispillion Inlet, at the point where Cedar Creek and the Mispillion River join and enter the Delaware Bay. For a precise location, see the following attached documents:

1. Copy of Area Map and Site Map.
2. Map of Nominated Area.
3. Photocopy of 1903 Survey drawing of the property as amended in 1904, 1907, and 1929, the original of which is in the National Archives, Records Group 26, Washington, D.C.

AREA MAP



SITE MAP

(TRACING FROM PORTION
OF SUSSEX COUNTY
TAX MAP NUMBER:
3-30-5
400' EQUALS 1 INCH

N



MR. & MRS. EUGENE RACZ
PARCEL
WITH
MISPILLION
LIGHTHOUSE
1.52 ACRES

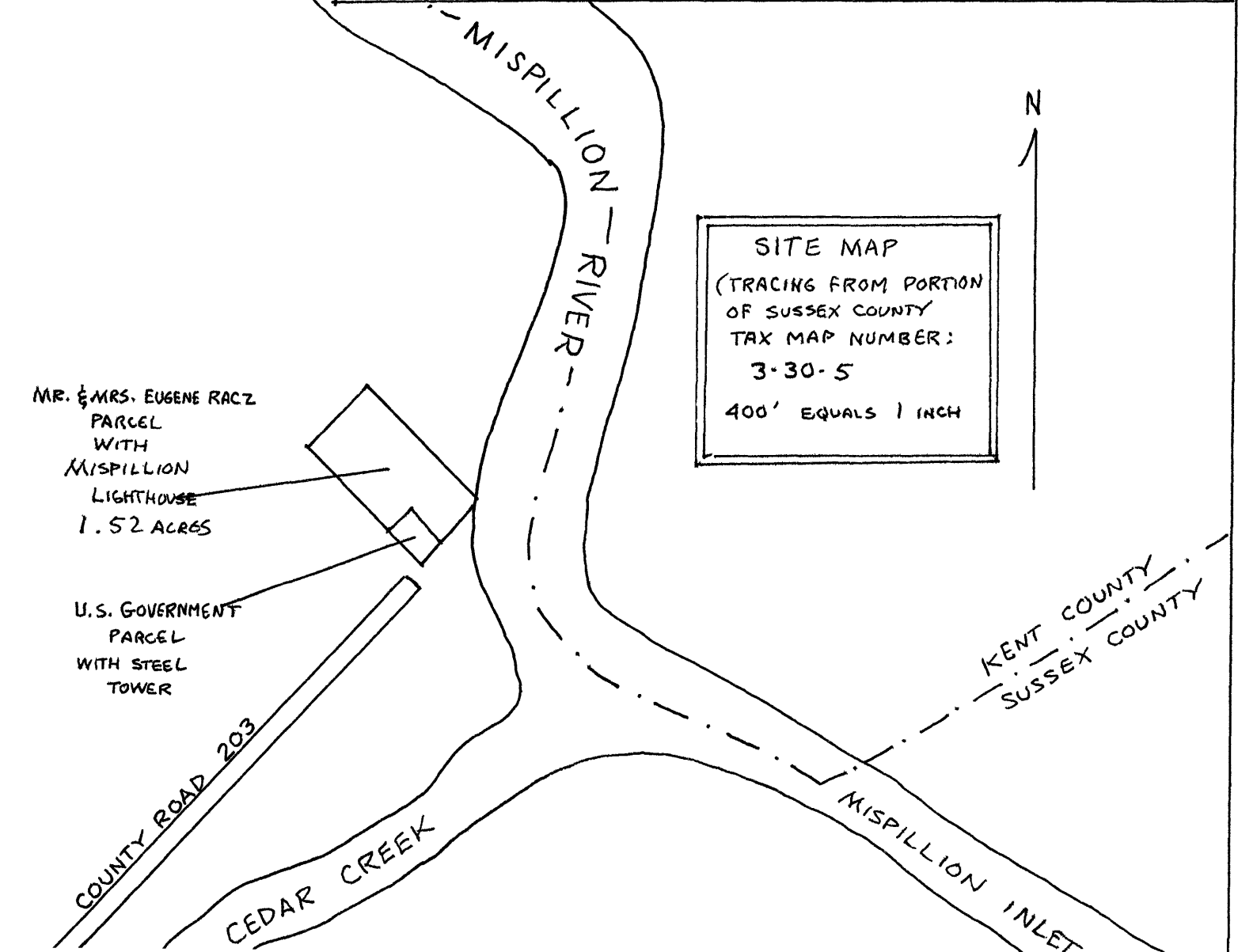
U.S. GOVERNMENT
PARCEL
WITH STEEL
TOWER

COUNTY ROAD 203

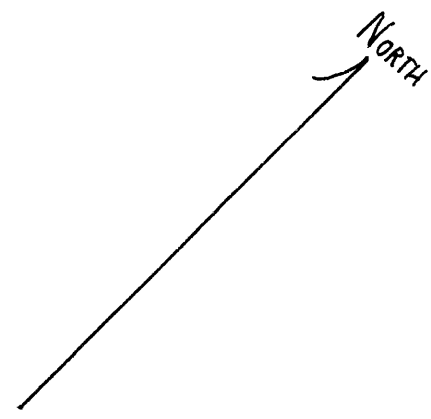
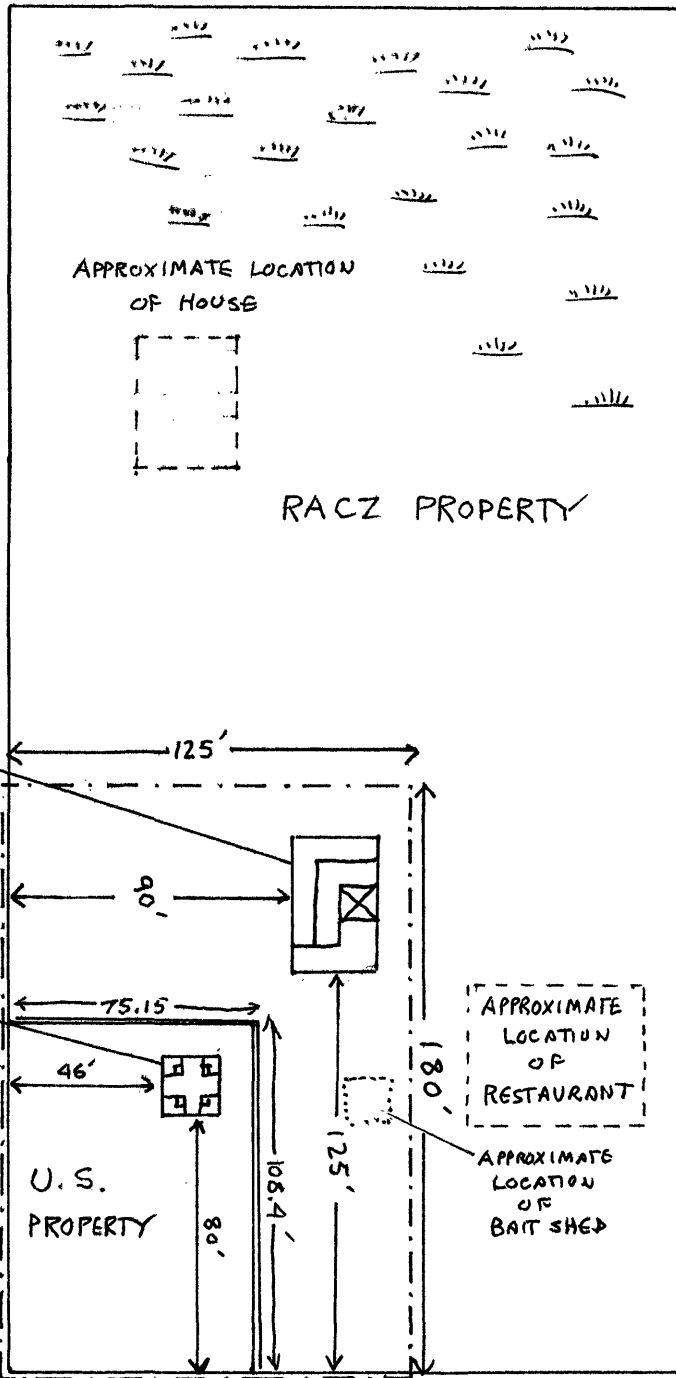
CEDAR CREEK

KENT COUNTY
SUSSEX COUNTY

MISPILLION INLET



MAP OF NOMINATED AREA



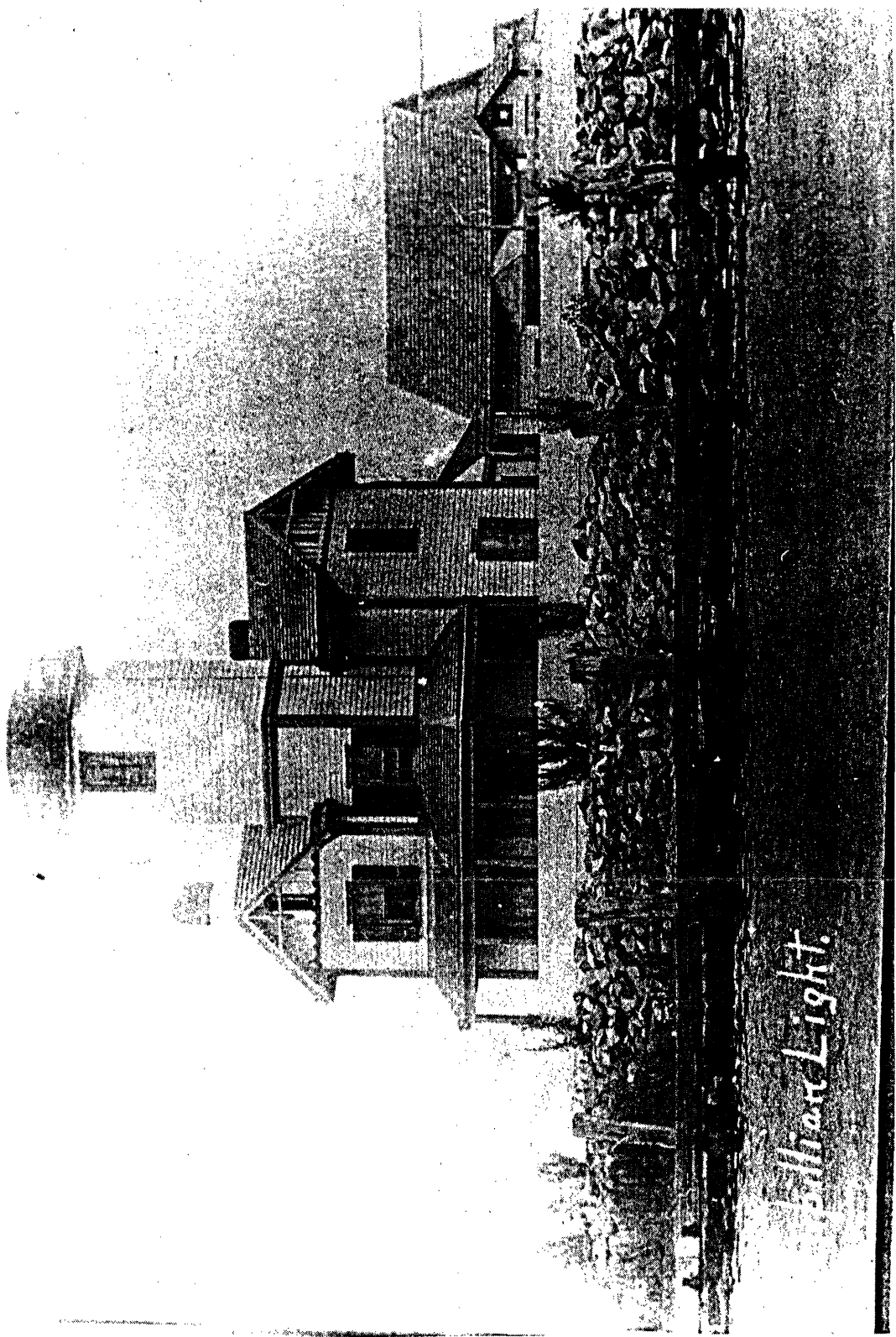
MISPILLION RIVER

COUNTY ROAD 203

--- DENOTES BOUNDARY OF NOMINATED AREA

1 INCH EQUALS 40 FEET

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH
OF
EARLY 20th CENTURY?



William Light.