Form 10-300 (July 1969)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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On the southern tip of Saint Simons Island, one of Georgia's "Golden Isles, the Lighthouse Keepers Building stands today essentially unaltered from its appearance when completed. It is a good example of mid-Victorian, Romantic Eclectic architecture. Directly adjacent to it, a lighthouse guards the entrance to Saint Simons Sound and Brunswick harbor, an important fishing port.

Plans for the Lighthouse and Keepers Building were "drawn under the direction of Bvt. Brig. Genl. O.M. Poe," in 1867. The construction contract dated November 20, 1868, was given to C.B. Cluskey, responsible for many outstanding buildings in Georgia some years earlier. Construction of the Keepers Building was begun approximately 25 yards north of the site of the original lighthouse, destroyed during the Civil War. Due to Cluskey's death during construction, the Lighthouse and Keepers Building were not completed for several years.

The 2-story brick structure was built to accommodate two lighthouse keepers and their families. (Local authorities report that it was the only brick dwelling in Glynn County prior to 1880.) It combines a Gothic Revival roof with an Italianate bracketed cornice and paired gable windows, enhanced by Italianate drip arches. A 1-story Italianate porch completes the main facade. On the north side, an outside stairway leads to a second story balcony. The first floor contains an 8-foot entrance hall running the length of the building; three medium sized rooms, each with one closet; one small room with closet and one bathroom. The second floor contains a small entrance hall; three medium sized rooms; one small room and one large bathroom. There is access to a large attic.



GNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as a	Appropriate)		
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REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Che	ck One or More as Appropri	ate)	
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lighthouse Keepers Building, now operated as a coastal area history museum, and the Lighthouse are popular reminders of Saint Simons maritime history and favorite attractions of the many visitors to Georgia's coast. Charles B. Cluskey, a notable figure in Classical Revival architecture in Georgia of previous years, was given the contract for construction of this good example of mid-Victorian, Romantic Eclectic architecture; his connection with the Keepers Building is most significant in itself.

The land on which the Lighthouse Keepers Building stands was included within Fort Saint Simons, built 1737, which with "Delegal's Fort at Sea Point" commanded the entrance to the harbor. These two forts played a vital role in the successful defense of the area during the English-Spanish conflicts of the mid-18th century. The first lighthouse at the site was completed circa 1810 and the contractor, James Gould, was appointed the first keeper by President James Madison. To prevent its use by Federal ships during the Civil War, the lighthouse station was blown up by Confederate soldiers Designs for a new lighthouse and keepers dwelling were drawn in 1867 "under direction of Bvt. Brig. Genl. O.M. Poe," Sherman's chief engineer during the Atlanta and Savannah campaigns of 1864. Construction of the present lighthouse and accompanying buildings were contracted in 1868 to C.B. Cluskey but completion was delayed for several years. According to U.S. Coast Guard records, the lighthouse (and presumably the dwelling "The light was exhibited for the first time also) was completed in 1872. on the night of September 1, 1872."

The contractor C.B. Cluskey is credited with the design and construction of several notable buildings in Georgia from 1830 to 1847. The Old Governor's Mansion in Milledgeville, built in 1838, is Cluskey's best known example of Classical Revival architecture. Other buildings credited to Cluskey are the Champion-McAlpin-Fowlkes House and the Sorrel-Weed House, Savannah, and the Medical College Building in Augusta. In 1848 Cluskey went to Washington, D.C. and submitted improvement plans for the U.S. Capitol, Executive Mansion and other federal buildings. None of his plans were carried out at that time; however, several of his suggestions were used in later renovations. Frederick Doveton Nichols assumed that Cluskey died before 1856 as mention was made in the U.S. Senate, August 1856 of "a memorial and papers" of C.B. Cluskey. His appearance again in 1868 as contractor for the Saint Simons Lighthouse and Keepers Building refutes that theory. Cluskey died on July 14, 1871, from an illness, probably (continued)

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Form 10-300a (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, SAINT SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS BUILDING

malaria, contracted at the construction site, accounting for the delay in completing the lighthouse project.

Automation of the lighthouse in 1964 made it unnecessary to retain a keeper there. More recently the structure housed an exploratory fishing and gear research station. On August 25, 1971, the Keepers Building was conveyed to the Board of Commissioners, Glynn County, by the U.S. government with the stipulation that the structure be used "as and for an historic monument, and for no other purpose." To that end, the Lighthouse Keepers Building is now operated by the Coastal Georgia Historical Society as a coastal area history museum and is open to the public on weekends. Many items of historic significance to the coastal area of Georgia are on display, and this picturesque old facility promises to be of ever increasing current interest to residents and visitors.



OMB Approval No. 1024-001

United States Department of the InteriorNational Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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AMENDMENT TO THE
ST. SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS' BUILDING
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

GLYNN COUNTY, GEORGIA

Purpose of Amendment

This amendment resolves certain ambiguities in the National Register nomination for the St. Simons Lighthouse Keepers' Building, Glynn County, Georgia. It clarifies the boundary and acreage of the nominated property. It updates the National Register documentation for subsequent preservation planning purposes. Finally, it requests a name change for the nominated property.

Background Information

On April 13, 1972, the "Saint Simons Lighthouse Keepers' Building" in Glynn County, Georgia, was listed to the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination included the Lighthouse Keepers' Building and approximately three and one-half acres of associated land. The nominated property was described by reference to a map attached to the National Register nomination form; this map showed the nominated property to be an irregularly shaped tract of land generally bounded to the north by the United States Post Office, to the east by 12th Street, to the west by a parking lot, and to the south by St. Simons Sound. In addition to the Lighthouse Keepers' Building, the nominated property included the lighthouse itself, an auxiliary building known as the oil house, and the site of the former lighthouse. However, these resources were not fully addressed in the National Register nomination form. Additionally, since the time of listing, another building known as the Davis House has been moved onto the nominated property, and erosion has continued to eat away at the southern boundary of the property. In light of the present interest in maritime preservation in general and lighthouse preservation in particular, it is appropriate to amend this National Register nomination to bring it up to date.

Buildings, Structures, and Sites on the Nominated Property

The property listed in the National Register in 1972 includes the following buildings, structures, and sites:

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ST. SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS' BUILDING

This building was described and its architectural and historical significance assessed in the 1972 National Register nomination form. Planned in 1867 and constructed between 1868 and 1872, the building is a two-story brick duplex residence. Eclectic in style, it features both Gothic Revival and Italianate architectural elements. It was built by Charles B. Cluskey, a noted 19th-century Georgia architect/builder, whose other documented works include the Governor's Mansion in Milledgeville and the old Medical College building in Augusta. Since Cluskey died during the construction of this building, it may be his last work. It also is distinguished by its Victorian Eclectic styling-most of Cluskey's works are in the Classical Revival styles. Since the building was built immediately after the Civil War, during a time when little construction was taking place in Georgia, it stands as one of a limited number of important historic buildings dating from this period in the state's history. It also is the most intact example in the state of a historic lighthouse keepers' residence. In 1979 a Historic Preservation Fund grant was used to help restore the building. Currently the Keepers' Building is owned by Glynn County and operated as a museum by the Coastal Georgia Historical Society.

ST. SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE

The lighthouse stands immediately behind (to the west) of the lighthouse keepers' building; until the 1950s it was attached to the dwelling by a small brick passageway. The lighthouse is approximately 100 feet tall (to be precise, the focal plane of its light is located 100 feet above ground level and 108 feet above mean sea level). In plan it takes the form of a tapering cylinder (a geometric form known historically as the "fustrum of a cone"), ranging in diameter from approximately twenty feet at the base to ten feet at the top. It is built of loadbearing brick masonry on a stone foundation. The shaft is punctured by several small windows with metal hood moldings which admit light and air into its interior; the interior features a spiral staircase. Near the top of the shaft, an exterior gallery or observation platform supported on metal brackets encircles the shaft. The lighthouse is surmounted by a metal-framed, glass-enclosed light room housing the light, lens, and other apparatus. The light room is capped by a metal roof and finial, the latter of which also serves as a lightning rod.

The lighthouse was designed in 1867 and constructed between 1868 and 1872. Its light was placed into service on September 1, 1872. In 1934 the light was converted to electricity. In 1959 the facility became fully automated. The lighthouse is still owned and operated by the U. S. Coast Guard.

The lighthouse is significant as an excellent intact example of a mid- to late 19th-century coastal lighthouse. Its overall form and design, and its construction materials and techniques, are typical of those used in coastal lighthouses of this period built by the United States government all along the eastern seaboard. Moreover, the lighthouse is one of only three major coastal lighthouses in Georgia (the second, Tybee Light, is

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located on the northern end of Tybee Island in Chatham County and is listed in the National Register as part of the Fort Screven Historic District; the third, on Sapelo Island, is an older, metal structure not currently listed in the National Register). The lighthouse was mentioned in both Sections 7 and 8 of the National Register nomination form for the Lighthouse Keepers' Building, and it was photographed. Its location was marked on the property map attached to the nomination form.

OIL HOUSE

The oil house is located immediately south of the lighthouse. It is a small, one-story, gable-roofed brick building, measuring nine by eleven feet in plan. Its only opening is a segmental-arched doorway in the east end of the building. It was built possibly as early as 1889 (official lighthouse records cite the construction of a new oil house as early as 1889 and on through 1892). This building provided weatherproof and fireproof storage for the oil which was used to fuel the light. The building was used to store oil until 1934 when the light was converted to electricity. Since that time it has been used for storage and other utilitarian purposes. Currently it serves as a gift shop.

The oil house is an unusual surviving example of a historic auxiliary building in a lighthouse complex. Its significance to the nominated property was confirmed in a letter from the Keeper of the National Register dated September 17, 1976.

SITE OF PREVIOUS LIGHTHOUSE

The existing lighthouse at St. Simons is the second to have been built at this location. The first St. Simons light, with its own complex of support buildings, was built ca. 1810. This lighthouse and its supporting buildings were destroyed by Confederate forces in 1862; its destruction was intended to thwart Union naval maneuvers near Brunswick. When the St. Simons Lighthouse Keepers' Building was listed in the National Register in the spring of 1972, the exact location of the former lighthouse was not known, although it was presumed to be on the nominated property. Shortly after listing, in the summer of 1972, test excavations under the direction of Dr. Lewis Larson, state archaeologist, determined the exact location of the former lighthouse and suggested the nature and extent of surviving subterranean features associated with it. The former lighthouse was located approximately 30 feet south of the existing lighthouse, between the existing lighthouse and St. Simons Sound. Subterranean remains associated with the lighthouse include a six-foot-thick, octagonal-shaped foundation constructed of "tabby" (an indigenous coastal form of concrete using sand, lime, and oyster shells) and red sandstone measuring approximately 25 feet in diameter. These materials and dimensions correspond to the 1807 written specifications for the earlier lighthouse. Also found was an assortment of both industrial and domestic artifacts which suggest that this earlier lighthouse was indeed accompanied by a lighthouse keepers residence. The test excavation was backfilled with clean sand and grassed over as a way of preserving it for future study. The site remains significant not only for confirming the location and containing the ruins of the earlier lighthouse but also for

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its potential to yield additional information about the earlier facility through subsequent and more extensive archaeological investigation.

THE DAVIS HOUSE

The Davis House is a modern, two-story, wood-framed, contemporary-style "beach" house. It was moved onto the nominated property late in 1985. The house is located to the southwest of the lighthouse and faces the parking area which defines the western boundary of the nominated property. The house provides administrative and archival space for the Coastal Georgia Historical Society which operates the historic lighthouse keepers' building as a museum. Although not historic, the Davis House has made it possible for the Coastal Georgia Historical Society to remove its administrative and archival operations from the historic lighthouse keepers building, which in turn has allowed that building to be operated as a true museum. The house also screens the lighthouse complex from new commercial development to the west.

BOAT HOUSE AND CISTERN

Historical documentation pertaining to the St. Simons lighthouse makes references to both a former boat house and a 6000-gallon underground cistern. Both of these structures are believed to have been lost to the sea. Since 1916, approximately 400 feet of land between the lighthouse and the sound has eroded away (see map). Both the boat house and the cistern are believed to have been located in the area which has eroded away. There are no known ruins of either structure.

Extent and Acreage of Property

According to the National Register nomination form and its accompanying map, property nominated with the St. Simons Lighthouse Keepers' Building in 1972 contained 3.593 acres of land, in two parcels, the larger (containing the Keepers' Building, the oil house, and the site of the former lighthouse) owned by Glynn County and the smaller (containing the lighthouse) owned by the U.S. government. This acreage consisted of the original four-acre tract purchased in 1804 by the U. S. government for the St. Simons lighthouse minus approximately one-half acre to the north of the current lighthouse complex, between it and Beach View Drive, which subsequently was subdivided for the construction of a U. S. Post Office. However, of the remaining three and one-half acres of land associated with the lighthouse, slightly less than one acre remains as dry land. The remainder of the property formerly associated with the lighthouse complex has been eroded away into St. Simons Sound (see map). The map submitted with this amendment shows the extent of dry land currently associated with the lighthouse complex. It is bounded by the rear lot line of the U. S. Post Office property to the north, the west side of 12th street to the east, the east edge of the parking area to the west, and the mean high water line of St. Simons Sound to the south. This tract of land contains all

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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known historic and archaeological resources associated with the St. Simons lighthouse complex.

Name Change

In light of the surviving historic and archaeological resources associated with this property, its historic name for National Register nomination purposes should be:

St. Simons Lighthouse and Lighthouse Keepers' Building

Classification

In light of the fact that the nominated property contains buildings, structures, and sites, it should be classified for National Register nomination purposes as:

District

Contributing buildings: 1 (Keepers' Building)
Noncontributing buildings: 1 (Davis House)

Contributing structures: 2 (lighthouse, oil house)

Noncontributing structures: 0

Contributing Sites: 1 (site of former lighthouse)

Noncontributing Sites: 0

Total contributing resources: 4
Total noncontributing resources: 1

Applicable National Register Criteria

Criteria A: For the role this lighthouse played in the history of maritime transportation in Georgia.

Criteria C: For the collection of intact historic buildings and structures which comprise a historic lighthouse complex.

Criteria D: For the demonstrated potential of the site to yield additional information about the location and use of buildings and structures associated with the former lighthouse at this location.

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Level of Significance

State

Areas of Significance

Architecture: For the architectural qualities of the historic buildings and structures on the property. The lighthouse, the lighthouse keepers' building, and the oil house represent unusual examples in Georgia of historic building types, styles, and methods and materials of construction that characterize 19th—century lighthouse complex design and construction along the east coast. The lighthouse is one of three major coastal lighthouses in Georgia; its associated buildings constitute one of only two known examples in the state of such a lighthouse complex.

Transportation: For the role that this lighthouse, and its predecessor, played in the history of ocean-going transportation in Georgia. The St. Simons light marks the entrance to Brunswick harbor, one of four major historic ocean harbors in Georgia (the others are Savannah, Darien, and St. Mary's). Since 1872 this light has been the principal visual beacon guiding sea vessels into and out of this major Georgia port city.

Archaeology: For the potential of the site to yield information about the former lighthouse at this location. The 1972 archaeological test excavation identified the site of the former lighthouse and revealed numerous industrial and domestic artifacts apparently associated with a former lighthouse keeper's complex, about which little is known. Additional archaeology at the site could provide additional information about the design and construction of the former lighthouse and the layout and use of its associated keeper's complex.

Period of Significance

1810 (date of construction of former lighthouse complex, representing by the site and subterranean ruins of the former lighthouse) through 1938 (50-year cut-off for a historic facility which has continued in operation up until the present)

Specific Dates

1810: construction of former lighthouse

1868-1872: construction of this lighthouse and keepers' building

1889: construction of oil house

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Amendment Form Prepared By

Richard Cloues, National Register Coordinator Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources 205 Butler Street, Suite 1462 Atlanta, Georgia 30334

404-656-2840

February 8, 1988

State/Federal Agency Certification

Elizabeth A. Lyon

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Georgia

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Date

Robert F. Crecco

U. S. Department of Transportation

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

ST. SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE AND LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS' BUILDING, GLYNN CO., GEORGIA Map showing extent of property listed in the National Register in 1972 (original name of listing: "Saint Simons Lighthouse Keepers' Building") Source: National Register nomination form North: As indicated Scale: As indicated Boundary of listed property: N. H. W. 1916' ST. SIMONS LIGHTHOUSE MEEPERS BUILDING VIEW

DRIVE

SIMONS ISLAND GA. GLYNN COUNTY



