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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Trinidad Head Light Station other names/site number Trinidad Head Light Station

MAY 7 1990

2. Location

street & number Trinidad Head city, town Trinidad state CA code CA county Humboldt code 023 zip code 95521

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal, building(s), district, site, structure, object, and counts for contributing and noncontributing resources.

Name of related multiple property listing: Light Stations of California. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Kathryn Swettini, California Office of Historic Preservation, Date: 11-5-90

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: Robert [unclear], U.S. Department of Transportation, Date: 7/19/91

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] determined not eligible for the National Register. [] removed from the National Register. [] other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water RelatedDomestic: Institutional Housing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water RelatedDomestic: Institutional Housing

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Lighthouse

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brickwalls BrickStuccoroof Wood Shakeother Weatherboard

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Trinidad Head Light Station is a small, compact station consisting of a small tower, a fog-signal building, and a 4-plex Keeper's residence. It is located on the southwestern slope of Trinidad Head--a 400' tall headland that forms the northern slope of Trinidad Harbor. It is located on a precipitous ledge carved out of the side of the rock at the 175' elevation. Sheer wall cliffs plunge almost straight down to the sea from the light station vantage. The fog-signal building (bell house) and lighthouse tower are original and their architectural integrity is nearly intact. The Keeper's residence is a modern structure built in 1969. Original buildings and structures no longer extant include the barn, Keeper's residence, landing (at Trinidad Harbor), and weight tower. The condition of the remaining buildings and structures is very good.

1. LIGHTHOUSE TOWER (1871)--CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

A four-sided pyramidal lighthouse tower built on a ledge 214' above the ocean. The structure is 25' high. Its one-story brick and cement base is surmounted by a glass and iron lantern room capped with a segmented conical iron roof. An external railed gallery encircles the lantern room on top of the tower's base. Brackets are found immediately under the top platform on four sides of the structure. Decorative masonry bands encompass the tower immediately under the brackets and, again, at the level of the door sill. A doorway is located on the east facade of the first level. It has no door frame but a segmented masonry arch is located above the doorway. A single pane window on the west facade looks out over the ocean below. The structure's architectural integrity is mostly intact with the exception of the removal of the original 4th order Fresnel lens.

2. FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (BELL HOUSE) (1900)--CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A small one-story frame building with horizontal wide planked wood siding (probably not original) and a peaked wood shingle roof. Two 6/6 double hung windows are located on the north and south sides. The original 5 panel cross door is located on the front (east) facade. The building is built atop a concrete pad on a narrow ledge on the side of the cliff, one flight down from the Keeper's residence. The interior of the building is of open-frame construction with exposed roof beams and trusses. The building was originally constructed as a "bell house" and contains the diagonal concrete supporting members used to position the bell at the outside of the building. Today, these support structures remain intact on the interior of the building, but deteriorating on the exterior. There is also a hole in the north side of the building that once connected the bell to the "weight tower" built on the concrete pad next to the north side of the building. The weight tower was a wooden skeleton derrick that contained the weights needed to power the clockwork mechanism of the bell's hammer. It is no longer extant. In 1947 the bell was replaced with more conventional compressed-air horns. It is possible to

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discern the former location of the horns on the building by observing the different types of wood used to patch up the hole when they were removed. A modern fog-signal is located outside the building today. The electrical equipment for this system is operated from inside the building. The architectural integrity of this building is nearly intact and the condition is very good. The original 4,000 lb bronze bell is on display in the town of Trinidad.

3. KEEPER'S RESIDENCE (1969)--NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A modern rectangular wood-frame 4-plex building containing side-by-side two-story townhouses. This building is non-contributing due to its recent construction and character.

The Trinidad Head Light Station contains one contributing structure, one contributing building and one non-contributing building.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Maritime History

Transportation

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1871-1940

Significant Dates

1871

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Trinidad Head Light Station meets the requirements for registration as defined in the multiple property submission "Light Stations in California." The station's significance is evaluated with respect to the historic context Maritime Transportation in California: 1842-1940. The station derives significance under Criteria A and C. Criteria A is satisfied by the association of the complex with California's critical reliance on maritime transportation and the aids that make navigation possible. Criteria C is met by the station's well-designed, original buildings remaining in an unaltered state. The lighthouse structure is the only pyramidal brick tower ever built in California. The existing fog-signal building is also the only "bell house" remaining in California.

The station fully meets registration requirements for its property type. It contains an intact lighthouse tower and an associated historical building (in this case, the fog-signal building). Both historical structures exhibit a high degree of architectural integrity. Original structures and buildings no longer extant include the landing, barn, original Keeper's quarters, and the weight tower.

The Trinidad Light Station serves as a monument to the federal government's efforts to make the Trinidad Headlands safe for maritime transportation. The 400' island-like headlands is the most prominent and visible landform on the California coast north of Cape Mendocino. The light station also serves as an entrance beacon to Trinidad Harbor-- at one time a bustling harbor home to numerous steam schooners and sailing vessels. Although the lighthouse tower dates from 1871, the federal government had purchased the land five years before in 1866. As early as 1851 federal and local officials had been agitating Congress for a lighthouse at this location. The harbor traffic in mining equipment, lumber, and agricultural products served to make Trinidad one of the busiest ports in California in the decades following statehood. The area was especially dependent on maritime transportation prior to the development of railroads or a connecting roadway network. Today, the harbor and lighthouse serve mostly the needs of the commercial fishing fleet that frequents the area.

The particular significance of the individual structures and buildings on the site are as follows:

LIGHTHOUSE TOWER (1871)

The lighthouse tower is of significance as the

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principal element of the light station complex. The structure fully meets registration requirements for its property type; it is a substantial structure built to contain a Fresnel lens (in this case 4th order) and its architectural integrity is complete (or nearly so). The lighthouse is similar to other California lighthouses of the time, but it is unique in some ways as well. Its short, squat shape is representative of the many California lighthouses built on the sides of high bluffs. Built at the 175' level on the side of the headlands, it is one of the highest lighthouses in the state. Its specific design is completely unique, however. It remains the only one-story, brick, pyramidal lighthouse ever built in California. The architectural integrity of the structure is nearly complete. The original window has been replaced with a single large glass panel, and the Fresnel lens has been removed. Other than that, however, the structure is intact and is in very good condition.

The town of Trinidad has erected a replica of the lighthouse in a park overlooking the harbor. The original Fresnel lens was installed in the replica in 1948 after it was superceded by a modern refracting lens.

FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING/BELL HOUSE (1900)

The fog-signal building is significant as a contributing element of the light station complex. It also is the only remaining bell house in California. It was built in 1900 replacing a less substantial structure built two years previously. The 4,000 lb bronze bell was hung from a concrete frame at the end of the bell house. The timing of the bell hammer was controlled by a clockwork mechanism powered by weights. A "weight tower" was erected next to the bell house in 1900 after the original weights had broken loose and fallen irretrievably down the cliff. Although the weight tower is no longer extant, a hole can be seen in the present fog-signal building where the clockwork mechanism connected with the bell hammer. The concrete brace beams used to support the bell are found to the west of the building and in the interior of the building. Those located in the interior are intact though on the outside they are deteriorating. The bell was replaced in 1947 with modern compressed-air horns. It then became known as the "fog-signal building." Today the building contains the electrical operation equipment for the modern fog-signal installed outside. The original bell has been hung outside next to the lighthouse replica in Trinidad Park.

Since its establishment in 1871 this station has had continued importance and significance. Significance has not been shown to be exceptional in the last fifty years, however, although the lighthouse continues to play a role in maritime transportation and navigation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

U.S. Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, various dates.
Gibbs, Jim. West Coast Lighthouses. Seattle: 1974.
Holland, F. Ross. America's Lighthouses Their Illustrated History Since 1716.
Brattleboro: 1972.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

National Archives Washington, D.C.
RG26

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 20 acres

UTM References

A

1	0	4	0	3	3	0	0	4	5	4	5	5	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

1	0	4	0	3	4	2	0	4	5	4	4	8	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

1	0	4	0	3	6	8	0	4	5	4	5	1	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 37, Section 26, T. 8W, R. 1W, N.M.
Executive Order September 10, 1902.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Trinidad Head Light Station embraces the buildings and immediate setting historically associated with the complex.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack Bookwalter

organization Sonoma State University date November 20, 1989

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Trinidad, CA
Humboldt County

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TRINIDAD HEAD
SKETCH MAP
NOT TO SCALE

