

PH0352721

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

MAR 25 1976

DATE ENTERED

SEP 29 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

\*

Indian River Life Saving Service Station

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

On State Route 14, north of Indian River NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bethany Beach

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

One

STATE

Delaware

CODE

10

COUNTY

Sussex

CODE

002

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

 DISTRICT  
 BUILDING(S)  
 STRUCTURE  
 SITE  
 OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC  
 PRIVATE  
 BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS  
 BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

 OCCUPIED  
 UNOCCUPIED  
 WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
 YES: RESTRICTED  
 YES: UNRESTRICTED  
 NO

## PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE  
 COMMERCIAL  
 EDUCATIONAL  
 ENTERTAINMENT  
 GOVERNMENT  
 INDUSTRIAL  
 MILITARY  
 MUSEUM  
 PARK  
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 RELIGIOUS  
 SCIENTIFIC  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of Delaware, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Dover

VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds for Sussex County

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Court House, The Circle

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

STATE

Delaware

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Delaware Historic Sites &amp; Buildings

DATE

1976

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Indian River Life Saving Station is one of a series of such stations designed by the Federal government in 1874, the plans for which have survived. The original portion is a board-and-batten frame structure, one-and-a-half-stories high with wide overhanging eaves. A shed-roofed wing on the back and a porch on the front have obscured much of the original ornate bracketing of the roof. A clipped gable, shown on the 1874 plans, is not present. The lookout cupola on the roof, present on the building, does not appear in the plans.

A mile to the south stood a separate boat house. There were originally five outbuildings on the main station: a feed house, a barn, a stable, a meat house, and a privy. At least once during its history, the station has been moved back from the encroaching surf. Its last major encounter with the elements occurred on Ash Wednesday 1962, when a severe storm left it buried up to its first-floor windows in sand.

The first floor contained a boat room and a mess room in the original portion, with offices and communications rooms added later. Upstairs were the keeper's room and the crew's bunk room.

The station stands on pilings between the highway and the dune line, near its original site. The essential elements of the building's environment have not been altered by the fact that the building has been moved back from the surf.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)                |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |   |

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1875-1882

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Indian River Life Saving Station is a relic of the days when the Delaware coast was a notorious graveyard of ships. It stands near the site of the old Indian River inlet, scene of many shipwrecks from colonial times forward. The building is one of the oldest surviving lifeboat stations on the coast.

Ships approaching Delaware Bay were forced to follow a course dangerously close to the offshore shoals south of Cape Henlopen; for this reason, the Delaware coast claimed a large number of ships in storms. An early move to improve the situation was the erection of the first Cape Henlopen lighthouse by Philadelphia merchants in 1765. The actual saving of lives was left to private enterprise. Farmers along the shore would rally to shipwrecks to scavenge whatever washed ashore and to rescue survivors. The United States Life Saving Service, now a part of the Coast Guard, eventually was established to provide regular rescue services on the beaches. Patrols would walk the beach or scan the shore from lookout towers. If a ship in distress were sighted, a lifeboat would put out from the station or a subsidiary boat house.

The Life Saving Service was created in 1872, to supplant the various private organizations that had existed along the coasts since the eighteenth century. The service advertised for bids for the station in 1875, but according to Coast Guard records it was not commissioned until 1880.

According to one account, the Indian River Station opened in 1875, under the command of Captain Washington Vickers. Indian River was the southern station in a series of four that extended to Lewes. By 1882, the four stations were in operation with constant patrols.

After the 1962 March storm, it was vacated by the Coast Guard crew, who moved to temporary facilities. In 1964, a new station on another site was opened. The property has since served as a state maintenance facility.

Although shipboard wireless equipment made the walking patrols obsolete, surf-boats continued to be the principal rescue craft until after World War II. They still remain, but larger cutters and aircraft provide most of the rescue services.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lenik, Edward J. "The Truro Halfway House, Cape Cod, Massachusetts," Historical Archaeology 1972, pp. 77-86.  
 National Archives and Records Service, record group 26.  
 Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L. J. Richards Company, 1888.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |         |       |          |       |   |      |         |  |          |  |
|---|------|---------|-------|----------|-------|---|------|---------|--|----------|--|
| A | 1,8  | 4,9,4   | 1,2,5 | 4,2,7,5  | 9,1,0 | B |      |         |  |          |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING |       | NORTHING |       |   | ZONE | EASTING |  | NORTHING |  |
| C |      |         |       |          |       | D |      |         |  |          |  |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Edward F. Heite, Historic Registrar

ORGANIZATION

Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

302-678-4564

CITY OR TOWN

Dover

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Lauren [Signature]*

TITLE: Director, Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

3/22/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Way [Signature]*  
*[Signature]*

DATE

9/29/76

ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

9/29/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY     |         |
| RECEIVED AUG 20 1976 |         |
| DATE ENTERED         | 8/23/76 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

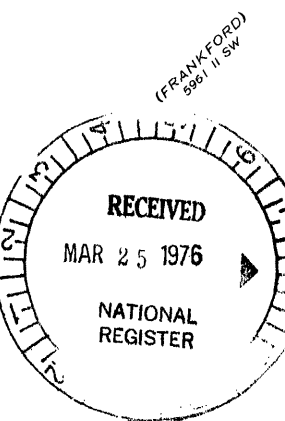
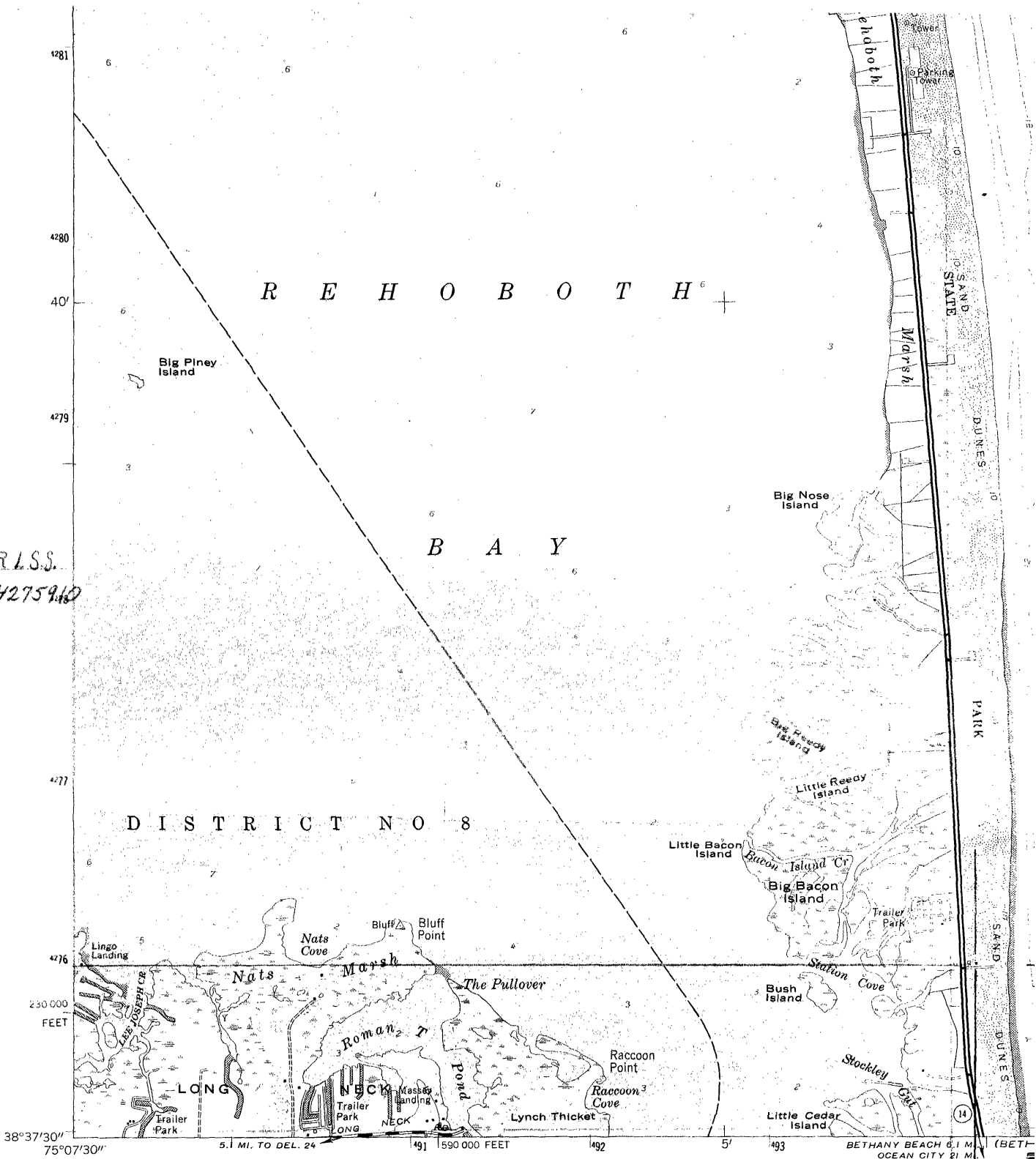
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The original outbuildings do not survive on the property. Modern service buildings now stand nearby, as part of a park maintenance facility.

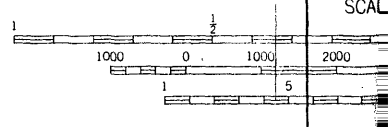
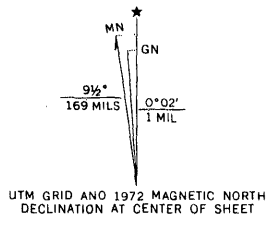
CHRONOLOGY:

- 1872: Life-Saving Service established by Congress.
- 1874: Plans drawn.
  
- 1875: Federal Government advertised for bids.
- 1875: According to one contemporary source, Indian River Station was manned at this time.
  
- 1880: Coast Guard records state the station was commissioned in this year.
- 1882: The full complement of four stations was operational.
- 1885: Date of drawings for Cape Henlopen and Indian River Stations, probably for alterations.
  
- 1962: Storm caused abandonment of stations.
- 1964: New station built by Coast Guard.

INDIAN RIVER L.S.S.  
8/494125/4275910



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE  
Culture and drainage in part compiled by Corps of Engineers, Dept. of the Army, from aerial photographs taken 1943  
Topography by planetable surveys (1954)  
Hydrography from USC&GS chart 1219, dated 1954  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Delaware coordinate system  
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, line 18, shown in blue



Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1972. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

CONTOUR DATUM IS SOUNDING  
DEPTH CURVES AND SHORELINE SHOWS REPRESENTS THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE AND 4 FEET  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC