

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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NAME: Historic: Conanicut Island Lighthouse

LOCATION: 64 North Bay View Avenue  
Jamestown, RI  
Newport County

**CLASSIFICATION**

Category - building(s)

Ownership - private

Status - occupied

Accessible - yes, restricted

Present Use - private residence

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Helen C. Smith

175 West 13th Street, Apt. B

New York, New York 10011

**LOCATION OF DEEDS**

Registry of Deeds

Jamestown Town Hall

71 Narragansett Avenue

Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

none

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DESCRIPTION

Condition - fair / altered / original site

Built in 1886 on a 3/4 acre site at the north end of Conanicut (Jamestown) Island, the Conanicut Island Lighthouse consists of a three-story, square light tower attached to the northeast corner of a two-story keeper's dwelling. The red clapboard, wood frame dwelling, built in the Gothic Revival style, features a steeply pitched cross-gable roof outlined in vergeboard trim; wide, open eaves; single and triple sash clustered windows topped with drip moulding crowns; and a corner entry porch. The roof of the clapboarded light tower, with its wide bracketed eaves, is now a flat platform as the lantern was removed in 1933. The iron balustrade which surrounded the lantern remains in place at the top of the tower. The only significant change made to the exterior of the dwelling section of the lighthouse involves the addition of a small one-story shed-roofed sun room on the northeast corner. Although the exterior needs painting, the building is in good condition.

Inside, a kitchen, living room, dining room, and sunroom are found on the first floor. An open circular stairway leads to three second-floor bedrooms. Access to the tower is provided by a wooden stairway which begins in a small landing off the kitchen. With the exception of the added sun room, few interior changes have been made and nearly all of the original wall finishes, flooring, doors, windows and trim are still intact.

Three outbuildings are located to the west of the lighthouse. A small one-and-a-half-story clapboarded barn, built in 1897, now unpainted and in poor condition, stands at the southeast corner of the property. A brick oil house and a brick fog signal house, built respectively in 1901 and 1907, sit side by side nearer to the dwelling. The oil house is unused, while the fog signal house has been converted to a small guest cottage. Some of the bricks of these two buildings are damaged, and both are in only fair condition.

East of the tower on a separate parcel of land is a concrete foundation pier for a steel skeletal tower. Its automatic beacon replaced the original light in 1933 but the tower was taken down in 1984, and the light no longer operates.

SIGNIFICANCE

Period: 1880-1899

Specific Dates: 1886

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Conanicut Island Light, which consists of an 1886 wood frame keeper's cottage with an attached light tower, is significant as the only surviving lighthouse in Rhode Island to be built in the Gothic Revival Style. Although another lighthouse of the same design was constructed in Wickford Harbor four years earlier, it no longer stands. Conanicut Island Light is also significant for its role in the state's maritime history. Situated on a point that marks the division of the east and west passages of Narragansett Bay, the light served primarily to guide southbound traffic from the Providence River and Greenwich Bay en route to Newport and the Atlantic Ocean.

The light was first lit on April 1, 1886. Originally, the station was equipped with a fog bell but it was replaced in 1900 by a blow siren that sounded a continuous blast. Seven years later, a steam driven compressed air fog signal building was built to house the horn's compressors. Two other buildings were also constructed on the grounds, an 1897 barn and a 1901 brick oil house.

In 1933 the lantern and lens were removed from the top of the light tower and a steel skeletal tower with an automatic beacon was built a short distance to the east of the lighthouse. After forty-seven years of service, the lighthouse, the three outbuildings and all of the land except for a small parcel surrounding the new steel tower were sold. Since 1933 the lighthouse has been used as a summer residence.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: 3/4 acre  
Quadrangle name: Prudence Island, RI  
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000  
UTM References: A 19 302190 4604930

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property occupies all of lot 299, Jamestown Town Assessor's Plat #1; this boundary includes the entire resource.

Level of Significance: State  
SHPO Certification:

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

*David C. Williamson*

The period of significance extends from 1886, the date of construction, to 1933, when the last of a series of significant alterations was made to the light.