



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 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 the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Mark R. Edwards  
Signature of certifying official

7-17-97  
Date

Mark R. Edwards  
State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

McIntosh

8/26/97

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet:

for

Signature, Keeper of the National Register

Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

TRANSPORTATION: water-related

### Current Functions:

WORK IN PROGRESS

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

NO STYLE

### Materials:

foundation	brick
walls	brick; stucco
roof	N/A
other	metal (iron)

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Sapelo Island Lighthouse is one of five historic lighthouses remaining in Georgia. It is located at the southern end of Sapelo Island, one of Georgia's major coastal barrier islands. Immediately south of Sapelo Island is Doboy Sound and the mouth of the Altamaha River. The Altamaha is the largest river on Georgia's coastal plain; some 90 miles inland, the river is formed by the confluence of the Ocmulgee and the Oconee rivers, each of which drains a major basin in Georgia's upland. The Altamaha served as a major water transportation route to the middle of the state from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. The small city of Darien, located approximately 10 miles inland (west) of Sapelo Island, was the major port city for the Altamaha River. Cotton, rice, timber, and naval stores were the principal commodities shipped through the port of Darien.

Sapelo Island, like Georgia's other barrier islands and like the coastal mainland itself, is low and relatively flat, with extensive marshes. The south end of the island, like the Georgia coastline generally, is permeated by a network of tidal creeks and passages. An approximately 200-acre area historically known as the 'lighthouse tract' is actually a distinct island separated from the rest of Sapelo Island by two tidal creeks and bordered to the southwest by Doboy Sound. Much of this small island is marsh; the highest ground is approximately 20 feet above mean sea level. It is on this small island tract of land that the Sapelo Island Lighthouse stands, since 1820, accompanied by the remains of its auxiliary structures, an accompanying range beacon, and other historic sites.

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The Sapelo Island Lighthouse, built c.1820, stands near the southwest edge of the lighthouse island. It is a load-bearing brick structure, in the form of a simple tapered cylinder, 65 feet tall, approximately 30 feet in diameter at the base and 12 feet in diameter at the top. The brick walls are several feet thick at the bottom and narrow to two feet thick at the top. They stand on deep brick foundations in the sandy island soil. The walls are punctuated by several segmentally arched window and doorway openings; the windows themselves, which appear to have been multi-paned double-hung sash, no longer exist. The exterior brick surface of the tower is stuccoed; when this stucco was applied is not well documented, although it may have been as recently as the mid-20th century. Historically, the tower was painted, perhaps directly on the bricks, with broad alternating horizontal bands of red and white. The top of the brick tower is capped by a stone platform resting on brick arches. On this platform is a polygonal cast-iron lantern with cupola which historically housed the light. The light itself no longer exists. Circular wooden stairs occupy the hollow core of the lighthouse tower; these stairs today are in an extreme state of disrepair. Contract specifications for the lighthouse's construction still exist and confirm that the overall appearance of the lighthouse structure today is essentially the same as when it was built c.1820.

Adjacent to the lighthouse are the standing ruins of the c.1890 oil house. This freestanding structure, which housed fuel for the light, was a small, nine-by-eleven foot, one-story load-bearing brick structure with a gabled roof and a single doorway. It is described in detail in its original contract specifications, which still exist. Today, all that remains of the oil house are its four brick walls.

Just east of the oil house is a brick cistern, eleven feet in diameter, partially underground, covered by a shallow masonry dome. Its exact date of construction is unknown, although it is presumed to have been built to store fresh water for the lighthouse keeper's house.

Approximately 600 feet east of the lighthouse is the historic range beacon. Built c.1877, it is a metal structure consisting of a two-level (roughly two-story) iron tower topped by an enclosed metal lantern with a pyramidal roof capped by a metal finial. The four main corner columns of the tower are of cast iron, shaped in the form of elongated fluted columns with flared capitals. Iron rods in tension provide cross-bracing. Cast-iron filigree ornaments the base of the lantern. Due to encroachment by the ocean, the structure has been moved several times. The overall structure is in poor condition.

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Also evident on the lighthouse island tract are the footings for a 1905 metal lighthouse (dismantled and moved away), the various dwelling sites on the lighthouse island and sites of their associated outbuildings, and sites or ruins of other outbuildings associated with the lighthouse operations. Many of these sites are documented through extensive historic photographs made during the active lighthouse era. The most visible of these remains are a granite-and-concrete foundation outline of the Spanish American War fortification from 1898 east of the cistern, approximately 150 yards from the lighthouse itself. Historical records indicate that a Civil War encampment and battery were constructed on the lighthouse island, although their exact location is unknown.

During the historical period, the lighthouse island was not connected to the main Sapelo Island. Access to the lighthouse island was by water only. Today, the lighthouse island is connected to Sapelo Island proper by a vehicular and pedestrian causeway, created presumably after the 1950 purchase of the lighthouse island by R. J. Reynolds, Jr.

Plans are underway to restore the lighthouse, including rebuilding the stairs, repairing the exterior, and repainting the stripes.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**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):**     N/A

A     B     C     D     E     F     G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

ARCHITECTURE  
TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance:**

1820-1933

**Significant Dates:**

1820, 1898, 1905, 1933

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Lewis, Winslow (architect)

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**Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:**

**Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Sapelo Island Lighthouse is one of five extant historic coastal lighthouses in Georgia. A total of 15 coastal lighthouses were built in Georgia; some were replacement structures, others have been removed, leaving only five today. Built c.1820, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse also is the oldest extant coastal lighthouse in Georgia. It is significant in the areas of architecture and transportation history.

In terms of its architecture, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse is an excellent example, and the oldest one in Georgia, of a common traditional form of lighthouse architecture: the tall, narrow, tapered cylindrical tower with the lantern for the light at the top. Three of Georgia's five extant historic lighthouses feature this characteristic form (a fourth, Cockspar Island, is so short that it cannot be classified as a 'tall tower'). Its simple geometric form, solid smooth exterior surface, segmentally arched window and doorway openings, circular stairs, and lantern structure are the distinctive characteristics of this form of historic lighthouse. It was designed by Winslow Lewis, an accomplished maritime engineer who designed and built other lighthouses for the U.S. government during the early 19th century; this is one of his few remaining works from the 1820s. The lighthouse structure also exemplifies the use of brick masonry in its construction and represents brick masonry craftsmanship and construction practices prevalent in the early 19th century; brick was used for the foundations, for the solid load-bearing walls, and for the arched top platform. The quality of construction is evidenced by the fact that the lighthouse has stood since 1820, withstanding the onslaughts of numerous coastal storms and hurricanes along with the effects of strong summer sun, and even withstood a severe encroachment by the ocean following the 1898 coastal hurricane which very nearly undermined the structure. Like many tall-tower lighthouses, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse also is an excellent combination of two of the six major types of historic aids to navigation: a 'manned lighthouse,' regularly operated and tended to by a permanent resident keeper; and a 'daymark,' a constructed landmark, with its tall, narrow form standing out on the low and relatively flat Georgia coastline, making it a ready visual reference for maritime navigation.

Also significant architecturally is the c.1877 range beacon associated with the Sapelo Island Lighthouse. It is the only known extant example in Georgia of this type of major aid to navigation. It is

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built entirely of iron, with evident characteristics of this type of historic structure: a open truss-like metal tower, with distinct compression and tension elements, supporting an enclosed lantern structure. The otherwise utilitarian design is highlighted by ornamental detailing in the fluted columns, the flared column capitals, and the applied filigree; this kind of ornamentation of engineering structures was typical of late 19th century design. The only comparable structures in Georgia are metal-truss bridges and elevated water tanks; none is known to predate this range light, making it, quite possibly, the oldest cast-iron open-truss structure in the state.

In terms of transportation, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse (including the companion range beacon) is significant for the major role it played in maritime navigation. Starting in the late 18th century, and continuing into the early 20th century, the small city of Darien was a major port on the coast of Georgia, in some ways rivaling Savannah to the north and Brunswick to the south. Located at the mouth of the Altamaha River, the largest river on Georgia's coastal plain, some ten miles inland from the coastal islands, the port of Darien served as a transshipping point for enormous quantities of agricultural produce, mostly rice and cotton, along with vast amounts of timber and naval stores from the vast south Georgia forests. During the late 19th century, the sawmills and lumber yards in and around Darien were among the largest in the world; yellow pine from Georgia was shipped from Darien to ports up and down the eastern seaboard and literally around the globe. The Sapelo Island Lighthouse facilitated this maritime transport by clearly marking the location of the major coastal entry to the port of Darien both by day (by its landmark shape) and by night (by its brilliant light). It was the only lighthouse providing this important aid to navigation for the port of Darien throughout much of the port's history. Deactivated after being damaged by the hurricane of 1898, and superseded functionally by a taller metal-tower lighthouse further inland on the lighthouse island in 1905 (which was dismantled after 1933), the c.1820 tower continued to function as a daymark. Officially, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse complex in its entirety was deactivated and abandoned as a public aid to navigation in 1933, with the decline in shipping from the port of Darien. Unofficially, however, the c.1820 lighthouse tower continues to function as a navigational landmark even today.

Although not documented to National Register standards, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse played a significant role in local social history and recreation because the lighthouse and the now-gone keeper's houses and surrounding land served as the venue for many local social outings during the 1880s and later, as reported by the local newspaper. Due

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to its remoteness and the hospitality of the keeper and his family, the lighthouse island was a favorite place for Sunday afternoon parties and picnics. It remained a special place for local residents and their guests to visit as long as it was operated as a lighthouse and had a keeper and his family living there.

The lighthouse tract may also be significant in terms of historic archaeology, although this potential has not been documented to National Register standards. Many physical remains of former buildings and structures are observable, such as the 1905 lighthouse footings and the granite-and-concrete foundation outline of the Spanish-American War fortification. Historic photographs, construction and contract documents, and newspaper articles document buildings and structures which once existed on the lighthouse island but which now are gone, including the lighthouse keepers' residences and related support buildings. Military records indicate that a Civil War encampment and battery were established on the island. Additionally, a small-scale archaeological study was conducted by Dr. Morgan Ray Crook in January, 1997, to investigate the grounds in the immediate vicinity of the c.1820 lighthouse in preparation for restoration of the lighthouse and its oil house, and this study recommended larger-scale archaeological investigations, given the archeological potential of the site. Because of its continuous use for more than a century and a half as a lighthouse complex, and because of its relatively undisturbed nature since deactivation of the light, the lighthouse island likely has a high potential for yielding significant information through archaeological investigation.

The Sapelo Island Lighthouse is the last of Georgia's five remaining historic lighthouses to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

**National Register Criteria**

The Sapelo Island Lighthouse meets National Register Criterion A for its direct associations with historic maritime transportation. As a major aid to navigation, the Sapelo Island Lighthouse protected and enhanced shipping from the port of Darien, one of Georgia's largest and most active coastal ports for agricultural produce and the timber industry from the late 18th century through the early 20th century. It also is significant in terms of the maritime transportation history of Georgia as one of a string of lighthouses built and managed by the U.S. government in the early 19th century along the Atlantic seaboard. It is the oldest of the five remaining historic lighthouses in Georgia.

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The Sapelo Island Lighthouse meets National Register Criterion C as an excellent and early representative example of a major type of an aid to navigation and a common but characteristic form of lighthouse, the tapered conical tower. The associated range beacon is a unique structure in Georgia and quite possibly the oldest extant example of an open-truss, cast-iron structure in the state.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

N/A

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance runs from the building of the lighthouse in 1820 until the deactivation of the entire site by the U.S. Government in 1933.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

Contributing resources include three extant historic structures (the lighthouse, the range beacon, and the cistern) and three known historic sites (the ruins of the oil house, the footings from the 1905 lighthouse, and the Spanish-American War fortification).

The noncontributing resources include one structure, the causeway, built c.1950.

Other historic resources are most likely present on the nominated property, although not documented to National Register standards. These would be archaeological sites such as the various keepers' houses, other lighthouse support structures, related activity areas, and the reported Civil War encampment/battery.

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**Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)**

(NOTE: The following is from an article entitled 'History of the Sapelo Island Lighthouse,' by Buddy Sullivan, with additional information added [in brackets] by the state historic preservation office. The original article appeared in 'Sapelo Soundings', a newsletter, Winter, 1996, as well as other publications.)

Lighthouse history on Sapelo Island goes back some 175 years when the existing brick tower, long abandoned, was first built to serve the active seaport of Darien nearby.

The tall, brick tower off the south end of the island is Sapelo's sentinel of the sea. It serves as a silent monument to the former glory days of water-borne commerce in the region when maritime activity was in flower along the length of coastal Georgia. Shipping from ports along the U.S. eastern seaboard relied on shore bound beacons, navigational aids such as the Sapelo lighthouse, as they transited the often treacherous shallow estuaries of tidewater Georgia, or threaded their way along the inland waterway between the barrier sea islands bounded by salt marshes, tidal mud flats and the hidden shoals guarding the approaches to the sounds.

Inactive since 1905, the Sapelo light has been designated for restoration by the State of Georgia in the future. It is situated on land within the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, (SINERR), thus when refurbished it will become an integral part of public interpretation on SINERR-led tours of the island. Plans call for the light to have new cypress wood stairs constructed inside the tower to allow access to the iron lantern above, which will provide panoramic views of the surrounding Doboy Sound estuary. The light will also be repainted in its postbellum 1800s colors, which featured wide, alternating red and white horizontal bands from bottom to top.

The small seaport of Darien, sixty miles south of Savannah, became a shipping center of importance during the first two decades of the nineteenth century due to its ideal position at the mouth of the Altamaha River, which flowed to the coast from the interior of Georgia. Large shipments of Sea Island cotton as well as inland grown cotton, along with locally cultivated rice from the local tidewater plantations, were exported from Darien in increasing numbers of ships calling on the port. Later in the 19th century enormous quantities of timber and naval stores were shipped from this port.

In 1808 five acres of land owned by Thomas Spalding off the south end of Sapelo Island proper were ceded to the United States government for

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the purpose of establishing a lighthouse to guide mariners into the local port. A deed, dated July 15, 1816, shows that for the sum of one dollar, Spalding sold the five acres to the Treasury Department's Lighthouse Establishment.

A U.S. government contract with Winslow Lewis of Boston on September 14, 1819 called for the construction of a 65-foot brick tower topped by a 15-foot iron lantern containing 16-inch reflectors to Lewis's specifications. The contract stated:

The Tower to be built of stone or hard brick; the form round, the foundation to be sunk as deep as may be necessary to make the whole fabric secure; to be laid in a good lime mortar. The height of the tower to be sixty-five feet from the surface of the ground. The diameter of the base to be twenty-five feet and that of the top twelve feet...

An adjoining lighthouse keeper's dwelling was also a part of the contract. The contracted cost of the project was \$14,500. Record Group 26 (U.S. Coast Guard Records) of the National Archives has a copy of the original contract for the construction of the Sapelo lighthouse by Winslow Lewis. Dated January 13, 1820, this contract states, in part:

Winslow Lewis agrees and is engaged to fit up and light the lantern on the Light House at Sapelo Island...with fifteen of the Patent Lamps and reflectors, each sixteen inches, fitted on a triangular revolving iron frame...

In 1822, the federal government constructed a wooden range beacon in the marsh flats on the north end of Wolf Island across Doboy Sound from Sapelo light. W.R. McIntosh, Superintendent of the Port of Darien, advertised in the April 19, 1819 edition of the Darien Gazette for bids to construct the Wolf Island beacon-lighthouse. The building was to be 55 feet in height "fifteen feet of which will be a basement story at right angles with the base, the remaining forty feet to be a pyramid terminating with a point at the top." The Wolf Island beacon was destroyed by the Confederates during the War Between the States, was rebuilt in 1868 and operated until it was damaged beyond repair in the 1898 hurricane.

Alexander Hazzard was appointed head keeper of the Sapelo lighthouse in 1853 at a salary of \$600 per year. A fourth order Fresnel lens was installed atop the tower in 1854. Hazzard served as light keeper until early 1862 when the light was abandoned by retreating Confederate forces stationed on Sapelo Island. The Confederates removed the Fresnel lens and destroyed the reflector system, but left the rest of

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the facility intact. It was repaired and reactivated by the U. S. Lighthouse Service in 1868. The Lighthouse Board's Annual Report for 1868 noted that the Sapelo station was `...re-established, and was [relighted for the first time on the evening of April 15, 1868. The keeper's dwelling has been almost entirely rebuilt, except the walls...New lantern and apparatus placed in tower...steps largely renewed...'

The Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board for 1869 noted of Sapelo that `the revolving machinery has been repaired on the lantern and some small repairs were made to the parapet around the lantern...the station is in generally good condition.' It was at this time that the tower was painted with wide, alternating red and white horizontal bands. In 1877, a cast iron range , although slightly moved from its original location. It was constructed 660 feet east of the main tower. This beacon still stands today. This beacon later served as a Coast Guard observation post against the German submarine threat during World War II.

A bar pilot's station operated from the lighthouse from about 1870 on. Pilots would put out to the Dobby bar and guide shipping traffic into the harbor to load cargoes of timber and lumber processed at the numerous sawmills around Darien and Dobby.

A local tradition began in 1873 when Irish-born James Cromley, at a salary of \$600 per annum, was appointed as keeper of the light, being the first of three [members] of his family to serve in that capacity: James (until his death in 1889), then son William G. Cromley (1859-1940) from 1890 until 1900, and then James Cromley, Jr., [1856-1940, another son] who served as head keeper beginning March 5, 1900 with [his brother] Daniel Cromley serving as assistant keeper. These two gentlemen were, according to records of the District Inspector for the U. S. Lighthouse Board, Sixth U.S. Naval District, on duty when the new steel lighthouse tower began operations in 1905. Robert H. Cromley, [another brother], became assistant keeper in 1912 and later served as head keeper for many years. [Robert was the only one of the four Cromley brothers to marry and have a family.]

In 1882, the Lighthouse Board's Annual Report noted that `at Sapelo main light and beacon, the front light was moved some distance seaward, which increased the efficiency of the range by making it more sensitive. Many repairs were made to the buildings.'

A severe hurricane and tidal wave in October 1898 resulted in the foundations of the Sapelo light being seriously undermined. For several hours the tide covered the lower 18 feet of the tower as much

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of Sapelo Island was under water. The erosion and gradual encroachment of the sea on the south end of Sapelo Island made the tower unsafe, according to the District Inspector, who recommended either extensive (and expensive) repairs or a new tower.

The Lighthouse Board's Annual Report for 1902 indicates that the keeper's residence was torn down and a portion of it was utilized to stabilize the foundations of the brick tower. This effort at stabilization was not successful and, later in 1902, surveys were conducted to determine the siting for a new lighthouse to be built several hundred feet north of the brick tower. In June of that year, an appropriation of \$40,000 was made for the "construction of a combined [steel] light tower and keeper's dwelling in the vicinity of the old [lighthouse]." [In 1904, the Cromley family, the lighthouse keepers, who had obtained ownership of the tract, sold the 182-acre (as measured then) Lighthouse Island to the U. S. government.] On September 18, 1905, the new lighthouse, a 100-foot steel pyramidal tower with a kerosene-lit flashing light, was activated. A new third order lens was installed, which could be seen by shipping up to fifteen miles at sea. Two [raised], frame cottages for the keeper and the assistant keeper and their families were constructed adjoining the new tower. Meanwhile, the 1820 brick tower was deactivated, never to be lit again [while the government operated the lighthouse service.]

According to Lighthouse Service documents found in Record Group 26, the new steel Sapelo lighthouse converted to an incandescent oil-vapor system of lighting in 1913. By this time, activities on the south end of Sapelo were on the decline due to the decreasing amount of shipping utilizing the Darien harbor. Altamaha River logging and saw milling were declining because of the over cutting of the upriver pine forests. Shipping traffic was nonexistent by 1933, the year the Lighthouse Service decided to deactivate the Sapelo station.

According to a Revocable License dated May 4, 1933 found in Record Group 26, Robert H. Cromley was retired as the last keeper of the Sapelo lighthouse. In 1938, the steel tower was dismantled and its parts were shipped to a new site in Southport, N.C. The final duty of Cromley was to oversee the tearing down of the two frame keeper's cottages on the site and to sell the lumber for scrap on the mainland. No visible evidence of these frame dwellings or the steel tower [except its footings] remains on the Sapelo lighthouse tract.

Besides the brick lighthouse tower, which serves as a useful day beacon for navigation along this section of the coast, all that remains of lighthouse activity on the south end of the island are the brick ruins of the small ca. 1890 oil house, and the old cast iron

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range beacon a short distance away. Also nearby are the concrete foundations of a U.S. Army artillery emplacement built as a part of the government's coastal defense system in 1898 during the Spanish-American War [and the cistern.]

[In 1950, the U. S. government sold the lighthouse tract, then measured at 195 acres, to R. J. Reynolds, Jr., who owned a large part of Sapelo Island, including the nearby Big House or mansion. He in turn built the causeway connecting the island to the main beach road. In 1992, the State of Georgia obtained full title to the lighthouse island from Reynolds' heirs.]

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Crook, [Morgan] Ray. Archaeological Investigations at the Sapelo Island Lighthouse and Oil House. Carrollton, GA: State Univ. of West Georgia, 1997. Report submitted to the Department of Natural Resources to use in restoration planning for the lighthouse, and personal communication on Feb. 12, 1997.

National Archives and Records Administration. U.S. Coast Guard Records, Record Group 26. (Copies of pertinent materials on file at Historic Preservation Division.)

Sullivan, Buddy. "The Mystique of Sapelo Light", Sapelo Soundings, a newsletter, Winter, 1996.

Ibid. "The Lighthouses of Georgia" in The Keeper's Log, Spring, 1988.

Ibid. Early Days on the Georgia Tidewater: The Story of McIntosh County and Sapelo. (Darien: County Commissioners, 1991.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- ( ) 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- (X) State historic preservation office (Sapelo Island Collection)
- ( ) Other State Agency
- (X) Federal agency-- National Archives/Coast Guard files
- ( ) Local government
- ( ) University
- ( ) Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Mc-494; and also in the State-Owned Buildings Survey (same number).

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## **10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreeage of Property:** 205.92 acres (39 acres of high ground, 166.92 acres of marsh.)

### **UTM References**

- A) Zone 17 Easting 472600 Northing 3472920
- B) Z17 E473380 N3473200
- C) Z17 E474300 N3473140
- D) Z17 E473150 N3472180

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is the legal entity known as the Lighthouse Island which was purchased by R. J. Reynolds, Jr., from the U. S. Government in 1950, as shown on the attached plat, and subsequently obtained by the State of Georgia.

### **Boundary Justification**

The nominated property, known today as the 'Lighthouse Island' and containing the lighthouse, the range beacon, and all associated historic buildings, structures, and sites, is a geographically defined area which also was an intact, legal tract separated legally from Sapelo Island proper in the early 19th century and formalized in a deed after the Civil War. It remained a separate, legal entity, with distinct geographical boundaries, known as the 'Lighthouse Island,' until it was sold in 1950 to R. J. Reynolds, the owner of most of Sapelo Island. Even then it maintained its clear geographical boundaries as a separate small island, although it became connected to the larger Sapelo Island by a causeway. In 1992 the island tract was sold by the Reynolds' heirs to the State of Georgia. It is shown on a 1976 plat which is attached.

This tract of land--the Lighthouse Island--has served as the immediate geographical setting for the Sapelo Island Lighthouse since its construction in c.1820. It forms the distinct piece of 'high ground' at the southernmost end of Sapelo Island proper upon which the lighthouse was located. Its extent, which can be readily seen from the top of the lighthouse, is directly related to the reasons why the lighthouse was located at this location. It also forms an appropriate natural setting with distinct maritime boundaries (Doboy Sound, tidal creeks) for the lighthouse and its related historic buildings, structures, and sites, all of which are contained within it. Functionally, the Lighthouse Island served as the 'yard' for the lighthouse and its associated complex of buildings and structures as well as for the activities which took place here in support of or related to the lighthouse. Legally, since at least 1904, this tract of land has been associated with the lighthouse. Because of its clear legal and geographical boundaries, this 200-acre tract of land is a convenient management area for the conservation and adaptive use of the lighthouse and its associated buildings, structures, and sites.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of  
Natural Resources  
**street & number** 57 Forsyth St., N.W., Suite 500  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
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**name/title** Richard Cloues, Survey and Register Unit Manager  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of  
Natural Resources  
**street & number** 57 Forsyth St., N.W., Suite 500  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** July 14, 1997

(HPS form version 10-29-91)

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Photographs

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**Name of Property:** SAPELO ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE  
**City or Vicinity:** Sapelo Island  
**County:** McIntosh  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** September, 1996

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 8: Lighthouse, oil house, cistern; photographer facing southeast.
- 2 of 8: Lighthouse, oil house, cistern, in foreground; photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 8: Oil house; photographer facing northwest.
- 4 of 8: Cistern in foreground, oil house and lighthouse base; photographer facing northwest.
- 5 of 8: Ruined stairs on interior of lighthouse; photographer facing skyward.
- 6 of 8: Spanish-American War ruins; photographer facing northwest.
- 7 of 8: Range beacon, with lighthouse in background; photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 8: Range beacon showing closeness of marsh immediately to the rear of the left footing; photographer facing southwest.





SKETCH MAP (SITE PLAN)

SAPELO ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE  
SAPELO ISLAND, MCINTOSH COUNTY, GA  
SCALE: NOT TO SCALE  
SOURCE: VANISHING GEORGIA COLLECTION,  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND  
HISTORY

DATE: PRE-1936; c. 1930

KEY: SURVIVING HISTORIC FEATURES:

- A = LIGHTHOUSE (1820)
- B = OIL HOUSE (1890)
- C = CISTERN
- D = SPANISH- AMERICAN WAR  
REMAINS (1898)
- E = BEACON (1877)

THE 1905 LIGHTHOUSE COMPLEX IS SEEN  
IN CENTER OF THE PHOTOGRAPH. IT IS  
NOW GONE.

A B C

E →  
D