

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Cape Decision Light Station

other names/site number Cape Decision Lighthouse
AHRS Site No. XPA-00012

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number southwesterly extremity of Kuiu Island, immediately north of the junction of Chatham and Sumner Straits in Southeast Alaska, approximately 63 miles south of Sitka

not for publication n/a

city or town Sitka vicinity X

state Alaska code AK county Wrangell-Petersburg code 280

zip code 99835

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally X statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jean M. Antonson
Signature of certifying official

16 December 2004
Date

Alaska
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson H. Beall 2/2/05

other (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> 4 </u>	<u> 3 </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u> 6 </u>	<u> 3 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Light Stations of the United States

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Transportation Sub: water-related

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Transportation Sub: water-related

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Art Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof concrete
walls concrete
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Cape Decision Light Station is located at the south end of Kuiu Island, immediately to the north of the junction of Chatham and Sumner Straits in Southeast Alaska. In the area, tidal currents are strong, fog is frequent, and numerous dangerous rocks are present. Prior to construction of the station, which was completed in 1932, an acetylene light stood on one of the Spanish Islands about ten miles south of Cape Decision.

In July 1929, the Lighthouse Board received funding from Congress to establish the station at Cape Decision on land previously withdrawn by executive order from the Tongass National Forest. Construction began in September. Insufficient funds and poor weather delayed work. The light, fog signal, and radio station started operating March 15, 1932. The Lighthouse Board later constructed several wood frame buildings at the site, including a large boathouse, hoist house, and blacksmith shop. An accidental fire in 1989 destroyed these wood buildings, four fuel tanks, and a portion of the dock. The lighthouse and paint shed constructed in 1932 still stand. Also at the site today are a boardwalk, dock, seawall, dam, and helicopter pad.

In 1997, the nonprofit Cape Decision Lighthouse Society leased the site from the U.S. Coast Guard. In 2004, the society received title to the buildings and structures, however, the Coast Guard maintains the light.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.) n/a

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Maritime history
Architecture
Transportation

Period of Significance 1932-1954

Significant Dates 1932

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder U.S. Lighthouse Service

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

Page 11

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Brown, C.M. *Lighthouses and Other Aids to Navigation in Alaska History*. Juneau, Alaska: U.S. Coast Guard, 1990.

Gibbs, James A. *Sentinels of the North Pacific*. Portland, Oregon: Binfords & Mort, 1955.

Hunt, Bill. "Lighting the Maritime Trail," *Alaska Magazine*, Vol. 56, No. 10 (October 1990):46-50.

Lowry, Shannon. "Alaska Lighthouse Tales," *Alaska Magazine*, Vol. 56, No. 10 (October 1990):30-45.

Lowry, Shannon and Jeff Schultz. *Northern Lights*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1992.

U.S. Coast Guard. *Light List, November 30, 1974*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.

U.S. Coast Guard, Juneau Division. Files in the Offices of Aids to Navigation, Civil Engineering, and Public Affairs.

U.S. Lighthouse Bureau. Annual reports, 1922-1932. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923-1933.

Wheeler, Wayne. "Northern Lights: Lighthouse Development in the Alaska Territory," *The Keeper's Log*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (Spring 1990):2-13.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>08</u>	<u>553980</u>	<u>6206320</u>	3		
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4		
	<u> </u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>				

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Cape Decision Light Station is located in the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 4, Township 68 South, Range 73 East, Copper River Meridian. It is described in Executive Order 3406, signed by President Woodrow Wilson on February 13, 1921, as ``that part of the southern extremity of Kuiu Island lying south of a true east and west line located at a distance of 4560 feet north true from the high water line at the southernmost extremity of the point.''

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the lighthouse, paint building, boardwalk, dock, dam, and seawall that stand and historically have been associated with Cape Decision Light Station at the southernmost tip of Kuiu Island. Although within the boundaries, the helicopter pad is noncontributing because it was built after the period of significance, and short sections of two trails are noncontributing because they are not shown on station plans.

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Chris Brooks, Secretary

organization Cape Decision Lighthouse Society

date November 14, 2000; revised December 1, 2004

street & number 224 Katlian Street

telephone 907-747-7803

city or town Sitka state AK zip code 99835

Contributing properties

Lighthouse. The lighthouse is a one story, reinforced concrete Art Moderne influenced building set on a raised basement. Measuring 46 by 46 feet the base is adorned with a minimalist cornice, a projecting entry vestibule centered on the façade, and recessed panels that occupy nearly all of, and are centered on, each elevation. A short, broad flight of fifteen concrete stairs with solid handrails leads to the entrance from the boardwalk. The front of the vestibule contains a single 15-light door flanked by 2/2 windows; windows also occupy the sides of the vestibule. Set into the façade on either side of the entrance are two 2/2 sash windows. Centered on the east elevation is a paired window, each with four lights, flanked by 2/2 windows. The south elevation has asymmetrical fenestration. From west to east on the elevation are a paired set of 2/2 windows (a paired set of 2/2 windows is boarded), a single 2/2 window and two paired sets of 2/2 windows. The west elevation contained only one centered window opening and it is currently boarded.

The basement has a double door at the west corner of the south elevation. The east and west elevations have no openings. A 1933 photograph of the façade shows two 2/2 windows on each side of the staircase at the basement level; these windows are no longer visible on the exterior.

Currently the first floor elevations are painted white and the basement elevations are gray. The roof is painted red with the exception of a white field on the east side that contains the large black letters ``CDE.''

Projecting from the flat roof are both a chimney and the tower. The chimney rises from the northwest corner of the roof and, like the base, exhibits shallow recessed panels on each elevation.

A 14 by 14 foot reinforced concrete tower with lantern rises 40 feet from the center of the roof. It features recessed panels on each of the elevations. At the base of the tower on the north side is a door that provides access to the roof. Fenestration on the tower is limited to a boarded window opening on the north side and a window centered vertically on the east side. Surmounting the tower's cornice is the lantern gallery, which is enclosed by a two-tiered metal pipe railing. The cylindrical metal watchroom rising from the center of the gallery is topped by a metal and glass lantern. The glass is broken horizontally by thin metal muntins that form diamond shaped panes. The roof of the lantern is capped by a ventilator ball. The original third order fixed lens powered by a 300-watt electric lamp displayed two white flashes every 15 seconds of 24,000 candlepower and was visible 15.6 nautical miles in clear weather. It was the first electric powered light installed in an Alaskan lighthouse. Today the lantern houses a Vega VRB-25 acrobeacon which flashes white every five seconds and is visible up to 18 nautical miles.

Inside the lighthouse on the main floor are three bedrooms, a galley, bathroom, radio room, and workshop/generator room. The Coast Guard

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

Page 6

=====

dismantled the radio equipment in 1997. NOAA meteorological equipment occupies another small room on this floor. The basement has small storage rooms, an electric water pump and filter system, and an air compressor that powered the first class fog signal. Water is collected in two 10,000-gallon cisterns inside the lighthouse from a rain catchment system on the roof. Originally, fresh water was piped from a small stream nearby. Attached to the lighthouse are two 5,000-gallon fuel tanks.

Paint shed. Constructed in 1931, the paint shed is an 8 by 8 by 10 foot wood frame building covered with corrugated metal. It is a short distance north of the dock.

Boardwalk. A wood plank boardwalk with a two-tiered wood railing connects the lighthouse to the 60-foot long dock crossing the octagonal helicopter pad. Although the 1989 fire destroyed part of the boardwalk, enough remains to be considered a contributing structure. It extends north and east of the lighthouse.

Dock. The dock has a wood deck and an understructure of creosoted timbers set on concrete footings. It had a boom derrick system to raise and lower boats, a tramway, a boathouse, a hoist house, blacksmith shop, and four fuel tanks. The buildings and structures were constructed during the 1930s. The 1989 fire destroyed these and part of the dock. Only the dock was rebuilt. Enough of the original dock remains for it to be considered a contributing structure. The dock is northeast of the lighthouse.

Walkway, seawall and footbridge. A walkway extends parallel to the east side of the lighthouse to a small grassy area in the back. It is enclosed by a two-tiered handrail that is a continuation of the handrail on the eastern side of the boardwalk. South and west of the lighthouse and backyard are six-inch thick concrete seawalls set on the rocks. Also to the south is a small footbridge connecting Kuiu Island with a small rocky island.

Dam. The concrete and log dam is 45 feet long and 5 feet high. It is approximately 300 feet north of the lighthouse. Although the original water system is no longer used, the dam still exists.

Noncontributing structures.

Helicopter pad. This is an octagonal wood structure in the center of the light station, a short distance north and east of the lighthouse and south and west of the dock. It was built in the mid-1960s, which is after the period of significance, but representative of the evolution of access to Alaska's remote light stations.

Trails (2). Over the years, keepers established two trails. A .9-mile trail connects the light station and a protected cove on the east side of the island where a trapper's cabin stood. A four-and-a-half-mile trail

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
connects the light station with Port McArthur. During the years the light station was staffed, the trail was occasionally used to transport supplies. Only a short portion of each trail is within the light station reserve. Because the trails were not integral to the station's mission, they are noncontributing.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

Page 9

=====
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Cape Decision Light Station was the last of 16 staffed lights established by the U.S. Government in Alaska. Since its lighting in 1932 it has been part of a system of navigational aids to safely guide commercial and recreational vessels through the dangerous and heavily traveled Southeast Alaska waterway known as the Inside Passage. The lighthouse, the main building at the site, housed the light, fog signal and radio equipment, offices, and living quarters for three keepers. It is, like many of its predecessors in Alaska, a reinforced concrete building with modest Art Moderne influences. The original lamp installed in the original lantern at the Cape Decision station was the first electric one used at an Alaskan lighthouse. In 1974, the Coast Guard automated the light and stopped assigning keepers to the station. Today, a light at Cape Decision continues to guide vessels passing between the Gulf of Alaska, Chatham and Sumner Straits, however the period of significance ends in 1954, fifty years ago. While a fire in 1989 destroyed several of the station's wood frame auxiliary buildings and boardwalk, the buildings and structures that remain, particularly the lighthouse, continue to convey the importance of maritime commerce and transportation routes in the history of Alaska.

Historic background

The Inside Passage has been a major transportation route in Southeast Alaska for hundreds of years. It provided a safer route for ships and boats to travel than through the open Gulf of Alaska to the west. Although safer, the numerous small islands, sharp turns, and narrow channels combine with frequent fog and heavy precipitation to make travel through the Inside Passage treacherous. Between 1902 and 1932, the U.S. Lighthouse Board and its successor the U.S. Lighthouse Service built and staffed 12 light stations in Southeast Alaska to aid navigation and to support development of commerce, industry, and communication.

During the 1920s, the number of salmon canneries, herring salteries, and reduction plants along the coasts bordering Chatham and Sumner Straits increased. Larger boats that could not pass through Wrangell Narrows used Chatham Strait accessing it by passing Cape Decision. Many deep-sea fishing vessels entered and exited the Inside Passage near the cape. Shipping companies and fishermen appealed to the U.S. Lighthouse Service to upgrade the acetylene light that then existed on the Spanish Islands. The Lighthouse Service determined that a lighted navigational aid with fog signal and radio equipment was needed in the area, and selected for a station Cape Decision at the southernmost tip of Kuiu Island, about ten miles north of the Spanish Islands.

On February 13, 1921, President Woodrow Wilson signed Executive Order 3406 reserving approximately 216 acres of southern Kuiu Island for lighthouse purposes. After the U.S. Lighthouse Service requested money for several years, in July 1929 Congress appropriated \$59,400 to build Cape Decision

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
Light Station on the island. Construction began in September of that year. Delayed by poor weather and insufficient funding, the station, at a total cost of \$158,000, did not begin operation until March 15, 1932. The lighthouse, which also housed three keepers, is a reinforced concrete Art Moderne influenced building. Wood frame lighthouses built in the early 1900s in Alaska proved inadequate to meet the often harsh weather conditions. Cape Decision was the last staffed light station established in Alaska.

The light tower was topped by a third order iron lantern which housed a fixed third order lens with a 300-watt electric lamp. It was the first light in Alaska powered by electricity. Cape Decision Light Station was also equipped with a fog signal and Class B radio beacon. The original fog signal consists of two No. 425 tyfon foghorns mounted on the southwest corner of the roof. In 1962, these were replaced by a single Supertyphon TF150/255-2B. The fog signal and radio beacon were synchronized thus acting as a distance finding station. By noting the time elapsed between the reception of the two sounds in the pilot house of the vessel and dividing the same by five, a close approximation of the vessel's distance from the station in miles could be obtained.

In 1974, the U.S. Coast Guard automated the station and removed the keepers. A 1,000-watt electric bulb powered by solar panels replaced the original third order lens which is now at the Clausen Museum in Petersburg, Alaska. In 1996, the light source was changed to a Vega VRB-25 aerobeacon.

In 1989, a fire destroyed the wood buildings at the station but not the lighthouse. Several buildings and structures still stand at the station and the light continues to operate. The Cape Decision Lighthouse Association, a non-profit organization, leased the buildings and structures in 1997 from the U.S. Coast Guard and received title to them in 2004. The U.S. Coast Guard continues to operate and maintain the light.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
Previous documentation on file (NPS) 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

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: U.S. Coast Guard Archives, Washington, D.C.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Cape Decision Lighthouse Society

street & number 224 Katlian Street

telephone 907-747-7803

city or town Sitka state AK zip code 99835

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg

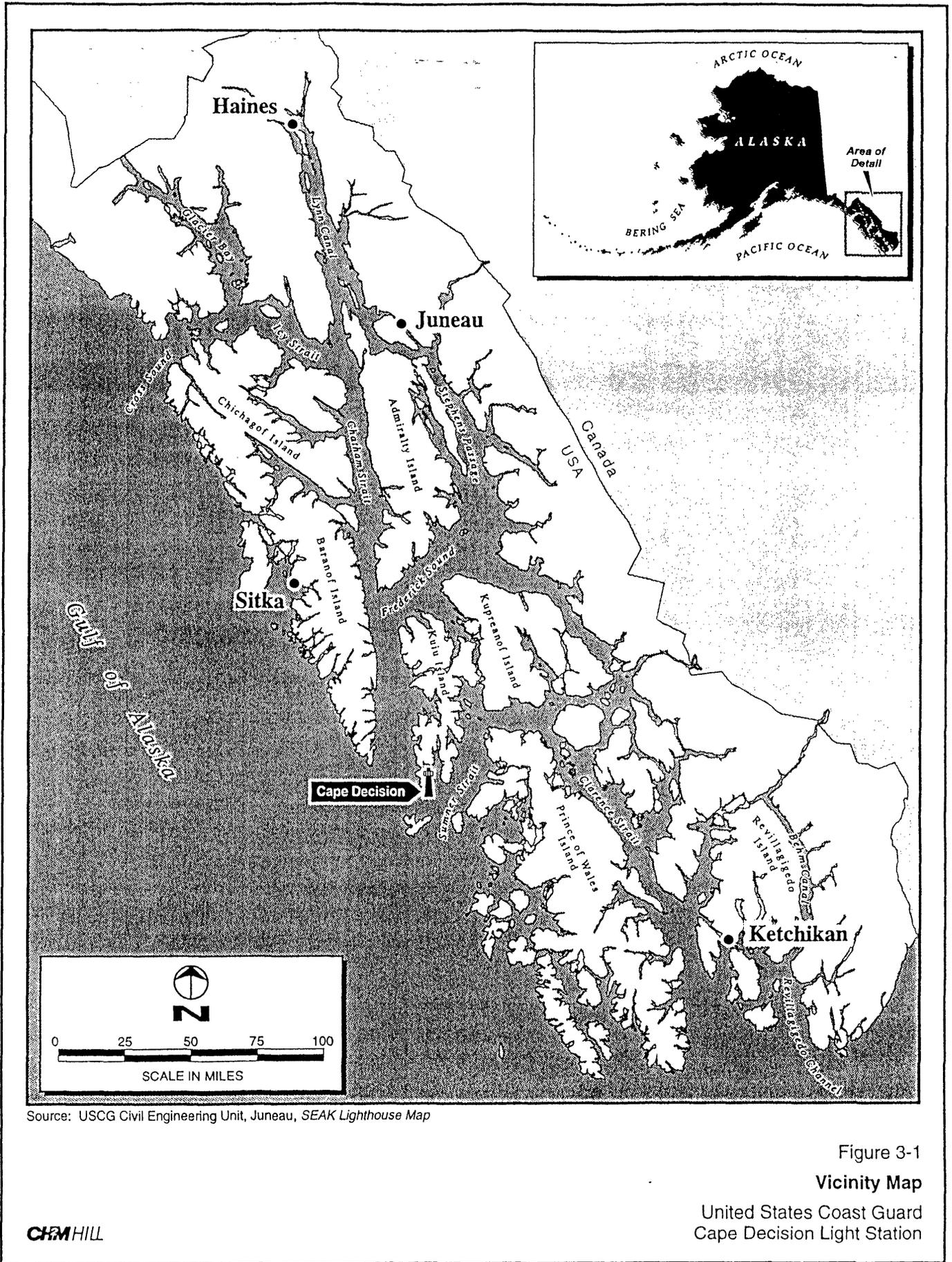
=====
Section Photograph identification
=====

1. Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska
Karen Johnson
July 30, 2004
Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, AK 99835
Looking north northwest at the lighthouse, boardwalk, and dock

2. Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska
Karen Johnson
July 31, 2004
Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, AK 99835
Looking west at the lighthouse

3. Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska
Karen Johnson
July 31, 2004
Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, AK 99835
Looking southwest at the lighthouse; part of the helicopter pad is
visible in the foreground

4. Cape Decision Light Station
Wrangell-Petersburg, Alaska
Bryan Cornelius
August 1, 2004
Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, AK 99835
Looking west southwest at the lighthouse

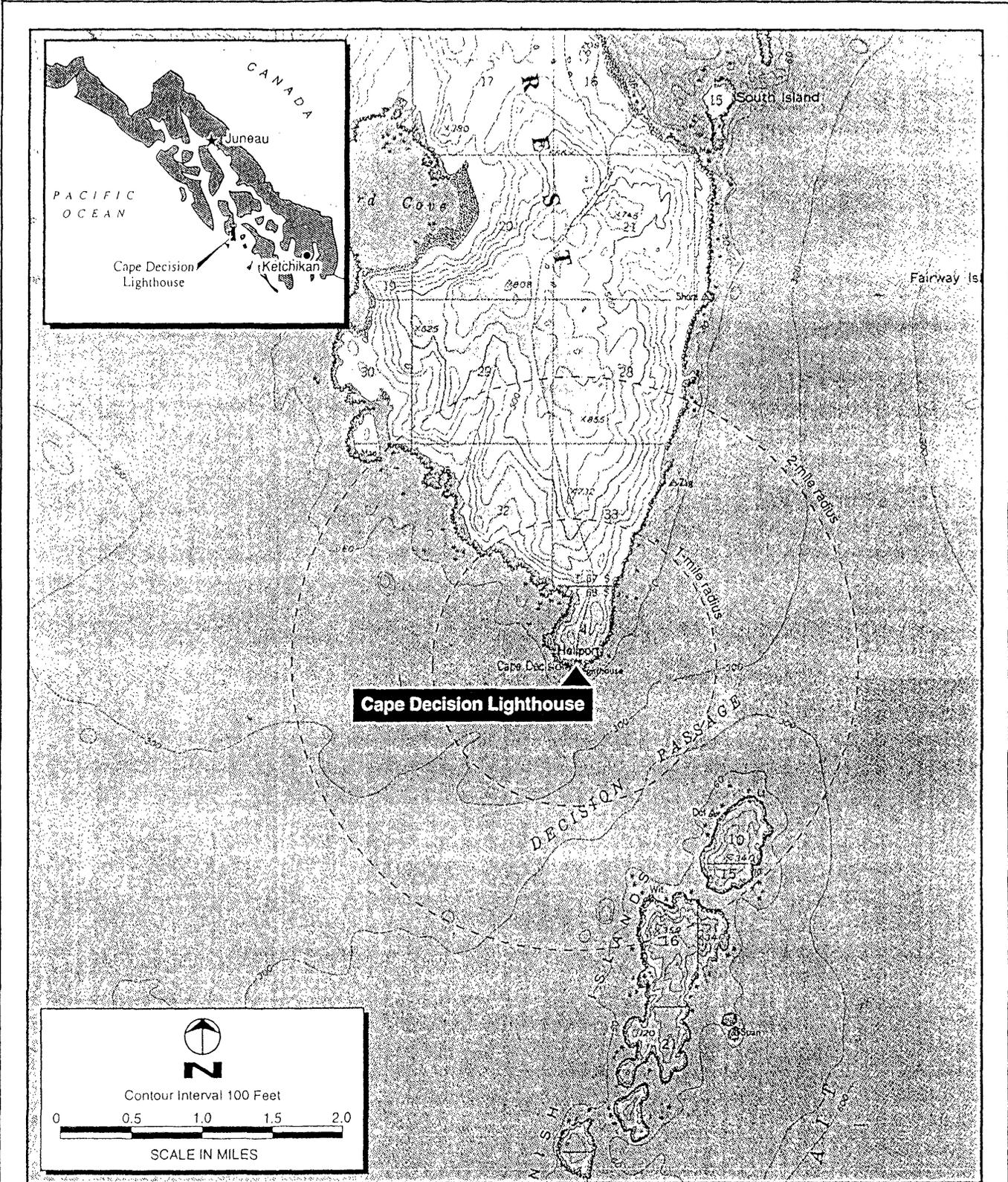


Source: USCG Civil Engineering Unit, Juneau, SEAK Lighthouse Map

Figure 3-1
Vicinity Map
United States Coast Guard
Cape Decision Light Station

139145.SA.03 CpDec 09/17/97 anc.txd

CHM HILL



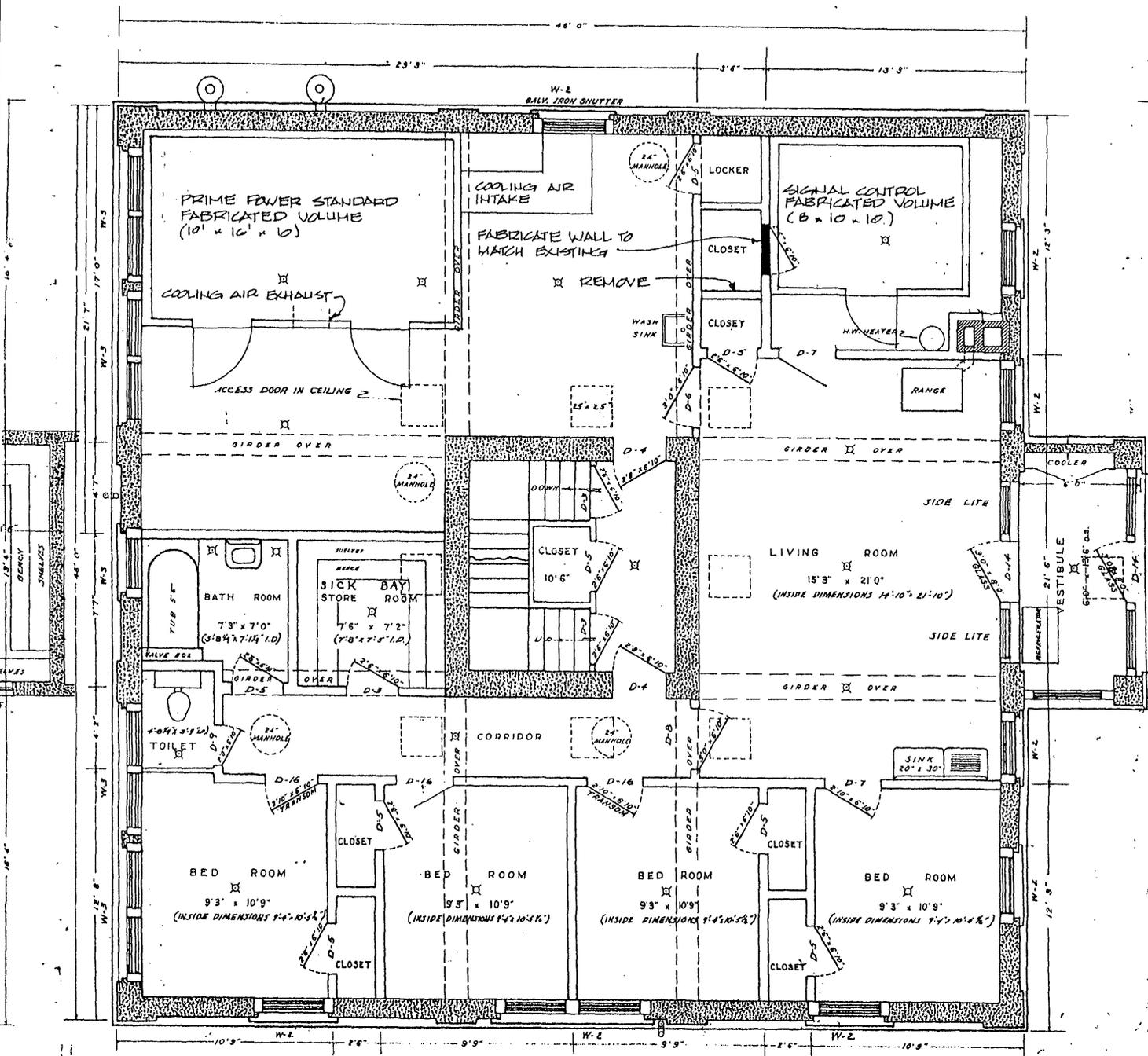
Source: USGS Quadrangles: Craig (D-6), Craig (D-7 and D-8), and Port Alexander (A-1), Alaska

Figure 3-2
Location Map

United States Coast Guard
Cape Decision Light Station

1:39:45 SA.03 CapeDec 06/17/97

CHM HILL



1/8 JEB DRAWING M-380

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1" ac. horizontal and staggered and staggered. Except cistern wall which is staggered and staggered. Floor and roof slab at the same at right angles. Two to be bent up over supports.

REVISION	DATE	APPD.	DESCRIPTION	BY
U.S. COAST GUARD 17th DISTRICT JUNEAU, ALASKA CIVIL ENGINEERING				
DESIGNED - GIGUERE		U.S. COAST GUARD LIGHT STATION		
DRAWN - LAHIER		CAPE DECISION, ALASKA		
TRACED - 17, SHT 2		LAMP - 1985		
CHECKED - GSD				
REVIEWED		LIGHT HOUSE FLOOR PLAN		
SUBMITTED		APPROVED		DATE
				2/26/85
		TECHNICAL ASSISTANT		
C G DRAWING NO				
F-351				
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"			SHEET 2 OF 23	