



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

## Historic Light Station Information VIRGINIA

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### ASSATEAGUE LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Assateague Island Light

Location: Southern end of Assateague Island

Date Built: Established in 1833 with present tower built in 1867

Type of Structure: Conical brick tower with red and white stripes;

Height: Tower is 145' with a 154' focal plane

Characteristic: Originally a fixed white light, with a fixed red sector (added in 1907), changed to two white flashes every 5 seconds in 1961, visible for 19 miles.

Lens: Original lens was an Argand lamp system with 11 lamps with 14 inch reflectors. The 1867 tower had a first order Fresnel lens with four wicks, now DCB 236. The Fresnel lens was made by Barbier & Fenestre, Paris 1866

Appropriation: \$55,000

Automated: 1933 when changed to battery power

Status: Open Easter through May, and October through Thanksgiving weekend every Friday through Sunday from 9 am to 3 pm; During June, July, August and September open Thursday through Monday from 9 AM to 3PM, last climb 2:30 PM call (757) 336-3696 for information.

### Historical Information:

- The original light was built in 1833 was only 45 feet tall and was not sufficient for coastal needs so in 1859 Congress appropriated funds to build a higher, more effective tower.
- Work began in 1860 but was suspended during the Civil War. The current structure was completed and lit in 1867. The keeper's quarters built in 1867 was a duplex. In 1892 it was remodeled with three large sections of six rooms each to house three families with each section including a pantry, kitchen, dining room, living room, three bedrooms, bathroom, and large closet.
- In 1892 an oil house was added.
- In 1910 a two story concrete keeper's dwelling was built.
- In 1933 the lens was powered by electricity from a generator.
- In 1961 when electric power lines finally reached the Island a Directional Coded Beacon was installed that consisted of two large drums each with a 1000 watt



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bulb. And the and characteristic changed from fixed white to flashing - a double flash every five seconds.

- In 1969 the red brick tower was painted in horizontal red and white stripes.
- In June 2004, the property was transferred to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000; the Chincoteague Natural History Association helps maintain the lighthouse and provide tours.
- First order lens is currently on display in the Oyster and Maritime Museum in Chincoteague.

**Keepers:** David Watson, Tom Moore, Frank Jones, Samuel Quillen, Edgar Hopkins, John Anderton, Walter Wescott, William Collins.

The above was researched and drafted by Catherine (Kitty) Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer. Ms. Myrna Cherrix, the Assateague Lighthouse Historian, also contributed.

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## BACK RIVER LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Back River Light (also known as Grandview Light)

Location: 6 miles north of Old Point Comfort, Chesapeake Bay, entrance to Back River; nearest Town/City is Hampton, Virginia

Date Built: 1829

Type of Structure: White-washed conical brick tower

Height: 30 feet

Lens: Ten oil lamps and ten parabolic reflectors

Characteristics: revolving white 1' 30" interval

Automated: 1915

Foghorn: None noted in records

Appropriation: \$4,250.00

Status: No longer standing

### Historical Information:

- The white-washed conical brick tower standing on four acres of land purchased for \$100.00 with beach in front and marsh behind. An elevated 144 feet footbridge over the marsh connected the tower to the keeper's home built by Winslow Lewis of Boston. A front porch was added for the first keeper costing \$15.00.



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- The tower specification from the June 18, 1829 newspaper: The lighthouse foundation was to be sunk at least three feet deep necessary to secure the fabric and lined with good lime mortar; base diameter was eighteen feet tapering to nine feet at the top; walls were three feet at the base graduated to twenty inches at the top; the top was arched with an eleven feet in diameter deck that was four inches thick; three windows with twelve panes of glass ten by eight inches in the tower; and, a six-foot by three-foot door for the entrance.
- \$750.00 of the construction costs was used for ten oil lamps and ten parabolic reflectors that were fourteen inches and had six ounces of pure silver in each; a new revolving machine with six twenty-one parabolic reflectors and six fountain lamps was installed in 1855.
- The keeper's house was a one story brick house thirty-four by twenty feet; chimneys were placed at the ends of the house in lieu of only one in the middle; a stone fourteen by twelve feet kitchen with two windows, one door, and a chimney with a sizeable fireplace and oven complete with an iron door-crane, trammels and hooks; a brick five by four feet out-house with a shingled or painted roof, a front porch and a white picket fence were added.
- The confederates vandalized and ruined the light in 1862 and put back in operation by 1863. But a worse enemy was the blowing sand and the relentless waves; riprap stone was put around the tower in 1868, 1878, and 1888, with screens added to keep the sand in place in 1881.
- The keeper's house was enlarged with a second story addition in 1894 for the keeper's growing family.
- The lighthouse was automated in 1915.
- The keeper's house was dismantled in 1914 and the lighthouse deactivated in 1936 and destroyed by Hurricane Flossy on September 27, 1956 with only a pile of rocks marking the site.

**Keepers:** William Jett (1829-1852); William Henry Abdell (1863-1885); R.F. Johnson (?-1915)

The above was researched and drafted by Catherine (Kitty) Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## BELLS ROCK LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Bells Rock Lighthouse  
Location: York River, near West Point, Virginia  
Date Built: 1881  
Type of Structure: screwpile, hexagonal house



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Characteristics: fixed white  
Lens: fourth order  
Foghorn: yes  
Height: 40 feet  
Appropriation: \$35,000  
Status: dismantled in 1928

## Historical Information:

- The first lighthouse was assembled at the Lazaretto Lighthouse Depot in 1880 but was sent to Thimble Shoal when that light burned down.
- In 1884 the lighthouse was damaged when it was hit by a schooner.
- The light was dismantled in 1928 when an automated light was placed on the original foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by William Simms, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## BOWLERS ROCK LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Bowlers Rock Light

Location: Only lighthouse built on the Rappahannock River between Bowlers Landing and Suggests Point; nearest town/city is Bowler Landing, Virginia

Date Built: Built in 1868

Type of Structure: Wooden rectangular cottage-style lighthouse on a screw pile; two additional fender piles set one on each of the ebb and flow sides of the structure, for additional stability against the ice.

Status: No longer standing.

## Historical Information:

- Two Lightships marked this location the first in 1835 until destroyed by rebels in 1861 the second Lightship was stationed in 1864 until 1868.
- The Lighthouse Board noted in the 1895 annual report that the iron foundation had "suffered from the impact of the ice during the past winter. Its age and position render doubtful its ability to withstand without protection another similar experience." The board requested that heavy riprap stone be placed on the axis of the current to act as icebreakers.



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- Destroyed by ice around 1918, deactivated in 1920, and in 1921 an acetylene light and automatic fog bell operated by carbon dioxide gas were built on a caisson structure to replace the iron-pile lighthouse.
- The lighthouse was replaced by a small automatic light near the original site.

The above was researched and drafted by Catherine (Kitty) Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## CAPE CHARLES LIGHT

Location: Smiths Island / Chesapeake Bay entrance

Date Built: Original tower - 1828, current tower - 1895

Type of Structure: Octagonal skeletal tower built on concrete piers, central column

Markings / Pattern: White with black lantern

Height: 180 feet above mean high water

Characteristics: Flashing white

Foghorn: Yes

Appropriation: \$150,000

Range: 24 miles

Status: Standing and Active

### Historical Information:

- The original lighthouse on Smith Island, near Cape Charles, Va., at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay was completed in 1828, at a cost of \$7,398.82. In 1856 Congress appropriated \$35,000 for "rebuilding the Cape Charles Lighthouse upon a proper site and fitting it with proper illuminating apparatus. This sum was spent in 1858 and 1859 and on June 20, 1860, an additional \$10,200 was appropriated for a keeper's dwelling. Only about \$1,890 of this was spent, however. Before the new tower was finished it was completely destroyed by "a party of guerrillas" (Confederate) in the Civil War then raging.
- "In August last (1862)" the Lighthouse Board reported "the lighthouse at Cape Charles was visited by a party of guerrillas, who completely destroyed the light, carrying away such portable articles as they deemed valuable. The new tower authorized for that station had, at the outbreak of the rebellion progressed in construction to a height of 83 feet, the greater part of the materials to complete the tower to its proper height (150 feet) being on the ground, stored, ready for future use. During the rebel occupancy of this part of the peninsula, the articles which had been stored were subjected to indiscriminate pilfering and spoliation, so that a new provision will have to be made."



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- In 1864 Congress appropriated \$20,000 for rebuilding the lighthouse and the tower was completed forthwith, the light being first exhibited on May 7, 1864. "Owing to the liability of this important light to an attack from the enemy the Board reported on June 30, 1864, "a competent military guard for its protection has been asked for." The encroachment of the sea upon the shore at this station had been in progress for many years by 1883 and about 300 feet had been washed away since 1857. By that time (1883) the waterline was within 300 feet of the tower and still nearer the keeper's dwelling. The average annual encroachment was then about 30 feet. As a result, Congress in 1885 appropriated \$10,000 to be used for "jetties of stone resting upon heavy timber mattresses to prevent too rapid sinking into the sand."
- However, further congressional action was believed necessary in that year to authorize the purchase of additional land needed for the three large jetties and \$30,000 was asked for this purpose. By 1886 about 120 feet of brush mattresses of this shore protection were completed and partially loaded with stone and about 80 feet of one jetty was finished extending from the shore to about low water mark. The jetty had already gathered much sand but had washed away somewhat at the sea extremity. In 1889, as steps were being taken to extend the protection, a heavy northeasterly gale washed away about 75 feet of the jetty and undermined the south end of the protection wall, and, at one time, the station was entirely surrounded by water. The retreat of the shore was not local but was general along the island. Any protection works, therefore, would have to extend a long distance to the northeast and be very expensive. It was, therefore, thought to be more economical to build a new light station where it would not be exposed to any danger. This would cost about \$150,000.
- Measures were meanwhile taken to construct four jetties at right angles to the shore protection and a protection wall in front of the one still standing. These were begun in February 1890. An appropriation of \$150,000 for a new tower was made on August 30, 1890. The new jetties were finished in April 1891. The contract for a new iron tower on a new site was signed in June 1893 and the structure was completed December 21, 1894. A first-order lens was installed and the light first exhibited August 15, 1895. The tower is an octagonal, pyramidal skeleton structure, 191 feet above land and 180 feet above water. The 1,200,000 candlepower first-order electric apparatus is unwatched and is visible 20 miles.

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## CAPE HENRY LIGHT(s) - OLD & NEW

Location: Fort Story, Virginia (near Virginia Beach), Chesapeake Bay entrance

Date Built: Original tower - 1792, current tower - 1881

Type of Structure: Tower constructed out of cast iron plate on a masonry foundation



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Markings / Pattern: Vertical black and white stripes

Height: 180 feet above mean high water

Characteristics: Flashing white with red sector

Foghorn: Yes

Appropriation: \$150,000

Range: 17 miles

Status: Standing and Active

## Historical Information:

- A provision for building a lighthouse at Cape Henry, at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay, was included in the first appropriation made for lighthouses by Congress on March 26, 1790. The amount was for \$24,076.66. The project had already been undertaken by the State of Virginia and Governor Randolph had written President Washington on December 18, 1789:
- "The State, some years ago, placed upon the shore of Cape Henry nearly a sufficient quantity of materials to complete such a lighthouse as was at that time thought convenient, which have been, in the course of time, covered with sand. Measures are being taken to extricate them from this situation."
- The Governor offered to sell these materials to the Federal Government and to cede the necessary land for the lighthouse to the United States. The tower which was constructed under contract for \$15,200, was an octagonal sandstone tower, the materials for which had undoubtedly been brought from abroad as ballast. The light, which was first shown in 1792, first consisted of oil lamps burning in turn fish oil, sperm oil, colza oil, lard oil, and finally kerosene after the discovery of petroleum in Pennsylvania in 1859. During most of the early 1800s it was outfitted with 18 Argand style lamps, each with a 12 inch reflector.
- In 1857 the lighthouse was provided with a dioptric Fresnel lens. Great difficulty, however, was experienced in distinguishing between lights along the coast in the 1840's because of the numerous fixed white lights, such as Cape Henry's. It was not until 1922 that the Cape Henry light's characteristic was changed to a distinctive group flashing light.
- During the Civil War the lantern of Cape Henry lighthouse was destroyed by Confederate raiders, but it was back in operation by 1863 being protected by a military guard detailed from Fortress Monroe. All the light vessels from Cape Henry southward had either been removed, sunk or destroyed by the Southern forces.
- In 1872 the Lighthouse Board recommended the building of a new tower, stating that the old tower was in an unsafe condition and that there was no way of repairing it satisfactorily. "It is in danger of being thrown down by some heavy gale." It was not until 1875 that Congress appropriated \$75,000 "for rebuilding and remodeling the lighthouse at Cape Henry."



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- In 1879 a contract for a new iron lighthouse, consisting of cast-iron plates backed by masonry walls, was entered into and after two more appropriations of \$25,000 each in 1880 and 1881, the new tower was completed and the light first shown on December 15, 1881. The old tower remained standing and became one of the antiquities of the State of Virginia, serving as a monument commemorating the landing of John Smith. It is now open to the public.
- The new structure was 170 feet in height and the lantern was equipped with a first-order lens, the lamp having five concentric wicks. A steam siren fog signal was also established. An incandescent oil-vapor lamp, burning kerosene vapor, replaced the wick lamp in 1912. This increased the intrinsic brilliancy, but decreased the area lit. The candlepower, however, was increased from 6,000 to 22,000. The candlepower has now been increased to 80,000 for the white light, with 16,000-candlepower red sector covering the shoals outside the cape and the middle ground inside the bay. The light is 164 feet above water and visible 19 miles. This station is also equipped with a diaphone fog signal and a radio beacon. The light was fully automated in 1984.

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## CHERRYSTONE BAR LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Cherrystone Bar Light

Location: South of Cape Charles Harbor; nearest Town/City is Cape Charles, Virginia to mark the channel into the Eastern Shore port.

Date Built: 1858

Type of Structure: Cottage style hexagonal screwpile lighthouse

Characteristics: Fourth order Fresnel Lens, in 1888 a red sector of about 210 degrees of arc was placed in the light with red showing the bay.

Foghorn: Bell

Appropriation: Built for almost \$10,000.00

Status: No longer standing

### Historical Information:

- The light was attacked by Confederate forces during the Civil War and was reestablished in 1862 by Union forces.
- Deactivated in 1919 and replaced with the automatic acerlene lantern on a caisson.
- The original hexagonal lighthouse was taken off its screwpile, moved by barge (October 1920 – April 1921) becoming the Choptank River Light in Maryland (also known as Benoni Point Light), making it the only lighthouse to ever be moved to another site to be used as a working navigational aid.





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**Keepers:** Gunter one of the few black men in lighthouse service.

The above was researched and drafted by Catherine (Kitty) Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## CHESAPEAKE LIGHT

Location: 14.5 MILES EAST OF CAPE HENRY

Station Established: 1930 (Lightship Station)

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1965

Operational: YES

Automated: YES 1980

Deactivated: n/a

Foundation Materials: STEEL PILE

Construction Materials: STEEL/CONCRETE

Height: 120' above mean high water

Tower Shape: SQUARE

Markings/Pattern: BLUE TOWER ON WHITE SUPERSTRUCTURE

Relationship to Other Structure: INTEGRAL

Original Lens: DCB 224

### Historical Information:

- The station was originally established in 1930 as a lightship station.
  - The "Texas Tower" was built in 1965 and was automated in 1980.
  - The Chesapeake Light Tower stands 13 miles offshore in the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia Beach. This steel tower is 120 feet tall. The tower is supported by four 33 inch concreted filled steel pilings driven 180 feet into the ocean bottom. Besides its current use as an automated station, the Chesapeake Light Tower is also the site of scientific experimentation by NOAA to collect data on ocean properties and weather.
  - It was scheduled to be decommissioned and demolished in 2004.
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## CRANEY ISLAND LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Craney Island Light

Location: near entrance to Elizabeth River in Virginia

Date Built: 1859



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Type of Structure: square screwpile structure

Height: 34' above mean high water

Lens: 5th Order

Characteristic: Flashing white every 5 seconds.

Foghorn: Aisler machine

Status: Original structure dismantled, now a light sits on a skeletal structure placed on original foundation.

## Historical Information:

- In 1820 Craney Island was the first permanent lightship site in the nation. She had a fixed white light and her name was printed on the side of her hull.
- In 1859 the lightship was replaced by a square screwpile lighthouse.
- In 1861 the light was damaged by Confederate soldiers so by 1863 the light was badly in need of repairs, so the light was replaced with a hexagonal light constructed at the Lazaretto Depot in Baltimore.
- When the superstructure of this lighthouse was decaying, it was replaced again in 1884 by a hexagonal structure, which lasted into the 1930's.
- In 1891 repairs were made to replace gallery posts damaged when the light was hit by a passing vessel.
- Site is now lighted by a simple light apparatus built on the old screwpile foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by William Simms, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## DEEPWATER SHOALS LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Deepwater Shoals Light

Location: James River, on the shoal on the starboard side of the channel, above Mulberry Island Point and below Lyon's Creek, providing improved navigation on the river; nearest town/city is Fort Eustis, Virginia

Date Built: Built in 1855

Type of Structure: Small one story cottage structure, white with red roof on screw pile

Height: Focal plane approximately 27' above mean high water.

Lens: large pressed-glass masthead lenses suspended in the lantern room of the house replaced in 1868 sixth order Fresnel lens.

Characteristics: Fixed white

Foghorn: Yes

Status: No longer standing



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## Historical Information:

- In 1856 the light suffered severe damage from ice floes; an entirely new superstructure had to be built in 1857.
- On January 20, 1867 the structure was again so severely damaged that the Light House Board rebuilt it. Reconstruction was completed on January 15, 1868 built on wooden pilings.
- 1862 the lighthouse was lighted after being snuffed out by the rebels; the Light House Board removed the lighting apparatus from the lighthouses and stored them at Ft. Monroe.
- The lighthouse was decommissioned in 1936 and torn down in 1966.
- There is an automated steel tower where the lighthouse once stood.

The above was researched and drafted by Catherine (Kitty) Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## DUTCH GAP CANAL LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Dutch Gap Canal Light

Location: Entrances of Dutch Gap Canal near Richmond on the upper James River, Virginia; nearest Town/City is Hopewell, Virginia near the I-295 bridge; this is the last station on the James River

Date Built: 1875

Type of Structure: Two small frame structures 27-foot high lights on posts planked and arranged with a supply room. The keeper's house, a plain frame dwelling, was built on a bluff on the Farrar's Island above the canal. The house was moved inland in 1890 because of the eroding cliff. In 1910 the light posts were replaced by fixed lights.

Height: 27 feet each.

Characteristics: Originally to be Sixth order it was decided to use small lantern, burning mineral oil, one at each end of the canal

Appropriation: Congress approved appropriation on March 3, 1873

Status: Inactive

## Historical Information:

- Second tower washed away during high water in December, 1878, indicating that the other tower was earlier destroyed. Two masts on poles for supporting lanterns were subsequently constructed in 1887. The lighthouse was deactivated in 1910 the Dutch Gap Canal Lights are now part of an 800-acre conservation area maintained by Henricus Park.



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## GREAT WICOMICO RIVER LIGHT

Name of Lighthouse: Great Wicomico River Light

Location: western shore of the Chesapeake Bay near Reedville, Virginia.

Date Built: 1889

Type of Structure: screwpile foundation with hexagonal house

Characteristics: 4th Order with fixed white light, two red sectors

Height: 43.5' above mean high water

Foghorn: yes – Stevens Fog Bell Machine (double blow every 15 sec.)

Construction Material: wood and iron

Deactivated: 1967

Status: house removed in 1967, but original foundation is now used for a more modern beacon, which displays a flashing light.

Historical Information:

- The 42-foot light "skeleton" entrance marker to the Great Wicomico River was dismantled and removed in September, 2015. The small, white unlighted warning buoy remains, marking the rocky area where the foundation sat. According to the Light List Corrections in the latest Fifth District Coast Guard Local Notice to Mariners (36/15), the light has been removed from the list. A Coast Guard representative said that the light will not be replaced. The proposal to discontinue Great Wicomico Light ran in the LNM from July 25, 2014 to September 1, 2014, as did similar proposals for Tue Marshes and Pages Rock lights on the York River (both were similar screwpile bases with the houses removed decades ago – they were each discontinued and removed earlier this year and are not referenced on current charts). "Due to structural failure of Great Wicomico Light (LL 7475) the Coast Guard can no longer safely access it for maintenance."

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## HOG ISLAND LIGHT



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Name of Lighthouse: Hog Island Light  
Location: SW point of Hog Island Great Machipongo Inlet  
Date Built: First tower build 1853  
Type of Structure: Conical white brick tower  
Operational: No  
Date Automated: N/A  
Deactivated: March 1948  
Height: Focal plane is 72' above mean high water  
Foghorn: none  
Construction Material: brick  
Original Lens: 1st Order Fresnel  
Characteristics: Fixed white light  
Status: Demolished – site under water

## Historical Information:

- Light was first established in 1853 on the north side of Great Machipongo Inlet with a First Order Fresnel lens. However an inspection report dated 1870 indicates the lens was a 4th Order. The tower was conical brick tower painted white.
- Erosion caused the need to rebuild the light. A replacement was completed and lit in 1896. The new structure was a black steel skeletal tower.
- Deactivated in 1948 and the lens was put on display in the Newport News Mariners Museum.
- In November 2004 the lens was put on display in a glass enclosed pavilion on the Portsmouth waterfront.

The above was researched and drafted by Anne Puppa, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## JONES POINT LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Jones Point Light  
Location: Potomac River, Jones Point Park; nearest Town/City is Alexandria, VA  
Date Built: 1856  
Type of Structure: White 1.5 story wood Keeper's house with black lantern on roof visible for nine miles  
Height: 28 feet  
Characteristics: Fixed white light changed to fixed red light in 1900.  
Lens: 1856 fourth order Fresnel lens was converted from whale oil to piped in gas. In



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1900, problems with the gas line caused the fuel supply to be converted to Mineral Oil,  
now 155 mm optic

Foghorn:

Appropriation: \$5,000 to acquire land from Manassas Gap Rail Road and build a small  
lighthouse built by Charles Church.

Status: Inactive and open to the public

**Keepers:** George L. Deeton and J.P. Geisendorfer (1856 -?); Benjamin Greenwood  
(1866-1903), his second wife remained until 1906 when the station was taken over by  
Frank Wilkins until shortly after WW1.

## Historical Information:

- 1919 the light was moved closer to the point with a 200 candlepower flashing acetylene light set up about 300 feet to the east of the lighthouse.
- Deactivated 1926, a new skeletal steel tower was built at the tip of the point with a fixed green light; at the same time the light was declared surplus and turned over to the Mount Vernon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) for restoration.
- 1934 the light on the skeletal steel tower was converted to electric power and automated.
- 1936 the Army Signal Corps owned the land surrounding the light until after WWII when it was returned to the DAR.
- 1960's the DAR approached the National Park Service about establishing a park on the 3000 square feet of land around the lighthouse.
- 1962 the light was discontinued since the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge opened and provided a better source of light for navigation.
- 1986 an agreement was signed with the Park Service to restore the lighthouse as a museum.
- Lighthouse was relit by the Mount Vernon Chapter of the D.A.R. in 1995; interior still needs restoration; managed by George Washington Memorial Parkway, 703-289-2500, website: <http://www.nps.gov/gwmp>
- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The above was researched and drafted by Kitty Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## JORDAN'S POINT LIGHT (a.k.a. JORDAN POINT)



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Name of Lighthouse: Jordan Point Light

Location: James River, on Jordan's Point, port side of river

Date Built: 1855

Operational: No

Date Automated: N/A

Height: focal plane is 35' above mean high water

Foghorn: Fog bell worked by hand in second structure.

Construction Material: wood with lantern on top of structure

Dwellings: white frame building with red roof

Original Lens: 6th order

Characteristics: fixed white light

Status: Demolished

## Historical Information:

- Some records refer to this as Jordan's Point Light. It was established in 1870 and some authorities state Jordan Point Light was established in 1855. It seems the original light was built on the James River around 1855.
- Shore erosion resulted in the need to rebuild the tower in either 1870 or 1875. In this second light the tower was separate from the keeper's dwelling and this is the structure seen in the pictures on this web site.
- In 1888 new keeper's quarters were built.
- The light was deactivated in 1927 and the station was abandoned a few years later.
- Skeletal tower was built around 1941 exists where tower once stood. This structure serves as Jordan Point Range Rear Light.

The above was researched and drafted by Anne Puppa, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## KILLOCK SHOAL LIGHT

Name of Lighthouse: Killock Shoal Light

Location: Chincoteague Channel, Virginia

Date Built: 1886

Type of Structure: Rectangular Screw-pile Lighthouse

Height: 47' 10" above mean high water

Operational: No

Deactivated: 1939

Foghorn: Bell struck by machinery every 15 seconds.



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Construction Material: Wooden house

Original Lens: 4th order

Characteristic: Fixed white to W of NNW 1/4 W & S 1/2 E. Fixed red thru remaining sector.

Status: Destroyed

## Historical Information:

- Light first built in 1886 as a 1-½ story square frame screw-pile lighthouse.
- Deactivated and dismantled in 1939 and replaced by an automated light on a steel tower placed on the original lights foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by Anne Puppa, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## LAMBERT POINT LIGHT

Name of Lighthouse: Lambert Point

Location: Elizabeth River - Norfolk

Date Built: 1872

Type of Structure: Square Screwpile

Operational: No

Date Automated: N/A

Deactivated: 1892

Foghorn: Yes

Construction Material: wooden

Tower Shape: square

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: 5th Order Fresnel

Characteristics: Fixed Red

Status: No Longer Standing

## Historical Information:

- The lighthouse was built in 1872 and consisted of a brown dwelling with a red lantern built on top of the structure. The original lens was a 5th order Fresnel.
- The lighthouse sat with a 14 inch tilt due to uneven settling on the pilings. More piles were added in an attempt to stabilize the structure. During this construction a dock from the shore to the light and a pier were added.





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- As the Norfolk and Western Railroad expanded the light became less visible because of the additional docks and piers. As a result the light was decommissioned in 1892. At this same time a lightship was established to mark nearby Bush Bluff.
- In 1901 the fog signal was re-started and continued to serve for the next 10 years.
- In 1911 the lighthouse collapsed due to deterioration.

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## NANSEMOND RIVER LIGHT

Name of Lighthouse: Nansemont River Light

Location: Located near Pig Point on east side of entrance to Nansemont River

Date Built: 1878

Type of Structure: Hexagonal cottage style screwpile lighthouse

Operational: No

Deactivated: 1935

Height: 36'

Foghorn: Yes

Builder: Lazaretto Lighthouse Depot

Construction Material: wooden

Tower Shape: Hexagonal

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Sixth order Fresnel lens

Characteristics: Fixed red

Range: 6 or 7 nautical miles

Status: destroyed

### Historical information:

- The screwpile lighthouse was assembled at the Lazaretto Lighthouse Depot up in Baltimore. Some parts of the light were recycled from the Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse.
- In 1899 the light was upgraded to a fifth order Fresnel.
- The screwpile was dismantled in 1935 and a steel skeletal tower with an automated light was affixed to the platform.

The above was researched and drafted by Anne Puppa, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

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## NEW POINT COMFORT LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: New Point Comfort

Location: near northern entrance to Mobjack Bay on Virginia's western shore

Date Built: 1804

Type of Structure: octagonal sandstone tower with separate frame dwelling

Height: 58 ft.

Characteristics: fixed white light

Lens: Original lens –octagon cylinder with multiple lamps. Fourth order Fresnel

Appropriation: \$8,500

Automated: 1930

Range: 13 miles

Status: No longer active

### Historical information:

- New Point Comfort is the third oldest lighthouse built on the Chesapeake Bay. President Thomas Jefferson appointed Elzie Burroughs, who built the lighthouse, as its first keeper.
- In 1855 a fixed fourth order Fresnel was installed.
- The Confederates put the lighthouse out of commission during the Civil War to disrupt Union shipping on the Chesapeake Bay.
- After the war extensive repairs were made and the light was relit in 1865.
- In 1919 the lighthouse lamps were replaced with an automated acetylene gas fixture
- Automated in 1930
- Originally the lighthouse stood on a peninsula but a hurricane in 1933 struck and eroded away much of the land. Over time the land has eroded more and more until it stands on a small island. The keeper's house no longer stands.
- In 1950 the light was electrified and the characteristic was changed to a four second flash.
- The tower was replaced by an offshore beacon with a 2 ½ second red flashing light in 1963 and the tower was abandoned.
- The lighthouse was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1972.
- In 1975 the light was deeded to Mathews county
- In 2001 a task force was formed by Mathews County in an effort to preserve the lighthouse.

The above was researched and drafted by Bill Simms, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.



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## NEWPORT NEWS MIDDLE GROUND LIGHT

Name of Lighthouse: Newport News Middle Ground

Location: Hampton Roads, VA

Date Built: 1891

Type of Structure: Cast Iron circular structure sitting atop a wooden caisson

Operational: Yes

Date Automated: 1954

Deactivated: No

Height: 35'

Foghorn: Stevens machine striking bell. Original signal double blow ever 15 sec.

Changed to single blow every 15 sec in 1954.

Builder:

Appropriation: \$50,000.00

Foundation Material: Wooden caisson

Construction Material: Cast Iron

Tower Shape: cylindrical

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fourth Order Fresnel

Characteristics: Fixed white varied by white flash every 20 sec.

Range:

Status: Active

### Historical Information:

- Built in 1891, the Newport News Middle Ground Light is the oldest caisson structure in Virginia waters. It was built to help mariners navigate while leaving the docks at Newport News. Because of the presence of ice, and heavy shipping traffic and the depth a caisson structure was recommended. Authorization was given in May of 1888 and \$50,000.00 was appropriated. The original light had a fixed white characteristic. About 1,000 tons of rip rap was placed around the light to protect it from erosion due to the currents.
- In 1954 the light was automated and the characteristic was changed to flashing white and the fog signal was changed from a double to a single blow every 15 seconds. The light was downgraded to a second-class tall nun buoy.
- In 1979 the structure was hit by a tugboat that caused some decking to be knocked out and resulted in leaking in the foundation. Inspection at the time revealed other problems with missing windows, the lantern door being jammed open allowing bird infiltration. Repairs were made in 1982.
- In 1986-1987 the light was solarized and was replaced by a less powerful channel marker light that was placed on a pole outside the lantern room. The



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light was sandblasted and painted, railings were replaced and new access ladders were installed.

- Around 1992 the completion of the bay bridge tunnel (Monitor-Merrimack Bridge Tunnel) made the light hard to see. The lens was upgraded in 2000 and placed back into active duty with a red light rather than a white one.
- A 1994 inspection team found the light in fair overall condition. One of the brackets for the lower gallery cantilevered deck was missing, and about 30 percent of the gallery railing was missing. The lantern door was once again found jammed open allowing birds to infest the interior.
- The light was on the list of lights to be turned over to non-profit groups in 2005. No adequate applications were submitted and the light was scheduled to go up for auction in late 2005.

The above was researched and drafted by Anne Puppa, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## OLD PLANTATION FLATS LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Old Plantation Flats Light

Location: Entrance to Old Plantation Creek; nearest Town/City is Cape Charles, VA

Date Built: 1886

Type of Structure: White rectangular cottage style house with tower on roof on a screw pile with an unusual foundation construction with a combination of screw pile and concrete pylons

Height:

Characteristics:

Lens: Fifth order Fresnel lens

Foghorn:

Appropriation: \$25,000

Status: No longer standing

### Historical Information:

- Fifth order Fresnel lens destroyed by ice flows in 1893 and replaced a month later with a new fifth order Fresnel lens.
- Lighthouse was once again damaged by ice flows in 1918 and was later reinforced with concrete at an additional cost of \$37,140.
- Deactivated and dismantled in 1962 and replaced with an automated steel skeleton 39 feet tower with a 4 second flash was built on the original foundation.



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- A replica of this lighthouse with a reproduction of a fourth order Fresnel lens was built in 2004 by the Bay Creek Resort & Club in Cape Charles; also has installed a 1942 bronze fog bell originally used on a bell buoy. Website is [http://www.baycreekgolfclub.com/plantation\\_flats.asp](http://www.baycreekgolfclub.com/plantation_flats.asp)
- Museum contains U.S. Lighthouse Service artifacts and keepers' implement on display.

The above was researched and drafted by Kitty Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## OLD POINT COMFORT LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Old Point Comfort Light

Location: Entrance to Hampton Roads Harbor, Chesapeake Bay; nearest Town/City is Fort Monroe, VA

Date Built: Built in 1774; present tower built in 1802 built by Elzy Burroughs

Type of Structure: White octagonal pyramidal sandstone tower with four large windows providing light to the spiral stone steps that lead to an iron ladder and trap door to the entrance to the lens chamber and a separate Keeper's house

Height: 58 feet, height of focal point is 54 feet

Characteristics: Two red flasher every 12 seconds

Lens: Eleven oil lantern with eleven fourteen-inch red and green reflector lanterns visible for fourteen miles on a clear day was replaced in 1857 with fourth order Fresnel lens and was automated in 1972

Foghorn: 1855 a fog bell tower was built with a fog bell, 40 inches in diameter and 36 inches in height and audible for 3 miles was added to the station with an appropriation of \$6,000

Appropriation: \$1,500 in 1800, a year later another \$3,500 was added to the original appropriation

Status: Still operational

### Historical Information:

- Second oldest lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay.
- It is suggested that Indians used wood fires on the point to act as navigational aids for Spanish ships during the 16th Century.
- It is known that in 1775 John Dams received the sum of 20 pound annually for showing a light there.
- During the War of 1812 the British captured the fort and used the lighthouse as an observation post.



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- Keeper's house was built in 1823; in 1891 a new keeper's dwelling was built to replace the house.
- Lighthouse is owned and maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard; the Keeper's house is owned and maintained by the U.S. Army and is residence for Fort Monroe's Command Sergeant Major; website <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/monroe>
- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The above was researched and drafted by Kitty Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## PAGES ROCK LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Pages Rock Lighthouse

Location: Off Blundering Point, York River; nearest Town/City is about 5 miles north of the town Yorktown, VA

Date Built: 1893

Type of Structure: Hexagonal Cottage style dwelling on a wooden screw pile with tower on roof.

Height: 41 feet

Characteristics:

Lens: Fourth order Fresnel lens and was automated in 1960

Foghorn:

Appropriation:

Status: No longer standing

### Historical Information:

- Lighthouse was assembled at the Lazaretto Depot in Maryland.
- Lighthouse was deactivated and removed in 1967. The lighthouse was replaced with an automated steel skeletal tower 43 feet high with a 6 second flashing light built on the original foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by Kitty Price, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## POINT OF SHOALS LIGHT



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Location: Burwell Bay in the James River, Virginia

Station Established: 1855

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1871

Operational: No

Automated: 1932

Deactivated: 1933

Foundation Materials:

Construction Materials:

Tower Shape: Hexagonal Screw-pile

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: 6th order

Characteristic: Fixed White

## Historical Information:

- The first lighthouse at this sight was built in 1855.
- It was a hexagonal screw-pile with a pressed glass masthead lens.
- Confederates raided the lighthouse during the Civil War.
- In 1871 the lighthouse had to be rebuilt due to severe damage caused by ice flows.
- It was automated in 1932 and deactivated in 1933.
- It was torn down in the 1960s.

Researched and written by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## PUNGOTEAGUE CREEK LIGHT

**Status:** No longer standing

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## RAGGED POINT LIGHT

Location: West side of the Potomac River entrance on the Chesapeake Bay

Station Established: 1910

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1962

Operational? No

Foundation Materials: Iron screw-piles

Construction Materials: Wood and Iron



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Tower Shape: Hexagonal screw-pile  
Markings/Pattern: Structure white, substructure brown  
Relationship to Other Structure: Integral  
Original Lens: Fourth Order, Fresnel  
Characteristic: Flashing white every 10 seconds

## Historical Information:

- The lighthouse was built at Coles Point near the Virginia shoreline in Westmoreland County on the Potomac River. It is on the opposite side of the river from Piney Point Lighthouse in Maryland.
- It was deactivated in 1962. It was one of the first lighthouses to be dismantled.
- An automated light tower was built on the original foundation.

Researched and written by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## SMITH POINT LIGHT

Location: Entrance to the Potomac River near Sunnybank, Virginia  
Station Established: 1802  
Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1897  
Operational? Yes  
Automated? 1971  
Deactivated: N/A  
Foundation Materials: Cast iron / concrete  
Construction Materials: Stone  
Tower Shape: Caisson  
Markings/Pattern: White with black lantern room & red base  
Relationship to Other Structure: Integral  
Original Lens: Fourth Order, Fresnel  
Characteristic: Fixed white

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

- The first light at Smith Point was built in 1802. Shoreline erosion caused the light to be moved in 1807.
- A lightship was stationed off the point in 1821. In 1828 erosion caused the light to be moved again. In 1857 a new lightship was placed near the point and in 1859 the light at the point was removed.





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- In 1868 the lightship was replaced by a screw-pile lighthouse. In 1895 ice destroyed the house when it ripped the house off its piles and carried it down the bay.
- In July of 1897 the caisson light was complete.
- The light was automated in 1971.
- This light still stands today and is an active aid to navigation.

Researched and written by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## STINGRAY POINT LIGHT

Location: Entrance to the Rappahannock River, near Deltaville, Virginia

Station Established: 1858

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1858

Operational? No

Automated? N/A

Deactivated: 1965

Construction Materials: Wood

Tower Shape: Hexagonal Screw-Pile

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Sixth Order

Characteristic: Fixed Red

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

- The lighthouse at Stingray Point was built in 1858.
- It was deactivated in 1965 and dismantled shortly thereafter.
- Stingray Point was named by Captain John Smith after being stung by a stingray in the area.
- A replica of the lighthouse was built at the Stingray Harbor Marina in Deltaville, Virginia, 1.6 miles west of the original site.

Researched and written by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## TANGIER SOUND



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Lighthouse Name: Tangier Sound Light

Location: Entrance to Tangier Sound, VA

Date Built: 1890

Height: 45 ft.

Type of Structure: square screwpile

Lens: Fourth Order Fresnel; Sauter, Lemonnier & Cie. 1889

Characteristic: White flash every 6 sec. with red sector for dangerous shoals.

Fogbell: yes – Number 4 Gamewell. 1 blow, 10 sec. silent, 1 blow, 10 sec. silent.

Appropriation: \$25,000

Status: Original Structure no longer standing. Replacement light exists.

## Historical Information:

- In 1905 ice caused a sunken schooner to rise and collide with the lighthouse.
- In 1914 the keeper made a daring, but futile effort to save the assistant keeper, who fell overboard from his dory.
- According to inspection records light station was repaired in 1919.
- Keeper's house was taken down in 1961 and a steel tower was built on the original foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by Bill Simms, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## THIMBLE SHOAL LIGHT

Location: Entrance to Hampton Roads, Virginia

Station Established: 1872

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1914

Operational? Yes

Automated? Yes, 1964

Deactivated: N/A

Foundation Materials: Cast Iron

Construction Materials: Concrete

Tower Shape: Conical "Spark Plug"

Markings/Pattern: Red tower made from red lead and Venetian red

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fourth Order, Fresnel

## Historical Information:



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- A six sided screw-pile light was built at Thimble Shoals in 1872. It replaced the last lightship on the bay.
- A fire destroyed the lighthouse on October 30, 1880 leaving only the iron work. A replacement light was sent from Lazaretto Depot in Baltimore, MD and the new light was lit on December 24, 1880.
- This screw-pile seemed doomed from the start. It was rammed by a steamer and damaged in March 1891. A coal barge rammed the lighthouse in 1898 and caused extensive damage. In December of 1909 the lighthouse was rammed so hard by the schooner *Malcom Baxter, Jr.*, it knocked over the coal stove and destroyed the pile foundation. The resulting fire destroyed the lighthouse.
- A new caisson light was built in 1914. It has fared better than it predecessor. It was automated in 1964 and still serves as an active aid to navigation.

Researched and written by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## TUE MARSHES LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Tue Marshes Light

Location: Lower Chesapeake Bay, Goodwind Island Entrance of York River.

Station Established: 1875

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1960

Operational? NO

Automated? N/A

Foghorn: Bell – 1 blow, 30 sec. silent, 2 blows, 30 sec. silent.

Deactivated: 1960

Foundation Materials: Current steel tower uses original foundation

Construction Materials: Wood and Iron

Tower Shape: Square screw-pile

Markings/Pattern: Square screw-pile

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Inspection reports note it as 6th order.

Characteristic: Fixed White, Red Sector

Status: No longer standing

### Historical Information:

- The Two Marshes Light was built in 1875 on the Goodwin Islands and marked the entrance of the York River. The original spelling of the name was "Too's Marshes". It was changed sometime in the late 1890's.



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- The Coast Guard dismantled the structure in 1960. They built a skeletal tower on the original foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## WATTS ISLAND LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Watts Island Lighthouse

Location: Chesapeake Bay, Little Watts Island near Tangier Island

Station Established: 1867

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: N/A

Operational? No

Automated? N/A

Deactivated: 1944

Foundation Materials:

Construction Materials:

Tower Shape: 48 Foot Tower

Markings/Pattern:

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate 20 by 34 keeper's quarters

Original Lens: Fifth Order Fresnel

### Historical Information:

- The tower was built in 1867. In 1891 a keeper's quarters was added.
- The light was automated in 1923.
- A winter storm in 1944 toppled the tower and the island eroded away. Only a shoal remains where the island and lighthouse once stood.

The above was researched and drafted by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## WHITE SHOAL (INLET) LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: White Shoal Lighthouse

Location: James River, Sandy Point near Newport News.

Station Established: 1854

Year Original Tower Lit: 1855



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Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1934

Operational? No

Automated? N/A

Deactivated: 1934

Foundation Materials: Iron

Construction Materials:

Tower Shape: Hexagonal screw-pile

Markings/Pattern: White Hexagonal screw-pile, red roof and foundation

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fifth Order Fresnel

## Historical Information:

- White Shoal Lighthouse was one of three screw-piles lit on February 6, 1855 on the James River. It replaced a day beacon that had been constructed in 1854.
- By 1869 the poorly constructed structure was leaning to one side and deemed unsafe.
- In 1871 the structure was completely rebuilt and a fog bell and fifth order lens were added.
- The lighthouse was deactivated in 1934. An automated light was built near the original location.
- In the 1970's ice flows carried the structure away. Though it was deemed unsafe 100 years before, it out lasted all other lighthouses on the James River.

The above was researched and drafted by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## WINDMILL POINT LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Windmill Point Lighthouse

Location: Chesapeake Bay, North Side of entrance to Rappahannock River.

Station Established: 1834

Year Original Light First Lit: 1869

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1965

Operational? No

Automated? N/A

Deactivated: 1965

Foundation Materials: Current beacon uses original foundation

Construction Materials:

Tower Shape: Hexagonal screw-pile



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Markings/Pattern: White Hexagonal screw-pile

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fifth Order Fresnel

## Historical Information:

- Between 1834 and 1869 three separate Lightships were stationed where the light was built. In 1861 Confederates took the Lightship.
- In 1869 a permanent lighthouse was built. The structure was a white Hexagonal screwpile with a fifth order lens.
- Harsh Chesapeake Bay winters took their toll on the lighthouse. Riprap stones were added to shore up the lighthouse.
- The light was automated in 1954.
- The structure was dismantled in 1965. A small automotive beacon was built on the original foundation.

The above was researched and drafted by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## WOLF TRAP LIGHT

Lighthouse Name: Wolf Trap Light

Location: Lower Chesapeake Bay, South of Rappahannock River.

Station Established: 1821

Year Original Tower Lit: 1870

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1894

Operational? Yes

Automated? Yes 1971

Deactivated: n/a

Foundation Materials: Caisson

Construction Materials: Brick

Tower Shape: Square on octagonal building

Markings/Pattern: Red on brown cylinder w/black lantern

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fourth Order

## Historical Information:

- In 1821 a lightship was established on the tip of Wolf Trap Shoals. The ship remained there until Southern forces destroyed it in 1861. After the war, many



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lightships were replaced by screw-pile lighthouse. In the spring of 1870 building began on the Wolf Trap Shoals light.

- The light was first lit on October 1, 1870. In January of 1893, ice flows cut the lighthouse off its pilings and carried it 20 miles down the Bay.
- In 1894 a replacement caisson lighthouse was constructed. It was lit on September 20, 1894.
- The light was automated in 1971. It remains an active aid to navigation and is owned by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The above was researched and drafted by Melissa Buckler, a Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Light House Society volunteer.

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## YORK SPIT LIGHT

**Status:** No longer standing

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