



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Sandy Point Shoal Light Station's National Register of Historic Places Nomination

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Sandy Point Shoal Light Station

other names/site number: AA-166

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2. Location

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street & number: N/A not for publication: N/A

city or town: near Skidmore. vicinity X

state: Maryland code: MD county: Anne Arundel code: 003

zip code: N/A

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



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Captain, U. S. Coast Guard,

Chief, Office of Civil Engineering 2/22/02

Signature of certifying official Date

Department of Transportation, U.S. Coast Guard

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

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4. National Park Service Certification

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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



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____ removed from the National Register _____

____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

____ private

____ public-local

____ public-State

X public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

____ building(s)

____ district

____ site

X structure

____ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

_____ buildings



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_____ sites

1 _____ structures

_____ objects

1 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Light Stations of the United States

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: transportation Sub: water-related

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: transportation Sub: water-related

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions): No Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions):

foundation: caisson

roof: metal

walls: brick



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other:

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)¹

Description Summary

Sandy Point Shoal Light Station has a wooden caisson foundation supporting a round 35-foot-diameter cement-filled cast-iron cylinder on which a 22-story octagonal brick structure rests. The brick octagonal structure is painted red and has a white roof surmounted by a black lantern. The first two stories were used as living quarters, the third level as the watch room, and the lower level within the cast iron cylinder, as a storage area for water, coal, and oil. The combination dwelling and lantern has elements of the Second Empire architectural style.² The station is situated in 5 to 7 feet of water approximately 1000 yards east from the beach at Sandy Point State Park and approximately 1 1/2 miles north of the William Preston Lane Memorial (Chesapeake Bay) Bridge, northern Chesapeake Bay, western shore, near Skidmore, Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Owned and managed by the U.S. Coast Guard in District 5, access to the station is via boat.

General Description³

Foundation

The cast iron cylinder, 35 feet in diameter, 32 feet, 6 inches high, is attached to a wooden caisson and was sunk in 3 feet of sand. The plates forming the cylinder are bolted together in horizontal bands with the flanges turned inward to give the exterior a uniform surface. It is filled with concrete. The cylinder is painted a dark red/brown.

Tower, Exterior

The 2 1/2-story brick tower/keeper's quarters is 24 by 24 feet with truncated corners giving the structure an octagonal shape. The first two stories are made of brick masonry, and the third story is constructed of timber framing with a mansard roof. Although not originally painted, the brick portion of the structure is now painted red. The wooden third story mansard roof is painted white, the lantern is painted black, and the gallery deck is painted a dark red/brown. The gallery deck is a concrete slab which overlays the caisson fill. In the slab, there are horizontal control joints at each corner of the tower and one at the half waypoint of each major wall. The slab is cracked, especially along the edges. The gallery balustrade surrounds the perimeter of the slab. It is made of square section iron posts at approximately 7-foot-centers, a flat 1 1/2-inch-wide flat iron bar stock top and bottom rail, and 3/4-inch-diameter balusters every 6-



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inches-on-center. The 1 1/4-inch-square posts are tapered at the top forming a pyramidal shaped cap. The privy, once located on the southwest side and overhanging the lower gallery deck, was removed sometime since 1989. A pair of davits and a landing ladder once existed on the east side. Another pair of davits and a single loading davit once existed on the west side. The landing ladder on the west side is still used.

The masonry tower has a water table four courses tall at its base. At the second-level sill elevation, there is a decorative molded brick masonry belt course. At the top of the second level, there is a decorative wood ogee molding with nine brackets on each major side and four brackets on the truncated sides, followed by a cove molding above. The cornice brackets are all replacements. Fenestration on the first two levels consist of two side-by-side windows on the north and south sides of the first and second floors; the main door on the west side of the first floor has a second-level window centered over it, and a single window on the east side with corresponding single window on the second level. There is a single dormer window on each of the four major sides of the mansard-roofed third level. Each window on the first and second levels has a stone sill and segmental lintel arch made with molded brick forming a window hood trim at the head of each window, though these have been removed above the north side windows.

The door opening has similar molded brick decoration. The original wooden door has been replaced with a 1/4-inch steel-plate storm door reinforced on the inside with 1 1/2-by 1 1/2-inch steel angles. A wooden entrance door is stored in the sitting room and has four glass panes at the top and three horizontal solid wood panels on the bottom. All of the original six-over-six double-hung window sashes have been removed (except for the bottom sash on a single window on the east side), and the openings were replaced with acrylic sheets fitted with white aluminum louvered vents. The first-level window opening on the east side and the second-level window opening on the west side are filled with brick. Apparently all the windows on at least the lower level were at one time filled with masonry, probably shortly after being automated in 1963 and then reopened and covered with acrylic sheets, probably in 1988.

The original diamond pattern polychromatic shingle roof had been replaced by a flat seam sheet metal roof. The small lightning conductors on the dormers have been removed. Plywood replaces the original sheeting boards below the lantern deck.

Tower, Lower Level

The lower level area is a 16-foot-wide octagonal-shaped room formed into the concrete fill of the caisson. The walls of the room are approximately 6 feet thick. The ceiling and concrete walls are covered with 1 3/4-inch tongue-and-groove beaded wood paneling. A brick masonry pier located in the center of the floor and running to the ceiling supports a hollow iron column which served both as a support column to the upper floors as well as



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housing the counterweights for the fog bell striking mechanism. This level is accessed by a ten-step wooden ship's ladder located through a doorway in the vestibule just adjacent to a spiral stairway located on the first level. A coal shoot leading up to the gallery deck is located on the north side.

Tower, First Level

Access is via a sheet-metal door located on the west side. As one enters the vestibule, directly ahead is a spiral wooden stairway that leads to the upper levels, and to the left of the stairwell, a ladder descends to the lower level. A door was once located here. Off the vestibule is a 7- by 11-foot kitchen with pantry to the northwest, and a sitting room with corner fireplace to the northeast. The fireplace mantel is missing. This 9- by 19-foot room was later used as a radio and day room. On the south side is a 9- by 19-foot room that was used for the storage of cell batteries and a backup automatic start generator from the time of automation to installation of solar panels. An 1883 plan from the National Archives shows that the kitchen was originally in the room that later stored the batteries and generator, and the present kitchen was a storeroom. All the rooms originally had ceilings made of plaster. The ceilings and walls are now covered with fibrous board, the seams of which are covered with wood battens. The original wood floors are covered with tile. The baseboard, where it survives, is a simple 1- by 4-inch board. An original built-in bookshelf in the sitting room is intact.

Tower, Second Level

The walls of the wooden spiral staircase to the second level are finished with tongue-and-groove beaded paneling, 2-inches wide. The second level is partitioned into three bedrooms, two on the north side and one on the south side. The south side bedroom also has a low-pressure metal tank in a closet; this was possibly part of the water cistern system or part of a fog signal system. The closet off the southeast bedroom was the weight closet for the fog bell mechanism on the third story. The second level remains exactly as shown in the original construction drawings. During Coast Guard occupation, one bedroom, 9 by 12 feet, was used by the officer in charge as his quarters and the other as storage. Exterior and partition walls have been covered with pressed fiber wallboard. The original wood floors are intact. All doors are intact except the door to the stairway, though the doorknob hardware is missing.

Tower, Third Level

The spiral staircase continues to the third or watch room level of the lighthouse, which is divided into two rooms. The original 1883 plans call this level the "oil and watch room." The wood-frame walls that form the mansard roof are lined with a horizontal beaded wood paneling except the lower 22 3/4 inches, which is covered by the same beaded



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paneling, but vertical. The smaller room on the south side does not appear on the original construction drawings, but the finish materials match that from the rest of this level suggesting it was added after the drawings were made. The door to this room is present, but the hardware is missing. The windows were all two-over-two double-hung wooden sashes with arched tops; only the north and west window sashes survive. All of these windows have been covered with acrylic sheets fitted with metal rectangular louvers. The fog bell, which hung from the east dormer, has been removed. The central metal cylinder support column, which rests on a brick pier in the cellar, continues up through to the lantern room and is clearly visible next to the spiral stairwell enclosure in the watch room. A 5 1/4-inch-diameter post supports each corner of the room.

Lantern

The octagonal 6 1/2- by 6 1/2-foot fourth-order lantern is reached via the continuation of the counter-clockwise spiral stairway that turns clockwise 2/3rds of the way up from the third level. The floor of the lantern room is made of wood. The glass panes are set in cast-iron frames with silicone sealant on the inside. The roof is a standing seam roof lined on the interior with sheet metal. The roof was described in 1938 as consisting of copper. At the peak of the roof, is an exterior ventilator ball. Mounted into the parapet wall are three vents, for which the regulators are missing. The interior of the parapet walls is lined with wood beaded paneling. A plywood half-door through the parapet wall provides access to the lantern level gallery which is covered with flat seam sheet metal. The balustrade consists of 1 1/2-inch-diameter posts set on 32-inch-centers, with a flat 1 1/2-inch-wide iron top and bottom rail, and 1/2-inch balusters set on 6-inch-centers. Each post is capped with a 3-inch diameter finial ball. Two solar panels are bolted to the top rail on the south side. An API foghorn was mounted on the northeast side of the upper gallery deck; it has since been removed.

Optic

The original fourth-order lens made by "Henry Le Pante" (Henri La Pauite) was described in 1938 as a four panel lens with one central drum panel and eight fixed prisms in the panel above the central drum and five fixed prisms in the panels below the central drum. The fourth-order Fresnel lens has been replaced with a 300mm solar-powered acrylic lens.

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8. Statement of Significance

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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.)

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

Transportation

Architecture

Period of Significance: 1883-1952



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Significant Dates: 1883, 1890, 1901-1902, 1929

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Known Design Source: none

Architect/Builder: W. J. Humes for the U.S. Lighthouse Board

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

The Sandy Point Shoal Light Station is significant for its association with federal governmental efforts to provide an integrated system of navigational aids and to provide for safe maritime transportation in the Chesapeake Bay, a major transportation corridor for commercial traffic from the early nineteenth through twentieth centuries. This caisson lighthouse embodies a distinctive design and method of construction that typified lighthouse construction on the Chesapeake Bay during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth.

History

The original Sandy Point Lighthouse, a brick keeper's dwelling with a lantern room placed on the roof, was built onshore at Sandy Point in 1858. Like Smith Point and Thomas Point Shoals, the onshore station was replaced by offshore lighthouses to more adequately mark offshore shoals. On August 3, 1854 Congress appropriated \$8,000 to build a lighthouse at Sandy Point near the present site of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Approximately two acres of land located about 600 feet north of the point and a right-of-way was purchased from Baptist Mezick and his wife Mary for \$526. A contract was let to W.J. Humes to built a 12-story 31.5- by 18.5-foot brick keeper's quarters with an integral tower and lantern room surmounted on the roof. The tower was painted red, and the lantern was fitted with a fifth-order Fresnel lens exhibiting a fixed white flashing light. The dwelling had four rooms, an attached kitchen, and a cellar. The main entrance through one of the gable ends was decorated along the roofline with Victorian sawn work. Nearby was a brick cistern 5 feet across and 5 feet deep.⁴

The Lighthouse Board in 1874 reported on the inefficiency of the lighthouse to adequately protect the off-shore shoals:

Sandy Point is located on the main-land, from which place continuous shoals make out into the bay, a distance of about one mile, and vessels drawing more than ten feet of water cannot approach within that distance of the lighthouse. A fog bell is established at



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this station, but, on account of its distance from the channel, can seldom be heard. The defects of its location are especially felt during stormy weather in winter. Nearly all the passenger-steamers running into the port of Baltimore from below, of which there are many, change their course at this point, and this becomes a hazardous undertaking to boats crowded with passengers and running on time, when neither the light can be seen nor the fog bell heard. A change in the location of the light to the outer edge of the shoal, and the establishment of an efficient fog-signal are recommenced, and an appropriation of \$40,000 asked for this purpose.⁵

After Congress failed to allocate the initial request, the Lighthouse Board lowered its request to \$30,000 the following year with the same result. In 1876 the Board requested \$25,000, and then \$20,000 in 1877, then \$25,000 each year until 1881; but each year's request was denied. Finally on August 7, 1882 Congress authorized \$25,000 but the Board now felt \$40,000 was needed because of the exposed location and need for a sturdier ice-resistant structure. When the request for additional funds was refused, the Board went ahead with a caisson lighthouse but erected a less expensive brick tower rather than the planned cast-iron tower. The present caisson structure was built on approximately five acres of submarine land conveyed by the Governor of Maryland on April 21, 1883.⁶

In August of 1883, the contractor and his crew erected a working platform to hold the caisson in position during positioning and sinking. A derrick, concrete mixer, and engine were installed. By August 24, the wooden caisson and first course of cast-iron plate for the cylinder were assembled and sunk the next day. On the 27th a second course of plates was added and the assembly sunk three feet into the bottom, being leveled by use of water jets and force pumps as it sunk. Temporary quarters and a kitchen were built on land and connected to the work site by a "plank walk." On August 31 they began mixing concrete and filling the caisson so that by September 26, about 1,000 cubic yards of concrete had been poured and the third course of iron plates attached. Forms for the cellar were made and bricklaying for the tower begun the day after the last of the concrete was poured. The brick tower was completed on October 9th and the lantern completed on the 11th. After "due notice to mariners" the fourth-order light went into service on October 30, 1883. The onshore facility, now abandoned, was eventually dismantled.

By 1890 a red sector was introduced but it did not reliably define the established mark so the light was changed from a flashing light to a fixed light in 1890. In the same year it was noticed the brick has "scaled off in many places" due to "salt moisture." The brick was to be painted to "prevent further corrosion."⁷ During a 1901 routine inspection, including the taking of soundings around the station, "an extensive scour in the immediate vicinity" of the lighthouse was discovered below the foot of the caisson and within a few weeks had enlarged nearly necessitating an emergency treatment. In 1902



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a contract was awarded to McClenahan Granite Company of Port Deposit who supplied and laid about 670 cubic yards of riprap around the foundation to prevent further bottom scouring.

The oil wick illuminant was changed to incandescent oil-vapor in 1913. Electricity was supplied to the lighthouse on December 4, 1929, and the characteristic of the light changed from a fixed to a flashing light. The fog signal in 1938 was described as a third-class reed horn with a 12-foot copper trumpet. There was one keeper, one assistant two boats at the station, one an 18 foot "launch" powered by a "make & break, 2-cycle. J. W. Lathrop" engine and a 14-foot "row boat," hung from davits. Water was collected from the roof into three 300-gallon cypress tanks.⁸

The light was automated on May 14, 1963. The foghorn sounds every 30 seconds during foggy weather. On June 1979, the classic fourth-order Fresnel lens was found smashed by vandals. The Coast Guard offered a reward for information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of the guilty party, but apparently the culprits were never found.

A sign located in the vestibule denotes that personnel aboard the USCGC Red Birch carried out rehabilitation of the lighthouse in July 1988. A section of deteriorating wooden cornice molding and brackets under the eaves of the gabled roof were removed to make a pattern at the Curtis Bay Coast Guard yard. From this pattern, new cornice molding brackets were made and reinstalled. Unfortunately, plywood fascia boards on which the brackets were attached have in some places already delaminated. It is probably during this work that the steel door and vented acrylic sheets over the windows were added. Personnel aboard USCGC Red Birch also performed interior and exterior painting of structure in 1990. In August 1995 major work was performed on the lighthouse including a new copper-sheathed roof, repair to the gallery deck, replacement of the gallery rail and landing ladder, and the entire structure repainted.⁹

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bartlett, Bill. "Coast Guard races time to preserve bay lighthouses," Annapolis Capital, August 4, 1990.

"Chesapeake Bay Lighthouses," Gredell & Associates: Structural Engineers, 1991.



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"Chesapeake Bay Lighthouse Foundation Inspection," Han-Padron Associates, New York, New York, 1992.

Clifford, Candace. 1994 Inventory of Historic Light Stations. Department of Interior, National Park Service, History Division, Washington, D.C., 1994.

Clifford, Mary Louise and J. Candace Clifford, Women Who Kept the Lights: An Illustrated History of Female Lighthouse Keepers Cypress Communications, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1993.

de Gast, Robert. The Lighthouses of the Chesapeake. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1973.

"Description of Sandy Point Light Station, September 26, 1938," copy in Sandy Point Light file, National Maritime Initiative office, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Hanley, D. M. "Sandy Point Shoal Light National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form" (no date), copy in Sandy Point Light file, National Maritime Initiative Office, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Holland, F. Ross, Jr. "Lighthouses," A part of the draft Maritime Heritage of the United States National Historic Landmark Theme Context Study for Lighthouses, National Maritime Initiative, National Park Service, Washington, D. C. (1993).

_____ Maryland Lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay: An Illustrated History. Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, Maryland, in press.

"Sandy Point Facelift," The Keeper's Log, volume XII, number 2, Winter, 1996.

Turbyville, Linda. Bay Beacons: Lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay. Eastwind Publishing, Annapolis, 1995.

U.S. Lighthouse Board. Annual Reports, 1857-1913. Department of Commerce and Labor, 1857-1913.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

X previously determined eligible by the National Register



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___ 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

___ Other State agency

X Federal agency

___ Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository: National Archives; Library of Congress; National Maritime Initiative, National Park Service; U.S. Coast Guard Headquarter, Historian's Office, Washington, D.C.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of the Property: Less than one acre

USGS quadrangle: Gibson Island, MD

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

18 380090 4319240

Boundary Description:

The boundary is coterminous with the foundation of the structure.



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Boundary Justification:

The boundary completely encompasses the light station.

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Ralph E. Eshelman, Maritime Historian; originally prepared for the Maryland Historical Trust as part of a multiple property nomination for Maryland Lighthouses; reformatted in May 1998 by Candace Clifford, NCSHPO consultant to the National Maritime Initiative, as part of a multiple property documentation form for U.S. Coast Guard-owned light stations; edited and revised in August 2002 by Jennifer Perunko, NCSHPO Consultant, National Maritime Initiative, National Park Service

organization: Eshelman & Associates

date: January 31, 1996

street & number: 12178 Preston Dr.

city or town: Lusby state: MD zip code: 20657

telephone: 410-326-4877

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Property Owner

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name: U.S. Coast Guard, Fifth District

street & number: 431 Crawfoot Street

telephone: (757) 398-6351

city or town: Portsmouth state: VA zip code: 23705



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Notes:

1 The following description and associated photographs were reviewed in August 2002 by a US Coast Guard Aid to Navigation team responsible for the property. A document verifying that the description and associated photographs reflect the current condition of the property is on file with the Office of Civil Engineering, US Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC.

2 F. Ross Holland, Jr., Lighthouses, A part of the Maritime Heritage of the United States National Historic Landmark Theme Context Study for Lighthouses, National Maritime Initiative, National Park Service, Washington, D. C. (1993), p. 87.

3 Much of this narrative is derived from a section of a condition assessment report on Sandy Point Shoal Light Station prepared by the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center in 1995/1996. This report is on file at the National Maritime Initiative office, National Register, History, and Education Programs, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.; "Chesapeake Bay Lighthouses," Gredell & Associates: Structural Engineers, pp. 95- 110; "Chesapeake Bay Lighthouse Foundation Inspection," pp. 4-13 - 4-21; and D. M. Hanley, "Sandy Point Shoal Light National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form" (no date), copy in Sandy Point Shoal Light file, National Maritime Initiative Office, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

4 Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, 1857; 1858; 1863; 1868; and 1869; and de Gast, p. 83.

5 U.S. Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, 1874, pp. 44-45 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1874)

6 Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, 1875; 1876; 1877; 1878, p. 35; 1879; 1881, p. 40; 1882; 1883, p. 51

7 Holland, "Maryland Lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay: An Illustrated History," Chapter 4, pp. 13-14; and Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, 1884, p. 49; and 1890

8 Lighthouse Board, Annual Report, 1901; 1902, p. 126, 1913, p. 45; "Description of Sandy Point Light Station, September 26, 1938," copy in Sandy Point Light file, National Maritime Initiative office, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.; de Gast, p. 83; Holland, "Maryland Lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay: An Illustrated History" Chapter 4, p.14; and W.A. Jones letter to Lighthouse Board, Baltimore, February 12 and 23, and May 22, 1901, and Engineer Secretary to W.A. Jones, [Washington], March 16, 1901, File 802. CBL. 1901-1910.



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9 Linda Turbyville, Bay Beacons: Lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay (Eastwind Publishing: Annapolis, 1995, p. 38; Bill Bartlett, "Coast Guard races time to preserve bay lighthouses," Annapolis Capital (August 4, 1990); "Sandy Point Facelift," The Keeper's Log, volume XII, number 2 (Winter, 1996), pp.35-36; and Lighthouse Digest, volume V, number 2 (February), 1996, p. 16.

NPS Form 10-900 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form