



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

## Sentinel Island Light Station's National Register of Historic Places Nomination

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 Sentinel Island Light Station

other names/site number Sentinel Island Lighthouse

AHRS Site No. JUN-00085

=====

### 2. Location

=====

street & number n/a

not for publication n/a



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

city or town Juneau vicinity X

state Alaska code AK county Juneau code 110

zip code 99801

=====  
=====

### 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 statewide X locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
=====

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of commenting or other official Date



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer

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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====

5. Classification



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

=====

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)

X district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

5 buildings

4 sites

2 structures

\_ objects

11 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National

Register 0



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

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

=====  
=====

## 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)

Modern Movement, Art Deco (lighthouse)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Bungalow/Craftsman (outbuildings)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete, wood piling

roof concrete, wood



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

walls concrete, wood

other

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

In 1900, the U.S. Government reserved 6.55 acres for a lighthouse on the northeastern half of Sentinel Island. The island is toward the north end of Favorite Channel south of the mouth of Lynn Canal and about twenty-five miles north of Juneau, Alaska. Sentinel Island Light Station includes five buildings, four sites, and two structures. Buildings date from two periods: the initial construction in 1901, and 1935 when Depression-era programs funded improvements at a number of Alaska's light stations. The light is still active, although automated in 1966, and now powered by solar charged batteries installed in 1987. The last keepers left in 1966. The standing buildings and structures have been reasonably maintained.

The oldest buildings include the Hoist Houses #1 and #2, Blacksmith Shop, and Boat House. These wood buildings have exposed rafter ends, gable roofs, and very simple detailing. Built in the 1930s, the lighthouse is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture. The foundations of the original lighthouse/keeper's residence, workshop/bunkhouse, water cistern, and oil house remain. There is also evidence of the 1902 tramway connecting the dock and the main buildings.

Lighthouse (AHRS Site No. JUN-737). Contributing. The original light station had a square, double, two-story keepers dwelling with hipped cross gables and a fog signal house. The fog signal house was 60 feet west of the oil house and equipped with a third-class Daboll trumpet. The station was illuminated with a fourth order, fixed-white light, 82 feet above mean high water, or about 42 feet above land. The candlepower of the light was increased from 600 to 1,600 in 1926. It was again increased in 1929 by changing the illuminant from acetylene to electricity. In 1935, a new two-story Art Deco style light and fog signal building was built measuring 28 by 34 feet. An 11 by 11 foot square tower rises 25 feet above the roof from the center of the Northeast elevation. The building is constructed of reinforced concrete and it has a full basement. The original 13-foot lantern housing a flashing white light with a 17-mile range is on top of the tower. A project to automate the light and change the optic to a Crouse Hinds DCB-10 rotating lantern was approved in 1962, and the change happened in 1966. In 1983 or so, the light was changed to a rotating 190 mm lantern, and then, in June of 1987, the crew of the buoy tender Woodrush installed fifteen solar panels on the roof of the building to reduce the need for generators and to cut maintenance costs. Hence, solar charged batteries now power the light. In 1996, the lantern was changed to a more modern VRB-25. In 1944, the fog signal was reported as a "fog signal, diaphone, air, on



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

for 5 seconds, off for 25." The fog signal kept that characteristic, on 5 sec out of every 30, until it was discontinued in 1996. The light tower has windows near the top of three of its elevations. A walkway with a metal handrail surrounds the glass and cast iron lantern on top of the tower. Pilasters decorate the sides of the building and the corners of its tower. The building is generally in good condition. Some original windows have been replaced with Plexiglas, and others were filled in during the 1960s.

Hoist House #1 (AHR Site No. JUN-738). Contributing. Built in 1901, Hoist House #1 is a small 7.5 by 7.5 foot shed roofed wood frame building. It has board and batten vertical siding. The building housed the mechanical equipment to pull a wheeled cart along the tramline. Generally in good condition, the wood timber foundation is rotted in some places.

Blacksmith Shop (AHR Site No. JUN-739). Contributing. Built in the 1930s, the shop is an 8 by 12 foot gable roofed wood frame building with corrugated metal siding and roofing. It has a concrete foundation. The original door has been replaced and the windows have been covered with Plexiglas.

Boat House (AHR Site No. JUN-740). Contributing. Built in 1901, the boathouse is a 15 by 28 foot gable roofed wood frame building with vertical board and batten wood siding. The original double hinged door remains. A window frame on the wall opposite the door is deteriorated. Most of the wood shingles are gone. The building is in poor condition.

Hoist House #2 (AHR Site No. JUN-741). Contributing. Built in 1901, Hoist House #2 stands next to the boathouse. It is a 12 by 16 foot hip roofed wood frame building sided with wood shingles. The windows are in poor condition, and most of the wood shingles on the roof are gone. The building is in poor condition.

Dock (AHR Site No. 742). Contributing. Built in 1901, the wooden dock is 50 by 60 feet and 20 feet high. A wood bridge connects it and the land. The dock has some rotted piling and beams.

Lighthouse/keeper's quarters' foundation (AHR Site No. JUN-743). Contributing. The red brick and cement block foundation of the original lighthouse/keeper's quarters measures 45 by 60 feet and includes two water cisterns. In 1971, several years after the station was automated and keepers removed, the U.S. Coast Guard removed the deteriorated building by burning it.

Workshop/bunkhouse foundation (AHR Site No. JUN-744). Contributing. This reinforced concrete foundation dates from the 1930s and measures 12 by 20 feet.



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Water cistern foundation (AHR Site No. JUN-745). Contributing. The reinforced concrete cistern foundation measures 12 by 12 feet. It was installed as part of the original station.

Oil house foundation (AHR Site No. JUN-746). Contributing. The reinforced concrete foundation of a building constructed in the 1930s that no longer stands measures 8 by 8 feet.

Tramway (AHR Site No. JUN-747). Contributing. Constructed in 1901, the 360 feet tramway connected the dock and the lighthouse. It is constructed of steel rails and wood ties.

=====

## 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)

X 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.

X 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





# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

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

Period of Significance 1902-1952

Significant Dates 1902

1935

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder U.S. Lighthouse Bureau

George James, Juneau

=====  
=====

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

=====  
=====



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Sentinel Island Light Station is a guide on an important water passage for Alaskan transportation and commerce, and the lighthouse is an excellent example in Alaska of Art Deco architecture. Sentinel Island and Five Finger light stations along Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage started operating on March 1, 1902. They were the first American lighthouses built in Alaska. Sentinel Island Light Station stands at the entrance to Lynn Canal, a heavily used marine transportation corridor from near the city of Juneau north to the cities of Haines and Skagway. The U.S. Lighthouse Bureau added a concrete Art Deco style lighthouse building to the site in 1935 that is an excellent example in Alaska of the popular architectural style. Sentinel Island Light Station continues to guide recreational and commercial vehicles through the Inside Passage today.

## Historic background

The discovery of rich gold deposits in the upper Yukon River area at the close of the nineteenth century prompted a massive rise in the number of ships navigating Lynn Canal. The canal was part of the Inside Passage, a safer route for ships to travel than the open ocean route to the west through the eastern Gulf of Alaska. In the late 1890s, watercraft of every description converged upon the Pacific Northwest ports to sail north. Once they passed British Columbia waters, there were few guides through the Inside Passage. Fog, rain, strong tides, and a rocky shoreline made this passage particularly difficult, especially for large steamers overloaded with prospectors and freight. Over three hundred accidents in Inside Passage waters were reported in 1898. Although Alaska's governors had been urging the U.S. Government to install navigation aids along Alaska's coasts for over a decade, only a few markers and buoys had been installed. In a report to Congress dated October 13, 1900, the inspector and engineer for the Thirteenth Lighthouse District, headquartered in the Pacific Northwest, gave Sentinel Island highest priority. Congress appropriated funds for two lighthouses in Alaska, one at Sentinel Island, that year. George James, a Juneau resident, received the contract and began construction of the Sentinel Island station in 1901. Construction costs were \$21,267. Sentinel Island Light Station started operating on March 1, 1902, sharing the honor with Five Finger Light Station south of Juneau, as one of the first two American-built lighthouses operating in Alaska. In the next three years, seven other lights would be established along the inside passage.

The original Sentinel Island lighthouse was a wooden, square, duplex keeper's residence with hipped cross gables and an integral light tower. A steel and glass lantern on top of the tower housed a fourth order Fresnel lens. During the 1930s, the U.S. Lighthouse Bureau replaced many of the wooden lighthouses in Alaska with concrete buildings of the Art Deco architectural style; in 1935, Sentinel was one of these lights. The Sentinel Island light and fog signal house's rectilinear massing, flat roof, central tower, stepped elevation plains, one over one double hung sash windows and vertical



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

fretwork distinguishes it as Art Deco. Its total cost was \$35,310. The original lantern was moved to the new tower and the building continued to serve as the keeper's residence until the light was unmanned and automated in 1966 due to inflation and technological advances. In 1971, the U.S. Coast Guard demolished the deteriorated original residence by burning it in accordance with recommended fire procedures issued by the Coast Guard.

On October 24, 1918, a particularly vicious storm hit Southeast Alaska. A fully loaded Canadian Pacific steamship, the Princess Sophia, left Skagway at 10:10 p.m. At 2:10 a.m. the unthinkable happened when the ship ran onto Vanderbilt Reef at cruising speed. A fleet of rescue vessels from Juneau rushed to the site. The Princess Sophia's captain did not think his ship was damaged badly enough to warrant the risky evacuation of passengers as the storm worsened. The boats sent to the rescue had to retreat to shelter, which some found by way of the light from Sentinel Island Light Station. The following morning, the rescue boats returned to Vanderbilt Reef and saw only a twenty-foot section of the Princess Sophia's mast visible above the water. None of the 353 passengers and crewmembers survived.

=====

## 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.



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

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

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

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

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

X Other

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



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

=====

## 10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property 6.55

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

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 08 504642 6489300 3 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

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

Sentinel Island Light Station is located in the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 30, Township 38 South, Range 63 East, Copper River Meridian.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries encompass the buildings, structures, and foundations that remain within the lighthouse reserve that historically have been associated with the light station.

=====

## 11. Form Prepared By\*

=====

name/title Gary H. Gillette, President

organization Gastineau Channel Historical Society



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

date November 15, 1998

street & number P.O. Box 21264

telephone 907-586-5338

city or town Juneau state AK zip code 99801

\*Revised by Ms. Kebby Kelley, Environmental Protection Specialist, Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard, 2100 2nd Street S.W., 20593, 202-267-6034.

=====  
=====

## 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

=====  
=====



## U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

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

name U.S. Coast Guard - MLCP(SE)

street & number Coast Guard Island, Building 54-D

telephone 510-437-5804

city or town Alameda state CA zip code 94501-5100 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form