

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

a. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Cape Henry Lighthouse is the first lighthouse structure authorized, fully completed, and lighted by the newly organized Federal Government. It is an octagonal stone structure, faced with hewn or hammer-dressed stone--the first of three lighthouses to be built by John McComb, Jr. The tower was completed in October, 1792, and it was lighted in that same month.

From early colonial times Chesapeake Bay boasted a substantial volume of shipping. For decades, however, efforts to gain the benefits of a lighthouse were unsuccessful. The division of the Bay into two political entities, Virginia and Maryland, made unified action difficult; the comparative regularity of the coast off the Virginia Capes made it seem less pressing; and there was difficulty in getting agreement among so many interested, and often conflicting parties--the two houses of the Maryland and Virginia Assemblies, the British Government, Lord Baltimore, and British merchants trading to the Chesapeake. The lighthouse was not erected until this complex situation had been simplified with the establishment of the Federal Government. Then it became the first whose authorization and complete construction were undertaken.

The oil-burning lamps of the Cape Henry Lighthouse were first lighted late in October, 1792. From reports and indications noted through the years, the light at Cape Henry burned with regularity in subsequent years. The lantern itself, of course, underwent a number of improvements, and there were some structural improvements as well.

During an inspection in 1872 the stability and safety of the old tower were first questioned. Since it was considered "one of the first lights in importance along the coast," it was argued that a more powerful light was needed. The recommendations did not get immediate attention. Finally, an initial appropriation of \$75,000 on June 20, 1878, paved the way for the start of a new tower and its associated facilities. The new tower was completed some 350 feet southeast of the old one late in 1881 and lighted in December of that year.

After a new light was placed in operation, the old tower remained a day-mark and is also used as a basis for coast survey triangulation. It ceases, however, to be noted otherwise for any lighthouse purpose. It did continue as a landmark. On April 29, 1896 the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities placed on it a tablet marking the first landing of the English colonists on Virginia's soil. The old tower thus became a forerunner of the Cape Henry Memorial.

The Cape Henry and Sandy Hook Lighthouses are outstanding in the degree to which the original tower has been preserved. The sandstone tower of Cape Henry is essentially unchanged although brick lining and an iron stairway have been added to the interior.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian; | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Travel &</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | <u>Communications</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Cape Henry Lighthouse was the first lighthouse authorized, fully completed, and lighted by the newly organized Federal Government. It is an octagonal stone structure, faced with hewn and hammer-dressed stone--the first of three lighthouses to be built by John McComb, Jr.; it is the third oldest lighthouse in the United States.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

Virginia	
COUNTY	
Virginia Beach (City)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7 a. CONT'D.

In 1930 the old tower and 1.77 acres were deeded to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. When last visited in 1962, the lighthouse appeared rather unkept and obviously lacking in regular care. Its entrance door was unlocked and permitted visitors to come and go at will. There was no interpretation offered to the public. Attention is drawn to it largely through occasional repairs and on special occasions such as Garden Week in Virginia and Cape Henry Day.

The structure appears to be solid though wind erosion at the base of the tower threatens serious damage. There was, however, strong local interest in maintaining the lighthouse, both on the part of the Norfolk Branch of the APVA and segments of the general public. The City of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Princess Anne County have recently appropriated funds for repairs, presumably to be done through the APVA.

b. BOUNDARIES: Cape Henry Lighthouse is situated on a small, circular mound, about 40 feet high, on 1.77 acres of land, on the western side of Atlantic Avenue at the junction of Atlantic Avenue and Cape Henry Drive, Fort Story.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Charles M. Hatch, Jr., "The Old Cape Henry Light" (unpublished ms. report, NPS, 1962); U. S. Coast Guard, Historically Famous Lighthouses (Washington, GPO, 1950).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' 0 "	0 ' 0 "		36 ° 55 ' 32 "	76 ° 0 ' 29 "	
NE	0 ' 0 "	0 ' 0 "				
SE	0 ' 0 "	0 ' 0 "				
SW	0 ' 0 "	0 ' 0 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.77

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Frank S. Melvin

ORGANIZATION: Virginia State Office, National Park Service

DATE: 6/30/72

STREET AND NUMBER:
Box 10008

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia 23240

CODE: 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS