

VLR-6/20/72 NRHP-3/1/73

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: VIRGINIA	
COUNTY: MATHEWS	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
NEW POINT COMFORT LIGHTHOUSE

AND/OR HISTORIC:
NEW POINT COMFORT LIGHTHOUSE

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: At the southernmost tip of Mathews County at the inter-section of Mobjack Bag and Chesapeake Bay.

CITY OR TOWN: New Point vicinity (Thomas N. Downing, First District Congressman)

STATE Virginia	CODE 51	COUNTY: Mathews	CODE 115
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both 	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment 	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum 	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific 	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) abandoned <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: County of Mathews c/o County Administrator

STREET AND NUMBER: Mathews County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Mathews

STATE: Virginia	CODE 23109	STATE: Virginia	CODE 51
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Mathews County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Mathews

STATE: Virginia	CODE 51
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1972 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: Room 1116, Ninth Street: State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia	CODE 51
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: VIRGINIA
COUNTY: MATHEWS
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of New Point Comfort Lighthouse is a small granite rubble island at the southernmost tip of Mathews County. When the light was constructed in 1805, this point was part of a peninsula connected to the mainland, but it has since been separated and reduced by erosion to an island of about one-third acre.

The lighthouse is a tapered octagonal ashlar sandstone structure similar to the Old Point Comfort Light, built in 1802 at Fort Monroe. Both structures encase stone spiral stairs constructed in a manner similar to spiral stairs in medieval structures. Double hung sash windows light the stair as it winds its way up to the light.

Abandonment of the lighthouse as an operating Coast Guard facility has resulted in neglect and vandalism. The walls are no longer freshly whitewashed, windows are boarded up, and the glass of the light cupola has been shattered.

The tower's stonework survives in good condition; however, and the building is in generally sound structural state. The light keeper's house disappeared prior to 1963.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New Point Comfort peninsula has served as a landmark to navigators entering Mobjack Bay since the seventeenth century and has been known by its present name since before 1690. The point and the surrounding shoals posed a continuous threat to navigation, thus a Congressional act of March 3, 1801 provided for the erection of a permanent light there as soon as the land was deeded by the state. Five thousand dollars was appropriated for the project. The General Assembly authorized cession of the land in January, 1802, and in February a construction agreement was concluded between the Federal Government and Elzy Burroughs of Mathews County. For eight thousand, seven hundred fifty dollars, Burroughs was to produce "in a workmanlike manner a lighthouse and dwelling house with their appurtenances." The light was completed by 1805, and it was first put into use in 1806, the year that Burroughs received his final payment for its construction.

Congress appropriated seven thousand dollars in 1816 for rebuilding the structure, but this project was never carried out.

An 1852 Light House Board report for the New Point Comfort installation supplies an interesting picture of the operation of the light prior to the War Between the States. A retired sea captain, Issac Foster, was the light keeper. Living alone on the small island with his female Negro slave, he received an annual salary of four thousand dollars. The inspector found the lighthouse "moderately clean" and in relatively good repair. His major complaint was that Foster did not light the beacon until dark, believing that "there is no use in lighting at sunset!" Three years later the illuminating device was found in poor condition, and it was replaced with new apparatus by 1856. The lighthouse and keeper's residence received extensive repairs after suffering neglect during the War Between the States when it was probably abandoned.

In 1930 the old mechanism was replaced with an automatic light atop the tower. The New Point Comfort Spit Light was established in the water beyond the old tower in 1963, and use of the 1805 lighthouse was discontinued by the Coast Guard. The abandoned tower still serves as day reference to passing boats.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Diggs, Martin, "New Point Lighthouse." Unpublished ms., 1969. (Copy on file at VHLC)
 Holland, Francis R., America's Lighthouses. Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Green Press, 1972, p. 118.
Laws of the United States Relating to the Establishment, Support, and Management of Light-houses, 1789-1855. Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855.

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	°	'	"	°	'	"	37°	18'	03"	76°	16'	40"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than ten acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: June, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: Room 1116 Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia 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 James W. Moody, Jr., Director
 Title Va. Historic Landmarks Commission
 Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

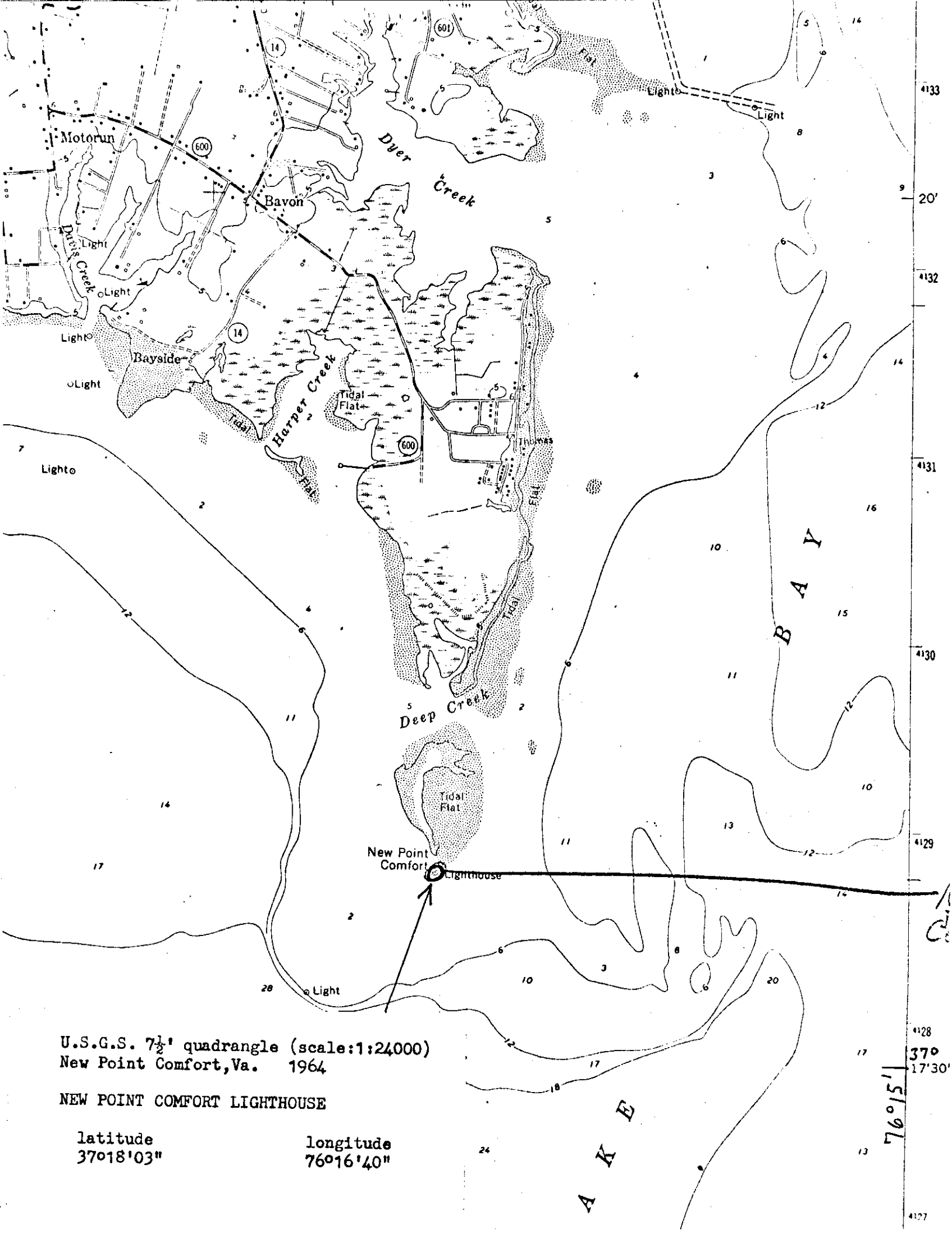
Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)
 New Point Comfort, Va. 1964

NEW POINT COMFORT LIGHTHOUSE

latitude
 37°18'03"

longitude
 76°16'40"

76°15'
 37°17'30"

4133
 20'
 4132
 4131
 4130
 4129
 4128
 4127