

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES—COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Indian River Life Saving Station

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

On State Route 14, north of Indian River

CITY, TOWN

___VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bethany Beach

One

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

Sussex

002

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT | USE |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of Delaware, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

STREET & NUMBER

CITY/TOWN

___VICINITY OF

STATE

Dover

Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds for Sussex County

STREET & NUMBER

Court House, The Circle

CITY/TOWN

___VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgetown

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Delaware Historic Sites & Buildings

DATE

___FEDERAL ___STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

1976

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records

CITY/TOWN

STATE

Dover

Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) APPEARANCE

The Indian River Life Saving Station is one of a series of such stations designed by the federal government in 1874, the plans for which have survived. The original portion is a board-and-batten frame structure, one-and-a-half-stories high with wide overhanging eaves. A shed-roofed wing on the back and a porch on the front have obscured much of the original ornate bracketing of the roof. The clipped gable, shown on the 1874 plans, is not present. The lookout cupola, present on the building, does not appear in the plans.

A mile to the south stood a separate boat house. There were originally five outbuildings on the main station: a feed house, a barn, a stable, a meat house, and a privy. At least once during its history, the station has been moved back from the encroaching surf. Its last major encounter with the elements occurred on Ash Wednesday 1962, when a severe storm left it buried up to its first-floor story in sand.

The first floor contained a boat room and a mess room in its original portion with offices and communications rooms added later. Upstairs are the keeper's and the crew's bunk room.

The station stands on pilings between the highway and the dune line, near its original site. The essential elements of the building's environment have not been altered by the fact that the building has been moved back from the surf.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

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The original outbuildings do not survive on the property. Modern service buildings now stand nearby, as part of a park maintenance facility.

CHRONOLGY:

1872: Life-Saving Service established by Congress

1874: Plans drawn.

1875: Federal Government advertised for bids.

1875: According to one contemporary source, Indian River Station was manned at this time.

1880: Coast guard records state the station was commissioned in this year.

1882: The full complement of four stations was operational.

1885: Date of drawings for Cape Henlopen and Indian River Stations, probably for alternations.

1962: Storm caused abandonment of stations.

1964: New station built by Coast Guard.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE—CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATION | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1875-1882

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Indian River Life Saving Station is a relic of the days when the Delaware coast was a notorious graveyard of ships. It stands near the site of the old Indian River, scenes of many shipwrecks from colonial times forward. The building is one of the oldest surviving lifeboat stations on the coast.

Ships approaching Delaware Bay were forced to follow a course dangerously close to the Delaware shoals south of Cape Henlopen; for this reason, the Delaware coast claimed a number of ships in storms. An early move to improve the situation was made first by the first Cape Henlopen Lighthouse by Philadelphia merchants in 1765. The actual saving of lives was left to private enterprise. Farmers along the shore would rally to shipwrecks to scavenge whatever washed ashore and to rescue survivors. The United States Life Saving Service, now a part of the Coast Guard, eventually was established to provide regular rescue services on the beaches. Patrols would walk the beach or scan the shore from lookout towers. If a ship in distress was sighted, the lifeboat would put out from the station or a subsidiary boat house.

The Life Saving Service was created in 1872, to supplant the various private organizations that had existed along the coasts since the eighteenth century. The service advertised for bids for the station in 1875, but according to Coast Guard records it was not commissioned until 1880.

According to one account, the Indian River Station opened in 1875, under the command of Captain Washington Vickers. Indian River was the southern station in a series of four that extended to Lewes. By 1882, the four stations were in operation with constant patrols.

After the 1963 March storm, it was vacated by the Coast Guard crew, who moved to temporary facilities. In 1964, a new station on another site was opened. The property has since served as a state maintenance facility.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Lenik, Edward J. "The Truro Halfway House, Cape Cod, Massachusetts," Historical Archaeology 1972, pp. 77-86.
- National Archives and Records Service, record Group 26.
- Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware: 1609-1888. L. J. Richards Company, 1888.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 18 | 494125 | 4275910 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Edward F. Heite, Historic Registrar

ORGANIZATION

Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

302-678-4564

CITY OR TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:
NATIONAL___ STATE X LOCAL___

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATIO

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER