

SM-270

## Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station

### **Architectural Survey File**

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site ([mht.maryland.gov](http://mht.maryland.gov)) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

***Last Updated: 01-06-2004***

SM-270

EASEMENT

1836

Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station  
Hurry Road (MD 498)  
Piney Point  
County

Builder: John Donahoo

The Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station consists of a conical brick light tower and a brick keeper's quarters with a shallow gable roof. The lighthouse is a conical structure of brick painted white, 30' high. The focal plane of the light was 34' above the base. A 9-sided cupola constructed of metal with rectangular glass panes surmounts the brick tower. This is covered with a standing-seam metal roof capped with a large ventilator ball. An iron railing, 40" high, runs along the edge of the cantilevered masonry parapet walkway. Access to the cupola is gained by means of a circular wood stairway which occupies the entire core of the structure. The stairwell is lit by 6/6 sash windows. Interesting early iron hardware remains on the heavy entrance door. Though the Fresnel lens has been removed, the appearance of the structure is essentially as constructed in 1836. The keeper's quarters is a brick constructed building, 34' x 20', with a 15' x 11' wing of stuccoed frame construction. Two stories over a full basement, the keeper's quarters has undergone radical interior alterations which have obliterated original conditions. The building has a shallow gable roof of standing-seam metal. A one-story porch extends across the northwest (entrance) facade. As constructed by John Donahoo in 1836, the keeper's quarters was a tiny one-story brick building of three rooms. This was enlarged in 1884 by the addition of a second story. At one time, the property also included a fog signal house, an oilhouse, a storehouse, and an outhouse.

Constructed in 1836, Piney Point was the first lighthouse built on the Potomac River. John Donahoo, constructor of several lighthouses in the Chesapeake Bay area, erected this structure at a cost of about \$5,000. The property on which the lighthouse was constructed was acquired in fee simple from Henry Suter and Charlotte Suter, his wife, by warranty deed dated 24 December 1835 for \$300. The lighthouse was erected to replace a lightship which had been in operation at the site since 1821 to warn mariners of dangerous shoals at Piney Point and across the Potomac at Ragged Point. In 1855, the old reflecting apparatus--ten lamps and ten 15" reflectors with a visibility of 10 miles--was replaced with a more efficient 5th-order Fresnel lens, increasing the light's visibility a full mile. In 1880, a 30' bell tower was added to the station to protect mariners from fog. This fog bell had an automatic striking device. A square frame tapering tower with 4/4 sash windows in gable-roofed dormers piercing the sides, the fog bell tower was destroyed by Hurricane Hazel in 1954. Piney Point was a busy recreation area for Southern Marylanders between 1820 and 1910. President James Monroe maintained a cottage at Piney Point, known as "The Summer White House." A hotel was in operation until closing due to damage sustained during the hurricane of 1933. Piney Point Light continued as a manned station under the lighthouse service until the incorporation of that service into the Coast Guard in 1939. Piney Point became a testing range for torpedoes during World War II. Following the war, the Naval Torpedo Test Center and Range was decommissioned and the base became known as the Pane Hall Center of the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship.

The Coast Guard discontinued the light in 1964. The property is now owned by the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks and is open to the public.

# Easement

S M -270  
PINEY POINT LIGHT STATION  
Piney Point

1836

The lighthouse and keeper's quarters built on Piney Point in 1836 comprised the first light station on the Potomac River. Constructed by John Donohoo, the light was manned under the lighthouse service until its incorporation into the Coast Guard in 1939. The light was discontinued in 1964, but the Coast Guard still maintains a station here.

The lighthouse is a conical brick structure thirty-five feet tall. Painted white, it has a metal cupola. The lens has been removed. The keeper's quarters is a stuccoed brick building of two stories with a stuccoed frame addition.

*This property has been included on the National Register of Historic Places, United States Department of the Interior.*

Easement

SM-270

SM-1902952

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Hurry Road (MD 498)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Piney Point

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

VICINITY OF

CODE  
24

COUNTY

St. Mary's

CODE

1205-037

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Department of Transportation, U. S. Coast Guard

STREET & NUMBER

Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District, 431 Crawford Street

CITY, TOWN

Portsmouth

VICINITY OF

Virginia 23705

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

St. Mary's County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Leonardtwn

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

SM-270

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The complex as constructed in 1836 consisted of the Lighthouse structure, the Keeper's Quarters and an outhouse. The two (2) major structures remain; however, the original outhouse has long since passed into oblivion. Presumably, the specifications for the structures were developed by staff personnel of the Treasury Department.

The Lighthouse is a conical structure of brick painted white, 30 feet high. The focal plane of the light was 34 feet above the base. A cupola constructed of metal with rectangular glass panes surmounts the brick tower. Access to the cupola is gained by means of a circular wood stairway which occupies the entire core of the structure. Interesting early iron hardware remains on the heavy entrance door. Though the lens has been removed, the appearance of the structure is essentially as constructed in 1836.

The Keeper's Quarters is a brick constructed building, 34' x 20', with a 15' x 11' ell of stuccoed frame construction. Two stories over a full basement, the Keeper's Quarters has undergone radical interior alterations which have obliterated original conditions. Extensive architectural and documentary research would be required to determine its original appearance. The exterior is presently painted white with a red standing seam metal roof. A one-story porch extends across the northwest (entrance) facade.

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

SPECIFIC DATES **1836/1897**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1836, Piney Point was the first lighthouse built on the Potomac River. John Donohoo, constructor of several lighthouses in the Chesapeake Bay area, erected this structure at a cost of about \$5,000. The property on which the lighthouse was constructed was acquired in fee simple from Henry Suter and Charlotte Suter, his wife, by warranty deed dated 24 December 1835 for \$300.

Piney Point Light continued as a manned station under the lighthouse service until the incorporation of that service into the Coast Guard in 1939. The Coast Guard discontinued the light in 1964. The Coast Guard retains the Piney Point site as a station. The Keeper's residence is maintained as a facility for housing personnel. The lighthouse presently serves no particular purpose.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robert de Gast, The Lighthouses of the Chesapeake  
The John Hopkins University Press: 1973

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	36,60,1,0	4,217,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Station located at end of state road 498 on Piney Point adjacent to the  
Steuart Petroleum Company

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

W. M. Whittington, Realty Specialist

11-5-75

ORGANIZATION

Fifth Coast Guard District

804-393-9611, ext. 304

STREET & NUMBER

431 Crawford Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Portsmouth, Virginia 23705

STATE

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*John N. Pearce*

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is \_\_\_ National \_\_\_ State \_\_\_ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Piney Point

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

St. Mary's

STATE

Maryland

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT

Unknown

DATE OF PHOTO

1968

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Fifth Coast Guard District - Photo Lab

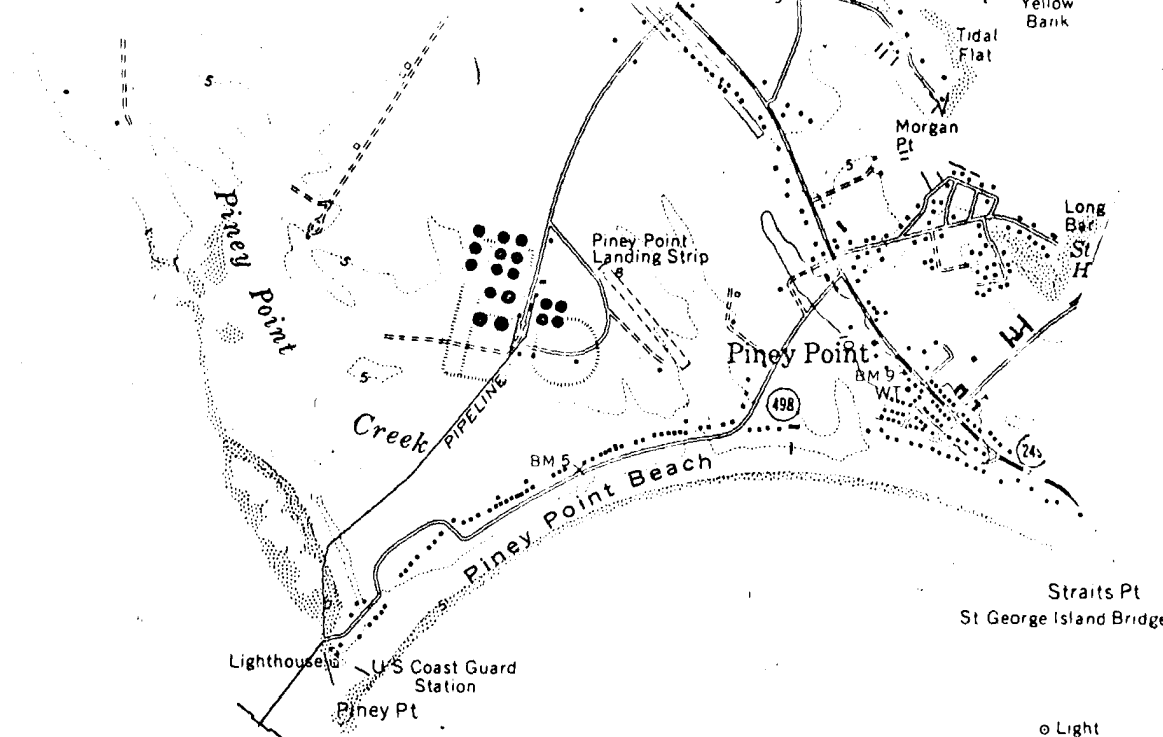
**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

051768-06

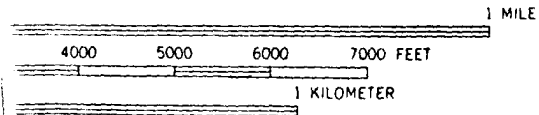
Southern view of station looking from property owned by Steuart Petroleum Company.



Coast Guard Piney Point  
 Light Station  
 UTM References  
 A - 18-366010  
 4221720

ST. GEORGE ISLAND I.S.P.  
 4221000m N.

LE/ SE 364 32'30" 365 366 368000m E. 76°30' 38°07'30"



SCALE 10 FEET  
 1 5-FOOT CONTOURS  
 SEA LEVEL  
 DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
 LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
 PROXIMATELY 1.4 FEET

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
 CES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903  
 D SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D. C. — 1972  
 2 570 000 FEET (VA.) 368000m E.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Secondary highway, all weather, Light-duty road, all weather,  
 hard surface                      improved surface                       
 Unimproved road, fair or dry weather                     

○ State Route

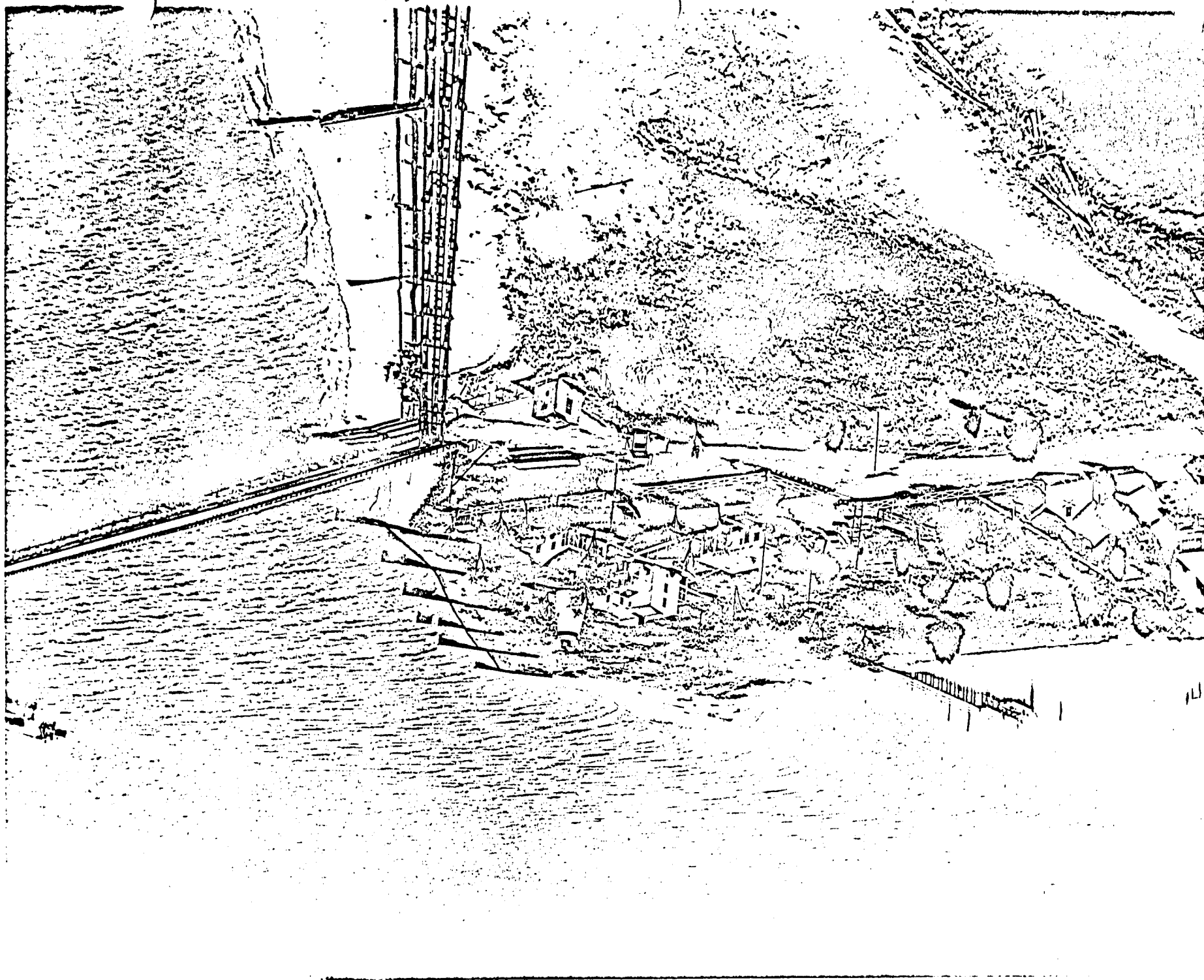
PINEY POINT, MD.—VA.  
 NE/4 PINEY POINT 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N3807.5—W7630/7.5

1968

AMS 5660 II NE—SERIES V833

(ST. GEORGE ISLAND)  
 5'500 II SW

SM-270



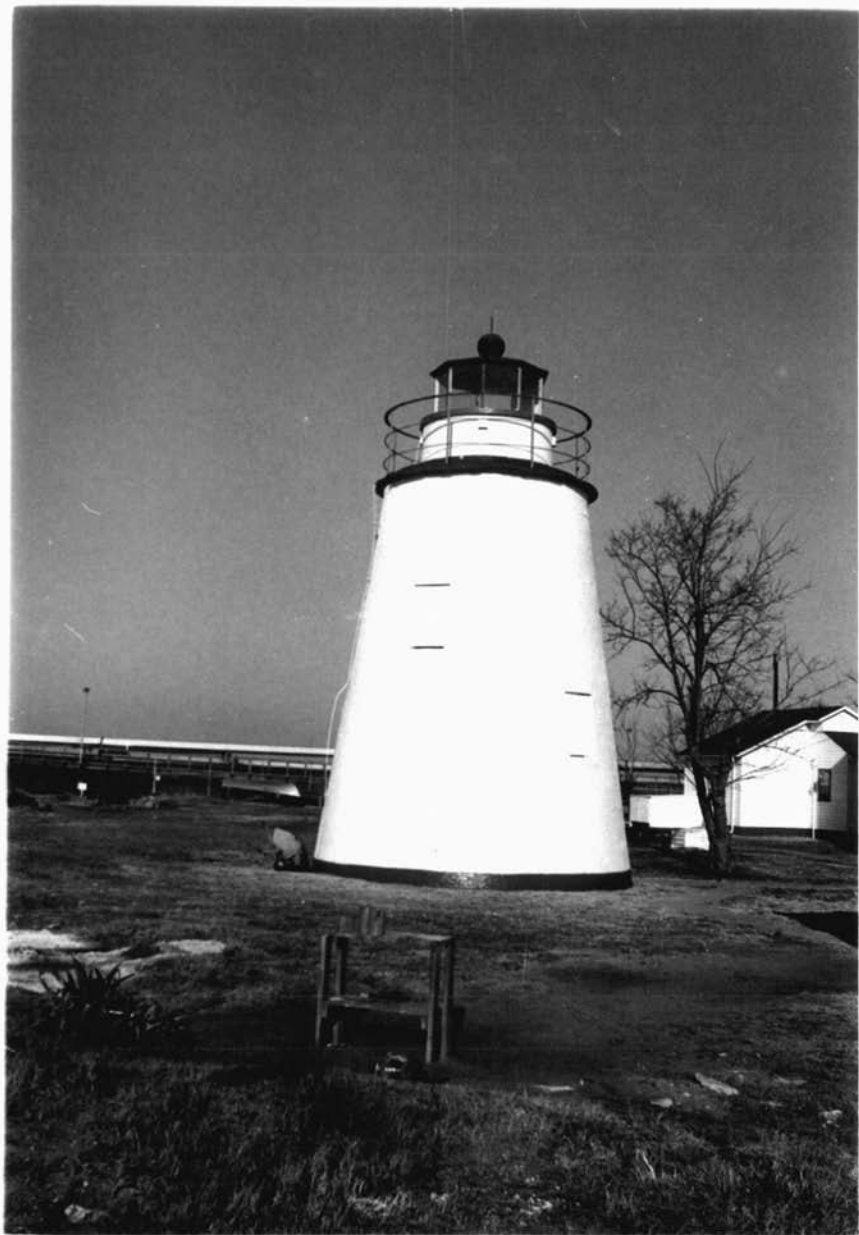
SM-270











037

1962

037





SM-270

Piney Point Light Station

St. Mary's County, Md

Kirk Ranetta

Md SHPO

Feb/00

Looking E

1 of 3



SM-270

Piney Point Light Station

St. Mary's County, Md

Kirk Ranzetta

Md SHPO

Feb/00

Looking N

2 of 3



SM-270

Piney Point Light Station

St. Mary's County, Md

Kirk Ranzeffa

Md SHPO

Feb/06

Looking S

3 of 3

DATE:

ASSIGNMENT:

FILE NO.:



SM-270

Piney Point Lighthouse