

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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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

Bald Head Island Lighthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Bald Head Island Lighthouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Southwest section Bald Head Island, Smith Island

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

#7

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Brunswick

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

__OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

NO

__MILITARY

OTHER: Empty

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Carolina Cape Fear Corporation

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 6

CITY, TOWN

Southport

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New Hanover County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

North 3rd Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bald Head Island Lighthouse, rising about 110 feet above the marshes of Bald Head Island, is a monument of functional architecture; its weathered condition does not detract from the impact of its unyielding strength. The lighthouse is a six-story octagonal tower built of brick with stucco facing. Its walls are approximately five feet thick at the base and taper to about three feet at the top. The masonry base, which extends underground to a depth of about seven feet, is covered on its visible portions with brown sandstone. One course of the sandstone steps inward to form a water table. Three sandstone steps lead to the lighthouse entrance, located on the western face of the structure. This entrance is highlighted by an applied brown sandstone elliptical arch with projecting keystone quoins. The original door (like the original windows) has been replaced, although its metal pintles remain intact. Centered above the doorway is a chamfered rectangular brown sandstone tablet inscribed: "R. Cochran/ Founder/ A. D. 1817/ D. S. Way, Builder."

The six windows, each lighting an interior stair landing, form a spiral pattern on the exterior. The first-floor window is on the northwestern face adjacent to the entrance; the entrance face contains the second-floor window, and so forth. The windows proceed around the tower, leaving only two of the eight faces blank. Each window opening is framed by brown sandstone and set beneath a splayed flat arch; sills of the same material project slightly.

The lighthouse terminates with a flat platform trimmed with a single course of brown sandstone which serves as a cornice. Off center on top of the platform stands the remains of the tower's lantern, a nine-sided iron skeleton attached to a circular stuccoed brick belvedere. The floor of the lantern area is covered with marble slabs.

The interior of the lighthouse is Spartan. Each level consists of one large plastered room with one large window in it. The window openings are arched inside with plastered splayed reveals. The room dimensions, including height as well as circumference, decrease at each higher floor. The floor of the first story is brick, while the others are rather recently installed wooden platforms on exposed joists. Each platform has a rectangular, balustraded well in its center, thus forming a continuous open space from top to bottom of the lighthouse. The wooden stairs, while not original, are framed into the heavy timbers of each platform. The stair begins on the southwestern wall of the ground floor and ascends in counterclockwise fashion, following the octagonal configuration of the walls.

To the south of the lighthouse stands a small supply shed. It is a one-story brick structure, one bay wide and two deep. The gable roof is covered with shingles, and there are fractable gable ends topped by stone copings. A four-course corbel cornice runs along the sides. The brick is laid in irregular one-to-five common bond. The entrance beneath the western gable, is ornamented with a segmental arch formed by three courses of brick positioned in low relief. The original sash and doors are gone, and their reveals have been covered with cement.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1817 BUILDER/ARCHITECT D. S. Way

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bald Head Island Lighthouse, the oldest standing lighthouse in North Carolina, is of great importance to the maritime history of the Outer Banks and to Smith Island. Completed in 1817 by contractor D. S. Way according to still-extant specifications, the tapering 100-foot octagonal shaft is a distinctive landmark of stark simplicity and weathered strength.

Smith Island is located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The sandy, barren westward section of the island has for over 200 years been called Bald Head by mariners who sailed these treacherous waters. The island has long been a strategic point. As early as 1524 Verrazzano and his French expedition, explored the area, and in 1526 de Ayllon's Spanish expedition camped on the island. In 1585 Sir Richard Grenville, leading Raleigh's first expedition, fell "in great danger of a wracke on a beach called the Cape of Feare." In 1718 Stede Bonnet, the infamous pirate, was captured off Smith Island. The island was later the scene of military encampments by the British in 1776, and still later by Confederate forces in 1863, when Fort Holmes was built to protect the entrance to the river, and the blockade-runners who shipped out of Wilmington.

On May 8, 1713, Thomas Smith, landgrave of Carolina, a wealthy and influential citizen, was granted a tract of land on the east bank of the Cape Fear River at its mouth, then called Cape Island. He used this island (which later took his name) as a base for his large trading operations with the Indians north of Charlestown in South Carolina. Landgrave Thomas Smith later became governor of South Carolina and was the progenitor of some of the most prominent families of the Lower Cape Fear. Benjamin Smith, grandson of the second landgrave, was aide-de-camp to General Washington in 1776, a member of the General Assembly, and governor of North Carolina from 1810 to 1811. He lived for a time at Orton Plantation (NR), but as early as 1800 he had a summer residence on the island, which he called Sea Castle. It was located near the present site of Bald Head Lighthouse.

In 1784 the General Assembly levied a duty of six-pence-per-ton on Cape Fear shipping to finance construction of a lighthouse on Smith Island, to "greatly facilitate the navigation of vessels . . . in order that vessels may be enabled thereby to avoid the great shoal called the Frying Pan." On October 28, 1790, Benjamin Smith granted by warranty deed, to thirteen "Commissioners for Navigating Pilotage and Navigation of the Cape Fear and their successors in office . . ." 19 acres on Smith Island on which to erect a lighthouse. Due to many construction problems the lighthouse was not completed until December 5, 1794.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE one

During the war years of 1812-1815, this first lighthouse was "wrecked," as reported by Joshua Potts, United States Navy Agent for the Cape Fear, then living in Smithville (now Southport). It is suggested that a waterspout in the river channel, near the lighthouse, may have undermined the tower. On April 27, 1816, Congress appropriated \$15,000 for building a replacement. The United States Treasury Department's proposal for bids appeared within a month. The Daily National Intelligencer in Washington, D. C. on Friday, May 24, 1816, gave detailed specifications for the proposed lighthouse (see Appendix).

The bid of Daniel S. Way was accepted in July, 1816, as his "terms were much lower than those received from other quarters," but he exceeded the allotted appropriation by a "small sum." Mr. Way's bid was made on the hope of good salvageable brick from the old lighthouse and the proximity of the new tower to the old. Both hopes went unrealized, for the brick was not the best quality, and the new lighthouse was a mile west of the old one, making transportation of the salvageable brick to the new site almost impossible. Way lost money on the project, but the tower he constructed has withstood the 158 years to become the oldest lighthouse standing in North Carolina. A stone tablet bears the legend, "R. Cochran/Founder/ A. D. 1817/ D. S. Way, Builder."

River pilots and their families as well as a lighthouse keeper lived on the island until the 1890s. Their houses were on the western side of the island, and there were at times sufficient numbers of them to maintain an occasional school and church. In 1882 the Cape Fear Life-Saving Station was established on the island; it functioned until 1937 when it was transferred to the Oak Island Coast Guard Station.

In the 1890s the annual reports of the Light-house Board to the secretary of the treasury noted the inadequacy of the Cape Fear (Bald Head) Lighthouse. In 1892 it was reported that

Recent changes in the lighting of the entrance to the Cape Fear River have almost eliminated the Cape Fear lighthouse (Bald Head) as a harbor light. Upon the establishment of the proposed new light on the pitch of Cape Fear the old light might be discontinued, as the tower and the keeper's dwelling are antiquated and discreditable to the Light-House Establishment.

Because of the proposed discontinuation of the Bald Head light "upon the establishment of a first-order light-station," it was noted in the reports of the following years that "no expenditures were made at the station."

In 1903 a new light was built on the eastern end of the island; it stood until it was dismantled in 1958. About 1914 the light at the Bald Head Lighthouse was changed from an oil light, with a keeper, to an unattended gaslight. In 1963 the United States Government declared the lighthouse property surplus, and sold it to Frank O. Sherrill of Charlotte, North Carolina, who in turn sold it to the Carolina Cape Fear Corporation, which is developing Smith Island, long an essentially undisturbed natural area, into a resort community.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Appendix for Specifications

Proposals will be received at the office of the Commissioner of the Revenue for building a Light-House on Bald Head, in the State of North Carolina, together with a dwelling-house, of the following materials, dimensions and description:

The Light-House to be of hard brick, the form octagon, the foundation to be of stone, and laid as deep as may be requisite to make the fabric perfectly secure, and to be carried up five feet above the surface of the earth, from commencement of the foundation to the bottom of the water table. The wall to be seven feet thick. The diameter of the base from the bottom of the water table to the top thereof, where the octagonal pyramid is to commence, to be thirty-six feet, and the diameter fourteen feet six inches at the top or floor of the lanthorn. The water table to be capped with hewn stone at least eight inches wide, and sloped to turn off the water. From the surface to the top of the building the walls to be ninety feet in height and graduated as follows:

The first twenty feet to be five feet thick. The next eighteen feet to be four and a half feet thick. The next sixteen feet to be four feet thick. The next fourteen feet to be three and a half feet thick. The next twelve feet to be two and three quarters feet thick; and the next ten feet to be two feet thick. The top of the building to be arched, reserving an entrance, on the side to the lanthorn, and to have a stone cornice covered with copper so as to preserve it from the weather. The trap door to be framed with iron and covered with copper, and fitted into a stone frame so as to be level with the lanthorn floor when shut. The platform on the arch to constitute the floor of the lanthorn and to be marble or freestone, and to project beyond the walls fifteen inches.

The ground floor to be paved with brick. A sufficient number of strong wooden stairs, with a safe hand railing, to lead from the ground floor to the lanthorn, with substantial plank floors on the joists of each story. The floors as well as joists and stairs to be of Carolina yellow pine clear of sap. The joists to be from twelve by ten inches to from nine by eight inches, diminishing with the superior stories, and the ends lodged accordingly, from two feet to one foot in the brickwork. In each story there is to be one window of sixteen panes of glass, ten by twelve inches in strong frames, painted with two coats of paint, with a substantial pannel door, three feet wide and five and a half feet high, iron hinges, lock and latch complete, on the lower floor. There is to be an iron ladder from the upper story to the entrance into the lanthorn. The doors and windows to have stone sills, arches and jambs.--A complete iron lanthorn in the octagon form, to rest on the platform of the pyramid, to be ten feet six inches in diameter and ten feet high, the eight corner pieces of which to be two inches square above the platform, and three inches square below it, to run ten feet into the brick work and to be there secured with anchors. The space between the posts at the angles to be occupied by the sashes, which are to be of iron struck solid and of sufficient strength so as not to work with the wind, each sash to be glazed with strong double

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER Appendix PAGE one

glass, fourteen by twelve inches of the first quality Boston manufacture, excepting the lower part, which is to be filled with sheet copper, thirty-two ounces to the square foot, and excepting on the north side where so much of the space as would otherwise be filled with sashes is to be occupied by an iron framed door covered with copper, two and a half feet wide and four and a half feet high.

The top of the lanthorn, to be a dome, five feet high, and covered with copper thirty-two ounces to the square foot, projecting seven inches over the eaves, formed by sixteen iron rafters concentrating in an iron hoop at the top, which forms the funnel for the smoke to pass out of the lanthorn into the ventilator in the form of a ball sufficient to contain sixty-five gallons and large enough to secure the funnel against rain; the ventilator to be turned by a large vane, so that the hole for venting the smoke may always be to leeward. The lanthorn to be surrounded by an iron ballustrade; the railing posts of which to be one and a quarter inch square, and three rails, three fourths of an inch square, between the posts, the highest of which to be four and a half feet from the floor. The lanthorn to be covered with three coats of paint. The outside of the pyramid to be rough plastered and the inside rough pointed.

The doors, sashes, window frames, &c. to be well painted; and the building furnished with two complete electrical conductors or rods with points.

The bricks to be all sound and of the best quality, and the work to be well bound, and good lime mortar used throughout.

There has been saved from the old Light House, and cleaned, a large number of sound bricks, variously estimated at from three hundred and fifty to six hundred thousand; and there remains likewise the old lanthorn, which is understood to have sustained but little injury in taking down. These are to be taken by the contractor, who may, if more agreeable to him, stipulate at a specified price for the Bricks according to the quantity that shall be actually used. In case of no such specification in the proposals, the amount to be paid will be considered as in addition to those materials.

The DWELLING HOUSE to be of Brick, thirty five feet in length and seventeen feet in width, one story high, ten feet pitch, with a gable end roof, the walls to be laid in lime mortar twelve inches in thickness, to have a good brick chimney at each end of the house, with a suitable fire-place to each. The house to be formed into two rooms of equal dimensions, with a passage between, leading from back to front, which are to be laid with good double doors and to be finished in a plain workmanlike manner; a suitable number of good doors and windows well secured with locks, hinges and latches. The walls and ceilings to be well plastered and whitewashed; the roof boarded, shingled and painted, and all the carpenter work inside and out to be well painted with two coats of good paint.

Two shed rooms to be built in the rear of the house of equal size, divided by a piazza, and also a piazza to be built in front, the whole length of the house. These are to be covered with a shingled roof and finished in other respects in a suitable manner, and to be painted.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER #9 PAGE one

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Hall, Louise. "'Old Baldy' Sold Down the River." Southern Architect, September, 1963.
Lee, Lawrence. The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days. Chapel Hill, 1965.
New Hanover County Records, New Hanover County Courthouse, Wilmington, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
New Hanover County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
Ross, Malcolm, The Cape Fear. New York: Chicago: San Francisco, 1965.
Sprunt, James, Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916. Raleigh, 1916.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brunswick County Historical Society Newsletter, vol. V, nos. 2 and 3, 1965.
 Brunswick County Records, Brunswick County Courthouse, Southport, North Carolina
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 Brunswick County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
 (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
 Clark, Walter, State Records of North Carolina. Goldsboro, 1904.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 L&L: $33^{\circ} 52' 24''$ $78^{\circ} 00' 03''$
 UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	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 Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist; architectural description by Janet Seapker and Mary Alice Hinson, survey specialists

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

21 March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 21 March 1975

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

