RG 26- RECORDS OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD

Lighthouse Service

LETTERS RECIEVED FROM DISTRICT ENGINEERS AND INSPECTORS
FEB. 1853- DEC. 1900

Fifth District Engineer, Jan. 1, 1874- July 1, 1874, Fifth Dis. Ispector, July 1, 1876- Jan. 31, 1877

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Box 177 entry 24

Office of Light-House Inspector,

FIFTH DISTRICT.

Norfolk, Va., September 6th, 1876.

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Sir:

Referring to your letter (A.B.D.) of the 4th ult., directing me to confer with the Engineer of the 5th L. H. District, and make report as to the necessity and proper location of a light house to be erected at the mouth of the Nansemond River Virginia, I respectfull inform you that I in company with the Engineer of this district visited and examined the locality above referred to, also proceeded up the river to Suffolk, and am of the opinion that there is much necessity for the proposed light-house. The channel leading to the mouth of the Nansemond and for some distance up the river is narrow and deep (some 30 ft) and lined on both sides with hard shoals, principally oyster, which make

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up suddenly, and extend to both river banks, and to the James River, and nearly to the Elizabeth River. These shoals have only from 2 to 7 ft on them - It is therefore very difficult and dangerous for vessels to attempt to enter the river at night - The river, even with a light at its mouth would still be a difficult one for night navigation, but the light would be a great aid, as it would guide vessels into and up one third of the river, clear of the oyster shoals. After passing these shoals vessels have to avoid the shoal mud flats, which line the channel on either hand; but should these be struck, time might be lost, but serious damage could seldom result, as would almost certainly be the case if the oyster shoals, referred to above should be struck -

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The Commerce of the Nansemond, consisting

of lumber, Oysters, wood and vegetables, commonly called truck, is quite large and increasing. I am informed by reliable authority that some four hundred large Schooners, some of them three masted, with numerous smaller vessels, and several Steamers (the latter during the trucking season) are engaged in it. The lumber trade of Suffolk alone is of sufficient importance to require a rail road from that place to the saw mills near the Dismal Swamp. The lumber &c. is carried by schooners from Suffolk and other points on the river to New York and to other Southern States. I have gaped up and down the river a number of times, and my observations have fully confirmed the above statements. The best

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location for the light is on the shoal making out from Pig Point on the port hand entering the river in eight (8) feet water, where the channel takes a turn. Should the light be located there vessels can run for it, and rounding it close to avoid the more dangerous Oyster Shoals on the Starboard hand, which frequently bring up vessels causing damage and delay. I respectfully enclose herewith a piece cut from the U.S. Coast Survey chart of 1st part of James River, on which I have marked the point where in my opinion the light house should be located. The Engineer of the District agrees with me as to the proper point to locate the light, but does not fully agree with me as to its necessity. He will make a separate report on

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this matter -

The structure should be square, and resting on five screw piles - Lens fifth order, to show a fixed Red light. I recommend a red light, as during the oyster season, numbers of vessels are constantly on & in the vicinity of the oyster shoals, above and below the mouth of the river, and it might not be easy, at all times, to distinguish the light, if fixed white, from those of said vessels —

It may be proper to add that twelve feet water can be carried to Suffolk.

Very respectfully submitted

J. W. Baker

L. H. Inspector

Professor,

Joseph Henry

Chairman L. H. Board

Washington D. C.

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