LIGHTHOUSES OF MASSACHUSETTS
THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION

LIGHTHOUSE INFORMATION FORM

NUMBER 15

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116

PHOTOGRAPH KEY

Victoria DiStefano - Martha's Vineyard Commission - Vineyard Haven - 1980

HISTORIC NAME: East Chop Light

TOWN: Oak Bluffs

LOCATION: On Lighthouse Road

COUNTY: Dukes CODE: 007

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 10th

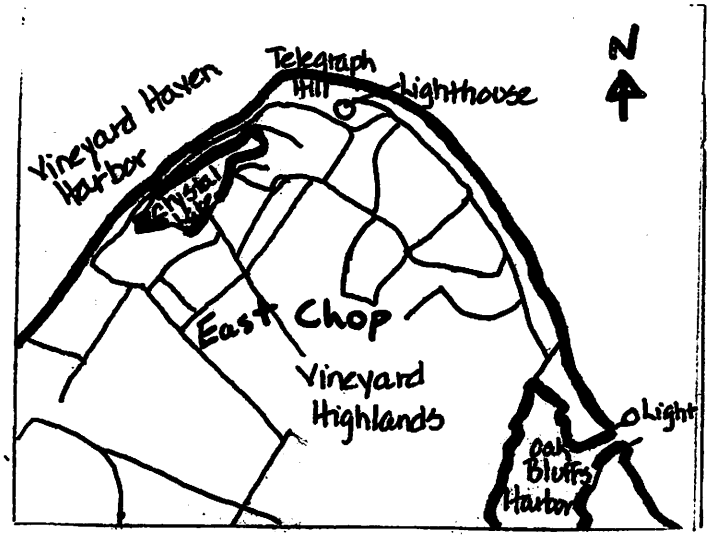
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Dukes County Courthouse

(Book 45, p. 91; Bk. 61, p. 213)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:
The nomination is confined to the 1876 cast iron tower; ancillary structures have been demolished and the land on which they stood transferred to the town of Oak Bluffs.

SKETCH MAP



LAT./LONG.: N/A

UTM COORDINATE: 19/368/800/4591/500

USGS QUADRANGLE: Prov. RI.; Mass., Conn.

SCALE: 1:250,000

ACREAGE: Originally 2A, now 0.1A

OWNER(S): First Coast Guard District
408 Atlantic Ave.
Boston, MA 02110

STATUS: Unmanned/Active

RECORDED BY: N. Salzman/V. DiStefano

ORGANIZATION: MHC/MVC

DATE: 1980-1981

East Chop Light, Oak Bluffs

SITE DESCRIPTION: East Chop Light, Oak Bluffs, is located on the east side of the entrance to Vineyard Haven Harbor Islands, on the highest protruding bluff of East Chop (also named Telegraph Hill). A Keeper's House and other ancillary buildings no longer exist.

MAJOR ELEMENTS: Cast iron tower (1876) surrounded by fence. Standard four drum Italianate cast iron tower design, painted brown. Tower stands 79' above water. Foundation is concrete; Italianate windows at levels 2 and 3; portholes (4) at level 4.

Doors - an outer double door (33 1/2" X 74 1/2") with vertical wooden sheathing on the outside, 2 panels on the inside measuring 23 1/2" X 19 1/2". Set in iron surround 3 1/2" deep with pintel hinge.

INTERIOR - segmental arched doorway is 10 3/4" deep. Set in frame is a four panel wooden door 33 1/4" X 71".

Material - floor is cement, walls are brick laid in basketweave.

Stairs - standard South Shore style with tubular rail (2 1/2" diameter) and single cylindrical balusters, one to a step. Treads are cast iron, diamond pattern, 34" wide.

Windows - are identical (30" X 49") 2/2 with 3 1/4" segmental arched frame. Sills are 6 3/4" deep at level two, 3" deep at level three.

Lamp Room - Standard South Shore type with stairwell wall cupboard occupying 1/3 of the floor space. 7'6" high walls are covered in vertical wood sheathing painted white, with no bevels. 3 1/2" wide battens form a narrow door that opens to expose the space between the sheathing and the cast iron drums, which allows investigation of the construction. Along the stairwell, two portholes of 13 1/2" diameter are framed by a square molding. Inside the lamp room two windows in an hexagonal frame are mounted on wooden frames. The space between the brass frame and exterior iron porthole casing is filled with wedges of 2" thick wood. A standard seven tread, curved iron ladder leads through a trap door opening. The ceiling is elaborately constructed with pie-shaped wooden boards, 2 3/4' wide fanning around a central point and framed at their junction with the wall by a crown molding. The closet has a standard four panel door of wood set in a 25 1/2" opening (28" with frame).

Lens Room - ten sides, lower half cast iron. Iron floor with no trap door over opening. Small, brass hand grab on wall. Stand for former Fresnel lens still in place. Ceiling is intact with reflector. Walls are sheathed in 3 1/4" wood. Five brass wheel ventilator covers are in place, can be turned by pin which is placed through the square backing.
Windows - three are painted with black enamel to shield light from landward side.
Scuttle door - wooden inside door is 21 1/2" X 29 1/2"

Balcony - original Italianate balusters (41 1/2") and part of a supporting bracket (vertical with 2 cross pieces) are extant at top of tower. Bracket is elaborate with fluting, acanthus leaves and moldings. Balusters are capped with large "flame" finials attached to post by 1/2" iron spike topped with smaller "flame". Several have been replaced with solid lead, unornamented balls of similar shape.
Rail -is simple horizontal band with smaller 3/4" vertical band 3 3/8" from bottom, with 21 1/2" between bands.
Floor -radius is 50 3/4"
Scuttle door - typical cast iron with latch
Vent Slot - alternating lower panels, simple framed slits

Roof - standard ten section surmounted by intact ventilator ball on molded base; unusual forked lightning rod.

LIGHT CHARACTERISTICS:

Equal interval group flashing 6 second Daylight control; 300mm diast lens; omnidirectional lamp 12v-2.03A; flasher=CG 181-12vDC; CG60-6PL=lamp changer; 9 mile range.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY:

1828 - site of semiphore system extending from Edgartown across Cape Cod and the South Shore of Massachusetts to Central Wharf in Boston Harbor; the system notified ship owners of sightings off Martha's Vineyard.

1869 - wooden structure built at a cost of $1700 by Captain Silas Daggett who raised the money through private subscriptions from local Martha's Vineyard merchants.

1869 - tower burns down.

1872 - new tower constructed.

1875 - U.S. Government purchases property for #5000.

1876 - cast iron, Italianate tower constructed. Also constructed were a standard L shaped Gothic Revival Keeper's Dwelling with some Italianate detail and a house with shingle roof and walls at rear of property (oil house?). All ancillary structures have been destroyed (date of demolition unknown).

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

East Chop Light possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship as well as associations with the development of aids to navigation in Massachusetts. Constructed in 1876, the present cast iron structure stands on the site of an 1828 light which was part of a semiphore system from Cape Cod and the Islands to Boston. It meets criteria A and C of the NRHP on the state level as well as survey criteria 2a.

