Point Lookout Md. May 5 1864

Captain:

You will proceed to Hooper's Island and hang the shutters on the light house which you have for that purpose. On the way down you will stop at Thomas' Point and see if you can repair the cistern at that place; if not, let me know what will be required to do so. Stop then at Smiths' Point and repair the fog bell machine; then proceed to Sanders' Point and replace the broken shutt. Report by telegraph when you arrive at Norfolk and instructions will be sent you what next to do. If you do not receive instructions you can go to Yorktown

Point and protect the site by driving stakes and wooding between them then fill up behind with stone and gravel as explained verbally

Respectfully,
Peter E. Haines
Master Engrs. U.S.A.
L.H. Cage

Capt. John L. Wyatt,
Tender "Julia"

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Field Records of the Light-House Board and Bureau

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Volume 371

NC-63 Entry 3

November 11 6

Colonel:

There has been forwarded you today by Steamer "Martha" of the New York and Baltimore Transportation Line Six (6) boxes containing two lenses, one pedestal, one table and two lamps, being the Pool's Island and Thomas' Point apparatus.

I turn this property over to you by direction of the Light-house Board given some time ago and hitherto unfulfilled by reason of a misapprehension of instructions.

Very respectfully,
Your obt servant,
H Harwood
Maj of Engrs U.S.A.
Light-house Engineer.

Col. D. C. Woodruff,
Corps of Engineers, U.S.A.
Lt. Engineer 3d Dist.
Smithville, N.C.

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RECORDS OF THE FIFTH LIGHT-HOUSE DISTRICT (BALTIMORE), 1851-1912

No. 12 (Index in Vol 352)

Volume 372

NC-63 Entry 3

L.H. Dist.

October 29, 18

Copy

U. S. L. H. Tender "Juliet"
Chesapeake Bay
August 27th 1874.

Professor Joseph Henry
Chairman Lights House Board

Sir

In obedience to the orders to report to the Board as we earliest convenience a location with estimate for a light house at Thomas Point, Chesapeake Bay - A light-house and day beacon at or near Mathias Point, Potomac river, and three day beacons in the Potomac river, we have the honor to state as follows; First as regards the Potomac river.

After a careful consideration of the charts of the Potomac river, from its mouth to the city of Washington and personal inspection of the river itself throughout that extent, we find that the greatest obstacles to

to navigation within the river are contained within a comparatively small and contiguous zone extending from Lower Cedar Point up the river to Maryland Point and comprising within its limits the peculiarly difficult bends at Mathias Point rendered still more so by the dangerous proximity of Port Tobacco Flats.

In making this statement however we desire it to be understood that we have not failed to give due consideration to the difficulties of navigation to be met with in other parts of the river. On the ordinary following the river from its mouth to the city of Washington, the course we have taken in preparing this Report, we find first presented to our notice as an obstacle to navigation Ragged Point with its dangerous adjacent Shoals. This point is situated on the Virginia shore opposite the reach between Piney Point and Blackistone Island on the Maryland side. It is true that this is a wide and commodious reach, readily navigable at all times by steamers and

and sailing vessels in a fair wind by aid of fix-
ed lights. But for sailing vessels with a head
wind it is far different.

By reference to the chart it will be seen
that a straight line connecting Piney Point with
Blackistone Island Light approaches very near to Rag-
ged Point shoals, and it is for this reason that
the course of vessels up the river turns to the
North eastward in running this reach directly.
Vessels in beating through it however, especially in
thick weather cannot judge of their proximity to
Ragged Point and hence it is a serious and dangerous
obstacle to them, and is so represented to us by ship
masters. We therefore duly considered the propriety
of reporting this as one of the sites for a day bea-
con, but after due deliberation, concluded that
other points had more frequent claim, and that
in a mist and thick weather, the very time
when a warning is most needed, a day

beacon

Beacon Lights could not well be seen, and would be a very imperfect aid to Navigation at the Entrance, we dismiss this Point from our consideration concerning Lights. We are of the opinion that although a day Beacon was not advisable, a Light at Ragged Point was a matter of Immediate necessity.

Passing from Ragged Point to Lower Cedar Point, we enter upon the reach specified at the beginning of this Report. Here we find the difficulties of Navigation begin to accumulate. Kettle Bottom Shoals force vessels down upon the Virginia Shore, Of which they are warned by Lower Cedar Point Light which is on Yates Shoal off the Virginia Shore. The Shoal off Lower Cedar Point projects, jutting out as it does into the River in such a manner as to materially narrow the direct approach of Vessels entering the upward reach to Mathias Point and having only two and one half feet of water at its lowest stages, is found to be a dangerous obstruction and

and therefore respectfully designate it as a site for one of the day beacons. I have to mark it on the chart accompanying this report. A day beacon here in connection with Lower Cedar Point Light diagonally opposite will well define the entrance into the most dangerous portion of the Potomac River Channel.

But there truly exists a new obstruction presents itself at once, a dangerous shoal juts out from the Virginia shore at Persimmon Point, having little more than two and one half feet water on lowest stage at its extremity. It is true that the bold Maryland shore line close into which vessels should stand in navigating this reach forms an excellent guide in fair weather, but for vessels bound through and for all in thick weather it is very hard for them to judge how near the end of Persimmon Point shoal they may be. Moreover to the west heading up the river there is presented a view the broad expanse of Port Tobacco Flats without

without any range to run upon, and this difficulty will continue even when these Flats and Mathias Point shall have been marked, as will be seen by reference to the Chart. Persimmon Point cutting off Lower Cedar Point light from view of the Head at Mathias Point -

Hence the necessity of warning vessels off the Head of Persimmon Point Shoal. We therefore respectfully report and vindicate this point as a proper site for the second day beacon -

We now come to the consideration of Mathias Point and Port Tobacco Flats, for the marking of which, by a light House and a day beacon, Congress has made a Special Appropriation. The question for us to report upon being where the lights should go and where the beacon. Mathias Point is a prominent Headland on the Virginia Shore, the shore line trending abruptly away from it up the river in a Northwesterly direction, and down the river

1st The South Eastward Off this last Sketch a Shoal makes out with gradual soundings to deep water. This Shoal is Sand on both its shore, but gradually shelves off into Mud towards the bed of the river. Its seaward limits is a curved line leaving the Channel to the river, and we beg to call particular attention to this circumstance, which has influenced us greatly in deciding upon the relative locations of the proposed Light House and day beacon. Off mattawoman Point on the Maryland side Port Tobacco Flats is spread out presenting a front to the river of about four and a half miles. Mid at the middle point of this front and four feet off to mattawoman Point, a spur makes out from the Flats and into the Potomac for a distance of about a quarter of mile from the general bend of the shoal line. Upon this spur we find only from three to nine feet of water lowest stage descending thence abruptly into from fifty to one hundred and fifty feet of soundings. The shoal at this

spur

Spit consists of a very hard shalum of oyster shells through which with great difficulty we sunk an Artesian well to a depth of ten feet finding it more and more compact as we descended into it. From the head of the Spit we have just mentioned, the coast line makes back to the North Eastward into a bight running off gradually to a South Eastward course to join the Maryland shore.

Thus vessels in rounding Smiths Point while steering before them into Port Tobacco Flats only a broad expanse of water, the shoal limit of which is unmarked save by a buoy. have really under their lee a dangerous submarine precipice upon which the tide, whether ebb or flood is constantly setting them.

A proper use of the lead will readily warn them off from too close a proximity to Smiths Point, as the soundings upon it are comparatively gradual but as for Port Tobacco Flats no sounding will avail and the vessel cannot know of her

sea danger until she is in its very jaws.

Hence although both points are dangerous to navigation, Port Tobacco Flats is pre-eminently so and the danger of Mathias Point wanes into insignificance in comparison with the greater peril of the opposite precipitous shoal. For vessels descending the river it is immaterial whether the warning to keep off this shoal, be upon the shoal itself or on the shoal off Mathias Point opposite

With vessels ascending the river it is however of no difference. We have seen that in order to avoid Persimmon Point shoal they must hug the Maryland shore & just rounding Mathias Point, they in so doing they are heading directly into the little bay formed by the South Eastward curve of the edge of Port Tobacco Flats. Unless they bend out from this bay in due time they must necessarily run on the flats upon which the tide is always setting them. If they keep away too soon they are apt to

to ground off Mathias Point. Hence it follows that the light house being the main aid to navigation should be located where it will most clearly and decidedly mark the deepest turning points for vessels rounding Mathias Point, whereby they will be enabled to avoid both dangers but more especially the greater one of Port Tobacco Flats -

Let us suppose the light house placed off Mathias Point. The vessel ascending the river has passed Freemans Point, but does not accurately know how near she is to the Maryland shore, she sees before her Mathias Point Lights and hastily draws by. Shall she go forth or must she still keep it on her port bow and if so how many points off? She cannot tell. If she heads for the light and happens to be near Freemans Point than the Maryland shore, and draws over 18 feet water she will ground on the shoal between Mathias Point and Freemans Point. If fearing this she keeps Mathias

Point

Points light too head off her port bow, she is on Port Tobacco Flats before she knows it. Therefore for the vessel ascending the river navigation by day aid of a light off Mathias Points is more guess work. She has no decided mark to guide her to take to change her course. The towning points into the upper reach of the river, but dangers in turning down the vessel and that towning points, against which the lights at Mathias Points is not an effectual towning. Suppose the light thrown to be placed on the head of the Flats of Port Tobacco Flats and it is then all plain sailing for vessels going either up or down the river. The vessel descending has simply to keep upper Cedar Points light in sight. Then keep Port Tobacco Flats light nearly ahead until it is passed or then keep away South East for the marshy bluff points until they are close aboard of Persimmon Points day beacon is sighted, then keep away for Lower

Leave Cedar Points light, which by this time will be in plain view.

In the vessel ascending the river the course is equally safe and distinctly marked. Having passed Sown Cedar Points Light, keep between the Maryland shore until Persimmon Points day beacon is passed, or if that cannot be seen, until Port Tobacco Flats Lights bear North-West, then bear away for it, keeping it close aboard on the Starboard bow until passed, then bear away for upper Cedar Points light and the mark beyond.

In view of these considerations, although we recognize the general principle that in locating a light to mark a shoal, it is better to put it where it must be rounded, than where a vessel has to make up to and keep away from it. We find in this instance, an exception to the general rule caused by the making out of the Shoal to the Eastward of Mathias Point which

which renders the location of a light at that point of imperfect utility. We therefore respectfully report that in our opinion the light house should be located at the head of the spit of Cat Tobacco Flats and the day beacon on the point of Mathias Point shoal directly opposite.

We have accordingly so indicated them on chart. Mathias Point being passed, or just above Cedar Point, light an admirable guide for the upper reach until between it and Mathias Point, a series of dangerous shoals present themselves in the axis of the river.

These shoals culminate and encroach on the Channel to the greatest disadvantage to vessels, immediately opposite Matomkin Point where we find a bar over which there is only two and a half feet water at the lowest stage. We therefore respectfully report this as the proper location for the third day beacon. &c

In coming to this determination we were somewhat undecided between this location and that off Maryland Point where we find the channel still more narrow, but as we also find ten feet water lowest stage on the apex of the shoal at this Point, and as light draft vessels can easily navigate all over this shoal we finally concluded that a day beacon here would be rather an obstruction than an advantage to General Navigation.

We were however fully impressed with the danger of this obstruction to heavy draft vessels and are of the opinion that to perfect the system of aids to navigation in the dangerous reaches meeting at Mathias Point - a light house at this its apparent is greatly needed -

If such a light could be established, by the aid of the other lights and beacons now existing or proposed in this report, the Mathias Point Region will be robbed of its terrors to navigation

and

and to vendued of as easy passage as any other portion of the river.

Between Maryland Point and the City of Washington, where such numerous obstacles to navigation to be encountered, but none to compare in importance to those we have discussed in this report. As regards estimates for the several structures, we respectfully submit that they will depend greatly upon the plan of construction adopted by the board. We are however of the opinion that the Port Tobacco Flats Light and Mathias Point day beacon can be effectively and stably established by aid of the existing appropriation and that the three day beacons need not cost more than $6000.00 each.

We are also called upon to report a location and estimate for a light-house off Thomas Point, Chesapeake Bay. Referring to the Board's annual report for 1873 we find a location selected for this light which approves itself to our judgment as

best calculated to be of the greatest aid to navigation.

The light as at present located on the main land being of little use which agrees with the proper location of this light, as known to seamen to differ as to the character of this conclusion believing that a screw pile light-house of a similar character to that located at Thimble Shoals, Chesapeake Bay, well protected by rip-rap and supplied with ice breakers would be more easily built and be just as stable as the tubular structure specified in the annual report.

Guarded to this conclusion on account of the very exposed nature of the site selected at the point of a shoal exposed to the full violence of the waves whereby construction is rendered very difficult and hazardous to unfinished work, we would greatly fear that should the tubular structure be determined upon it would be wrecked before it could be completed, inevitably involving great loss should such a calamity occur

occur. On the other hand we are of the opinion that a complete light House could be more safely built and be rendered equally stable by aid of rip-rap and a proper system of Ice breakers.

We estimate $40.000.00 as the cost of the Structure we propose and inasmuch as the present balance of appropriation falls far short of this amount we respectfully recommend that nothing beyond contracting for the Iron work be done with the corps of the existing funds to undertake until further appropriation is made —

We are struck with the great necessity of the prompt establishment of this light on the point of this dangerous Shoal, rendered more deadly necessary on account of the establishment of Craighill Channel into the Patapsco River whereby vessels seeking the port of Baltimore are led more over into the Western shore of Maryland than heretofore. The establishment of this Channel we notice has also

Endorsed

render the light house at Lore Point of minor and only local importance and the Skeen and Baker order Harbour light now there established is no longer necessary for the general navigation of the bay.

We therefore respectfully recommend that when the new Thomas Point light house shall have been built that the Lore Point lens, a specially fine one, and other fittings for the necessities of the new station be transferred to Thomas Point and the present Thomas Point lens be placed at Lore Point when it will answer all the purposes of the local navigation. We have the honor to be

Very Respectfully
Your Obedient Servants

(signed) F. H. Baker
Comdr U.S.N. & Lt Inspector

" J. Harwood
Major Engrs U.S.A. Engr 5th L.H. Dist

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No. 14 (Index in Vol. 352)

Volume 374

NC-63 Entry 3

March 15 to

April 17 1855

Sir:

I have to transmit herewith for record in your office, a deed executed by the Governor of Maryland on the 28th. day of October last, granting to the United States for light-house purposes a tract of land lying under the navigable waters of that State at Thomas' Point Shoal.

As soon as recorded, please return it to this office, together with your bill for service.

Very respectfully,

T. Lanman

Major of Engineers, U.S.A.
Light-House Engineer.

To the
Clerk of the Circuit Ct.
Anne Arundel Co.
Annapolis, Md.

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No 15 (INDEX in Vol 352)

Volume 375

NC-63 Entry 3

5th District

January

October 1st 5

Dear Sir,

Thomas' Point Shoal light-house will be finished sooner than I expected, and I therefore respectfully request that you will if possible let me have the machine to strike three strokes etc. not later than the 15th of November, from.

Very respectfully,
Your
Obt. Servt.
Major of Engineers U.S.A.
Light-House Engineer.

Mr. Geo. M. Stevens
90 Sudbury St.
Boston, Mass.

November 1 3

Sir:

The Point Station, lately discontinued, is, I am informed, occupied by an acquaintance of the former Keeper with his consent but without any direct authority of the Board.

Thomas Point Station will be shortly discontinued and some provision will be necessary for the care of the property which will otherwise be liable to damage and depredation. I respectfully call the attention of the Board to these circumstances, not being instructed as to whether I have any responsibility in the matter or not, but to request, if I am responsible, the Board will give me the

necessary instructions as to the care of the
premises of the property.

Very respectfully,
Your obt servant,
J. Barnard
Major of Engineers U.S.A.
Light house Engineer

Professor Joseph Henry
Chairman L.H. Board
Washington, D.C.

November 12 65

Sir:

As I cannot see any advantage to either the United States or the Light-house Establishment in retaining the light-house property at either Fog Point or Thomas' Point light-stations when discontinued, I respectfully recommend that it be sold after due process of advertising in newspapers at Baltimore, Washington and Annapolis and by poster at Annapolis and Crisfield, Md.

Very respectfully,
Your obt servant,
[signature illegible]
Major of Engineers, U.S.A.
Light-house Engineer.

Prof. Joseph Henry,
Chairman L.H. Board,
Washington, D.C.

Baltimore, Md., December 13, 0

John W. Lewis,

Annapolis, Maryland.

Put up closet and alter davit.

MURDOCH

( O. B. Charge Gov't rate )

Assistant Engineer.

(Thomas R. Shand Lsx)

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Volume 367

NC-63 Entry 3

NAME

Patapsco

BRANCH

1

(NC-63) Records

1 enclosure

April 29th 3

Major:

I have to return, herewith, plat of Thomas Point Shoal, forwarded with your communication of 26th inst. A copy has been made for the files of this office, as directed.

Very respectfully,
Your obt. servt.

Maja Engrs, U.S.A.
L. H. Engr.

Major Chas. H. Elliot, U.S.A.
Engr. Secy. L. H. Board,
Washington, D.C.

I have to request your attention to the inclosed from the Light-house Board and signed by the Chairman, &c. to the 25th Ult. proposing the time & Structure to be built at Thomas Point Shoal, Chesapeake Bay Md. From the wording of the last paragraph it is evident that it is expected the structure is to be built up to a certain height during the present season, and in conversation with Major Elliot I understood him to say that it should be finished to a height of about four (4) feet at least above high water.

For the following reason I deem it expedient to delay the commencement

of this work till next June.

Cash. The Contractor is not bound to advance to carry the work on above high water mark supposing the most favorable circumstances to exist. The timbering from which the work of piling down the tube is to be raised, or must be of a substantial character, - ordinary trestles will hardly answer the purpose. Such a pier as will be required cannot be built at this place for less than about $1000. A sufficient number of cribs filled down will not cost less than $500. The iron lining will not cost less than about $400 for a working tube (the most favorable circumstances in regard to the character of the ballast will require a length of at least 90 feet - 6 in the sand & to depth of water at mean tide, & for high tide and 9 feet to height above high water).

Pile work alone will therefore cost £3000; and
piers of less than 300 feet: timber for
bottom £50; labor inserting & driving piles
300 more — making a sum total of £3350,
the appropriation being only £3000. If
the character of the bottom should be
unfavorable, the cost will be increased,
and if stormy weather should be experi-
enced, still further increase.

Secondly. There is no particular advan-
tage in having the structure thus in an
unfinished state awaiting a further ap-
propriation, even supposing it could be
carried on by a second combination of in-
terest. It would be necessary to place
on it a temporary light and a temporary
guard for flushes, which would be a
still further expense: otherwise it would
be a source of danger to passing craft.

Thirdly. If the work is delayed the

Fifthly, another objection can be made, sufficient to condemn the entire structure without suspending observations and that is, before long the material can be put and so an early commencement.

Sixthly. The necessary assistance during the winter will add considerably to the cost.

Seventhly. The ice during the winter may carry away some or all of our temporary huts and total the absence of shelter it will be a very objectionable.

Lastly. The observation is to be taken high above and it may be questioned whether such a structure as is proposed can be properly so considered.

I present the foregoing considerations for your attention. If you differ with me as to the expediency of awaiting any additional observation, please

I will go ahead as early as practicable, and will go ahead and work as far toward completion as the means will allow.

Very respectfully
Your obt Servt

Major of Engineers
Light House Engineer.

Brvt Brig Gen. O. M. Poe,
Chief Engr Light House Board
Washington, D. C.

June 6

Sir:

I have to report that on the 28th ult. I made a personal examination of the site proposed for the light-house on Bond's Flat Shoal and at the same time made borings with an Auger to ascertain the depth of 22 feet. The soundings on the chart proved to be correct so far as could be judged by comparing borings on the pilot-house as the position marked on the tracing sent me by the Light-house Board on the 26th ult. easily determined. The day was calm and at the time the borings were made the tide was ebbing. I found what somewhat surprised me — a current [illegible]

June 6

Sir:

I have to report that on the 28th inst. I made a personal examination of the site proposed for the light-house on Thomas Shoal and at the same time made borings with an Auger to ascertain the depth of water. The soundings on the chart proved to be accurate so far as could be judged by comparing bearings on the pilot-house on the position marked on the tracing sent me from the Light-house Board. On the 29th inst. early determined. The day was calm and at the time the borings were made the tide was ebbing. I found what somewhat surprised me - a current [illegible]

at the bottom of it. The sand consists of a mixture of black mud, sand and shells to a depth of about 12 inches; below this the sand becomes more free of mud, but at about 10 feet there is only a trace of it. Oyster shells were found mixed with the sand at various depths, and at 22 feet some of them quite large. I had no means at the time of testing the bearing capacity of the soil but I have no doubt from the character of the borings that a good sand foundation for the light-house can be found at a depth of 10 feet, or less, below the surface. Precautions will doubtless have to be taken, however, to counteract the scouring action of the current. From my present knowledge I should say that the cast iron tube could be sunk by merely excavating the soil from the inside and weighting it until the required depth is attained.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Before arrangements are made for this
mode of operating I desire to make some
further tests as to the character of the shot
which I propose to do at the earliest day
practicable.

Very respectfully
Your obt servt
[illegible]
Major of Engineers U.S.A.
Light-house Engineer.

Brvt Brig. Gen. C. P. Patterson
Actg Engr Secty L.H. Board
Washington, D.C.

May 21

Sir:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 20th inst. stating that my letter dated 13th May, relative to commencing work on Thomas Point Shoal Light-house this season, has been referred to the Committee on Engineering for report.

Very respectfully,
Your obt servt

Major of Engineers, U.S.A.
Light-house Engineer.

Bvt Brig. Gen. G.W. Toe,
Actg Engr Secty L.H. Board.
Washington, D.C.

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Volume 369

NC-63 Entry 3

5th L.H.D is
Sept. 25, 1873, to Jan

Col. Appropriation Thomas Point Shoal Md.

Washn. Oct. 3

Major:

Col. Mowins before leaving for Charleston last night directed me to inform you by letter to day that an appropriation of ($50,000) fifty thousand dollars should be made for Thomas' Point Shoal Light Station, instead of ($5000) twenty five thousand, as recommended in his last annual report.

Very respectfully,
Your obt. Servt.
Jos. H. Talbert.

Major Gen. M. Meigs,
Supt. Treasy. D. C. Brad,
Washington, D. C.

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No. "O" Index in Vol 520

Volume 432 NC-63 Entry 3

Post Office Building, Room 20, P. O. Box 1178.

Light-House Establishment,

Office of Engineer, Fifth District,

No. ..... Inclosures.

Baltimore, Md., March 26, 1900.

*Subject:* Thomas Point Shoal Light-station, Md.
Inspection of.

The Lighthouse Board.

Sirs:

I have the honor to make report of an examination of the following light-station:

THOMAS POINT SHOAL, MD., March 25, 1900.

Station was in excellent order. Complaint having been made of white sectors within the limits of the red sector, wider panes of red glass will be introduced by means of placing them in frames.

Respectfully yours,

W. H. Heuer

Lieutenant-Colonel, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.,
Lighthouse Engineer.

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Volume 435

NC-63 Entry 3

Department of Commerce and Labor
LIGHT-HOUSE ESTABLISHMENT

OFFICE OF ENGINEER, 5TH DISTRICT
ROOM 20, P. O. BUILDING
BALTIMORE, MD.

July 2, 1904.

The Lighthouse Board.

Sirs:

I have the honor to make report of an examination of the following light-station:

THOMAS POINT SHOAL, MD., June 22, 1904.

Station was in excellent order.

Respectfully,

Colonel, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.,
Lighthouse Engineer.