



Maryland's National Register Properties

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Photo credit: Richard J. Dodds, Calvert Marine Museum, 03/2001

Cove Point Lighthouse

Inventory No.: **CT-65**

Date Listed: **4/11/1973**

Location: **3500 Lighthouse Boulevard (MD 497) , Cove Point, Calvert County**

Category: **Structure**

Period/Date of Construction: **1828**

Description: Cove Point Lighthouse is a conical brick tower rising 51' above the ground. Its walls are over 30" thick at the base. It has a nominal range (the maximum distance at which the light may be seen in clear weather) of 21 miles and 150,000 candle-power lamp. It has a flashing white beacon. The entrance to the light tower is on the west side. Two 6/6 sash windows pierce the north side of the tower, one near the bottom and one near the top, and a single 6/6 sash window pierces the south side of the tower, about half way up. A balcony with an iron railing encircles the top of the lighthouse. The brick tower was covered with stucco in 1953. The circular lantern, with cast-iron mullions supported by a masonry wall and surrounded by an 18" stone deck and cast iron railing, has triangular panes of glass and is painted black. The interior floor of the lantern is formed of a single iron plate. The interior winding staircase is constructed of triangular wooden treads with a hole on the interior side of each tread through which a central wooden column is threaded. The outward side of each tread is fitted directly into the masonry of the tower as is a narrow handrail which appears to be original. Next to the stairwell column a square shaft, also running from the ground level to the lantern, houses the counterweights of the original winding mechanism. The lightkeeper's house, located immediately to the west of the lighthouse, was raised to two

Significance: One of twelve lighthouses built in Maryland by John Donohoo, the Cove Point Lighthouse has served as a navigational aid on the Chesapeake Bay since its construction in 1828. It is the oldest operating light on the Maryland shore of the Chesapeake Bay. In the 1820s, the United States realized the importance of erecting navigational aids on the Bay. The State of Maryland granted the Federal government the right of jurisdiction over the property they had already purchased. Originally, the lighthouse used eleven lamps with eleven 18" reflectors. On June 12, 1855, the lighthouse was equipped with a fifth-order Fresnel lens, which exhibited a fixed light, varied by flashes. In 1897, a fourth-order Fresnel lens replaced the lamps and reflectors. This lens had a weight-driven rotation mechanism. The light was fully electrified in 1907, and automated since 1986. The Cove Point station has had a fog signal for many years, the first in 1834. This bell lasted until 1858, when it was considered worn out and was replaced by a new bell and striking apparatus. In 1880 the first of a series of bell towers was built. Fashioned at the Lazaretto Depot, the first tower lasted seven years before it had to be replaced. In 1898 an iron fog bell tower, a square pyramidal structure 31' tall, was installed. This tower was removed in the spring of 1901 and replaced with another wood frame structure, this time on a brick foundation. This tower held a second class

stories in 1883, providing three additional rooms. This square brick building is four bays by three bays, with a pyramidal hip roof and large gabled dormers with two 6/6 sash windows each. Windows on the first and second floors are 8/8 sash. Doors, covered by shed-roofed vestibules reached by a flight of steps, appear in the outer bays of the four-bay facades. A small 1901 gable-front frame shed, one bay wide by two deep, stands to the south of the lighthouse. Centered on the peak of the west gable end of its roof is a large fog bell supported by a bracketed frame. The entrance to the shed, covered by paneled shutters, consists of a double door in the west end. Windows, two each on the north and south facades, and one on the east gable end, are 4/4 sash with a single paneled shutter. The roof is standing seam metal. The shed originally housed a blower siren and machinery.

Daboll trumpet fog signal. The old fog bell, attached to a support on the roof, was retained for emergency use. In 1891, in response to erosion problems, the Lighthouse Board approved a substantial wooden seawall surrounding the house. The fog bell tower was also moved inland 16'. A seawall still protects the point from erosion. The property is currently owned by Calvert County, but the Coast Guard is still responsible for its official operation. All but the lantern room is accessible and maintained as a museum.

