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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| RECEIVED         | NOV 9 1977  |
| DATE ENTERED     | NOV 25 1977 |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS



**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Ocracoke Light Station (HS-0-1A, HS-0-1B)

AND/OR COMMON  
Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Rural Road 1326

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN  
Ocracoke

VICINITY OF

First

STATE  
North Carolina

CODE  
37

COUNTY  
Hyde

CODE  
095

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY                                        | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS                                              | PRESENT USE                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS           | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC                |
|                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
|                                                 |                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:           |

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)  
United States Coast Guard, 5th District/National Park Service, ~~Cape Hatteras NC~~ <sup>SE Regional Office</sup>

STREET & NUMBER  
431 Crawford Street / 1895 Phoenix Blvd  
~~Rt. 1, Box 675~~

CITY, TOWN  
Portsmouth / Atlanta / Manteo  
VICINITY OF  
Virginia / Georgia / North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hyde County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Swanquarter  
STATE  
North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN  
STATE

# 7 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |                                    |                                                   |

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original Ocracoke Light Station was constructed in 1823 at a cost of \$11,359.35 by Noah Porter of Massachusetts. The station consisted of the conical tower and a small one and a half story, three bedroom keepers dwelling with gabled roof. The station occupies a two acre plot in the midst of modern day Ocracoke. A white picket fence surrounds the property. Over the years, other out buildings have been added so that by 1930 an oil house stood near the base of the lighthouse, a coal shed stood to the west of the quarters, a storage shed stood between the quarters and tower; a kitchen and a dining room, connected by a walkway, stood immediately north of the quarters.

The tower (HS-0-1A) stands 69 feet above its base to the focal plane of the light or 75 feet above sea level. The tower is constructed of brick with a mortar surface. The structure is five feet thick at the base and tapers toward the top. The surface has been whitewashed. A wooden spiral staircase circled the inside walls to the lens room in the original. The tower is pierced by a wooden doorway at the western base and by four windows (two facing North, at base and half way up the tower, and two on the South side opposite the others). The windows contain 2x3 pane vertical sash. A brick pediment supports the iron gallery with double railing around the lens room. The circular lens room is constructed of brick and mortar upon which rest the twelve glass trapezoidal lens panes and the dome and finial of cast iron. The lantern originally housed a valve lamp with reflectors. A Fresnel lens from L. Soultter & Cie, Paris, France, replaced the reflecting apparatus in 1854. In 1860, Franklin lamps replaced the valve lamps. In 1862, during the Civil War, the lighthouse was still standing but the Fresnel lens had been removed. By 1863 the refitting of the Ocracoke light tower was completed and the light re-exhibited.

A large part of the tower was recemented and whitewashed with two coats in 1868. The lantern and all wood work was painted inside and out with two coats. The lantern deck and sashes and frames were repaired and the stairway renovated, putting in 33 feet of 14 inch diameter newel. New modern fourth-order lamps were supplied and various repairs were made again in 1899. A plank walkway was laid from the dwelling to the light tower in 1903. Following the hurricane of 1944, the stairway was removed and replaced with ladders. In 1950 the old wooden stairs were torn out and replaced by a steel spiral stairway. Repainting of brick interior and recoating of the outside walls was done in 1951 using the gunite process to preserve the tower and aid in maintenance of the whitewashed surface.

In 1938 the old oil vapor lamps were replaced with modern electric bulbs. The 8000 candle power white light is continuously visible for 14 miles at sea. Except for the changes in the lighting apparatus and repairs to the stairs and surface treatments, the tower appears as it did when constructed in 1823.

The keepers quarters (HS-0-1B) were built in 1823-24 by Noah Porter of Massachusetts at the same time as the lighthouse tower. The original dwelling was a one story structure with a gabled roof, containing three comfortable rooms. The walls were constructed of brick 16 inches thick and had deep inset windows of 2x4 pane double sash. The walls were covered by mortar and whitewashed. The ceiling and inside walls were plastered and painted white. The gabled roof was covered by wooden shingles. A

(See continuation sheet.)

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1823 to Present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Noah Porter (Builder)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ocracoke light station was one of the first lighthouses authorized for the state of North Carolina. Ocracoke lighthouse is the oldest ~~remaining~~<sup>functioning</sup> lighthouse structure on the North Carolina coast. It continues to warn mariners of hazardous Ocracoke Inlet.

During the latter part of the 18th Century and the first half of the 19th Century Ocracoke Inlet served as the primary point of entry for sea vessels bound for the populous northern part of North Carolina. Efforts were made to establish a lighthouse to guide mariners toward the inlet. A light was needed not as a channel marker but for mariners bound into the inlet to warn them not to cross the bar at night.

The first lighthouse at Ocracoke was authorized by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly in 1789 and on September 13, 1790, a one-acre site on Ocracoke Island was deeded to the State of North Carolina. The lighthouse construction did not occur because lighthouse became the responsibility of the Federal Government. Nothing happened until May 13, 1794, when Congress authorized construction of a lighthouse on Shell Castle Island just inside Ocracoke Inlet. The Shell Castle Lighthouse was ~~completed~~<sup>lighted</sup> in 1798, but was rendered useless because the channel had shifted about a mile so that the light did not serve its purpose of guiding mariners to the channel<sup>1</sup>.

On May 15, 1802, an appropriation of \$14,000 was made for a light vessel to replace the Shell Castle Lighthouse. The light vessel was placed in service at the inlet but did not prove satisfactory either. On May 7, 1822, Congress authorized \$20,000 for construction of a lighthouse on Ocracoke Island to replace the light vessel. The lighthouse was built on two acres of property sold to the United States in December of 1822 by Jacob Gaskill for a sum of \$50.00.

Over the years, the lighthouse became a community center. During bad storms, towns people would congregate in the lighthouse quarters on high ground until the waters receded. During WWII Coast Guardsmen stayed in the quarters and maintained a round-the-clock watch from the top of the lighthouse. The lighthouse remains in operation (automatically) today under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard. The quarters and other property were transferred to the National Park Service (under a special use permit) in 1957 for use as ranger quarters. According to the keeper of the light, 1929-1946, Joe Burrus, "the great event of each day used to be climbing the spiral stairs at sundown to trim the wick, fill the reservoir, polish the reflectors and light the lamp. Today, my days are more like the trip back down the spiral stairway."<sup>2</sup>

1. Stick, David - "Outer Banks of North Carolina", pages 302 - 303.

2. Rondthaler, Alice - "Old Time Light Keepers Gone", news article, "Coastland Times", 1951.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

brick walkway surrounded the dwelling. In 1868 the roof was repaired and reshingled. Hearths and brick walks around the house were relaid. Plastering was repaired in all rooms. Floors were painted and the dwelling whitewashed.

In 1897 the roof of the original structure was removed and a full story was added. This provided three good upstairs rooms with beaded walls. A second dwelling was attached on the eastern end of the first in 1928-29. This section is similar to the first, but it is E-W rather than N-S, and being of wooden frame construction, it lacks the thick walls of the 1823 structure. The roof was changed from wood shingles to a standing seam tern roof. The outside walls of all additions were shingled. The duplex building was extensively renovated in 1950, including complete interior refinishing and redecorating (covering beaded walls with painted wallboard), and installation of modern sanitary facilities and improvements in both apartments. Modern kitchen and bathroom equipment was put in, floors were replaced or refinished, ceilings and walls were lined with plywood panelling, closet space was increased. The full length porch, built across the front of both apartments in 1929, was screened-in during 1950. The quarters appears today about as it did in 1950. Only minor interior redecorating has occurred to its 14 rooms since then. In 1972 the standing seam tern roof was replaced by one of the same type.

Outbuildings: Just south of the tower is a single bay 8 foot square, brick with mortar surface oil house. It has a flat roof of wood and metal and is painted white. A single wooden door on the west side and a window on the south side offer access. Originally built to house oil and backup supplies for the lighthouse, the alternate electric generator is now housed there. Adjacent to the north end of the quarters is a two bay wide board and batten structure with gabled roof. The walls are painted white and the roof has wooden shingles. Now used for storage, the building was originally a dining room. It was once connected by a covered, screened-in walkway to a smaller kitchen building toward the east side fence.

An additional small storage building of board and batten construction with steep gabled roof with shingles of wood stands between the old dining room and the light tower. A gabled roof coal shed (garage) was built of wood on the west fence line. It was severely damaged by the 1944 hurricane and collapsed.

The whole property is surrounded by a white picket fence 200 feet on north and south and 420 feet on east and west lines.

Minor intrusions on the historic scene include a paved road north of the lighthouse, power lines to the station and an NPS residence sign. Shrubbery hides the view of 20th century cottages in the immediate area.

At the time of construction the lighthouse station had little vegetation and sat near the gently sloping wide beach. By 1900 trees and shrubs surrounded the station. This vegetation closely resembles today's thick growth.



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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Ocracoke Light Station HS-O-1A, HS-O-1B

AND/OR COMMON  
Same

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Ocracoke VICINITY OF COUNTY Hyde STATE North Carolina

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

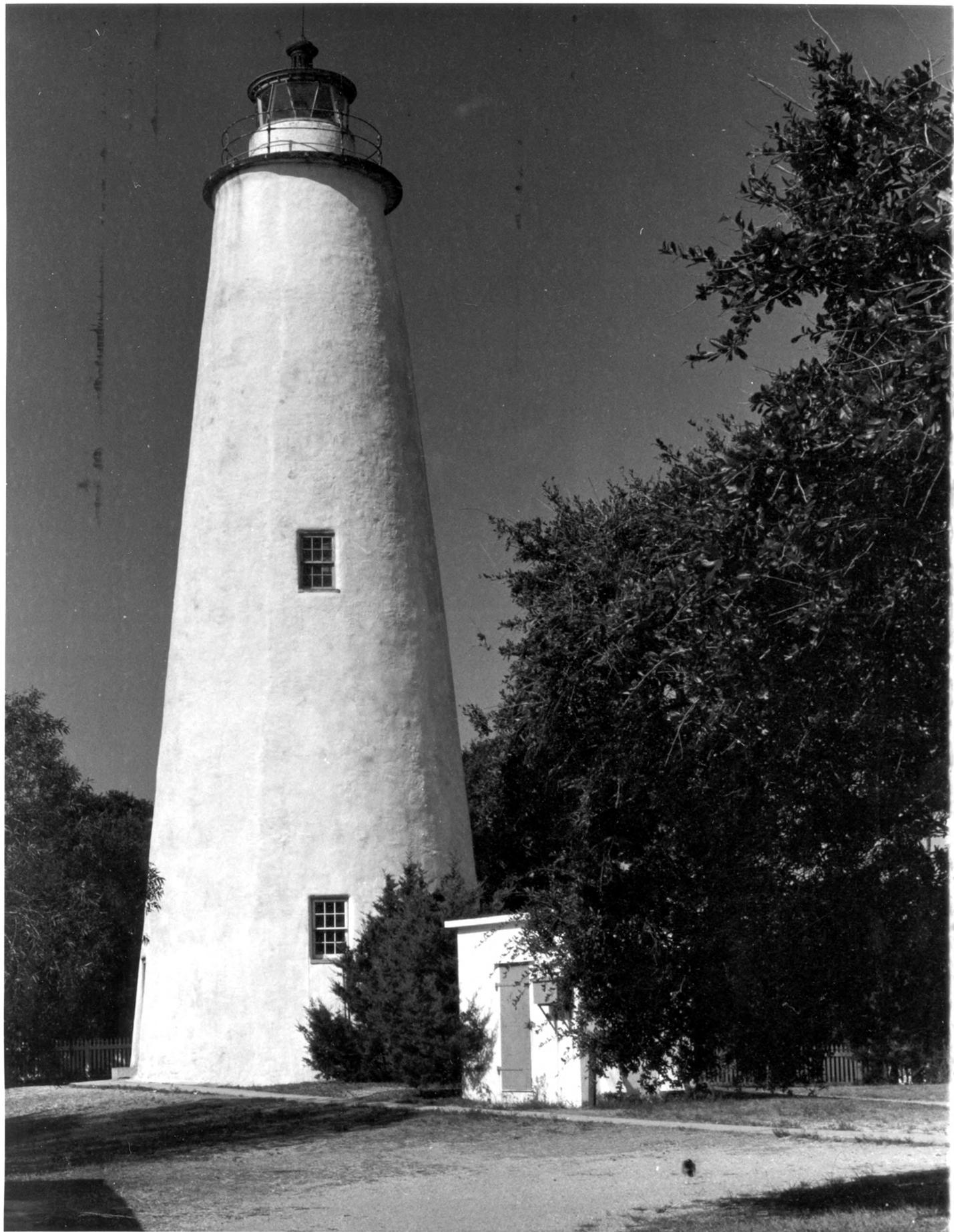
PHOTO CREDIT Ronald G. Warfield, National Park Service DATE OF PHOTO October, 1976  
Cape Hatteras National Seashore  
NEGATIVE FILED AT Rt. 1, Box 675  
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

View of light station tower and Keepers' Quarters from south. Tower appears about as constructed in 1823 but dwelling has been added to and changed through the years.

PHOTO NO.  
HS-0-1B



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AND/OR COMMON  
Same

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Ocracoke

— VICINITY OF

COUNTY  
Hyde

STATE  
North Carolina

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Ronald G. Warfield, National Park Service DATE OF PHOTO October, 1976  
Cape Hatteras National Seashore

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rt. 1, Box 675  
Manteo, North Carolina 27951

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Ocracoke Lighthouse (close-up) from south; oil house in foreground.

PHOTO NO.  
HS-O-1A