OMB NO. 1024-0018 EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form date entered

For NPS use only received MAY 2 7 1982 JUN 2 8 1982

1. Na	me				
nistoric	Charlest	on Main L	ight	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
and/or comme	on Morris I	sland Lig	hthouse (prefe	red)	
2. Lo	cation	6 Mi.	50 3		/
street & numi	_{ber} approximately	6 miles	southeast of Ch	narleston on	N/A not for publication
city, town	Morris Island Charleston		_X_ vicinity of	-sengresolonal district	L
	South Carolina		045 county	Charleston	code 019
	ssification	n	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
Category district building(_X_ structure site object	• •	on Ac	atus occupied unoccupied work in progress cessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation X other: abandoned
4. Ow	ner of Pro	perty			abandone
name		Felkel m Land Co	mpany, Inc.		
street & numb		bank Road			
city, town	Goose Cree		N/Avicinity of	state	South Carolina 29445
	cation of L	egal		on	
	egistry of deeds, etc.		ton County RMC	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
street & numb			use Square		
		Charles	·	atata	South Carolina 29401
6. Re	presentati			_	
Inven	ntory of Historic es in South Carol			operty been determined	eligible?yes _X_ no
date 1981				federalX_ s	tate county loca
depository fo	r survey records So	uth Carol	ina Department	of Archives and H	istory
	Columbia				South Carolina 2921

7. Description

Condition Check one Check one excellent deteriorated X unaltered X original site good ruins altered moved date X fair unexposed	
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Morris Island Lighthouse is a tall, conical, brick tower built on Morris Island ca. 1876 to mark the southern entrance to the Charleston Harbor. The present lighthouse is the third such structure on the site. Although the original keepers' houses and other outbuildings have been destroyed, the tower is intact with few alterations and still serves as a daymark on the channel.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Morris Island Lighthouse is a 150-foot, conical, brick tower with a base diameter of thirty-three feet and a top diameter of sixteen feet, eight inches. The focal plane was 158 feet above sea level with a visibility of eighteen and three-quarter miles. At present the tower is painted in alternating black and white horizontal stripes for use as a daymark, and photographs from ca. 1900 indicate that it was historically marked in this manner. Single light windows with segmental-arched heads are located at alternate levels on the east and west faces of the lighthouse.

Inside the tower, an iron spiral stair with nine flights leads to the light room, which has an external gallery with an iron parapet. The parapet has decorative iron pendants on its lower edge. The light room originally had a revolving lamp outfitted with a first-order Fresnel lens system. The lamp burned lard oil until 1881 when it was converted to mineral oil. In 1934 the fuel was changed to acetylene, which was used until the light was discontinued in 1962.

<u>Surroundings</u>: The lighthouse was originally part of a complex of buildings including three frame Italianate keepers' residences and several associated outbuildings. A brick retaining wall originally surrounded the complex. All of the outbuildings and associated structures have been destroyed; the tower is the only surviving structure. The erosion of the Morris Island beach has eliminated all traces of the destroyed buildings. The lighthouse itself is now completely surrounded by waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications		landscape architectur law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportationX other (specify) local history
Specific dates	ca. 1876	Builder/Architect	unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Morris Island Lighthouse is a tall, conical, brick tower erected ca. 1876 on Morris Island in the Charleston Harbor. The lighthouse, last used in 1962, is the third tower at this site, a strategic point in guiding shipping for over two hundred years. The Morris Island Lighthouse is significant for its role in marking Charleston's channel, as a good example of later nineteenth century lighthouse design, and as a local landmark.

The present Morris Island Lighthouse, built ca. 1876, is the third lighthouse on this site. In 1767, about the time the first light was constructed in the harbor, there were three small islands, Cumming's Point, Morrison's Island, and Middle Bay Island, where Morris Island is now. The first lighthouse, a brick, octagonal tower was designed by Samuel Cardy, architect and Thomas Young, engineer, and built by Adam Miller, bricklayer, on Middle Bay Island. Remains of this light were discovered during construction of the present tower, which is situated directly atop the original site. A second, more modern tower with a revolving light was constructed in 1837. This light was refitted in 1845 and again in 1857.

By the Civil War the three islands had physically joined and Morris Island, from Morrison's Island, was the name applied to the whole. In 1861 the lighthouse on Morris Island was destroyed by Confederate troops seeking to hinder the Union forces'entry into the channel. For the remainder of the war, Morris Island was a battlefield. In 1876 the present lighthouse, then called the Charleston Main Light, was completed on Morris Island. Due to a shift in the location of the channel, the tower was built to the south of the second light, coincidentally directly on top of the 1767 tower. The new lighthouse was a 150-foot, conical, brick tower.²

At the same time the lighthouse was constructed, houses and outbuildings to accommodate the light keepers were also built. Nautical maps from the late 1800s show at least fifteen buildings, which included three Italianate keepers' residences, on the island, which had become a virtually self-sufficient community. The residents kept a garden, chickens, and pigs. There was a one-room school whose teacher arrived the first of each week by boat and returned to Charleston each weekend. A boardwalk system facilitated travel, and well into this century, a car was imported for traversing the island.

In 1938 the lighthouse was automated, and the keepers and their families left the island. By the time of their departure the devastating erosion of the island had already begun. Jetties constructed in 1896 caused complete erosion of the shoal protecting Morris Island from the sea. Since 1939 over 1600 feet of land have been lost on Morris Island, and today the lighthouse stands completely surrounded by water about 500 feet off the shore of what is left of Morris Island. In 1962, upon completion of the Sullivan's Island light station, the Morris Island lighthouse, completely surrounded by water and leaning slightly due to the ravages of time, storms, and an earthquake, was slated for demolition. It was saved through the efforts of the Charleston Preservation Society; and although several plans for utilizing the tower have been broached, none have, as yet, been implemented.⁴

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

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	<u>-</u>	hical Data			·	
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1. F	orm Pre	pared By				
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reet & numb		11,669, Capitol S		telephone	(803) 758-5816	
y or town	Columbia				th Carolina 29211	
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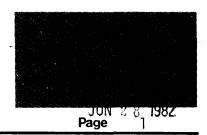
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Item number

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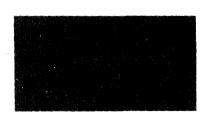


Engineering/Architecture: The Morris Island Lighthouse is a significant engineering accomplishment, a competent and logical answer to the problems inherent in guiding shipping into the Charleston Harbor. Since the first light was built ca. 1767, the erection of a lighthouse on Morris Island had been seen as necessary. The present tower, the third lighthouse on the island, produced a light visible from eighteen and three-quarter miles away, helping to guide shipping into the channel. The structure has survived over a hundred years of Atlantic Ocean storms as well as the erosion of the Morris Island beach. The design of the tower with the arched windows, iron stair, and iron gallery with pendants on its parapet is also noteworthy.

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Charleston Main Light Footnotes

David Chamberlain, "Middle Bay Light," Charleston Magazine, January/
February 1977, p. 14; Yearbook-1883 (Charleston, SC: City of Charleston, 1883),
pp. 491, insert between 491 and 492; US, Congress, Senate, Report of the
Secretary of the Treasury, on the State of the Finances for the Year Ending
June 30, 1858, Executive Document 2, 35th Congress, 2nd session, 1858, pp. 414415; Samuel Cardy was also the architect of St. Michael's Church in Charleston,
SC; see "Death Notices From the South Carolina Gazette From September 29, 1766
to December 19, 1774," South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine
34 (October 1933): 211-17 and Charleston County Judgment Rolls, Box 57B, File 36A,
South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC.

²Chamberlain, p. 14; <u>Yearbook-1883</u>, p. 492; E. Milby Burton, <u>The Seige of Charleston</u> (Columbia, SC: <u>University of South Carolina Press, 1970</u>), p. 86; Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Year 1867 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), pp. 219-220.

³Chamberlain, pp. 14-15.

⁴Chamberlain, pp. 14-15.