



FINDING AID

FORT BROOKE U.S. ARMY RECORDS **1902-1967(bulk dates:)**

Prepared by
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National Park Service

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HISTORY

President Theodore Roosevelt, under General Order No. 93, established the San Juan Military Reservation in 1903. It consisted of 210 acres of lands acquired by the United States under the Treaty of Paris in 1898. The reservation included Castillo San Cristobal, Castillo San Felipe del Morro, Fortin San Juan de la Cruz (El Canuelo) and surrounding areas and buildings. The San Juan Military Reservation operated as a War Department post in the Caribbean, from 1903-1967. The reservation was designated Fort Brooke Army Base in 1943, after John Rutter Brooke, a Spanish-American War Army Major General and Puerto Rico's first governor. The entire period of U.S. Army occupation of the San Juan Military Reservation, prior to National Park Service occupation, is referred to as the Fort Brooke Era.

The territory of Puerto Rico was taken by the U.S. Military in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, when the United States declared war on Spain in support of Cuba's fight for independence. On May 12, 1898, in an attempt to cut off Spanish supplies shipped to Cuba, a U.S. Navy squadron, under the command of Admiral William T. Sampson, fired upon the Spanish military base at San Juan, Puerto Rico. The bombardment lasted approximately three hours and severely damaged San Juan's city walls and Castillo del Morro, where an embedded shell can still be seen in the walls of Santa Barbara Battery. Castillo de San Cristobal, the San Juan jail, hospital, several government buildings and private residences were also damaged during the attack. Spanish casualties were 36 dead, 20 wounded, the United States losses are listed as one dead and seven wounded. The United States Military did not come ashore to take the city of San Juan at this time and instead Sampson's fleet traveled on to Cuba.

In July, the attack on Puerto Rico continued with an invasion on the southern coast at Guanica and Ponce. Troops invaded other strategic land locations and planned to march north to San Juan and surround the city with the support of U.S. Navy fleet. The plan was called off when the United States and Spain negotiated a cease-fire on August 12, 1898. Subsequent peace agreements provided Cuba independence and ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States.

According to peace terms, Spanish soldiers left the base at San Juan in October 1898, taking records and other documentation from the Spanish occupation. Additional records and artifacts, such as seacoast guns and howitzers, were also sent back to the Spanish government in Seville in 1904.

After occupation, the U.S. began to strengthen the defenses of the San Juan walls and fortifications and updated the facilities for use by the U.S. military. Construction projects began in 1899 when the U.S. Navy built a Lighthouse in El Morro to replace the Spanish Lighthouse destroyed in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Due to poor construction, this lighthouse lasted only a few years and a second lighthouse was built in 1908. The second U.S. Army

lighthouse is still in use today and is currently operated by the U.S. Coast Guard. In 1901 the U.S. Army began installing electricity in El Morro and San Cristobal barracks and quarters, Ballaja Barracks, and the other administration buildings.

Over time and under the supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Army upgraded the electrical, sewer, and drainage systems to contemporary standards and patched and resurfaced the stucco facades of the fortifications and city walls.

With the changing militaristic climate and the increasing significance of naval warfare, Fort Brooke was designated a key strategic post in 1913 and subsequently received increased funding.

In 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and began improving the artillery on the San Juan Military Reservation. The advent of war had an impact on the fortification's physical structures. Modern military additions were added to the Castillo San Cristobal and San Felipe del Morro structures to aid in wartime activities and the surveillance of the Caribbean. The Corps of Engineers constructed numerous gun emplacements to accommodate the new weaponry.

The post was developed to accommodate the U.S. Army soldiers and their families living on the base. Housing facilities, hospitals, and recreation areas, such as a swimming pool, theatre, golf range, and a baseball diamond, were built on El Morro's grounds. Additionally, improvements were made to sanitary facilities in order to combat the spread of diseases.

In the 1930's the base at San Juan collaborated with the Works Progress Administration to repair the fortifications. Planning for tourism and recreation projects on the base also began. These projects ceased in the late 1930's and early 1940's as the base became a central location for Caribbean operations during WWII.

WWII brought more troops to the San Juan Military Base. While the base never saw an attack, the strategic placement of the fortifications provided an ideal location for submarine lookouts and communication centers. Additions included submarine observation areas added to the fort's walls, harbor defense and communication centers, and in 1942 bombproof bunkers were constructed in the dry moats of San Cristobal and El Morro.

In 1949, an agreement between the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army established a portion of Fort Brooke as the San Juan National Historic Site. The National Park Service was to develop facilities for visitors, create walks, roadways, and services for public use. Transition to the San Juan National Historic Site began in 1949 and continued until September 13, 1961, when 36 acres of the fortifications, San Cristobal, El Morro, El Canuelo, and parts of the walls and adjacent lands were formally transferred to the National Park Service.

Reduction of U.S. Army operations in the city of San Juan began in 1965. In 1967, a Master Plan was developed for the use, demolition, and transfer of Fort Brooke property. Fort Brooke was separated into two main parts, Parcel "A" and Parcel "B." Parcel "A" spread from El Morro to Manicomio and to the San Juan Gate and was transferred to the National Park Service. Parcel

“B” areas: the Manicomio, Beneficencia, Ballaja, La Concepcion, and Dominican Monastery areas were transferred to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The Master Plan determined which buildings were to be destroyed in order to open the grounds for public use. The National Park Service worked with the army to tear down barracks, housing quarters, and recreation facilities, such as the pool, theatre, and baseball diamond. In 1976, the boundaries were redrawn, providing more land to the Puerto Rican government in Parcel “B.” The U.S. Army retained and operated Rodriguez Army Hospital as the last part of Fort Brooke, in the Ballaja area of San Juan, and its access roads until 1973.

Today, Fort Brooke appears much as it in 1898 when Spain ceded it to the United States. Few of the U.S. Army buildings remain; the majority of Fort Brooke’s 20th century structures have been demolished; and some structures, such as the WWII bunkers, have been repurposed for park use.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

FORT BROOKE U.S. ARMY RECORDS 1902-1967 (bulk dates:)

CATALOG NUMBER SAJU 1307

VOLUME 3.00 LF

DESCRIPTION

These records document Fort Brooke U.S. Army Base's planning and development, report its activities, and detail its transition to the San Juan National Historic Site. Spanning the years 1902 to 1967, the records include reports on planning, development and preservation, photographs, maps, drawings, agreements, bids and proposals, and correspondence.

The General Files series includes preservation and condition reports of the Fort Brooke facility, construction and building specifications, and recreation and park development reports in anticipation of the transfer of lands to the National Park Service. These reports offer perspectives on how the initiatives of the War Department changed in regards to the Fort Brooke Post during different periods of the 20th century. They also offer insight into the steps taken to develop and preserve a historically significant U.S. Army base during the first half of the 20th century.

Strengths of the General Files series include detailed reports written by the Army Corps of Engineers describing the preparation and development of the military base for transfer to a historic site.

The War Department Correspondence series consists mostly of transmittal messages between the War Department and Corps of Engineers discussing construction projects. Materials include reports, specifications and bids for projects, and telegrams. The volume of correspondence begins to increase during the 1920's. Strengths of this

collection include various contract specifications and construction expense records which document the efforts the War Department to maintain and preserve the fortifications and city walls.

ORGANIZATION

The records are organized in two series: Series I, General Files; Series II, War Department Correspondence.

PROVENANCE

The Fort Brooke U.S. Army collection was donated by Hector R. Marin in 1988. According to the accession file, "this material had been discarded by the San Juan Area Office, Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, when they weeded their files. It was recovered as it was about to be burned at the Fort Buchanan incinerator and saved from certain destruction." There is no record of who Hector R. Marin was, or how he became the owner of records.

RESTRICTIONS

NO

*ASSOCIATED
MATERIALS*

Park Resource Records, SAJU 18599

Assembled Personal Papers, SAJU 18627

HIERARCHY

I. SERIES I: GENERAL FILES, 1910-1967

II. SERIES II: WAR DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENCE, 1902-1941

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. SERIES I: GENERAL FILES, 1910-1967

Arranged alphabetically

This series contains reports and specifications for projects conducted at the San Juan Military Post, and subsequently the Fort Brooke Army Base, from 1910-1967. The series details the issues facing the San Juan Military Post, including staff housing, health conditions, preservation of the historic structures, and future planning initiatives. Materials include: preservation, repair, and construction reports, planning and development records, and Works Project Administration projects. The files document the changes made to the property and provide insight on how the military plans for Fort Brooke changed.

The majority of files date from 1930-1950, when the importance of maintaining and preserving the forts, as well as updating them for wartime use, was an important endeavor. The series also contains numerous reports about recreation and tourism planning and the transfer of property to the National Park Service. These reports chronicle the standards of the army with regards to the functions of the land at the San Juan Military Post.

Of interest in the series are the materials relating to the Works Progress Administration projects performed at the park during the 1930's and the Park Development and Tourism Planning reports, the later providing evidence that the transition from military to National Park Service occupation had been in development before the onset of World War II.

This series includes a small number of photographs, maps, drawings, and social event invitations.

II. SERIES II: WAR DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENCE, 1902-1941

Arranged chronologically

This series includes correspondence to and from the U.S. War Department, from 1902-1941, with the majority of the correspondence dating from 1925-1941. The correspondence discusses the preservation of the fortifications, the walls, and other construction projects. The majority is formal correspondence detailing the transmission of various documents between departments.

The majority of the series consists of correspondence and includes telegrams, photographs, architectural drawings and blueprints, agreements, bids for construction projects, as well as proposals, contract, and budget information. Much of the correspondence is written between the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Washington, D.C., Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., U.S. Engineer Office, Porto Rico District, NY office, and the U.S.

Engineering Office, San Juan, as well as correspondence from contractors and Puerto Rico government officials. The records in this collection were created by various engineers working for the War Department including: William T. Rossell, H.C. Newcomer, William W. Black, Solomon W. Roessler, Elliot J. Dent, W.J. Truss, and John W. Wright.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I: GENERAL FILES, 1910-1967

Box 1

- Folder 1: Army News Release, Army to Transfer El Morro, San Cristobal to U.S. National Park Service, 1958
- Folder 2: Central Traverse Magazine, Cabras Island, 1940
- Folder 3: Completion Report: Repair of Historical Fortifications, Military Reservation, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1938-1940
- Folder 4: Construction of a Wing Wall and Sea Wall Contract, Draft, 1931
- Folder 5: Description of Bulkhead Line, San Juan Harbor, PR, 1910
- Folder 6: Engineering Report on Puerto Rico, 1940
- Folder 7: Gaging Chart, Steel Cargo Barge, 1943
- Folder 8: Joint Operations Center Blueprint, Site "AW", Sheet No.1, Air Conditioning & Gas Proofing, 1942
- Folder 9: Material for History of the National Historic Site Beginning 6/30/49, 1949-1956
- Folder 10: Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, 1952
- Folder 11: Party Invitations, 1961-1963
- Folder 12: Preservation and Repair of Historical Fortifications, W.P.A. Project O.P. 513-2-351, Quartermaster Corps, 1938
- Folder 13: Preservation of Historical Fortifications, Reconstructing a Section of Wall West of San Agustin Battery, Draft, 1925
- Folder 14: Preservation of Historical Fortifications, San Juan, PR, 1938-1940
- Folder 15: Proposed Boundaries of San Juan National Historic Site, 1954
- Folder 16: Proposed National Historic Site, 1946
- Folder 17: Puerto Rico, Defense 'David', Mighty Slingshot Prepared for Invading 'Goliath', News Clipping, 1940
- Folder 18: Recreation Development and Planning in Territories of the United States, 1953
- Folder 19: Repairs and Restoration of Historic Fortifications, Specifications, U.S. Plant and Hired Labor, W.P.A. Projects, FY 1938-1939, January, 1939
- Folder 20: Repairs and Restoration of Historic Fortifications, Specifications, U.S. Plant and Hired Labor, W.P.A. Projects, FY 1938-1939, April, 1939
- Folder 21: Repairs and Restoration of Historic Fortifications, Specifications, U.S. Plant and Hired Labor, W.P.A. Projects, FY 1938-1939, May, 1939
- Folder 22: Repairs and Restoration of Historic Fortifications, Specifications, U.S. Plant and Hired Labor, W.P.A. Projects, FY 1939-1940, 1939

Box 2

Folder 23: Report of Inspection of Park Possibilities on Puerto Rico, 1934
Folder 24: Report on Park Development and Tourist Trade Possibilities: Island of Puerto Rico, 1934
Folder 25: Report on Proposed Development for San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1935
Folder 26: Report on the Preservation and Exhibition of the Ancient Fortifications of San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1947 (Part 1 of 2)
Folder 27: Report on the Preservation and Exhibition of the Ancient Fortifications of San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1947 (Part 2 of 2)
Folder 28: Report on the Special Sanitary Condition with Reference to the Prevention of Plague in the Military Zone at San Juan, PR, 1921
Folder 29: Report on Visit to San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico, February 23-28-March 3-5, 1949
Folder 30: San Juan Historic Site Agreement, Fort Brooke, 1967
Folder 31: Specifications for Painting of Permanent Buildings at Fort Brooke, Puerto Rico, 1950
Folder 32: Specifications for Repairing Roofs of Permanent Buildings at Fort Brooke, Puerto Rico, 1950
Folder 33: Specifications for Repairs to Roofs of Temporary Living Quarter Buildings, 1950
Folder 34: Specifications for the Construction of 4-Family Quarter Buildings at Fort Brooke, Puerto Rico, 1949
Folder 35: Survey of Utilities, Fort Brooke, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Part I: Report on Sewerage Facilities, 1952

Box 3

Folder 36: Technical Specifications for Building No. 4, Fort Brooke, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1950
Folder 37: Trunk Cable Data, [1940]
Folder 38: Work Specifications, 1950

SERIES II: CORRESPONDENCE, 1902-1941

Box 3

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1902
Folder 2: Correspondence, 1906
Folder 3: Correspondence, 1913
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Folder 9: Correspondence, 1920
Folder 10: Correspondence, 1922
Folder 11: Correspondence, 1923
Folder 12: Correspondence, 1924
Folder 13: Correspondence, January-July, 1925

Folder 14: Correspondence, August-December, 1925
Folder 15: Correspondence, 1926
Folder 16: Correspondence, January-May, 1927
Folder 17: Correspondence, June-December, 1927

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Folder 18: Correspondence, 1928
Folder 19: Correspondence, 1929
Folder 20: Correspondence, 1930
Folder 21: Correspondence, 1931
Folder 22: Correspondence, January-June, 1932
Folder 23: Correspondence, July-December, 1932
Folder 24: Correspondence, 1933
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Box 5

Folder 29: Correspondence, January-April, 1938
Folder 30: Correspondence, May-June, 1938
Folder 31: Correspondence, July-December, 1938
Folder 32: Correspondence, January-May, 1939
Folder 33: Correspondence, June-July, 1939
Folder 34: Correspondence, August-December, 1939
Folder 35: Correspondence, February-April, 1940
Folder 36: Correspondence, May-July, 1940
Folder 37: Correspondence, 1941