



FINDING AID

U.S. COAST GUARD RECORDS, PERTAINING TO LIGHTHOUSES

1876-1991, undated(bulk dates: 1898-1964)

Prepared by
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National Park Service

Catalog Number: SAJU 18575

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HISTORY

In 1846, the Spanish government erected a lighthouse on Puerto Rico at Castillo San Felipe del Morro. It was the first of a series of lighthouses the Spanish government built to improve navigation and aid commerce in the waters surrounding Puerto Rico. In 1869, plans for a larger program of lighthouse construction were approved by the Spanish government and 11 lighthouses were built in and around Puerto Rico during the years 1880-1898. The advent of the Spanish-American War saw the destruction of the lighthouse at Castillo San Felipe del Morro and led to the permanent occupation of Puerto Rico by the United States. Following the conclusion of the war in 1898, the administration of Puerto Rico's lighthouses passed to the United States Lighthouse Board.

The Lighthouse Board oversaw the repair of the lighthouse at Castillo San Felipe del Morro and rebuilt the lighthouse in 1908. In 1910, the Lighthouse Board was dissolved and replaced with the Bureau of Lighthouses, a federal agency operating under the United States Department of Commerce. President William H. Taft appointed George R. Putnam as the 1st Commissioner of Lighthouses, a post he would hold for 25 years. During Putnam's administration, the Bureau of Lighthouses underwent a great period of change as new technologies were adopted to improve the safety and efficiency of lighthouses and navigational aids. From 1921 to 1935, radio beacons, automatic time clocks, photo-electric alarm devices, and battery powered buoys were all introduced to the lighthouse service. These innovations laid the groundwork for the eventual automation of all lighthouse stations.

In 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt approved legislation to transfer the functions of the Bureau of Lighthouse to the United States Coast Guard. Many of Puerto Rico's light stations became obsolete with the advance of new technologies and many have fallen into ruin. By the 1990's and early 2000's, a growing interest in the preservation of lighthouses as historical monuments led to the restoration of several Puerto Rican lighthouses.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

U.S. COAST GUARD RECORDS, PERTAINING TO LIGHTHOUSES 1876-1991, undated (bulk dates: 1898-1964)

CATALOG NUMBER SAJU 18575

VOLUME 4.70 LF

DESCRIPTION

Records include: correspondence, architectural plans, blueprints, mechanical drawings, maps, reports, copies of legislation, property records, memoranda, contracts, invoices, handwritten notes, and photographs.

The records document the development and administration of light stations in Puerto Rico and the surrounding islands from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. One of the strengths of the collection is the architectural plans detailing the construction of lighthouses which include specifications on their fixtures, lanterns, and attendant outbuildings. Of particular note are the Spanish-era architectural plans, drawn in color on sheets of linen based paper up to 10 feet in length. Also of note, the correspondence from the Bureau of Lighthouses provides a unique insight into the operation of this now defunct federal agency. Additionally, the records contain detailed reports on individual light stations in the 9th Lighthouse District, compiled by the Bureau of Lighthouses.

The collection has a number of files pertaining to the Port San Juan Light Station at El Morro. There is extensive correspondence (1917-1968) regarding the acquisition of property at the Las Animas Bastion for construction of a lighthouse keeper's dwelling. This correspondence is supplemented with architectural plans for the dwelling as well as a radio beacon tower that was built beside it.

ORGANIZATION

The records are organized into three series: Series I, General Files; Series II, Spanish-Era Records; Series III, Department

of Commerce, Bureau of Lighthouse Records. The last series is divided into two subseries. [Arrangement]

PROVENANCE

The U.S. Coast Guard Records collection was compiled by Coast Guard Engineer Jorge R. Gautier, and transferred to SAJU in 2005, following Mr. Gautier's retirement.

RESTRICTIONS

NO

*ASSOCIATED
MATERIALS*

HIERARCHY

I. SERIES I: GENERAL FILES, 1903-1991

II. SERIES II: SPANISH-ERA RECORDS, 1876-1946

III. SERIES III: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BUREAU OF LIGHTHOUSE RECORDS, 1898-1973, undated

A. SUBSERIES A: CORRESPONDENCE, 1910-1973

B. SUBSERIES B: ARCHITECTURAL PLANS, 1898-1971, undated

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. SERIES I: GENERAL FILES, 1903-1991

Arranged alphabetically by subject

This series documents activities of the Bureau of Lighthouses and the U.S. Coast Guard for the Port San Juan Light Station and 9th Lighthouse District. The records include correspondence, copies of legislation, permits, deeds, reports, maps, photographs, cut-out silhouettes, and blueprints.

Principal correspondents include Commanders of the U.S. Coast Guard, Superintendents of Lighthouses, Commissioners of Lighthouses, engineers, and contractors. Many of the records detail the acquisition of land from the Municipality of San Juan in order to construct a lighthouse keeper's dwelling and radio beacon.

II. SERIES II: SPANISH-ERA RECORDS, 1876-1946

Arranged alphabetically by structure name

This series contains architectural plans, mechanical drawings, and blueprints of lighthouses in the Spanish controlled Puerto Rico area. Many of the architectural plans are original works, drawn on linen paper and signed by the engineer. Some records include correspondence and invoices for lighthouse building materials and supplies.

III. SERIES III: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BUREAU OF LIGHTHOUSE RECORDS, 1898-1973, undated

This series is divided into two subseries: Subseries A, Correspondence; and Subseries B, Architectural Plans.

This series contains records from the Bureau of Lighthouses, Puerto Rico district.

A. SUBSERIES A: CORRESPONDENCE, 1910-1973

Arranged alphabetically by subject

The records include correspondence, architectural plans, blueprints, newspaper clippings, copies of legislation, property records, memoranda, reports, contracts, invoices, handwritten notes, and photographs. Correspondents include: Superintendents of Lighthouses, Commissioners of Lighthouses, Secretaries of Commerce, Mayors of San Juan, Governors of Puerto Rico, personnel of the Lighthouse Bureau, lamp lighters, and lighthouse keepers. The records include descriptions of lighthouses, land transfers, and

maintenance issues. Also included are records relating to the transfer of the Bureau of Lighthouses to the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939.

B. SUBSERIES B: ARCHITECTURAL PLANS, 1898-1971, undated

Arranged alphabetically by subject

The records include architectural plans, mechanical drawings, blueprints, drawings, and maps. Many of the architectural plans are of the light station, keeper's dwelling, and radio beacon tower at Port San Juan. The mechanical drawings include plans of lighthouse lanterns of several orders of refracting power.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES 1: GENERAL FILES, 1903-1991

Box 1

- Folder 1: Correspondence, Miscellaneous [Superintendent of Lighthouses and others], 1925-1956
- Folder 2: Las Animas and San Justo Bastions, Deed of Property, 1917-1926 (Part 1 of 2)
- Folder 3: Las Animas and San Justo Bastions, Deed of Property, 1917-1926 (Part 2 of 2)
- Folder 4: Las Animas Bastion, Fort Brooke P.R., 1944-1955
- Folder 5: Lighthouses, Photographs and Blueprints (Various), [United States], 1926-1938 (Part 1 of 2)
- Folder 6: Lighthouses, Photographs and Blueprints (Various), [United States], 1926-1938 (Part 2 of 2)
- Folder 7: Light Station, Dwellings, Port San Juan, Photographs, 1935-1949
- Folder 8: Photos, Miscellaneous [Coastal Views, U.S. Coast Guard Official Photos], 1929
- Folder 9: Property Deed, Part of Las Animas Bastion, 1920-1964
- Folder 10: Puerto San Juan Light, Transfer of Property to National Service, LLN 1276, 1964
- Folder 11: Puerto San Juan Lt., Leases and Agreements, LLN 1276, 1932-1971
- Folder 12: Puerto San Juan Lt, Legal Documents and Descriptions, LLN 1276, 1944-1961
- Folder 13: Puerto San Juan Lt., Report of Federal Real Property, LLN 1276, 1903-1906
- Folder 14: Radio Beacon, San Juan, Report of Real Property Owned by U.S., LLN 1275, 1954-1991
- Folder 15: Radio Beacon Station, Port San Juan, 1928-1966
- Folder 16: Reports on the Rivers and Harbors, San Juan Harbor and Puerto Rico District, 1937-1939
- Folder 17: Spanish Retaining Wall Seaward of Las Animas Bastion, Jurisdiction Over, 1903-1953
- Folder 18: U.S. Coast Guard Radio Beacon Station, St. Lucia, Photographs, 1942-1964

SERIES II: SPANISH-ERA RECORDS, 1876-1946

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- Folder 1: Arecibo Light Station, 1895-1896
- Folder 2: Caja de Muertos Light Station, 1888-1890
- Folder 3: Cape San Juan Light Station, Plans, Painting Surfaces, 1876-1937
- Folder 4: Guanica Light Station, Maps, Plans, and Photographs, 1892-1946
- Folder 5: Proyecto de Saneamiento de Terrano al Sur del Edificio del Faro de Cardona, Cardona Island, 1888-1912

Folder 6: Proyecto de un Faro de 5 Orden en Puerto Ferro, Vieques, Port Ferro Light Station, 1896-1899

Folder 7: Proyecto de un Faro de 3 Orden en Punta de la Tuna, Punta de la Tuna Light Station, 1890-1891

Folder 8: Proyecto Reformado del Faro de Los Morrillos de Cabo-Rojo, Cabo Rojo Light Station, 1881-1935

Folder 9: Punta Borinquen Light Station, 1890

Folder 10: Punta Mulas, Construction Correspondence, 1895

Folder 11: Punta Mulas Light Station, Plans, 1894-1926

SERIES III: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE BUREAU OF LIGHTHOUSE RECORDS, 1898-1973, undated

SUBSERIES A: CORRESPONDENCE, 1910-1973

Box 2

Folder 1: Anniversary (150th) of the Lighthouses (August 4, 1790-August 4, 1947), 1939-1947

Folder 2: Consolidation of Lighthouse Service with the U.S. Coast Guard, President's Reorganization Plan II (5-9-39), 1910-1939

Folder 3: Correspondence, Miscellaneous, 1929-1937

Folder 4: Culebrita Island Light Station, Lighthouse Service, 1922-1933

Folder 5: Culebrita Light Station, Description, 1911-1946

Folder 6: Guanica Harbor Range Lights, Lighthouse Service, 1930-1939

Folder 7: Guanica Light Station, Description, 1927-1928

Folder 8: Ham Bluff Light Station, Correspondence, St. Croix U.S.V.I., 1918-1939 (Part 1 of 2)

Folder 9: Ham Bluff Light Station, Correspondence, St. Croix U.S.V.I., 1918-1939 (Part 2 of 2)

Folder 10: Las Animas and San Justo Bastions, Exchange of Lands, 1924-1925

Box 3

Folder 11: Las Animas Bastion, Land Ownership, Lighthouse Purposes, 1920-1924

Folder 12: Las Animas Bastion, Lighthouse Keeper Dwelling, 1916-1919

Folder 13: Lighthouse Service File, Cabeza de Perro Light, 1912-1934

Folder 14: Lighthouse Service, Old Files (Catano Anegado Range), 1922-1928

Folder 15: Light Stations, Correspondence and Descriptions, 1910-1973

Folder 16: Light Stations, Description, 1911-1928 (Part 1 of 2)

Folder 17: Light Stations, Description, 1911-1928 (Part 2 of 2)

Folder 18: Point Borinquen Light Station, Correspondence and Description, 1911-1972

Folder 19: Point Jiguero Light Station, Lighthouse Service, 1921_-1928

Box 4

Folder 20: Point Jiguero Light Station, New Tower and Dwelling, 1912-1921

Folder 21: Point Tuna Light Station, Description, 1911-1937

Folder 22: Port San Juan, Dwelling, 1919-1921

Folder 23: Survey of Pt. Tuna Light Station Reservation, Lighthouse Lens, Transformer, 1930-1955

SUBSERIES B: ARCHITECTURAL PLANS, 1898-1971

Box 4

Folder 1: Bureau of Lighthouses, Lantern Blueprints, 1906

Folder 2: Lantern for Apparatus of the 1st Order, Plans, undated

Folder 3: Las Animas Bastion, Plot, Keeper Dwelling, Radio Beacon, Plans, 1919-1968

Folder 4: Ocean Engineering, Buoys, Plans, 1971

Folder 5: Office of the Lighthouse Board, Lantern for Apparatus of the 2nd Order, Plans, 1903

Folder 6: Office of the Lighthouse Board, Lantern for Apparatus of the 3rd Order, Plans, 1898

Folder 7: Office of the Lighthouse Board, Lantern Glass for Apparatus of the 4th, 5th, & 6th Orders, Plans, 1898

Folder 8: Port San Juan Light Station, 3rd Order Lantern, Blueprints, 1907

Folder 9: Port San Juan Light Station, Keeper's Dwelling, 1935

Folder 10: Port San Juan Light Station, Keeper's Dwelling and Radio Beacon, Plans, 1935-1940

Folder 11: Port San Juan Light Station, Proposed Reconstruction and Extension of Keeper's Dwelling, 1920-1938

Folder 12: Port San Juan Light Station, Radio Beacon, Plans, 1940-1966

Folder 13: Port San Juan Light Station, Reconstruction and Machinery, Plans, 1903-1915

Folder 14: Port San Juan Light Station, Reconstruction and Machinery, Plans, 1906-1938

Folder 15: Pt. Tuna Light Station, Proposed Repairs, Dwelling Roof, 1926

Folder 16: San Juan Harbor and Semaphoric Tower, Morro Castle, 1900