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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Sombrero Key Light

other names/site number Sombrero Key Light Station, Dry Bank Light

2. Location

street & number Offshore of middle Florida Keys, approximately 5.5.mi SSW of Marathon ☐ not for publication

city or town Marathon ☒ vicinity

state Florida code FL county Monroe code 087 zip code 33050

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

[signature], CG Fed Pres Officer 14 DEC 2011
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

United States Coast Guard
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Barbara E. Mattick JANUARY 5, 2012
Signature of commenting official Date

DSHPO for Survey & Registration FL Divisim of Historical Resources
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) ___

[signature]
Signature of the Keeper

3/9/2012
Date of Action

Sombrero Key Light
Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [ ] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [X] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [ ] building(s)
- [ ] District
- [ ] Site
- [X] Structure
- [ ] Object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	Buildings
0	0	District
0	0	Site
1	1	structure
0	0	object
1	1	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Light Stations of the United States

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation: Water-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation: Water-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Iron
walls: Iron
roof: Copper, Iron
other: Lantern: Iron, Glass

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

(see continuation sheets)

Narrative Description

(see continuation sheets)

Narrative Description

Summary

The Sombrero Key Light, which was established as a Federal aid to navigation in 1858, marks a hazardous offshore reef 5.5 miles south-southwest of Marathon in Monroe County, Florida. It is situated more than three nautical miles from land and is outside Florida state waters. One of the six historic Florida Reef Lights, the Sombrero Key Light is approximately 154 feet tall and stands in eight feet of water. It includes an octagonal, pyramidal skeletal tower with a foundation consisting of nine iron pilings. The tower supports a one-story rectangular keepers' dwelling, a central stair cylinder that rises from the dwelling, and a watch room and lantern. This lighthouse is an operating Federal aid to navigation identified as number 1000 on the regional light list. It is equipped with an automated modern beacon that signals a flashing white light visible for 15 miles in clear weather. This beacon includes three red sectors marking areas of hazardous water north, east, and west of the lighthouse. Other modern equipment installed atop the tower includes a solar array, a RACON radar beacon, and weather instruments. This lighthouse property is owned by the U.S. Coast Guard. It includes one contributing resource, the lighthouse, and one non-contributing resource, a boat dock built in 1970. The boat dock features a mooring, and a walkway and ladder providing access to the lighthouse. The Sombrero Key Light is accessible by boat only, and is not open to public visitation.

Setting

This offshore lighthouse marks the location of Sombrero Key, a hazardous shallow coral reef that formerly included a small sandy island which has eroded away. The eroded islet was originally named *Cayo Sombrero* by the Spanish. This reef is situated approximately 5.5 miles south-southwest of the town of Marathon in Monroe County, Florida (Additional Documentation (1) and (2)). The Sombrero Key Light is more than three nautical miles from land and beyond the limit of Florida state waters. It stands on the northern side of the Straits of Florida, near an important shipping lane for vessels navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The Florida Straits extend west to east between the Florida Keys and Cuba, and curve northward between Florida's east coast and the Bahamas. The Gulf Stream current flows eastward from the Gulf of Mexico through the Florida Straits and into the Atlantic Ocean northeast of the Bahamas.

The Sombrero Key Light is one the famous Florida Reef Lights that are spread along approximately 150 miles of the Florida Keys from near Key West to south of Key Biscayne. They are six skeletal tower lighthouses built during the middle to late nineteenth century that are all more than 100 feet in height. Five of these lighthouses are located offshore of Monroe County. From west to east, they are situated at Sand Key, American Shoal, Sombrero Key, Alligator Reef and Carysfort Reef. One of the six Florida Reef Lights is located offshore of Dade County at Fowey Rocks, approximately six miles southeast of Key Biscayne.

The Sombrero Key Light is within the authorized boundaries of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. It stands in eight feet of water and is identified as number 1000 on the regional light list. This lighthouse is surrounded by water and is accessible only by boat.

Physical Description

Sombrero Key Light was established as a Federal aid to navigation in 1858 and is approximately 154 feet tall. It is the tallest of the six Florida Reef Lights and has a structure similar to the others. This lighthouse includes an iron disk pile foundation and an iron octagonal pyramidal skeletal tower with seven horizontal tiers. The tower includes a platform supporting the keepers' dwelling, a central stair cylinder, and a watch room and lantern (Photo # 1). The lighthouse's day mark is brown from top to bottom. This distinctive coloration has been maintained from 1858 to the present, though the day mark color at the time of initial establishment was described in the January 20, 1858, *New York Times* as "red" (i.e., reddish brown).

Disk Pile Foundation

The lighthouse's foundation, which is 56 feet in diameter, includes a set of nine iron disk piles. Eight pilings are arranged in an octagonal configuration, with the ninth positioned in the center. Each disk pile includes a 12-inch diameter wrought iron straight piling and a 7-foot diameter cast iron disk. The pilings are solid metal and 26 feet long with a pointed tip. Each piling includes a shoulder that is 12 feet, 9 inches from the tip that increases its diameter. Each disk includes a 12-inch diameter center hole surrounded by a 2-foot tall collar. The collar is reinforced by radial ribs extending to the disk's perimeter, ending at a 6-inch tall rim. The disks are each positioned horizontally on a leveled area of the coral rock seafloor. A disk pile is set in place using a pile driver to pound a piling through the disk's center hole and into the coral rock substrate until the piling is approximately ten feet deep and the piling's shoulder rests against the disk's collar. This disperses the piling's structural load over a wider area and provides for greater stability. The following describes how the Sombrero Key Light's foundation was built:

> *The 12-inch wrought iron foundation-piles rest centrally on cast iron disks 8 feet in diameter, and go 10 feet into the rock. They stand at the angles and center of an octagon 56 feet across and are braced by horizontal radial and periphery ties of 5-inch round iron. The frame rises from this foundation pyramidal in shape, in six sections, with a diameter of 56 feet at the bottom, tapering to 15 feet at the top. All the shafts, except those of the lower series, are of hollow cast-iron.* (Arnold Burges Johnson, Chief Clerk, Light-House Board, in *The Modern Light-House Service*, 1890)

After being set into position, the tops of the nine foundation piles were cut level with one another and capped with sockets. The sockets provide connection points for horizontal beams, vertical columns, and tension rods (crosstie rods with turnbuckles). The tension rods are oriented diagonally, vertically and horizontally. They provide tension on the foundation's components and the skeletal tower's column and beam framework, pulling them together vertically, horizontally, and diagonally.

The foundation's vertical pilings are connected with one another using horizontal beams extending to sockets at the top of neighboring pilings (Photos #1 and # 2). Tension rods tie them to sockets on neighboring pilings. The socket atop the foundation's center piling includes 16 connection points. These provide joints for a vertical column, horizontal beams extending to the peripheral pilings, and tension rods. The tension rods extend upward and downward in a radial fashion to the peripheral foundation pilings as well as to columns and beams of the tower superstructure.

Skeletal Tower

The lighthouse's skeletal tower is octagonal in plan and pyramidal in elevation. It is built with a series of seven structural tiers consisting of horizontal beams extending between the tower's peripheral columns. The first (lowest) tier includes the top of the foundation's nine vertical pilings and horizontal beams connecting them. Each of the eight perimeter pilings supports a column that inclines inward towards the center in pyramidal fashion at an approximately 60-degree angle.

The skeletal tower's eight peripheral columns are made with a series of column segments and iron sockets at each segment's upper and lower end. These sockets provide connection points for successive column segments as well as each tier's horizontal beams and diagonal tension rods. The inclined columns are hollow cast iron pipe segments that become narrower in diameter at higher tiers. The first tier's foundation pilings are 12 inches in diameter. The column segments rising to the second and third tiers are 10 inches in diameter, while the segments rising to the fourth and fifth tiers are 9 inches in diameter. The column segments extending from the fifth to the seventh tier have a diameter of 7.5 inches.

The tower's second tier includes horizontal iron beams connecting with the second tier sockets atop the central and peripheral columns. This tier supports an octagonal platform made with iron plates. The lighthouse keepers' dwelling sits atop the platform. The tower's third, fourth, fifth, and sixth tier include diagonal tension rods and horizontal beams that extend between the peripheral columns and bands of sockets surrounding the stair cylinder. The seventh tier's horizontal beams support the watch room, which is centered atop the stair cylinder.

Second Tier Platform

The skeletal tower's octagonal second tier platform is approximately 50 feet wide and is made with iron plates (Photo # 3). It supports the keepers' dwelling, which sits centered atop the platform. The platform's northwest (NW) side includes two projecting 3-foot wide triangular sections that formerly supported boat davits that are no longer present. A non-historic galvanized steel guardrail encloses the second tier platform's perimeter. It is a replacement for the original wrought iron handrail that had deteriorated. The second tier is accessed by way a non-historic galvanized steel ladder that rises from the tower's first tier next to the lighthouse's boat dock. The lower 7-foot section of this ladder has no steps in order to discourage unauthorized entry.

Keepers' Dwelling

The lighthouse keepers' dwelling is rectangular and one story in height. It is approximately 10 feet tall and is 30 feet, 9 inches long on each side. The dwelling has a nearly flat hipped metal roof that slopes slightly from the central stair cylinder to the roof's perimeter. A cast iron stylized classical cornice extends along the roof eaves. It includes a built-in gutter that channels rainwater to four downspouts inside the dwelling. One downspout is positioned at each of the dwelling's four interior corners. They formerly drained into storage tanks but now empty into the sea.

The dwelling's exterior walls are made of vertical iron beams with riveted cast iron plates filling the space between them (Photos # 3 and # 4). Each beam's exterior face features a pilaster decorated with a stylized Doric order column design, including capital, fluted shaft, and base. These are spaced approximately five feet apart and project slightly from the adjoining undecorated wall plates. The pilasters provide classical architectural details to the otherwise plain exterior. The dwelling's four exterior corners are made with curved iron plates held between two pilasters. There are two doorways on each side of the dwelling. Each is fitted with a two-leaf metal door. Only one of these, a door on the southeast elevation, is accessible from the outside. The other seven doorways are secured on the inside with steel crossbars.

The dwelling's interior is a single large room (Photo # 5). The original interior partition walls, ceiling, and flooring have been removed. The existing floor consists of iron plates of the second tier platform. A pair of concrete rectangles rest atop the metal floor near the room's southern corner. They are two feet long by two feet wide by six inches tall, and formerly supported machinery that has been removed. The base of the lighthouse's stair cylinder sits in the room's center, 11.5 feet from the surrounding walls. The room's existing ceiling is the underside of the dwelling's roof. It is supported by 16 curved beams that extend in a radial fashion from the stair cylinder to the surrounding walls. Four tension rods connected to the skeletal tower's third tier pierce the dwelling's ceiling and extend diagonally to pierce the floor near the stair cylinder. The lower ends of these rods connect with the skeletal tower's center column, directly beneath the stair cylinder.

Stair Cylinder

The lighthouse's stair cylinder rises vertically from the center of the keepers' dwelling to the base of the watch room (Photos # 1 and # 5). It is approximately 90 feet in height and seven feet in diameter. The cylinder is made of curved cast iron plates that are 0.25-inch thick and fastened with rivets. The stair cylinder's lower entrance is an arched doorway on the cylinder's northern side, inside the keepers' dwelling. This entry is 6 feet, 8 inches tall by 2 feet, 9 inches wide. The door is original and is made of iron and rounded at the top. It includes an arched window in its upper half that is made with eight lights arranged in a decorative pattern. No glass remains in the door's lights. The cylinder contains a cast iron spiral stairway with a central column that leads up from the dwelling to the watch room atop the skeletal tower. The stairway's 128 iron treads are cast with a mesh of diamond-shaped openings. There are five landings made with cast iron plates having the same mesh as the stair treads. A steel cable strung through rings attached to the cylinder's interior wall serves as the stairway's handrail. The stair cylinder has five rectangular windows that are 30 inches tall by 24 inches wide and include a projecting sill and surround. Each window is covered by a non-historic metal plate with a vent in the center. The stair cylinder's lowest window is at the stairway landing a short distance above the dwelling's roof and faces north. The next four windows are located at each of the higher four stairway landings.

Watch Room

The lighthouse's watch room sits centered atop an octagonal platform made with iron plates that is supported by the skeletal tower's seventh tier and the stair cylinder. The stair cylinder's spiral stairway ends at an opening in the watch room floor that opens and closes with an original semi-circular iron trapdoor. The watch room is circular, 12.5 feet in diameter, and 7.5 feet tall (Photos # 1 and # 6).

The watch room is constructed of iron plates and paneled on the interior with vertical wooden beaded board. A built-in wooden beaded board cabinet hangs from the northern wall. The watch room's western side is pierced with a rectangular four-light 30-inch by 24-inch window covered with a metal plate on the outside. The room's eastern side is pierced with an arched doorway 6 feet, 8 inches tall by 2 feet, 9 inches wide that provides access to the watch room's outdoor gallery. The door is original and identical to the door at the base of the stairway cylinder. It is made of iron and rounded at the top with an arched decorative window covered over with a steel plate on the outside (Photo # 7). The watch room floor includes a circular walkway covered with wooden boards that surrounds a circular iron platform supporting the lighthouse beacon's original cast iron pedestal. The pedestal sits centered atop the platform (Photo # 6). A set of modern batteries sits on the watch room floor with associated electrical panels mounted on the wall. These provide power to the lighthouse's existing optic and RACON radar beacon.

The watch room has no ceiling. It is open at its circular top to the lantern room, above. The cast iron pedestal on the watch room floor supports a circular cast iron platform with radial ribs on the underside that supported the lighthouse's original first order Fresnel lens. This lens together with its supporting pedestal and platform was approximately 14 feet tall. The watch room's overhead opening is surrounded by the lantern room's two-foot wide circular catwalk which is constructed of sectional cast iron plates. A steep, curving iron stairway on the watch room's northeast side provides access to the lantern room catwalk.

The watch room is surrounded by an octagonal open air gallery (Photo # 7). This gallery is four feet wide and bounded by a non-historic steel guardrail made with steel pipe stanchions and four horizontal rails. The gallery's deck is made of iron plates. The deck is pierced at intervals with a diamond-shaped grill that allows water to drain through its pattern of small diamond-shaped openings. A modern solar array is mounted on a steel framework attached to the southern side of the watch room gallery deck. It recharges the batteries powering the lighthouse's electrical equipment. A modern automated RACON radar beacon is attached to the framework supporting the solar array. When triggered by a ship's radar, it transmits the letter **M** in Morse code as its identification signal. A non-historic aluminum post is bolted to the watch room gallery's northwest side. It supports automated weather data instruments. An iron ladder rises from the gallery's northern side to an opening in the lantern gallery deck, above.

Lantern

The lighthouse's lantern sits centered atop the watch room. It is cylindrical, 11.5 feet in diameter, and approximately 10 feet in height (Photo # 8). The lantern room has a 2-foot wide circular catwalk made with iron plates. The room's opening to the watch room below is occupied by the circular iron platform that formerly supported the lighthouse's original first order Fresnel lens. This platform includes two integral sets of steps allowing access from below to what had been the open area inside the original first order Fresnel lens. The platform's top is pierced in a grill-like fashion allowing ventilation. A modern steel pipe pedestal is attached to the platform's center. This pedestal supports the lighthouse's existing optic, a modern automated VRB-25 marine beacon that flashes five times every 60 seconds and has a focal plane 142 feet above the water (Photo # 8). It signals a white light visible in three sectors for 15 miles in clear weather. These white sectors are from northeast to east-northeast (NE to ENE), from east to west-southwest (E to WSW) and from west-northwest to north-northwest (WNW to NNW).

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

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The lantern's exterior includes glazing approximately six feet tall extending from a metal base just above the lantern room catwalk to the roof overhead. The lantern consists of 96 triangular glass panes held by diagonal astragals in a helical pattern. The glazing is arranged in three horizontal tiers of 32 triangular panes each. Three places on the lantern glazing's inner side are covered by red lexan panels. These panels are of floor-to-ceiling height and are held in place by aluminum frames. They give a red color to the beacon light when seen from three hazardous areas away from the lighthouse that contain dangerous reefs and shallow water. One red sector covers from north-northwest to northeast (NNW to NE), another covers from east-northeast to east (ENE to E), and the third covers from west-southwest to north-northwest (WSW to NNW). The red-colored beacon sectors are visible for 12 miles in clear weather.

The lantern's metal roof springs from a soffit above the glazing. It is made with triangular cast iron plates riveted together and supported by iron ribs that rise in a slight slope to a circular opening at the apex. The roof's exterior is topped with a cylindrical vent and lightning rod. The lantern is surrounded by an outdoor gallery two feet wide and made of iron plates. An original 3-inch tall iron grill surrounds the gallery's perimeter. Above this, a non-historic steel handrail with two horizontal bars supported by steel rod stanchions surrounds the gallery. It replaced the original handrail which had deteriorated. The lantern gallery is accessed by way of the metal ladder that rises from the watch room gallery.

Non-Contributing Resource

Boat Dock

The lighthouse's boat dock stands next to the skeletal tower's northern side (Photo # 1). Constructed in 1970, it provides for vessel mooring and serves as a landing place for transferring personnel, equipment and supplies. The boat dock is rectangular, approximately 30 feet long by 30 feet wide, and is supported by four pilings. Its deck is made with wooden boards and is approximately 15 feet above water level. A steel ladder extends from the boat dock's deck to the water. A walkway made with steel beams and a wooden deck extends approximately 20 feet from the dock's southern side to the lighthouse tower's first tier. This walkway has no guardrail. A non-historic 14-step, steel ladder built in 1991 rises at a steep angle from the walkway to the tower's second tier platform (Photo # 2). It is approximately 25 feet tall. A 7-foot tall section at the ladder's lower end does not include any steps in order to discourage unauthorized entry. This boat dock and its ladder are of late twentieth century construction and do not contribute to the property's historical significance.

Alterations and Overall Integrity

Sombrero Key Light remains very much the same as when its construction was completed in 1858. Its foundation, skeletal tower and superstructure components are largely unaltered. Changes that have been made relate principally to the lighthouse's maintenance, access, and beacon. Much of this work was accomplished subsequent to the property's automation in 1960, after which facilities to support resident keepers were no longer needed. Historic photographs showing the property's appearance in 1925 and 1954 are in the collections of the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office (Additional Documentation (3) and (4)).

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

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Maintenance

The lighthouse's original iron pile foundation and skeletal tower remain in place and are largely unmodified except for repairs. Deteriorated tension rods in the foundation section were replaced in 1915, 1950, and 1961. A number of the iron sockets in the upper foundation and the tower's first tier have cracked over time and were repaired and reinforced in 1949 by installing support yoke fittings. Deteriorated tension rods in the tower's fifth and sixth tiers were replaced in 1961. Cathodic protection panels were installed below the foundation's water line in 1952 and 1957 to alleviate corrosion.

The lighthouse was originally equipped with two wooden rainwater storage tanks below the second tier platform that received runoff from the keepers' dwelling rain gutters. These were replaced with metal tanks in 1875. In 1930, an enclosed room was installed below the second tier platform northern side to hold five steel fuel tanks. This was replaced in 1954 by a fuel tank platform suspended below the second tier. Photographs of the lighthouse taken in 1925 and 1954 show some of these features in place (Additional Documentation (3) and (4)). All of the lighthouse's water and fuel tanks were removed subsequent to the property's 1960 automation. These features were not character-defining elements of the lighthouse and their removal has not significantly changed the structure's appearance.

The keepers' dwelling was originally divided into four rooms with wood-frame partition walls extending between the exterior walls and the stair cylinder in the center. The floor and ceiling were also built with wood framing. All wood materials in the dwelling were removed following the lighthouse's 1960 automation. Today, the dwelling's interior walls, ceiling, and floor are bare metal. The interior is now a single large room with the stair cylinder in the center.

The stair cylinder's original 1858 design plans included a wrought iron handrail for the stairway. Following the lighthouse's 1960 automation, the iron handrail replaced with a non-historic steel cable threaded through rings attached to the cylinder wall. In addition, the cylinder's original windows were wood-framed hinged windows with four lights. These are no longer extant. Each stair cylinder window opening is covered with a non-historic steel plate pierced by a vent in the center. These covers were installed following automation in 1960. The watch room atop the stair cylinder includes one window that was originally fitted with wood-framed, four-light sash. This has been replaced with a four-light, metal-framed window. The window glass is broken and a non-historic metal plate installed after 1960 covers the window's exterior. The existing guardrails surrounding the second tier deck, watch room gallery, and lantern gallery are made of galvanized steel and are non-historic, having been installed after the 1960 automation. They replaced wrought iron guardrails that had deteriorated. The existing solar array mounted on the watch room gallery was installed in 1982. A modern aluminum pole for mounting weather data equipment has also been installed on the watch room gallery.

Access

The property's changes in physical appearance include modifications affecting access to the structure. Its original configuration included a small platform used as a boat landing on the northwest quadrant of the tower's first tier. This was located below the two triangular projections on the second tier, where boat davits were installed. Additional wood decking that extended across the first tier was installed in 1881.

A portion of the first tier wood decking was replaced with iron plates in 1915, when an iron stairway leading up to the second tier platform and keepers' dwelling was installed. Deteriorated wood decking on the first tier was replaced in 1958, and a single drum boat hoist was installed. The pile-supported boat landing adjoining the lighthouse and a walkway leading to the tower's first tier were built in 1970. All decking on the first tier was removed in 1986, along with the second tier platform's boat hoist. The existing metal ladder leading up from the boat landing to the second tier platform was installed in 1991.

The departure of the lighthouse's resident keepers in 1960 due to automation led to a number of changes in the property. These include modifications to secure it from unauthorized entry and vandalism. Seven of the eight exterior doors for the keepers' dwelling are secured on the inside with steel crossbars. Only one two-leaf metal door, secured with an exterior lock, is accessible from the outside.

Beacon

The lighthouse's aid to navigation equipment has been replaced and upgraded over time. The original first order Fresnel lens was lighted with an oil lamp. It displayed a fixed white light that was visible for 22 miles in clear weather. Improvements in technology led to the beacon's illumination source being replaced with an incandescent oil vapor lamp. An underwater electrical cable extending from Vaca Key to the lighthouse was installed circa 1960. This provided reliable electricity without using an onsite generator. This underwater power cable was de-energized after the existing solar array was installed on the lighthouse's watch room gallery. This solar array charges a set of batteries that power the lighthouse's aids to navigation and weather instruments. Sombrero Key Light's original first order Fresnel lens was removed in 1982. It is presently on display at the Key West Lighthouse Museum in Key West, Florida. The first order Fresnel lens was replaced with a flash tube array that was determined to be unreliable and was soon replaced with a 300-millimeter optic. The 300-mm beacon was replaced in 1986 with a modern 190-millimeter acrylic lens. The 190-mm optic was replaced in turn in 1997 with the existing VRB-25 marine beacon. A RACON radar beacon was installed on the lighthouse's watch room gallery in 1997. It transmits a signal (Morse code letter **M**) when activated by a commercial vessel's onboard radar.

Today, the Sombrero Key Light retains a high level of integrity regarding its location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. It continues to occupy its original offshore position atop the shallow reef known as Sombrero Key, which is a hazard to navigation more than three miles offshore from the Florida Keys. The significant character-defining features of Sombrero Key Light remain largely unaltered. These include the basic structure of its piling foundation, skeletal tower, keepers' dwelling exterior, stair cylinder, watch room, and lantern. The property's integrity has been impacted by the removal of all interior finishes from the keepers' dwelling and the replacement of doors and windows. However, these changes have not significantly altered the lighthouse's overall external appearance and are reversible. The structure's principal features and its basic components remain largely intact except for repairs and changes in lighthouse technology over time. Sombrero Key Light's distinctive octagonal skeletal tower structure and brown-colored day mark coloration are the same as in 1858 when it was originally established as a Federal aid to navigation.

Sombrero Key Light
Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Maritime History
Transportation
Engineering

Period of Significance
1858 to 1960

Significant Dates
1858

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Architect: Office of the Lighthouse Board
Builder: Parts manufactured by I. P. Morris & Company of Philadelphia, PA

Period of Significance (justification)

The property's period of significance begins with the establishment of Sombrero Key Light as a Federal aid to navigation in 1858 and continues to 1960, the year this lighthouse was automated.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sombrero Key Light
Name of Property
Monroe County, Florida
County and State
Light Stations of the United States MPDF
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

(see continuation sheets)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

(see continuation sheets)

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

(see continuation sheets)

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Sombrero Key Light is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria A and C at the local level. It is significant in terms of Criterion A for its association with Federal efforts to provide for safe maritime transport in Florida waters, although it is located more than three nautical miles from land and is outside the limit of Florida state submerged lands. Sombrero Key Light is one of the six Florida Reef Lights, a group of tall skeletal tower offshore lighthouses constructed along the Florida Keys during the middle to late nineteenth century. It was the third of these lighthouses to be constructed and was also known as Dry Bank Light. This property is significant in the local history of Monroe County, Florida, because it embodies the county's nineteenth and twentieth century maritime heritage while continuing to serve as an important navigational aid. Sombrero Key Light's period of historic significance begins in 1858, when it was established as a Federal lighthouse, and ends in 1960, when it was automated and its resident keepers departed. This property exemplifies how the U.S. government's long-term program for establishing an integrated system of navigational aids throughout the United States was manifested in the Monroe County area. It has been an operating lighthouse for more than a century and a half, and is widely recognized as a local landmark for mariners.

The Sombrero Key Light is significant under Criterion C as a surviving example of middle nineteenth century lighthouse architecture and engineering. It exemplifies design and construction methods characteristic of offshore skeletal tower lighthouses during that time period, and retains substantial integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The existing condition of Sombrero Key Light attests to the lasting value of its design, as well as the high quality of its materials and construction. Changes made to the property have been limited and are largely reversible. The lighthouse's character-defining features and appearance remain essentially the same as during its period of historical significance.

This NRHP registration form is submitted as an individual listing under the overarching *Light Stations of the United States* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The specific historic contexts that apply are *Establishment of the U.S. Lighthouse Board (1852-1910), Bureau of Lighthouses and the U.S. Lighthouse Service (1910-1939),* and *Lighthouses under the U.S. Coast Guard (1939-present).* The property type sections of the MPDF relating to this NRHP registration are *U.S. Lighthouse Construction Type – Skeletal Tower,* and *Foundation Type – Straightpile Skeletal Type.* Information and historic contexts presented in the *Light Stations of the United States* MPDF are not repeated. This submission emphasizes facts and details supporting the historical significance of Sombrero Key Light as an individual property. The following discussion focuses on the nominated property and is organized as follows: (1) historic context, (2) significance under Criterion A, (3) architectural context, and (4) significance under Criterion C.

Five of the Florida Reef Lights are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They include the Sand Key Light (NR 1973), the Carysfort Reef Light (NR 1984), the American Shoal Light (NR 2010), the Fowey Rocks Light (NR 2011), and the Alligator Reef Light (NR 2011).

Historic Context

The Straits of Florida have been an important corridor for maritime transportation since colonial times. The Florida Keys, which border the straits, are characterized by dangerous reefs, shallow waters and powerful storms, especially hurricanes. They have made this area especially hazardous to vessels and the scene of thousands of wrecks and other maritime accidents. Many places in the Florida Keys are still known by names given them by Spanish-speaking colonial mariners. Among these is Sombrero Key, called *Cayo Sombrero* by the Spanish.

Florida was claimed and partly settled by Spain during the sixteenth century, but by the early nineteenth century, Spain's New World Empire was in decline. During the early 1800s, the newly independent United States of America was more ambitious than any other nation in undertaking territorial expansion into western and southeastern North America. Among the new territories added to the nation during this period was the vast Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and Spanish Florida which was ceded to the U.S. in 1819. Population expansion and economic development of these areas followed shortly afterwards. Several Gulf of Mexico ports, most notably New Orleans, became important centers for maritime commerce. This led to substantial increases in shipping traffic navigating the Florida Straits between the Keys and Cuba's north coast during the period between the War of 1812 and the early 1820s. At the same time, a regional decline in maritime security led to a rise in pirate activity. The resulting losses to American maritime commerce spurred the U.S. government to dispatch several naval vessels during the 1820s to suppress the pirates.

From the second quarter of the nineteenth century onwards, the Florida Straits remained a busy corridor for ships navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea region, and ports in the eastern United States and Europe. As the volume of maritime traffic increased, the number and frequency of shipping losses along the Keys and Florida's east coast rose as well. This provided ample justification for the U.S. government to undertake improvements to navigational safety.

The first group of lighthouses constructed in the Florida Keys region consisted of masonry towers built onshore at strategic locations during the mid-1820s. These included the Cape Florida Light (1825), the Key West Light (1825), the Garden Key Light in the Dry Tortugas (1825), and the Sand Key Light near Key West (1826). In addition, a lightship was stationed offshore of Key Largo at Carysfort Reef in 1825.

In 1846, the U.S. Coast Survey conducted a detailed offshore survey of the Florida Keys, identifying and mapping the area's numerous reefs and shoals. This information was important to the Federal government for the production of nautical charts as well as for determining where and how to mark the many hazards to navigation.

Sombrero Key appears on nautical charts resulting from this work and later surveys. Originally a small sandy islet, it was subject to erosion over time and by the middle nineteenth century was exposed above the water only intermittently. In addition to its original name, Sombrero Key came to be known as "Dry Bank" among American mariners.

Along with lighthouses, other Federal aids to navigation were established along the Florida Keys during the 1850s. These included day beacon visual markers at several locations. Differing color schemes helped distinguish one day beacon from another. These markers were meant to be visible from miles away during daylight, but were not so helpful during stormy weather or at night. The day beacon erected at Sombrero Key in 1852 consisted of a 36-foot tall iron screw piling topped with a wooden barrel painted red and white.

During the late 1840s, managers of the Federal lighthouse program determined that the lightship marking Carysfort Reef should be replaced with an onsite lighthouse. The structure was designed as a tall skeletal tower supporting a lantern 100 feet above sea level. The proposed lighthouse's substantial height was intended to allow its optic and day mark to be visible to mariners as far as 10 miles away. In 1848, Congress appropriated funds to build this lighthouse and a contractor was soon selected. The structure was fabricated in Philadelphia and its disassembled parts shipped to Florida in 1849.

The task of supervising Carysfort Reef Light's construction was assigned to Captain Howard Stansbury of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. The work to build the lighthouse proceeded, but the appropriated funds proved to be insufficient and were depleted by 1851. While additional funds were being obtained, Captain Stansbury was reassigned to another post. His replacement was Major Thomas P. Linnard, who died shortly after arriving in the Keys. Lieutenant George G. Meade replaced Linnard and supervised the remaining work at Carysfort Reef Light. Completed in 1852, this structure, which was 112 feet tall, became the first of the Florida Reef Lights. The Carysfort Reef Light (NR 1984) was initially equipped with a lamp and reflector array, which was the standard optical equipment for U.S. lighthouses at the time. The lamp and reflector technology was characterized by limited illumination and visibility range. Shortly after the lighthouse was finished, Federal lighthouse managers recognized the superiority of Fresnel lens optics for use as state-of-the-art lighthouse beacons. They adopted a policy to replace all the previously-installed lamp and reflector equipment with Fresnel lenses. A first order Fresnel lens was subsequently installed at the Caryfort Reef Light and remained in use through the mid-twentieth century. Today, the Carysfort Reef Light is equipped with a modern automated optic and continues to serve as an active Federal lighthouse.

Lieutenant Meade's 1850s tour of duty in the Florida Keys included being in charge of constructing a new lighthouse at Sand Key, which was designed as a skeletal tower structure with an optic 109 feet above sea level. Work on the Sand Key Light began in 1852 and was completed in 1853. It is 132 feet in height and was equipped with a first order Fresnel lens as its original beacon. The Sand Key Light (NR 1973), the second of the Florida Reef Lights, is still an active Federal aid to navigation and is presently equipped with a modern automated optic.

Historic Significance

The distance between the Sand Key Light and the Carysfort Reef Light is approximately 122 miles. For 1850s mariners, this was a long stretch of hazardous waters without a lighted aid to navigation. In 1854, Meade proposed that a lighthouse be built at Coffins Patch shoal south of Grassy Key, approximately halfway between the Sand Key and Carysfort Reef lighthouses.

After studying the configuration of reefs and shallows in the vicinity, the Lighthouse Board decided that the new lighthouse should be built at Sombrero Key instead. Located approximately 14 miles west of Coffins Patch, Sombrero Key is situated some 51 miles east of the Sand Key Light and 71 miles west of the Carysfort Reef Light. It is near the Florida Reef's outer limit and close to deep waters navigated by shipping.

Meade initially considered constructing a masonry light tower, but the engineering obstacles and cost led him to decide that building another tall skeletal tower structure was better. Supervising the construction of the Sombrero Key Light was Meade's final achievement during his tour of duty in the Florida Keys.

The building of Sombrero Reef Light began in 1856 with establishment of a staging area on Duck Key and commencement of preliminary work offshore. A hurricane that struck in August 1856 halted progress for that year. Construction resumed in 1857. A temporary boat landing and work platform were erected and underwater work leveled the area underneath for the lighthouse's foundation. Nine seven-foot diameter cast iron disks with center holes were placed in position and 12-inch diameter iron piles were driven through each disk. These disk piles provided the foundation upon which the superstructure's columns, beams and crossties were erected. Construction was completed in early 1858. It is the tallest lighthouse ever built in the Florida Keys.

The Sombrero Key Light was lighted officially for the first time on March 17, 1858. Its beacon was a first order Fresnel lens made by Henri Lepaute of Paris which was purchased by the U.S. government for $20,000. It had a focal plane 142 feet above sea level and displayed a fixed white light visible for 22 miles in clear weather. When mounted atop its pedestal, the Sombrero Key Light's first order Fresnel lens stood approximately 14 feet tall.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 halted prospects for any further offshore lighthouse construction in the Florida Keys until after the conflict ended. Five years after the 1858 completion of the Sombrero Key Light, George G. Meade was a Major General and commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac. He is renowned for leading the Union forces that defeated Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Following the Civil War's end in 1865, the Federal government renewed its program to improve existing navigational aids and construct additional lighthouses. In 1868, the Lighthouse Board requested funding from Congress for a lighthouse on Alligator Reef, approximately midway between the Sombrero Key Light and the Carysfort Reef Light. However, no funds were appropriated. This request was repeated in 1869 with the same result. After a third request was submitted, the U.S. Congress finally approved an appropriation in July 1870 to build the Alligator Reef Light.

The design proposed for the Alligator Reef Light incorporated aspects used in the previous Florida Reef Lights and was almost identical to the Sombrero Key Light. Similar features included the engineering, configuration and height of its skeletal tower, as well as its one story keepers' dwelling and watch room.

A principal difference between the Alligator Reef Light and the Sombrero Key Light is the glazing pattern in their lanterns. The lanterns of the three Florida Reef Lights built before the Civil War included triangular window panes held by mullions arranged in a helical pattern. The three reef lights constructed after the Civil War (Alligator Reef, Fowey Rocks, and American Shoal) all have rectangular windowpanes arranged in three tiers of 16 panes each. In addition, the Sombrero Key Light's lantern roof is made of iron plates and rafters while the lantern roofs of the three post-Civil War reef lights are made with iron plates held together by radial crosstie rods.

Construction of the Alligator Reef Light began in 1872 and was completed in late 1873 at a total cost of $185,000. The lighthouse's first day of active service was November 25, 1873. Its beacon was a first order Fresnel lens made by Henri Lepaute of Paris with a focal plane 136 feet above sea level. It flashed a white light every five seconds and was visible for 18 miles in clear weather. The Alligator Reef Light (NR 2011) remains an active Federal aid to navigation today and is equipped with a modern automated optic.

The next location selected for a Florida Reef Light was Fowey Rocks, which is located six miles south of Key Biscayne in Dade County. The earlier lighthouse at Cape Florida on Key Biscayne had proven to be inadequate for warning mariners of dangerous waters in the Fowey Rocks area. The U.S. Lighthouse Board determined that Fowey Rocks would best be marked by an offshore light. Work there to construct a tall skeletal tower lighthouse began in 1875 and was completed in 1878. The Fowey Rocks Light is 125 feet tall. Its original beacon was a first order Fresnel lens. This lighthouse differs from the Sombrero Key Light and the Alligator Reef Light in three major aspects: its tower is not as tall or steeply sloped, the keepers' dwelling is two stories tall, and there is an added service room below the watch room and lantern. The Fowey Rocks Light (NR 2011) is still an active Federal aid to navigation and is presently equipped with a modern automated optic.

The five tall skeletal tower lighthouses built by the Federal government along the Florida Keys between the early 1850s and 1878 provided a nearly overlapping series of beacons where the next in line could be seen around the time that the one passed earlier was lost to view. By 1878 there was just one major gap left, a stretch approximately 51 miles long between the Sand Key Light and the Sombrero Key Light. The Sand Key Light could be seen for approximately 12 miles. From there, however, a vessel needed to navigate approximately 25 miles farther before the Sombrero Key Light became visible. This gap contained a number of hazards to navigation, including the Sambo Reefs, Maryland Shoal, American Shoal, and Looe Key.

To solve the problem of this unlighted 25-mile gap, the U.S. Lighthouse Board recommended to Congress in 1875 that a lighthouse be constructed at Looe Key. However, Congress took no action that year. In 1876, the Lighthouse Board resubmitted its recommendation for a lighthouse in the area between Sand Key Light and Sombrero Key Light. This time, the Board proposed that American Shoal was a better site than Looe Key for building the proposed lighthouse. In June 1878, Congress finally approved funds to build a tall skeletal tower lighthouse at American Shoal. Onsite work there began in late 1879 and was completed the following year. The lighthouse's optic was officially lighted for the first time on July 15, 1880.

The American Shoal Light (NR 2010) is virtually identical to the Fowey Rocks Light except for its lantern. The skeletal tower is not as tall or steeply sloped as at the Sombero Key Light and the Alligator Reef Light, the keepers' dwelling is two stories tall instead of one, and there is a service room below the watch room and lantern. The American Shoal Light is still an active Federal aid to navigation and is presently equipped with a modern automated optic.

The six Florida Reef Lights have proved to be important aids to navigation from their initial establishment to the present day. Over time, the exposure of their iron skeletal towers to corrosive saltwater led to the deterioration of various parts. At the Sombrero Key Light for example, repair work was undertaken in 1868, 1949, and during the 1960s and 1980s to replace several clamps, tension rods, and turnbuckles, and to repair deteriorated sockets.

A number of technological improvements were made to the Sombrero Key Light subsequent to its establishment. Three red sectors were added to the beacon in 1893 to mark areas of hazardous water north, east, and west of the lighthouse. This was accomplished by mounting panes of red-colored glass inside the lantern. These were replaced during the late twentieth century with sheets of red-colored lexan.

The original oil lamp that lighted the lighthouse's beacon was replaced with a kerosene lamp in 1884, which was in turn replaced by an electric lamp in 1948. The lighthouse's electrification included conversion of one of the dwelling's rooms into an engine room where generators were installed. To provide for fuel storage, a new oil room with storage tanks was suspended beneath the second tier platform. Other improvements included new decking on the boat landing and first tier platform, and a replacement stairway leading up to the second tier platform. Repairs were also made to the windlass and davits that lifted supplies and the light keepers' boat up to the dwelling level.

Following the end of World War I, the U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses (successor to the Lighthouse Board) determined that additional lighted aids were needed in the Florida Keys. This led to the construction from 1921 to 1936 of a group of seven unmanned reef lights to mark local hazards. These lights were designed to be operated automatically from the outset. The first two were built at Molasses Reef and Pacific Reef in 1921. They were pyramidal skeletal towers having three tiers of horizontal supporting members, and were topped with a lantern equipped with an automated optic. Another pyramidal skeletal tower automated light was built at Hen and Chicken Shoals in 1929. Its design was a modification of the type used earlier at Molasses Reef and Pacific Reef.

A different skeletal tower design was developed for the four other offshore automated lights. They included the Smith Shoal Light (built 1933), the Tennessee Reef Light (built 1933), the Cosgrove Shoal Light (built 1935), and the Pulaski Shoal Light (built 1936). Today, the Tennessee Reef Light is the only one of these seven skeletal tower automated lights that still has its original lantern. Two of this group (the Smith Shoal Light and the Pulaski Shoal Light) have been demolished.

Keepers working for the U.S. Lighthouse Service (a subunit of the Bureau of Lighthouses) manned the six Florida Reef Lights until 1939. In that year President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the Bureau of Lighthouses to be subsumed into the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Following this consolidation, Coast Guard personnel were assigned as lighthouse keepers. A typical complement was four men with each serving three weeks at the lighthouse followed by one week ashore. Their schedules were staggered so that three men were always at the lighthouse. This system continued until the 1960s, when the Florida Reef Lights were automated and resident keepers were no longer required.

The Sombrero Key Light was automated in 1960. Its keepers departed and equipment was installed for automatic operation. Power for the automated beacon was provided using an underwater electrical cable installed circa 1960 that extended from Vaca Key to the lighthouse. Other work on the lighthouse occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This included construction of the existing boat landing platform, the installation of a ladder from the new landing to the second tier platform, and the removal of all platform decking from the skeletal tower's first tier.

The original first order Fresnel lens at Sombrero Key Light was removed in 1982. It is presently on display at the Key West Lighthouse Museum in Key West, Florida. The Fresnel lens was replaced with a flash tube array that soon proved to be unreliable and was replaced with a modern 300-millimeter optic. A more technologically advanced 190-millimeter optic was installed in 1986. The existing optic, a VRB-25 marine beacon, was installed in 1997. It signals a flashing white light that appears as a flashing red light in the beacon's red sectors.

In January 1997, the container ship *Houston* ran aground approximately two miles west of the American Shoal Light, within the limits of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The ship was eventually refloated, but the incident left an extensive area of coral reef damaged and the ship's owners liable. As part of the resulting legal settlement, the owners paid for eight modern RACON radar beacons that were installed atop several light towers in the Florida Keys, including the Sombrero Key Light.

Today, the Sombrero Key Light continues to fulfill its original role as an aid to navigation for mariners traversing a potentially hazardous area along the Florida Reef. Visible from shore, it is widely recognized in Monroe County as a prominent offshore landmark. In addition to serving as a navigational aid for vessels in the middle Florida Keys vicinity, the Sombrero Key Light is a lasting reminder of the Florida Straits' important historical role as a route for commercial shipping. It evokes feelings that recall the eventful maritime heritage of the Florida Keys, and is reminder of the dedication to duty characteristic of lighthouse keepers in American history.

Significance under Criterion A

The Sombrero Key Light qualifies for National Register listing under Criterion A at the local level for its association with events related to Federal government efforts to improve maritime safety by providing for an integrated system of navigational aids in Florida. This resource was established as an operating lighthouse in 1858 and has been an important local landmark for mariners ever since. It is historically significant because of its contribution to the broad historical patterns of maritime transportation and commerce in Florida state waters.

The Sombrero Key Light exemplifies the Federal government's concerted effort to establish a nationwide system of aids to navigation during a period when the nation experienced significant economic development, population increase, and an expansion of maritime activity. It is one of the famous Florida Reef Lights, a group of six tall skeletal tower lighthouses built along the Florida Keys during the middle to late nineteenth century. These six offshore lighthouses have served as hazard warnings and guideposts that aided and continue to assist safe passage for thousands of ships through the Florida Straits. The Sombrero Key Light has contributed to maritime safety in Monroe County for more than 150 years and continues to promote safe navigation in the Florida Keys vicinity.

Architectural Context

The construction of the Florida Reef Lights incorporated the use of screw pile foundations, which was an important advancement in U.S. lighthouse engineering. This technology provided stability at locations where the seafloor lacks the solidity of bedrock. Such areas include coral reefs, which can be riddled with fissures and pockets filled with sand and rock fragments. The foundations of the Florida Reef Lights are made with wrought iron pilings that incorporate wrought iron disks for stability and to spread the load-bearing surface over a wider area. The first two Florida Reef Lights built from the late 1840s to the early 1850s used screw piles improved with disks for their foundations. The four Florida Reef Lights constructed from the late 1850s onwards used straight piles that incorporated iron disks, instead of screw piles.

The use of screw piles for lighthouse foundations originated in Great Britain in the 1830s (see Clifford 2002). It was first employed in the U.S. in 1848 at the Brandywine Shoal Light in Delaware Bay. This technology was also adopted for the construction of an offshore lighthouse at Carysfort Reef in the Florida Keys. The 1848 design for the Carysfort Reef Light was prepared by lighthouse engineer I. W. P. Lewis and included a screw pile foundation supporting a skeletal tower. Lewis believed that a screw pile foundation was the best solution for constructing an offshore lighthouse where the sea floor included coral rock and sand.

Parts to assemble the Carysfort Reef Light's foundation were fabricated in Philadelphia in 1848. The completed kit was shipped to the Florida Keys where construction work at the lighthouse's offshore site began in 1849. The task of supervising this project was assigned to Captain Howard Stansbury, U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. Stansbury observed that screw piles driven into the reef's soft coral rock did not provide a foundation of sufficient strength to support the lighthouse's tall structure. To overcome this, he designed a circular foot plate with a hole in the center through which a foundation pile could be driven until it was tightly seated using a collar. The circular foot plate thus became a disk dispersing the weight supported by the pile over a larger area of the sea floor. The disk and screw pile foundation that Captain Stansbury developed for the Carysfort Reef Light was successful. As a consequence, it was employed in building the Sand Key Light in 1852 to 1853.

Use of a foot plate with a metal pile is the defining concept of a disk pile foundation. It provides a significantly larger load-bearing surface and gives better support for the superstructure. Disk pile foundations are an engineering characteristic shared by all six of the Florida Reef Lights (the Carysfort Reef Light constructed in 1849 to 1852, the Sand Key Light and the Sombrero Key Light in the 1850s, and the Alligator Reef Light, the Fowey Rocks Light and the American Shoal Light in the 1870s to 1880). All six of these

lighthouses include an iron disk pile foundation, pyramidal skeletal tower, integral keepers' dwelling, and a lantern 100 feet or more above sea level.

The Lighthouse Board's decision in the mid-1850s to construct a lighthouse on Sombrero Key adopted a different disk pile design than that used earlier at Carysfort Reef and Sand Key. The difference is that the foundation was to be constructed using straight piles in combination with disks. The use of straight piles with disks for constructing the Sombrero Key Light in 1857 was the first time this engineering technology was employed in the Florida Keys. The Sombrero Key Light is the tallest of all the Florida Reef Lights. Its design, including its rectangular one-story keepers' dwelling, was also used in building the Alligator Reef Light in 1873. As built, the first tier of the Sombrero Key Light's skeletal tower is approximately six feet higher above the water than the one at the Alligator Reef Light. Thus, the Sombrero Key Light's dwelling is positioned at a slightly higher elevation and the structure's overall height above the water is approximately six feet greater than the Alligator Reef Light. Other differences are that the Sombrero Key Light's lantern has three tiers of triangular mullions in a helical pattern that hold the glazing while the Alligator Reef Light's lantern has three tiers of rectangular mullions, and that the lantern roofs of the two lighthouses were made with differing roof plates, vents, and fasteners.

The skeletal tower design used in constructing the Sombrero Key Light and the Alligator Reef Light represented state-of-the-art engineering and construction methods for those times. However, their one story keepers' dwellings provided limited living space for the lighthouse keepers. The next Florida Reef Light built after the Alligator Reef Light was the Fowey Rocks Light (completed in 1878). Its design included a pyramidal skeletal tower with sides that slope less steeply that the four lights built before. In addition, the keepers' dwelling at the Fowey Rocks Light is two stories tall and includes significantly more space than the dwelling at the Sombrero Key Light and the Alligator Reef Light. The design used at the Fowey Rocks Light was also used for the American Shoal Light, completed in 1880, which was the last of the tall skeletal tower Florida Reef Lights to be built.

Significance under Criterion C

The Sombrero Key Light qualifies for National Register listing under Criterion C because of its significance in American lighthouse architecture and engineering. It represents the distinctive design and engineering characteristics of middle to late nineteenth century pyramidal skeletal tower lighthouses built offshore in Florida and elsewhere in the United States. The durable, efficient and weather-resistant character of its design has proven to be successful in the natural setting of the Florida Straits. It is also evidence of this lighthouse's high quality of materials and construction. The iron disk pile foundation and skeletal tower engineering technology used in building the Florida Reef Lights has enabled them to withstand powerful storms for more than a century. The Sombrero Key Light remains standing in its original location surrounded by water atop a hazardous reef several miles from shore. It was the first lighthouse in the Florida Keys to incorporate the use of straight piles in combination with disks in its construction, which served as a model for the Florida Reef lighthouses that were built afterwards. The basic structure, appearance, and setting of the Sombrero Key Light remain virtually unchanged from its historic 1858 appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sombrero Key Light
Name of Property
Monroe County, Florida
County and State
Light Stations of the United States MPDF
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

(see continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____
___ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #_____

Primary location of additional data:

X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
X Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Name of repository: U.S. National Archives DC, USCG Civil Engineering Unit (CEU) Miami , USCG Aids to Navigation Team (ANT)-Key West, USCG Historian's Office – Washington, DC

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	488760	2723690	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property's boundary is the perimeter of the octagonal configuration of the lighthouse structure's foundation pilings along with the adjoining rectangular configuration of the boat dock's foundation pilings.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the footprint of the lighthouse structure and its boat dock. This encompasses the entirety of Sombrero Key Light.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

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_____. 1962. Sombrero Key Light Station, triple yoke at top of foundation series for pile #6. USCG Drawing No. 3264, 2 sheets, dated 15 August 1962. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 1963. Sombrero Key Light Station, structural repairs. USCG Drawing No. 3269, 4 sheets, dated 5 March 1963. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 1970. Sombrero Key Light, landing platform. USCG Drawing No. 3702, 2 sheets, dated 11 September 1970. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 1975. Sombrero Key Light, structural repairs. USCG Drawing No. 4301, 4 sheets, dated 20 May 1975. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 1985. Sombrero Key Light, structural inspection. USCG Drawing No. 4152, 2 sheets, dated 4 June 1985. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 1986. Sombrero Key Light, structure repairs. USCG Drawing No. 4153, dated 17 October 1986. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

U.S. Coast Guard. 1991. Sombrero Key Light House, landing platform and ladders. USCG Drawing No. 7006, 3 sheets, dated 15 May 1991. On file at USCG CEU Miami.

_____. 2009a. Light list, volume III, Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.

_____. 2009b. Historic light station information and photography – Florida. U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office website. Available online at http://www.uscg.mil/history/weblighthouses/LHFL.asp (accessed 2 November 2009).

U.S. Light House Board. 1854. *Design for a lighthouse on Coffins Patch, Florida Reef, submitted to the Light-House Board with a report, by Geo. G. Meade, Lieut. Topographical Engineers.* Dated 22 April 1854. Copy on file at the Monroe County Public Library, Key West, FL.

_____. 1870 *First Order Iron L.H. for Alligator Reef, Fla.* 32 Plates. Office of the Light House Board. November 1870. On file at the U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering Unit Miami (USCG CEU Miami), FL.

_____. 1890. *The Modern Light-House Service.* Arnold Burges Johnson, Chief Clerk. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. National Park Service, Maritime Heritage Division. 2009. Lighthouse construction types - offshore lighthouses – straightpile and screwpile. Online at < www.nps.gov/history/maritime/constype/screw.htm >.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sombrero Key Light	Name of Property
Monroe County, Florida	County and State
Light Stations of the United States MPDF	Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Koski-Karell, Ph. D., USCG HQ Office of Environmental Management, and Chad Blackwell, HDR|e²M, Inc.

organization United States Coast Guard (COMDT CG-47) date 8 December 2011

street & number 2100 Second Street SW – STOP 7901 telephone 202.475.5683

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20593-7901

e-mail Daniel.A.Koski-Karell@uscg.dhs.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. **The property is off the USGS topographical grid. A NOAA nautical coastal map has been used instead.*

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner:

name United States Coast Guard

street & number 2100 Second Street SW telephone 202.267.1587

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20593

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

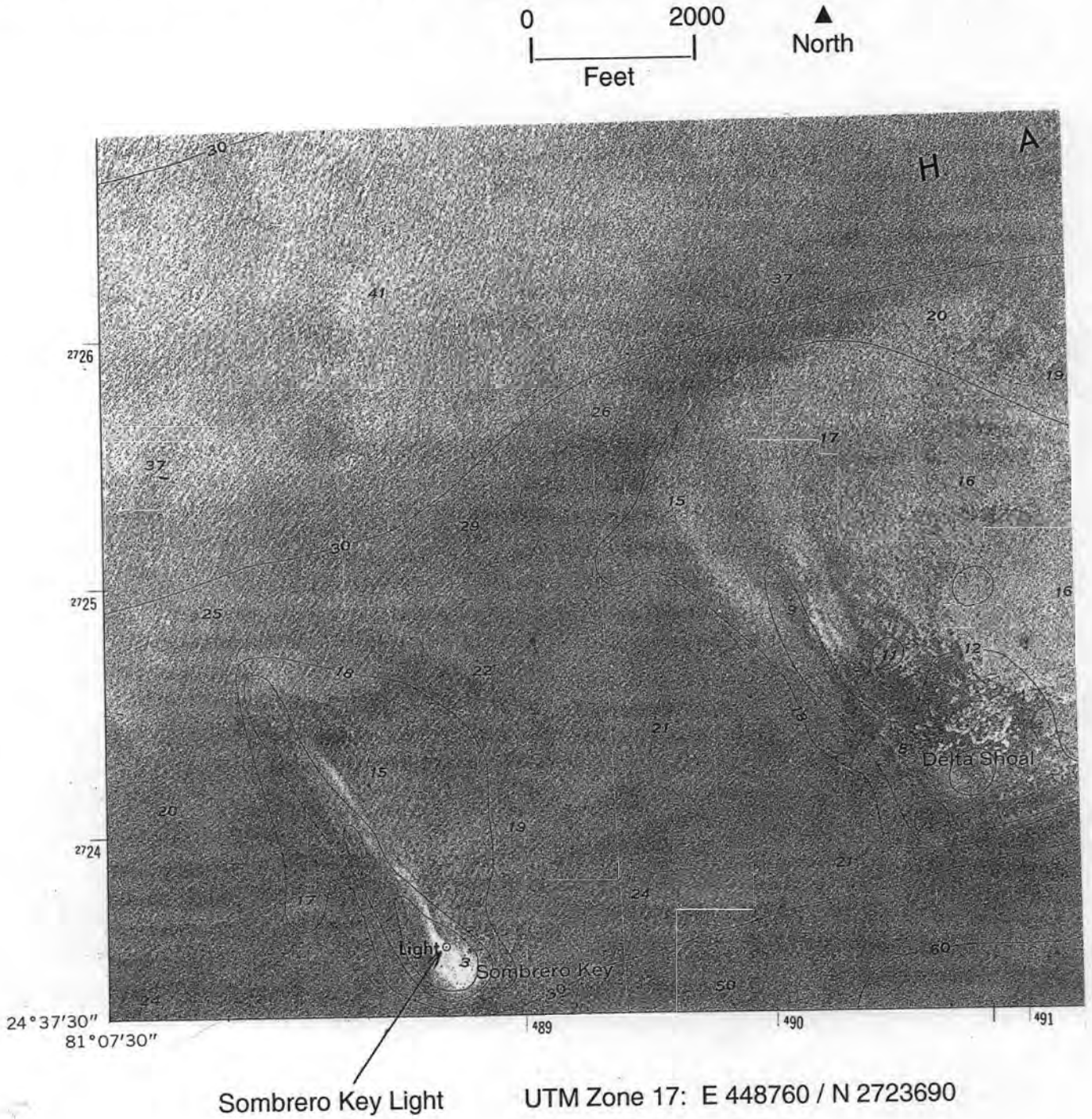
Sombrero Key Light
Name of Property
Monroe County, Florida
County and State
Light Stations of the United States MPDF
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION
(1) Location Map

"Marathon Quadrangle, Florida," 7.5 minute, Scale 1:24,000 (U.S. Geological Survey 1971)
Sombrero Key Light UTM Coordinates: Zone 17, E 448760, N 2723690

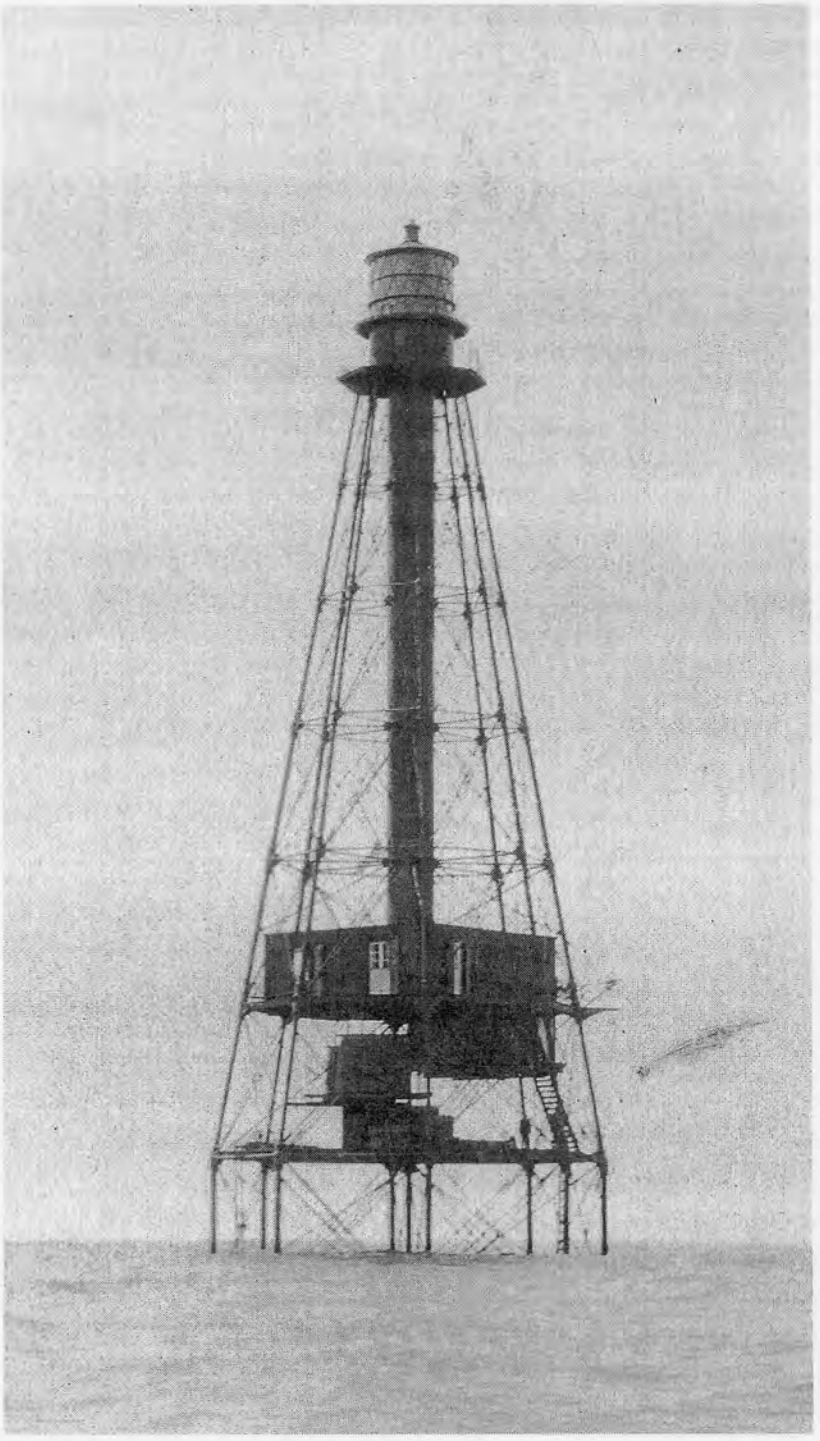
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

(2) Sombrero Key Light Location: portion of the *Marathon Quadrangle, Florida–Monroe Co.*, 7.5 minute series orthophotomap (topographic), scale 1:24,000 (U.S. Geological Survey 1971).



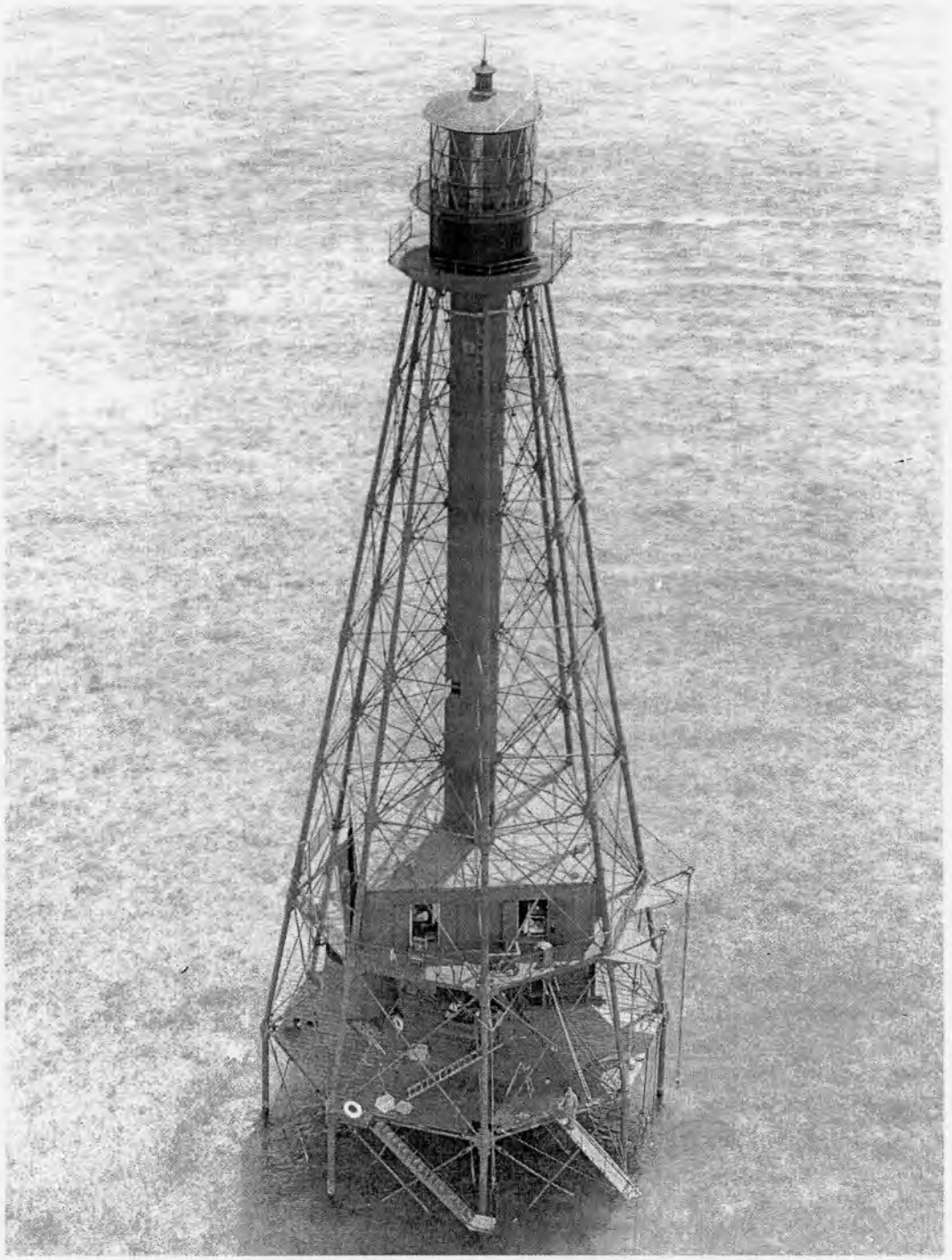
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

(3) Appearance in 1925: This is a photograph of Sombrero Key Light looking southeast, taken in 1925 (Seventh Naval District, photographer F.C.H., on file in the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, Washington, DC).



ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

(4) Appearance in 1954: This is a photograph of Sombrero Key Light, looking south, taken in 1954 (U.S. Coast Guard, photographer unknown, on file in the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, Washington, DC).



ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

(5) Photographs

The following information is common to the eight contemporary photographs:

Name of Property: Sombrero Key Light
Location: Monroe County, Florida
Photographer: Timothy McGrath
Date: 28 October 2009
Location of original negative: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office,
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC.

Photograph Number	Description
1.	Lighthouse northwestern elevation, boat dock on left, looking east.
2.	View upward from boat dock toward access ladder and second tier platform, looking southwest.
3.	Second tier platform deck with keepers' dwelling north façade on left, looking west.
4.	Skeletal tower, stair cylinder, and keepers' dwelling roof cornice, looking upward toward northwest from second tier platform.
5.	Keepers' dwelling interior with stair cylinder doorway in center, looking south.
6.	Watch room interior with pedestal for optic, looking northwest.
7.	Watch room gallery with doorway to watch room and ladder to lantern gallery, looking north.
8.	Lantern room interior, existing modern optic on left, looking southeast.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sombrero Key Light

MULTIPLE NAME: Light Stations of the United States MPS

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Monroe

DATE RECEIVED: 1/27/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/23/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/09/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/13/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000092

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER:	N	PDIL:	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	Y	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

✓ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT 3/9/2012 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Meets Registration Requirements of MPS
Nice Skeletal tower light outside of State Jurisdiction

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A&C

REVIEWER J. Gabbert DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

PHOTO # 1

LIGHTHOUSE NORTHWESTERN ELEVATION, BOAT DOCK ON LEFT, LOOKING EAST.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY MCGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

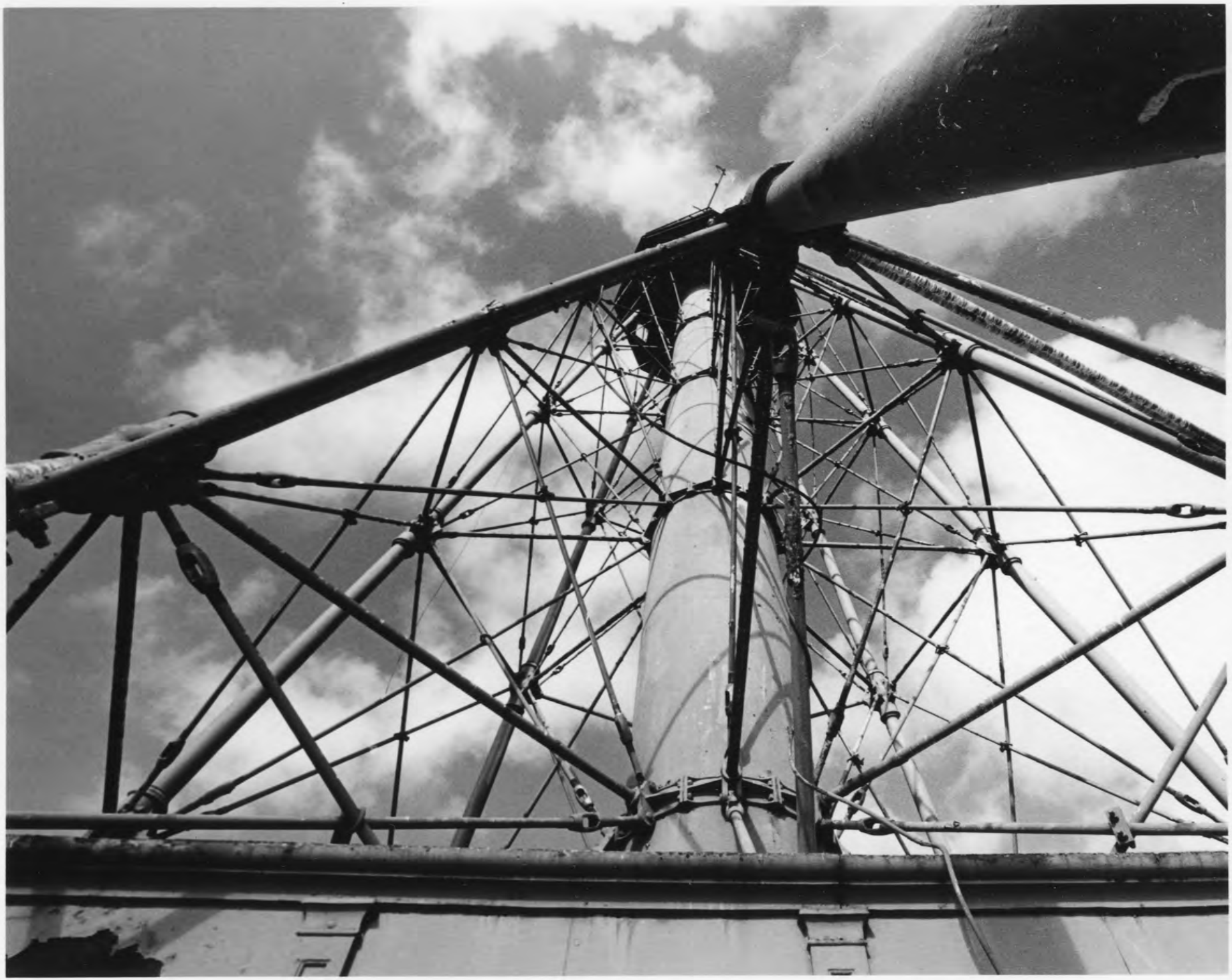
PHOTO #2

VIEW UPWARD FROM BOAT DOCK TOWARD ACCESS LADDER AND SECOND TIER PLATFORM, LOOKING SOUTHWEST.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

PHOTO #3

SECOND TIER PLATFORM DECK WITH KEEPERS' DWELLING NORTH FAÇADE ON LEFT, LOOKING WEST.



SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: OCTOBER 2009

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON, DC

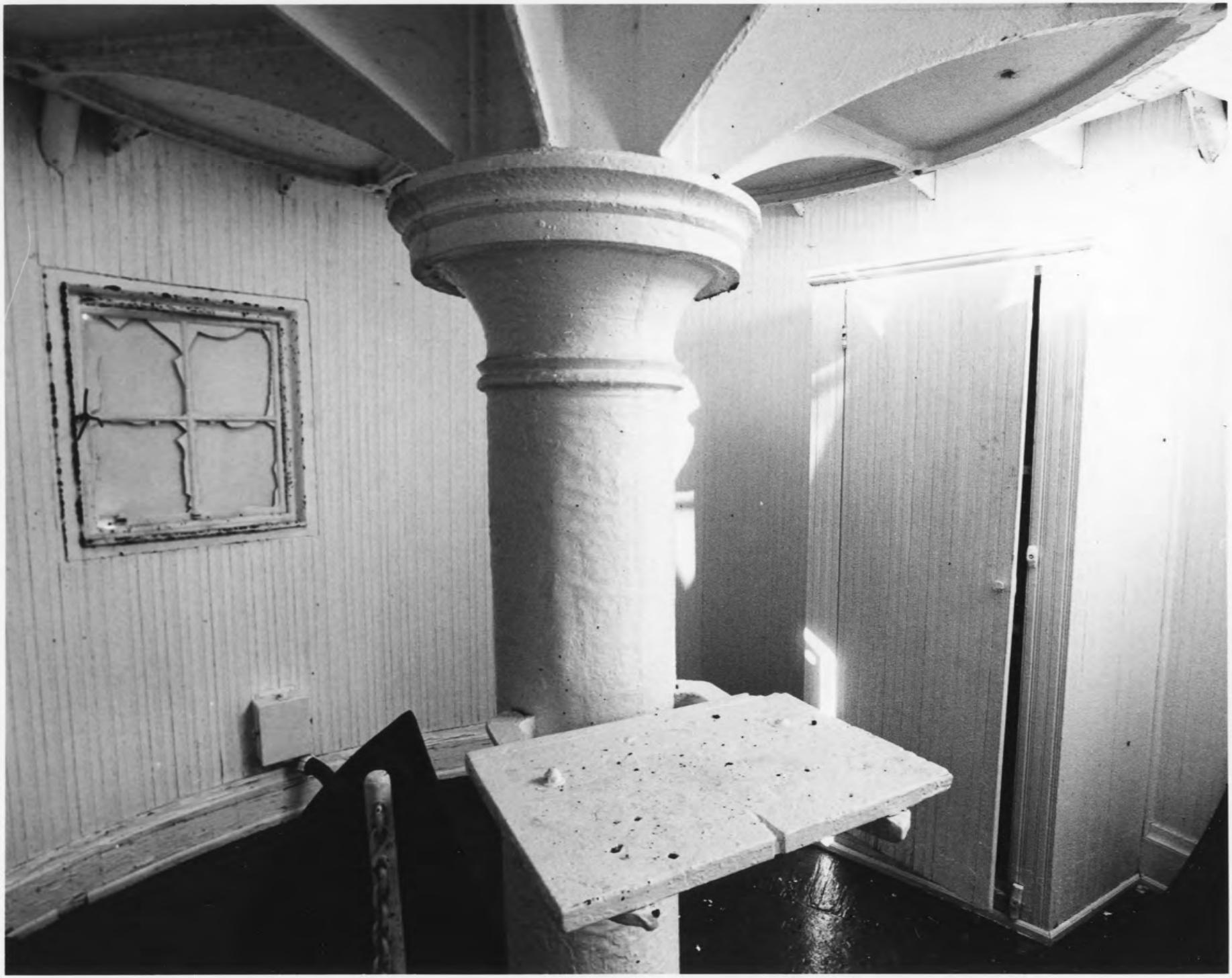
PHOTO #4

SKELETAL TOWER, STAIR CYLINDER, AND KEEPERS' DWELLING ROOF CORNICE, LOOKING UPWARD TOWARD NORTHWEST FROM SECOND TIER PLATFORM.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

PHOTO #5

KEEPERS' DWELLING INTERIOR WITH STAIR CYLINDER DOORWAY IN CENTER, LOOKING SOUTH.



SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

PHOTO # 6

WATCH ROOM INTERIOR WITH PEDESTAL FOR OPTIC, LOOKING NORTHWEST.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY MC GRATH

DATE: OCTOBER 2009

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

PHOTO # 7

WATCH ROOM GALLERY WITH DOORWAY
TO WATCH ROOM AND LADDER TO
LANTERN GALLERY, LOOKING NORTH.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH
DATE: OCTOBER 2009
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE
U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC
PHOTO #8

LANTERN ROOM INTERIOR, EXISTING MODERN OPTIC ON LEFT, LOOKING SOUTHEAST.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF FLORIDA

MARATHON QUADRANGLE
FLORIDA—MONROE CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES ORTHOPHOTOMAP (TOPOGRAPHIC)

4733 I SW (EAST BAHIA HONDA KEY)
4733 I SE (BAMBOO KEY)
4833 IV SW (GRASSY KEY)
4733 II NW (SEVENMILE BRIDGE)
4833 III NW (CRAWL KEY)

81°07'30" — 24°45' — 81°00'
2737000m N. — 490 000 FEET — 150 000 FEET

FLORIDA BAY
INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY
Rachel Bank
Rachel Key
Pretty Joe Rock
Stirrup Key
Russel Key
Vaca Key Rock
Fat Deer Key
Long Key (20 mi.) Miami (101 mi.)
Vaca Cut
Radio Tower
San Pablo Sch
Beacon 6
Marathon Airport
Marathon Shores
Sewage Disposal
Key Colony Beach
Golf Course
Sandy Point
VACA KEY
MARATHON
PO
Swiftik Sch
Radio Towers
Fanny Keys
Palm Island
Knight Key Channel
Coast Guard Sta
Hosp
Sombrero Country Club
Vaca Key Bight
Boot Key Harbor
Hog Key
Campground
Knight Key
Radio Tower
Sewage Disposal
High Sch
Sister Creek
Light
Radio Towers (WFFG)
BOOT KEY
Tingler Island
East Sister Rock
West Sister Rock
Light
Light
East Washerwoman Shoal
CHANNEL
HAWK
Delta Shoal
Light
Sombrero Key
STRAITS OF FLORIDA

KEY WEST 46 MI.
BIG PINE KEY 17 MI.
T. 66 S.
42'30"
40'
110 000 FEET
460 000 FEET
24°37'30"
2724000m N.
499000m E.

SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT MONROE CO., FLORIDA
UTM ZONE 17 E 448760 N 2723690

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.—1973

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Florida Department of Transportation

Orthophotomap prepared from aerial photograph taken April 9, 1970
Topography by planetable surveys 1971

Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Chart 852 (1970) and 1250 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Florida coordinate system east zone (transverse Mercator)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum

Where omitted, land lines have not been established or are not shown because of insufficient data

Only landmark buildings indicated in urban area

MN — GN — 0°02' 1 MIL — ½° 9 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1971 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000

1 MILE — 7000 FEET — 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 1.5 FEET IN HAWK CHANNEL AND 0.8 FOOT IN FLORIDA BAY

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

FLORIDA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Trails
Interstate Route — U. S. Route — State Route

MARATHON, FLA.
N2437.5—W8100/7.5

1971

AMS 4733 II NE—SERIES V847

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW, STOP 7901
Washington, DC 20593-7901
Staff Symbol: COMDT (CG-47)
Phone: (202) 475-5687
Fax: (202) 475-5949

16475

JAN 24 2011

MEMORANDUM

From: E. F. Wandelt, Chief
COMDT (CG-47)

Reply to Attn of: Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell
(202) 475-5683

To: Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW (Stop 2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Subj: SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Ref: (a) National Historic Preservation Act Section 110, 16 U.S.C. 470h-2
(b) Programmatic Agreement Regarding Outgranting of Historic Lighthouse Properties

1. The Coast Guard nominates Sombrero Key Light, Monroe County, FL, for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The nomination package is enclosed (Enclosure (1)).

2. The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer's comments on this NRHP nomination were requested and received. They have been incorporated into this property's NRHP registration form where deemed appropriate.

3. Comments from appropriate local officials were solicited and none was received. Copies of this correspondence are included in the enclosure.

#

Enclosure: (1) NRHP nomination package for Sombrero Key Light

Copy: CG SILC (with encl)
CG CEU Miami (with encl)
CG D7(DPW) (with encl)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW - STOP 7901
Washington, DC 20593-7901
Staff Symbol: COMDT (CG-47)
Phone: (202) 475-5687
Fax: (202) 475-5949

16475

NOV 22 2011

Honorable David Rice, Mayor
District 4 Commissioner
Monroe County Board of Commissioners
9400 Overseas Highway, # 210
Marathon Airport Terminal
Marathon, FL 33050

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

Dear Mr. Rice:

The U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) has determined that Sombrero Key Light offshore of Monroe County, Florida, is a historic property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). We are proposing to nominate this lighthouse for official inclusion in the NRHP. A summary of the NRHP nomination is enclosed for your information (enclosure (1)). This action is being performed pursuant to the authorities contained in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, and the National Park Service regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.9.

As part of the nomination process, the USCG is seeking your comments. Please provide any comments within 45 days from the date your office receives this letter. If we receive no response from your office within 45 days, we will assume you have no comments. We will also submit the NRHP nomination form for Sombrero Key Light to the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer for review and comments.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to contact Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell at (202) 475-5683.

Sincerely,

E. F. WANDELT
Chief
Office of Environmental Management
U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for Sombrero Key Light

Copy (w/o enclosure): J. Paul Loether, National Park Service
COMDT (CG-0942)
CG SILC
CG CEU Miami
CG D7 (DPW)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW - STOP 7901
Washington, DC 20593-7901
Staff Symbol: COMDT (CG-47)
Phone: (202) 475-5687
Fax: (202) 475-5949

16475

NOV 2 2 2011

Honorable George Neugent
District 2 Commissioner
Monroe County Board of County Commissioners
25 Ships Way
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

Dear Mr. Neugent:

The U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) has determined that Sombrero Key Light offshore of Monroe County, Florida, is a historic property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). We are proposing to nominate this lighthouse for official inclusion in the NRHP. A summary of the NRHP nomination is enclosed for your information (enclosure (1)). This action is being performed pursuant to the authorities contained in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, and the National Park Service regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.9.

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Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to contact Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell at (202) 475-5683.

Sincerely,

E. F. WANDELT
Chief
Office of Environmental Management
U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for Sombrero Key Light

Copy (w/o enclosure): J. Paul Loether, National Park Service
COMDT (CG-0942)
CG SILC
CG CEU Miami
CG D7 (DPW)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW - STOP 7901
Washington, DC 20593-7901
Staff Symbol: COMDT (CG-47)
Phone: (202) 475-5687
Fax: (202) 475-5949

16475

NOV 22 2011

Mr. Colley Billie, Chairman
Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
P.O. Box 440021
Miami, FL 33194

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR SOMBRERIO KEY LIGHT

Dear Mr. Billie:

The U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) has determined that Sombrero Key Light offshore of Monroe County, Florida, is a historic property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). We are proposing to nominate this lighthouse for official inclusion in the NRHP. A summary of the NRHP nomination is enclosed for your information (enclosure (1)). This action is being performed pursuant to the authorities contained in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, and the National Park Service regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.9.

As part of the nomination process, the USCG is seeking your comments. Please provide any comments within 45 days from the date your office receives this letter. If we receive no response from your office within 45 days, we will assume you have no comments. We will also submit the NRHP nomination form for Sombrero Key Light to the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer for review and comments.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to contact Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell at (202) 475-5683.

Sincerely,

E. F. WANDELT
Chief
Office of Environmental Management
U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for Sombrero Key Light

Copy (w/o enclosure): J. Paul Loether, National Park Service
COMDT (CG-0942)
CG SILC
CG CEU Miami
CG D7 (DPW)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW - STOP 7901
Washington, DC 20593-7901
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Phone: (202) 475-5687
Fax: (202) 475-5949

16475

NOV 22 2011

Mr. James E. Billie, Chairman
Seminole Tribe of Florida
6300 Stirling Road
Hollywood, FL 33024

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

Dear Mr. Billie:

The U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) has determined that Sombrero Key Light offshore of Monroe County, Florida, is a historic property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). We are proposing to nominate this lighthouse for official inclusion in the NRHP. A summary of the NRHP nomination is enclosed for your information (enclosure (1)). This action is being performed pursuant to the authorities contained in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, and the National Park Service regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.9.

As part of the nomination process, the USCG is seeking your comments. Please provide any comments within 45 days from the date your office receives this letter. If we receive no response from your office within 45 days, we will assume you have no comments. We will also submit the NRHP nomination form for Sombrero Key Light to the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer for review and comments.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to contact Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell at (202) 475-5683.

Sincerely,

E. F. WANDELT
Chief
Office of Environmental Management
U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for Sombrero Key Light

Copy (w/o enclosure): J. Paul Loether, National Park Service
COMDT (CG-0942)
CG SILC
CG CEU Miami
CG D7 (DPW)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street SW, STOP 7901
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16475

DEC 5 2011

MEMORANDUM

From: E. F. Wandelt, Chief
COMDT (CG-47)

Reply to Attn of: Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell
(202) 475-5683

To: Mr. Sean Morton, Superintendent
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
33 East Quay Road
Key West, FL 33040

Subj: SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT, ALLIGATOR REEF LIGHT, AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT AND FOWEY ROCKS LIGHT NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS

Ref: (a) National Historic Preservation Act Section 110, 16 U.S.C. 470h-2
(b) National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000, Public Law 106-355

1. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is nominating Sombrero Key Light and Alligator Reef Light, offshore of Monroe County, FL, for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The USCG previously nominated American Shoal Light and Fowey Rocks Light which are now listed on the NRHP.

2. The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer's comments on these NRHP nominations were requested and received. They were incorporated into these properties' NRHP registration forms where deemed appropriate.

3. Comments from appropriate local elected officials were solicited and ones supporting the nomination were received. No comments were received opposing these nominations.

4. If you have any questions or wish to discuss anything about these lighthouses, please contact Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell (email: Daniel.A.Koski-Karell@uscg.dhs.gov).

#

Copy: J. Paul Loether, National Park Service
CG-431
CG CEU Miami
CG D7(DPW)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION
SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

The Sombrero Key Light is an offshore lighthouse located approximately 5.5 miles south-southwest of Marathon in Monroe County, Florida. It is an operating aid to navigation owned by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), identified as number 1000 on the regional Light List. This property is surrounded by water and accessible only by boat.

The Sombrero Key Light was officially established as a Federal lighthouse in 1858. Based on its historic character, the USCG intends to nominate this property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA) (16 United States Code 470 *et seq.*) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to expand and maintain a national register of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Federal agencies are charged with identifying, evaluating, and nominating such properties under their control to the NRHP. The National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-355) amended the NHPA for the purpose of establishing a National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Program.

The USCG has prepared a NRHP registration form for the Sombrero Key Light. It will be sent to the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer for review and comment concerning the USCG position that this property is eligible for listing in the NRHP. Pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations 60.9, we are notifying local elected officials who may have an interest in the property and inviting them to comment on the nomination during the 45-day comment period. The property is described below.

Site Name and Location:

- Sombrero Key Light
- Located approximately 5.5 miles south-southwest of Marathon in Monroe County, FL
- Light List Number 1000

Owner:

- U.S. Coast Guard COMDT (CG-47)
  ATTN: Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell
  2100 Second Street SW – STOP 7901
  Washington, DC 20593-7901

Summary Description:

The Sombrero Key Light is an iron skeletal tower lighthouse approximately 154 feet tall. It includes a foundation made with nine iron disk piles which supports an octagonal skeletal tower that includes seven horizontal tiers. The tower's second tier is a platform made with iron plates that supports a rectangular one story keepers dwelling. A cylinder that encloses a spiral stairway rises from the dwelling to the upper superstructure atop the skeletal tower. The lighthouse's upper superstructure includes a watch room and lantern. The lantern is equipped with a modern automated beacon with a focal plane 142 feet above sea level. This beacon signals a flashing white light and three sectors marked with a flashing red light. The beacon's red sectors mark areas with hazards to navigation. The Sombrero Key Light is also equipped

with a RACON radar beacon. The lighthouse's day mark color is brown. This property includes a boat dock and walkway built in the twentieth century. The dock stands next to the lighthouse and provides for mooring a vessel. The walkway connects it to the lighthouse where a ladder ascends to the tower's second tier platform. The modern boat dock and walkway do not contribute to the property's historical significance.

Summary Statement of Historical Significance:

This lighthouse was constructed from 1856 to 1858 atop an area of reef and shallow water near the southern edge of the Florida Reef. This location is adjacent to an important route for vessels navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, and ports in the eastern United States and Europe. This area has been the scene of a number of shipwrecks The Sombrero Key Light was the third of six tall skeletal tower lighthouses built offshore of the Florida Keys between 1852 and 1880. They are known as the Florida Reef Lights. The others offshore of Monroe County include Sand key Light, American Reef Light, Alligator Reef Light, and Carysfort Reef Light. One of the six Florida Reef lighthouses, Fowey Rocks Light, is offshore of Dade County.

This lighthouse property is significant in the history of Monroe County. It is eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing under Criterion A for its association with the maritime history of southern Florida. This property exemplifies a local manifestation of the Federal government's program to establish a nationwide system of aids to navigation in order to promote maritime safety and commerce. The Sombrero Key Light is also eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion C for its architectural and engineering significance. It exemplifies how mid-nineteenth century lighthouse architecture and engineering were applied to the need to mark the hazardous Florida Reef which extends from offshore of southeastern Dade County southwestward along the Florida Keys to Key West and beyond. The qualities of this structure's design, materials, and construction methods were applied to overcome difficulties relating to building a lighthouse atop an offshore coral reef in an area subject to hurricanes and other tropical storms. The Sombrero Key Light retains substantial integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship. It is a well-known landmark offshore of Monroe County.

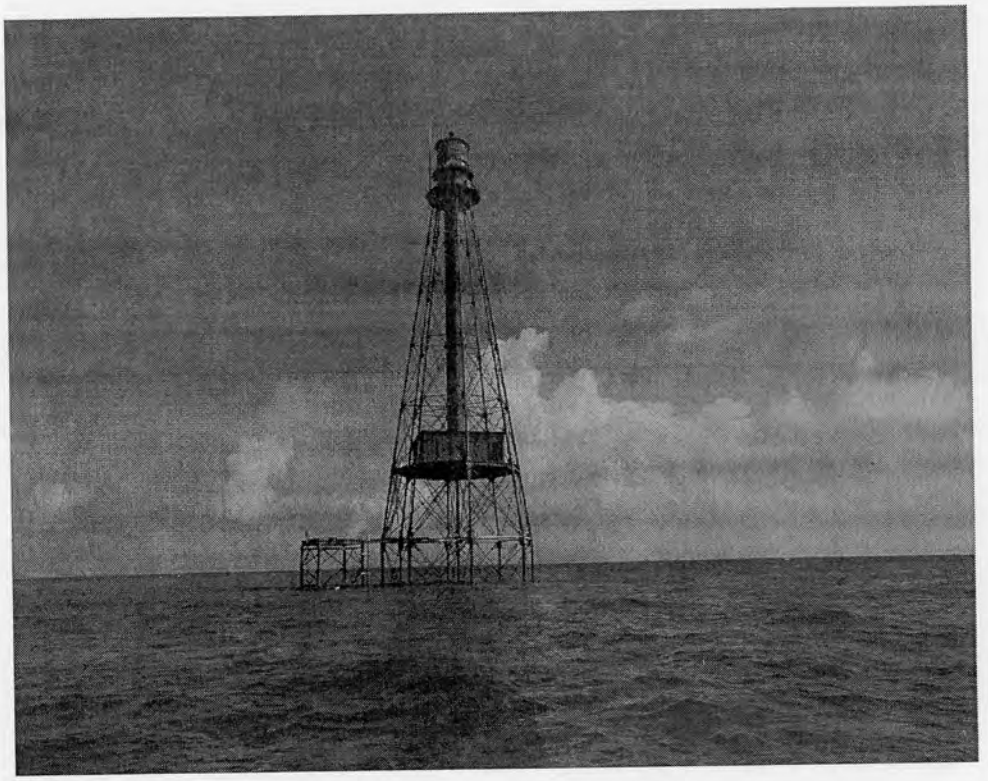
Map and Photograph:

- Sombrero Key Light location map.
- Sombrero Key Light, view looking east.

Sombrero Key Light location map

"Marathon Quadrangle, Florida," 7.5 minute, Scale 1:24,000 (U.S. Geological Survey 1971)

Sombrero Reef Light, view looking east



Via USCG email

COUNTY of MONROE
KEY WEST FLORIDA 33040
(305) 294-4641

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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Mayor Pro Tem Kim Wigington, District 1
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January 11, 2012

E. F. Wandelt, Chief
Office of Environmental Management
U.S. Coast Guard
2100 Second St. SW – Stop 7901
Washington, D.C. 20593-7901

RE: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR SOMBRERO KEY LIGHT

Dear Chief Wandelt,

As a long-time resident of the Marathon area, where the Sombrero Key Light is located offshore, I was very pleased to learn that the USCG has nominated this lighthouse for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP).

Sombrero Key Light is a beautiful structure offshore of Marathon, and is a well-known point of navigation to boaters in the Middle Keys area. It has stood the test of time since its establishment as an official lighthouse in 1858. The structure is in good condition, and listing in the NRHP would provide grant opportunities for funds to maintain this structure for future generations.

This light, and the others in the chain of six lighthouses down the Florida Keys Reef built between 1852 and 1880, have very significant historical importance to Monroe County. All six should be recognized in the National Register of Historic Properties, in my opinion, and I would support all efforts to make that happen.

Thank you for your efforts to nominate the Sombrero Key Light for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties. Monroe County is very appreciative of this proposal and will look forward to news of the final determination of this process. Please keep our office informed, and if you have any questions, or I can be of any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,

David P. Rice, Ph.D.
Mayor , Monroe County, Florida
County Commissioner, District 4

Cc: County Commissioners
Roman Gastesi, County Administrator
Roger Hernstadt, City Manager, City of Marathon