

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 17 1980

DATE ENTERED OCT 22 1981

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 31/47

NAME:

Historic: Faro de la Isla de Caja de Muertos  
Common: Isla Caja de Muertos Light

LOCATION: On the summit of Isla Caja de Muertos near its center about 5 1/2 miles south of Puerto Rico and about 7 miles east of the entrance to Ponce Harbor. On position 17° 53.7' N - 60° 31.5' W.

CLASSIFICATION: Unoccupied. Unrestricted access.

DESCRIPTION: Fair. Altered. Original site.

The light was built in 1887 as a 3rd order lighthouse. It stands somberly at the highest point of a rocky, desertic island which name describes its natural coffin shape. Even more, the structure has a unique and unusual Lorraine cross double-arm "T" type shape which makes it unique within the system.

The main entrance of the structure, 24.6 x 15.6 x 5.9 mts., opened to a small vestibule, 3.9 x 1.5 mts. The vestibule in itself is a section of a 12 x 1 mt. long corridor which led to the keeper's quarters. The entrance to the tower, which has a 3.9 mts. square base, located in the center of the structure is across the main entrance. On both sides of the tower base there were two 4.74 x 4.55 mts. rooms one which served as the engineer's room and the other as a storeroom. North of the tower base the oil room, 3.6 x 1.5 mts., was located. Therefore, from west to east a structural connection is formed by the storeroom, tower base, oil room, engineer's room, and corridor. This section links the keeper's quarters. These were arranged into two parallel north to south oriented section identical in dimensions.

In order of disposition, first, came the living room 4.9 x 3.4 mts., followed by two sleeping rooms 3.5 x 3.5 mts each, and a kitchen-dining area also 3.5 x 3.5 mts. The last three rooms connected to a 8.9 x 1 mt. long corridor which reached the bathrooms. Each living room had three windows; the kitchens two; the dormitories, storeroom, and engineer's quarters one each.

The tower is a massive cylindrical structure, 19 mts. high --including the lantern-- and 2.5 mts. inside diameter. It terminates in rectangular bracket-supporters for the cement circular gallery and cast-iron balustrade that encloses the cast-iron, copper, and glass 3rd order lantern. A cast-iron spiral stairway also led to the lantern that had vertical bars.

The original illuminating apparatus was a 1885, lenticular 3rd order Sautter, Lemonnier & Cie. lens. The central drum had 1 mt. in diameter. It had 6 panels of which 3 were flashing ones. In each panel of the central drum there were 7 elements; each panel above central drum had

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11 prisms and 4 below. The flashes were produced by the central revolving drum mounted on a chariot activated by a clock work system. The clock cord descended through the central column in the stairway. The mechanism was protected by a circular iron and glass case. The original light characteristic showed a white flash every 3 seconds and had an 18 miles range. In 1923 the light characteristics were changed. In 1945 the light was electrified and changed into an automatic unwatched light which exhibited the original characteristics. The structure was abandoned and boarded up. The lens was replaced by a 500 mm. lens. No record has been found which indicates that major structural changes or alterations were introduced in the dwelling. The decorative elements are purely neo-classic especially its cornices and pediment.

SIGNIFICANCE: Faro de la Isla de Caja de Muertos is a major light and a unique architectural structure within the Spanish lighthouse system. It is only slightly similar to Isla Culebrita Light but, in itself, is a major example of a variation within the central theme of utilitarian functions and aesthetical interpretation.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: Area nominated: 7.35 acres. Boundary description: beginning at a boundary post S 0° 15' E 18.77 ft from SW corner of dwelling; thence N 73° 45' E 124.8 ft to a point; ~~thence N 27° 15' W 110.5 ft to a point; thence N 34° 15' E 407.5 ft to a point; thence N 60° 30' W 368.5 ft to a point; thence N 61° 15' E 760 ft to a point; thence 34° W 140 ft to high water mark; thence along high water mark 45 ft; thence S 43° 30' E 145 ft to a point; thence S 35° E 1148.7 ft to a point; thence S 29° 45' E 72.3 ft to the point of beginning.~~

SUPPORTING MATERIALS: v. attached pocket #9 "Isla Caja de Muertos Light". Enclosures are: Quadrangle; plan area nominated; c. 1898 photo; 1978 photos; original site drawings photo; xerox copies original site drawings.

→ then south on a line parallel to the eastern boundary; then east to the point of beginning.