

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

other names/site number FMSF# 8NA134

2. Location

street & number 215 1/2 Lighthouse Circle N/A not for publication

city or town Fernandina Beach N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Nassau code 089 zip code 32034

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick / DSHPO 12-26-02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Florida
Department of State, Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper (for)

Date of Action

Amah D. Pope

2/13/02

Amelia Island Lighthouse
Name of Property

Nassau Co., FL
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	2	buildings
0	0	sites
3	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	2	total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Florida's Historic Lighthouses

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: lighthouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: lighthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
roof BRONZE
other GLASS
WROUGHT-IRON

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

MARITIME HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

MILITARY

Period of Significance

1839-1952

Significant Dates

1839

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lewis, Winslow, builder

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of Repository

#

Amelia Island Lighthouse
Name of Property

Nassau Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.37 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	4 5 7 6 0 0	3 3 9 3 2 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Johnston, Sidney/Kenneth Smith/Robert O. Jones, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date December 2002

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone 850-245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Fernandina Beach

street & number 204 Ash Street/P.O. Box 668 telephone 904-277-7311

city or town Fernandina Beach state FL zip code 32034

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 7 Page 1

**Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida**

SUMMARY

The Amelia Island Lighthouse is located at 215½ Lighthouse Circle in Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida. Rising sixty-four feet, the conical brick lighthouse stands on a knoll fifty-nine feet above sea level. Built in 1839 overlooking Egan's Creek about one mile east of downtown Fernandina Beach, the lighthouse has a decagonal roof, iron lantern and rotation rooms with galleries, a third-order Fresnel lens, tapered exterior walls finished with stucco, window openings filled with replacement sash windows, a replacement entrance door, and masonry foundation. The lighthouse is the oldest in Florida, and has a superior level of craftsmanship. A contributing oil house and cistern, and a non-contributing dwelling and garage also stand on the property. The owner, the City of Fernandina Beach, acquired the lighthouse in 2001, and the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary maintains it. The lighthouse retains its nineteenth century character and physical integrity to a high degree. The lighthouse is nominated to the National Register under the "Florida's Historic Lighthouses," Multiple Property Listing, Property Type: F.1, Brick Lighthouses, and F.4, Supporting Buildings & Structures.

SETTING

The lighthouse occupies a prominent site on Amelia Island two miles south of the St. Marys Entrance and Cumberland Sound, and one-half mile west of the Atlantic Ocean. It stands within the city limits of Fernandina Beach, one of few lighthouses contained within a city limit. Florida's northeastern-most city, Fernandina Beach lies one mile to the west, and has an approximate population of eleven thousand. Several blocks to the south of the lighthouse is Atlantic Avenue, the primary east/west corridor connecting Fernandina Beach with the Atlantic Ocean. Eighth Street, Fletcher Avenue, and Fourteenth Street are primary north/south corridors on Amelia Island. Fletcher Avenue extends along the coastline; Eighth Street and Fourteenth Street service the residential and commercial districts of Fernandina Beach. The lighthouse is four blocks north of Atlantic Avenue, nearly equidistant between Fletcher Avenue and Fourteenth Street. Built on the west bank of Egan's Creek, the structure is bracketed on the north, south, and west by a residential neighborhood consisting of relatively modern dwellings. To the east, is Egan's Creek and its wetlands that are a part of Fort Clinch State Park Aquatic Preserve. The entrance road to the fort lies approximately one-half mile east of the street leading to the lighthouse. Access to the lighthouse is gained from Atlantic Avenue using Nineteenth Street, Highland Street, and Lighthouse Circle. An alley extending north from Lighthouse Circle leads to the structure. The terrain slopes abruptly upwards onto a knoll, where the lighthouse stands near the center of the site. A locked gate and chain-link fence protects the site. North of the structure lies a dwelling constructed in the 1960s, and a non-contributing, altered garage built in the 1930s. To the east, stands a contributing oil house, an attached retaining wall, and the remnants of a cistern. Three additional dwellings, a water tank and tower, and historic period fencing once occupied the site, but have been demolished. The site is relatively clear of tall trees and vegetation. However, a small stand of mature long-leaf pine trees radiate at the southwest corner of the property offering shade, visual breaks, and ambiance to the site.

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**Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida**

In the early twentieth century, Clarence B. Moore investigated "Lighthouse Midden," one hundred fifty yards south of the lighthouse. According to Moore, "the height of the mound, which was totally demolished by us, was 12 feet." Moore's excavation yielded seventy-four skeletons, "all seemingly in anatomical order." Despite his findings, Moore's investigation did not extend to the lighthouse property. No documents have been located indicating an archaeological investigation at the lighthouse site.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Exterior

Rising sixty-four feet, the conical brick lighthouse is finished with stucco painted white (Photo #1). Resting on a masonry foundation, the circular profile of the structure slightly tapers from approximately twenty-two feet in diameter at ground level to approximately thirteen feet at the top of the masonry work. The main entrance faces south, and has a modern replacement door slightly recessed into the wall (Photo #2). Slightly recessed in the walls are six windows at semi-random angles to the entrance (Photos #1-3). Only the fourth window, punctuating the tower at the twenty-fourth step, is in vertical alignment with the entrance. The remaining windows present an irregular association to each other and to the entrance. The first window appears at the ground-floor, opening to the east; the second opens at the ninth step facing northwest; the third opens at the sixteenth step facing east; the fourth opens at the twenty-fourth step facing south; the fifth opens at the thirty-first step facing northwest; and the sixth opens at the fifty-fifth step facing northwest. Despite the irregular arrangement of the fenestration on the exterior, the placement of the windows is consistent with the rise of the interior staircase.

The summit of the conical tower has a rotation room, fabricated with cast-iron panels. A replacement hollow-metal door facing south provides access from the rotation room onto a gallery with wrought-iron deck plates and a two-part handrail-and-stanchion system finished with round finials (Photo #4). The gallery is supported in part by decorative, but functional, arched cast-iron brackets cantilevered from the masonry walls and secured by a molded cornice ring.

Above the rotation room, the lantern room is at the peak of the structure (Photo #5). A slender metal cornice visually divides the rotation and lantern rooms (Photo #6). The lantern room has a decagonal copper roof capped by a bronze ventilation ball. Ten large glass storm panes rise the full height of the lantern room, secured by cast-iron sills and mullions with handholds. Standing about eighteen inches high, a system of stanchions and handrails protects the lantern gallery. On the north elevation, a short ladder extends from the main gallery to the smaller lantern gallery (Photo #1).

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**Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida**

Interior

The entrance opens into a deep arched shaft, or "tunnel," about four feet long and leading to a circular staircase (Photo #7). Executed with hand-hewn granite, fifty-nine steps are secured to the interior wall and a central solid-core (Photo #8). The steps wind to the top of the masonry interior without mid-landings. Six cracked treads are stabilized by a twelve-by-twelve post (Photo #9). Mounted to the interior wall, a historic wooden handrail spirals above the outer stair edge, and a wooden conduit box extends up the west face of the wall (Photo #10). The interior walls of the brick tower are whitewashed and painted; although areas missing those finishes reveal the red bricks. The interior masonry walls taper slightly from approximately ten feet in diameter at ground level to approximately seven feet in diameter at the top. Deep window shafts are finished with tongue-and-groove lintels and stools. An examination of the window shafts reveals that a cavity exists between the exterior and interior walls.

The staircase terminates at a granite landing. A round cast-iron deck plate caps the brick tower and has a semi-circular opening that provides access between the tower and rotation room. A spiral cast-iron ship's ladder-type stair leads from the granite landing up to the rotation room (Photo #11). The walls of the rotation room are finished with vertical tongue-and-groove wooden planks. Decorative brackets anchor the base of the lantern room to the walls of the rotation room. The rotation room contains an electrical motor and mechanical apparatus that turns the lens in the lantern room above. The spiral cast-iron ship's ladder stairs continue along the interior wall of the rotation room, terminating at the floor of the lantern room (Photo #12).

Within the lantern room, measuring four feet in diameter, the Fresnel lens occupies most of the space contained within the lantern room (Photos #13). The lens consists of a twelve-sided brass framework filled with a dioptric lens system consisting of glass bull's eyes and prisms (Photo #14). An automated bulb replacement apparatus is equipped with two one-thousand-watt light bulbs (Photo #15).

ALTERATIONS

Historic alterations include a replacement lantern room and rotation room in 1881. Stucco was applied to the exterior walls about 1890, and the installation of the Fresnel lens was in 1903. Non-historic alterations to the lighthouse include 1990s wooden windows with one-over-one lights. The original fenestration consisted of six-over-six double-hung sash windows, which were replaced by four-over-four, double-hung sashes at the middle of the twentieth century. Historic photographs indicate at least two generations of entrance doors: one comprised of vertical wood planks mounted with broad iron hinges (ca.1870), and another consisting of a pair of narrow, paneled wood doors (ca.1885). Although the dates of installation remain undocumented, the entrance door and rotation-room door are replacements that are non-historic. Despite these minor alterations, the structure retains its historic character, features, and feeling to a high degree.

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**Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida**

Oil House

Located approximately fifteen feet east of the lighthouse, a masonry oil house contains one hundred twenty square feet of interior floor space (Photos #16&17). Facing west, the rectangular building has a gable roof sheathed with cement asbestos shingles. The eaves are close to the brick exterior walls that terminate with corbels at the eaves juncture. A louvered wooden entrance door is set in an arched surround. Metal ventilation pipe elbows pierce the west and east walls. The building is built on a brick foundation, and there are no windows.

The oil house has undergone several alterations. The original standing-seam metal roof has been replaced by cement asbestos shingles. An original metal-clad wooden door was replaced by the louvered wooden door about 1965. Fabricated with concrete, a small retaining wall measuring five feet by seven feet abuts the oil house at the northeast corner. Built about 1990, the stem walls contained a small oil tank.

Cistern

A red circular brick cistern is five feet east of the oil house (Photo #17). Originally having a circular stem wall eighteen inches high, the structure was used as a trash pit beginning about 1905. The structure is filled with earth and debris, and the stem wall was destroyed sometime after 1950.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Garage

A three-hundred square feet, two-bay garage, stands twenty-five feet northeast of the lighthouse (Photos #18&19). Built about 1930, the garage has a gable roof with corrugated cement asbestos roof and wooden frame walls finished with stucco. Boarded over and partially destroyed, an eight-light metal casement window punctuates the rear, or east wall. A modern stucco finish has replaced the original corrugated metal exterior wall.

Former Keeper's Dwelling

A non-historic keeper's dwelling is one hundred feet north of the lighthouse (Photos #20&21). Built about 1962, the residence has an "L" footprint with a hip roof pierced by a brick chimney. The walls are concrete block, and windows are filled with metal sashes. It contains about eighteen hundred square feet of interior floor space.

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**Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL**

SUMMARY

The Amelia Island Lighthouse is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C at the state level in the areas of Architecture, Transportation, Maritime History, and Military. The oldest existing lighthouse in Florida, and the oldest documented structure in Fernandina Beach, the lighthouse was initially built in 1820 on Cumberland Island, Georgia, but relocated to Amelia Island in 1839. A primary aid-to-navigation in northeast Florida, the lighthouse has guided thousands of vessels along Florida's northeast coastline, through the treacherous waters of the St. Marys Entrance to Cumberland Sound, and along the Amelia River and St. Marys River. As a part of an integrated system of federal lighthouses, the sweep of the light from Amelia Island historically intersected with the lights at St. Augustine Lighthouse to the south, and Little Cumberland Island to the north. The lighthouse historically served as the primary light to a series of smaller front and rear range lights installed elsewhere on Amelia Island and neighboring Tiger Island, and buoys in the Cumberland Sound Entrance. The light was extinguished by Confederate forces during the Civil War, became a watch station equipped with telephone lines into Fernandina Beach during the Spanish-American War, and served as a lookout station during the World War I and II. Installed on Amelia Island primarily as an aid to commercial shipping, the lighthouse remained important as business interests changed over time and expanded in the 1920s and 1930s. The lighthouse served as a familiar beacon for recreational boaters who increasingly used the Intra-coastal Waterway in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

The lighthouse was constructed from standardized plans maintained by the fifth auditor's office of the Department of the Treasury. It was constructed by Winslow Lewis, a prominent Boston inventor and lighthouse builder. Consisting of a masonry fifty foot tower, the structure was considered a "second-class" lighthouse, a system of classes based on heights. Lewis built the tower, with its lantern rising an additional fourteen feet. Assembled with hollow wall cavities, the structure is representative of a common lighthouse construction technique. Changes to the structure were effected by the U. S. Light-House Board, and reflect typical changes to older lighthouses. The alterations consisted of improved rotation and lantern rooms (1881), and the installation of a new invention--Fresnel lenses in 1856 and 1903. Built in 1890, a contributing brick oil house is also representative of improvements to light-stations by the Light-House Board between the 1880s and 1910s. The design of the lighthouse is consistent with national and statewide trends in architecture. The structure contributes to the Florida's Historic Lighthouses Multiple Property Submission under all four historic associated contexts and the F.1 and F.4 property types.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the towns of Fernandina and St. Marys on Georgia's mainland became busy ports shipping cotton and timber products. But, incursions by American patriots and marauding pirates destabilized the plantation economy and commerce of northeast Florida and southeast Georgia. Slaves had contributed to the Amelia Island economy, as early as the British period, and in the second Spanish period

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Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

northeast Florida remained a setting for contraband trade and slave smuggling. Still controlled by Spain, Amelia Island, especially, with its close proximity to Georgia and a deepwater port, became a center of this activity. In 1808, a federal law that outlawed the importation of slaves from Africa increased the significance of ports bordering the United States. In 1818 alone, over one thousand slaves were delivered into Fernandina and adjacent areas, and then sold to planters throughout the region.¹

Responding to increased shipping and cries for a lighthouse by Robert Stafford and other prominent planters on Cumberland Island to the north, the Congress approved the construction of a lighthouse on the south end of Cumberland Island. Requests as early as 1802 finally resulted in a lighthouse being constructed in 1820. That year, Stephen Pleasonton, chief of the fifth auditor's office and supervisor of lighthouse contracts, awarded a bid to construct the lighthouse to Winslow Lewis of Boston for seventeen thousand dollars. As completed, the structure stood one hundred twenty-six feet, a significant coastal lighthouse. Despite the treacherous channel at St. Marys Entrance, Amelia Island did not support any significant navigational aids while under Spanish control, which ended in 1821. Shipping increased after the United States annexed Florida, and in the early-1820s St. Marys became a port of entry and residents of Fernandina incorporated the town. Initially, the Cumberland Island lighthouse served as a useful navigational guide. But, in the 1830s, the entrance's channel shifted southward, causing the lighthouse to lose some of its effectiveness as an aid to navigation. Federal actions to improve inland waterways between Cumberland Sound and St. Johns River began in 1828, but progress remained inconsequential until the 1880s.²

As early as 1834, at the behest of the merchants and mariners of Fernandina, Francisco Pons petitioned Joseph White, Florida's congressional delegate, to "make an appropriation for a Light House to be built on Amelia Island in place of the one now on Cumberland Island." Pons claimed that the existing structure "is of little or no benefit to the Mariner--as it cannot be seen in entering the Bar--neither when bound from the South, until several miles to the northward of it..." A subsequent petition from residents of St. Marys confirmed Pons's petition, and was referred to the Congress's committee on commerce on 19 May 1834. In March 1837, the Congress approved the construction of a lighthouse on Amelia Island.³

In November 1837, Pleasonton appointed Archibald Clark, customs collector of St. Marys, Georgia, to select and purchase a site for the new lighthouse. Clark chose the highest point on the island, a bluff nearly sixty feet

¹Junius Dovell, *Florida: Historic, Dramatic, Contemporary*, 4 vols., (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1952), 1:169-170; Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Random House, 1956), 251-252.

²Mary Bullard, *Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island: Growth of a Planter* (South Dartmouth: Mary Bullard, 1986), 66; Thomas Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses, 1821-1845* (Allandale: Thomas Taylor, 1995), 243; Senate, *American State Papers*, 16th Cong., 2d Sess., Document No. 235, p. 460; "Cumberland Island Lighthouse Removed to Amelia Island," 15 September 1852, 06-3A, Cartographic & Architectural Branch, National Archives; House, *Cape Fear River, N. C., to St. Johns River, Fla., Intracoastal Waterway*, 75th Cong., 3d Sess., Document No. 618, p. 11; "Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.," Amelia Island Lighthouse clipping file, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D. C.

³Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 244-245.

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Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

above sea level overlooking Egan's Creek east of Fernandina. About two miles south of St. Marys Entrance and one-half mile from the ocean, the site was the highest point of land and the most inland for any of Florida's territorial-period lighthouses. In April 1838, Clark executed a deed for six acres with Mary Fernandez, the widow of Domingo Fernandez, a prominent planter. Fernandez had acquired many tracts on Amelia Island from the Spanish government, and residents later named the Town of Fernandina after him.⁴

Later that year, Clark requested bids to remove the old Cumberland Island lighthouse and rebuild it on Amelia Island. On 25 October 1838, the treasury department awarded a bid of seven thousand dollars to Winslow Lewis, who had constructed the Cumberland Island structure eighteen years earlier. In addition to a lighthouse, the contract stipulated the construction of a keeper's dwelling. Lewis's slow progress dismantling the Cumberland Island structure prompted a response from George Hollins, a naval inspector for the fifth lighthouse district. He pressed Pleasonton and Lewis in December 1838 to complete the Amelia Island lighthouse because the Cumberland Island structure was "not in very good order; this light but little use, the channel having shifted." In February 1839, the *St. Augustine East Florida Herald and Southern Democrat* tongue-in-cheek mused "and so much of the appropriation heretofore made and unexpended for a light house on Amelia island, be, and hereby is, appropriated, for the removal of the light house situated on the southern end of Great Cumberland Island to the said site on Amelia Island."⁵

Lewis initiated work at Cumberland Island in late 1838, and completed rebuilding the lighthouse on Amelia Island on 4 March 1839. The new fifty-foot tower was less than half the height of the former tower on Cumberland Island. Assembled at the peak without a separate rotation room, the lantern extended the tower's height to sixty-four feet. Inside the lantern, Lewis installed fourteen revolving patent lamps with fifteen-inch reflectors. Lewis had patented a lighthouse lamp-and-reflector system in 1810, a technology that was still used in America's lighthouses into the 1850s. Lewis's interest in lighthouse lamps had led to a career in construction, which he began about 1828. By the early 1840s, Lewis had assembled or rebuilt approximately eighty lighthouses, and at the time of his death in 1850 he had built about one hundred lighthouses between Maine and the Mississippi River. In the late 1830s, Lewis also constructed lighthouses at Cape Cod, Massachusetts and Sand Island, Alabama. Lewis claimed that Boston builders assembled all of Florida's earliest lighthouses, and that New England contractors dominated America's lighthouse construction industry.⁶ Considered a minor lighthouse, the Amelia Island Lighthouse rose sixty-four feet, but because it rose one-hundred and ten feet above sea level, its fourteen-foot lantern was visible fifteen miles at sea. Lewis also built a small one-story brick keeper's dwelling at Amelia Island, which measured thirty-four feet by twenty feet and

⁴Ibid., 245; Official Records Book 52, p. 403, Nassau County Courthouse, Fernandina Beach, Florida.

⁵House, *Contracts--Light-Houses, &c., Included*, 25th Cong., 3d Sess., Doc. No. 131, p. 5; Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 245; *St. Augustine East Florida Herald and Southern Democrat*, 28 February 1839.

⁶Senate, *Report of the Officers Constituting the Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document 28, p. 46, 105, 121, 127-128; House, *Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document 114, p. 41; Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 243-249.

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Amelia Island Lighthouse
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

stood approximately ninety feet southeast of the lighthouse (demolished). One historian of the site has speculated that Lewis used the surplus salvaged bricks harvested at Cumberland Island to assemble the keeper's dwelling.⁷

The development of the Amelia Island Lighthouse occurred during a period of upheaval in the development of the nation's lighthouses, which extended between the mid-1830s and the early-1850s. By the mid-1830s, the treasury department became overwhelmed with petitions for new lighthouses. In 1837 alone, the department received requests for thirty-one new lighthouses. The appeals compelled the Congress to appoint a board of naval commissioners to examine the need for these structures. In its recommendations, the board rejected at least one lighthouse in every state, except Florida, where it approved structures at Amelia Island, Apalachicola Bay, Carysfort Reef, and St. Joseph's Bay, and the rebuilding of lighthouses at Cape Florida and Mosquito Inlet. The review board made recommendations that precipitated further debate.⁸

In 1843, civil engineer I. W. P. Lewis, a nephew of Winslow Lewis, submitted a report to the Congress about the nation's lighthouses. The report stated that there is a "strikingly family likeness amongst all the various establishments, no matter how opposite the character of their locations. Be it the rocks of Maine, the sands of the Carolinas, or the mud banks of Louisiana, the same formula of construction is observed throughout." Indeed, the Amelia Island Lighthouse reveals much of the "strikingly family likeness" of antebellum lighthouses referred to by Lewis. In addition, the engineer stated that repairs to lighthouses constituted nearly one-half the expenses of the Lighthouse Establishment. He also cited instances of fraud in the construction of Florida lighthouses at St. Johns and St. Marks, where investigations "discovered building the walls hollow." He found, coincidentally, that Winslow Lewis had assembled both of those lighthouses. Unknown to I. W. P. Lewis and only recently discovered, the Amelia Island Lighthouse was also built with cavities between the walls. I. W. P. Lewis attributed these hollow walls to fraud, but they were a common construction technique practiced by many lighthouse contractors. Apparently, Amelia Island Lighthouse is the only "hollow wall" lighthouse from the Territorial era left standing in Florida. Other early examples deteriorated, fell into the ocean, or were rebuilt over a century ago. The well-drained, stable site on which the Amelia Island structure stands is responsible, in part, for its longevity.⁹

Reflecting another similar pattern of Florida's antebellum lighthouses, Amelia Island Lighthouse required repairs within several years of its completion. Both Amos Latham, the initial keeper, and his replacement,

⁷Senate, *Report of the Officers Constituting the Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document 28, p. 46, 105, 121, 127-128; House, *Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document 114, p. 41; Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 243-249; Harold Belcher, informant, 2002.

⁸Senate, *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 25th Cong., 2d Sess., Document No. 15, p. 13-15, 24; House, *Examination--Light-House Establishment*, 27th Cong., 3d Sess., Doc No. 183, p. 19-20.

⁹Senate, *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 25th Cong., 2d Sess., Document No. 15, p. 13-15, 24; House, *Examination--Light-House Establishment*, 27th Cong., 3d Sess., Doc No. 183, p. 19-20.

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Captain E. Richardson, submitted their concerns to James Dell, superintendent of the St. Johns district. The nature of their concerns remains undocumented, but in 1843, after a series of repairs were completed, Dell sighed "I hope not soon to hear more complaints from the keeper of that light, of inconvenient quarters or defective apparatus. I trust the repairs of this work will need no amendment for some years to come."¹⁰

One of the changes to the lighthouse near the close of the antebellum period included the installation of a Fresnel lens in the lantern. The use of Fresnel lenses lay near the heart of a controversy between the fifth auditor's office and the Blunt brothers of New York City. The Fresnel lens, an invention of Augustin-Jean Fresnel, a French civil engineer, enjoyed a four-to-one performance ratio in economy and brilliance over the existing technology. In 1852, one of the first measures adopted by the newly created U. S. Light-House Board was the authorization to install Fresnel lenses in the nation's lighthouses. That year, the Light-House Board recommended "making it [Amelia Island Lighthouse] a first-class sea-coast light" by elevating the tower and equipping it with the "best description of apparatus." Although the tower height was not raised, in 1856 a third-order Fresnel lens was installed. Two years later, the board indicated that only six lighthouses still used the antiquated Lewis system. In 1862, the board confidently reported that "the improved Fresnel lens has been supplied to all the light-houses."¹¹

In the 1840s, concerns over the difficult route across the St. Marys bar and through the entrance to Cumberland Sound, and the distant location of the lighthouse to the entrance, prompted an investigation to move the lighthouse again. In October 1848, Y. Cardova, Samuel Cribb, and George Latham, bar pilots of Fernandina and St. Marys, wrote to Stephen Pleasonton that "the present lighthouse, where it now stands, is at least four miles south of the entrance and bar above mentioned, and, therefore, entirely useless, and in many instances injurious to vessels coming from the north, as they generally make for the light and fall to leeward." They argued that "the proper site for a light-house for the entrance of this bar is, and always was, the extreme northeast end of Amelia Island, as vessels inward bound can, by the light and aid of buoys, be guided in with safety." The pilots found that "within four hundred years of the sea beach, the same kind of soil for a foundation to build the light-house on as any other on the sea islands south of Charleston, S.C."¹²

Responding to the bar pilots, James Dell, the custom-house collector at Jacksonville and superintendent for the St. Johns district lighthouses, obtained an assessment from Captain N. L. Coste of the U. S. Revenue Service, a predecessor of the U. S. Coast Guard. Coste's personal observation weighed in against the bar pilot's assessment, stating "to remove it might tend to serious injury. It is bad policy to remove old well-established

¹⁰House, *Light-Houses*, 28th Cong., 1st Sess., Doc. No. 38, p. 54-55.

¹¹House, *Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 114, p. 4; House, *Report of the Officers Constituting the Light-House Board*, 32d Cong., 1st Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 55, p. 140; Senate, *Letter of Wm. B. Shubrick*, 37th Cong., 2d Sess., Mis. Doc. No. 61, p. 8, 12; "Amelia Island Lighthouse," dhr.dos.state.fl.us/maritime/lighthouses/light.cfm; "Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.," NARA.

¹²Neil Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses, 1820-1939* (Alexandria: Historic Lighthouse Publishers, 1990), 9.

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landmarks, under any circumstances, but no necessity exists in the present case. Therefore I reiterate that no benefit will result in a change of location either to the mariner or pilot, on the contrary, injury may result to the former.” Apparently unknown to Coste, by then the lighthouse had stood for fewer than ten years on Amelia Island, removed to that location from Cumberland Island without “serious injury.”¹³

Based on Coste’s recommendation, Pleasonton “concluded to take no further step in relation to it.” Interestingly, the federal government had previously set aside section eight at the northeast corner of the island as a “lighthouse reservation,” a site east of where the federal government built Fort Clinch in the 1840s. In addition, because of their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and St. Marys Entrance, engineers with the U. S. Coast Survey had designated sections nine and twelve as “lighthouse reservations.” In the 1850s, Pleasonton’s successor, the U. S. Light-House Board, took several steps to address the pilots’ concerns about navigating the bar and channel. By 1856, a series of three beacons, named east, south, and west (all demolished), marked the contours of the northeastern edge of Amelia Island and helped guide pilots and mariners. Two years later, the board established the Amelia Island North Rear Range Light. Mounted within a lantern atop a two-story wooden frame house (demolished), the light was a sixth-order fixed red Fresnel lens. Comprised of the lighthouse and three range lights, the four beams cast a convergent light to a point in the main channel of the St. Marys Entrance north of the South Breakers and east of Kingsley Bank. The Amelia Island Lighthouse and the south range light (later renamed front light) aligned in a northeasterly direction, and the east and west range lights aligned in a southeasterly direction. This system was maintained until the 1880s, when entrance improvements and the construction of jetties compelled a new system of secondary navigational aids.¹⁴

Harbor activities at Fernandina increased in the 1850s, in part, because of the Florida Railroad built by David Levy Yulee. Construction began in Fernandina in 1855 and the 155-mile route to Cedar Keys was completed in March 1861. Yulee’s railroad supported Florida’s plantation system and developed a new shipping network between the Atlantic seaboard and Gulf of Mexico. Yulee insisted, against his critics, that although cargoes hauled by his railroad would receive additional handling at the port towns, shipping companies would experience fewer losses and improved profits by avoiding the journey through the treacherous Straits of Florida. Significant lighthouses had only just begun to appear there with the completion of Carysfort Reef Lighthouse in 1852.¹⁵

¹³Senate, *Communication from the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury*, 31st Cong., Special Sess., Document 1, p. 3, 5-6.

¹⁴Senate, *Report of the Superintendent of the Coast Survey*, 34 Cong., 3d Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 12, map 22; House, *Report of the Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey*, 41st Cong., 2d Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 206, map 18; State of Florida, *Public Lands Tract Book*, Volume 10, p. 107, Township 3 North, Range 29 East; Thomas Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 2001), 27-28; “Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.,” NARA.

¹⁵Senate, *Communication from the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury*, 31st Cong., Special Sess., Document 1, p. 3, 5-6; George Pettengill, Jr. “The Story of the Florida Railroads, 1834-1903,” *Railway and Locomotive Historical Society* 86 (July 1952), 1-132; Dudley Johnson, “The Florida Railroad After the Civil War,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (January 1969), 292-309.

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During the antebellum period, eight keepers maintained the Amelia Island Lighthouse with the length of service extending between one and seven years. In the period spanning 1839-1954, twenty-one keepers were assigned to the light station, again with brief service terms of one year, but one extending for twenty-nine years. With a few notable exceptions, most keepers remained at the post fewer than ten years, their tenures being cut short either by transfer to another lighthouse, death, discharge, or retirement. Amos Latham, the first keeper, had transferred from Cumberland Island site, and maintained his watch at Amelia Island until his death in 1842. A native of Connecticut, Latham was a veteran of the Revolutionary War. Buried north of the lighthouse, his body was later re-interred at Bosque Bello Cemetery in Fernandina Beach. Accorded Great Floridian status by the Florida Department of State in 2000, Latham was related to other keepers of the Amelia Island Lighthouse in the late-nineteenth century and twentieth century.¹⁶

Captain E. Richardson, who served between 1842 and 1849, replaced Latham. Richardson's replacement, George W. Walton, a native of North Carolina, was removed in 1854 for speaking out "in terms most intemperate and bitter" against President Franklin Pierce. Horace Vaughn, a native of Florida, served three years, resigning in 1857. His replacement James Woodland maintained the post until Florida seceded from the Union, and then became the C. S. A.'s keeper of the lighthouse until the lighting apparatus was confiscated by Confederate authorities and shipped to Madison, Florida, for safekeeping. Keepers maintained a daily schedule of trimming wicks, cleaning and filling the Argand lamps with whale's oil, completing reports, lighting the lamps in the evening and extinguishing them in the morning, and other tasks.¹⁷

Early in the Civil War, Stephen Mallory, secretary of the Confederate navy, ordered that lighthouses should be seized and remain unlighted. In response to the confiscation of federal properties, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the government's intention to "recover and maintain possession of all forts, lighthouses, etc." Because of its harbor and rail connection Federal troops occupied Fernandina in March 1862, but by then the lighthouse apparatus had been removed. Although federal authorities seized the lighthouse, the navigational aid remained dark until 1864, when the Light-House Board reported that "steps have been taken, also upon the recommendation of the military authorities, to re-establish the light formerly in operation at Amelia Island; the necessary repairs and renovations were made, and its re-exhibition at an early day is confidently looked for." Although several of the range lights were destroyed during the war, the lighthouse remained in good condition. War-time keepers and assistant keepers included William McGlne, James Parker, Benjamin Randall, and James Woodland, who did little more than maintain the property. The federal government had paid Woodland four hundred dollars annually for his services; the Confederate government reduced his pay to three hundred dollars. His wife, Winifred Woodland, was appointed assistant keeper in 1860, the only female to officially serve in a keeper capacity at Amelia Island during the historic period.¹⁸

¹⁶Taylor, *Florida's Lighthouse Trail*, 23-24; *Fernandina Beach News-Leader*, 25 June 1999.

¹⁷Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses*, 5; Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 249.

¹⁸House, *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 40th Cong., 3d Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 2, p. 360; Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses*, 5; Taylor, *Florida's Territorial Lighthouses*, 249; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 25; "Amelia Island Light-Station,

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In 1867, repairs were made to the tower, contractors installed new glass, and built an iron gallery around the lantern. Other improvements included encasing the weight-and-cable system of the rotation machinery in a wood box that extended down the interior wall of the lighthouse. Apparently, the pre-Civil War Fresnel lens had been returned to Amelia Island shortly after the war, but within several years was replaced by another third-order Fresnel lens manufactured in 1868 by Henry-LaPaute of Paris, France. In 1868, the board reported that “repairs in progress at this station...have been completed and a fence constructed. A plank walk 840 yards in length has been made across the marsh to the beacon light in front, and a roadway, 680 yards, cleared.” A movable beacon, the front range light was installed on wheels with a tramway one hundred feet long making it adjustable for changes in the entrance’s channel. In 1870, the Light-House Board approved a plan to secure the foundation of the lighthouse. A drawing called for the construction of “posts and planking” fifteen feet from the foundation to help stabilize the surrounding soils. East of the plank walk, a new iron front-range beacon replaced an older structure in 1876.¹⁹

In 1878, a line drawing in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* depicted the lighthouse projecting above the surrounding tree line and the plank walk and footbridge spanning Egan’s Creek and its wetlands. Part of a larger study of the sea islands of Georgia and South Carolina by author and illustrator Samuel Greene Wheeler Benjamin, the article characterized the “light-house of Fernandina [as] exceptionally situated, a mile from the sea, on a steep eminence with a most picturesque grove of ancient oaks.” Prepared with characteristic nineteenth-century flair and artistic license, Benjamin’s illustration portrayed the keeper and a young assistant crossing the footbridge and beginning the long ascent up the plank walkway to the lighthouse.²⁰ Benjamin was perhaps the only travel writer of the nineteenth century to portray the Amelia Island Lighthouse. A native of Greece, Benjamin was a nationally recognized author and illustrator, and in 1883 President Chester A. Arthur appointed Benjamin ambassador to Persia.²¹

During the 1870s, keepers of the lighthouse maintained relatively brief assignments. They included Henry Swain, a native of Norway who would also serve as keeper at the Cape San Blas (Florida) and Little

Fla.,” NARA.

¹⁹House, *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 40th Cong., 3d Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 2, p. 360; House, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., Ex. Doc. No. 2, p. 776-777; Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses*, 5; Taylor, *Florida’s Territorial Lighthouses*, 249; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 25; Charles Nordhoff, *The Light-Houses of the United States in 1874* (Golden: Outbooks, 1981), 47; “Plot of Ground Belonging to U. S. Lighthouse Amelia Island Fla., July 1867,” Fla No. 16, Lighthouse Establishment, Office of the Sixth District, Charleston, S. C. (copy held by Harold Belcher); “Amelia Island, FL Main Light, August 1870,” C. J. Hamilton, draftsman, Office of the 6th Lighthouse District, Charleston, S. C. (copy held by Harold Belcher); “Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.,” NARA.

²⁰“Drawing of the Lighthouse: Amelia Island, Florida, 1878,” Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, FL; S. G. W. Benjamin, “The Sea Islands,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 57 (November 1878), 839-861.

²¹A. N. Marquis, comp., *Who’s Who in America* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, 1912), 151; *New York Times*, 20 July 1914; the Florida Photographic Archives holds a copy of Benjamin’s line drawing of the lighthouse.

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Cumberland Island (Georgia) lighthouses. After six years of service, Mordecai Edward was removed for “insubordination and neglect of duty.” A carpenter and farmer, Samuel Petty worked as keeper between 1878 and 1879, and was followed by William Adams and Joseph Howell, the latter a former teacher. Dewayne Suydam, a native of New York, served as assistant keeper between 1871 and 1873, and then keeper between 1880 and 1891, retiring because of failing health in the latter year. During Suydam’s tenure, the Amelia Island lighthouse and St. Marys Entrance underwent improvements that changed the character of each.²²

In 1880, the Light-House Board whitewashed and painted the brick tower, and made plans for a “new modern iron lantern.” Sectional elevations and plans of a lantern room and watch room depict a lantern redesign with an improved staircase system, brackets, handrails and stanchions, and roof plan. In February 1881, the *Fernandina Florida Mirror* reported, “the material for enlarging and improving Amelia Light-House has been received by the steamer *Western Texas*. We understand that the changes to be made will be to greatly strengthen the structure and improve the light.” Then on 26 March 1881, Admiral John Rodgers, chair of the Light-House Board, gave notice in the local newspaper “that on and after April 15, and while the tower is being repaired, the main light on Amelia Island, Fla., will be discontinued, and a fourth-order light, showing white flashes every thirty seconds, will be displayed from a temporary structure near the tower. The focal plane will be seventy-four feet above mean low water. The structure is to be an open wooden pyramid surmounted by a lantern.” By June the improvements and repairs were complete with the Light-House Board giving “notice that on and after July 1st the main light on Amelia Island, Florida will be reestablished in the old tower, from which it was removed for repairs. The character of the light will be as formerly, a flashing white, with intervals of ninety seconds between flashes.” In its annual report of 1881, the board reported, “the lantern on this old tower was too small for the third order lens which it inclosed [sic]. A new lantern of more recent model was set up in place. It adds to the efficiency as well as to the appearance of the station.”²³

In April 1886, carpenters completed a second keeper’s dwelling north of the lighthouse. The one-and-one-half-story wood-frame house (demolished) had a gable roof with an end porch, one-story shed extension, three brick chimneys, and six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The following year, the 1839 brick keeper’s dwelling was “sold to the highest bidder and removed by the purchaser. The old fence was replaced by 1,900 linear feet of barbed iron-wire fence to enclose the reservation, and 420 linear feet of picket fence were built immediately around the new dwelling....”²⁴

Improvements to the lighthouse were made, in part, because of growth at Fernandina’s harbor. Between 1877 and 1880, the number of commercial vessels entering Fernandina rose from two hundred twenty-two to three

²²Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses*, 5-6.

²³Fernandina *Florida Mirror*, 26 March, 11 June 1881; “Proposed Plan for Securing Amelia Id. L.H. Foundation,” 10 August 1870, 6-3A-23, Cartographic & Architectural Branch, National Archives; “Amelia Island Lt. H. Elevation and Section Plan,” 5 May 1881, 06-3A-34, Cartographic & Architectural Branch, National Archives.

²⁴“Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.,” NARA.

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hundred sixteen. The consolidation of two railroads at Fernandina also prompted harbor improvements. Economic and transportation changes also compelled improvements at the St. Marys Entrance. Initiated in 1879, the construction of jetties at the entrance changed the relationship between the lighthouse and its supporting range lights. In December 1879, the Light-House Board indicated "on and after January 1, 1880, the beacon light which, with the Amelia Island main light, serves as a range to the old channel entrance to St. Marys River, Florida, will be discontinued." Work on the apron of the north jetty began in June 1881, and the south jetty in June 1882. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers completed and improved these structures in the 1890s and the opening decade of the twentieth century.²⁵

Although the jetty system deepened the entrance, it made the channel less predictable. In 1893, the Light-House Board discontinued the range beacons adjacent to the channel, and installed temporary range beacons until the permanent route of the new channel could be determined. By 1897, the channel had shifted again, compelling the board to install buoys in the entrance. The range light structures were destroyed in 1899 by a gale storm, which also destroyed the front-range beacon. The latter was rebuilt, but then discontinued because of the uncertainty of the alignment of the channel. Undamaged by the storm, the lighthouse remained the primary aid-to-navigation through the entrance, assisted by bell and whistling buoys. As late as 1902, the board was adjusting the location of its whistling buoy to accommodate changes in the entrance.²⁶

Commercial activities increased at Fernandina in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1879, the harbor supported about three hundred thousand tons of shipping. By 1896, shipping had increased to nearly four hundred thousand tons, and in 1898 alone nearly three million dollars of fertilizer, lumber, phosphate, railroad supplies, and vegetables were shipped from Fernandina. Eventually comprising nearly ten millions dollars annually worth of export, phosphate rock from central Florida became a primary shipping product. Other important commodities shipped from Fernandina in the 1890s included cotton, lumber, and naval stores. The lighthouse and its supporting beacons remained critical navigational aids during the era, because even by 1899 "the construction of the jetties has, as yet, had no effect in the establishing or maintaining of a channel over the bar, not having been far enough advanced to control the currents and wave action."²⁷

In 1888, the Light-House Board opened discussions to discontinue Amelia Island Lighthouse. The discussion was initiated by engineers from the U. S. Coast Survey who located a site at Mount Cornelia north of the mouth of the St. Johns River sixty-two feet above sea level. Properly located to sweep the lighthouse arcs of Little Cumberland Island Lighthouse to the north and St. Augustine to the south, the height and position of the

²⁵Fernandina *Florida Mirror*, 17 December 1879; House, *Report of the Secretary of War*, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., Ex. Doc. 1, Part 2, p. 931-940.

²⁶*Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1895*, p. 111; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1897*, p. 111; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1899*, p. 19-20, 188; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1902*, p. 19.

²⁷House, *Annual Reports of the War Department, Part 1*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 2, p. 268; House, *Annual Reports of the War Department, Part 2*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 2, p. 1596.

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proposed structure would eliminate the need for both the Amelia Island structure and the existing lighthouse at St. Johns River. Proposing to build the structure at a cost of one hundred five thousand dollars, the board stipulated the light would be “second only on the Atlantic coast to that at the Highlands of Navesink, New Jersey.” Despite its recent changes and improvements, the board characterized Amelia Island Lighthouse as “an old and unsightly structure...” Other reasons cited to consolidate the lighthouse system in northeast Florida included increased commercial shipping at Jacksonville, calls for a better regional lighthouse by the Clyde Steamship Company, and efforts to streamline the Lighthouse Service. But, budgetary constraints and, perhaps, outcries from citizens at Fernandina and Mayport forestalled the project, which faded away in 1894, only to resume briefly and then vanish completely in the opening decade of the twentieth century.²⁸

In the 1880s, the Light-House Board developed a plan to construct masonry oil houses at the primary lighthouses in the country. Implemented in conjunction with the conversion of lighthouses from lard oil to mineral oil, a kerosene derivative, this program yielded hundreds of brick oil storage buildings. By 1895, lard oil had been eliminated from use as a lighthouse fuel throughout the nation, but its highly flammable replacement required a separate storage building. Consequently, between 1888 and 1909 four hundred twenty-two detached oil houses were built. Despite the intensive activity, by 1910 approximately one hundred lighthouses still operated without the benefit of a fireproof fuel storage building. The brick oil house at Amelia Island Lighthouse, constructed in 1890, was a part of this larger nationwide effort to protect and streamline the operation of lighthouses. The oil house contained shelving sufficient to hold forty-five five-gallon oilcans.²⁹

During the Spanish-American War, the Light-House Board ordered the “extinction and relighting of light-houses, beacons, and lighted buoys and making changes in the characteristics of lights on short notice.” In practice, however, few changes were made to the principal coastal lights, including Amelia Island Lighthouse. Instead, one of the few practical developments of the conflict consisted of the installation of telephone lines between lighthouses and adjacent towns and cities. The introduction of telephone lines finally permitted keepers who lived in relative isolation to communicate with nearby towns and villages. In 1898, a telephone system was installed between the Amelia Island Lighthouse and the town of Fernandina. Not maintained following the war, the system was “abandoned as useless” by June 1899, but replaced several years later.³⁰

An invention in the 1890s set the stage for further improvements to lighthouses. In 1893, Lieutenant-Colonel D. H. Heap, the Light-House Board’s third district engineer, invented a revolving optical apparatus for Fresnel lenses. The invention came in response to concerns over long lapses between flashes. Various studies had shown that many of the nation’s lighthouses then employed a ninety-second flash sequence, allowing too long of a dark interval between flashes. A bearing, collar, and shaft rotational device design by Heap permitted

²⁸House, *Reports of the Department of Commerce and Labor, 1905*, 59th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 7, p. 185.

²⁹*Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1895*, p. 31; House, *Reports of the Department of Commerce and Labor, 1909*, 60th Cong., 2d Sess., Document No. 1048, p. 623; “Amelia Island Light-Station, Fla.,” NARA.

³⁰*Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1899*, p. 122.

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revolutions as often as once every ten seconds. By 1899, nearly seventy lighthouses still employed eighty and ninety-second flash sequences, including Florida lighthouses at Amelia Island, Cape Canaveral, Cape Romain, Cedar Keys, Jupiter Inlet, Pensacola, Sand Key, and Sanibel Island. The board embarked on a program installing new rotational devices, and in 1901-1902 allocated nearly seven hundred thousand dollars to the task, and eight hundred fifty thousand dollars in 1902-1903. In October 1903, the installation of a Barbier & Benard Fresnel lens at Amelia Island Lighthouse was accompanied by the installation of Heap's rotational equipment to give the lighthouse a ten-second flash sequence. Other improvements at that time included building a brick storeroom under the dwelling, and the installation of one hundred feet of drainpipe.³¹

During the 1870s and 1880s, keepers and assistant keepers held their respective posts at Amelia Island for relatively brief periods. Longer tenures began in the 1890s with Charles W. Grimm (1891-1906), who served as keeper during the Spanish-American War and the installation of the new Fresnel lens. A native of Germany, Grimm served in the U. S. Navy before entering the Lighthouse Service, and transferred to Volusia Bar Lighthouse in 1906. His replacement, Thomas P. O'Hagan was born in Brooklyn, New York. The son of Irish immigrants, he entered the service in 1880 as assistant keeper at the Fort Ripley Shoal Lighthouse in Charleston, S.C. and, following several other assistant keeper positions, was promoted in 1887 to keeper of the Georgetown Lighthouse in South Carolina. Another transfer in 1893 placed him at Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse at New Smyrna Beach, Florida. He remained there until 1905, when he was transferred to Amelia Island, where he retired in 1925. Upon O'Hagan's retirement, the *Lighthouse Service Bulletin* noted his service as "meritorious and he was held in esteem by the officers in charge of the district." O'Hagan and his wife raised twelve children, three of whom became lighthouse keepers. One of those, Thomas J. O'Hagan, worked as assistant keeper at Amelia Island between 1912 and 1925, and then served as keeper between 1925 and 1954, the longest tenure of any of the Amelia Island keepers. By marriage, the O'Hagans were related to Amos Latham, the first keeper of the Amelia Island Lighthouse.³²

In 1901, the Amelia Island Lighthouse was a small part of a larger showcase at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Contributing to the Department of the Treasury's Light-House Service Exhibit, paintings and photographs displayed the age and range of the nation's lighthouses. Other Florida lighthouses included in the exhibit were Coffin's Patches, Fowey Rocks, St. Johns, and Sand Key. The Tennessee Centennial Exposition (1897), the Trans-Mississippi & International Exposition at Omaha, Nebraska (1898), and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904) also featured exhibits from the Light-House Service, which included a

³¹ *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1899*, p. 35-39; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1900*, p. 29; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1902*, p. 34-35, 141; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1903*, p. 646; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1904*, p. 213; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 25.

³² Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses*, 6-7, 97; Bureau of Lighthouses, *Lighthouse Service Bulletin, 1924-1929* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1929), n.p.

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photograph of the Amelia Island Lighthouse. As late as 1915, the Service showcased its exhibits at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Diego, California.³³

Improvements to the Amelia Island property in the early-twentieth century included the installation of a wire picket fence around the keeper's dwelling and lighthouse in 1907. The same year, a deep well was dug to augment the fresh-water supply. By then, a water tower and tank (later demolished) stood southeast of the lighthouse. By 1917, a third keeper's dwelling had been constructed at the lighthouse. The L-shape, one-story wood-frame house (demolished) with a hip roof and a veranda stood south of the lighthouse and oil house. Authorized in 1907 but built about ten years later, the dwelling was one of sixteen standardized keeper's houses constructed to support light stations along America's coast in the decade prior to World War I. By 1917, the one-and-one-half-story wood-frame dwelling had been demolished, and the lighthouse, oil house, and keeper's dwelling were enclosed by a wire picket fence.³⁴

An important improvement to the lighthouse occurred in 1915, when an incandescent oil-vapor apparatus was installed in place of the older wick system. Both systems burned mineral oil, but the incandescent light increased the illumination intensity nearly eight times over the wick system. By 1915, seventeen other Florida lighthouses had already been converted to the modern system. Between 1910 and 1915, the number of oil-vapor lighthouses in America increased from eighty to two hundred eighty-six. In the latter year, the Bureau of Lighthouses indicated, "most of the primary coast lights are now provided with oil-vapor lights." In the span of three decades, inventions and technological refinements prompted transitions at the Amelia Island Lighthouse from whale's oil (1839-c.1856), to lard oil (c.1856-c.1867), to mineral oil (c.1867-1933), and from the Lewis lamp (1839-1856) to the Fresnel lens systems.³⁵

Commercial activities expanded at Fernandina in the early twentieth century. In 1904, nearly eight hundred steam and sailing vessels docked at Fernandina harbor, conveying thousands of tons of commodities. In 1905, B. K. Richardson opened the Nassau Wharf Company, which shipped nearly twenty-five million board feet of lumber. The Amelia Wharf Company, Naval Stores Export Company of Jacksonville, and the National Transportation and Terminal Company opened businesses on Amelia Island, making Fernandina one of the largest naval stores shipping centers on the Atlantic coast. The Seaboard Air Line Railroad operated a phosphate loading dock, and by 1920 the Florida Terminal Company had invested one million dollars in the development of its Hill Wharf phosphate storage and loading system from which it shipped three hundred

³³ *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1897*, p. 34; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1898*, p. 35; *Annual Report of the Light-House Board, 1901*, p. 42-43; *Reports of the Department of Commerce, 1915*, 581.

³⁴ House, *Reports of the Department of Commerce and Labor, 1907*, 60th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 7, p. 547; "Amelia Island Lightstation, Fernandina, Nassau County, Fla., May 1917," Harold Belcher collection, Fernandina, FL; *Reports of the Department of Commerce, 1916*, p. 727.

³⁵ *Reports of the Department of Commerce, 1915*, 561-563, 592, 598.

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thousand tons of the sedimentary rock from the harbor in 1920.³⁶ Access to the lighthouse from Fernandina became easier in the early twentieth century. By 1917, shell-paved Atlantic Avenue extended from the downtown Fernandina to the Atlantic Ocean. A short unimproved road extended north from Atlantic Avenue up to the lighthouse.

During World War I, shipping decreased around the island. But, wrecks and groundings in shoal waters at Nassau Sound at the south end of Amelia Island compelled the introduction of a red sector in the lighthouse. A pane of red glass that extended the full height of the lantern, the sector faced to the southeast, warned mariners of the Nassau Sound's shoals. During the war, by executive order President Wilson transferred twenty-one lighthouses and forty-six lighthouse tenders to the Department of the Navy. The tenders were used to lay mines, patrol harbors and coastlines, and lay submarine nets. Navy personnel used the lighthouses as watch stations. Although the Amelia Island Lighthouse was not transferred to the Navy, it served as a local watch station. Lighthouse Service employees in Florida assisted many people in grounded boats, but few of those activities occurred at Amelia Island or were war related.³⁷

In the early twentieth century, the lighthouse was a popular backdrop for picture postcards and photographers. Among other publishers, the H. & W. B. Drew Company of Jacksonville produced thousands of colored postcards. Between 1910 and the 1940s, various views portrayed the Amelia Island Lighthouse, including those by the Drew Company and Frederick Charles Gustin. In December 1920, biologist and photographer John Kunkel Small used the lighthouse as a backdrop for his photograph of the wetlands and dune system of Amelia Island. A noted specialist and prolific author of plant life in the Southeast, Small often cast ancient and picturesque structures in scenes of native flora and plant specimens. The Florida Photographic Archives maintains nearly fifteen hundred of Small's black-and-white pictures, including the Amelia Island image.³⁸

Few new developments occurred at the lighthouse during the Florida land boom of the 1920s. A part of the national Lighthouse Service Efficiency Act involved the sale of surplus lighthouse properties throughout the nation in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1924, the land to the east of the lighthouse was laid out by the federal government in what was called the "Plan of the Amelia Island Lighthouse Reservation." Publicly owned land since the mid-nineteenth century, the property extended to the coastline east of the lighthouse, and north of Atlantic Avenue. It consisted of approximately four hundred acres that surveyor Arthur W. Brown carved into thirty-seven lots. Near the eastern terminus of Atlantic Avenue and the south end of the plat stood several bathhouses and pavilions. Laid out, in part, to take advantage of skyrocketing land sales during the Florida land boom, the property comprising the Amelia Island plat remained largely undeveloped during the era. In 1926, the

³⁶House, *Fernandina Harbor, Florida*, 59th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 388, p. 3-11; House, *Fernandina Harbor, Fla.*, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 227, p. 4-9.

³⁷*Reports of the Department of Commerce, 1917*, p. 676-677; *Reports of the Department of Commerce, 1918*, p. 563-564.

³⁸H. Harold Hume, "Botanical Explorers of the Southeast," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 21 (April 1943), 301-302; "Amelia Island salt marsh," SM1212, Florida Photographic Archives, Tallahassee, FL.

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City of Fernandina opened negotiations with the federal government over its lighthouse reservation lands. But, federal policy required transferred lighthouse lands to local municipalities to be used only for public parks, an issue that delayed the transfer of the Amelia Island property until 1934. Notwithstanding the disposal of adjacent "lighthouse" lands on Amelia Island, the original six-acre tract associated with the actual lighthouse remained intact.³⁹

In the 1930s, the lighthouse gained significance in association with an increase in recreational yachts and motor boats plying the region's inland waterways. Anchoring the south end of the sea islands of Georgia and South Carolina, Cumberland Sound and Amelia Island accommodated increasing numbers of small boats. By 1936, approximately thirty-six hundred vessels with drafts between three and ten feet plied the Intracoastal Waterway between Fernandina and Savannah. Small yachts, sailboats, and motorboats accounted for nearly seventeen hundred of that watercraft. During the period, Amelia Island benefited from a flush tourist economy enjoyed at Jekyll Island and St. Simon's Island to the north. The lighthouse served as an important navigational beacon for seasonal visitors who made annual pilgrimages along the inland waterway to Florida and Georgia.⁴⁰

Local commerce and industry boomed concomitant with improvements to the Intracoastal Waterway and Fernandina's harbor. In 1929, over five hundred thousand tons of commercial goods and nearly ninety thousand passengers were transported along the Intracoastal Waterway adjacent to Amelia Island. Spawned in the early twentieth century, a shrimping industry thrived in the 1930s, when three shrimp canneries were installed near the docks. Fernandina also became a production and shipping center for kraft paper, paper bags, pulpwood for newsprint, and allied products. In the late-1930s, Kraft Corporation of America built a seven million dollar paper plant at Fernandina. Among other developments, the city's industries included a menhaden fertilizer factory. Cotton, phosphate, and pulpwood remained important commodities delivered by the railroad and transported by ship to market. The Fernandina Pulp & Paper Company, Nassau Fertilizer & Oil Company, and Kraft Corporation were industries that depended upon Fernandina's harbor and a well-marked and lit channel and entrance system to export its products. An alteration to the Amelia Island Lighthouse during the era was the installation of electrical cables and apparatus to power a five-hundred-watt bulb in 1933. With electrification, the nineteenth-century rotational device's weight and clock cables were removed from the wood conduit box to make room for the installation of electrical service. In addition, a two-stall garage was constructed about 1930 (Photo #19).⁴¹

³⁹"Supplemental Plat of the Amelia Island Lighthouse Reservation, embracing Secs. 9 and 12, T.3 N, R.29 E., Talla. Mer., Florida," February 1926, Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, Florida; Senate, *Disposal of Lighthouse Reservations*, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., Report No. 703, p. 1-3; *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Secretary of Commerce for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1934*, 106.

⁴⁰House, *Cape Fear River, N. C., to St. Johns River, Fla., Intracoastal Waterway*, 75th Cong., 3d Sess., Document No. 618, p. 20; House, *Intracoastal Waterway between Charleston, S. C., and St. Johns River, Fla.*, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 114, p. 3, 6.

⁴¹House, *Cape Fear River, N. C., to St. Johns River, Fla., Intracoastal Waterway*, 75th Cong., 3d Sess., Document No. 618, p. 3, 9, 18; House, *Intracoastal Waterway between Charleston, S. C., and St. Johns River, Fla.*, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., Document No. 114, p. 7; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 24-25; "Amelia Island Light," typescript, n. d., n. p., Amelia Island Lighthouse folder, Amelia

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In the spring of 1939, Helen O'Hagan, wife of keeper Thomas J. O'Hagan, composed a poem in recognition of the one hundredth anniversary of the lighthouse and its keepers' service. She wrote:

Two old oaks, heads together
Lean across our road and sway
Bowing and swaying in stormy weather
As the wind blows North East today.

For many a decade thus they've stood
Guarding our lighthouse tower
The tower challenges their sturdy wood
Against wind and storm--its stony power.
Silently rigid it guards the shore
With its flashing eye by night
And the craft of sea and air all roar
Past its daymark dress of white.

Changing its fire from oil to spark
Its keepers and overseers,
This tower has guided ships through the dark
For over a hundred years.

For me it is a symbol of all that I hold dear
Not alone its strength and age--to me there's something deeper
For God blessed me with a home just here
Around this Tower my children play, my husband is its keeper.

'Tis here we've found joy heaven sent
'Tis here with life's smiles and fears
'Tis here like the Tower and old Oaks bent,
I'd stay for a hundred years.

In July 1939, the Bureau of Lighthouses was merged into the U. S. Coast Guard, which faced challenges integrating the infrastructure and workforce of the Lighthouse Service. At that time the Bureau of Lighthouses maintained over four hundred lighthouses, nearly thirty thousand smaller aids-to-navigation, and nearly five thousand civilians. The Coast Guard already managed two hundred life-saving stations throughout the country,

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including nine facilities in Florida. With the consolidation, the Coast Guard would maintain approximately thirty lighthouses and hundreds of buoys and channel markers in Florida alone. Orchestrating the administrative merger, the Coast Guard's commandant attempted to respect the traditions of the Lighthouse Service by retaining many keepers and other employees as civilian workers. To encourage personnel to enlist in the military, those keepers inducted into the Coast Guard were generally assigned the rank of chief or first class petty officers. In 1939, fifty-nine former lighthouse employees became officers, and in all four hundred sixty-six employees accepted the rank of petty officers.⁴²

Thomas O'Hagan, the keeper at the Amelia Island Lighthouse, enlisted in the Coast Guard in June 1941 as a boatswain mate first class. Benefits enjoyed by O'Hagan included a higher salary, and a fast launch that he docked near Old Town Fernandina. He used the launch to maintain the smaller aids-to-navigation on the Amelia River, at Tiger Island, and in the St. Marys Entrance. In anticipation of armed conflict, President Roosevelt issued in November 1941 Executive Order 8929 that directed the Coast Guard to operate as part of the Navy. In 1942, the Coast Guard organized the Beach Patrol, an important step in the integration of the nation's system of coastal defenses.⁴³

During the early years of World War II, German U-boat commanders found Florida's Atlantic coast easy hunting grounds. Shipping lanes along the Gulf Stream and Florida's Atlantic coast provided one of the densest concentrations of Allied shipping in the world. Although most of Florida's Atlantic coast experienced submarine activity, the Florida Straits were particularly hazardous for Allied shipping. In 1942, one out of every twelve ships sunk by Axis submarines throughout the world went down in Florida's waters. That year, German U-boats destroyed twenty-four merchant vessels off Florida's Atlantic coast. Destruction of sixteen of those ships occurred in the interval of February through May 1942, between Cape Canaveral and Boca Raton. Some of the destruction occurred within several miles of the coast, presenting unsettling spectacles of wartime conditions at home to residents and visitors alike.⁴⁴

In February 1942, German commander Reinhard Hardegan of U-123 sailed past Fernandina, which he found as "brightly lit as a welcome station." Several days later, after skirting carefully around the St. Johns River Lightship, he stalked and then sunk the *Gulfamerican*, a large oil tanker, off Jacksonville Beach. The U-boat skipper commented that the explosion and sinking was "a rare show for tourists." On 11 April 1942, Florida's Governor Spessard Holland signed legislation mandating black outs of all lights showing seaward in coastal and

⁴²Malcolm Willoughby, *The U. S. Coast Guard in World War II* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 7; Robert Johnson, *Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard, 1915 to the Present* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 162-163; "Amelia Island Light," n.p., Amelia Island Lighthouse folder, Amelia Island Museum of History; Helen O'Hagan Sintes, informant, 2002.

⁴³Willoughby, *U. S. Coast Guard in World War II*, 7; Johnson, *History of the United States Coast Guard*, 162-163; "Amelia Island Light," n.p., Amelia Island Lighthouse folder, Amelia Island Museum of History; Helen O'Hagan Sintes, informant, 2002.

⁴⁴Michael Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1996), 326; Eliot Kleinberg, *War in Paradise: Stories of World War II in Florida* (Melbourne: Florida Historical Society, 1999), 27-32.

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beach communities to prevent silhouettes at sea. A navigational necessity, lighthouses with their relatively brief flashes continued to operate without interruption during the war.⁴⁵

During the conflict, personnel based at Coast Guard stations rescued five hundred sailors from Florida's waters. Not equipped with a rescue vessel, the Amelia Island Lighthouse served as a watch tower for U-boats and stricken Allied vessels. Six Coast Guard recruits assigned to the lighthouse maintained a twenty-four-hour watch from the gallery. A short-wave radio installed about 1942 made possible quick contact with Mayport. Although equipped with a fast launch, O'Hagan did not perform any search-and-rescue missions. Because of its height, the lighthouse probably provided a view of the *Gulfamerican* destroyed off Jacksonville Beach. The same year, the *Esparta* sank off St. Simon's Island, but no vessels were sunk by submarines off Amelia Island during the conflict. Increased military action at Naval Station Mayport and NAS Jacksonville, the latter one of the nation's largest naval air stations, helped drive the submarines from Florida's shoreline, the threat of which diminished significantly after 1942.⁴⁶

Several changes and transitions occurred at the lighthouse following the war. Thomas O'Hagan retired in 1954, and replacement keepers only maintained a two-year assignment before receiving transfers to other lighthouses or posts. The following year, O'Hagan opened Lighthouse Circle subdivision, a small residential plat south of the structure. The subdivision included a fifteen-foot alley that provided access to the lighthouse grounds. Lighthouse Lane subdivision opened along the west face of the property several years later. Parts of each subdivision included surplus lighthouse property sold to the developers by the federal government, bringing the current land associated with the lighthouse to 2.37 acres. Both subdivisions filled with relatively modern homes.⁴⁷

About 1960, the Coast Guard increased the bulb capacity illuminating the Fresnel lens to one thousand watts, and about 1962, the early twentieth-century keeper's dwelling was demolished and a new concrete-block quarters built north of the lighthouse (Photo #21). The lighthouse's original six-over-six double-hung sash windows were replaced about 1950 by four-over-four double-hung sash windows, and in the 1990s by modern sash frames. Doors at the lighthouse entrance and gallery, and into the oil house were also replaced. In 1970, the Coast Guard automated the lighthouse, terminating O. O. Brown's tenure as keeper and ending a one-hundred-thirty-one year interval of keepers residing at the light-station. That year, the remains of Amos Latham, the original keeper, and those of his wife were reinterred at the Bosque Bello Cemetery in Fernandina Beach. In

⁴⁵Michael Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat: The Dramatic True Story of Germany's First U-Boat Attacks Along the American Coast in World War II* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990), 358-364.

⁴⁶Willoughby, *U. S. Coast Guard in World War II*, 7, 124-125; Gannon, *New History of Florida*, 326-327; Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, 336-337.

⁴⁷"Amelia Island Light," n.p., Amelia Island Lighthouse folder, Amelia Island Museum of History; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 24-25; Harold Belcher, informant, 2002; Helen O'Hagan Sintes, informant, 2002; *Fernandina Beach News-Leader*, 19 December 1952, 1 October 1970, 11 August 1982, 30 March 2001; Plat Book 3, p. 49, Plat Book 4, p. 45, Nassau County Courthouse.

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1995, U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-1 began holding periodic meetings at the former keeper's dwelling. The Coast Guard placed the lighthouse on the disposal list in 1998, prompting the formation of the Amelia Island Lighthouse and Museum, Inc., a non-profit organization formed to restore the lighthouse. On 28 March 2001, the City of Fernandina Beach acquired the property and lighthouse from the Coast Guard. Presently, Helen O'Hagan Sintes, daughter and granddaughter of Thomas J. O'Hagan and Thomas P. O'Hagan, respectively, serves as the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary's lighthouse staff officer supervising four crews who maintain the structure. Through her lineage, Helen O'Hagan Sintes traces family connections of keepers at Amelia Island Lighthouse to Amos Latham in 1839.⁴⁸

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Amelia Island Lighthouse is a good example of a lighthouse developed by the fifth auditor's office of the Department of the Treasury, and the only "hollow wall" constructed lighthouse in Florida during the antebellum period. It is the oldest lighthouse in Florida, and the oldest documented aboveground structure in Fernandina Beach. The conical brick lighthouse rises sixty-four feet and has tapered walls finished with stucco. An unusual semi-random fenestration pattern contributes to the character of the structure. Having a late-nineteenth century rotation room and lantern, and an early-twentieth century Fresnel lens, the structure is a good example of technological advancements that changed the physical appearance and operating processes of the lighthouse over time. The original spatial relationship of the lighthouse to a contributing oil house still exists. Three generations of keeper's dwellings have been demolished, a 1930s-era garage altered, and a fourth building constructed outside the historic period stands to the north of the structure. Still, the lighthouse contributes to the sense of time, place, and historical development through its ambiance, linkage, and character to the built environment of Amelia Island and Florida's maritime history.

⁴⁸“Amelia Island Light,” n.p., Amelia Island Lighthouse folder, Amelia Island Museum of History; Taylor, *Florida Lighthouse Trail*, 24-25; Harold Belcher, informant, 2002; Helen O'Hagan Sintes, informant, 2002; *Fernandina Beach News-Leader*, 19 December 1952, 1 October 1970, 11 August 1982, 30 March 2001; Helen O'Hagan Sintes, informant, 2002.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a 8" x 12" concrete monument with disk stamped Coast Guard No. 7 bearing south 49 degrees 7 minutes 12 seconds east a distance of 188.12 feet from the center of the Amelia Island Lighthouse and lying on the northerly line of Lighthouse Circle subdivision, then west for 259.85 feet, then north 397 feet, then east 259.88 feet, then south 398.65 feet to the point of beginning. Along the south line, a fifteen-foot alley off Lighthouse Circle provides access to the property. See attached scaled site plan.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above-described parcel encloses 2.37 acres historically associated with the Amelia Island Lighthouse.

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FLORIDA**

PHOTOGRAPHIC LIST

1. Amelia Island Lighthouse, 215½ Lighthouse Circle, Fernandina Beach
2. Nassau County, Florida
3. Sidney Johnston, historian, DeLand, FL & Kenneth Smith Architects Inc., Jacksonville, FL
4. 2002
5. Sidney Johnston & Kenneth Smith
6. View showing north elevation with first & third windows, facing southwest
7. Photo #1 of 21

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. South elevation with entrance and first and fourth windows, facing northwest
7. Photo #2 of 21

6. Southwest elevation with fifth and sixth windows, facing northeast
7. Photo #3 of 21

6. View showing rotation room door and main gallery, facing north
7. Photo #4 of 21

6. View showing lantern room/gallery and roof, facing northwest
7. Photo #5 of 21

6. View showing lantern room/gallery and roof, facing northwest
7. Photo #6 of 21

6. Interior view showing entrance, facing south
7. Photo #7 of 21

6. View showing floor, treads and risers of spiral staircase, handrail, and second window, facing northwest
7. Photo #8 of 21

6. View showing underside of spiral staircase, support post, and second window, facing northwest
7. Photo #9 of 21

6. View showing fifth window, wood conduit for rotation device/electrical infrastructure, facing west
7. Photo #10 of 21

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6. View showing rotation room deck plate and spiral ship's ladder-type stairs, facing northeast
7. Photo #11 of 21

6. View showing rotation room, rotation equipment, and spiral ship's ladder-type stairs, facing northwest
7. Photo #12 of 21

6. View showing lantern room and Fresnel lens, facing southwest
7. Photo #13 of 21

6. View showing Fresnel lens, facing southwest
7. Photo #14 of 21

6. View showing lighting apparatus inside Fresnel lens, facing southwest
7. Photo #15 of 21

6. View showing oil house, facing southeast
7. Photo #16 of 21

6. View showing oil house and cistern, facing west
7. Photo #17 of 21

6. View showing two-bay garage, facing northeast
7. Photo #18 of 21

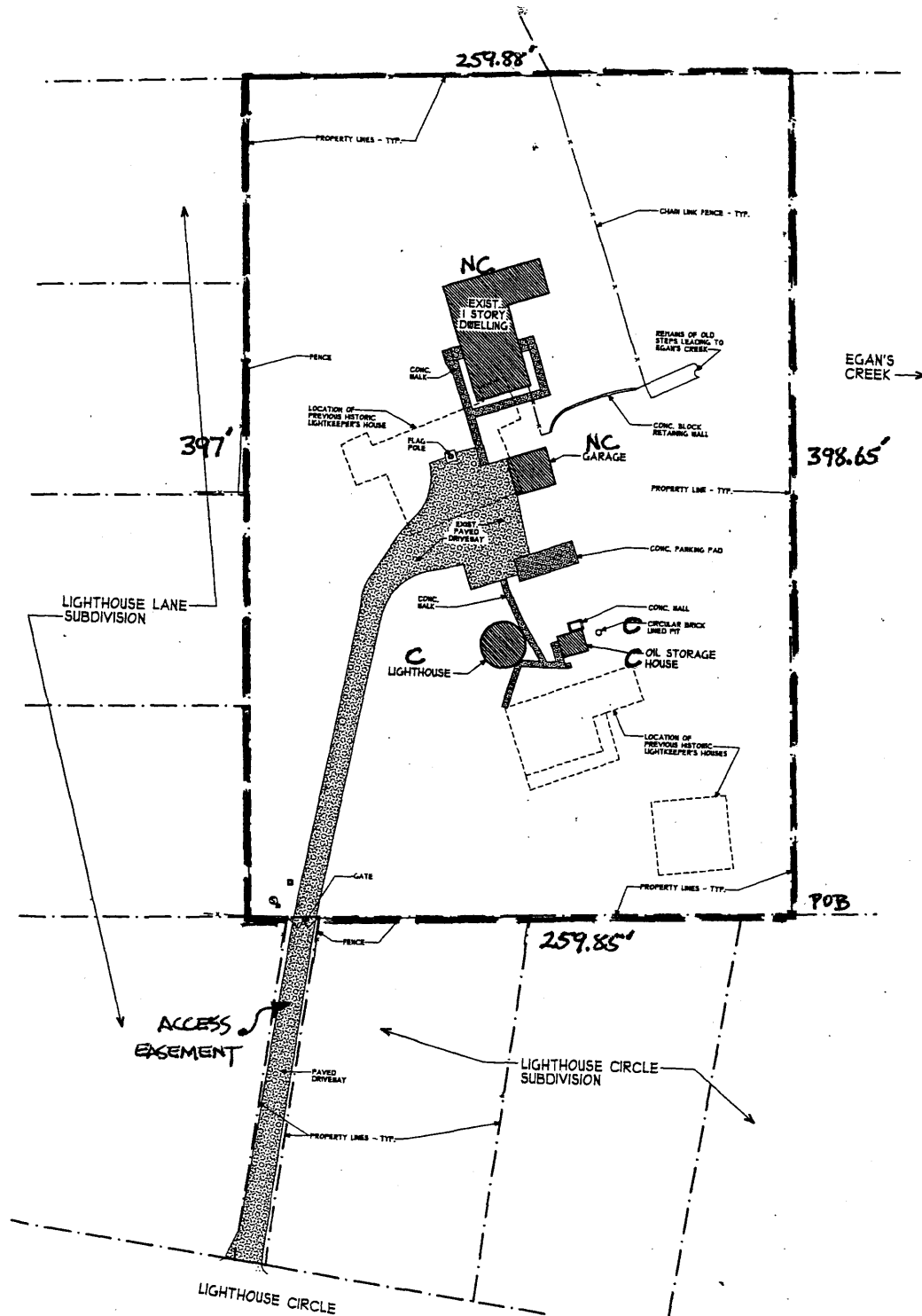
6. View showing two-bay garage, facing northwest
7. Photo #19 of 21

6. View showing former keeper's dwelling, facing northeast
7. Photo #20 of 21

6. View showing former keeper's dwelling, facing northwest
7. Photo #21 of 21

AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, FL

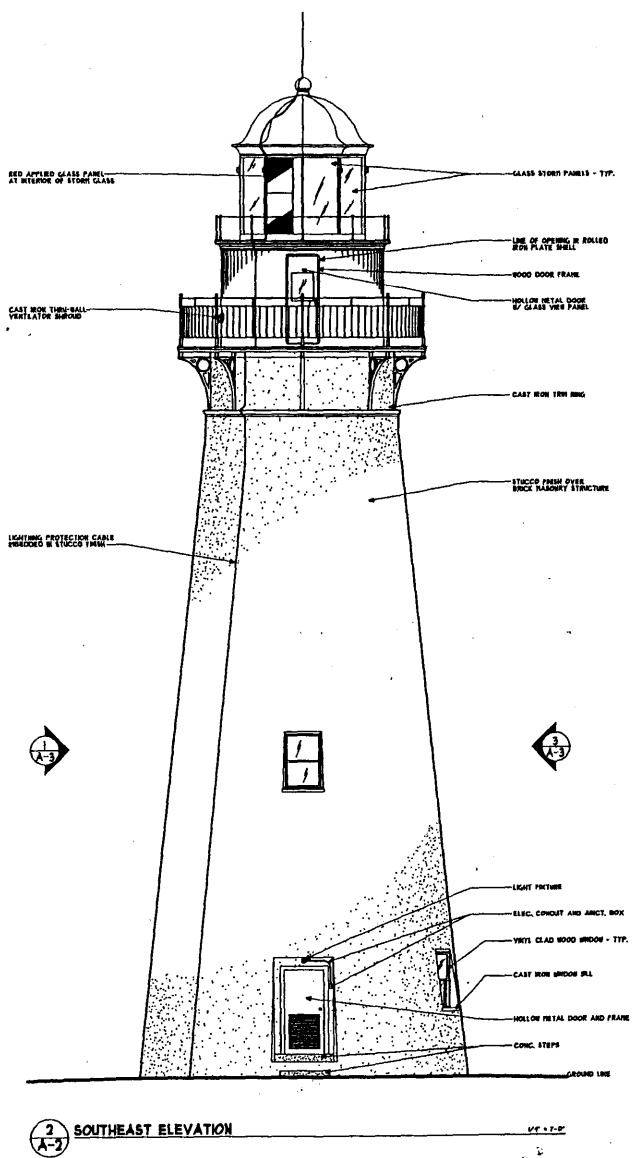
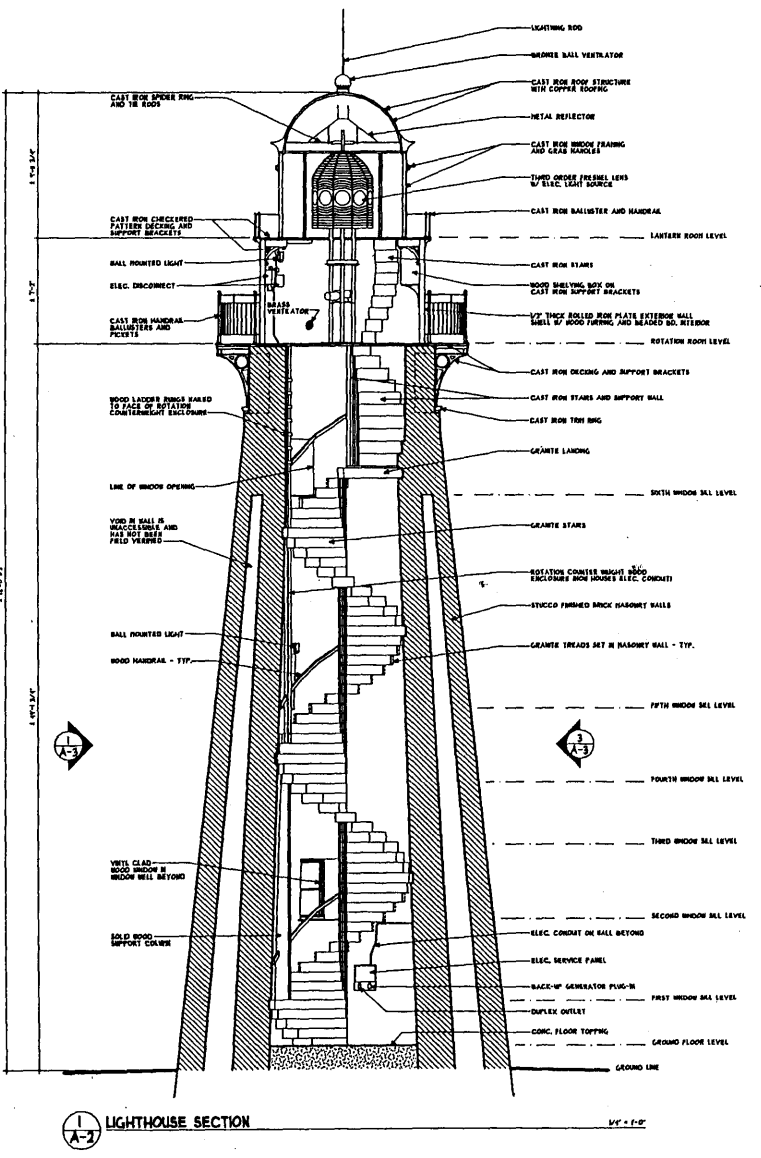
This topographic map shows the Amelia Island Lighthouse area in Fernandina Beach, Florida. The map includes contour lines, waterways, and various landmarks. The Amelia River is prominent on the left, with project depths for January 1976 and 1978. The lighthouse is located on the right side of the map, near the Atlantic Ocean. The town of Fernandina Beach is visible in the center, with a grid of streets. The map also shows the Amelia Island Lighthouse and the Amelia Island Lighthouse. The map is titled 'AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, FL'.



AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL
 Site Plan

DATE	REVISION
MARCH 8, 2012	
MTD	
YSL	
09115	011308P(L)A(D)C3

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AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

KENNETH SMITH ARCHITECTS INC.
1001 CHIMNEY FLAKE DRIVE SUITE 200
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32218
904-751-0022

AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE RESTORATION
1500 UNIVERSITY BLVD. SUITE 100
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32218
904-751-0022

EXISTING SECTION AND ELEVATION

A-2

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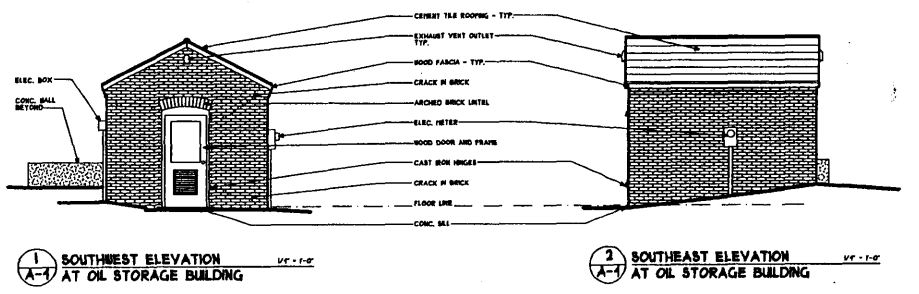
KENNETH SMITH ARCHITECTS INC.
 3001 CHERRY PALM DRIVE SUITE 200
 JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32216
 904-752-0000 FAX 904-752-0002

AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE RESTORATION
 FERNANDINA BEACH, FLORIDA

EXISTING OIL STORAGE BLDG.
 PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

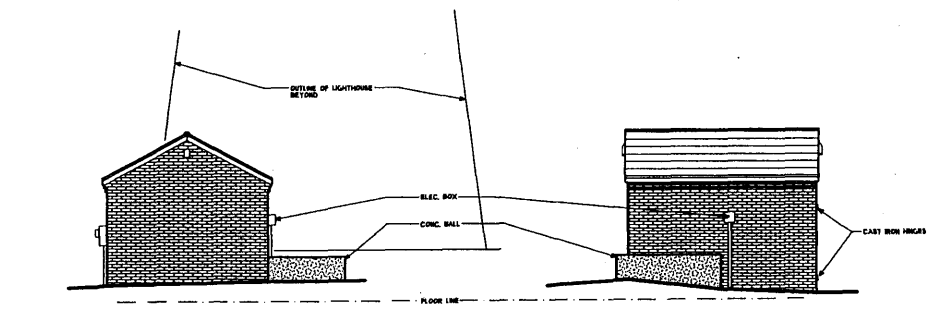
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REV.	DATE
BY	DATE
CHECKED	DATE
SCALE	

A-4



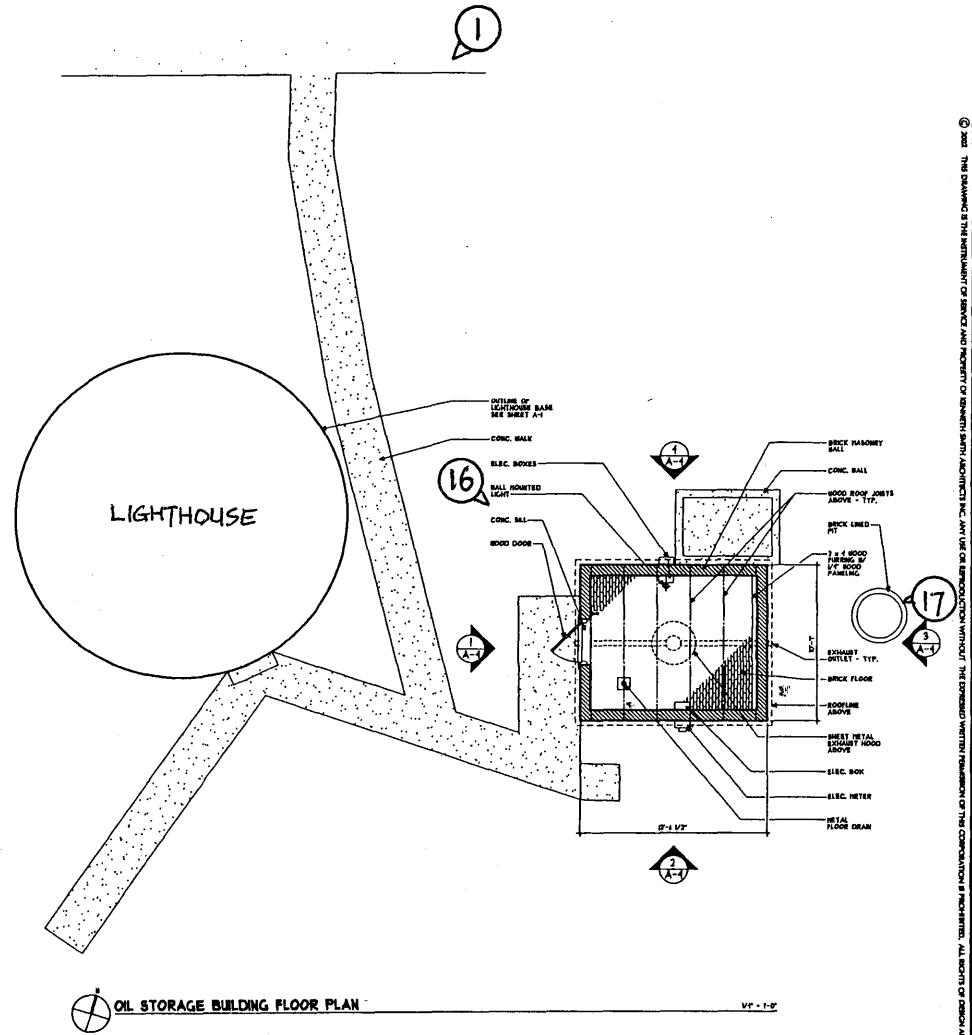
1 SW - 1'-0"
 A-1 SOUTHWEST ELEVATION AT OIL STORAGE BUILDING

2 SE - 1'-0"
 A-1 SOUTHEAST ELEVATION AT OIL STORAGE BUILDING



3 NE - 1'-0"
 A-1 NORTHEAST ELEVATION AT OIL STORAGE BUILDING

4 NW - 1'-0"
 A-1 NORTHWEST ELEVATION AT OIL STORAGE BUILDING

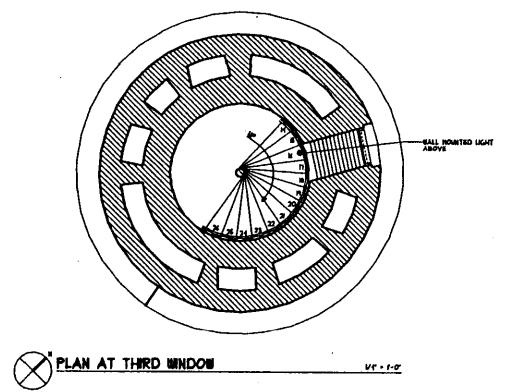
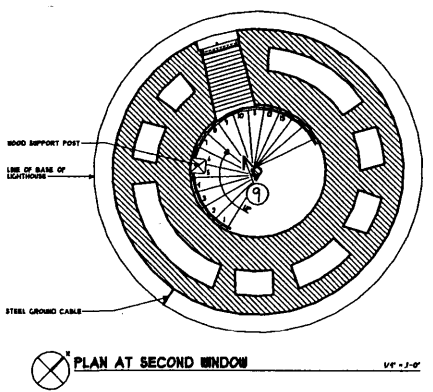
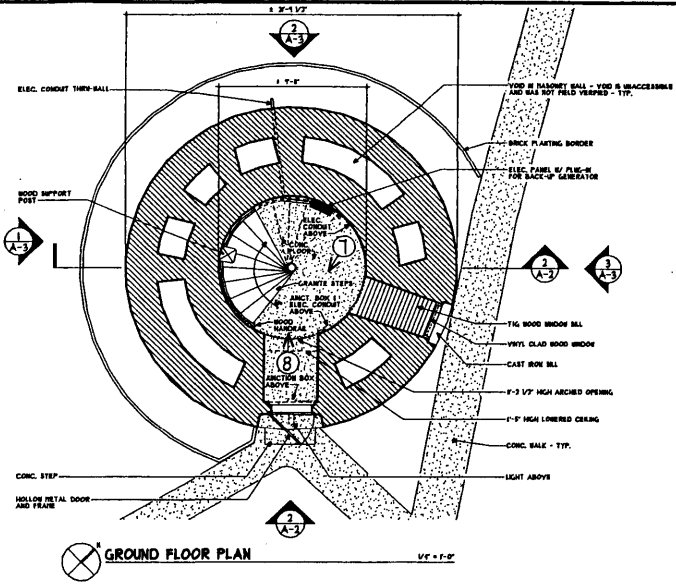


16 OIL STORAGE BUILDING FLOOR PLAN 1'-0"

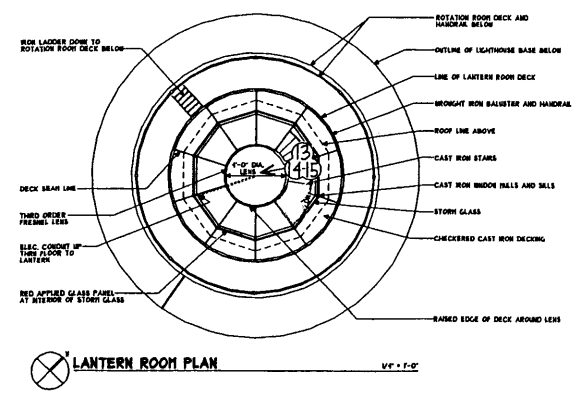
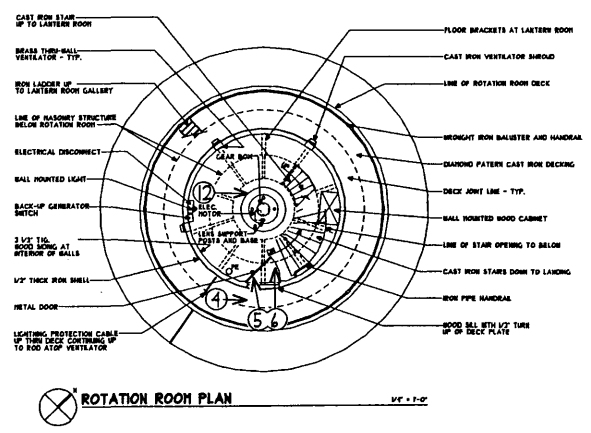
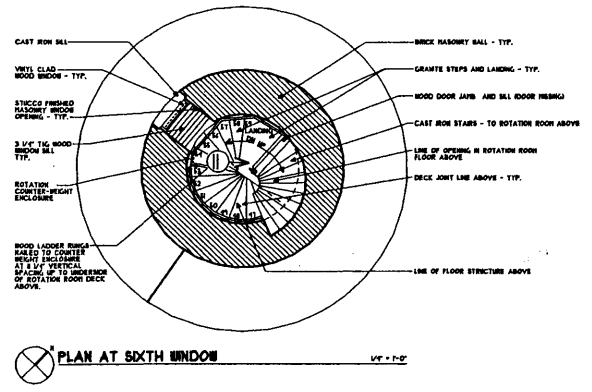
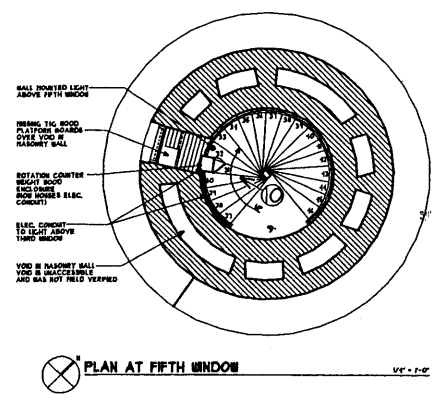
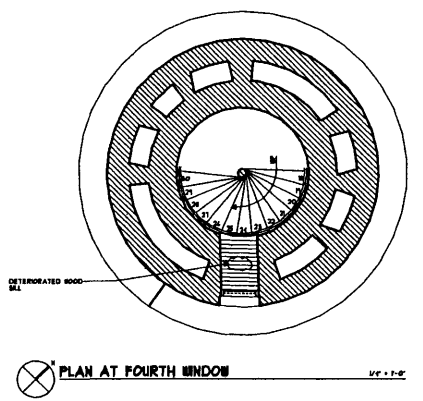
AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
 Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

Oil Storage Building
 & Photo Diagram

2



AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
 Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL
 Photo Diagram



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AMELIA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Fernandina Beach, Nassau Co., FL

Non-Contributing Buildings
Photo Diagram

NTS



NC

EXIST.
1 STORY
DWELLING

CONC
WALK

PENCE

LOCATION OF
PREVIOUS HISTORIC
LIGHTKEEPER'S HOUSE

FLAG
POLE

NC
GARAGE

20

18

EXIST.
PAVED

21

19

