

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1189



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name American Shoal Light

other names/site number American Shoal Light Station; MO 1295

### 2. Location

street & number Offshore of the lower Florida Keys, 9.6 mi SW of Summerland Key  not for publication

city or town Summerland Key  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Monroe code 087 zip code 33042

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
     national      statewide X local  
[Signature], DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ENV. MGMT 10/27/10  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
United States Coast Guard  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.  
[Signature] 10/28/10  
Signature of commenting official Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer FL Dept. of State  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register      determined eligible for the National Register  
     determined not eligible for the National Register      removed from the National Register  
other (explain:)  
[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1/25/2011

American Shoal Light  
Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

- building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
1	1	structure
0	0	object
1	1	<b>Total</b>

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

Light Stations of the United States

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Water-related

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Water-related

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Iron

walls: Exterior: Iron

Interior: Iron, wood

roof: Copper, Iron

other: Lantern: Iron, Glass

American Shoal Light  
Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida  
County and State

---

**Narrative Description**

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

**Summary Paragraph**

(see continuation sheets)

---

**Narrative Description**

(see continuation sheets)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 1

### Narrative Description

#### Summary

The American Shoal Light was established as a Federal aid to navigation in 1880 and marks a hazardous reef 9.6 miles southwest of Summerland Key in Monroe County, Florida. It is situated more than three nautical miles from land and is outside Florida state waters. This property is one of the famous Florida Reef Lights, which are six skeletal tower lighthouses more than 100 feet tall that were built during the middle to late nineteenth century. The American Shoal Light was the last of the Florida Reef Lights built. The structure's skeletal tower is supported by pilings and supports a Second Empire style keepers dwelling and a stair cylinder. The superstructure atop the skeletal tower and stair cylinder includes a service room, watch room and lantern. American Shoal Light is operated as an automated beacon identified as number 1015 on the regional light list. It is equipped with a modern optic that signals a flashing white light visible for 10 miles in clear weather, and a RACON radar beacon. The optic also displays two red sectors that mark areas of hazardous water to the east and west. Owned by the U.S. Coast Guard, this property includes one contributing resource and one non-contributing resource. The contributing resource is an octagonal, pyramidal skeletal tower lighthouse 124 feet tall that stands in approximately five feet of water. The property's non-contributing resource is a boat dock built in 1991 that provides a mooring place and includes a walkway that connects with the lighthouse. American Shoal Light is accessible only by boat and is not open to public visitation.

#### Setting

This lighthouse marks the American Shoal, which is a coral reef located offshore of the lower Florida Keys. It is situated 9.6 miles southwest of Summerland Key and 17 miles southeast of Key West in Monroe County, Florida. The American Shoal is more than three nautical miles from land and is beyond the limit of Florida state waters. This location is on the northern side of the Straits of Florida, near an important shipping lane for vessels navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The Florida Straits extend west to east between the Florida Keys and Cuba, and curve northward between Florida's east coast and the Bahamas. The Gulf Stream current flows eastward from the Gulf of Mexico into the Florida Straits and along the straits northward to the Atlantic Ocean beyond.

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

The American Shoal Light is within the authorized boundaries of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. American Shoal Light sits atop a 4-acre parcel of submerged land owned by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). It is identified as number 1015 on the regional light list. This property is surrounded by water and accessible only by boat.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 2

#### Physical Description

The 124 feet tall lighthouse at American Shoal began operating as a Federal aid to navigation in 1880. It is nearly identical to Fowey Rocks Light, which was established as a Federal lighthouse in 1878. These two lighthouses were built using the same design plans. The only significant difference between them is that they have different lanterns. American Shoal Light includes an iron disk pile foundation and an iron octagonal pyramidal skeletal tower with five horizontal tiers. The tower supports a keepers dwelling, stair cylinder, service room, watch room and lantern (see Photo # 1). The entire lighthouse is painted brown.

#### Disk Pile Foundation

The lighthouse's foundation, which is 56 feet in diameter, includes a set of nine iron disk piles. Eight pilings are arranged in an octagonal configuration, with the ninth positioned in the center. Each disk pile includes a 12-inch diameter wrought iron piling and a 7-foot diameter cast iron disk. The pilings are solid metal and 28 feet long with a pointed tip. They include a shoulder 11 feet, 4 inches from the tip that increases the piling's diameter. Each disk includes a 12-inch diameter center hole surrounded by a 2-foot tall collar. The collar is reinforced by radial ribs extending to the disk's perimeter, ending at a 6-inch tall rim. Each disk is positioned horizontally on a leveled area of the coral rock seafloor. The process to set a disk pile in its place used a pile driver to pound a piling through the disk's center hole and into the coral rock substrate until the piling was approximately ten feet deep and the piling's shoulder rested against the disk's collar (U.S. Lighthouse Board 1875, Plate No. 5). This served to disperse the piling's structural load over a wider area and provided for greater stability. The foundation for American Shoal Light was built in the same manner as Fowey Rocks Light several years earlier. The following describes how the Fowey Rocks Light's foundation was built:

*The lower series of piles were put in place in the summer of 1876. A working platform, about 80 feet square, was erected on the site, 12 feet above low water, on iron-shod mangrove piles driven into the coral. The disk for the central iron foundation-pile was then lowered into its place, and through this disk the first iron pile was driven. A perimeter disk was then located by a gauge, and then the first perimeter pile was driven through the center of this disk. After every blow of the pile-driver the pile was tested with a plummet, and the slightest deviation from the vertical was rectified. In locating the disk for the next perimeter pile two gauges were used to get the proper distance from the center pile, and to maintain it from the perimeter pile just driven. The disks were dragged along the bottom until the outer edges just touched the free edges of the gauges. Each pile was then driven through the center of its disk. When all were driven their tops were leveled by cutting off each to the line of the lowest. The piles were then capped with their respective sockets; the horizontal girders were inserted, the diagonal tension-rods were placed and screwed up, and the foundation series was completed.*

(from *The Modern Light-House Service*, U.S. Lighthouse Board 1890)

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 3

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

#### Skeletal Tower

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

The skeletal tower's eight peripheral columns are made with a series of column segments and iron sockets at each segment's upper and lower end. These sockets provide connection points for successive column segments as well as each tier's beams and tension rods. The inclined columns become narrower in diameter at higher tiers. The first tier's foundation pilings are 12 inches in diameter. The column segments rising to the second and third tiers are 10 inches in diameter, while the segments rising to the fourth tier are 9 inches in diameter. The column segments extending from there to the fifth tier have a diameter of 8 inches.

The tower's second tier includes horizontal iron beams connecting with the second tier sockets atop the central and peripheral columns. This tier supports an octagonal platform made with iron plates. The lighthouse keepers dwelling sits atop the platform. The tower's third tier includes tension rods that extend through the dwelling's walls and connect with the lower part of the lighthouse's central stair cylinder, which is enclosed by the dwelling. The tower's third, fourth and fifth tiers include horizontal beams that extend between the peripheral columns and bands of sockets surrounding the stair cylinder. The fifth tier's horizontal beams support the service room, which is centered atop the stair cylinder.

#### Second Tier Platform

The skeletal tower's octagonal second tier platform is approximately 50 feet wide (see Photo # 2). It is made with iron plates cast with a diamond pattern for traction. The platform's southeast (SE) and northwest (NW) sides each include an original opening in the deck for a stairway descending to a platform on the skeletal tower's first tier. These openings are now covered with steel plates and the two original stairways and first tier platforms have been removed. The second tier platform's northern and southern sides also include projecting 3-foot wide rectangular decks that formerly supported boat davits and lifting cranes that are no longer present. A wrought iron guardrail encloses the second tier platform's perimeter. Its stanchions pierce the platform's supporting beams and are attached at the bottom to a decorative bracket beneath each beam. This guardrail was installed in 2001 and replaced the deteriorated original guardrail using like materials and following the original 1875 design.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 4

#### Keepers Dwelling

The lighthouse keepers dwelling is approximately 40 feet in diameter and sits centered atop the second tier platform (see Photo # 2). Its design follows the Second Empire style, which was popular in the 1870s. The dwelling is octagonal in plan, two stories tall, and has a mansard roof. It is painted brown. The first and second story windows are wood-framed on the interior. The original sashes have been removed. The windows are now fitted with double-hung lexan sheets left unsealed to allow for ventilation. The exterior of each window is covered with steel mesh for security purposes.

The second story mansard roof is octagonal and made with ribbed iron plates. Each of the roof's eight vertical sides (facets) is pierced with window dormers that include surrounds with a cast iron hood and molding with decorative medallions at the corners.

Decorative cast iron cornices extend along each of the roof's eight facets at the slope transition above the second story windows. Decorative cornices also extend along the roof eaves below the windows. The eave cornice includes a built-in rain gutter system that originally drained into a cistern. Non-original downspouts have been installed to drain the gutter runoff into the sea.

The dwelling's first story exterior wall includes eight sides (facets). These are clad with iron plates. Six facets are pierced with a single window each. The exterior of each window includes a simple cast iron surround and sill. The windows are wood-framed on the interior. The first story's west-northwest (WNW) and east-southeast (ESE) facets include doorways flanked by a window on the right and a window on the left. The ESE doorway has been closed off with steel plates. The WNW doorway is fitted with a steel double door providing access to the dwelling's interior.

The first story interior is divided by wooden partition walls into four rooms and includes a wooden circular partition wall at its center surrounding the lower part of the lighthouse's stair cylinder (see Photo # 3). The walls dividing the four rooms extend north-south and east-west from the stair cylinder. Each room's outer wall includes two facets of the dwelling's octagonal façade. The walls are made with vertical wooden boards. A 4-inch wooden baseboard runs along each wall. Crown molding extends along the joints where the walls meet the ceiling. The ceiling and floor of each room is made with wooden boards. Plywood has been laid atop the original flooring in portions of the SE and SW rooms. The first story rooms connect with one another by way of partition wall doorways situated near the outer wall, except there is no doorway in the partition separating the NW and SW rooms. Doors have been removed from two interior doorways and placed on the floor. An angled corner closet is built into the farthest clockwise corner of each first story room between an exterior window and the doorway leading to the adjacent room. The first story's NW and SE rooms include an outer facet pierced by an exterior doorway flanked by a window on both sides and an outer facet pierced by a window. Only the WNW doorway is operable. The first story's NE and SW rooms have two windows each. The SW room has cabinets installed between its two windows.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 5

The first story entry to the lighthouse's central stair cylinder is located in the NW room directly opposite the WNW entrance. It is fitted with a wooden door that has three 2-light glazing in the upper half and two side-by-side panels in the lower half. The cylinder's spiral stairway leads up to a landing level with the dwelling's second story. This landing has two doorways fitted with doors identical to the stair cylinder's first story. These doorways lead to the second story's NW and SW rooms.

There are four second story rooms (see Photo # 4). Each room has wood board flooring and wood board ceilings. The walls are made of vertical wooden boards with a chair rail 30 inches above the floor. A 7.5-inch tall wooden baseboard extends along each wall. The outer wall of each room slants inward toward the ceiling, conforming to the angle of the mansard roof. The NW, NE and SE rooms are interconnected with doorways that pierce their partition walls near the stair cylinder. The outer upper corner of these two doorways is clipped where a tension rod extends from the skeletal tower to the stair cylinder. Additional vertical tension rods are located adjacent to the stair cylinder in each room. The NW, NE and SE rooms each have a closet in the clockwise corner between the windows and the adjacent partition walls, similar to the first story. The NW room has a bathroom built into its northern corner. The second story's SW room is only accessible by way of its stair cylinder doorway.

#### Stair Cylinder

The lighthouse's central stair cylinder is 50.5 feet tall and seven feet in diameter. It is made of curved cast iron plates that are 0.25-inch thick. The cylinder contains a cast iron spiral stairway with a central column that leads up from the dwelling's first story to the service room atop the skeletal tower (see Photo # 5). The stairway's iron treads are cast with a diamond pattern for traction. There are four landings made with cast iron plates. An iron handrail is bolted to brackets on the cylinder's interior wall. The handrail ends at each landing and resumes where the stairway continues. The stair cylinder's lower entrance is inside the dwelling's first story and faces WNW. It has a wood-framed doorway measuring 6 feet, 8 inches tall by 2 feet, 9 inches wide. The stairway ascends to its first landing, where there are two wood-framed doorways providing access to the dwelling's second story NW and SW rooms.

Higher up, the stair cylinder is pierced with a window opening at each of the three upper landings. These three window openings are 5 feet, 4 inches tall by 2 feet, 6 inches wide with a cast iron sill and surround. Each is covered by a steel plate; no sash remains. The lowest window opening is at the stairway's second landing, a short distance above the dwelling's roof. It faces NW. The second window opening is located at the stairway's third landing and faces NE. The third window opening is at the fourth landing and faces SE.

#### Service Room

The lighthouse superstructure's service room, watch room, and lantern sit atop the skeletal tower and stair cylinder (see Photo # 6). The tower's fifth tier supports the service room. It is octagonal, 16 feet in diameter, approximately eight feet tall, and is constructed of iron plates (see Photo # 7). The floor, walls and ceiling are clad with wooden boards. A section of floor on the southeast side is covered with plywood.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 6

The service room is accessed by way of a semi-circular opening centered in its floor at the top of the stair cylinder's spiral stairway. A wrought iron guardrail extends around this opening. Each of the service room's eight sides is pierced by a window with an iron surround. The windows are fitted with two sheets of double-hung lexan that is left unsealed to allow for ventilation. No original sash remains. The service room ceiling is octagonal and made of iron plates behind the wooden boards. It is supported by two parallel iron beams extending across the room's center, crossed by a single perpendicular beam. These beams are supported by a circular perimeter girder that sits atop eight iron columns, one at each at the room's wall corners. A steep, curving iron stairway with a wrought iron handrail leads up from the service room to an opening in the ceiling. It is painted with white balusters, black handrails, and red newel caps. This stairway provides access to the watch room, above.

#### Watch Room

The service room's ceiling forms an octagonal platform that supports the watch room, which is circular, 14 feet, 6 inches in diameter, and made of iron plates. The watch room includes a large circular overhead opening to the lantern room in place of a ceiling. This opening was necessary to accommodate the lighthouse's original first order Fresnel lens, along with its pedestal and rotation mechanism (see Photo # 8). The lens and supporting assembly was approximately 14 feet tall. The overhead opening is surrounded by the lantern room's two-foot wide circular catwalk. This catwalk is constructed of 14 sectional plates supported by decorative iron brackets. Each plate includes a circular floor light made with small hexagonal openings grouped in a honeycomb pattern. A steep, curving stairway rises from the watch room floor to the lantern room catwalk. It is similar to the stairway leading from the service room to the watch room. Inside the watch room, a curving partition wall next to the lantern room stairway encloses a small closet. The closet's western end is fitted with a door that is 5 feet, 10 inches tall by 16 inches wide. Another partition beneath the lantern room stairway encloses the stairwell leading up from the service room and includes a foyer with doorways to the watch room interior and the exterior open-air gallery. These partition walls are curved to conform to the watch room's circular configuration. The cast iron pedestal for the lighthouse's original first order Fresnel lens sits centered on the watch room floor. It includes a column decorated with bands of molding that supports a broad circular platform with radial ribs on the underside. An original metal box at the base of the pedestal contains a clockwork mechanism for rotating the lighthouse's optic. An original circular metal drum with decorative elements sits atop the pedestal's platform. It formerly supported the Fresnel lens, which has been removed.

The watch room gallery is octagonal and four feet wide. It is accessed by a narrow doorway on the watch room's east-southeast side. This doorway is fitted with an iron double-leaf door. The gallery's cast iron deck has a diamond pattern. A deteriorated wrought iron guardrail made with eight straight segments surrounds the gallery's perimeter. It is supported by stanchions attached to brackets underneath the deck. A metal ladder rises from the deck's east-southeast side to the gallery surrounding the lantern, above. A solar panel array is attached to the watch room gallery's southern side. It is used to recharge batteries that power the lighthouse's electrical equipment. A modern automated RACON radar beacon is attached to the framework supporting the solar array. When triggered by a ship's radar, it transmits the letter **Y** in Morse code as its identification signal.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 7

#### Lantern

The lighthouse's lantern sits atop the watch room. It is cylindrical, 11.5 feet in diameter, and approximately 10 feet tall. The lantern's exterior includes glazing approximately six feet tall extending from a metal base just above the lantern room catwalk to the roof overhead. This glazing consists of 48 two-foot by two-foot glass panes held by astragals, arranged in three tiers of 16 panes each. The vertical astragals of the middle glazing tier are offset the width of half a glazing pane from the tiers above and below. On the interior side of the glazing, two red lexan panels of floor-to-ceiling height are held by aluminum frames mounted on the lantern rooms east-northeast (ENE) and west-southwest (WSW) sides. These give a red color to the lighthouse's beacon when viewed from those directions, indicating hazardous areas. The lantern room base below the glazing is pierced on the inside with eight evenly-spaced ventilation openings that provide for air passage from the watch room below.

The lantern's metal roof springs from a soffit above the glazing. It is made with 10 triangular cast iron plates that rise in a slight slope to an apex topped with a vent ball and lightning rod. The lantern is surrounded by an outdoor gallery two feet wide. A non-original tubular steel handrail supported by steel rod stanchions surrounds the gallery's perimeter. The lantern gallery is accessed by way of the metal ladder on the watch room gallery. Another metal ladder rises vertically from the lantern gallery to the lantern roof.

Inside the lantern room, the wide opening in the floor is occupied by the circular assembly that formerly supported the lighthouse's original first order Fresnel lens. A steel stand affixed to the center of this assembly supports the existing optic, a modern automated VRB-25 marine beacon. It signals three white flashes every 15 seconds and is visible to the north and south for 10 miles in clear weather. The red lexan panels inside the lantern change the beacon's color to a flashing red light visible towards the ENE and WSW for 10 miles in clear weather. The eastern red sector covers an arc from 67 to 90 degrees magnetic. The western red sector covers an arc from 242 to 270 degrees magnetic. They mark areas containing hazardous reefs and shallow water. The optic's signal light is obscured from 90 to 125 degrees.

#### Non-Contributing Resource: Boat Dock

The lighthouse's boat dock stands next to the northwestern side of the skeletal tower. It provides for vessel mooring and serves as a landing place for transferring personnel, equipment and supplies. The boat dock is rectangular, approximately 30 feet long by 30 feet wide, and is supported by four pilings. Its deck is made with wooden boards and is approximately 15 feet above water level. A steel ladder extends from the deck to the water. A walkway made with steel beams and a wooden deck extends approximately 20 feet from the dock to the lighthouse tower's first tier. This walkway has no guardrail. A steel ladder approximately 25 feet tall rises at a steep angle from the walkway's lighthouse end to the outer edge of the tower's second tier platform next to the keepers dwelling. The lowest ten feet of this ladder has no rungs for security purposes. A portable ladder must be placed there to allow for climbing. The boat dock was constructed in 1991 and replaced an earlier one. It does not contribute to the property's historical significance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 8

#### Changes in Physical Appearance and Overall Integrity

American Shoal Light remains very much the same as when its construction was completed in 1880. Its foundation, skeletal tower and superstructure components are virtually unaltered. The changes that have occurred relate largely to the lighthouse's day mark coloration, means of access to the structure, routine maintenance, replacing and upgrading equipment, and measures for securing the property that began in 1963, when the lighthouse was automated and its resident keepers departed.

The lighthouse's original day mark coloration was brown with a white stair cylinder. Its skeletal tower, keepers dwelling, service room, watch room and lantern were all painted brown. Only the vertical stair cylinder was painted white. This coloration was maintained from 1880 to c. 2007 when the lighthouse was repainted entirely brown, which is its present day mark.

The property's changes in physical appearance include modifications affecting access to the structure. Its original configuration included two iron stairways that led up from two landing platforms on the first tier to the keepers dwelling platform on the second tier. Iron ladders descended from the first tier landings to water level. One stairway and landing were on the lighthouse's northern side. The other set was on the southern side. The second tier platform includes rectangular projections on the north and south sides where boat davits were originally installed directly above the first tier landings. The lighthouse's landing space was expanded in 1927 when a large section of wooden decking was installed atop the skeletal tower's first tier. The two iron stairways providing access from the first tier to the second tier and dwelling were removed in the 1970s following the lighthouse's automation. The first tier's wood decking was removed in 1986. The original stairways, first tier landings, and boat davits were not character-defining elements of the lighthouse. Their removal did not significantly change the structure's appearance. (Illustrations showing this are provided in the additional documentation). The stairways, landings, and boat davits could be replaced using in-kind materials, if desired.

Another change from the lighthouse's original configuration was that tanks for water storage were installed on the first tier landing platforms below the keepers dwelling circa the end of nineteenth century. A lamp oil storage unit was installed on the first tier then as well. These features were removed circa the 1970s, following the lighthouse's 1963 automation.

There has been a variety of maintenance work on the property. This includes repairs in 1949 to stabilize the skeletal tower's foundation disk piles. A modern rain gutter system with downspouts was installed on the keepers dwelling exterior circa the 1980s. Prior to this, the gutter system drained rainwater through pipes in the dwelling's interior walls to fresh-water storage tanks. The deteriorated guardrail on the lantern gallery was replaced with a steel handrail circa the 1990s. The existing second tier guardrail was installed in 2001 to replace the deteriorated original guardrail. This replacement used like materials and followed the original 1875 design.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 7 Page 9

Changes to the keepers dwelling include measures to secure the property after its 1963 automation. This included removing the doors from its two entries. A steel door was installed in the WNW entry and steel plates were used to seal off the ESE entry. The sash in the dwelling's windows was removed and replaced with sheets of lexan installed in double-hung fashion but not sealed, in order to allow for ventilation. Steel mesh was also installed on the outer side of each window for security purposes. Inside the dwelling, parts of the original floor have been covered with plywood sheets at places where deterioration has occurred. The stair cylinder's windows have been modified as well. The sash has been removed and the window openings covered with steel plates. The windows in the service room atop the light tower have also been modified. The sash has been removed and replaced with lexan sheets installed in double-hung fashion but not sealed, in order to allow for ventilation.

The lighthouse's lantern retains its original character except for changes in equipment. Its original first order Fresnel lens was manufactured in 1874 by Henry-Lepaute of Paris and included 24 bulls-eye lenses. It was mounted atop a ring-shaped cage mechanism that rotated by rolling 39 steel 1.5-inch diameter ball bearings. This optic made a full rotation every two minutes around a circular track atop the lens pedestal. The light source for the Fresnel lens was a kerosene oil wick lamp. When viewed from a vessel, the beacon exhibited a flash from one of its bulls-eye lenses every five seconds.

The optic's kerosene wick lamp was replaced in 1912 with an incandescent oil vapor (IOV) lamp. It burned kerosene that was vaporized by air pressure and burned inside a mantel that produced a powerfully bright white light. The IOV lamp was subsequently replaced in 1923 by a Type-A 55-millimeter kerosene vapor lamp that was even brighter. In 1955 an alarm system was installed that sounded a warning signal if the Fresnel lens stopped rotating. The lighthouse's optic was automated in 1963. This included removing the kerosene vapor lamp and installing a modern battery-powered electric lamp with an automatic bulb-changer. Diesel generators were installed as a backup power supply. The first order Fresnel lens from American Shoal Light was removed in 1980 and replaced with an automated 190-millimeter acrylic beacon powered by batteries that were recharged using a solar array. The present whereabouts of the first order Fresnel lens from American Shoal Light is uncertain. It may be the first order Fresnel lens of undetermined provenance currently in storage at the U.S. Coast Guard's curatorial facility in Forestville, Maryland. In 1998, the lighthouse's 190-millimeter beacon was replaced with a VRB-25 rotating beacon. The property's RACON radar beacon was installed the same year. Both these aids to navigation are powered by batteries recharged using the solar array mounted on the watch room gallery.

Today, American Shoal Light retains a high level of integrity regarding its location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. It continues to occupy its original offshore position atop American Shoal, a hazard to navigation several miles offshore from the Florida Keys. The significant character-defining features of American Shoal Light remain largely unaltered. These include its skeletal tower, keepers dwelling, stair cylinder, service room, watch room and lantern. Features that are missing, changed or degraded have had limited impacts on the property's integrity. They have not significantly altered the lighthouse's appearance and are reversible.

American Shoal Light  
Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Maritime History
- Transportation
- Engineering

**Period of Significance**

1880 to 1960

**Significant Dates**

1880

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Architect: Office of the Lighthouse Board

Builder: Phoenix Iron Company of Trenton, NJ

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The property's period of significance begins with the establishment of American Shoal Light as a Federal aid to navigation in 1880 and continues to 1960, the most recent year of its operation 50 years before the present.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

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

(see continuation sheets)

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

(see continuation sheets)



**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

(see continuation sheets)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 1

### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Summary

The American Shoal Light is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria A and C at the local level. It is significant in terms of Criterion A for its association with Federal efforts to provide for safe maritime transport in Florida state waters. American Shoal Light is one of the famous Florida Reef Lights, a group of offshore tall skeletal tower lighthouses constructed along the Florida Keys during the middle to late nineteenth century. It was the final one of the six lighthouses to be constructed and is significant in the local history of Monroe County, Florida. American Shoal Light is located more than three nautical miles from land is outside the limit of Florida state waters. This property embodies the nineteenth and twentieth century maritime heritage of Monroe County while continuing to serve as an important navigational aid. Its period of historic significance begins in 1880 when it was established as a Federal lighthouse and ends in 1960, the most recent year of its operation 50 years before the present. This property exemplifies how the U.S. government's long-term program for establishing an integrated system of navigational aids throughout the United States was manifested in Monroe County. The American Shoal Light has been an operating lighthouse for more than 130 years and is widely recognized as a local landmark for mariners.

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

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 2

#### Historic Context

The Straits of Florida have been an important corridor for maritime transportation since colonial times. The reefs and shallows of the Florida Keys have always been hazardous to vessels and are made even more dangerous by the area's storms, especially hurricanes. These factors have made the Florida Keys the scene of thousands of shipwrecks and other maritime accidents.

During the early nineteenth century, the United States expanded westward and southward in North America. Among the new territories added to the nation during this period were the vast Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and Spanish Florida, ceded to the U.S. in 1819. Population expansion and economic development of these areas followed in turn. New Orleans in Louisiana and other Gulf of Mexico ports became important centers for maritime commerce. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Florida Straits had become a busy corridor for ships navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea region and ports in the eastern United States and Europe. As the volume of maritime traffic increased, the number and frequency of shipping losses along the Keys and Florida's east coast rose as well. These increases in traffic and losses provided ample justification for the U.S. government to make improvements to navigational safety in these areas.

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

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Federal government's only lighthouses in the American Shoal vicinity were Key West Light, located approximately 17 miles west of American Shoal, and Sand Key Light, which was located approximately 23 miles west of American Shoal. Both of these lighthouses were destroyed by a hurricane in 1846. The replacement, the new Key West Light, was built in 1847 to 1848. A new lighthouse at Sand Key was built in 1852 to 1853. Another noteworthy event of 1846 was a detailed survey of Florida reefs by the U.S. Coast Survey. It identified and mapped the numerous reefs and shoals along the Florida Keys. This information was important to the Federal government for the production of nautical charts and for deciding where and how to mark the many hazards to navigation.

Around the time the new lighthouse at Key West was being built, the managers of the Federal lighthouse program determined that the lightship marking Carysfort Reef should be replaced with an onsite lighthouse. The proposed structure was designed as a tall skeletal tower supporting a lantern 100 feet above sea level. This height enabled the lighthouse's optic and day mark to be visible to vessels 10 miles away. In 1848 the U.S. Congress appropriated funds to build this lighthouse. A contractor was soon selected and the structure was fabricated in Philadelphia and shipped to Florida in 1849.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 3

The task of supervising the construction of Carysfort Reef Light was assigned to Captain Howard Stansbury of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. The work proceeded, but the appropriated funds to build the lighthouse proved insufficient and were depleted in 1851. While additional funds were being obtained, Captain Stansbury was reassigned to another post. His replacement was Major Thomas P. Linnard who died shortly after arriving in the Keys. Lieutenant George G. Meade replaced Linnard and supervised the remaining work at Carysfort Reef Light. Completed in 1852, this structure was 112 feet tall. Carysfort Reef Light was initially equipped with a lamp and reflector array, which was the standard optical equipment for U.S. lighthouses at the time. Shortly after this, Federal lighthouse managers recognized the superiority of Fresnel lens optics for use as state-of-the-art lighthouse beacons. They adopted a policy to replace all the previously installed lamp and reflector equipment, which was less effective. Caryfort Reef Light's original optic was subsequently removed and replaced with a first order Fresnel lens. Today, the Carysfort Reef Light is equipped with a modern automated optic and continues to serve as an active Federal lighthouse. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP listing number 84000199).

Lieutenant George Meade's tour of duty in the Florida Keys during the 1850s included being in charge of constructing the new Sand Key Light. It was designed as a skeletal tower structure with an optic 109 feet above sea level. Work on Sand Key Light began in 1852 and was completed in 1853. It is 132 feet tall and was equipped with a first order Fresnel lens as its original beacon. Sand Key Light is still an active Federal aid to navigation and is presently equipped with a modern automated optic. It is also listed on the National Register (NRHP listing number 73000589). Meade completed his service in the Keys by supervising the construction of Sombrero Key Light, another skeletal tower structure. Work began in 1857 and was completed in 1858. The Sombrero Key Light, at 156 feet tall, is the tallest lighthouse in the Florida Keys. It remains an active Federal lighthouse today, and is equipped with a modern automated beacon.

In 1852, Lieutenant James Totten, working for the U.S. Coast Survey, supervised the placement of the American Shoal's first Federal aid to navigation. It was a day beacon made with an iron screw pile driven into the coral atop American Shoal. The piling stood 36 feet tall and was painted white. An iron latticework painted red was mounted atop the piling and a painted marker with the letter **B** was affixed below the latticework. This day beacon was visible from 2 to 3 miles away during daylight and from as far away as 6 to 10 miles using a telescope. However, it was not lighted and thus was effectively invisible at night. The lack of a lighted marker proved problematic. In January 1853 the merchant ship *F. A. Everett* wrecked on American Shoal at night during a storm.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 halted prospects for any further offshore lighthouse construction in the Florida Keys until after the conflict ended in 1865. Five years after the completion of Sombrero Key Light, George G. Meade was a Major General and commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac. He is renowned for leading the Union forces that defeated Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863.

Following the end of the Civil War, the Federal lighthouse establishment undertook a re-energized program to construct additional needed lighthouses and improve existing navigational aids that were ineffective. During the early 1870s, attention turned to the hazardous Florida Reef. The first new offshore skeletal tower lighthouse to be built there was Alligator Reef Light. Work began in 1871 and was completed in 1873. It is 150 feet tall and was equipped with a first order Fresnel lens.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 4

The next location selected was Fowey Rocks, six miles south of Key Biscayne. It attracted attention because Cape Florida Light had proven to be inadequate for warning mariners of dangerous waters in the Fowey Rocks area. The U.S. Lighthouse Board decided that Fowey Rocks would best be marked by an offshore light. Consequently, the construction of Fowey Rocks Light began in 1875 and was completed in 1878. It is 125 feet tall and was equipped with a first order Fresnel lens as its optic.

The five tall skeletal tower lighthouses built by the Federal government along the Florida Keys from the early 1850s to 1878 provided a nearly overlapping series of beacons where the next in line could be seen before the one passed earlier was lost to view. In 1978 there was just one gap where this did not occur, a stretch approximately 51 miles long between Sand Key Light and Sombrero Key Light. Sand Key Light could be seen for approximately 12 miles after passing it. From there, however, a vessel needed to navigate approximately 25 miles farther before Sombrero Key Light became visible. This gap contained a number of hazards to navigation including the Sambo Reefs, Maryland Shoal, American Shoal and Looe Key (named for the *HMS Looe* which wrecked there in 1744).

### American Shoal Light

To solve the problem of the 25-mile gap, the U.S. Lighthouse Board sent a recommendation to Congress in 1875 that a lighthouse be constructed at Looe Key, but Congress took no action. The following year, the Lighthouse Board resubmitted its recommendation for a lighthouse in the area between Sand Key Light and Sombrero Key Light. This time, the Board proposed that American Shoal rather than Looe Key was a better place to build a lighthouse and requested \$75,000 to pay for it. Again, Congress took no action on this proposal. The same thing happened in 1877. The Lighthouse Board resubmitted its recommendation and funding request for American Shoal the next year. This time, Congress approved it on June 20, 1878. The Lighthouse Board then approached the State of Florida about a property transfer for the proposed lighthouse site. On June 6, 1879, the Governor of Florida deeded to the Federal government any of its rights to a 4-acre parcel of submerged land on American Shoal. This was the location designated for the lighthouse's construction.

The contract for constructing the lighthouse's metalwork was awarded to the Phoenix Iron Company of Trenton, New Jersey, at a cost of \$47,000. The contract called for all the components to be assembled at the factory to assure proper fitting, then disassembled and shipped to the lighthouse depot at Key West. Onsite work at American Shoal began in the late 1879. Fair weather and a mild winter allowed construction to progress rapidly and the lighthouse was completed the following year. The optic installed was a first order Fresnel lens manufactured in 1874 by Henry-Lepaute and Company of Paris. American Shoal Light was officially lighted for the first time on July 15, 1880. Its day mark coloration included the skeletal tower, lantern and keepers dwelling painted brown, and the stair cylinder painted white.

The first keeper of American Shoal Light was William Bates. He had previously served at Garden Key Light, Sand Key Light and Sombrero Key Light. The assistant keeper was Dudley Richardson who transferred to the new lighthouse from Sombrero Key Light.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 5

The number of shipping incidents in the vicinity was reduced following American Shoal Light's establishment. However, accidental losses continued to occur from time to time. These included the December 1924 grounding of the British steamship *New Toronto*. It stranded on American Shoal near the lighthouse during a voyage from Hull, England, to Galveston, Texas. The USCG Cutter *Saukee*, a steam-powered tug, and another salvage tug came from Key West to assist. They were able to refloat the grounded vessel which continued its voyage.

Several decades later, the U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses (successor to the U.S. Lighthouse Board) decided to build a group of seven unmanned reef lights in the Florida Keys to mark local hazards. They were constructed between 1921 and 1936, and were designed to be operated automatically from the outset. The first two of these lights were built at Molasses Reef and Pacific Reef in 1921. Both were pyramidal skeletal towers having three tiers of horizontal supporting members, and topped with a lantern equipped with an automated optic. Another pyramidal skeletal tower automated light was built at Hen and Chicken Shoals in 1929. Its design was a modification of the 1921 version. A different skeletal tower design was developed for the four other offshore automated lights built in the Keys. They included Smith Shoal Light (built 1933), Tennessee Reef Light (built 1933), Cosgrove Shoal Light (built 1935), and Pulaski Shoal Light (built 1936). Today, Tennessee Reef Light is the only one of these seven skeletal tower reef lights that still has its original lantern. Two of this group (Smith Shoal Light and Pulaski Shoal Light) have been demolished.

Keepers working for the U.S. Lighthouse Service (part of the U.S. Lighthouse Establishment directed by the Lighthouse Board, and later attached to the Bureau of Lighthouses) manned American Shoal Light until 1939. In that year President Franklin Roosevelt ordered the Bureau of Lighthouses to be subsumed into the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Following this consolidation, USCG personnel were assigned as lighthouse keepers at American Shoal Light. The normal complement was four men. Each served three weeks at the lighthouse followed by one week ashore. Their schedules were staggered and rotated so that three were always at the lighthouse. This continued until 1963, when American Shoal Light was automated and resident keepers were no longer required.

American Shoal Light remained unoccupied until the period of July to November 1980, when it was used as an observation post during the Mariel Boatlift. This event occurred when the communist regime governing Cuba temporarily relaxed its restrictive emigration policy, enabling approximately 125,000 of its citizens to flee to the United States by boat from the port of Mariel. American Shoal Light was manned by six USCG personnel who monitored and reported on vessel traffic relating to the boatlift. The Coast Guard detachment departed from the lighthouse after the Cuban government halted the mass exodus.

In January 1997, the container ship *Houston* ran aground approximately two miles west of American Shoal. Eventually refloated, it left an extensive area of coral reef in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary damaged and the ship's owners liable. As part of the legal settlement for this incident, the owners paid for the purchase of eight RACON radar beacons and their installation atop several light towers in the Florida Keys including American Shoal Light.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 6

Today, American Shoal Light continues to fulfill its original role of providing a navigational guide for mariners traversing a potentially hazardous area. It is widely recognized as a prominent landmark in Monroe County and serves as a marker for vessels navigating the lower Florida Keys vicinity. This lighthouse property is a lasting reminder of the Florida Straits' important historical role as a route for commercial shipping, and its prominent visibility evokes feelings that recall the area's eventful maritime history. It also stands as a reminder of the dedication to duty characteristic of lighthouse keepers in American history.

### Significance under Criterion A

This property qualifies under Criterion A for its association with events related to Federal government efforts to promote maritime safety by providing for an integrated system of navigational aids in Florida, as manifested in the Monroe County locality. American Shoal Light was established as an operating lighthouse in 1880 and has been an important local landmark for mariners ever since. This property is historically significant because of its contribution to the broad historical patterns of maritime transportation and commerce in Florida state waters. It exemplifies the Federal government's concerted effort to establish a nationwide system of aids to navigation during a period when the nation experienced significant economic development, population increase, and an expansion of maritime activity. American Shoal Light is one of the famous Florida Reef Lights, a group of six offshore, tall skeletal tower lighthouses built along the Florida Keys during the middle to late nineteenth century. These lights have served as hazard warnings and guideposts that aided and continue to assist safe passage for thousands of ships. American Shoal Light has contributed to maritime safety in Monroe County for more than 130 years and continues to promote safe navigation in the Florida Keys vicinity.

### Architectural Context

The construction of the Florida Reef Lights included an important advancement in U.S. lighthouse engineering. This is the technology of their foundations, which was developed to provide stability at locations where the seafloor lacks the solidity of bedrock such as areas with coral reef, which can be riddled with fissures and pockets filled with sand and rock fragments. The foundations of the Florida Reef Lights are made with wrought iron pilings that incorporate wrought iron disks for stability and to spread the load-bearing surface over a wider area. The Florida Reef Lights built from the late 1840s to late 1850s used screw piles improved with disks for their foundations. Those built in the 1870s to 1880 were constructed using straight piles that incorporated iron disks.

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 7

Work to fabricate the lighthouse's structure began in Philadelphia in 1848. It was shipped to the Florida Keys where onsite work at Carysfort Reef began in 1849. The task of supervising this project was assigned to Captain Howard Stansbury, U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. Stansbury observed that screw piles driven into the reef's soft coral rock did not provide a foundation of sufficient strength to support the lighthouse's tall structure. To overcome this, he designed a circular plate with a hole in the center through which a foundation pile could be driven until being tightly seated using a collar. Use of a foot plate with a metal pile is the key concept of a disk pile foundation. It provides a significantly larger load-bearing surface and better support for the superstructure.

The disk pile foundation that Stansbury developed for Carysfort Reef Light was successful and was employed in building the five later Florida Reef Lights (Sand Key Light and Sombrero Key Light in the 1850s, and Alligator Reef Light, Fowey Rocks Light and American Shoal Light in the 1870s to 1880). All six of these lighthouses include an iron disk pile foundation, pyramidal skeletal tower, keepers dwelling, and a lantern 100 feet or more above sea level.

After the decision was made in the early 1870s to construct a lighthouse on Fowey Rocks, a design was prepared that included a disk pile foundation using straight piles rather than screw piles. The lighthouse's skeletal tower superstructure was similar to, but differed from, the four Florida Reef lights built earlier. The plans included a shorter skeletal tower with a wider base than earlier reef lights, and five horizontal structural tiers above the foundation. Another difference was that the keepers dwelling was to be octagonal, two stories tall, and include a mansard roof following the Second Empire architectural style popular at that time. In addition, a service room was added below the watch room and the lantern included a Second Empire style bell-shaped roof. The construction of Fowey Rocks Light began in 1875 and was completed in 1878.

As the lighthouse's construction proceeded, its future lantern and first order Fresnel lens optic were assembled and exhibited by the U.S. Lighthouse Board at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. This provided the American public with a view of the technology used for the nation's lighthouse beacons. The first order Fresnel lens designated for Fowey Rocks Light was manufactured in France by Henry-Lepaute of Paris. With its glass lens mounted atop the optic's pedestal and rotation machinery, this remarkable example of late nineteenth century technology stood approximately 14 feet tall. The Lighthouse Board took such great pride in Fowey Rocks Light that it also chose to exhibit a ¾-inch to one-foot scale model of the lighthouse seventeen years later at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The skeletal tower design used in constructing Fowey Rocks Light was based on state-of-the-art engineering and construction methods for those times. The Lighthouse Board regarded the design as a success and decided to use it also for the construction of American Shoal Light. As a result, the two lighthouses are virtually identical. The only significant difference is they have different lanterns atop the watch room. Fowey Rocks Light has a lantern with symmetrically aligned glazing and a high-domed Second Empire style roof. American Shoal Light's lantern includes glazing where the middle of three tiers of glass panes is offset sideways half a pane's width from the tiers above and below. In addition, its lantern roof has a low sloping configuration made with triangular iron plates that rise to an apex topped with a vent ball and lightning rod. This roof shape is the norm among other late nineteenth century U.S. lighthouses.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Section number 8 Page 8

### Significance under Criterion C

The American Shoal Light qualifies for National Register listing under Criterion C. As one of the six famous Florida Reef Lights, it embodies and represents distinctive design and engineering characteristics of middle to late nineteenth century pyramidal skeletal tower lighthouses built offshore in Florida and elsewhere in the United States. The durable, efficient and weather-resistant character of its design has proven to be successful in the natural setting of the Florida Reef and Keys. It is also evidence of this lighthouse's high quality of materials and construction. The disk pile foundation and skeletal tower engineering technology used in building the Florida Reef Lights has enabled them to withstand powerful storms for more than a century. American Shoal Light remains standing in its original location surrounded by water atop a hazardous reef several miles from shore. Its basic structure, appearance, and setting remain virtually unchanged from its 1880 to 1960 period of historical significance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

(see continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): MO 1295

### 10. Geographical Data

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

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>447380</u>	<u>2712250</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

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

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

#### Bibliography

Browning, Robert. 2009. . Lighthouse evolution and typology. U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office website. Available online at <http://www.uscg.mil/history/weblighouses/LHevolution.asp> (accessed 17 December 2009).

Clifford, Candace. 2002. Light stations of the United States, Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register of Historic Places. On file at the National Register of Historic Places, U.S. National Park Service, Washington, DC.

Dean, Love. 1992. *Lighthouses of the Florida Keys*. Key West: Historic Florida Keys Foundation Inc.

Johnston, Sidney, and Robert O. Jones. 2004. Florida's Historic Lighthouses, Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register of Historic Places. On file at the Florida Division of Historical Resources, Tallahassee, FL.

Kenneth Smith Architects, Inc., and Bender & Associates, Architects, P.A. Associate Architects. 2002. *Florida Lighthouse Study*. Dated 30 April 2002. Prepared for the Florida Division of Historical Resources, Tallahassee, FL.

McCarthy, Kevin. 1990. *Florida Lighthouses*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

Scheina, Robert L. 1980. "Lighthouses of the Florida Keys." *Sea Classics*. 12(5):55-7, September 1980.

Tecumseh Professional Associates. 2003. Asset review for American Shoal Light Station, Florida. On file at USCG Civil Engineering Unit (CEU) Miami, FL.

United States Coast Guard. 2009a. Light list, volume III, Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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

United States Lighthouse Board. 1875. "First Order Light House on Fowey Rocks, Fla." Design plans, 23 Plates. On file in Record Group 26, U.S. National Archives, Washington, DC.

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



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

#### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Koski-Karell, Ph. D., USCG HQ Office of Environmental Management, and Chad Blackwell, HDR|e<sup>2</sup>M, Inc.

organization United States Coast Guard (COMDT CG-47) date 21 October 2010

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

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20593-7901

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

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. *\*The property is off the USGS topographical grid. A NOAA nautical coastal map has been used instead.*
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

#### Property Owner:

name United States Coast Guard

street & number 2100 Second Street SW telephone 202.267.1587

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20593

**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 to amend existing 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.460 et seq.).

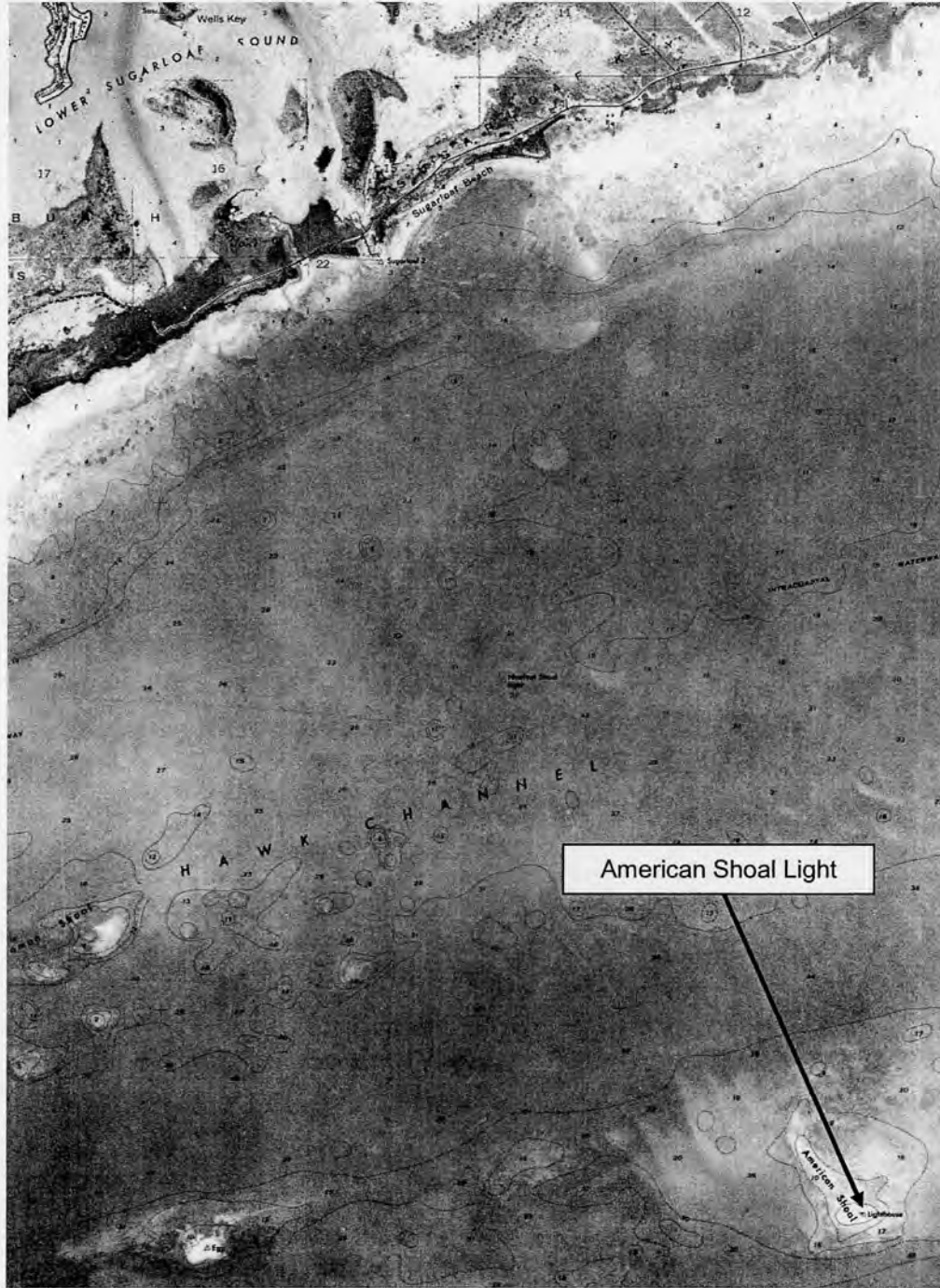
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION Location Map



This is part of the *Saddlebunch Keys, Fla. 7.5 minute series orthophotomap (topographic)* (U.S. Geological Survey, 1972).

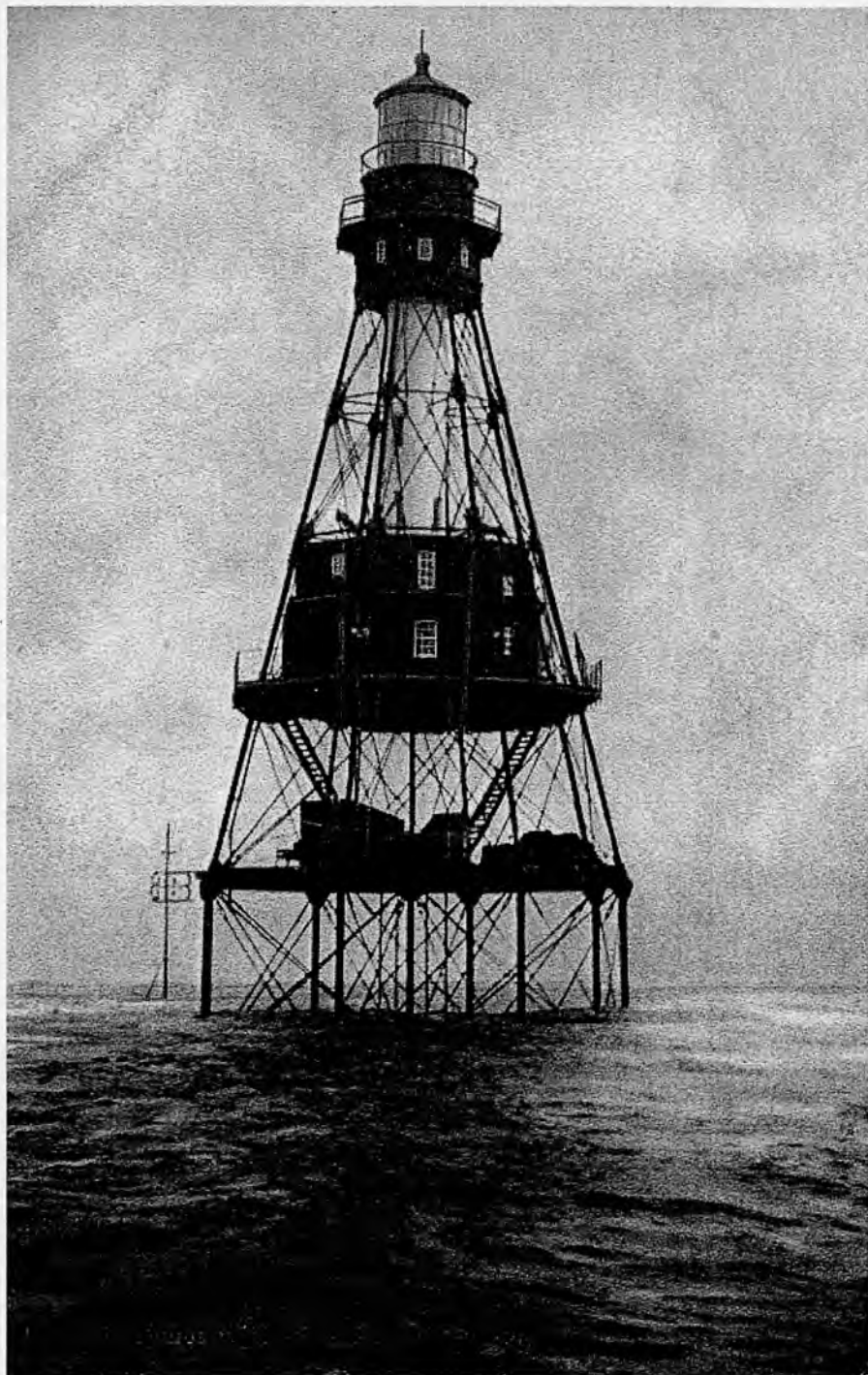
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

#### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

**Original Appearance:** This is a photograph of American Shoal Light circa 1915, looking south.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

#### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

**Appearance in 1966:** This is a view of American Shoal Light, looking east, taken in 1966 (U.S. Coast Guard, photographer unknown, on file in the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, Washington, DC).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

#### Photographs

The following information is common to the contemporary photographs:

Name of Property: American Shoal Light  
 Location: Monroe County, Florida  
 Photographer: Timothy McGrath  
 Date: 26 October 2009 and 1 June 2010  
 Location of original negative: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office,  
 U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC.

#### Photograph Number

#### Description

1. Lighthouse western elevation, boat dock on left, looking east.
2. Keepers dwelling and tower second tier platform, northern elevation, looking south.
3. Keepers dwelling first story interior, southeast room, looking northeast.
4. Keepers dwelling second story interior, northwest room, with stair cylinder doorway on right, looking northeast.
5. Stair cylinder interior, first landing at keepers dwelling second story, looking northeast.
6. Lighthouse lantern, watch room and service room, looking south.
7. Service room interior, looking east.
8. Watch room interior, view upward to pedestal drum and underside of lantern room catwalk, looking north.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY American Shoal Light  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Light Stations of the United States MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Monroe

DATE RECEIVED: 12/16/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/07/11  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/24/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/31/11  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10001189

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 1/25/2011 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Meets the registration requirements of MPS*

*American Shoals Light was the last of a string of important lights constructed in the 1870s to mark hazards along shipping routes in the Florida keys. It was the last link in the chain giving full visual coverage. It is an excellent example of disk pile construction.*

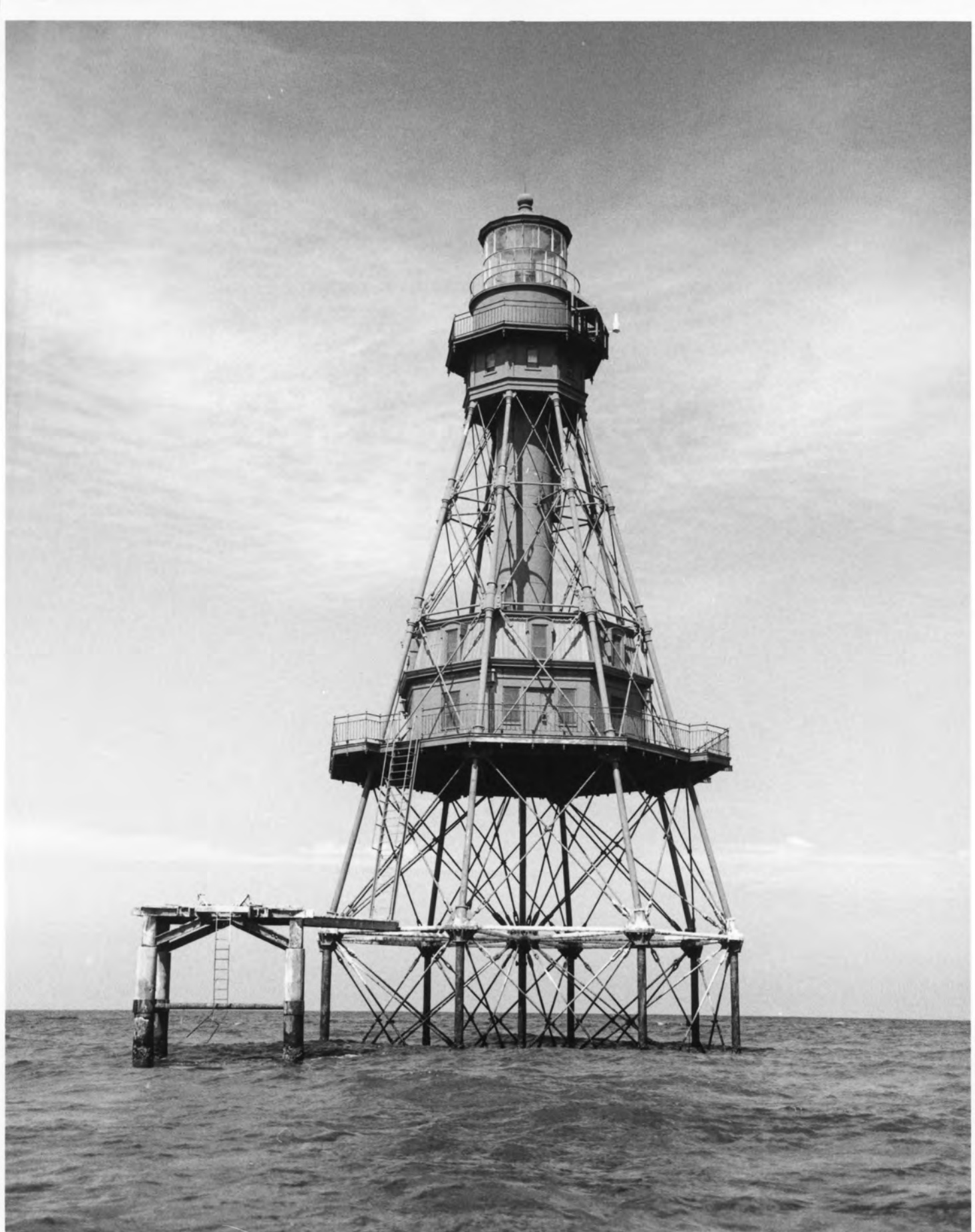
RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+C

REVIEWER J. Grabbert DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT  
MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: 26 OCTOBER 2009

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

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

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

PHOTO # 1





AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON, DC

KEEPERS DWELLING AND TOWER SECOND TIER PLATFORM,  
NORTHERN ELEVATION, LOOKING SOUTH.

PHOTO # 2



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT  
MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH  
DATE: 1 JUNE 2010

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

KEEPERS DWELLING FIRST STORY INTERIOR,  
SOUTHEAST ROOM, LOOKING NORTHEAST.

PHOTO # 3



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: 1 JUNE 2010

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON, DC

KEEPERS DWELLING SECOND STORY INTERIOR,  
NORTHWEST ROOM, WITH STAIR CYLINDER DOORWAY  
ON RIGHT, LOOKING NORTHEAST.

PHOTO # 4



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: 1 JUNE 2010

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON, DC

STAIR CYLINDER INTERIOR, FIRST LANDING  
AT KEEPERS DWELLING SECOND STORY,  
LOOKING NORTHEAST.

PHOTO # 5





AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: 26 OCTOBER 2009

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEAD QUARTERS

WASHINGTON, DC

LIGHTHOUSE LANTERN, WATCH ROOM AND  
SERVICE ROOM, LOOKING SOUTH.

PHOTO # 6



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

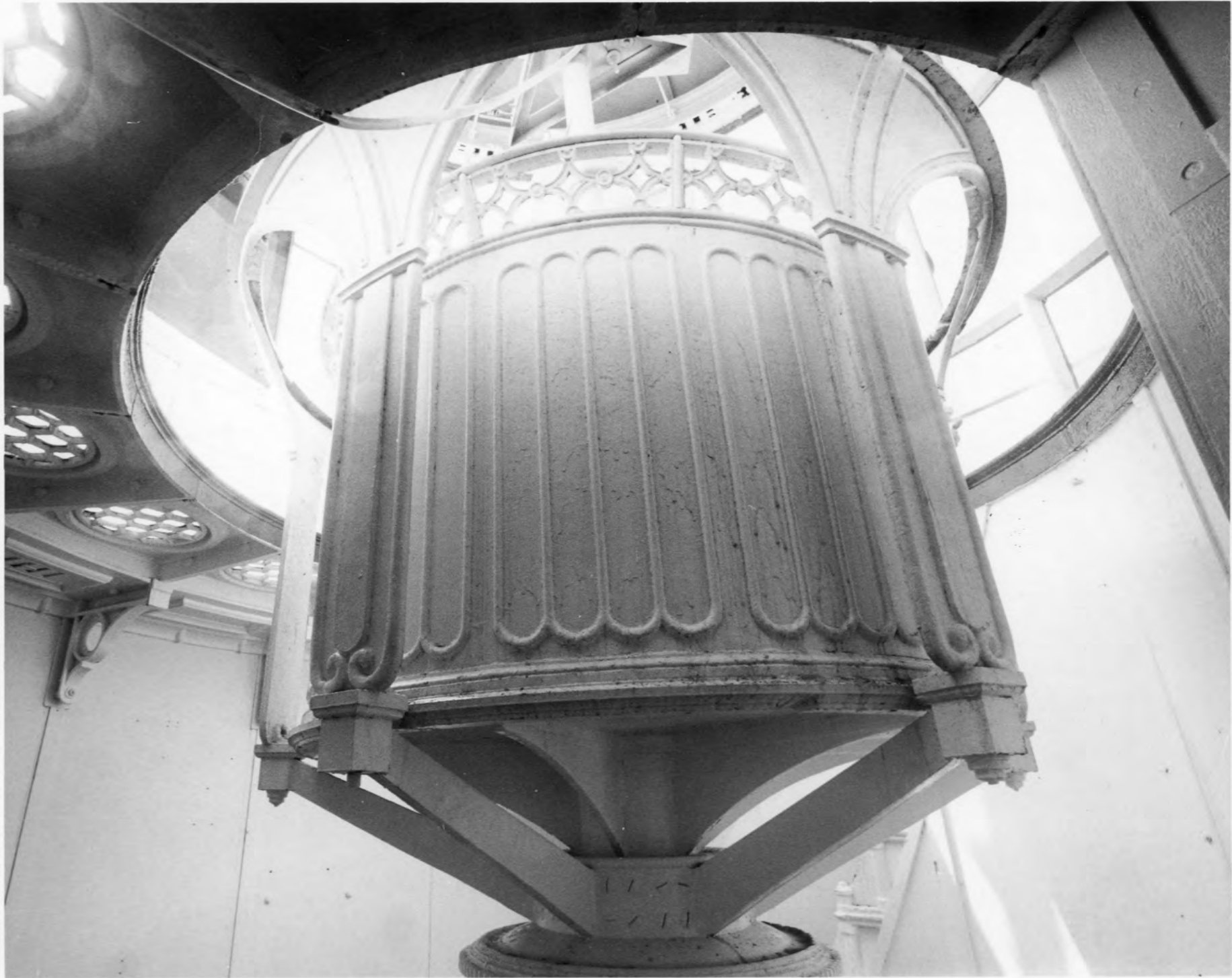
DATE: 1 JUNE 2010

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

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

SERVICE ROOM INTERIOR, LOOKING EAST.

PHOTO # 7



AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

MONROE COUNTY, FL

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY McGRATH

DATE: 1 JUNE 2010

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE:

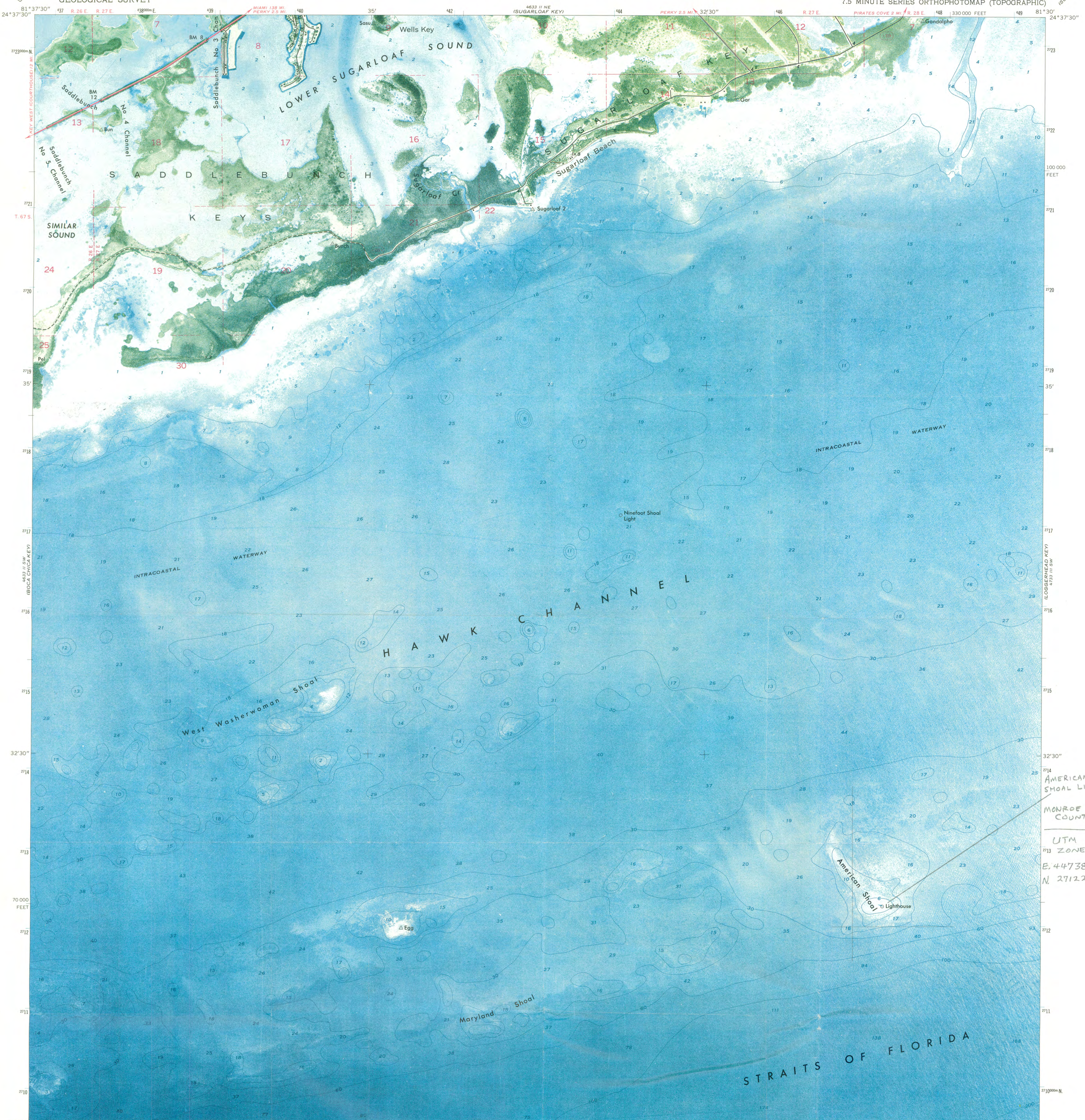
U.S. COAST GUARD HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

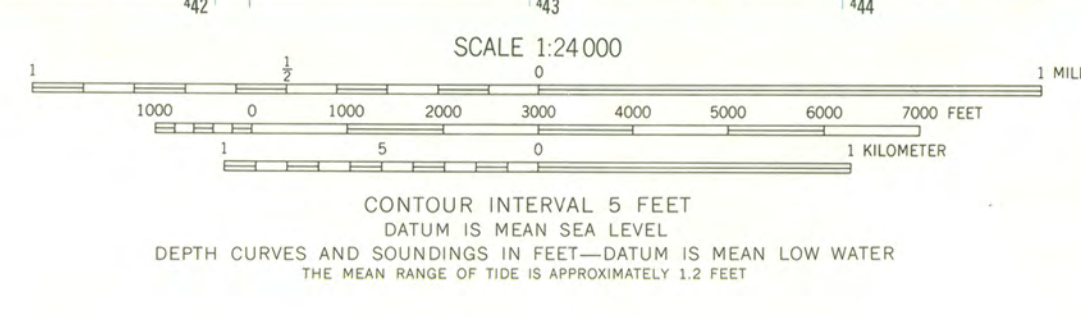
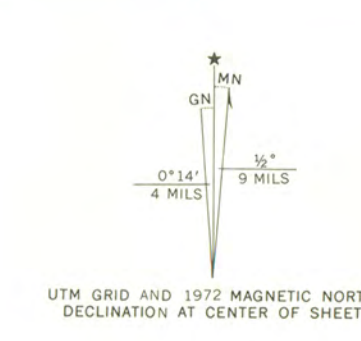
WASHINGTON, DC

WATCH ROOM INTERIOR, VIEW UPWARD TO  
PEDESTAL DRUM AND UNDERSIDE OF  
LANTERN ROOM CATWALK, LOOKING NORTH.

PHOTO # 8



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Orthophotomap prepared from aerial photograph taken April 4, 1970  
Topography by planetable methods 1972  
Supersedes Army Map Service map dated 1943  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 853  
854, and 1251 (1971).  
This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Florida coordinate  
system, east zone (Transverse Mercator)  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 17, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum  
Where omitted, land lines have not been established or are  
not shown because of insufficient data



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

SADDLEBUNCH KEYS, FLA.  
N2430—W8130/7.5  
1972  
AMS 4633 II SE—SERIES 9847

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

AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT  
MONROE COUNTY, FL  
UTM  
ZONE 17  
E. 447380  
N. 2712250

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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

16475

OCT 12 2010

Honorable Sylvia Murphy, Mayor  
Monroe County Board of County Commissioners  
102050 Overseas Highway, Suite 234  
Key Largo, FL 33037

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

Dear Ms. Murphy:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. F. Wandelt".

E. F. WANDELT

Chief

Office of Environmental Management

U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for American Shoal Light

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



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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

16475

OCT 12 2010

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

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

Dear Mr. Neugent:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. F. Wandelt".

E. F. WANDELT

Chief

Office of Environmental Management

U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for American Shoal Light

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

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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

16475

OCT 12 2010

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

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

Dear Mr. Billie:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. F. Wandelt".

E. F. WANDELT

Chief

Office of Environmental Management

U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for American Shoal Light

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

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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

16475

OCT 12 2010

Mr. Mitchell Cypress, Chairman  
Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida  
6300 Stirling Road  
Hollywood, FL 33024

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT

Dear Mr. Cypress:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. F. Wandelt".

E. F. WANDELT

Chief

Office of Environmental Management

U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) Summary of NRHP nomination for American Shoal Light

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION**  
**AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT**  
**MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

American Shoal Light is an offshore lighthouse located approximately ten miles southeast of Summerland Key in Monroe County, Florida. It is an operating aid to navigation owned by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), identified as number 1015 on the regional Light List. This property is surrounded by water and accessible by boat.

This property was officially established as a Federal lighthouse in 1880. Based on its historic character, the USCG intends to nominate this property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

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

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

**Site Name and Location:**

- American Shoal Light
- Located approximately ten miles southeast of Summerland Key in Monroe County, FL
- Light List Number 1015

**Owner:**

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

**Summary Description:**

American Shoal Light is an iron skeletal tower lighthouse approximately 124 feet tall. It includes a foundation made with nine iron disk piles which supports an octagonal skeletal tower that includes five horizontal tiers. The tower's second tier is a platform made with iron plates that supports a two story keepers dwelling designed in the Second Empire architectural style. A cylinder that encloses a spiral stairway rises from the dwelling to the upper superstructure atop the skeletal tower. The lighthouse's upper superstructure includes a service room, watch room and lantern. The lantern is equipped with a modern automated beacon with a focal plane 109 feet above sea level. This beacon signals a flashing

white light towards the north and south, and a flashing red light towards the east and west. The beacon's red sectors mark areas with hazards to navigation. American Shoal Light is also equipped with a RACON radar beacon. The lighthouse's day mark is entirely brown. This property includes a boat dock and walkway built in 1991. The dock stands next to the lighthouse and provides for mooring a vessel. The walkway connects it to the lighthouse where a ladder ascends to the tower's second tier platform. The modern boat dock and walkway do not contribute to the property's historical significance.

**Summary Statement of Historical Significance:**

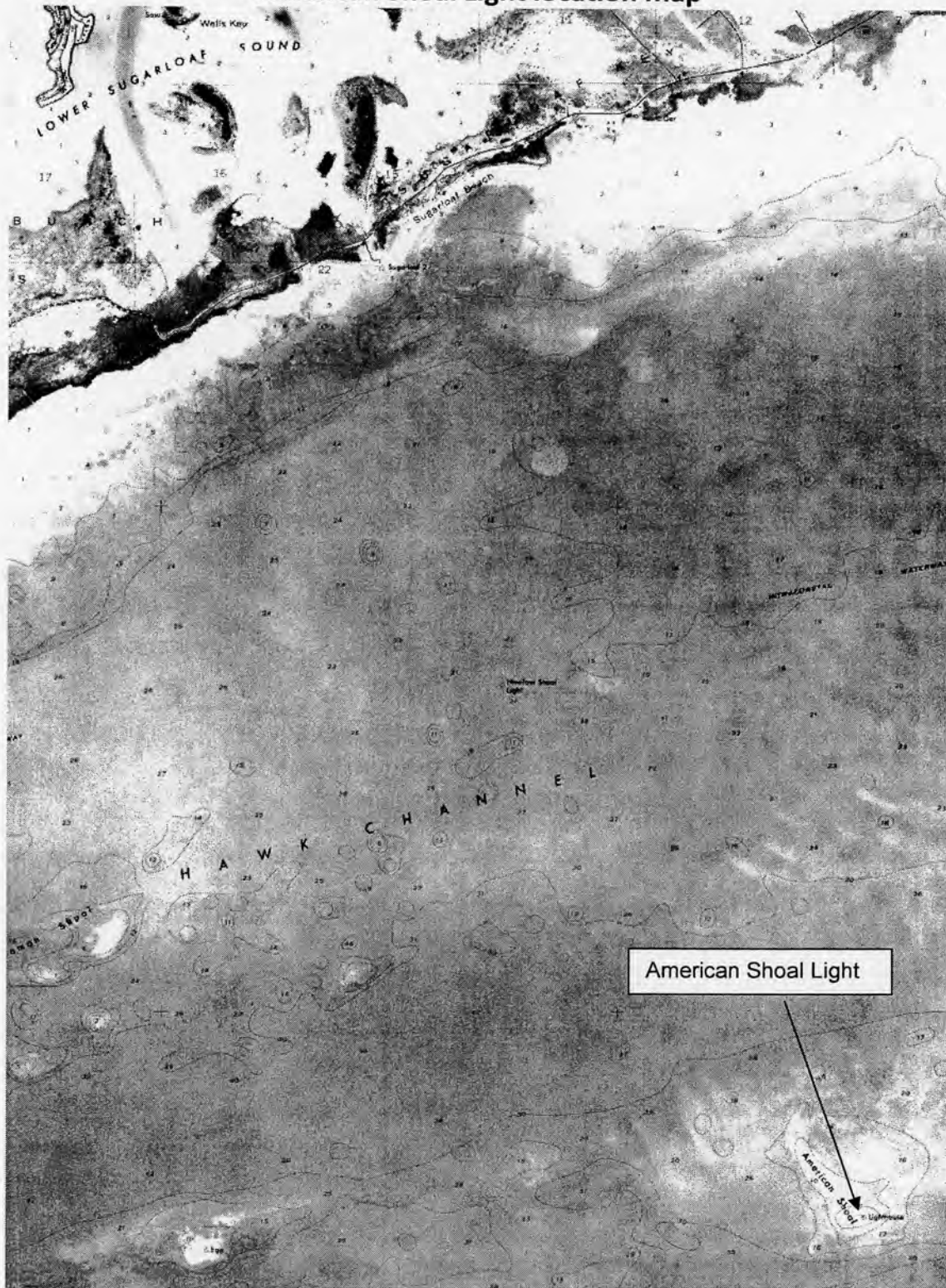
This lighthouse was constructed from 1879 to 1880 atop an area of reef and shallow water along the offshore side of the Florida Reef. This location is adjacent to an important route for vessels navigating between the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, and ports in the eastern United States and Europe. This area has been the scene of a number of shipwrecks. American Shoal Light was the last of six tall skeletal tower lighthouses built offshore of the Florida Keys between 1852 and 1880. They are known as the Florida Reef Lights. The others in Monroe County and include Sand Key Light, Sombrero Key Light, Alligator Reef Light and Carysfort Reef Light. One of the six Florida Reef lighthouses, Fowey Rocks Light, is in Dade County.

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

**Map and Photograph:**

- American Shoal Light location map
- American Shoal Light, view looking southeast

### American Shoal Light location map



Part of the "Saddlebunch Key, Fla." 7.5-minute series orthophotomap (topographic), Scale 1:24,000 (U.S. Geological Survey, 1972).

American Shoal Light, view looking southeast





**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
Mayor Sylvia J. Murphy, District 5  
Mayor Pro Tem Heather Carruthers, District 3  
Kim Wigington, District 1  
George Neugent, District 2  
Mario Di Gennaro, District 4

**Mayor Sylvia J Murphy**  
Nelson Govt. & Cultural Ctr., Ste. 234  
102050 Overseas Highway  
Key Largo, FL 33037  
Phone 305-453-8787  
Cell 305-797-0088  
Email: [boccdis5@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:boccdis5@monroecounty-fl.gov)



November 3, 2010

U.S. Coast Guard COMDT (CG-47)  
ATTN: Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell  
210-0 Second Street SW – STOP 7901  
Washington, DC 20593-7901

Dear Dr. Koski-Karell:

American Shoal Light is one of our favorite historic lighthouses in the Florida Keys and by "us" I mean all of the people who care about our maritime history.

Please add my name, on behalf of Monroe County, to the list of those who would like to see this lighthouse officially included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you for the opportunity to give my comments.

Sincerely,

A large, elegant handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sylvia J. Murphy'.

Sylvia J. Murphy  
Mayor



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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

## MEMORANDUM

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



16475

DEC 15 2010

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

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

Subj: AMERICAN SHOAL LIGHT, OFFSHORE OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

1. The Coast Guard nominates American Shoal Light, offshore of Monroe County, FL, for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The nomination package is enclosed (Enclosure (1)).
2. The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer's comments on this NRHP nomination were requested and received. They have been incorporated into this property's NRHP registration form where deemed appropriate.
3. Comments from appropriate local officials were solicited and one supporting the nomination was received. Copies of this correspondence are included in the enclosure.

#

Enclosure: (1) NRHP nomination package for American Shoal Light

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