

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 17 1980

DATE ENTERED OCT 22 1981

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Arecibo vic.

NAME: Historic: Faro de Punta Borinquen
Common: Punta Borinquen Light

LOCATION: About 1 1/4 mile northeast of Point Borinquen, northwest part of Puerto Rico. On position 18° 30.1' N - 67° 08.7' W.

CLASSIFICATION: Occupied. Restricted access.

DESCRIPTION: Excellent condition. Unaltered. Original site. The original lighthouse was built in 1889 in position 18° 29' 26" N - 67° 09' 43" W very close to the sea in a low sandy point. In 1918 Puerto Rico experienced an earthquake which had its epicenter somewhere on the NW part of the Island, possibly on the Puerto Rico Trench. As a result, two lighthouses were practically demolished on the NW section of Puerto Rico: Punta Borinquen and Punta Higuero (south of Punta Borinquen). The old structure closely resembled Arecibo Light in design although it was much smaller. As a 4th class light it had a 12 mile range showing a red and white light with alternate flashes 30" in 30". The dwelling --a 13 room unit for a 2nd and 3rd class keepers-- was built around the octagonal tower. Both were built of stone and brick and were painted red with white trimmings. One distinctive element was the tower brackets-cornice arrangement which had a clear moor-style that sharply contrasted with the building's neo-classic simplicity. The earthquake also destroyed the lens, a major loss, since the flashes were produced by tinted panels in the central drum. It was a 3 1/2 order lens built by Barbier & Bernard, lenticular, 75 cms. in diameter. It had 8 flashing panels; the central drum had 5 panels; 10 prisms formed the upper section of each element above central drum and 4 prisms were located below the central drum. The entire lens rotated on a chariot activated by a clock work system. The new light was built in 1922 on position 18° 30.1' N - 67° 08.7' W. The new structure differed from the first in two ways: the dwelling is reinforced concrete and the tower is detached from the dwelling. Otherwise, the keepers quarters were built --even in decorative elements-- following the old ones design. A change was introduced as the principal keeper would have 5 rooms and his assistant 4, with a connecting hall between and a common storeroom. The old light design was so closely followed that two four-furnace Spanish charcoal kitchens were built in the keepers quarters. The dwelling is 56' 4" x 39' 6". The main entrance on the east side leads into a long east-west corridor at the end of which a door leads

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to an uncovered passway to the tower. South of the corridor a door opens to an 11' 10" x 11' 7" principal keeper's living room; two additional doors connect with two identical 11' 9" x 12' 3" rooms. One of these serves as a dining area which opened into the 11' 9" x 12' 3" Spanish kitchen (no longer in existence). The kitchen also opened into the largest room, an 11' 10" x 18' 7" master bedroom. The other west half of the structure is identical to the east section, although the 11' 10" x 18' 7" room serves as a common storeroom. The kitchens, following the Spanish arrangement of spaces, are located in the north-east and southwest corners, respectively. Each room originally had double-leaf windows. The floors are still tiled as in the 1920's. The exterior decorative elements such as cornices, pediment, and parapet follow the Spanish colonial neo-classic style.

The light gray colored reinforced-concrete tower was built 292 ft above water, 60 ft above ground and is earthquake resistant. It has four stories, a watchroom, and the lantern. The tower has a 6 ft deep 25 ft square foundation which is reduced by a series of four superimposed concentric exterior concrete belts into a 15' 2" circular structure that has a 12' 8" internal diameter. Each floor, having a west oriented window, is connected by a cast-iron winding stairway. In 1921 the tower had a 3rd order 7' 1" diameter cast-iron, brass, and glass cylindrical lantern with helical bars. It opened into a concrete balustrade and gallery. The illuminating apparatus was formed by a 40" diameter, 3rd order 1917 lenticular lens built by Macbeth Co. in New York. It had 12 panels of which 8 were flashing ones. The central drum had 12 panels; 11 prisms were located on each panel above central drum and 4 below. The lens was mercury floated, activated by a classic clock work system that had a galvanized iron cord led through the center of the column in the tower stairway. It had a 200 lb. weight. In the 1920's the light characteristics responded to sea navigation. In 1947 the light was changed for an airway beacon for surface and air navigation. As a consequence, the lantern was transformed and the old helical bar structure removed. In its place a 36" double head revolving Crouse-Hinds apparatus was installed. The 1946 tower and light and dwelling are in existence today.

SIGNIFICANCE: The new 1920's dwelling follows the old 1880's geographical location, structural, and architectonic characteristics. Its tower represents the only ever built by the U.S.C.G. showing the above stated specifications. Both the old and new lights, stand in the north-west point of the Island and partially complete the north light trilogy already mentioned. But most important, it is the first eastern light

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in the Island's western front that guides the entrance to the Caribbean, thus forming with Mona Island and Cabo Rojo Lights that protects the north-south bound sea navigation into the historically famous Mona Passage.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: Area Nominated: 2.6 acres. Boundary description: beginning at a point located 150° 64' from the E corner of old Mrs. Castro's hut; thence N 2° W 228 ft to a point; thence S 74° 30' W 160 ft to a tree; thence S 10° 30' E 191 ft to a point; thence N 87° E 130 ft to the point of beginning. Another tract of land beginning at a point located 150° 64' from the E corner of Mrs. Castro's hut, thence N 2° W 228 ft to a point; thence N 74° 30' E 240 ft to the Malazo County Road; thence southerly along said road to a point S 87° W 234 ft to the point of beginning; thence westerly to the point of beginning.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS: v. attached pocket #3 "Punta Borinquen Light". Enclosures are: Quadrangle; plan area nominated; c. 1898 photo; 1978 photos; original site drawings photos; and, alteration's drawings.