Faro Isla de Culebrita
(Isla Culebrita Light)
Summit of southern part of
Culebrita Island
Fraile (barrio)
Culebra
Puerto Rico

HAER No. PR-12

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Index to Photographs

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Photographer: Luis Morales, August 1978

PR-12-1	Photocopy of book illustration, undated ca. 1895, from Album de Puerto Rico
PR-12-2	Photocopy of measured drawing, ca. 1901, showing components of lighthouse lamp
PR-12-3	Photocopy of measured drawing, ca. 1901. Component of lamp in plan and in section
PR-12-4	Aerial view looking south, showing overview of site
PR-12-5	Aerial view looking southwest, showing rear of lighthouse
PR-12-6	Aerial view looking south
PR-12-7	Aerial view looking south
PR-12-8	Aerial view looking southwest
PR-12-9	Aerial view looking west
PR-12-10	Aerial view looking southwest, close-up
PR-12-11	Aerial view looking south
PR-12-12	Close-up aerial view looking south
PR-12-13	Detail view looking south, showing light tower

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(Isla Culebrita Light)

PR-12

Location: On the southern summit of Culebrita Island, the westerly side of Virgin Passage approximately 22 miles east of Puerto Rico Position 18° 18.9' N - 65° 13.7' W

Date of Erection: 1886

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Coast Guard

Original Owner: Central Lighthouse Commission
Colonial Public Works Office
Harbor and Port Section
Government of Spain

Present Use: Unoccupied

Significance: Isla Culebrita Light was built in 1886 on the western side of Virgin Passage. In both design and importance of location the stone structure is unique. In 1888 the 4th order light showed a fixed white light with a 12 mile range. The lenticular illuminating apparatus was manufactured by Sautter, Lemmonnier, & Cie. in 1884 or 1885 as a fixed 3 1/2 order lens. It had 75 cms. in diameter. It was formed by 4 panels. The central drum had 9 elements; 9 prisms in each panel above central drum and 4 below. The lantern— in situ-- was also a 3 1/2 order, 2 mts. in diameter made of cast-iron, copper, and glass. A door led from the lantern to the cement gallery surrounded by a cast-iron balustrade. Both, the lens and lantern were severely damaged by the 1932 hurricance (the lens was actually destroyed). The lantern was repaired and a 375 mm. lens was installed.

The original stone structure plan clearly resembles a letter "T" with the tower in its center connected to the dwelling by a covered passage. It was built for 2nd and 3rd class keepers. The main entrance faces SW. The vestibule was a large area approximately 10 x 4 mts. At the NE of the

vestibule a door led to a long corridor, approximately 10 x 1.5 mts. that led to the keepers quarters and to the tower. The keepers quarters are in a symmetric and identical disposition at both sides of the tower and parallel to each other. From SE to NE there were three rooms, each one approximately 3 x 3.75 mts. and a kitchen dining area approximately 4 x 4.5 mts. A covered passage led to the cylindrical tower 2.5 mts. internal diameter. Another passage --a continuation of the first-- led to the storeroom and to the oil room, approximately 4 x 4 mts, located behind the tower.

It is not possible to describe the interior of the structure, since it was closed off with concrete blocks and cement in 1959. The external stone structure is relatively well preserved although it has been consistently vandalized. As stated before, the lighthouse responds to the official neo-classicism, closely resembling in design Caja de Muertos Light.

It was the fourth light to be built on the Island as part of the lighthouse system. The original arrangement of spaces, the externally exposed materials (brick and stone), and the reddish color makes it unique. Within the system, it is the most eastern light outside mainland Puerto Rico (serves as a counterpoint to Mona Island). It guides navigation through Virgin Passage and Vieques Sound connecting with the light from Cabo San Juan Light.

Transmitted by:

Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, August 1984; from the National Register Nomination prepared by Dr. Benjamin Nistal-Moret, August 1979.