Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

Washington

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 1 1 1975

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APR 3 0 1976

INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM DATE ENTERED SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS 1 NAME HISTORIC Point Isabel Lighthouse Port Isabel Lighthouse 2 LOCATION STREET & NUMBER NOT FOR PUBLICATION <u>State Highway 100</u> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT VICINITY OF Port Isabel CODE COUNTY CODE Texas 48 Cameron 3 CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY **OWNERSHIP STATUS PRESENT USE** _DISTRICT XPUBLIC. X_OCCUPIED __AGRICULTURE _MUSEUM _BUILDING(S) __PRIVATE __UNOCCUPIED __COMMERCIAL __PARK XSTRUCTURE __ВОТН _WORK IN PROGRESS __EDUCATIONAL __PRIVATE RESIDENCE __SITE **PUBLIC ACQUISITION ACCESSIBLE** _ENTERTAINMENT __RELIGIOUS __OBJECT _IN PROCESS __YES: RESTRICTED __GOVERNMENT SCIENTIFIC __BEING CONSIDERED X_YES: UNRESTRICTED _INDUSTRIAL X_TRANSPORTATION NO MILITARY _OTHER: 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY NAME Texas Parks and Wildlife Department STREET & NUMBER CITY, TOWN STATE 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cameron County Courthouse STREET & NUMBER CITY, TOWN STATE Brownsville Texas **6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS** TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey, Site No. Tex-33-AB-1 X_FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL March 19, 1935 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

_EXCELLENT

_XGOOD

__FAIR

CONDITION

__DETERIORATED

__RUINS __UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

__UNALTERED XALTERED.

CHECK ONE

XORIGINAL SITE __MOVED DATE

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

After Fort Polk, Texas, was abandoned following the Mexican War, on Feb. 27, 1850, the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army recommended that the site and buildings be transferred as a lighthouse site to the Treasury Dept., a recommendation which was approved on April 22, 1850. Because of an increase in maritime shipping through Brazos Santiago Pass to Port Isabel, Tex., and because of frequent foggy conditions in the area, Treasury Department officials agreed with the Army Quartermaster General and determined that the Department should construct a lighthouse in the vicinity as a navigational aid. On Sept. 28, 1950, the U.S. Congress authorized an appropriation of \$15,000 for "a lighthouse and beacon light" at Brazos Santiago and President Zachary Taylor, former General of the Rio Grande and one-time commander of the region, signed the bill.

The original construction contract between the Treasury Department and John Garey of Brownsville was signed December 6, 1851, and work began in February 1852. It was listed as completed in the 1853 report of the Lighthouse Board and was included in the October 1853 "List of Lighthouses" with Stephen Powers as its keeper. As initially constructed the lighthouse was an 82-foot-high brick tower topped with four lights. By 1854 it had 15 lamps and 21 reflectors. A third order lens was installed in 1857

and the fixed light was varied by flashes.

Probably the most colorful period of history of the Point Isabel Lighthouse occurred during the American Civil War. During the conflict, as federal ships blockaded the Texas coast, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was occupied by soldiers from both sides as a look-out post. Cannon and musket balls found in the walls of the structure a century

later attest to the fighting in its vicinity.

After the close of the Civil War, the Treasury Department refitted the Point Isabel Lighthouse. It is said that during the conflict Col. John S. (Rip) Ford of Texas forces removed the lends to prevent its falling into the hands of Union troops. months after the war, Treasury Dept. employees refurbished the tower, refitted the lamps, and then relit the lighthouse on February 22, 1866. In 1879 the Lighthouse Board reported that the tower had deteriorated to a dilapidated condition, but by 1881 a new iron lantern had been installed and the following year mineral oil lamps had been fitted. In 1888 the light was temporarily discontinued because of a question about the title to the land upon which it stood. Claimants proved that the United States government had not title to the land, forcing the government to condem the land in 1894 to acquire title. The government paid \$5,000 to secure unquestioned title and on July 15, 1895, the light returned to use. It operated for ten years, after which time it was extinguished in 1905. On Sept. 20, 1927, the Secretary of Commerce ordered the unused lighthouse and land sold. A local citizen purchased it for the sum of \$2,760 on December 14, 1927, but in the late 1940's a movement began to save the old lighthouse as a historic site. On October 5, 1950, the Texas State Park Board, as authorized by the Texas Legislature, formally accepted the lighthouse and surrounding land as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Lon C. Hill, Jr., owners at the time. Later additions were made from two lots adjoining on the west side of the plot.

The Texas State Park Board began restoring the lighthouse in 1951 and completed the following year. Using original descriptions, the restoration was conducted as precisely as possible. The outside of the brick tower was recovered with plaster, but the original iron platform on the top of the tower was replaced with concrete and the glass dome was raised to provide easier access to visitors. The spiral iron stairway within the tower was reinforced during the restoration with a welded hand rail. A mercury-vapor lamp was installed on the tower and the lighthouse returned to service as a navigational aid to

seamen. Today the lighthouse is operated as a Tex. State Historic Park.

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED APR 30 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE

Texas Historic Engineering Site Inventory Fall, 1974 State
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

8 SIGNIFICANCE

SPECIFIC DAT	^{TES} 1852	BUILDER/ARCHITECT U. S. Department of Treasury			
		_INVENTION			
_1900-	X_COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRYINVENTION	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)	
4 _1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	X_TRANSPORTATION	
_1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER	
_1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
_1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE	
_1400-1499	_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION	
PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Because of increasing maritime traffic through Brazos Santiago Pass, near the mouth of the Rio Grande on the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. Department of Treasury constructed there in 1852 an eighty-two-foot-high brick lighthouse tower topped with a stationary white light which could be seen for fifteen miles. The lighthouse operated with changing equipment and with intermittent interruptions until 1905, after which time it was abandoned for several years. During the American Civil War the lighthouse served as an observation post for both Union and Confederate forces operating in the vicinity. After lying unused for most of the first half of the twentieth century, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was acquired in 1950 by the Texas State Park Board, subsequently was restored by that agency, and today stands both as a state historical park and as a functioning navigational aid.

The Point Isabel Lighthouse is one of the oldest functioning lighthouses on the Texas Gulf Coast. It played a significant part in military operations around the mouth of the Rio Grande during the Civil War and for over a century, with some interruptions, has served the region as an aid to seamen. We have the region as an aid to seamen.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOG				
Baughman, J. C. "Taps June 29, 1952, pp.		es." Hous ton	Chronicle Rotogravure	Magazine,
McKenna, Verna Jackson.		Lighthouse, Be	acon of Brazos Santiago	0.
Austin: Texas Sta	te Parks Board, 195	6.		
U. S. Department of Tr	easury. Coast Guar nment Printing Offi		ly Famous Lighthouses.	
washington: dover	milent Frinting offi	Ce, 1972.		
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE	
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11 FORM PREPARE	D BY			
NAME / TITLE				
T. Lindsay Baker, Resea	rch Associate		DATE	
History of Engineering	Program, Texas Tech	University	May 21, 1975	
STREET & NUMBER		es romaneis:	TELEPHONE (806) 742-1231	
P. O. Box 4089			STATE	
Lubbock			Texas	
12 STATE HISTORI	C PRESERVATION	N OFFICER C	ERTIFICATION	
THE EVA	ALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF	THIS PROPERTY WIT	THIN THE STATE IS:	
NATIONAL	STAT	E_X	LOCAL	
As the designated State Historic	Preservation Officer for the N	lational Historic Preser	rvation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-	-665), I
hereby nominate this property	for inclusion in the National F	//-	at it has been evaluated according	
criteria and procedures set forth	by the National Park Service.	Tallo 1	,/	
SIGN	NATURE (MMM)	Javim		
TITLE Texas State	Historic Prese	vation Offi	cer DATE June 4, 19	75
FOR NPS USE ONLY				7.5
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National Register Write-up Federal Register Entry	Send-backRe-submit	Entered APR 3 0 1976



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NPS Nu	mber 4.30.76
Title:	Point Isabel Lighthouse
	Cameron Cty., Texas
Loc.	North view. Small
_	lights are Christmas

Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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DATE ENTERED

APR 3 0 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Point Isabel Lighthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Port Isabel Lighthouse

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

__VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Port Isabel

INTIY OF

Cameron

Texas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

January 1973

History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University

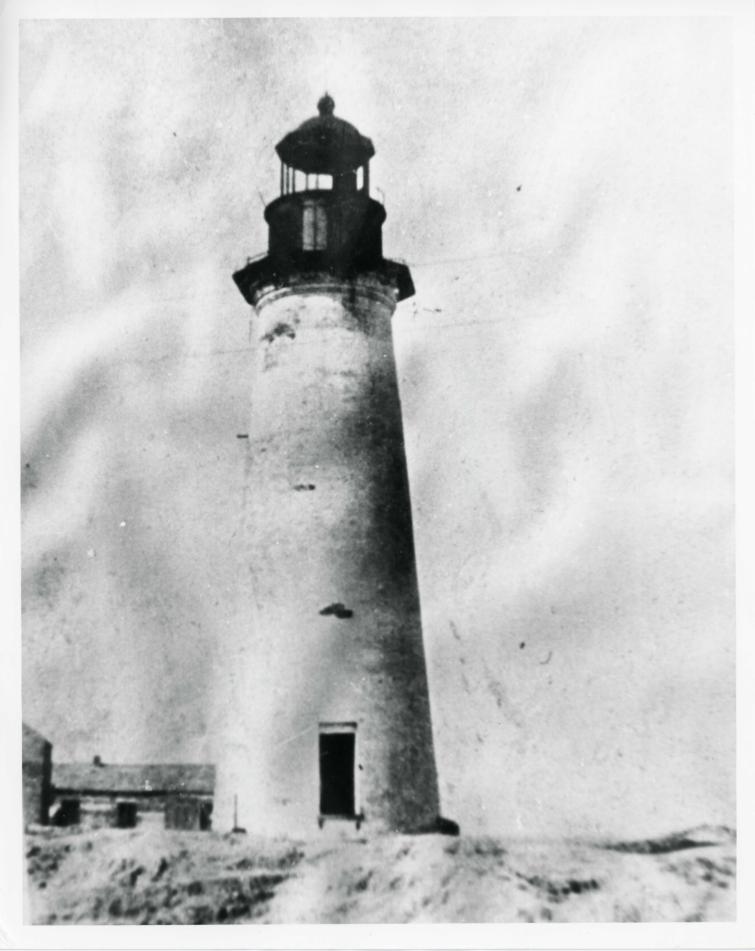
History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

North to full view of Point Isabel Lighthouse. The small lights on wires are Christmas decorations used during December and early January.

рното NO.



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Teyas.

NPS Number 4,30,76 Title: Pout Isabel Lighthouse Cameron Cty., Texas Loc. Reproduction of 1951, pre-restoration photo, taken by the State of

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

RECEIVE NOV 1 1 1975

DATE ENTERED APR 3 0 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS

TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Point Isabel Lighthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Port Isabel Lighthouse

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

__VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Port Isabel

Cameron

Texas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, Texas

DATE OF PHOTO 1951

NEGATIVE FILED AT

History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University

4 IDENTIFICATION

Reproduction of photograph of the Point Isabel Lighthouse in 1951 before restoration by the State of Texas. Original photograph is at Point Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Park, Port Isabel, Texas.

РНОТО NO.

2 42

Form No. 10-301 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

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APR 3 0 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

1 NAME

HISTORIC Point Isabel Lighthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Port Isabel Lighthouse

2 LOCATION

CITY. TOWN Port Isabel

___VICINITY OF

COUNTY Cameron

STATE Texas

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE

USGS

SCALE 1:24000

DATE 1955

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

- 1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
- 2. NORTH ARROW
- 3. UTM REFERENCES

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE

TEXAS

Date Entered

APR 30 1976

Name

Location

Hot Well Archeological Site

El Paso Vicinity El Paso County

Point Isabel Lighthouse

Fort Isabel Cameron County

Victoria Grist Windmill

Victoria Victoria County

Also Notified

Hon. John G. Tower

Hon. Lloyd M. Bentsen

Hon. Richard C. White

Hon. E. (Kika) de la Garza

Hon. John Young

State Historic Preservation Officer Mr. Truett Latimer Executive Director

Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station

Austin, Texas 78711

cc: Regional Director, Southwest Region

/PR:MMott:cam:5/4/76

INT: 2950-75

DOMESTIC TO A THE THE PERSON AND THE

					DATA	The same of the sa		T
NAME as it ap	pears on federal	register:	20	THER NAMES:			date of entry;	@county code:
Point Isabel	l Lighthouse						4-30-76	61
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☐ ARCHITECTURE-4	□ ECONOMICS-9	☐ INDUSTRY - 13	MUSIC - 19	SOCIAL / CULTURAL-3		'only'		
☐ ART-5	☐ EDUCATION-10	☐ INVENTION - 14	☐ PHILOSOPHY - 20	TRANSPORTATION 25		-		
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andscape arch	itect/garden desi	gner: ginterior	decorator:	artist:	33 artisan:	3 builde:	r/contractor:	
NAMES give personal: EVENTS: INSTITUTIONAL:	role & date							
39 NATIONAL RE	GISTER WRITE	-UP						
Lighthouse, b changing equi served as an	rick construction pment and intermobservation post	on, 82' high, st nittent interrup for both Union	tions until 190 and Confedera	05 when it was ab te troops during	o to 15 miles; ope pandonned for seve Civil War; restor a functioning navi	ral years; ed ,in 1950	;	

reviewers initials MLH date 7.5.77