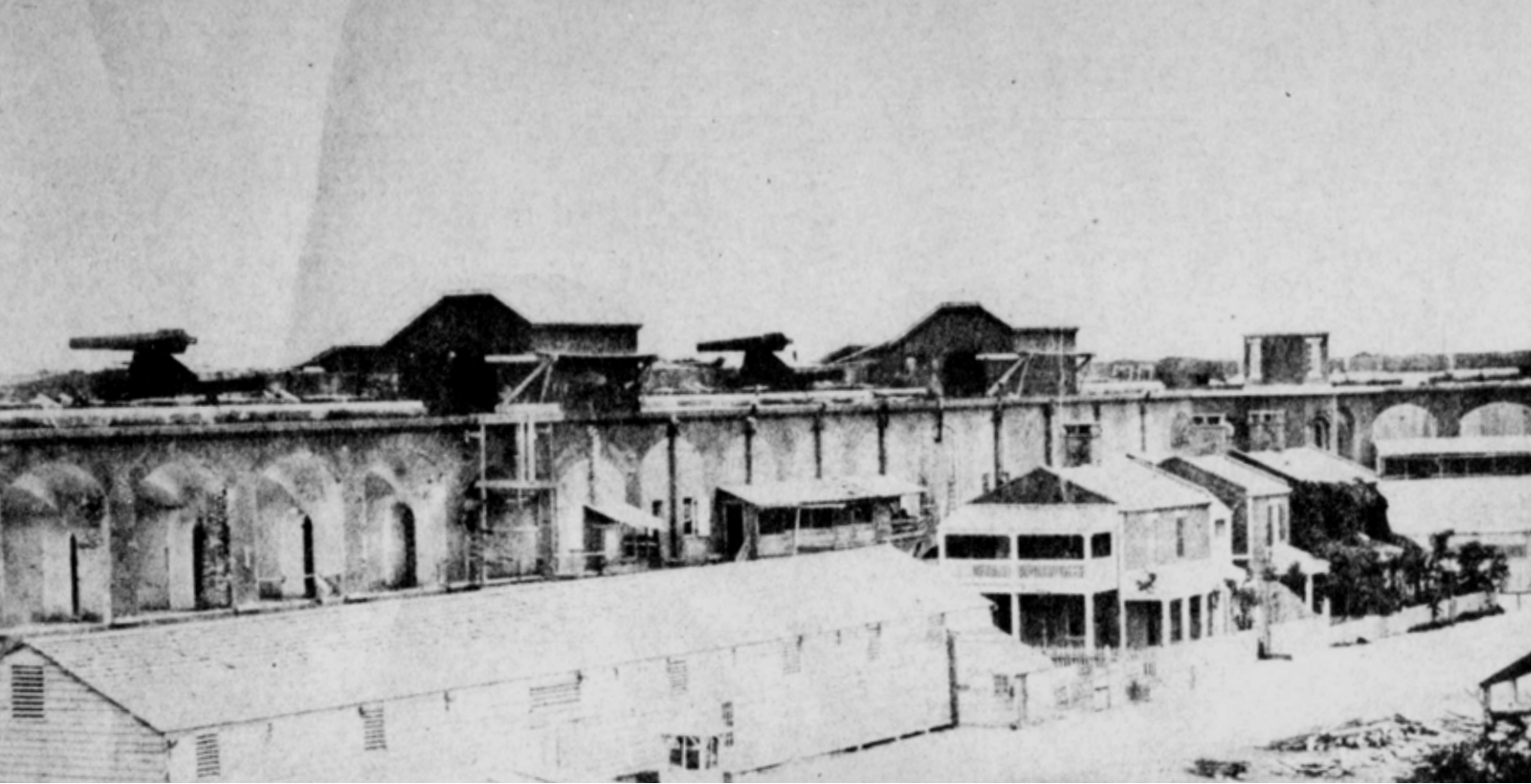




## Engineering Officers' Quarters



Circa 1867

While Fort Jefferson is an impressive and outstanding example of a nineteenth century masonry fortification and the primary resource of cultural significance at Dry Tortugas National Park, it is not the only edifice of note within the park grounds. Some of the oldest buildings at the park, are the Engineering Officers' Quarters, located in the western section of Fort Jefferson's parade ground.

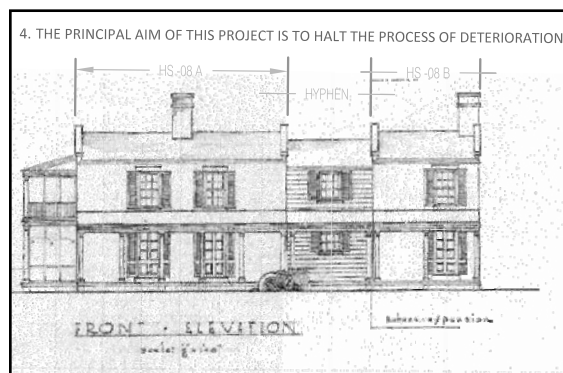
### Building History

The Engineering Officers' Quarters are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing buildings of Fort Jefferson and are historically significant properties. These buildings are great tangible examples of history that have endured many important periods of occupation and use withstanding the substantial changes that have occurred on the island throughout the last 150 years.

The buildings, which now appear to be a cohesive unit, are actually three separate masonry structures with a wooden addition spanning the space between two of the buildings. Originally there was a third building to the north that stands in ruin today. These buildings were constructed just prior to 1867 by the Army Corp of Engineers.

Porches, granite window accents, and slate roofs all appear to be part of the original design. During the Army Period (1846-1898) and Navy Occupation (1898-1916), the houses went through various configurations and a couple of different paint schemes but their use was primarily residential and very few changes were made to the overall massing and fenestration of the structures through the years.

Sometime between 1916 and 1937 the buildings fell into near disrepair, presumably due to major hurricanes that made landfall at Dry Tortugas during those years, a lack of occupancy and maintenance, and possible fire or salvage. It is at this point in history, at the brink of being lost, that the story of these structures takes a drastic turn.



Architecture drawings



1909

Following the Fort's designation as a National Monument in 1935, the National Park Service (NPS) determined to save the buildings from permanent ruin. These efforts involved New Deal Programs such as the PWA and the Emergency Relief Act (ERA), primarily Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding. Work completed converted the remains of the Engineering Officer's Quarters into living accommodations for the park's superintendent and other park employees. However, at that time preservation efforts were not governed by guidelines as they are today. Some major alterations were made to the fenestration and interior layout of the buildings to accommodate modern conveniences such as interior bathrooms and kitchens.

Since this project was completed in 1941 the buildings have been used as NPS housing. With the exception of a kitchen addition to the west side of the smaller house, very few substantial

changes have been made to the buildings over the past seven decades.



1934

## Work in Progress

The care of historic structures is an active and on-going process. Though the Engineering Officer's Quarters were completely rehabilitated during the early part of the 20th century, those repairs have aged and some have taken their own toll on the buildings' integrity. Most notably the iron lintels, sills, and fasteners have corroded and expanded in the humid salt air, cracking and dislodging brick and rendering two of the porches unstable in the process.

Existing conditions warrant the buildings' Rehabilitation. Treatment will be completed on the buildings over several years, focusing on the exterior first and then the interior as time and funding allows. The first phase of documentation has been completed and now work has physically begun on the structures. Components of this phase include: continued documentation, stabilization and repair of porches, repointing and masonry repairs, removal of damaging iron lintels and replacement with historically accurate granite. The next phases of the project will focus on repairs to interior walls, floors, and fixtures, and subtle integration of updated utilities. Where

possible, original materials such as doors and hardware will be cleaned, refurbished, and reinstalled.

Today work is executed by skilled masons managed under a NPS Cooperative Agreement, a management structure that brings together private sector craftsmen with NPS staff. This project in particular is being used to train NPS staff from other fortification parks with similar buildings and issues. All work is being conducted under the Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Guidelines for Rehabilitation, and when complete the National Park Service will be able to interpret these buildings for current and future generations thereby upholding their duty to, "protect, stabilize, restore, and interpret" as outlined within the Park's enabling legislation.

Many preservation projects are on-going, multi-phase efforts that span a number of years and the restoration and rehabilitation of the Engineering Officer's Quarters at Fort Jefferson is no exception. Efforts to preserve these structures began over 75 years ago and continue to this day.



1934



WPA workers rehabilitating buildings in the 1930's

## Contact Information

For further information about this project or other on-going preservation work at Fort Jefferson and the rest of Dry Tortugas National Park please contact:

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