

U.S. Coast Guard Base San Juan, Motor Pool  
(Building 122)  
La Puntilla Finalle  
San Juan  
Puerto Rico

HABS No. PR-133-A

HABS  
PR  
7-SAJU,  
63A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Southeast Region  
Department of the Interior  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
U. S. COAST GUARD BASE SAN JUAN, MOTOR POOL  
(BUILDING 122)**

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- Location:** United States Coast Guard  
Base San Juan  
La Puntilla Finalle  
San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Significance:** The Motor Pool (Building 122), constructed in 1930, is a contributing element of the Base San Juan Historic District, which is significant for its role as the commanding base of the Coast Guard's Tenth District in the Caribbean during World War II. Base San Juan, along with the Port of Spain, Trinidad and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, formed the major harbors of the Caribbean area. Together with smaller ports and harbors, they formed a ring of protection about the approaches to the Panama Canal. Roles provided by the base during the war included the Coast Guard's ongoing maintenance of the Aids to Navigation, beach patrol, and convoy escorts. The Motor Pool served as a motor vehicle maintenance and storage facility, and is currently used as a general storage area.
- Description:** The Motor Pool is a long, rectangular plan, one-story building which faces southeast and covers approximately 2,086 square feet. The building layout consists of seven open automotive bays and one enclosed bay and workroom on the northeast end. The enclosed bay has reinforced concrete walls with two louvered windows on the northeast exterior wall. The southeast wall of the enclosed bay has a steel framed, steel pedestrian door and a large vehicle opening which formerly contained a steel overhead door, but is now secured with paired, chain-link swinging doors. The first two automotive bays on the southwest end of the building have wood framed exterior walls clad with vertical wood siding. The only interior wall within the open bays is between bays two and three and is constructed of reinforced concrete. The northwest wall of the remaining bays, three through seven, is constructed of reinforced concrete.
- The posts that divide the bays and support the southeast side of the roof are constructed of reinforced concrete with the exception of posts one, two, and six, which have been replaced by wooden posts on concrete footings. The opening to each of the automotive bays has recently been closed in with paired chain-link swinging doors in order to provide secure general storage.

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The end-gable roof of the building is wood framed and covered with a corrugated metal roofing material. The roof extends outward

approximately three feet over the southeast side of the building with the peak of the roof located directly above the southeast wall.

**Historical Context:** Between 1899 and 1906 the U.S. Navy Department occupied most of the southern half of La Puntilla, demolishing and constructing buildings as necessary. On the tip of La Puntilla the U.S. Lighthouse Service established a reservation on February 19, 1903. In September of 1940 the Quarantine station established on La Puntilla was formally transferred to the U.S. Treasury Department for use by the Coast Guard, which needed to expand beyond the Lighthouse reservation acquired in July 1939.

In February 1942, President Roosevelt directed that the Secretary of the Navy take all steps necessary to protect water-front facilities against injury from sabotage, subversive acts, accidents or other causes. The Secretary of the Navy entrusted this responsibility to the Commandant of the Coast Guard. To oversee activities in Puerto and the Virgin Islands, Base San Juan became the District Headquarters of the Tenth Coast Guard District.

In addition to its normal duties of search and rescue and maintaining aids to navigation, District Headquarters directed the installation of new aids to navigation such as beacons and additional radio communications aids, took on responsibility for harbor safety, mine sweeping, escort service for convoys, and patrolling for submarines. Much of this action was in response to the height of military action in the Caribbean during World War II between 1942 and 1943, during an invasion by German U-boats which preyed on merchant ships that transported products and military supplies. Base San Juan's location was crucial in defending headquarters in an emergency and its ability to disperse special patrols at any time within the district.

**Sources:** United States Coast Guard. "Final Historic Resources Survey and Determination of Eligibility Report for U.S. Coast Guard Base San Juan." Report prepared by Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., August 1995.

Salvatore, Susan C. Letter submitted on behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard regarding Determination of Eligibility of Base San Juan to Marilyn Harper, Historian, National Park Service. November 26, 1997.

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USCG, June 1998. Proposed Upgrade of United States Coast Guard Base San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Files of the U.S. Coast Guard Base San Juan Puerto Rico.

Gautier, Jorge. Base Engineer, U.S. Coast Guard, San Juan. Personal interview regarding building history and use, November 10, 1998.

**Project Information:** This project is a mitigative recording required by a Programmatic Agreement executed by the U.S. Coast Guard, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Officer regarding implementation of the proposed development and construction of Base San Juan. URS Greiner Woodward Clyde completed mitigation documentation for this project in November 1998. Andrew Bagnat prepared the photographic documentation. Charles Arthur and Susan Salvatore compiled the Architectural Data Form.

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