

*Approved for the use of the  
Feb. 1, 1857.*

*For a 2<sup>d</sup> Order Lens*



# Citing Records *in the* National Archives *of the* United States

**GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET 17**

National Archives and Records Administration | Washington, DC

Revised 2010

*Cover:* Lighthouse Drawings; “Minot Ledge Light House” [Architectural Drawing]; District 2, Drawing 20-21; Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

*Inside back cover:* Lighthouse Drawings; “Minot’s Rock Light” [Architectural Drawing]; District 2, Drawing 20-11; Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

*Back cover:* Lighthouse Drawings; “Plan of outer rock of the Minot Ledge” [Architectural Drawing]; District 2, Drawing 20-24; Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

# Citing Records

*in the* National Archives  
*of the* United States

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This pamphlet describes the guidelines for citing unpublished records held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the Washington, DC, area, in the regional archives, in the Presidential libraries, and in the affiliated archives. These guidelines cover citations to textual records, microform records, nontextual archives (i.e., photographic records, posters, motion pictures, tape recordings, cartographic records, and architectural drawings), electronic records, and online references.

Guidelines for citing publications of the U. S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and other Federal agencies are not given because they can be found in *The Complete Guide to Citing Government Documents: A Manual for Writers and Librarians* (Bethesda, MD: Congressional Information Service, 1984) by Diane L. Garner and Diane H. Smith. Microfilm publications of captured German and related records from World War II involve peculiarities of identification; for guidelines on how to cite them, consult NARA's guides to those records.

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ELEMENTS *of* CITATIONS *to* RECORDS *of* FEDERAL AGENCIES

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In general, citations to textual records of Federal agencies should identify the record item, the file unit, the series, the subgroup, the record group, and the repository. As noted later, nontextual records may require that additional information be cited. As a rule, a citation to archival records should contain as much information as necessary to allow someone to easily locate those records. Not all citations have all the elements described below. The following example, which cites textual records, illustrates the various elements:

Amos T. Ackerman, Attorney General, to Richard Crowley, U.S. Attorney, New York, Nov. 23, 1871; Vol. C, Oct. 27, 1871–Apr. 23, 1873, p. 60; Instruction Books, 1870–1904; General Records, Letters Sent, 1849–1919; General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

**RECORD ITEM:**     **Amos T. Ackerman, Attorney General, to Richard Crowley, U.S. Attorney, New York, Nov. 23, 1871**

The record item is the specific document to which a citation refers. It may be a letter, report, photograph, map, motion picture, or database.

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**FILE UNIT:**        **Vol. C, Oct. 27, 1871–Apr. 23, 1873, p. 60**

The file unit is the file folder, jacket, or bound volume that holds a record. For microform records, it is the roll or fiche number.

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**SERIES:**            **Instruction Books, 1870–1904**

The series is a set of record items or file units arranged according to a filing system or kept together because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, document a transaction, take a particular physical form, or have some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use.

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**SUBGROUP:**        **General Records, Letters Sent, 1849–1919**

The subgroup is a set of series, related by their common origin within an administrative unit or by their connection to a common function or activity. Subgroups may sometimes be formed on the basis of date or geography.

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**RECORD GROUP:**   **General Records of the Department of Justice,  
Record Group 60**

The record group is a major archival unit that comprises the records of a large organization, such as a Government bureau or independent agency.

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**REPOSITORY:**     **National Archives Building, Washington, DC**

The repository is the building or institution in which the records are held.

- ❖ Not all citations have all the elements described above.
- ❖ Do not cite record group and box numbers only. One record group could have several boxes with the same number.
- ❖ Cite the subgroup because identical series titles may be found throughout a record group. For questions concerning subgroup structure, consult the preliminary inventory or other finding aids.
- ❖ Abbreviate subsequent citations to the same record. Researchers can develop abbreviation symbols to fit their own needs. Use parentheses to enclose abbreviation symbols that appear in the initial citation. For instance, if a researcher expects to cite several times from the example on page 2, the citation might appear thus:

Amos T. Ackerman, Attorney General, to Richard Crowley, U.S. Attorney, New York, Nov. 23, 1871 (**Ackerman to Crowley**); Vol. C, Oct. 27, 1871–Apr. 23, 1873, p. 60 (**Vol. C, p. 60**); Instruction Books, 1870–1904 (**IB 1870–1904**); General Records, Letters Sent, 1849–1919 (**Letters Sent, 1849–1919**); General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60 (**RG 60**); National Archives Building, Washington, DC (**NAB**).

In subsequent citations to this record, the citation elements would appear as follows:

**Ackerman to Crowley; Vol. C, p. 60; IB 1870–1904; Letters Sent, 1849–1919; RG 60; NAB.**

- ❖ Abbreviation symbols can be used and listed in an alphabetical table, as below.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library: **FDRL**

Herbert Hoover Library: **HHL**

National Archives Building, Washington, DC: **NAB**

National Archives at College Park, MD: **NACP**

National Archives and Records Administration–Pacific Region  
(San Francisco): **NARA–Pacific Region (SF)**

Record Group: **RG**

*Note: In each of the following examples, the portion of the citation covered by the accompanying rule is **highlighted**.*

1. The record title should precede a file number when both appear in the same citation.

**Request for Writ of Habeas Corpus, Case File 220**; General Case Files; U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, Southern Division (Springfield); Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives and Records Administration—Great Lakes Region (Chicago).

2. The file number is the initial citation element when there is no record or file unit.

**Soldier's Certificate No. 198,214**, William H. Brotherton, Sergeant, Company G, 85th Indiana Infantry; Case Files of Approved Pension Applications of Veterans Who Served in the Army and Navy Mainly in the Civil War and the War with Spain ("Civil War and Later Survivors' Certificates"), 1861–1934; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

**Homestead file No. 2559**, Tom J. McCue, June 6, 1891, Oberlin, Kansas, Land Office; Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

**File 2657-I-281/120**; Declassified General Correspondence, 1917–1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Record Group 165; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

3. When records are in bound volumes, cite the page and volume numbers.

W. H. Shock, Bureau of Steam Engineering, to Rear Adm. G. H. Cooper, Commandant, New York Navy Yard, February 20, 1882; **p. 281, Letter Book 15 S.E., New York Navy Yard**; Letters Received from the Bureau of Steam Engineering; Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments, Record Group 181; National Archives and Records Administration—Northeast Region (New York City).

4. Citations should include enclosures.

Special Order 156, Department of Dakota, Oct. 14, 1869, enclosed in letter from Maj. Gen. A. Baird to the Adjutant General's Office, Nov. 1, 1869; File 793B1869; Letters Received, 1805–1889, Main Series; Correspondence, 1800–1917; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's–1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

5. When citing congressional records, include the complete file number.

*Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation: Are We Doing Enough?*, September 24, 2003; Subcommittee on Crime, Corrections and Victims' Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary (Serial No. J-108-43); 108th Congress; Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

6. Exceptions to the general rules apply when citing personal papers donated to a Presidential library. For the record item and file unit, provide the record or folder title.

Lee White to the President, April 15, 1964; **Hu 2, Executive File**; White House Central Files; Lyndon B. Johnson Papers; Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX.

7. National Archives repositories in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD, should be cited as the "National Archives Building, Washington, DC," and "National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD."

For NARA regional records services facilities, cite the repository as the "National Archives and Records Administration," followed by an en dash, then the name of the region in which the repository is located, followed by the city (as illustrated above in rules 1 and 3). Subsequent citations can be shortened with abbreviations, as in NARA–Northeast Region (NYC). Citations for Presidential libraries should include the full name of the library, followed by the city and state (as illustrated in rule 6).

Bankruptcy file 84544, Crocetti, Dino a/k/a Martin, Dean, January 23, 1946; U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York; Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; **National Archives and Records Administration–Northeast Region (New York City)**.



When microform versions of Federal textual records are cited, follow the rules for citing textual records. After the series, cite the microfilm publication title, followed by the publication's identifying information in parentheses. The information should include the publication number, roll or fiche number, and, if available, frame number(s). After the initial citation, subsequent citations to the same publication may be abbreviated by citing the publication number, roll, and frame or fiche numbers.

Council of War, Proceedings re Penobscot Expedition, July 6–August 14, 1779; Vol. 2, p. 132 of item 65, Massachusetts; *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M247, roll 79); State Papers, 1775–91; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, Record Group 360; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

For some microform records, such as census and passenger arrivals, indicate which type of page number you are citing, such as stamped, handwritten, lower left corner, etc. One page may have more than one number.

Leon C. Stanford; p. 22 [**handwritten**], line 1, Enumeration District 1056, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois Census of Population; *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T624, roll 268); Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29.

Anna Lacek, SS *Noordam* Passenger Manifest, July 11, 1908; **stamped page 82**, line 3; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, 1897–1957* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T715, roll 1122); Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85.

The National Archives accessions microforms from other agencies. If the agency name is the same as the record group title, you do not need to repeat the agency name. Cite the repository where the accessioned microform is held.

“Project Proposal, Bronx Borough, New York City”; Official Project Number 65-97-12; WPA Project Folders, New York

City; (microfilm roll 8383); **Records of the Work Projects Administration, Record Group 69**; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD..

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GUIDELINES *for* CITING NONTEXTUAL RECORDS

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Nontextual records consist of maps, blueprints, architectural drawings, motion pictures, photographs, posters, sound and video recordings, and oral history tapes and transcripts. Because of this variety, the file unit (consisting of the physical form of the record and its file number) is critical. Without it the records cannot be located. In many instances, series and subgroup titles are not identified, which leaves the file unit as the only means of locating a record within a record group.

1. The file unit (physical form and file number) should be the initial citation element. It is followed by the title (caption); the series and subgroup titles, if applicable; record group title and number; and the repository and its location.

**Photograph No. P-456-108-2522**; “Stilling Basin: Close-up View of Upstream Area of Stilling Basin Showing Ice Formations,” January 1955; Palisades Project; Records of the Bureau of Reclamation, Record Group 115; National Archives and Records Administration—Rocky Mountain Region (Denver).

**Sound Recording 208.029**; “You Can’t Do Business with Hitler,” Feb. 12, 1944; Records of the Office of War Information, Record Group 208; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

**Video Recording No. 306.420**; “Press Conference USA,” July 21, 1964; Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Record Group 306; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

**Aerial Photograph, Can #ON007851, EX-1103**; “Aerial Photograph of the Mall in Washington, DC, 06/03/1940”; Aerial Photographs, compiled 1935–1970; Records of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Record Group 393; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

2. The name of the photographer (or artist for a poster) can be placed in parentheses as part of the file unit.

Color Poster No. 44-PA-71 (**Artist James Montgomery Flag**); “I Want You for the U.S. Army/Enlist Now”; Records of the Office of Government Reports, Record Group 44; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

3. File system abbreviations should be parenthetically spelled out.

*Prelude to War*; Motion Picture 111 OF 1 (**Orientation Film No. 1**); Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Record Group 111; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

4. Citations to audiotapes of oral history interviews should include the names of the respondent and the interviewer and the date(s) of the interview, as well as series and subgroup title, if available.

Sound Recording 64.190; **Interview of Herbert Angel by Philip C. Brooks, Jan. 24, Feb. 13, Apr. 5, 1973**; National Archives Oral History Project; Records of the National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 64; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

5. Citations to transcripts of oral history interviews should follow the previous rule, except the page number replaces the sound recording number.

**Transcript (p. 5)**; Interview of Herbert Angel by Philip C. Brooks, Feb. 13, 1973; National Archives Oral History Project; Records of the National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 64; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

6. Sometimes the record title and number are identical to the file title and number. Note in the following example the “Manuscript Map of Sumass Lake area” is the file as well as the map title, and “Map 51” is the file as well as the map number. The map is the 51st map in the 69th series, Miscellaneous Field Maps. The physical form of cartographic records and architectural drawings should be given in brackets.

**Manuscript Map of Sumass Lake area, Map 51 [Cartographic Record]**; Series 69, Miscellaneous Field Maps; Northwestern Boundary, Treaty of 1846; Records of Boundary and Claims

Commissions and Arbitrations, Record Group 76; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

7. File numbers based on an agency filing system retained by the National Archives could yield additional information that may be useful. For instance, in the following example, “District 2” refers to the second lighthouse district (as organized by the Bureau of Lighthouses before its transfer in 1939 from the Commerce Department to the U.S. Coast Guard). “Drawing No. 20-36” means the titled record is the 36th item in drawing 20.

Lighthouse Drawings; “Front Elevation of Light House as Proposed to be Built on Minot’s Ledge, Boston Harbor” [Architectural Drawing]; **District 2, Drawing 20-36**; Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

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#### GUIDELINES *for* CITING RECORDS *in* AFFILIATED ARCHIVES

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Affiliated archives are non–National Archives institutions that hold by formal, written agreement with NARA records that are part of the accessioned holdings of the National Archives of the United States. The current affiliated archives are located at the U.S. Military Academy Archives, West Point, NY; William W. Jeffries Memorial Archives, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD; Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, NM; Yellowstone National Park Archives, Yellowstone, WY; the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, Washington, DC; and Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Citations to records on deposit at affiliated archives should note the repository’s National Archives–Affiliated Archives status, the fact that NARA records are deposited there, and the affiliated archives name and location.

Proceedings of the Academic Board, September 8, 1854; pp. 453–457, Volume for 1851–54; Proceedings (Staff Records); Records of the Office of the Dean of the Academic Board; Records of the U.S. Military Academy, Record Group 404;

**National Archives–Affiliated Archives: record on deposit at the U.S. Military Academy Archives, West Point, NY.**

Preston Beck Grant; SG 1; Surveyor General Case Files; (New Mexico State Records Center and Archives Microfilm Publication: “Land Records of New Mexico,” roll 12, frames 006–485); Surveyor General Records, 1854–92; Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49; **National Archives–Affiliated Archives: record on deposit at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, NM.**

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#### GUIDELINES *for* CITING ELECTRONIC RECORDS

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Electronic records include data files, text files, and digital images. Citations must identify that they are electronic records. A citation for an electronic record will usually be identical to citations for textual records, with the additional insert of [Electronic Record].

Citations to data files that are Federal electronic records begin with the data file title; followed by the physical form of the records, placed in brackets; then any appropriate subseries and series titles; the database title, if any; the record group title and number; and the repository and its location.

**West Germany, Salt II and Security, 1979 (I79006) [Electronic Record];** Surveys of the General Population, 1956– ; Surveys of Foreign Perceptions of International Strength and Security, 1956– ; Attitude Surveys, 1956– ; Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Record Group 306; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

When citing documentation to electronic records, researchers should use the lead phrase “Documentation relating to . . .”

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#### GUIDELINES *for* CITING DIGITIZED DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE *on* NARA’S WEB SITE

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In general, NARA recommends that copies of documents retrieved via online research be cited using the information elements appropriate to the

originals with the addition of a note in brackets indicating the URL of the online version and the date reviewed.

General example:

“Introduction and Links to Resources on Land Entry Case Files and Related Records.” NARA—Genealogists/Family Historians—Land Records. [Online version, *www.archives.gov/genealogy/land*, National Archives and Records Administration, September 25, 2006.]

If the reference example is retrieved from the online catalog, cite only the URL for the catalog. For example:

Archival Research Catalog (ARC) citation:

Patent Drawing of a Toy Horse, 1/22/1867 [Architectural and Engineering Drawings]; Records of the Patent and Trademark Office, Record Group 241; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [online version available through the Archival Research Catalog (ARC identifier 594926) at *www.archives.gov*; November 1, 2006].

Access to Archival Databases (AAD) citation:

Record for Franklin W. Potter; World War II Prisoners of War Data File, 12/7/1941–11/19/1946 [Electronic Record]; Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947; Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at *www.archives.gov*, September 26, 2006].

Online genealogical citations:

James J. Collins, 1920 census, Morris, Morris County, New Jersey, T625, roll 1061, page 6B, ED 29, image 62, *Ancestry.com* (August 25, 2006).

Pension file R9924, Snyder, Margaret, Revolutionary War, *HeritageQuest.com*, Series: M805, Roll 757, Image 777, File R9924, August 25, 2006.

Rock Light

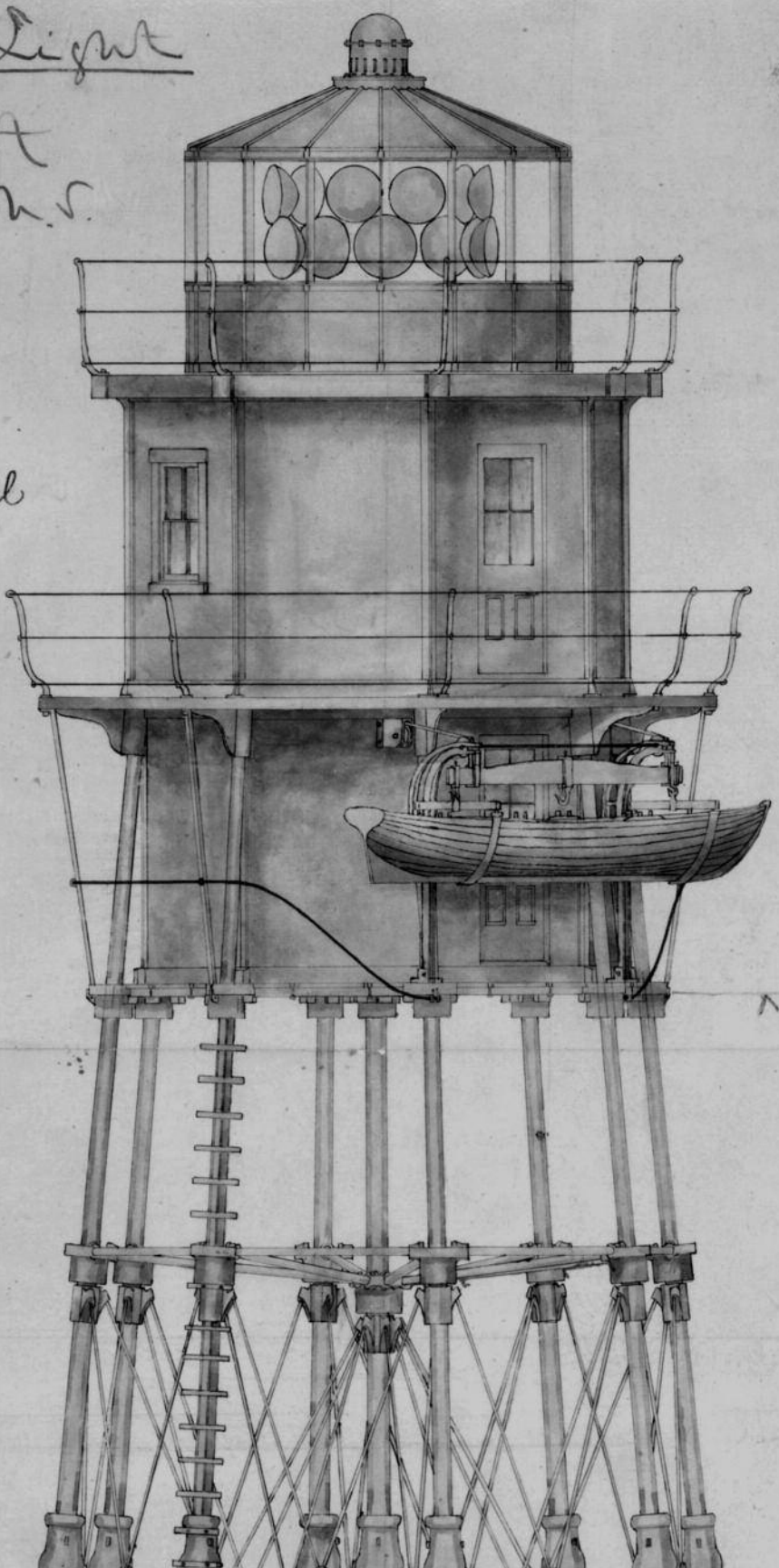
Swift  
light to R.S.

249.

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0 - 1 Jan

1 - 16 April



*Plan of outer rock of the Minot Ledge*

*from survey made under the direction of  
Major C. A. Ogden, Corps of Engineers  
June 1853.*

*Edm d L. F. Hurdcastle  
Eng & Secty. S. W. R. Board  
July 18<sup>th</sup> 1854.*

