

TOWER OF HERCULES

Beacon

The lighting system used after the restoration of the lighthouse was also harshly criticized. Therefore, the *Consulado* decided to improve it and to this end Navy Captain José de Mendoza was sent to London so that he could gather information on the feasibility of building a beacon based on a turning lamp fuelled by oil. By late 1799, the new system arrived in the city. Its high price forced the *Consulado* to make a collection to pay part of the cost.

So as to install the new maritime lighting system it was necessary to make some modifications to the upper section of the Tower. Miguel de Hermosilla, Comanding Engineer of the Kingdom, commissioned Eustaquio Giannini to make the relevant modifications. Basically, these modifications consisted in removing the dome and laying the foundations on these walls to install a beacon with a diameter of 3.20 m.

The large windows of the lantern, now useless, were walled and an inner staircase was built to provide access to the lamp. Besides, an outer spiral staircase was also built. It leads to the upper balcony and which is hidden by a cylinder with a trunco-conical capping, giving the Tower its characteristic profile. It was used to place the lightning conductor.

Once again, in designing this spiral staircase an attempt was made at aesthetically integrating it into the whole and to this end stone of the same quality and colour was used and particularly the outer part was decorated with a helicoidal strip which clearly evokes that of the main section of the lighthouse.

The appointment of Eustaquio Giannini as the senior assistant of the *Comandancia de los Correos Marítimos* of *A Coruña*, on 21 November 1800, determined that the performance of the works were commissioned to his brother, also an engineer, José Giannini, who made all the modifications required in accordance with the drawings made by Eustaquio.

The new beacon was installed between 1804 and 1806, thus taking the Tower to rise 105 meters over the sea level. All these changes were recorded in an interesting anonymous map of 1804 that is kept in the Archive of the cathedral of Santiago.