



# TOWER OF HERCULES

## Iconography of the Tower

The image of the Tower of Hercules is a living and omnipresent image that is so closely linked to the city of A Coruña that it is difficult to identify the city without resorting to the lighthouse. The Tower presides over the City Hall's coat of arms, the *Diputación*, the University, most professional associations and cultural associations, but we also come across its representation in the floor tiles on the pavement of the main streets of the city, on the lampposts of the promenade, in floral arrangements in gardens, as decoration in pies at one of the better-known patisseries of the city or used in the Teresa Herrera Trophy. The presence of the Tower is also apparent in the street map and the place names of the area, as well as in the names of businesses and companies of A Coruña. We are thus talking of the image that identifies the city and which is a symbol of two thousand-year old past that since 2009 is recognised as a site of exceptional, universal value and included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The emblematic value of the image of the Tower is documented as early as in the 15th century when the Tower becomes the symbol of the city, its emblem, an icon countless times repeated in all kinds of places such as rubberstamps, final judgements, navigation charts, coats of arms and signs identifying city council's property that can be found anywhere in the city. There is, however, record of very interesting images of the monument from an earlier time such as the world map of Beato of Burgo de Osma (ca. 1085) or the Hereford Chart (ca. 1280), where "Farum Brigantium" is included as the symbol of *finis terrae*, of the world known.

The trace of the Tower is also apparent in the *portularios de navegación*, i.e., the charts used by seamen in the Late Middle Ages where they recorded the routes, the geographical features of the coast, the ports of harbour and the lighthouses. These *portularios* gave way to the navigation charts of the 16th and 17th centuries which reproduce the image of the Tower of Hercules. Particularly suggestive are the French or British ones, which reproduce the image of the Tower in a most detailed manner. These graphical sources are of particular relevance for the study of the monument as by that time both England and France were potential enemies of the Spanish Crown and, therefore, the Tower was for them in a strategic objective to be destroyed, hence the exactness of its representation.

It will be in the 18th century when both the Spanish Ministry of the Marine and the Consulate of the Sea collaborate to restore and modernize the lighthouse and, as a result of these initiatives, a number of projects were commissioned to military engineers which included drawings, sections and elevations, all of which allow us to know the state of the lighthouse from both the inside and the outside. Furthermore, several engravings and coloured pictures are kept in a variety of archives, which provide us with further information. We also have the drawings that were used in Eustaquio Giannini's reform project of 1789 as well as those published by José Cornide Savedra and Father Padre Flórez, not to mention those dealing with the reform of the beacon. The planimetric catalogue is completed with partial drawings of the refurbishments made during the second half of the 19th century and those of the 20th and 21st century.

Finally, to all these images we should add all those reproductions of the Tower that were made from the 19th century onwards as a consequence of the discovery of photography. The Tower is undoubtedly the monument of A Coruña that is most often repeated in card collections, posters, calendars, stamps, pottery and engravings. More recently, it has become the emblem of city merchandising and an advertising element as well as the most popular image of the city. It is for this reason that its mark is found in every neighbourhood, showing a versatile iconography.