

CURAÇAO, DUTCH CARIBBEAN ROOSEVELT HOUSE

During World War II, oil refineries on Curaçao and Aruba provided 70% of the fuel used by the Allied Forces. United States forces assumed the defense of these strategic islands on February 14, 1942. Just two nights later, German U-boats attacked the refineries and oil tankers, but U.S. forces successfully defended the islands.

After the war, the people of Curaçao pledged a unique gift to symbolize their gratitude: a residence for the U.S. consul general to be constructed on a prime location in the town of Willemstad overlooking the harbor entrance. The Netherlands and the people of Curaçao formally offered the gift of the land and future residence to the U.S. government on October 31, 1945, and President Harry S Truman officially accepted the gift on April 13, 1946. The property would be called Roosevelt House in honor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the leader of the Allied Forces and a U.S. president with Dutch ancestry. The American Consul General in 1947 noted in a letter to acting Governor Dr. C. Suthoff that Roosevelt House is to be "...dedicated as a memorial to the armed forces of my country who served in the Netherlands West Indies during the war, and at the same time to their old Commander-in-Chief, and also as a memorial of perpetual friendship between the peoples of the Netherlands West Indies and the United States."

On March 15, 1950, Governor of the Netherlands West Indies Leonard A.H. Peter officially transferred the building to the United States at a ceremony marking the opening of Roosevelt House. The house is a simple modern vernacular building with painted stucco walls and tiled hipped roof. The library of the house is for visitors and contains a picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The U.S. government selected the three lots the house was built upon and approved the building design before construction began. The house was designed by A.A. van Ammers from the Curacao Public Works department. A memorial rock dedicated to those who served during World War II is displayed on the grounds. The property is included within the boundaries of the 1997 UNESCO World Heritage Site for the Historic City Center of Punda in Willemstad, Curaçao.

