257

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)

OMB No. 1024-0018

**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name **Rodríguez Morales, Juana, House**

other names/site number **Cervoni, Espada, House**

## 2. Location

street & number **7 Nuñez Romeu Street** ☐ not for publication _____
city or town **Cayey** ☐ vicinity _____
state **Puerto Rico** code **PR** county **Cayey** code **035** zip code **00737**

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this **X** nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property **X** meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally **X** statewide **X** locally. (___See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

**Elizabeth Solá Oliver**
Signature of certifying official

FEB · 2 · 2005
Date

**Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office**
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____
Signature of commenting official/Title

_____
Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall

__V__ entered in the National Register
_____ See continuation sheet.
_____ determined eligible for the National Register
_____ See continuation sheet.
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain):

Signature of Keeper — Date of Action: 4/6/05

## 5. Classification

| Ownership of Property: | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property: Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ Private | X building(s) | 1 | 1 | buildings |
| X public-local | ___ district | 0 | 0 | sites |
| ___ public-State | ___ site | 0 | 0 | structures |
| ___ public-Federal | ___ structure | 0 | 0 | objects |
| | ___ object | 1 | 1 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
**N/A**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: **0**

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
Cat: **Domestic** Sub: **Single Dwelling**
**Commerce** **Professional**

Current Functions:
Cat: **Not in use** Sub: _____

## 7. Description

***Architectural Classification***:
*Spanish Creole Townhouse*

***Materials***
foundation **Brick**
roof **Metal**
walls **Wood**
**Brick**
Other: **Concrete**

Narrative Description: **(See continuation sheets)**

## 8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_____ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
_____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
__X__ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
_____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations:

_____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
_____ B removed from its original location.
_____ C a birthplace or a grave.
_____ D a cemetery.
_____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
_____ F a commemorative property.
_____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance: **Architecture**

Significant Person: **N/A**

Period of Significance **1850**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Significant Dates: **1850**

Architect/Builder: **Unknown**

Narrative Statement of Significance: **(See continuation sheets)**

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography **(See continuation sheets)**

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
_____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_____ previously listed in the National Register
_____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
_____ designated a National Historic Landmark
_____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
_____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
__X__ State Historic Preservation Office
__X__ Other State agency
_____ Federal agency
__X__ Local government
_____ University
_____ Other
Name of repository:
**Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, Municipality of Cayey**

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: **less than one acre**

UTM References:

| Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **19** | **799850** | **2005115** | 3 | |
| 2 | | | | 4 | |

Verbal Boundary Description **(See continuation sheet)**
Boundary Justification **(See continuation sheet)**

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Héctor F. Santiago Cazull, President**
organization **ConservAcción, Inc.** date **September 2003**
street & number **168 Calle San Jorge #3** telephone **787-722-6302**
city or town **San Juan** state **PR** zip code **00911**

## Property Owner

name **Municipality of Cayey**
street & number **PO Box 371330** telephone **787-715-6604**
city or town **Cayey** state **PR** zip code **00737**

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

***Summary***

*The Juana Rodríguez Morales House, better known as the Espada-Cervoni House is located in the center of the town of Cayey, on a lot facing the town plaza. The property is composed of the main building and one small outbuilding. The main house is a two-story, wood and brick-masonry, mixed-use residential building with a tall, hipped, sheet-metal roof in the vernacular style or mode commonly referred to as "Criollo" or Creole, and in the typology commonly known as "Casa Criolla Urbana, de Altos" (two-story Creole townhouse). The house possesses a typical "martillo" (hammer shaped) courtyard plan, consisting of a rectangular core or main volume located along the front boundary line and parallel to the adjacent street and sidewalk, and a rear service wing, which projects northward from the west side of the rear or north façade of the core. The resulting "L" - shaped plan creates a courtyard at the rear, onto which open many of the interior spaces. At the north end of the yard there is a small 20th century wooden outbuilding in ruinous condition, which is a noncontributing resource. Although the property is not in use and has suffered deterioration in its exterior elements it still retains integrity in the workmanship, location, materials.*

*The Juan Rodríguez Morales House stands on the north side of Nuñez Romeu Street, near the approximate center of the block defined by Muñoz Rivera Street, to the west, and Palmer Street, to the east. The house is cramped tightly into its urban lot, which measures approximately 11 meters along the front boundary and 16 along the side, leaving only very narrow passages on either side and at rear. . The core volume measures 35' 7" wide and 25' deep, and is sheltered by a high, hipped roof, sheathed with corrugated sheet metal. The service wing extends 26' northward from the rear façade of the core volume and measures 12' 8" deep, and is sheltered by a cross-hipped roof, also sheathed in corrugated sheet metal.*

*The front or south façade of the house measures 35' 7" wide and approximately 18' high, from the street line to the roof girders. The façade's architectural modulation is dictated by a series of eight doorways (four on each floor), arranged at equal distances along the width of the façade and aligned between the two stories. All doorways occupy almost the entire height of the corresponding story. Since the property has been boarded-up, all the doorways at the ground floor have been covered over with plywood panels and boards. Behind the boards, the first entrance on the left has a broken, metal-frame and glass commercial-fare door. The second, third and fourth doorways on the lower level possess wooden, board and batten paired casement doors with no windows. At the upper story, all doorways possess outward-opening wooden paired casement doors, each with rectangular panels at the lower segment, and operable jalousie panels at the upper segments. Between the doorways on both stories, much of the 7" wide tongue-and-groove horizontal clapboards, installed in the early XX century, survive intact, although deteriorated by weathering. At the upper level, across the width of the building a continuous balcony projects from the façade. The balcony is supported by a series of wooden joist that project outward from the main timber frame, assisted by simple wooden bracket timbers on either end. The*

*balcony is articulated by a series of seven (7) slender, equidistantly distributed, lathed wood balcony posts. Each post consists of a simple dado, which supports a slender column composed of a base, a tapered shaft, and an oddly high, rectangular capital, similar to, but smaller than the lower dado. The columns support a continuous wooden lintel, which, in turn, supports the balcony's corrugated sheet-metal skirt roof. A high-hipped roof originally covered with ceramic mission-style tiles, crowns the façade but now it is entirely sheathed with corrugated sheet metal.*

*The rear façade of the core volume, which faces the courtyard, is a simple and irregular composition, perforated only by a few doors and windows, irregularly distributed in response to the necessities of the interior spaces. Only a wooden paired casement door and a single-leaf door – both board-and-batten – provide access to the ground story, whereas only one window with board-and-batten shutters provides air and light into the stair hall at the upper story. The wall of this façade has been covered with asphalt sheets at some time in the mid- to late XX century. The courtyard façade of the service wing has greater architectural articulation, in contrast to the core volume's courtyard façade. At the ground level, one set of solid, board-and-batten paired casement doors and three single-leaf board-and-batten doors provide access into two commercial-storage rooms. At the upper level, two sets of board-and-batten paired casement doors open into two respective rooms, originally dedicated to kitchen and dining areas. A cantilevered wooden balcony, overlooking the courtyard, spans the length of the service wing and serves as a gallery to the rooms along that part of the upper story.*

*The west façade of the house faces a very narrow side alley, and possesses only five sequential sets of windows with board-and-batten shutters, distributed throughout the depth of the lower level, and four similar windows at the upper level. The wooden clapboards at this lateral façade have been almost entirely sheathed over with galvanized tin sheets. The building's east façade, which consists of two sets of windows, two on each floor, has been totally covered by the building located at the adjacent property.*

*A small, ruinous outbuilding (25' wide X 7' deep) made of wood upon a concrete foundation and low concrete wall bases, stands across the north end of the lot, attached to the service wing, thus partially enclosing the courtyard. The single-pitched wood and corrugated sheet-metal roof, and the wooden upper segments of the wall of this building have caved in almost entirely. This building was constructed near the middle of the XX century and housed commercial storage and workshop areas, which abuts it.*

*The house is constructed almost entirely of native hardwood timber framework, including original and reused timbers, tied together by mortise and tendon joinery. The structural framework consists of massive, hand-sawn and roughly-cut timber posts, measuring approximately 8" to 10" square in plan, distributed more-or-less regularly along the outer frame and along a transversal centerline through the core volume, parallel to the front façade. These posts support similarly produced hardwood girders, which in turn support the floor joist and lighter framework of the upper story. Smaller hand-sawn hardwood posts, measuring approximately 4" X*

*4", create the framework for receiving the exterior wallboards. At the interior, only the central living space at the core volume has wooden sheathing over the structural frame. All other rooms have exposed framework, allowing the exterior clapboards to be seen from within. The framework is sheathed at the exterior with a combination of original, irregular, butt-edged, hardwood clapboards, ranging from approximately 6" to over 13" in width; early XX century tongue-and-groove pine clapboards measuring 7" wide; early XX century tin sheet repairs with a faux-brick pattern and late XX century, 4' X 8' grooved plywood panels, the latter implemented only for partial remedial repairs. Only the east wall at the ground level is made of stuccoed masonry. The wall measures 31" thick and is composed of irregular, fired terra-cotta bricks measuring 10 ½" X 5 ¼" X 1 ¾", and faced with a XX century cement stucco, over ½" thick. Physical evidence shows that the brick wall did not originally possess stucco, but was lime washed. The hipped roof structure is made of hand-sawn hardwood rafters, measuring approximately 4" X 4", with queen post trusses supporting the ends of the ridge beams.*

*As is common for this building typology, the ground story has always been used for commercial space, workshops, service quarters and storage. As such, the interior of the core volume was generally subdivided into large naves, perpendicular to the street, taking advantage of the structural posts. In this building the structural framework was left visible to the interior, except at the entrance hall, which was originally located behind the third entrance from the left. This spatial distribution at the ground floor of the core volume would have allowed for two or three commercial and/or shop areas, each with entrances directly from the street. Today, the core volume's ground story is divided into three large naves: one occupying nearly half of the area, to the east, and two narrow naves occupying the western half. The westernmost commercial space has been subdivided into two consecutive rooms, and its walls have been sheathed with modern plywood paneling installed in the 1970's. The ground story of the service wing is also divided into two rooms: a larger room adjacent to the core volume, and a smaller room at the far rear. The northwestern corner of the smaller room has been subdivided, by virtue of wooden posts and clapboards, in order to create a small bathroom area.*

*The upper story, which served as family housing, was originally accessed from a "zaguán" or entrance hall, located on the ground story, behind the third entrance door from the left. The "zaguán" communicated the street with the courtyard, and accessed a wooden return stair, oriented perpendicular to the hallway. The stair has been modified and currently is accessed from the courtyard, along a narrow alley between the building and the adjacent property to the east. The wooden stair, leads up, in a westerly direction, onto a vestibule located at the approximate center of the rear of the house's core volume. The vestibule has doors with leads into the house's living and service areas.*

*On the left or south of the vestibule, a paired casement door with wooden jalousies opens into the main living area of the home, located at the center of the core volume. The walls of this room are articulated with a stringcourse cornice, surround molds and a wooden chair rail. Above the below the chair rail, the walls are*

*sheathed with a wide butt-jointed boards made of native hardwoods, which vary in width from 6" to over 13". The floors are also sheathed with butt-jointed pine boards, associated with a mid-XX century repair. The ceilings are made of original hardwood butt-jointed boards. At the south wall of the living area, two paired casement doors with louver shutters open out onto the balcony, overlooking the street. On the east and west walls of the living area, four single-casement paneled doors – two at each wall – lead, respectively, into the house's four bedrooms, which flank the living room, two on either side. These four bedrooms have exposed framework, plywood panel floors and original butt-jointed wooden ceilings. This spatial distribution it typical of this house type and is, perhaps, the most common vernacular floor plan in XVIII and XIX century Creole urban town houses of the middle and upper classes in Puerto Rico.*

*On the west side of the entrance vestibule, opposite the stairway, a door opening leads into a small narrow room, which is actually an extension of the stair-hall/vestibule. This small chamber has decorative hydraulic-cement floor tiles, laid over wooden joists and floorboards. On the north side of the vestibule, a board-and-batten single-casement shutters opens out onto the courtyard, and a single-casement board and batten door opens out onto the balcony or gallery that accesses the service wing. The gallery spans the length of the service wing and is architecturally defined by four slender balcony posts, distributed equidistantly across the gallery's length. Each post consist of a dado or base, a cylindrical shaft and a decorative wooden capital composed of interlocking mensulae. These decorative brackets articulate the tops of the columns, and serve as lateral supports for the gallery's lintel beam, which, in turn, supports the balcony's rafters and lean-to skirt roof. Two sets of paired casement doors with operable louvers provide access from the gallery, into the two main service rooms. The first room is simple rectangular space, with exposed framework and a ceiling made of tongue-and groove boards. Based on the common spatial distribution of this house type, this first room probably originally served as either a dining area or domestic service quarters. The second room, located at the north end of the service wing, is similar in character but larger, and includes two small bathroom areas, located against the north wall, subdivided with wooden partition walls from the main room. Based on the common traits of the typology, the existing bathroom area was probably the location of the original wood-burning kitchen, while the remaining portion of the room probably housed a pantry and/or the dining area. The tall attic space, know historically as the "sobrado" reveals the fine native hardwood timber construction and naval quality workmanship. This space was not historically used for any purpose other than ventilation. Electric and telephone lines are wired through this space in the early twentieth century.*

*Integrity statement*

*The Juana Rodríguez Morales or Espada-Cervoni House conserves a high degree of integrity of design, since it maintains its overall form, volume and spatial distribution. Although the original tile roof was replaced in the very early XX century, the replacement roof is traditional and representative of its time. Therefore, the house also conserves a high degree of integrity of materials, as it is, nonetheless, almost entirely built of wood, despite the fact that some of its parts have been replaced and repaired. Despite the inappropriate and often shoddy repairs that have been performed in a piecemeal fashion, the house maintains a high degree of integrity in workmanship, since it conserves its original artisan timber frame construction, fine original carpentry in the doors and balconies, and much of the original interior and exterior surface sheathing materials. Integrity of location has not been affected, since the house has never been moved from its original site. The setting of the house has, unfortunately, been significantly altered – as occurs in most urban settings – but principal features of the setting, such as the relationship of the house to the public square, the Parrish Church, and other important XIX and early XX century buildings, is conserved. Integrity of association and feeling are both high, as the building clearly and well represents the lifestyle and architecture of Cayey in the mid XIX century.*

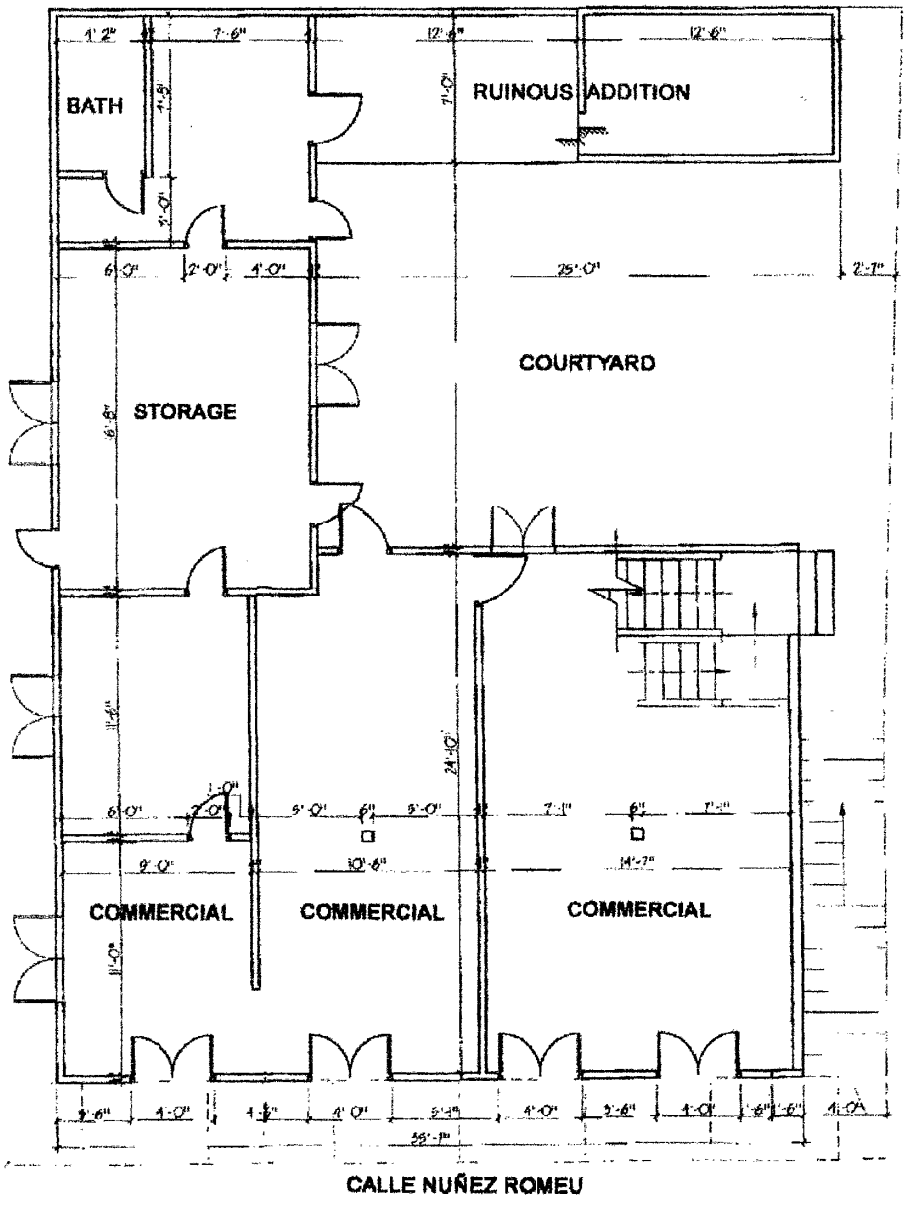


**Figure 1: Ground floor plan. Base plan courtesy of Davis-Fuster Arquitectos.**

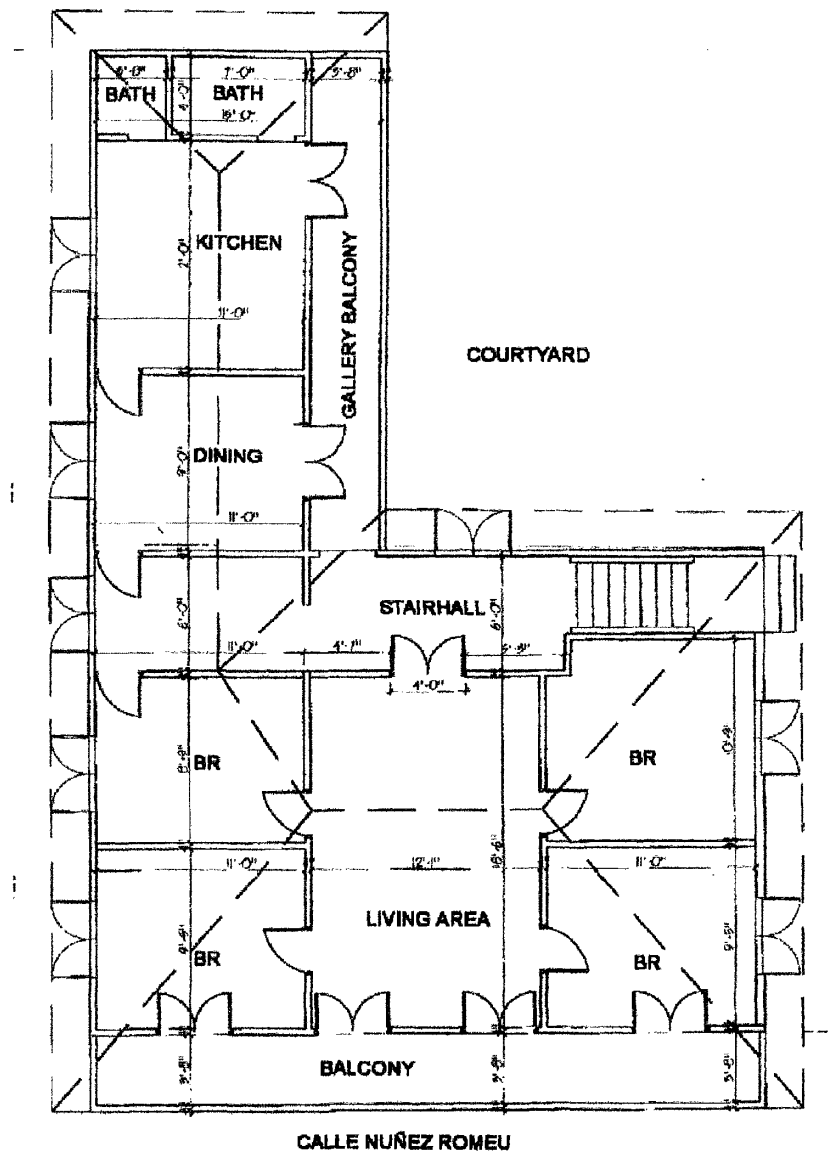


**Figure 2: Upper story plan. Base plan courtesy of Davis-Fuster Arquitectos.**

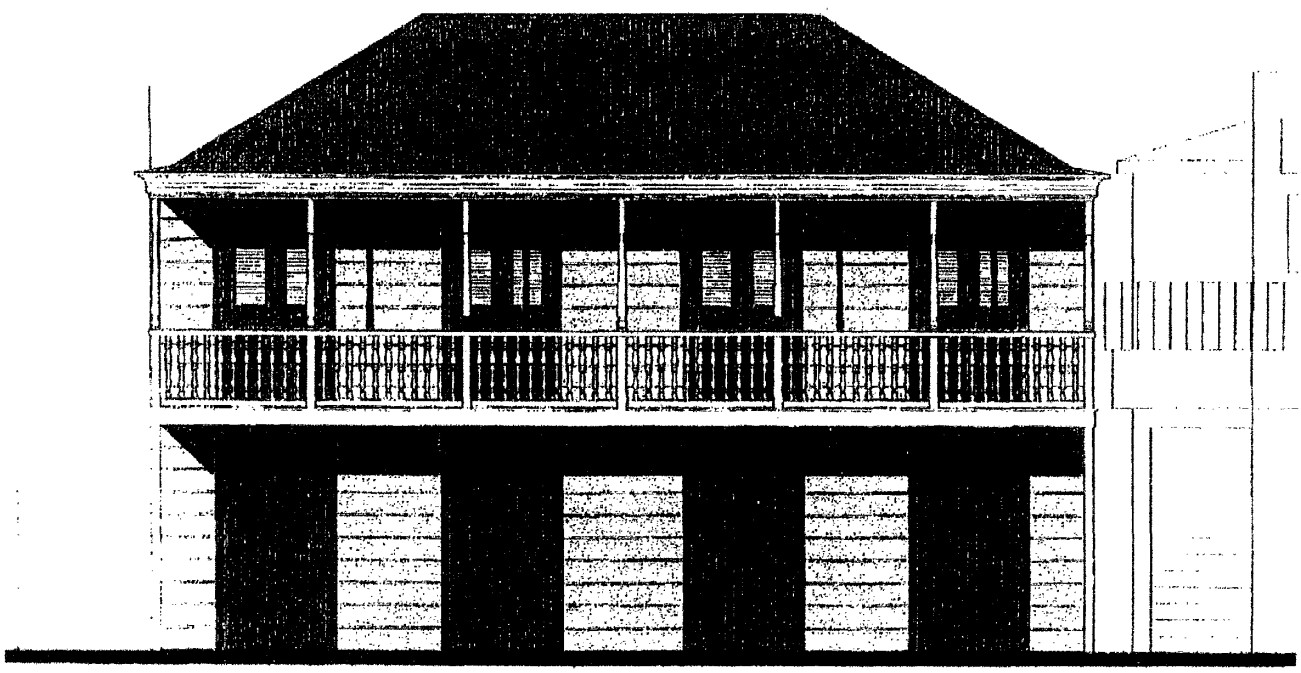

**Figure 3: Reconstruction of front facade, based on physical evidence. Drawing courtesy of Davis-Fuster Arquitectos.**

## NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

***Summary***

*The Juana Rodríguez Morales House, built in 1850, is significant at local and state level for its architectural value as an excellent example a local vernacular type and is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The property is significant at local level as being one of the*

*Background History of the town of Cayey*

*Since the sixteenth century, the most common dwelling houses of Puerto Rico have been described by chroniclers as rustic cottages made of wood, and covered with palm thatch, wood shingles or ceramic tiles. In 1782, Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra described the houses of the Spaniards and other well to do people of San Juan as follows:*

> *"made of rubble work, covered with tile, some have a flat terrace roof. Never do they build more than one upper story, which is generally made of wooden boards, sometimes roofed with bricks"*[1]

*In his chronicles of site visits to the towns and countryside outside of San Juan, Abbad y Lasierra described the wooden and thatch homes of the average peasant and poor town dwellers as having been inspired by the houses of the Island's extinct native Indians. The houses were generally small, one-story shacks made of timber and palm boards, elevated above ground level upon wooden columns, and roofed with palm thatch. With regard to the homes of the better off, Abbad y Lassierra added:*

> *Not all the houses on the Island are so small or grotesque: some are covered with tile, made of well adjusted and nailed wooden boards, with living areas and divisions; but always upon beams and of the same type, that they form a strange town, of a melancholic aspect, to which contributes the fact that the houses are usually without inhabitants, since they always live at the haciendas and cattle ranches, going to town only for festivities, during which they go to Mass."*[2]

*Puerto Rican painter, José Campeche y Jordán, captured a very similar rural home in his painting entitled "Dama a caballo". The neoclassical painter depicted an aristocratic woman riding upon a lavishly decorated horse. In the far background stood a rectangular wooden building, raised upon wooden columns and crowned by a steep, hipped roof. The building represented the vernacular architecture of the Puerto Rican countryside,*

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[1] *Fray Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lassiera. Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista, 99. (Translation by the author).*

[2] *Ibid., 113. (Translation by author)*

*as built by the landowning classes of the late XVIII century. These buildings were constructed out of abundant local hardwoods such as mahogany and ironwood, and covered with wooden boards and palm thatch, shingles or ceramic tiles. Although these dwellings were rather rustic and rural in character, it was precisely this building type that predominated in Augusto Plee's drawings and engravings of various Puerto Rican town centers in 1821-1823. In these drawings, various towns of Puerto Rico were depicted as small settlements of numerous rectangular, hip-roofed, wooden buildings, elevated upon a series of thin pilotis or columns. The buildings were either randomly dispersed – as in the case of Hormigueros – or huddled around the church in a somewhat orderly fashion, as in Caguas, Guayama and San Germán. This should not come as a surprise, since many of the Puerto Rican towns of the late XVIII and early XIX century had only recently been established under the initiative of groups of agrarian landowners and immigrants. Their urban dwellings were thus usually built out of the excellent woods that were so abundant throughout most of the Island, in a fashion very similar to their rural dwellings.*

*In 1773 Governor of Puerto Rico Miguel de Muesas founded the town of Cayey. In 1782, Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra described the recently founded village as an enclave of six or seven homes, organized around a small church. Pío López Martínez, local historian of Cayey, quotes an unidentified source, stating that in the year 1826, eleven well-built homes, with shingle roofs, were constructed in the town center.[3] Only 12 years later, Pedro Tomás de Córdova stated that 45 substantial homes existed in Cayey in 1838[1]. In 1853, the town center of Cayey was described as having seventy (70) substantial houses (not including small shacks known as "bohíos"), of which only eight (8) boasted ceramic tile roofs.[4] An undated document, written shortly thereafter (circa 1855-1860), tallies the number of well-built homes in Cayey at 91.[5] Finally, in 1877, Manuel Ubeda y Delgado describes the town as possessing a total of 199 homes.[6]*

*<u>The importance of the property at local urban context</u>*
*The house at Calle Nuñez Romeu #7 is located in the center of the town of Cayey, on a lot facing the town plaza and adjacent to the "Casa del Rey" (King's House or Government House). The building's central location identifies it as the property of a prominent local family, and possibly of one of the founding families of Cayey, as usually, only such citizens owned lots or homes facing the public square. The building may have been, in fact, one of the six or seven homes identified by Abbad y Lassierra as being located around the public square in 1782. Unfortunately, this cannot be determined without performing significant scientific and archaeological studies on the building fabric and lot, but a conscientious analysis of the descriptions of the city's building stock*

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*[3] Pío López Martínez, <u>Historia de Cayey</u>. (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1972), 39. Note that López Martínez quotes the fact, but does not provide a reference.*
*[1] Pedro Tomás de Cordova, <u>Memorias geográficas, históricas, económicas y estadísticas de la Isla de Puerto Rico</u>, 2nd edition, [page].*
*[4] AGPR. Fondo de Obras Municipales, Serie de Cayey. Docket 17a, File 1.*
*[5] AGPR. Fondo de Obras Municipales, Serie de Cayey. Docket 17a, File 1.*
*[6] López, 42-43. From Manuel Ubeda y Delgado, <u>Isla de Puerto Rico. Estudio histórico, geográfico y estadístico de la misma</u>. [page]*

*provides a reasonable approximation of the building's construction date. López Martinez's quote regarding the construction of numerous shingle-roofed homes in 1826, coupled with the known construction of the Government House between 1825 and 1828*[7]*, suggests this was an important period in the urban development of the town, and that shingles were possibly the most common or preferred roofing material at the time. It is, nonetheless possible, that the house – which is remarkably similar to the "Casa del Rey" in typology, details and proportions – originally possessed a shingle roof, which was subsequently replaced with ceramic tile, as this was a common improvement to this type of urban dwelling during much of the XIX century. By 1853, there were eight tile-roofed homes in the town, probably all around the public square or in central locations very near to it, and belonging to the wealthier citizens. Hurricane San Felipe, that struck the Island of Puerto Rico in 1876, caused serious damage to many homes in Cayey, probably stripping away ceramic roof tiles. By this time, corrugated zinc roofing had become a commonplace modern substitute for ceramic tile in Puerto Rico, shingle and thatch roofs, and as a repair material for roofs damaged by hurricanes.*[8] *It was, therefore, highly unlikely that a home with ceramic tile roof would be built in Cayey after 1876. Legal documents confirm the existence of the building since at least 1877.*

*The house was built in the same vernacular mode and constructive typology as the "Casa del Rey". Such was the similarity between these two buildings, that local oral history has consistently confused them to this date. In 1853 the Government House was described as a two-story building, measuring 18 "varas" (15.12 meters) wide and twelve "varas" (10.08) deep, constructed entirely of wood, with a shingle roof.*[9] *The building was similar to many of the public buildings and private homes of the upper classes that could be found in the urban centers of smaller towns and cities of Puerto Rico. Considering the property's simple, vernacular architectural vocabulary and its prime location on the main street, facing the town square and adjacent to the Government House, it is probable that this house was one of those eight tile roof homes identified in the 1853 description of Cayey. In 1878, the house, then owned by Don Miguel Muñoz, was described as a two-story structure made of native woods, with a ceramic-tile roof. Oddly enough, the lot measured 12 "varas" (10.08 meters) in width and 18 "varas" (15.12 meters) in depth, precisely the inverse of the Government House in proportions.*[10]

*Given the above information, it stands to reason that, although it is possible the house may have been built at any time after 1773 and subsequently improved; the building was probably constructed at about the date of construction of the "Casa del Rey" (1828), probably before 1853, and clearly prior to 1877.*

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[7] *López, 84-85.*
[8] *Héctor F. Santiago Cazull. "Corrugated Zinc Roofing in Vernacular Puerto Rican Buildings". TMs, May, 1986.*
[9] *AGPR. Fondo de Obras Públicas, Serie Obras Municipales, Cayey. Legajo 17.*
[10] *Puerto Rico Property Register, Cayey Section, Volume 9, page 70.*

*History of the property*

*Doña Juana Rodríguez Morales, whose life story is as of yet unknown, is the earliest known owner of the building. Don Miguel Muñoz, local businessman and resident of Cayey, purchased the building and property from Doña Juana in 1877.*[11] *After owning it for only one year, Muñoz sold the property on August 6, 1878 to Doña María Soledad Vázquez y González, widow of Juan José Nogueras Lebrón*[12]*. At the time, the house was one of approximately two-hundred commercial-dwelling houses existing in Cayey,*[13] *most of which were constructed of wood, with roofs made of either ceramic tile, wood shingles, corrugated sheet-metal or palm thatch. After Doña María sold the house to her son, Juan José Nogueras Vázquez, the house continued to be passed down within the Nogueras family line until 1937, when it was ceded to Mateo Orraca Martínez, in payment of an unpaid mortgage debt. Mateo Orraca subsequently sold the property to Ricardo Espada Cordero in 1948. Finally, Espada Cordero bequeathed the property in 1962 to his legitimate offspring, David, Pura and Ricardo Espada Cervoni. The Espada Cervoni family maintained ownership of the building until 2003, when the Municipality of Cayey purchased it. The property is currently in the process of being restored by the Municipality of Cayey in order to conserve and restore it as a historical resource.*

*Statewide significance*

*The Juana Rodríguez Morales house is one of the very rare surviving examples of the vernacular architecture, which characterized the towns and villages of rural Puerto Rico during the late XVIII century and most of the XIX century. In spite of the house's deteriorated state, it is perhaps one of the most integrally conserved examples of this dwelling type. The building conserves most of significant character-defining elements of the type. It conserves the following:*

- *Complete or nearly-complete wooden construction*
- *Martillo type plan, forming a private courtyard*
- *Two-story, mixed usage type*
- *Rough-hewn hardwood timber framework with fine mortise and tenon joinery*
- *Substantial original hardwood wallboards and floorboards*
- *Wooden stairway*
- *Tall, hipped roof structure*
- *Two bay X three bay layout at the core volume; railroad layout at the rear wing*
- *Cantilevered wooden balcony at the upper story façade*

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[11] *AGPR. Protocolos Notariales, Serie Guayama. Box 320, pages 0265809-0265810. Deed No. 186, August 6, 1878, by Notary Casimiro Morales.*
[12] *Puerto Rico Property Registry. Cayey Section. Volume 9. Page 70*
[13] *López, 42.*

- *Cantilevered wooden gallery along the rear wing, overlooking the courtyard*
- *Fine carpentry craftsmanship, as seen in constructive details*
- *Historic hardware (hinges, locks, latches, crossbars)*

*The building has lost some important character-defining elements. Although these have affected the appearance of the house with respect to its original aspect, these modifications are common to the few surviving examples of this architectural type, and do not significantly affect the integrity of the building as a representative of its type:*

- *The tile roof found in XIX century descriptions was replaced with corrugated zinc sheathing, probably shortly after 1899, when Hurricane San Ciriaco destroyed or seriously affected most of the homes in Cayey, including all the structures facing the town square.*[14]
- *The first segment of the stair has been isolated from the second, and the entrance procession altered. This modification is reversible, since the first segment still survives.*
- *Spatial partitions at the ground story have been modified. This does not affect integrity, as these partitions were often modified to accommodate varying commercial, storage, stable, and other uses.*
- *Spatial distribution at the upper story has been minimally modified in the mid XX century to accommodate new bathroom facilities.*
- *A small accessory structure was constructed at the rear, at an unknown date between 1937 and 1948.*[15] *This structure does not contribute to the significance of the building and is in a ruinous, collapsed state.*
- *Exterior wallboards were partially replaced at an unknown date, probably in the 1940's, with tongue-and-groove imported pine clapboards. Parts of the exterior walls have been covered over with galvanized zinc sheathing, as a protective measure against sun and rain deterioration.*
- *A concrete floor has replaced the original wooden floor, at the ground story.*
- *Many of the floorboards at the upper level have been replaced with plain 4' X 8' plywood sheets.*
- *Deterioration due to termites, weathering and abandon has partially destroyed the balcony, floors, ceilings and many of the original exterior doors.*

*Few of these buildings have survived to this date, most succumbing to the highly deleterious effects of the tropical climate, hurricanes, abandon and contempt. Few others with reasonable integrity and in similar condition to this one have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places as excellent examples of their vernacular architectural and constructive typology.*

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[14] *López, 229.*
[15] *Puerto Rico Property Register, Cayey Section, Vol. 70, 38.*

*The Juana Rodríguez Morales or Espada-Cervoni House is, furthermore, the oldest-known surviving wooden structure and the best example of its typology in the town of Cayey. The house is one of the most integral examples of its vernacular Creole or "Criollo" townhouse type surviving in Puerto Rico, comparable with – among others – the Machín House in San Lorenzo and the Gonzalo Marín 101 House in Arecibo, both of which are listed in the National Register.*

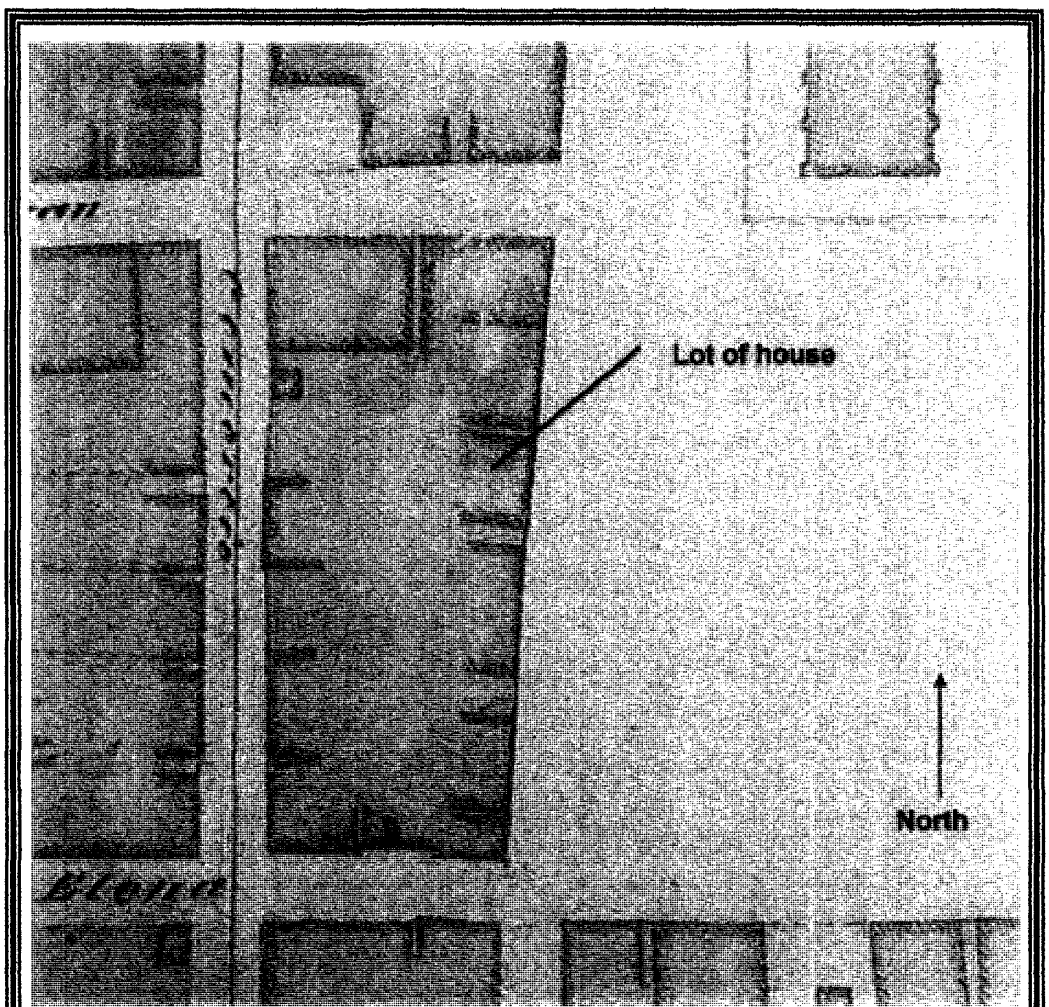


**Figure 4: Detail of a plan of Cayey, ca. 1880, showing the existence and location of the house.**

**Figure 5: Detail of a photograph taken circa 1910 along Calle Nuñez Romeu. The house at center is the Juana Rodríguez Morales or Espada-Cervoni House. Photo reproduced from: Oficina Estatal de Preservación Histórica and Héctor Santiago Cazull. *Reconocimiento de Edificios Históricos Urbanos.* September, 1999.**

**Figure 6: Photo of a funeral procession, taken circa 1920, in front of the Casa del Rey or Government House of Cayey. Adjacent, to the right, is the Juana Rodríguez Morales or Espada-Cervoni House. Reproduced from López Martínez, Pio. *Historia de Cayey.* p. 85**

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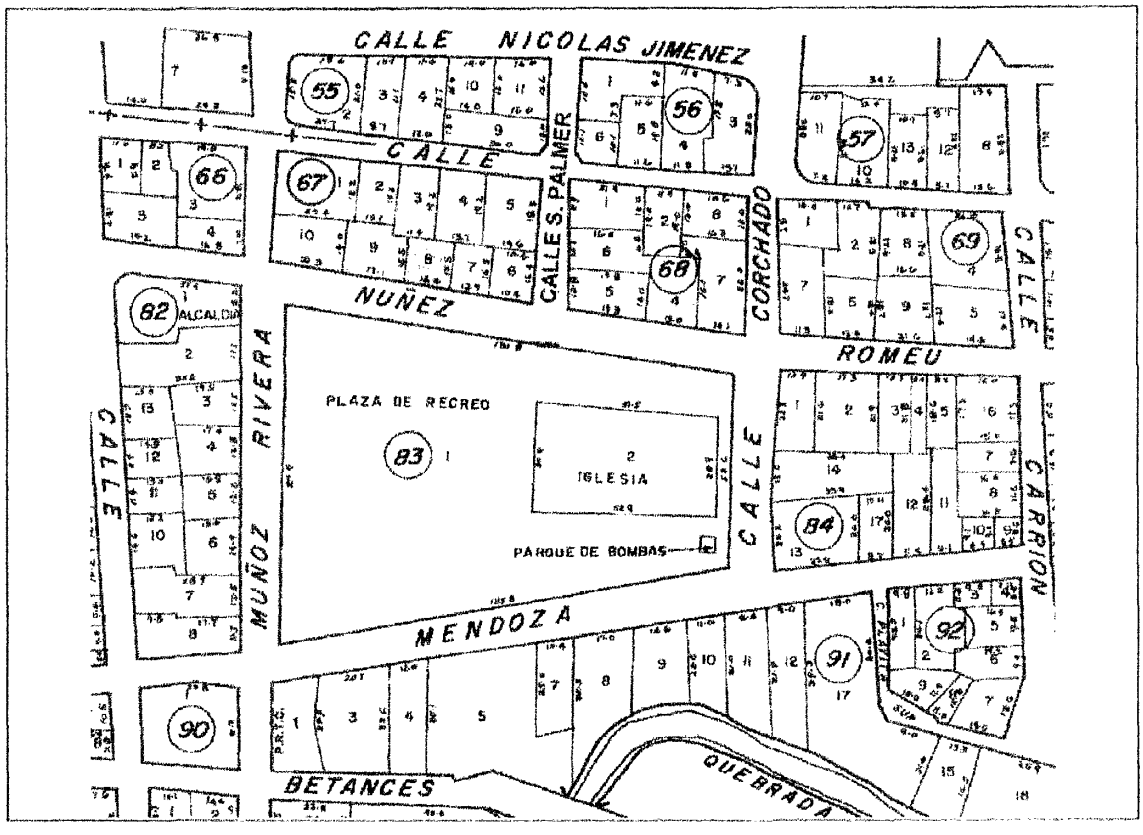
**Verbal Boundary Description:**

*The property is identified in the lot number 8, on block number 67, in the Tax Maps for the Municipality of Cayey. The property is located is a rectangular urban lot, measuring 10.31 meters wide and 15.05 meters deep, with its South or front boundary along calle Nuñez Romeu; its right or east boundary along an adjacent lot belonging to Manuel Orraca Torres and José Orraca Martínez; its left or west boundary along an adjacent lot belonging to Joaquín Jiménez Matute; and its north or rear boundary with adjacent lots belonging to Mateo Orraca Martínez and María Rivera, widow of Rivera (see enclosed site map).*

**Boundary Justification:**

*The property is located in the plot of land historically associated with the building.*

*Site Map*
Scale 1:1,000



*All photographs of this property were taken by Héctor Santiago Cazull, on September 3, 2003. All original negatives are located on file at the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office, San Juan, Puerto Rico.*

| *Photo #* | *Description of view* | *Direction of camara* |
|---|---|---|
| *1* | *General view of main façade on Calle Nuñez Romeu* | *North* |
| *2* | *General view of upper story and roof at main façade* | *North* |
| *3* | *Detail of balcony, showing original wooden balustrades, columns, clapboards and metal sheathing over boards* | *North* |
| *4* | *General view of commercial space at lower story. Notice the rough-hewn timber post and linter structure and the original wooden floorboards, above* | *Northwest* |
| *5* | *Detail of rough-hewn hardwood timber post at the west wall of the service wing at the ground floor. Notice the wedge, evidencing the previous existence of a wooden floor.* | *Northwest* |
| *6* | *Detail of original, but modified entrance stair, from the middle commercial space at the lower story.* | *Northwest* |
| *7* | *Detail of entrance stair from the foot of the steps* | *West* |
| *8* | *General view of dwelling vestibule, upper story, and entrance door to the living area. Notice the wide wallboards and the original doors and hinges.* | *West* |
| *9* | *General view of living room. Notice the wide wallboards, the original doors to the balcony and the deteriorated conditions of the front area.* | *South* |
| *10* | *Detail of door from living room to vestibule, showing original iron latch, with door to service wing gallery in the background* | *Northwest* |
| *11* | *Detail of original wrought-iron latch at door from vestibule to service gallery* | *North* |
| *12* | *Detail of queen-truss wood frame roof at kitchen area of service wing* | *North* |
| *13* | *General view of service gallery, from window at north wall of vestibule* | *North* |
| *14* | *View of service wing and gallery from the courtyard* | *West* |
| *15* | *View of service wing gallery, showing door and window toward the vestibule. Note traditional repair work at lower part of door and hardware on window.* | *South* |
| *16* | *Detail of wooden capital at center of service wing gallery, showing the quality of the original woodwork and the interlocking parts which compose it* | *Southeast* |