NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

RECEIVED
2280
NATIONAL REGISTER, HISTORY
& EDUCATION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

OMB No. 1024-0018

423

1. Name of Property

historic name **Torrens Bridge**

other names/site number **Bridge #208, Puente Blanco, Puente Colorao**

2. Location

street & number **SR 319, km. 1.5, Barrio Hormigueros** not for publication
city or town **Hormigueros** vicinity **X**
state **Puerto Rico** code **PR** county **Hormigueros** code **067** zip code **00660**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 _X_ nationally ____ statewide _X_ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lilliane D. López

Lilliane D. López, Architect **March 23, 2000**
Signature of certifying official Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_X_ 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): _____

_____ for _____ Signature of Keeper _5/11/00_ Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
___ private
___ public-local
_X_ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property
___ building(s)
___ district
___ site
_X_ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing **"Spanish American War in Puerto Rico**

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions
Cat: **Transportation** Sub: **road-related**

Current Functions
Cat: **Transportation** Sub: **road-related**

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification **Other/ Lattice, transverse joist**

Materials
Foundation **N/A**
roof **N/A**
walls **N/A**
other **superstructure: steel**
substructure: masonry

Narrative Description
(see continuation sheets)

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria

X 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 **engineering, transportation, military**

Period of Significance **1878-1950**

Significant Dates **1878, 1898**

Significant Person **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Eng. José de Echevarría** (designer)
Eugene Rollin & Cía (foundry)
José Madera (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance
(see continuation sheets)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Albino Plugues, Edwin. "Estudio, documentación y nominación de los recursos históricos-arquitectónicos del casco urbano y los relacionados con la industria azucarera en el territorio municipal de Hormigueros". Survey and Inventory for the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office, San Juan: 1990.

Herrmann, Karl Stephen. From Yauco to Las Marias. Being a Story of the Recent Campaign in Western Puerto Rico by the Independent Regular Brigade, under the Command of Brigadier-General Schwan. Boston: 1900.

Oliver Jr., William H. Roughing it with the Regulars. New York: William F. Parr, 1901.

Pumarada O'Neill, Luis. Los Puentes Históricos de Puerto Rico. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo, RUM, Mayagüez: 1991.

Rivero, Angel. Crónica de la Guerra Hispanoamericana en Puerto Rico. San Juan: 1972

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: **Puerto Rico Highway Authority**
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
_X_ **University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus**
___ Other
Name of repository:

_____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **less than one acre**

UTM References

Rosario Quadrangle, PR 7.5 minute series UTM ZONE 19
18° 07'34"N/ 67° 07'37"W E. 698173
N. 2005146

Verbal Boundary Description (see continuation sheets)

Boundary justification (see continuation sheets)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title **Edwin Albino Plugues, Hormigueros Municipal Government and Horomico (original 1990 draft); Revised and edited by José E. Marull, State Historian/ Hugh Tosteson, Historian (PRSHPO).**

organization **Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office** date **January 31, 2000**

street & number Box 82. La Fortaleza telephone **(787) 721-3737**

city or town **San Juan** state **PR** zip code **00902**

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Property Owner

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name **Public Works and Transportation Department, Puerto Rico**

street & number **P.O. Box 41269** telephone **(787) 722-2929**

city or town **San Juan** state **PR** zip code **00940-1269**

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Torréns Bridge is a single-span steel bridge, with a lateral lattice girder, transverse joist structural system including lateral, longitudinal and diaphragm beams, with steel plates making up the roadway floor (See Drawing). This superstructure, which comprises the bridge floor and railings, rests on brick and masonry abutments built on both sides of the Rosario River (Photo 1). The bridge, which crosses from south to north 2.15 meters above the Rosario riverbed, is located at kilometer 1.5 of Puerto Rico State Road (SR) #139 (Photos 2 and 3), about 2 kilometers south of the urban core of the town of Hormigueros. Currently the bridge, owned by the Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority (PRHTA), is used for vehicular traffic traveling between SR #2, SR #114 and the town of Hormigueros. The bridge's deck has a thick cover of asphalt supported by the longitudinal and floor steel plates. The bridge's roadway is narrow, only 4.70 wide, permitting cars to pass in only one direction at a time (Photo 4).

Two plaques dating from the bridge's original construction and assembly are no longer there, the first one having disappeared in 1970 while the second was removed by the PRHTA in1977. During that year (1977) the PRHTA improved vehicular visibility by reducing the bridge abutment elevation, which resulted in lowering the deck.

This bridge retains a high degree of integrity in terms of setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association and location. The bridge itself has suffered no significant alterations since the period of significance. A description of the structure follows:

span number:	1	construction date:	1878
span length:	19.90 meters	superstructure:	steel
total length:	21.4 meters	substructure:	masonry
roadway wdt.:	4.70 meters	current condition:	good

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Torréns Bridge is significant at national and local levels for its importance in engineering and its association with the areas of transportation and military history. The bridge, built in 1878 by Belgian company Eugene Rollin & Co., was designed by the resident Spanish engineer in Paris, José de Echevarría, and assembled at its current location by work crews under the direction of José Madera. The bridge is significant at National level under **Criterion C**, for its design and as an example of an unique technology within U.S. jurisdiction, and under **Criterion A**, for its association with the Spanish-American War, when it served as an important crossing used by the U.S. Calvary during the Battle of Hormigueros on August 10, 1898. At local level under **Criterion A,** under the theme of transportation, the bridge is significant as a vital link for the developing urban core of Hormigueros from 1878-1960.

Importance in the Spanish American War

The Torréns bridge is one of two historic structures linked to the Battle of Hormigueros on August 10, 1898. This battle was one of the most important battles that occurred in the western region of the Island during the Spanish American War in Puerto Rico. It was the only attempt made by the Spanish garrison in Mayagüez to stop the advance of the U.S. forces during the war.

Sometime after 2 o'clock on August 10, Troop A of the 5th Cavalry under Capt. Augustus Macomb exchanged fire with Spanish scouts under Capt. Juan Bascarán. Captain Macomb's cavalry was part of the vanguard for the Independent Regular Brigade under Gen. Theodore Schwan. As the vanguard approached the town of Hormigueros it received concentrated fire from the Spanish positions on the Silva Heights. Under fire, U.S. scouts and infantry tried unsuccessfully to cross the Rosario River. Responding to the need to relieve pressure on the infantry Captain Macomb's cavalry crossed the Rosario River using the Torréns Bridge to flank the Spanish positions using a road that led to nearby railroad embankment. According to William H. Oliver, a member of Troop A:

> *We reached the Rosario and found it to be a muddy, sluggish stream about fifty feet wide. The scouts attempted to cross it, but the stream had been made unfordable by the recent rains. The Homigueros* (sic) *road crossed the stream over an iron bridge a couple of hundred yards to our left, and over which the Spaniards had retreated but a short time before. We right-faced and marched single file towards this bridge. Cartridges, belts, helmets and even guns were scattered along the road, as if the locality had been too hot for the enemy and they had fled in confusion...This bridge was a valuable acquisition, as it would enable artillery and infantry to cross the Rosario – the next nearest crossing being half-a-mile or more down stream. The road turned here at a right angle and led straight to*

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Homigueros (sic). *The platoon, under Lieut. Valentine, deployed to ascertain the position of the enemy, the other two platoons remaining to guard the bridge against the possible flank movement.*

Even though the bridge was briefly held by two cavalry platoons while elements of the 11th Infantry arrived to cover their flank, its capture proved essential for the successful cavalry movement that day.

For further contextual information regarding the bridge's historic importance, registration requirements, and property types, see related multiple property listing **"Spanish American War in Puerto Rico"**

Transportation and engineering significance

The bridge was named in honor of Modesto Torréns Morales, mayor of the town of Hormigueros between 1875-1879. The newly founded Municipality of Hormigueros had separated from the Municipality of San Germán in 1874, and sought to improve transportation linkages that would help the economic development of the town and provide access to the religious sanctuary of Our Lady of Monserrate (*Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Monserrate*). SR #319, where the bridge is located, is part of an older, and probably primary road in the region, known as *Camino Real de las Alturas*, which had a difficult crossing known as *Paso de las Nieves* where it met the Rosario River. When the main road between San Germán and Mayaguez (today's SR #114) was built in 1846, the need for a proper bridge over the river became more urgent, and imperative when Hormigueros became a town in 1874. Beginning in that year, the new municipality requested the central government that a bridge be built over the Rosario River. In a meeting held on July 11, 1877 the Municipal Government stated that "the main purpose for the structure is to revitalize this town, the vehicular flow would certainly be greater and would concern all aspects of this jurisdiction". The Spanish engineer Pedro Tolosa drew up a budget (11,067 francs), while the resident Spanish Engineer for Public Works in Paris, José de Echevarría, placed an order with Eugene Rollin & Co. manufacturing company in Ourburg, Belgium, for the bridge components. Once these components were ready they were transported by ship to port city of Mayagüez and from there ox carts transported the steel structure overland to the site in Hormigueros. Once at the site, a work brigade under José Madera assembled the structure over the masonry abutments constructed for that purpose.

This bridge is classified as lattice girders with transverse joist, a subtype of beam bridges. This construction, whose period of significance is 1878-1950, is considered unique within the U.S. jurisdiction, while this bridge is the only one of its type in the western region of Puerto Rico. For further contextual information regarding bridge building in Puerto Rico, registration requirements, and property types, see related Multiple Property Submission **"Historic Bridges of Puerto Rico"**.

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Locally, as part of the old road to Hormigueros (today SR 319) the bridge served as an important avenue for transporting trade goods, agricultural products, visitors and religious pilgrims, in addition to facilitating communications in general, all of which contributed to the development of the community from 1871-1960. Before the bridge was built, the river crossing was hazardous when rains swelled the Rosario River. In 1960 this road diminished in importance when a new regional highway, SR#2, was constructed to the north. The period of significance for this property ends in 1950, to correspond with the fifty-year National Register cut –off date.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References
No UTM references are available for the Rosario Quadrangle USGS map. The property is located in the latitude 18^0 07' 34" North and at the longitude 67^0 07' 60" West.

Verbal Boundary Description
The nominated property is a rectangular-shaped parcel measuring 21.4 X 4.70 meters, which is centered on the coordinates listed above. Included within this rectangular parcel are the bridge's superstructure, substructure and floor system.

Boundary Justification
The nominated structure includes the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, any approach spans and the property on which they rest. These boundaries encompass, but not exceed, all of the property that has been historically associated with this bridge.