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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name **Humacao Customs House**

other names/site number **Escuela Francisco Isern**

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2. Location

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street & number **Marina St., corner Aduana St.** __ not for publication
city or town **Humacao** vicinity___
state **Puerto Rico** code **PR** county **Humacao** code **069**
zip code **00791**

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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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 ___ nationally _X_ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Pilar Pabón 28-III-95
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

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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

✓	entered in the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	Edson A. Beall Entered in the National Register	5/18/95
___	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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

___ private
___ public-local
_X_ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

_X_ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	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 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: **Government** Sub: **Customs house**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: **Education** Sub: **School**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial/Spanish Colonial

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	**Brick**
roof	**Metal**
walls	**Stucco**
	Brick
other	**Wood**

Narrative Description: **See continuation sheet**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

____ 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 n past.

_X_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period.

____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ 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**

Period of Significance: **1872-1890**

Significant Dates: **1872, 1885, 1890**

Significant Person: **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Julián Cruellas y Rovira**
Evaristo de Churuca

Narrative Statement of Significance: **See continuation sheet**

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Name of repository: **General Archives of Humacao**

10. Geographical Data

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

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	**20**	**209590**	**2010700**	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: **See continuation sheet**

Boundary Justification: **See continuation sheet**

11. Form Prepared By

Nomination draft: **Héctor F. Santiago Cazull/Cruz Ortiz Cuadra**

Revised, edited and rewritten with additional material by: **Karen González/Staff Architect; Arleen Pabón PhD/State Historic Preservation Officer; Berenice R. Sueiro/Staff Architect**

organization: **Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office**

date: **February 24, 1995**
street & number: **109 San José St.** telephone: **(809) 721-3737**
city or town: **San Juan** state: **PR** zip code: **00901**

Property Owner

name: **Government of Puerto Rico, Department of Education**
street & number: **P.O. Box 190759** telephone: **785-4949**
city or town: **San Juan** state: **PR** zip code: **00919-0759**

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Humacao Customs House
Humacao, Puerto Rico

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Humacao Customs House occupies the eastern section of the urban lot comprised by Marina St.(east), Aduana St.(south), Alejandro St.(west) and Isidro Andreu St. (north) on the Punta Santiago sector in Humacao. It is a one story, stuccoed, brick and rubble masonry structure in the traditional Spanish Colonial style. The building consists of a square shape plan organized by a central space and two flanking ones. This central space has a metal truss and corrugated metal-sheet gable roof. The side spaces, in conjunction with the front portion of this central wing, form a U flat masonry roof that embraces the metal gable structure and the central space.

The main facade faces the east, and the waterfront along Marina Street. The central section of the tri-partite composition, is slightly projected and presents an arched entrance with two flanking arched windows. The continuous parapet acquires "en ressault" characteristics over this central section; the central part of which is emphasized by a pediment-like element. An uninterrupted plain molding, or "retallo," is used around all openings, as a base and as base to the parapet. The parapet, cornice and base are continuous elements repeated all around the structure (See photo #1). The east and west facades have similar tripartite compositions; the west facade also depicts a slightly projected central section, this time crowned by a pediment. Its tympanum has an arched "oculi", or bull's eye window, with bars and fixed louvers (See photo #2). The entrance wooden batten doors are the original ones. The south and north facades each have seven rectangular bays, combining window and door openings. Some of this openings have been closed lately with concrete blocks to protect the interior of the building.

From the east facade, the entrance leads into a hall-like vestibule, or "zaguán." Another hallway leads towards the side naves. Historic plans state that the spaces siding the vestibule were to be used as offices for the porter and the warehouse overseer. The roof structural system is the typical one of Spanish Colonial buildings: wooden beams, wooden slats, or "alfajías," running in a

perpendicular fashion to the beams, and thin "terra cotta" bricks (See photo #6). The central nave or customs depository is entered either from this vestibule or directly from the yard. The structure of the roof is exposed and consists of pine rafters with corrugated zinc sheets on top. The rafters rests on pine girders along the top of the masonry walls. Steel tensors span across the nave and tied to the girders (See photo #5). The complete structure has poured-concrete, polished floors and stuccoed walls.

At the yard, there is a partially sunken, stuccoed, brick masonry cistern. The cistern appears as an elevated platform, with a small set of brick steps, that lead up unto a brick surface. The cistern, apparently, has been filled with dirt and sand; historical plans show a structure consisting of a 4.0 by 8.0 meter tank, partially underground, and divided into two naves by a series of four segmented arches resting upon square columns. Each nave has a segmented cannon vault.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The structure is a Spanish Colonial one, both in terms of its typology and its architectural style. It was constructed, and apparently finished, in 1872 by the Department of Public Works of the Spanish Government in Puerto Rico. Until this time, the customs house was a wooden building, temporary in nature, so the need for a permanent structure made it possible that, in 1865, it was decided to construct the present building to serve as the new customs house at Punta Santiago.

The original project was designed in 1871, by Julián Cruellas y Rovira, an engineer. At the time, state projects were designed and built under the supervision of engineers belonging to the Royal Corps of Engineers. The plans called for a 25 meter by 25 meter square building, with a large, central warehouse space, or depository, surrounded on its three sides by offices and officer's residences. Historic documents reveal that the original plans were revised and changed in some details by engineer Evaristo de Churuca. The revision included an emphasis of the eastern-western axis by closing lateral entrances and the addition of a frontispiece to the parapet over the eastern facade, recognizing the ocean-front side as the main facade of the building. A later interior rehabilitation project, signed by Pedro Cobreros in 1885, substituted the deteriorated wooden floors by lime mortar cementitious floor mixture, or "argamasa." In 1890, part of the warehouse area was subsequently

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re-floored with wood in order to protect certain perishable goods from the floor humidity.

The National Register of Historic Places multiple nomination "United States Custom Houses in Puerto Rico 1898-1931," states that the Humacao Customs House is one of only four structures, designed and built under the Spanish era, still existing. It is an important example of the Spanish Government's interpretation of this typology. Customs houses provided the visual, official and architectural link between the island and the sea, which represented foreign commercial ties. Customs houses, as other official buildings, were meant to visually represent the State, in this case the Spanish crown. They were also extant examples of a desire to be "modern." During the 19th century it was felt by the Crown that customs houses and lighthouses would give "presence" to the colonies in the seafaring traffic routes of the times. This guaranteed commerce and, thus, much-needed progress. Because of this, the building represents customs houses of a very important period in the island's architectural history. As such, it is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, for its contribution to the understanding of the 19th century, Spanish customs house typology, as used in the ultramarine colony of Puerto Rico.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Abreu Vega, Salvador. Apuntes para la historia de Humacao. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1984.

Gutiérrez, Luis A. and Pabón, Arleen. "PHAROS: Sistema de Alumbrado Marítimo de Puerto Rico," 1991.

Ortiz Cuadra, Cruz M. and Santiago Cazull, Hector. "Inventario de Edificios Históricos del Municipio de Humacao." Centro Cultural Antonia Sáez with Survey and Planning Funds from the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office. July 1994.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the property are: Marina St. to the east, Aduana St. to the south, and Isidro Andreu St. to the north. To the west, the boundary is defined by the yard between the Humacao Customs House and a cafeteria building of the Francisco Isern School.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries correspond to the urban lot historically associated with the property, excepted the west boundary, where the cafeteria building is located. This structure is not being included because it is a modern building that does not contribute to the character of the Humacao Customs House.

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Humacao Customs House
Humacao, Puerto Rico

All photographs taken by Evelyn Ayala, June, 1993.

All original negatives found within the Historic Buildings Survey of Humacao, at the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office.

Photos
#1 General view of main facade, facing northwest
#2 View of west facade, facing southeast
#5 Detail of roof truss, facing east
#6 Detail of wooden beams, wooden slats, or "alfajías", and thin "terra cotta" bricks at the "zagúan", facing east.