

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **DEC 6 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cementerio Antiguo de Ponce

and/or common Cementerio Civil de Ponce

2. Location

street & number Torres #1 and Frontispicio Street ___ not for publication

city, town Ponce ___ vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county Ponce code 0760

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation abandoned
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>cemetery</u>

4. Owner of Property

name Municipality of Ponce

street & number Ponce City Hall

city, town Ponce ___ vicinity of state Puerto Rico 00731

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Ponce Government, De Hostos Avenue

city, town Ponce state Puerto Rico 00731

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The cemetery plan is shaped as a rectangle measuring approximately 157.71 meters in length by 84.31 meters wide. It is attached by a rectangular-shaped lot at the north-west corner measuring about 32.80 meters in length by 25.03 meters wide, and a small rectangular lot where the mortuary used to be located, at the center of the south side of cemetery measuring about 14.13 meters wide by 8.97 meters in length. It was built in 1842 and enlarged in 1864.

A small mortuary structure building used to stand at the entrance of the cemetery. Following this structure, small mausoleums, crypts and niches were lined up on a central pathway that led to a small chapel located at the center of the cemetery. The cemetery was totally enclosed by very high walls that still remain. Most mausoleums and crypts were constructed following the neo-classical style trend that prevailed at the time (See Item No. 8 for architectural description). Thick walls and piers were used as the main structural system. These were constructed using brick, "argamasa", stone and mortar.

The cemetery was closed in 1915 and has been deteriorating since then. More recently it has been subjected to vandalism; crypts and mausoleums have been plundered. Today it contains a variety of mausoleums, crypts and niches partially destroyed, and most of the area is covered by heavy vegetation. The enclosing wall plaster has fallen down exposing the brick and stone to weather conditions.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	education	military	social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics/government	transportation
		invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) historic

Specific dates 1842-1864

Builder/Architect Nieto Blajol Iglesia 1864 project

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

On February 13, 1838 the secretary of the Municipality of Ponce met with civic leaders of the "Villa of Ponce" to discuss plans for building a new cemetery adjacent to the existing one because of its deplorable and bad condition which posed a danger to public health. Because the "Villa of Ponce" did not have the money to build the cemetery, a voluntary proportional contribution was established in which all neighbors were to contribute. A commission was named composed of one member of the Municipal Council and four neighbors of influence to carry out the project, to open up a voluntary subscription, name a depository and to proceed with the construction of the cemetery until its completion. The project was to be carried out in a lot adjacent to the existing cemetery extending one hundred square "varas" (a measure of length equal to 0.84m. approximately). Named by vote to form the commission were the "Sor Sndico" (secretary to the mayor of the "Villa") and the neighbor leaders Don Gerónimo Ortiz, Don Tomás Souffront, Don Luis Font and Don Mateo Maenamaxe. On February 26, 1838, the project was approved by the mayor of Ponce. However, it was not until 1842 that the project was started out with the contributions of the neighbors of the "Villa". In 1843, the cemetery was inaugurated under the auspices of the mayor of Ponce, Don Juan Rondón Martínez, which by the way, was the first person to be buried there. In 1864 the cemetery was enlarged and repaired. The new work consisted of: repairs and construction of the enclosing walls and pathways, construction of new niches and construction of a chapel and mortuary. In 1915 the cemetery was closed down.

The cemetery consisted of well designed small mausoleums that were lined up following a central pathway followed by lateral ones, starting from the entrance of the cemetery to a chapel located at the end. Most structures were designed and constructed following the neo-classical style that prevailed at that time. This style consisted of the use of columns and pilasters following the doric, ionic or corinthian order, barrel vaults, greek pediments, roman arches and other details characteristic of said style. The thick walls and piers were built using brick, "argamasa" (a mixture of crushed brick, sand, stone aggregate and lime) and mortar. The enclosing walls were built of brick and mortar and the part of the walls built in 1864 were built using stone and mortar.

This cemetery distinguishes itself because various illustrious Puerto Ricans of transcendent importance are buried there. The most important personage buried in this historic cemetery is Don Ramón Baldorioty de Castro, distinguished patriot, journalist, educator, writer, orator and abolitionist. In 1870, he was elected delegate to the Courts of Cádiz, where he attacked the slavery system of the time, being responsible of most of the liberty amendments. Afterward, on March 23, 1873, the abolition of slavery was proclaimed, being Baldorioty de Castro responsible for such proclamation. Other distinguished persons buried there are: Juan Morell Campos and Manuel G. Tavarez, distinguished composers and musicians; most famous for their "danzas" (folkloric music typical of Puerto Rico) compositions. Don Juan Seix, founder of the Ponce Fire Department; Don Juan Rondón Martínez founder of the cemetery and first person buried there.

