

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Ponce Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 7843 Calle Nazaret Urbanización Santa María not for publication

city or town Ponce vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county Ponce code 113 zip code 00717-1005

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela
Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Rafael Ríos Rey, A Puerto Rican Muralist, 1911-1980.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ civic

SOCIAL/ civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete

roof: Concrete

other: wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The **Ponce Young Male's Christian Association (YMCA) Building** is a 1955, reinforce concrete, one story, Modern style building, located in the urban residential area known as Santa Maria in the Municipality of Ponce. Designed by architect Pedro A. de Castro y Gayá in 1953, the building became the second seat in the island for the Young Men's Christian Association (**Fig. 1**). In 1955, as part of the building's inauguration, a mural was donated to the facility. Located at the same location and untouched since 1955, the mural was painted by Rafael Ríos Rey specifically for the building and the institution, capturing in canvas the YMCA philosophical postures. Rafael Ríos Rey is considered by many the most important Puerto Rican muralist. This artwork is precisely the most significant feature of the building.

Narrative Description

The **Ponce Young Male's Christian Association Building** it's located at 7843 Calle Nazaret Urbanización Santa Maria. The building sits in a 6,349 square meters lot. The main façade faces south towards Calle Nazaret. The most significant features of the building's main façade is the asymmetrical ensemble of a reinforced concrete, entrance canopy - which consists of a segmented vault slab supported by a pair of catenary arches - and also a native stone-faced rectangular volume (**Fig. 2**). This ensemble breaks the extreme horizontality of the building's elevation.

The building's layout responds directly to his function. It consists of a main rectangular volume divided by a lobby. West of the main lobby, the space is distributed among a club room, director's office, administration office, receiving area facing the lobby, and three rooms that originally were reserved for boys, men and women. These last three side by side rooms, which are separated from the administrative area by a secondary lobby running east to west, are no longer divided by gender. Today, they are used as classrooms and day-care center.

Pass the entrance facing east, the lobby opens up into an open room that serves as the lounge and game room, still following the 1953 design. The lounge's eastern wall is made out of the originals perforated clay blocks, allowing for natural light and crossed ventilation. Originally, the southern wall of the lounge room, facing Calle Nazaret, had glass louvered windows. These were removed during the early 1980s and replaced with perforated clay blocks. The lounge/game room is used for activities when large numbers of participants are expected. The floor in the lounge/game room, as in the rest of the main volume, retains the original 1955 native tiles (**Fig. 3**).

Rafael Ríos Rey's mural *El Hombre* is located in the western wall passed the building's main entrance (**Fig. 4**). The mural, approximately 0.12 m x 0.13 m, is oil painted in cloth adhered into the wall. It has Ríos Rey's signature in the lower left hand corner (facing the mural), along with the name of the mural, a dedication to Antonio Ferré Bacallao and the date October 55. The piece is surrounded by a three-foot high removable metal fence to protect it from the YMCA young visitors.

Pass the reception area, the lobby turns into a corridor that runs northerly towards the second volume of the building. This section has an L-shaped asymmetrical layout. The section contains the exercise room, a gymnasium, a small lounge room, showers, locker rooms and storage rooms. The building has several exits to access the outside patio, where many athletics activities are conducted in a daily basis. There is a 1960s swimming pool at the northwest corner of the lot and a 1953 hipped metal roof basketball court, built by the YMCA before the building was completed. The **Ponce YMCA Building** retains a high level of integrity.

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 our past.
- 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

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

Ponce YMCA Building
Name of Property

Ponce, PR
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Art

Period of Significance

1955

Significant Dates

1955

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Ríos Rey, Rafael (muralist)
de Castro y Gayá, Pedro A. (architect)

Period of Significance (justification)

As the significance of the property resides in its historic association with the muralist production of Rafael Ríos Rey, the year corresponding to the timeframe the mural was painted (1955) is the period of significance

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The **Ponce Young Male’s Christian Association (YMCA) Building** is of statewide significance under Criterion C as the property is the depository of an extremely important piece of art, Rafael Ríos Rey’s mural *El Hombre* (The Man). The mural was painted in 1955, especially designed for the Ponce YMCA Building. Rafael Ríos Rey is considered by many the most influential and important Puerto Rican muralist, whose work reflected better than any other plastic artist, the crucial economic, political and social changes that transformed the island by mid-20th century.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The building¹

The YMCA Building is a 1955, reinforce concrete, one story, Modern style building, located in the urban residential area known as Santa Maria in the Municipality of Ponce. Designed by architect Pedro A. De Castro y Gayá in 1953, the building became the second seat in the island for the Young Men's Christian Association. The building reflects an important period of transition between styles in the local architectural language. During the early 1950s, promoted by the State and the private interests, the Art Deco, the Spanish Revival and the Neoclassic lost ground to the Modern and International Style.

The YMCA Chapter in Ponce was established during the late 1940s. Before the construction of the building, the meetings and activities of the Board of Directors were conducted on a room made available to them in City Hall. Early in the 1950s the YMCA began a campaign to collect funds in order to build two new facilities, one in Ponce and the other in the city of Mayaguez. Among the members of the Board was Luis A. Ferré, member of a distinguished local family, an already well known Captain of Industry and future pro-statehood governor of Puerto Rico, whose brother, Jose A. Ferré, also a member of the YMCA, had already a close working relationship with muralist Rafael Ríos Rey. It was assigned to Luis A. Ferré to head the committee responsible to find the proper site for the new building.

In 1951, the National Council of the YMCA, with headquarters in New York City, assigned architect Samuel Nock to assist the local chapter in the search for the right place and the proper design of the future building in Ponce. The National Council indicated the necessity that the building had to be planned in a way that could house different groups together, such as adults, boys and girls under suitable conditions for each separate group. Nock made a sketch plan of the preliminary organization of the building that included the layout for the equipment in the food service facility, the gymnasium, swimming pool, and special fixtures such as urinals, bath floors and the furniture of the building. The local architect selected would make the actual plans and drawings, based on the recommendations of the National Council.

In 1952, after considerable difficulty in locating a site, due mainly to the high prices requested by the sellers, the YMCA Ponce Chapter secured a lot of 6,349 square meters in the then growing residential area of Santa María. The lot belonged to the American Railroad Company who agreed to sell it for \$12,720.91. Once again, with the lot secured, Luis A. Ferré was assigned to find an engineer to make the topographic plan of the grounds and to hire the architect to design the building. For this last task, architect Pedro A. de Castro y Gayá was chosen. The actual construction was given, on competitive bid, to *Lopez & Pérez, Builders*.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the **Ponce YMCA Building** took place on September 10, 1953. After an uphill battle to maintain the construction funds through membership quotas, corporate donations and personal contributions, the new building was completed at a cost of \$113,378.00 and inaugurated on February 22, 1955. A few months later during the same year, to celebrate the opening of the facility, Antonio Luis Ferré Bacallao, father of Luis A. Ferré and founder and president of the family's industrial complex, donated the mural "El Hombre", commissioned to Rafael Ríos Rey precisely for this occasion. At a special activity, Ferré Bacallao unveiled himself the mural, while his son, Luis, presented the work and the artist to the public (**Fig 5**).

¹ The information pertaining the Ponce YMCA Building was extracted from 1950s original memos and letters kept at the facility. Digital copies of these documents are maintained at the PRSHPO.

The mural

The mural *El Hombre* is located in the western wall passed the building's main entrance (**Fig. 6**). Its size and images capture the visitor as soon it reaches the main lobby. The mural painting technique is oil in cloth adhered directly into the wall. Its size is approximately twelve feet in height and thirty-two feet in length.

The work represents the historic development of the western civilization. From left to right, as the observer faces the mural, Ríos Rey produced images that could be read as a history book: our prehistoric ancestors stamping their pictorial signatures in the dark corner of a cave; the Sphinx and the great pyramids of Giza, the Mayan calendar and sculptures of the Assyrian period. The Greek civilization comes alive in the three classic capitals and in the Jupiter's temple column. Near the Acropolis, just below Myron Eleuthero's Discus Thrower and the Winged Victory of Samothrace, Ríos Rey placed the busts of some of the greatest thinkers of the Ancient World: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates and others. Towards the center Ríos Rey brought the ancient Rome of the Caesars, with the mythological she-wolf Luperkus, that fed Romulus and Remus, located between the Coliseum and a viaduct.

The cathedrals bring the middle Ages. Dante marks the transition towards the Italian Renaissance. No better representative from this period that the figure of Leonardo da Vinci trying his flying machines. The democratization of the human knowledge is represented through the figure of Johannes Gutenberg and his movable type printing machine. This side of the mural brings the images of historic figures associated to crucial historic events: Christopher Columbus, the Wright Brothers, Washington Carver, Thomas Alva Edison, Alexander Fleming and Albert Einstein. Science shares this stage with the strength of the written word represented in the figures of William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes. The extreme left ends with the arrival of the modern times with its cities and its skyscrapers, the heavy industrial production and a set of iron beams that seems to extend into the future.

All these characters loose preeminence when compare with the center figures in the mural. These center figures are highlighted through a more intensive use of colors and shades. The image of Christ dominates the stage. Ríos Rey brought into the canvas the Augustinian conception of Christ as the center of history. Every great human action and product depicted in Ríos Rey's mural is obscured by the projected strength of the theological figure. Christ's disproportionally huge hands are a particular strong philosophical discourse. Those hands are protecting the other center figures in the mural: a group of Puerto Rican children that are about to start a simple baseball game. It's precisely in this segment of the mural, where Ríos Rey's social project unveils: the coming together as a team of youngsters that obviously come from different social and racial backgrounds, speaks of the author involvement with the populist movement spread through the island during those crucial years. Four of the multicolor racial children, Ríos Rey's brilliant and subtle way to emphasize the complexity of the Puerto Rican ethnicity, have each one a sequence of letters in their shirts spelling YMCA. In a wider scope, Ríos Rey captured the essence that has sustained the western civilization: art and science, industry and religion, knowledge and faith.

Located at the same original spot and untouched since 1955, Rafael Ríos Rey's mural has been the perfect background and the silent partner of all the athletic, educational and social activities conducted at the **Ponce YMCA Building (Fig. 7)**. The work represents a significant piece of art from the most significant Puerto Rican muralist. The artwork is historically integrated into the building, making the **Ponce YMCA Building** a property of statewide significance under Criterion C.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción de la Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR). Plans for the Ponce YMCA Building. De Castro & Hardesty Inc. 1953.

Documents and Photographs from the Ponce YMCA Building Archives.

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form Cover Document. *Rafael Ríos Rey, A Puerto Rican Muralist, 1911-1980.* 2011

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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Ponce YMCA Building

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.57 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>19</u> Zone	<u>752251</u> Easting	<u>1992570</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Lot of six thousand three hundred and forty nine (6349) square meters, as recorded at the Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM), under number 389-072-807-03.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos / Historian
organization Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office date April 17, 2012
street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737
city or town San Juan state PR
e-mail jllanes@prshpo.gobierno.pr

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Building's main façade; looking northwest; 0001

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Building's main façade; looking northeast; 0002

1 of 6.

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Lounge; looking northeast; 0003

1 of 6.

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Mural "El Hombre"; looking west; 0004

1 of 6.

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Mural "El Hombre"; looking southwest; 0005

1 of 6.

Name of Property: Ponce Young Male's Christian Association

City or Vicinity: Ponce

County: Ponce

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: November 9, 2011

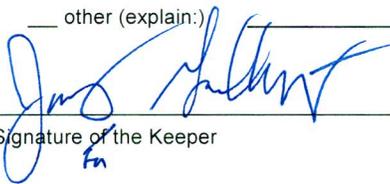
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Mural "El Hombre"; looking northwest; 0006

1 of 6.

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register
 ___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register
 ___ other (explain:)


 Signature of the Keeper

6/4/2012
 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public - Local
 public - State
 public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

	Contributing	Noncontributing	
	1	0	buildings
	0	0	district
	0	0	site
	0	0	structure
	0	0	object
	1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Rafael Ríos Rey, A Puerto Rican Muralist, 1911-1980.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ civic

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ civic

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Figure 1. Ponce YMCA Building, 1955.



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Figure 2. Ponce YMCA Building, 2011.



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Figure 3. Lounge/game room, 2011.



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Figure 4. Rafael Ríos Rey's mural, *El Hombre*.



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Figure 5. The unveiling of *El Hombre* at the YMCA Building, 1955.



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Figure 6. Rafael Ríos Rey, *El Hombre*, 2011.



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Figure 7. The mural as the perfect bacground. (1960s photos)



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Figure 7. Continuation....(Photo, 1960s)



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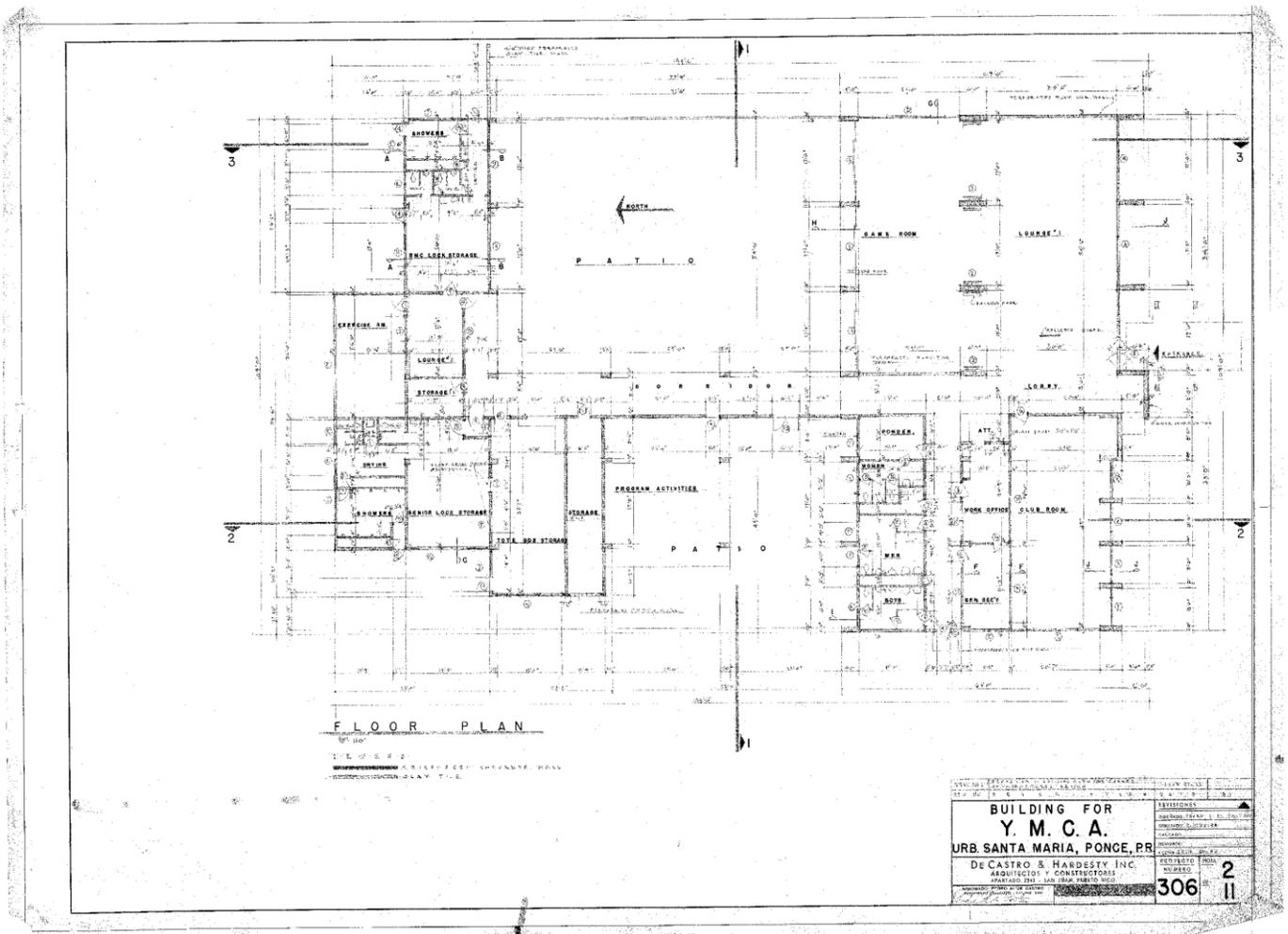
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Ponce YMCA Building floor plan, 1953.



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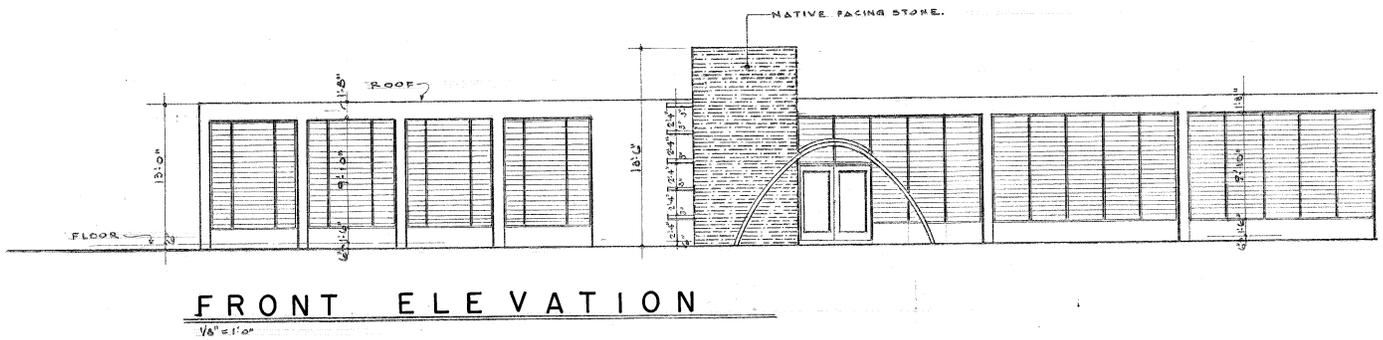
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Ponce YMCA Building elevation, 1953.



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Ponce YMCA Building site map
(source: Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM))



Ponce YMCA Building