

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 8 1987

date entered OCT 29 1987

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

1. Name

historic Residencia Font-Ubides

and or common Residencia Monsanto

2. Location

street & number Calle Castillo No. 34 \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Ponce \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 072 county Municipality of Ponce code 0760

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Virgilio Monsanto Diaz

street & number Calle Castillo No. 34

city, town Ponce \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Puerto Rico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registro de la Propiedad

street & number Centro Gubernamental de Ponce

city, town Ponce \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historical-Architectural  
title Survey of Ponce

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July, 1984 \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records P.R. S.H.P.O.

city, town San Juan \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Puerto Rico

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Calle Castillo No. 34, the Monsanto Residence, is a one-storey, detached, masonry and stone building on the north side of the street, between Calle Virtud and Calle Salud, in the historic urban center of Ponce. The house consists of plastered masonry at the living level and pink-stone ashlar at the podium. Excessive ornamentation and exuberance of volumes denominates this house as what is known locally as "wedding-cake architecture."

The facade is organized into three similar bays, each one consisting of a narrow, arched doorway with wooden panel double-doors, stained-glass lights and tiffany-style stained-glass fanlights. The central entrance doors contain wrought-iron panels in curved "Art Nouveau" lines. Each opening is articulated with intricate, decorative plaster surrounds and flaked with plaster festoon mouldings. In addition, the central entry is crowned with a plaster cartouche displaying the initials of the first owners, PF (Providencia Ubides and Federico Font).

A heavily ornamented three-bay facade is shaded by two gazebo-like front terraces. Each consists of a series of four Corinthian columns upon pedestals, arranged around a 3/4-circle plan. Decorative wrought-iron railings in curvilinear "Art Nouveau" designs span between each of the pedestals.

Each series of columns supports a cornice with a festooned frieze and a parapet above, decorated with circular-wreath balusters. The cornice wraps around the two porches, connecting the two in a curved pediment motif above the central entrance. Roman amphorae are located above the parapet, one at the location of each column.

A second-floor "mirador" or "belvedere" projects upward above the first bay in a baroque manner. The volume is generally cubical in proportions, capped with an upwardly-curving cornice on each of its four sides, thus creating a groin-vault roof and ceiling. A small masonry pinnacle is located above the cornice at each of the four corners of the mirador and a circular oculus with stained glass panels occupies each of the four sides.

A curvilinear stair or "stoop" conforms to the space available between the podiums of the two terraces, flowing up to the central entry. Once inside, a long, narrow hallway extends back from the street entry. Parlors and bedrooms open onto the hallway at either side, and the hallway terminates at a grand dining room at rear, with a kitchen at left and a terrace along the entire rear wall of the house. The upper level mirador is accessed by a cast-iron spiral staircase located on the southeast corner of the parlor at bay 1. Characteristic interior features of the house include: decorative native ceramic tile floors, intricate, pressed-tin ceilings in biblical motifs, and skillfully carved wooden fanlights.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1913 **Builder/Architect** Blás C. Silva

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Monsanto Residence at Calle Castillo No.34 is truly an architectural landmark in the city of Ponce. Designed by the well-known architect Blás Silva in 1913, the residence has always stood out among the great houses of Ponce for its aggressive incorporation of curvilinear forms and ornament. Adapting the curves of the "Art Nouveau" to the persistent Neo-classicism of Puerto Rico and the recently born Creole vocabulary of Ponce, Silva succeeded in creating a movement in architecture which broke away from the traditional forms while remaining within them. The traditional continuous raised verandah along the front facade is broken up into two and twisted out of its usual linearity into the curved forms preserved today. Characteristic of the architecture to abound in Ponce contemporaneous to Castillo 34 is a profusion of applique, and eclectic combination and juxtaposition of shapes, particularly curvilinear, and a general ostentation of articulation. Blás Silva was probably the most established of the "wedding-cake architects" and was thus sought after mostly by the "nouveau riche" of the period. Silva's houses are among the richest in Ponce, among which the Monsanto Residence stands out for its circular porches. Other buildings by Blás Silva include the Frau Residence (NR-Po-06-84-24) and the Salazar-Candal Residence (NR-Po-06-84-18), both in the nomination process.

The complete preservation of the original architecture of the Monsanto Residence, its unique design amongst the houses of Ponce, and its location within the historic urban core of the city qualify it as one of a series of grand houses and in integral part of the character of Ponce.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Efraín Pérez-Chanis, Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico, Arquitectura. Archivo Histórico de Ponce, Teatro La Perla, Ponce.  
Interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Monsanto, July and August, 1987.  
Revista Plástica, Liga de Arte de San Juan, No. 15, Vol. 2, Sept. 1986.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Ponce, PR

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

A 

1	9	7	5	2	8	4	0	1	9	9	2	9	6	1	0
Zone				Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See enclosed location map

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Félix Julián del Campo / State Historian and  
Héctor F. Santiago / State Architectural Historian

organization P.R. S.H.P.O.

date August, 1987

street & number Box 82, La Fortaleza

telephone 809-721-3737

city or town San Juan

state Puerto Rico

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer.

date August, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 10/29/87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

1

Item number

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Except for the necessary modernization of the structure (i.e.: kitchen, bathrooms, etc...) the house has not been altered in any way, and thus maintains the original spacial distribution, facade, and overall character.

OCT 26 1987

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Residencia Monsanto, Calle Castillo #34  
Ponce, Puerto Rico

