272

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: James Fenimore Cooper Graded School

Other names/site number: Escuela James Fenimore Cooper

Name of related multiple property listing: Early Twentieth Century Schools in Puerto Rico
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number: 20 San Isidro Street, corner Luis Muñoz Rivera Street

City or town: Sabana Grande State: Puerto Rico County: Sabana Grande

Not for publication [] Vicinity [X]

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: [X] A [] B [] C [] D

Diana López Sotomayor

Diana López Sotomayor SHPO/Director — April 8, 2015

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

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 of 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 Keeper 5-26-2015 **Date of Action**

James Fenimore Cooper Graded School — **Name of Property**

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico — **County and State**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

[] Private
[X] Public-local
[] Public-state
[] Public-federal

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

[X] 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	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/ school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/municipal building

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Neoclassical

Materials (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick and masonry; concrete; metal

Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** is a 1903, one story, four-classrooms, C-shaped, brick and masonry, Neoclassical, shed-with-parapet-metal-roofed building. The property, with a footprint of three hundred and ninety five (395) square meters, sits in a six hundred and ninety-five (695) square meters urban lot, located northeast across the street from the town square and the Church of San Isidro Labrador in the municipality of Sabana Grande (**Fig. 1**). The oldest school building in Sabana Grande and one of the earliest schoolhouses in the island, the resource was the first institutional facility in the municipality built under the new United States' authorities.[1] With some changes in its design, the resource retains every other aspect of integrity.

Figure 1. Aerial view of the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School**'s urban setting. (Source: CRIM)

[1] Prior to the James Fenimore Cooper Graded School, no other undertaking was conducted by the American authorities in Sabana Grande related to public institutional facilities such as schoolhouses, city halls, slaughter houses, hospitals, jails, etc. The Cooper is the first civic construction in town, properly documented.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.**)**

The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** faces northeast into San Isidro Street, one of the oldest, most important roads in Sabana Grande's urban core. The 1903 building, designed in the neoclassical style, presents a symmetrical three-unit arrangement in its elevation. The main central volume (northern façade) is set back, while flanked by two identical volumes projecting outward at each end. The main entrance is framed with a set of pilasters, a keystone molding as ornament and a classical pediment. Completing the main entrance composition, a corbie-stepped gable sits atop the parapet (**Fig. 2**) Each volume of the main façade has an independent entrance, with a three-risers platform-concrete-steps and two-sided aluminum with glass-panels doors. The main entrance is flanked by two flag poles.

Figure 2. The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School**. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos, 2014)

The central volume main façade entrance has two evenly spaced aluminum jalousie windows on each side.[2] These windows correspond to the two classrooms located in this section. Equally spaced and properly identifying the two classrooms on the projecting volumes, there are two additional sets of metal windows on the northern façade. Each one of the flanking volumes is crowned with its own pediment.

On the lateral facades, the wall segments directly topped by the pediment and containing the windows protrude forward at a right angle, creating an extended volume. When designed and built in 1903, the east and west facades were symmetrically identical with three evenly spaced windows. However, sometimes during the 1960s, the center window opening on both east and west facades was concrete-filled; leaving only two windows, each crowned with an original keystone ornament molding. The keystone moldings atop the closed-down windows are still present. The only aesthetical difference between the lateral facades, it's the presence of a bell gable atop the eastern façade's pediment, housing the original school bell (**Fig. 3**)

Figure 3. The eastern façade, with the bellcote. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos, 2014)

[2] Sometime during the 1960s, the original wooden double sided louvered windows were replaced by the aluminum type throughout the entire building. The openings of the original fenestration were expanded to accommodate the new metal windows.

The building's rear section (southern façade), as originally designed, presents an austere appearance, with its walls plastered, with only the openings of doors and windows breaking the walls continuity. To compensate the downgrading of the terrain on the building's rear, there are three set of stairs, part of the original design; one set for each rear exit. To comply with the 1990's *American with Disabilities Act*, a ramp was added to the central set of stairs at the rear. The location of the ramp at the building's rear avoids a visual unaesthetically impact upon the resource's main façade. Made of wood, the ramp is currently been built in concrete (**Fig. 4**)

Figure 4. Building's rear (southern façade) showing the concrete stairs and the wooden ramp. The roof wooden panel and corrugated metal is also shown. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos, 2014)

A masonry and concrete parapet runs along three quarters of the building's roof. The parapet is decorated with high-relief rectangular masonry panels. The roof is cover with waterproofing sheeting, placed over wooden panels. Underneath the wooden panels, the galvanized corrugated metal is still visible. To properly drain the rainfall, the roof has a slope toward the building's rear (**Fig. 5**)

Figure 5. View of the building's roof.

As originally designed, the main entrance guides to a straight lobby that runs southerly toward another exit at the rear, providing access to the buildings backyard. At each side of the hallway, spaces are symmetrically disposed: one equal size room on each side, with access provided directly from the linear hallway. Each one of the classrooms on the main volume has a doorway that allows access to the adjacent rooms in the projecting volumes, as disposed in the original layout. As the building is currently owned and used by Sabana Grande's municipal legislature, all four rooms are occupied by local governmental departments. The old classroom in the western wing is used as seat of the legislative body (**Fig. 6**)

Figure 6. Partial view of the legislative chamber in the west wing room. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos, 2014)

Even though the building's spatial layout has remained the same as in 1903, changes have been done to its interior. During the 1950s, the wooden floors were replaced by an exposed concrete slab. By the early 2000s, the concrete slab was covered with ceramic tiles. Acoustic panels are used throughout the entire building, keeping out-of-sight the steel frame beams that support the galvanized corrugated metal roof. Every interior masonry wall in the building is currently covered with half-inch wooden panels. In many ways, the wooden panels, which could be easily removed, protect the masonry walls as every drilling or nailing is conducted upon them and not on the historic walls.

Through all the changes in design, the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** still retains every other aspect of integrity and as such, its ability to convey its significance.

James Fenimore Cooper Graded School — Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico
Name of Property — **County and State**

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.)

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.

__ **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 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
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Social History

Period of Significance
1903-1965

Significant Dates
1903

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Post, Charles G.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The **James Fenimore Copper Graded School** is statewide significant under Criterion A in Social History as the property is one of the earliest twentieth century schoolhouses built in the island. The building became the first institutional resource built in Sabana Grande during the United States' early stages administering Puerto Rico, exemplifying the arrival in the municipality of the new metropolis' educational and social discourse. The property represents the social project undertaken by the United States in Puerto Rico to promote the education and the economic well-being, combined with the political project of promoting the American values and the acculturation process of the Puerto Rican society. The period of significance extends from 1903-1965, coinciding with the construction date until the fifty-year cut-off time.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

In 1898, as a result of the Spanish Cuban American War, Puerto Rico was transferred to the United States. The US authorities found an island with a population of 951,836 inhabitants, out of which 143,472 were able to read and write, and only 5,045 had more than an elementary education. Only 500 schools were in service by 1898, for a school-age population of 322,393. Of this last number only 25,644 pupils, a little over 8%, were enrolled in the public schools by June 30, 1898.[3] Under Spain, not a single public schooling was conducted in a building erected or adapted to the purpose, the majority being carried on in rented buildings or in the teachers' homes, who were allowed a small sum for house rent in addition to their salaries. Some of the buildings used were fairly good, but in most cases, according to the new American administrators, they were "*miserable apologies for schoolhouses*".[4] Not only were the buildings of poor quality, but the facilities as a whole were detrimental to the educational process. The delegation that inspected the schools reported that the water supply for many schools was inadequate and impure, combined with a lack of sanitary provisions.

Other problems reported by the new authorities was the reduced number of teachers, the low number of schools in the rural area in an island were most of the inhabitants lived in the countryside and an absence of teachers able to manage the English language and the new educational methods. Added, was the accepted practice developed by many teachers to charge a fee to the pupils attending the school. As such, the public schools became untitled properties of the instructors. Spain also kept a strict policy of separate school facilities by gender. This policy negatively affected girls the most, as the public educational facilities for females were extremely limited in number.

[3] *Report of the Military Governor of Porto Rico on Civil Affairs*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902, 121.
[4] *Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, 1901*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901, 354.

On matters related to education, the military government established upon the island during the first eighteen months (1898-1900) instituted sweeping reforms which had significant impact on subsequent civil administrations: schools were open to both sexes; the schoolhouse was separated and upon different premises from the teacher's residence; all fee-collecting practice was prohibited, making schools absolutely free to everyone between the ages of 6 and 18 years; a graded system was established in the urban schools; church doctrine and religious teaching were eliminated from the public schools; a curriculum embracing English, geography and elements of US history and civil government was adopted, among many others.[5] The policies began under the military government became, with some slight variations and trends, the general objectives of the first five Commissioners of Education under the disposition of the Foraker Act: Martin G. Brumbaugh (1900 -1901), Samuel L. Lindsay (1902 – 1904), Roland P. Falkner (1904 – 1907), Edwin G. Dexter (1907 – 1912), Edward M. Bainter (1912 – 1915) and Paul G. Miller (1915 – 1921).

During the twentieth century's first decade, the Commissioners' agenda had three major objectives: the forced use of English as the main teaching language, the use of the education system as a mean for acculturation of the Puerto Rican society and most urgent, the establishment of an effective schoolhouses-construction program.

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century the Commissioners dealt with some of the identified deficiencies. Due to the lack of local teachers able to properly instruct in English, an aggressive campaign was conducted to recruit young teachers in the United States. Most of them came from the Northeast region: New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Ohio, among others states.[6]

As part of the acculturation efforts, a practice of sending Puerto Ricans students to the US was established as early as 1899. Initially, some sixty students were sent to the *Carlisle Indian Industrial School* (CIIS) in Pennsylvania.[7] Later on, under Martin G. Brumbaugh, a program was organized to send a selected group of students to other institutional facilities in the US such like Tuskegee and Hampton.[8] Just as important, the construction of every school, named mostly after US' significant figures, served

[5] *Report of the Military Governor of Porto Rico,* 126.
[6] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1906*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906, 125-126.

[7] Pablo Navarro-Rivera, *Acculturation Under Duress: The Puerto Rican Experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School 1898-1918.* Centro Journal of the Hunter College Center for Puerto Rican Studies in New York City, New York.

[8] A very relevant factor can be seen in the program mentioned above. This early educational policy was built on a racial and ethnic discourse that reflected more the dominant social views in the US than the social reality of Puerto Rico. Initially, the new administrators saw the Puerto Ricans as "*Indians*", so sending the "*natives*" to Carlisle was a "*natural*" course of action. Under Martin G. Brumbaugh, Puerto Ricans began to be categorized as "*colored*", so Tuskegee and Hampton became more proper as institutional facilities to educate the inhabitants of the new territory in the Caribbean.

as an opportunity to promote the American values. In his 1901 report, Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh, the first Commissioner of Education designated under the Foraker Act, indicated that:

> *"Almost every school in the island has an American flag. In almost every city of the island, and at many rural schools, the children meet and salute the flag as it is flung to the breeze. The raising of the flag is the signal that school has commenced, and the flag floats during the entire sessions. The pupils then sign "America", "Hail Columbia", "Star Spangled Banner", and other patriotic songs. The marvel is that they sing these in English. The first English many of them know is the English of our national songs. The influence of this is far-reaching".*[9]

Most impressive was the schoolhouses' construction effort, as is shown in the table below.

Number of Public Schools in Puerto Rico, 1902[10]

Municipalities	**# Schools in 1897 (under Spain)**	**# Schools in 1902**
Adjuntas	6	13
Aguadilla	8	21
Arecibo	11	39
Barranquitas	4	10
Bayamón	10	30
Cayey	8	14
Ciales	7	17
Guayanilla	5	9
Hatillo	6	12
Maricao	4	7
Quebradillas	4	10
Sabana Grande	5	12
Salinas	3	6
San Sebastian	8	14
Toa Baja	4	8
Trujillo Alto	4	8
Utuado	9	20
Vega Alta	5	7
Yauco	15	25

[9] *Report of the Commissioner of Education*, 1901. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901, 361.
[10] *Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, 1902*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902, 42. To see entire list refer to the cited document.

After 1898, because of lack of funds, the US authorities in the local Department of Education continued with the same renting-building-policy during the initial years. On January 2, 1901, however, a School Trust Fund was initiated for the purpose of school construction and extension with the transfer of $200,000 to the local Treasure Department, directly ordered by the United States' president.[11] A new school law was also passed that very same year providing that every municipality would have a school board composed of three qualified electors. Among the responsibilities of the school boards was taking charge of all school buildings in their districts, erect and repair school property, rent buildings for school purposes and nominate to the Commissioner of Education the name of those teachers whom they wish to employ.

The 1901' school fund came with the significant creation of the Division of School Extension within the Department of Education. The division had the responsibility of administering such portions of the trust fund allotted to the construction of school buildings; plans and specifications for buildings were prepared by the division; contract let; and the actual construction work was supervised by the division's inspectors.

From 1901, at least until 1906, the division was headed by architect Charles G. Post, under the title of "Inspector in Charge". During 1901-1902, with the new trust fund, the division's production was mostly oriented toward the construction of rural schools and some graded schools within urban centers. On either case, wood was the dominant construction material.

However, by the time the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** was built in 1903, an improvement had been made in the general architectural features of the buildings constructed. As expressed by Post himself, these changes were based "*upon the increased experience in school construction attained in this office by the supervising architect as he has struggled to overcome the peculiar difficulties which attend all building in this climate*".[12]

By 1903, guided by Post, the division adhere to the policy of constructing buildings that had more than the average permanency, avoiding expending large sums for any unnecessary features or for mere matters of adornment. The division constrained to keep school construction under the simplest scale and to the simplest type of building practical for school purposes, permanent and enduring in the service which may be expected. To maximize efforts and reduce costs, Post and the Division of School Extension adopted the innovative practice of using the same building plan for equal sizes schools, regardless of their future sites. Very sober external architectural details and ornaments were used to differentiate one schoolhouse from the other, but the layout was essentially the very same.

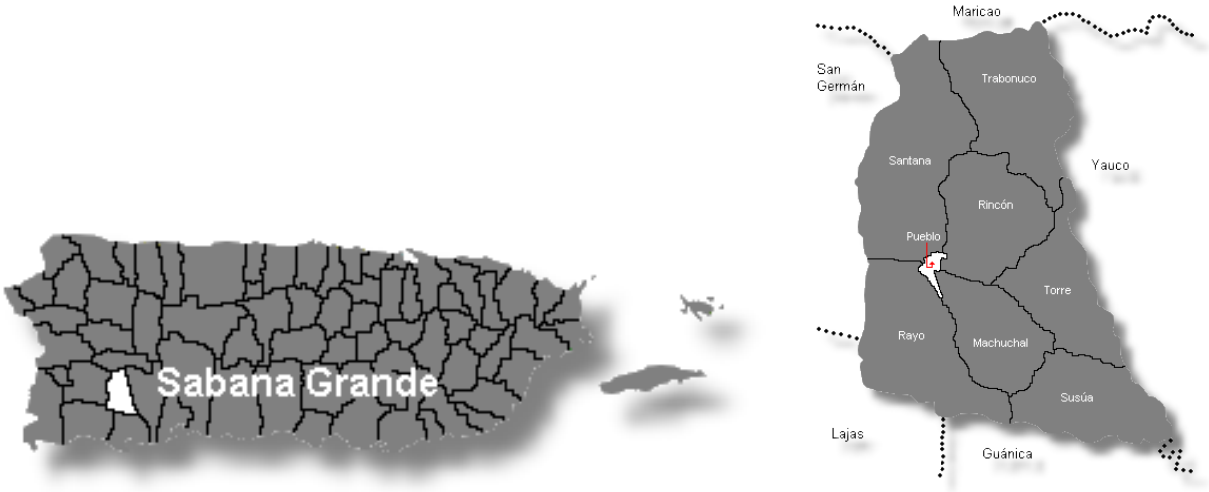
[11] *Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico*,1901. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901, 355-356.
[12] *Third Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico covering the period from July 1, 1902 to June 30, 1903*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903, 152-153.

By 1902, the Department of Education initiated a new program on which it was able to enter into a contract with any municipality to build schoolhouses, especially graded-urban facilities. As a combined effort, the department agreed to furnish the funds to construct the building, while the municipal authorities would furnish the land and agree to reimburse the department, in monthly payments extended over a period of five years, half the cost of the building.[13] Sabana Grande, with its **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School,** was among the first municipalities that took advantage of the half-and-half plan.

Sabana Grande and the James Fenimore Cooper Graded School

Located in the southwest of Puerto Rico, Sabana Grande was founded between 1813-1814 (**Fig. 7**). During most part of the nineteenth century, the town's economy was based on agriculture and cattle rising. By 1875, the municipality was divided in six wards, with *Barrio Pueblo* containing the most prominent families, as usual.[14]

Figure 7. Sabana Grande' location and its wards.



[13] *Third Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico covering the period from July 1, 1902 to June 30, 1903*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903, 177-178.
[14] Luis R. Negrón Hernández, *Sabana Grande: Notas para su historia*. San Juan, 1986, 27.

By 1878, it was indicated in Manuel Ubeda y Delgado's work, that Sabana Grande had a population of 8,492 people. Barrio Pueblo, main urban and administrative center, had eleven streets with *Comercio*, *San Isidro* and *Rey* as the main arteries. Pueblo was organized using the historic reticle, with all the streets departing at straight angles from the church/town square area at the center. The urban center was home for 353 families, dwelling in 83 houses and 270 *bohíos*. There were five schools in the entire municipality, with four schoolhouses (two for boys and two for girls) in *Pueblo* and one for boys in Machuchal, a rural ward. [15]

In 1892, Sabana Grande's urban center was razed by a fire, with more than 80 dwellings totally destroyed.[16] It was identified that the fire began at the Gaztambide's residence, an old family in town. As in other cities in the island, the fire became a learning experience. As part of the recovery process, Sabana Grande's authorities implemented a construction code upon the urban center. *Pueblo* was divided in three construction zones. In the first zone, only dwellings and buildings of stone, bricks and masonry were allowed. The same materials, including wood, were authorized for the second zone, but every building's roof was required to be of tiles or metal. In the outskirts of Pueblo, the third zone, light building materials were permitted. The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** was eventually built at the Gaztambide's family old lot, in the heart of the first zone. The construction material for the new schoolhouse responded not only to the Division of School's new policies, but also to the municipality's nineteen century urban code.

Sabana Grande's municipal officials showed a remarkable interest not only on the development, planning and care of the urban core, but in the schoolhouses and the educational system in particular. Surviving reports from the 1880s informed of the recurring inspections conducted by the members of Sabana Grande's School Board, describing the schools physical conditions, the number of students attending and commenting on the effectiveness, or lack-of, of the educational methods applied by the teachers. In 1885, for example, the president of the Board (who was the town's mayor) reported on one of his visits to the schools assigned to him. Mayor Manuel Rodriguez Soto mentioned visiting the two schools in Pueblo and the rural school in Santana (a rural ward) describing the two urban schools as "*outstanding*" and the rural one as "*regular*". The two urban schools, following Spain's practice, were gender separated. The boy's school had an enrollment of 116 students, while there were 69 girls enrolled in the other schoolhouse.[17] The board members were obligated to conduct those visits and present their reports on a monthly basis. Sabana Grande's officials' genuine interest in the local

[15] Manuel Úbeda y Delgado, *Isla de Puerto Rico, Estudio histórico, geográfico y estadístico de la misma*. Puerto Rico. Establecimiento Tip. Del Boletín, 1878, 212-213.
[16] Silvia A. Aguiló, *Sabana Grande*. *Identificación y catalogación de su patrimonio histórico-arquitectónico y recursos culturales*. Oficina Estatal de Preservación Histórica. 4 de Febrero de 1991, 10.
[17] Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Fondo: Documentos municipales: Sabana Grande. Instrucción Pública. Actas y minutas. Libros de Actas de la Junta Escolar. Informe de la Junta Escolar, 1885. Caja 57.

education shows also in the fines imposed upon parents for not sending their children to school, as it was required by law, but not necessarily enforced by many municipalities.[18]

The Sabana Grande's leadership progressive thinking in educational matters came forward again in the report submitted to the reverend Dr. Henry K. Carroll, an envoy sent to Puerto Rico by President William McKinley in 1898 to investigate and report on the island social, economic and political conditions. The municipal officials suggested to Carroll the need to establish the proper separation of powers between the government and the church, eliminating religious teachings in the public schools. They also indicated the need for a free and mandatory education policy for all children between the ages of five and twelve.[19]

Following on the steps of their progressive legacy, the municipality was one of the first to see the advantage on the 1902 half-and-half program. By 1900, the town had five school facilities, providing services for 192 boys and 102 girls, and was expending annually $504.00 in rent of schoolhouses.[20] The number of schoolhouses increased to twelve by 1902, but still, none of the buildings were properly owned. The program provided the opportunity to promptly acquire a building purposely designed as a graded school with the ownership eventually passing to the municipality, breaking with the unproductive renting cycle.

In the initial months of 1902, Sabana Grande wrote to the Department of Education indicating that it had inscribed a lot in which to build a graded school at the Registry of Deeds and that it was ready to concede ownership of the site to the people of Puerto Rico, as required by the Department of Education half-and-half policy.[21] In April 1902, the Department of Education included Sabana Grande in his half-and-half program allocating the amount of $9,500 for the construction of a graded school building.[22] The layout and design applied to the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** was the one story, four-classrooms, C-shaped, brick and masonry, Neoclassical model already worked by Charles G. Post in the Division of School Extension and pre-approved by the Department of Education. As indicated in the 1904 report of the Commissioner of Education, Sabana Grande was to repay the amount of $4,750 out of the $9,500 allotted, beginning payments in July 1, 1903. However, contrary to the five years terms repayment policy, Sabana Grande was allowed to prorogate its payments until the

[18] AGPR. Ibid. Legajo 00793132.

[19] AGPR. Fondo: Documentos municipales: Sabana Grande. *Memoria que presenta el Ayuntamiento de Sabana Grande al Honorable Señor Henry K. Carroll, Comisionado especial del gobierno de Washington en Puerto Rico*. 1898. Yauco, Pto Rico. Establecimiento tipográfico "Borinquen". Año 1899. Caja 90.

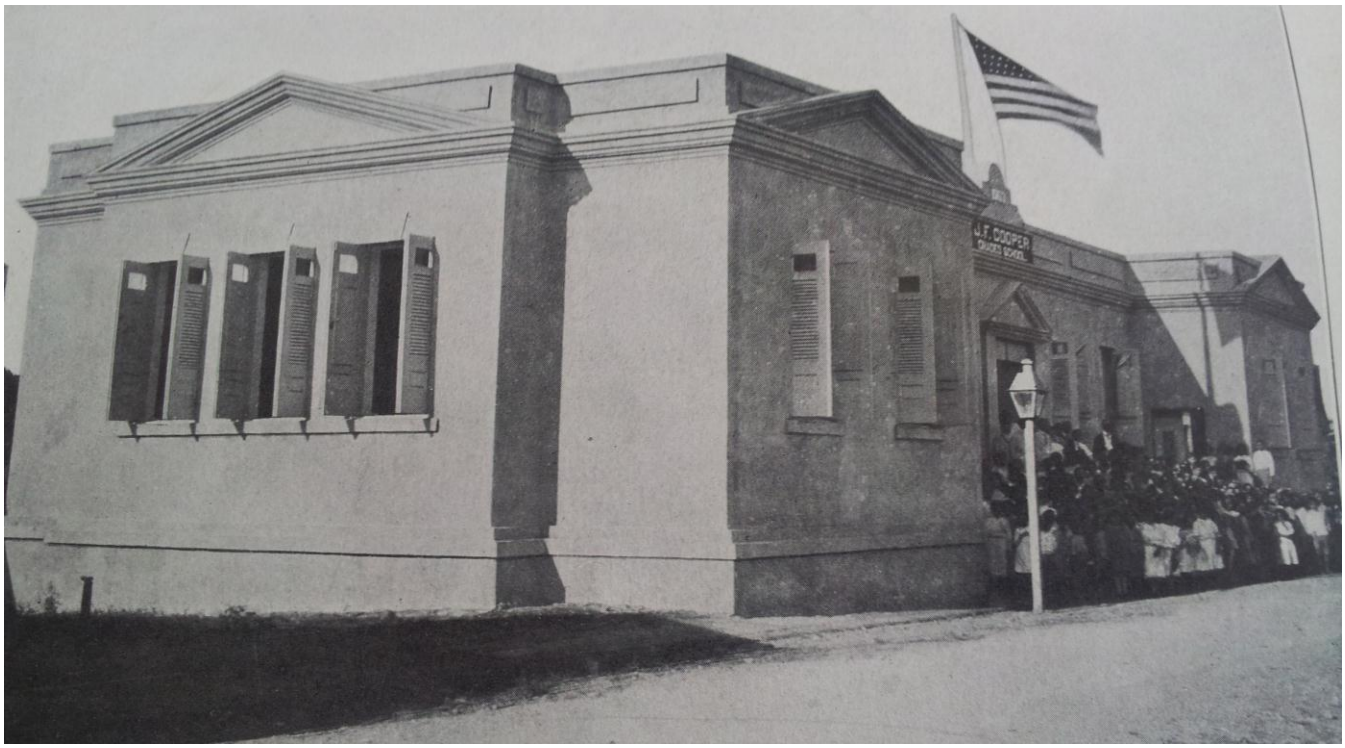
[20] AGPR. Fondo: Oficina del Gobernador. Serie: Correspondencia general. Caja 11. Expediente: Estadísticas Junio 1899 – Octubre 1900.

[21] AGPR. Ibid. Caja 119. Expediente 226. The lot mentioned was the very same owned by the Gaztambide family during the 1890s. In February 1902, the Gaztambide Succession presented a legal claim against the municipality disputing the ownership of the lot, but the legal situation was quickly resolved in favor of City Hall.

[22] AGPR. Fondo: Oficina del Gobernador. Serie: Correspondencia General. Caja 14, *Special Report on School Extension on Porto Rico, from January 2, 1901 to December 3, 1903*.

fiscal year of 1913-1914.[23] With the construction granted to the firm *Axmayer & Son*, the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** was included in the list of schoolhouses completed during the year ending June 30, 1904 (**Fig. 8**). The new facility was built at a final cost of $9,170.00 and officially accepted by the Department of Education on November 14, 1903.[24]

Figure 8. **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School**, 1903. (Source: *Annual Report of the Governor*, 1904)



By January 1904, Sabana Grande School Board indicated that the "*elegant schoolhouse, named J.F. Cooper, jointly financed by the Department of Education and the Ayuntamiento*" was already fully functional with all four classrooms properly equipped.[25] The building had the capacity to provide for two hundred students, fifty per classroom. By 1906, that amount was doubled as the schoolhouse implemented the double enrollment program, on which two hundred students attended classes in the morning period, and another two hundred attended in the afternoon.[26]

[23] *Report of the Commissioner of Education for Porto Rico to the Secretary of Interior*, USA, 1904. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904, 226.
[24] Ibid.
[25] AGPR. Fondo: Documentos municipales. Sabana Grande. Caja 90. Municipio de Sabana Grande. Año económico de 1903 a 1904. Agosto de 1904. Imprenta de José de Jesús López. Sabana Grande, P.R. 2-3.
[26] *Report of the Commissioner of Education for Porto Rico to the Secretary of Interior*, USA, 1906. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906, 108.

The new school building, with the *Stars and Stripe* flying high, represented not only the new educational opportunities, but also the arrival of the new metropolitan power. The building was located nearby the Old Catholic church, the town square and City Hall, a space historically reserved for the emblematic signs of power (**Fig. 9**). The incoming social, political and cultural agenda became immediately a living force through the new schoolhouse. That agenda could be summarized into three major objectives: wide extension of the American school system in the Island, the forced use of English as the main teaching language and the acculturation or "Americanization" of the Puerto Rican society.[27] Fusing these three objectives, the educational policy primary's concern was most definitely the conquest of the inhabitant's conscience, as it was clearly stated by the second Commissioner of Education, Dr. Samuel McCune Lindsay:

> *"Colonization carried forward by the armies of war is vastly more costly than that carried forward by the armies of peace, whose outpost and garrisons are the public schools of the advancing nation".* [28]

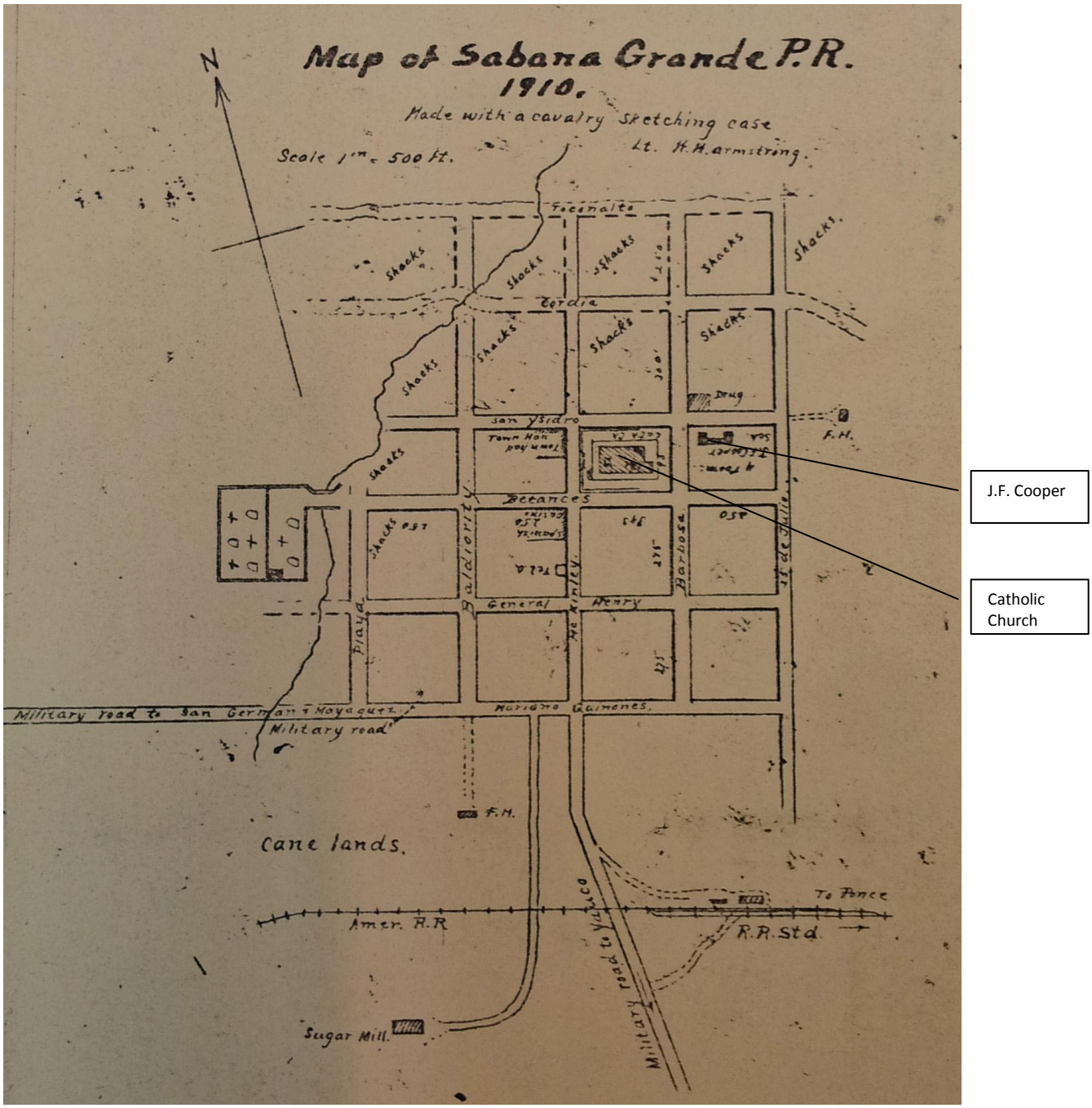
The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School,** the "*new outpost and garrison"* in Sabana Grande, became a distinguish landmark among the town's urban landscape. In 1910, When Lt. William Armstrong described Sabana Grandes' urban core as part of his 1909-1912 island-wide topographical survey for the United Sates' Army, the schoolhouse was highlighted:

> *"Sabana Grande is a town of considerable importance only because it is located in a good sugar district. It has numerous stores, several of which are very good dry goods and general provision stores. The population of the entire district is 11,523 of which there are probably 5,000 in the town. Two thirds of this population is of the bare footed illiterate class. The streets are metaled after a fashion, rough, narrow and in a filthy condition. The buildings are old and most of them are built of wood. The best building in town is the new concrete school building, the J. Fenimore Cooper School, which has four ground rooms. The catholic church is a very old brick structure".*[29]

[27] Aida Negrón de Montilla. *Americanization of Puerto Rico and the Public School System, 1900 – 1930*. Editorial Universitaria. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1975.
[28] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1902*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902, 257.
[29] William Armstrong. *Manuscritos sobre algunos pueblos de Puerto Rico*, 1909-1912. Volumen 10, 1-7. Armstrong wrongfully described the school as a concrete building.

Armstrong's comments could reflect more about his own prejudices. As view from the "eyes" of the conqueror, only those things brought in by the new administrators were worthy of praise. Even so, it does not diminish the significant and dominating presence of the **James Fenimore Copper Graded School's** building within the town's landscape, as it shows in Armstrong's sketch (**Fig. 9**)

Figure 9. William Armstrong's map of Sabana Grande, 1910.



Another comment made by Armstrong provides an insight on how significant the new schoolhouse was as a mean in the need to capture the social conscience of the local inhabitants and to establish and validate the presence of the American authorities:

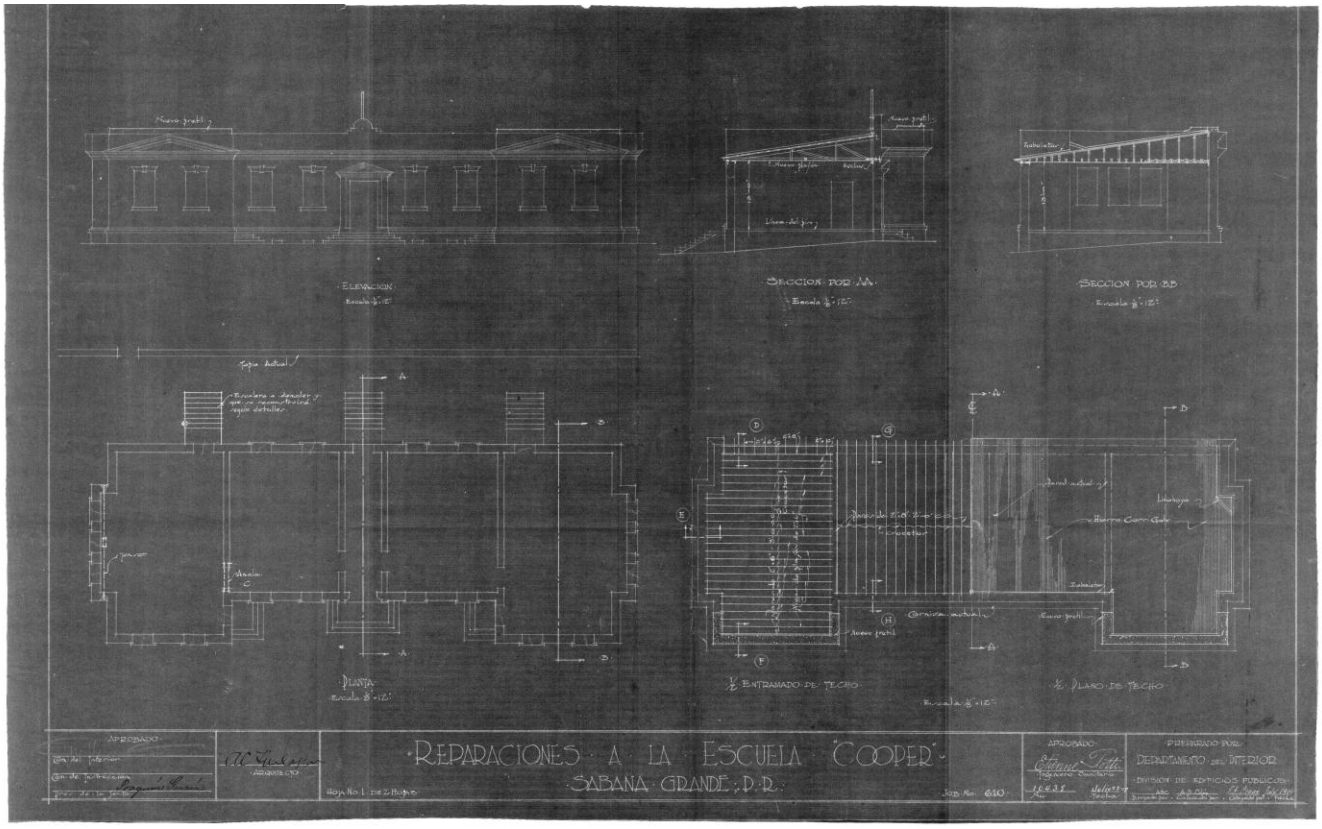
> *Sabana Grande and San German are the most hostile and anti-American towns in the island. There are only four Americans in the town and three are the teachers and a missionary. The hatred seems to be due chiefly to the fact that but few good Americans has ever been known to the natives*.[30]

As with many other schoolhouses built by the United States in Puerto Rico during the very early years, the original 1903's plans for the **James Fenimore Copper Graded School** have not been located. However, one blueprint was drawn in 1919 by architect Adrian C. Finlayson, working at that moment for the Department of the Interior (**Fig. 10**). On October 11, 1918, the island was hit by a 7.3 Richter scale's earthquake that caused the death of 116 people and property's damages estimated at four million dollars.[31] Many school buildings were affected. The local government and the Department of Education, quickly responded establishing a fund to help the municipalities in identifying and repairing the schoolhouses damaged by the seism. Sabana Grande submitted a report identifying the damages to the **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School.** To identify the repairs and changes to be made, Finlayson prepared the blueprint, showing the building as it was by 1919, allowing us to glance at the building's historic elevation and layout.[32]

The narrative accompanying Finlayson's blueprint indicated the changes applied upon the building. For one, the existing roof by 1919 (which was not described) was replaced by galvanized corrugated metal sheets, supported by a wooden frame. It is indicated in the narrative (and in the blueprint), that the new metal roof would be inclined towards the building's rear. An interior thirteen-foot high wooden panel ceiling was added. The stairs on the building's rear were re-built in concrete. The height of the masonry parapet was elevated by the addition of a concrete segment atop the projecting's volume parapet, in the main façade. All these 1919 changes and additions are still present.

[30] Ibid. 7
[31] Puerto Rico. Red Sísmica. http:redsismica.uprm.edu/Spanish/informacion/terr1918.php
[32] AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Edificios Escolares. Sabana Grande. Caja 1046, Legajo 59, Expediente 1. Reparaciones a la escuela James Fenimore Cooper.

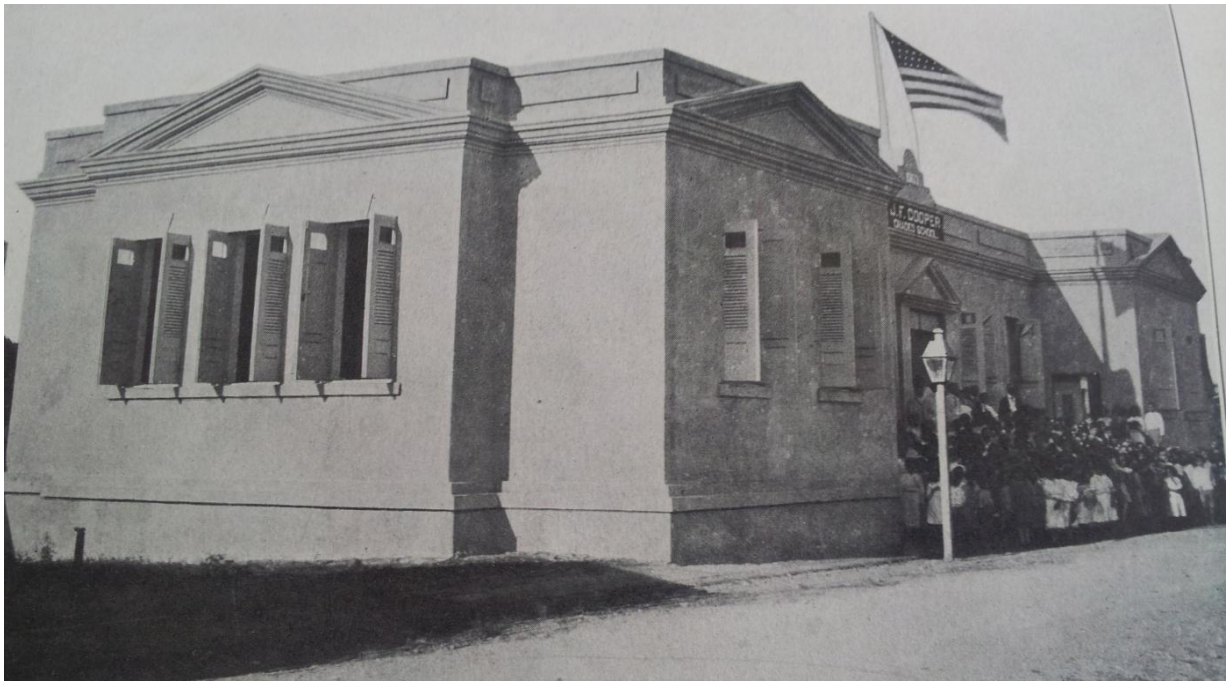
Figure 10. **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School's** 1919 blueprint. (Source: AGPR)



The building has endured changes and new trends on its functionality. The loss of the original louvered wooden windows sometime during the 1960s; concrete-filled of center windows on the flanking volumes; tiles on the exposed concrete floors during the early 2000s; and placement of wooden panels over the interior masonry walls, have been the major physical changes to the building. By the late 1990s, the building ceased to be used as a schoolhouse. The Department of Education eventually transferred total ownership of the building to the local authorities. Currently used as seat for the Municipal Legislature, the building has been custom to its function.

However, the property retains most of its physical features, its mass, spatial relationship, and proportion. Most important, it possesses most aspects of integrity like its location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The physical changes and alterations have not impaired the property's ability to convey its significance. The James Fennimore Copper is one of the oldest and best kept early twentieth century school buildings in Puerto Rico (**Fig. 11**).

Figure 11. The James Fenimore Cooper Graded School, 1903/ 2014.



The **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School** is of statewide significance under Criterion A in Social History, as it is one of the best examples in the early stage of the social project undertaken by the United States in Puerto Rico to promote the education, combined with the national political project of locally promoting the American values and the acculturation process.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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James Fenimore Cooper Graded School
Name of Property

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico
County and State

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 #
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other (Name of repository)
_____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than an acre (0.171 acres) USGS Quadrangle _____

(Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates. Delete the other.)

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): _____

___ NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

1.	Zone 19Q	Easting	716012	Northing	2000164
2.	Zone	Easting		Northing	
3.	Zone	Easting		Northing	
4.	Zone	Easting		Northing	

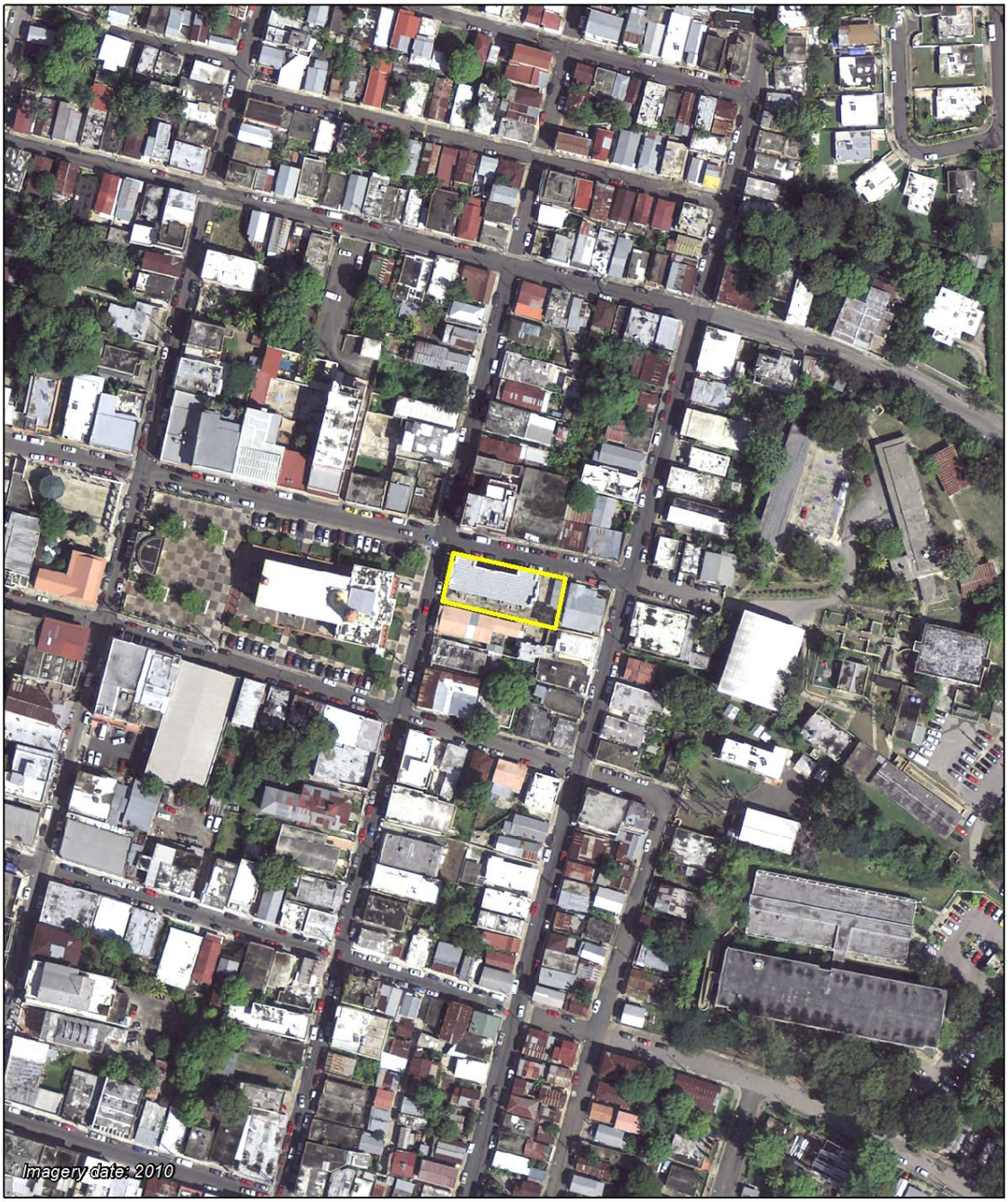
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot of six hundred and ninety-five (695) square meters, as recorded at the Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM) under the number 266-075-091-01.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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

Map 1. Regional Vicinity Map (Scale 1: 1,800)



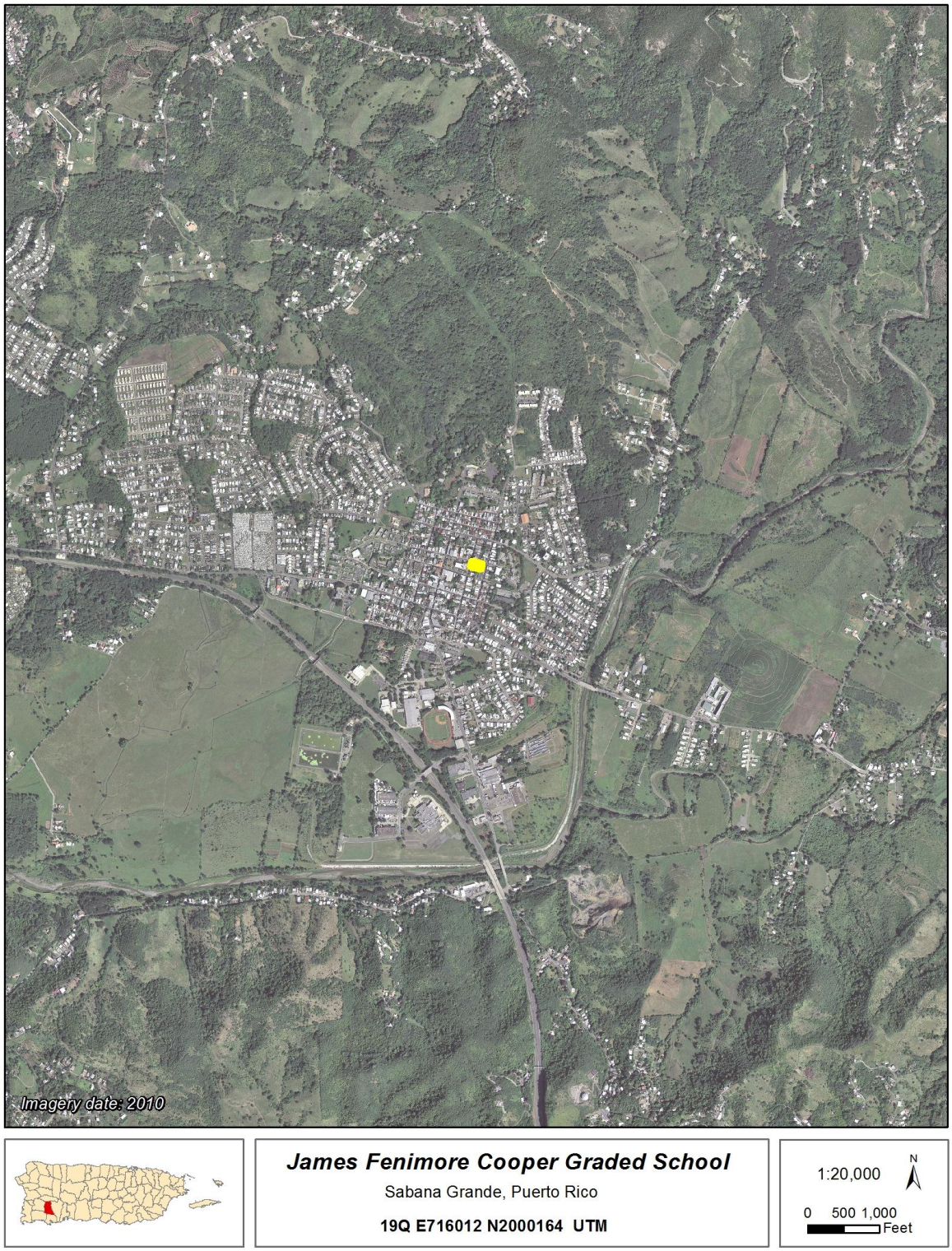
James Fenimore Cooper Graded School
Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico
19Q E716012 N2000164 UTM

1:1,800
N
0 50 100
Feet

James Fenimore Cooper Graded School
Name of Property

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico
County and State

Map 2. Site Map (Scale 1: 20,000)



James Fenimore Cooper Graded School — Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico
Name of Property — **County and State**

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos, Historian
organization State Historic Preservation Office date April 6, 2015
street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737
city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00902-3935
email jllanes@prshpo.gobierno.pr

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property **James Fenimore Cooper Graded School**

City or Vicinity Sabana Grande County Sabana Grande State Puerto Rico

Photographer Juan Llanes Santos Date Photographed August 21, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

1. Main and eastern facades, looking southwest. Photo 0001.
2. Western façade with partial view of main façade; looking southeast. Photo 0002.
3. Main façade; looking south. Photo 0003.
4. Western and southern façade; looking northeast. Photo 0004.
5. Legislative Chamber, building's left wing; looking north. Photo 5.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.