

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAY 26 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Casa de España

and/or common Casa de España

**2. Location**

street & number Ponce de León Ave., Stop 1 1/2 not for publication

city, town San Juan vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county San Juan code 0930

**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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other: civic

**4. Owner of Property**

name Land Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Building Members of Casa de España

street & number La Fortaleza Ponce de León Ave., Stop 1 1/2

city, town San Juan vicinity of state Puerto Rico

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds- San Juan, Section 1

street & number San Juan Judicial Center- Second floor

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Inventario de Monumentos Históricos has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal  state county local

depository for survey records Institute of Puerto Rican Culture

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The basic plan of "Casa de España" is a typical rectangular moorish house (palace) 119'-2" in width by 158'-0" in length, with an interior rectangular courtyard, 51'-0" in width by 85'-3" in length. It is two stories high with a tower at each corner. The structural system consists of reinforced concrete walls and artificial stone. Most walls are cement plastered with large areas covered with geometric arabic glazed tiles. The main roof is flat with those on the interior courtyard gallery; front, back, and sides verandas, and the four corner towers pitched and covered with glazed clay roof tiles. Doors and windows are wooden with most of them having fixed glass inlets.

The moorish influence is manifested immediately as one approaches the property encountering a fountain, definitively a copy of the one in the "Patio de los Leones" at "La Alhambra" in Granada, Spain ( Photograph #1 ). The main entrance is very interesting occurring at the East Corner of the South Facade ( Photographs #13, #14, #15 ). The geometric arabic tile wainscot starts from the East Corner throughout the first floor and the main stairway ( Photographs #2, #4 ). The active facade ornamentation ( stone reliefs and motifs, pinnacles, tilework, pilasters ) are some of the details particular to said style ( Photographs #6, #7, #12, #17, #18 ). The extensively use of geometric glazed tilework ( Photographs #2, #4 ), the strong use of moorish type columns ( Photographs #2, #4, #6, #9, #10, #12, #16, #19 ), the use of towers with its pointed roof ( Photographs #6, #11, #16, #20 ), among other details typifies a strong moorish style.

The first floor is used mostly for small private meeting rooms, a library, administrative offices, and a reception room. All of these areas open up to the interior galleries and courtyard. The interior elevations of the galleries open to the patio and are arcaded at the first level with roman arches; yet the slenderness of moorish columnades is non existing ( Photograph #5 ). The open gallery at the second level has double corinthian columns ( Photograph #5 ) inspired by the moorish style. This treatment is repeated in the South Facade ( Photographs #12, #13 ). Of special interest are the blue and white irregularly colored glazed roof tiles particular and peculiar to said structure.

The second floor areas are used for entertainment activities. A large multi-purpose activity room stands out from the rest of the areas in the building for its excellent woodwork details. This room has an extraordinary polychromated wood ceiling. Three large glass chandeliers lighting fixtures hangs from wooden beams. The walls are covered with wood panels with large mirrors at the center, thus the name, "Sala de los Espejos" (Hall of Mirrors). A restaurant and small game rooms are also located in this floor. As in the case of the areas in the first floor, all of these areas open up to the interior galleries. The corner towers are also used for entertainment activities. The strong moorish details are also manifested in these areas ( Photographs #9, #10, #11 ).

The building has been kept in good condition and unaltered throughout the years.

# 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	X ..... architecture	..... education	..... military	..... social/	
..... 1700-1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian	
..... 1800-1899	..... commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater	
X ..... 1900-	..... communications	..... industry	..... politics/government	..... transportation	
		..... invention		X ..... other (specify)	civic, cultural
<b>Specific dates</b>	1932	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Arch. Pedro de Castro		

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

"Casa de España" is a private, civic and cultural organization created in 1913. Its main objective was to gather Spanish citizens living in Puerto Rico in a place where they could meet and present civic, cultural and social activities typical of Spain and its surroundings. This organization owned a small structure in Old San Juan, in front of "Plaza de Armas", where the González Padín store now stands. The structure was very small and lacked adequate facilities to provide services for the organization. Because membership was limited to spaniards, getting additional members was a problem due to the existence of the "Casino Español"; an organization created in 1872 with the same principles and objectives of "Casa de España", which was encountering the same membership problems. In 1923 both organizations merged, keeping the name of "Casa de España" as the only one. The Board of Directors decided to sell the property and with the help of donations from private citizens, and of the Government of Puerto Rico which donated the land, they build the structure now known as "Casa de España". They decided to contract the services of an architect which was to design the building with all the facilities needed to adequately service the organization.

Pedro de Castro, a Puerto Rican architect graduated from Syracuse University in 1919, was commissioned to design the building. Because the structure was to be used by an organization of Spanish origin, he decided to design the building reflecting the style most used at that time in Spain, thus he borrows from the Spanish moorish style, as did other architects of that period.

The moorish influence can be readily seen in the basic rectangular plan with towers at each corner. A fountain, a reproduction of the one in the "Patio de los Leones" at "La Alhambra", seems to dictate the strong moorish influence of the building. The extensive use of tilework throughout the building, the active facade ornamentation, the use of colored roof clay tiles, among other details, typifies a strong moorish influence.

As "Casa de España" grew with the time, the Board of Directors decided to accept Puerto Ricans of Spanish descendants as members of the organization. Civic, cultural and social organizations are part of the lifestyle of the majority in Puerto Rico. Almost all the cities and towns in Puerto Rico have at least one cultural organization. Organizations such as "Casa de España", "Ateneo Puertorriqueño", "Círculo de Recreo de San Germán", "Casino de Puerto Rico", among others, have become part of the history of Puerto Rico. At present every town in Puerto Rico has a Cultural Center under the jurisdiction of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. All of these organizations, private or public, have become an important source in keeping the cultural heritage of Puerto Rico intact throughout time.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico; Tomo 9, Arquitectura y Leyes, Ediciones R., Madrid, 1976.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.21 acres

Quadrangle name San Juan

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

### UTM References

18°28'10" Lat. North, 66°06'28" Long. West

A 

Zone	Easting			Northing							

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing							

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The property is bounded to the North by Muñoz Rivera Ave., to the South by Ponce de León Ave., to the East by the Capitol of P.R. and to the West by Carnegie Library.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Armando Morales Parés- Architect

organization Institute of Pto.Rican Culture

date May 17, 1983.

street & number Box 4184

telephone (809)- 724-4102

city or town San Juan

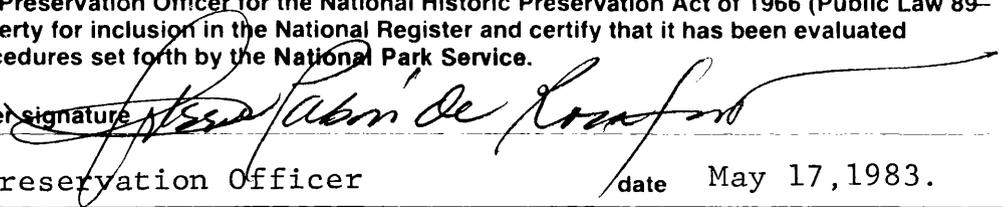
state Puerto Rico 00905

## 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 May 17, 1983.

For NPS use only

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



date 2/5/83

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration