

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1

other names/site number Casa de las Almas

2. Location

street & number 1612 Antonsanti Street not for publication

city or town San Juan vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county San Juan code 127 zip code 00912

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alda Belén Rivera Ruiz
Signature of certifying official/Title

28 April 2006
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Daniel J. Vivian
6/8/06

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
0
0
1

0 buildings
0 sites
0 structures
0 objects
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

N/A

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 06000507

Date Listed: June 8, 2006

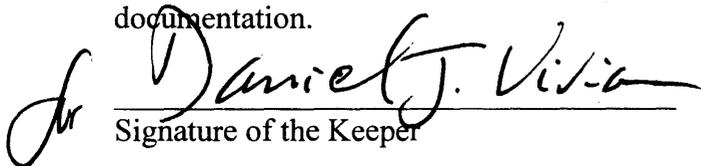
Property Name: Gran Logia Espiritual Numero 1

County: San Juan

State: Puerto Rico

none
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

June 8, 2006
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 10. Geographical Data

The following verbal boundary justification is hereby added to the nomination: The property includes all of the land historically associated with the Gran Logia Espiritual Numero 1.

[This change was made in consultation with and approved by the National Register staff of the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office.]

The Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

**National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Gran Logia Espiritual Numero 1
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, San Juan

DATE RECEIVED: 5/04/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/23/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/07/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/17/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000507

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

 ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Gran Logia Espiritual Numero 1 is locally significant for its historical role as the center of Spiritualist thought and social life in Puerto Rico. A philosophical movement that spread throughout Europe, the United States, and Latin America in the nineteenth century, Spiritualism had its origins in the thought of Allan Kardec. Its fundamental principles combined philosophy and science. It had special appeal among middle-classes professionals, who viewed it as progressive. The first Spiritualist centers in Puerto Rico appeared in the 1870s. The Gran Logia Espiritual Numero 1 dates to 1910. The current building, a three-story reinforced concrete structure, was built in 1928. Today, the lodge reflects the history of Spiritualism in Puerto Rico and retains integrity from its period of significance.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A
REVIEWER Daniel Vivian DISCIPLINE Historian
TELEPHONE (202) 354-2252 DATE 6/8/06

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR (Y)N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social / Meeting Hall

Education / Philosophical School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social / Meeting Hall

Education / Philosophical School

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical provenance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls concrete

roof concrete

other _____

Narrative Description

X See continuation sheets

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.

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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 _____
 Philosophy _____
 Education _____

Period of Significance

1910-1928, 1928 – 1950 _____

Significant Dates

1910, 1928 _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

Luis F. Delgado _____
 Juan Rivera París _____

Narrative Statement of Significance

See continuation sheets.

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
 San Juan, Puerto Rico

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

See continuation sheets.

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: Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less that one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>19</u>	<u>810050</u>	<u>2042130</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

Legally recorded lot: 040-070-210-03. Cadastre Registry. Puerto Rico State Government.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos/PRSHPO, Santiago Gala/PRSHPO, Karen González Jensen/Deputy SHPO

organization Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office date _____

street & number PO BOX 9066581 telephone 787-721-3737

city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00936-4267

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1 (Casa de las Almas)

street & number 1612 Antonsanti Street telephone 787-725-1181

city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00912

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Narrative Description

The **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1**, also known as **Casa de Las Almas**, is a three-story, reinforced concrete, Spiritualist meeting-hall built in 1928. Its rectangular plan almost fills its entire site, which faces north to Antonsanti Street in Santurce, one of the oldest and most important wards of San Juan. The property is located on the same lot where the original Spiritualist Center was established back in 1910. Its immediate context is residential, with houses of not more than two levels in height. Up to this day, the elegant proportions of the building have an impact on its surrounding milieu (**Photo 1**). The deed to the property states that Luis F. Delgado and Juan Rivera Paris were the designers of the building. The actual construction was not only financed, but also literally carried out by the Center's members, mostly with voluntary labor and donated materials.

The main façade uses abstracted elements of classical provenance. Its arrangement not only reflects horizontally its three levels, it is also divided into three vertical bays. Each level differentiates itself from the other by a transition of openings –from an open balcony on the first level to just three windows on the second and third level- and square-section columns on the first floor that transform to pilasters on the second level and to the façade wall on the third. The façade is crowned with a simple pediment with a relief that forms the name of the Center and the date of construction: **Logia Espiritual Número 1, Casa de las Almas, 1928 (Fig. 4)**.

All the windows of the main façade are of metal louvers framed by simple, concrete moldings with a textured concrete relief under it. The original windows were wooden, casement windows, with glass panes. They were replaced by metal louvers at an early date. However, the introduction of these metal windows did not alter the original proportions of the openings and today could also be considered historic. The only access door is located in the first floor on the center of the façade. Originally it consisted of a wooden, double-door, with glass panes. Today, the door is still wooden but louvered windows have substituted the glass panes, without altering the original door opening. The windows and door substitutions and the closure of the balcony with ornamental iron are the only elements that have been altered from the original design. Fortunately, these are completely reversible. The west façade is a continuous plain wall with openings with metal windows and glass blocks. However, the east façade shows a composition of metal louver windows protected by concrete canopies with a lateral stepped design.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

The use of a simple, post-and-beam structural frame to construct the building not only facilitated its erection but also allowed for the use of wide spans on interior spaces. The simple design layout features a rectangular floor plan, with each space distribution changing from level to level. The distribution of the first level is similar to the domestic arrangements of the houses of the period. This level was used as the residence of the Vázquez family during and after the construction of the building. There is a central vestibule-living area with a closed space used as a library to the left and the access area to the main stairway to the right (**Photo 2**). The space transforms into a long central hall, with a succession of service areas to the left (bathrooms, kitchen, exhibition-museum), and ends on a multi-purpose area on the southern portion of the building (**Photo 3**). From this area a small internal stairway connects to an administrative office and spiritualistic consulting spaces on the second floor. Due to the fact that this property was built by stages, with donated material, the floor finish of the first level varies from hydraulic-cement tiles (in a floral motif, a chain motif, and a plain light-gray) (**Photo 4**) to vinyl tiles.

The main access to the second floor is through the stairway at the vestibule. Its handrail, walls, and ceiling have simple concrete moldings. At the second floor level, this staircase has two arched openings to allow for natural ventilation and illumination. This feature was requested by a spiritual being during a spiritual meeting at the time of construction. The second floor is the main meeting-hall area and occupies almost the whole building plan, with the exception of the two closed areas at the south end and two small rooms at the west (**Photo 4**). At the southern portion of the meeting-hall a long table is located in front of a wall with a three-arch molding relief. In front of the central arch, a pedestal with a large, engraved, metal-cup was located in 1928 during a ceremony, by the request of spiritual beings to honor the effort of all the members of the Center in the completion of the building, to mark the end of the construction of the building (**Photo 5**). Being the most important space in the Center, special attention was given to the application of the floor finishes. The access to the space has a floral motif, hydraulic-cement tiles with a floral motif but the floor finish in the main space is divided into three areas with a blue and white star motif tiles and a continuous border with a chain motif tile.

The third floor is only used for special ceremonies and it's accessed through the main stairway. This area occupies the whole building plan. At the southern portion of the rectangular space a smaller stairway gives access to the roof for maintenance purpose. On the blind wall, at the southern portion of the building, a mural of unknown date serves as the only decorative item (**Photo 6**).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Narrative Statement of Significance

The **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1** building is significant locally under Criterion A because it embodies a social and philosophical movement important in our history.

Historic Statement of Significance

Fig. 1. Gran Logia Espiritual



The building known as **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1** (Grand Spiritual Lodge No. 1) is widely recognized as the location of the most important center in the studies of the Spiritualist Doctrine in Puerto Rico (Fig. 1). The “*Gran Logia Espiritual*” is considered the strictest follower in the island of the philosophical principles codified by Allan Kardec (1804 – 1869).

Allan Kardec is the “*nom de plume*” of Hippolite Léon Denizard Rivail, renowned nineteenth – century French pedagogue and author (Fig. 2). Besides coining well-known terms such as “reincarnation” and “spiritualism”, Allan Kardec was the first to ever conduct, document and publish scientific, evidence-based, systemized studies of the paranormal and their implications to human life. As a result, Kardec is often called the “compiler” (or “codifier”) of

Fig. 2. Allan Kardec



Spiritualism. The philosophical movement propelled by his writings deeply impacted not only Europe, but also eventually the United States and Latin America.

The scientific approach to the study of the paranormal was concomitant with the intellectual forces sweeping in the social studies in Europe and the Americas. The application of the “scientific” approach to revealed the “mysteries” of the human development was sweeping through the vast region of the intellectual fields. Karl Marx was using it to understand the economical process. The approach used by Charles Darwin to explain the development of the natural world was being used to explain the development of the social world. These materialistic approaches to “decipher” the complexities of human history were among the most ideologically advanced intellectual postures of their time. In that sense, the movement originated by Allan Kardec in France, was part of a wide spectrum of ideas associated with the modernization in the interpretation of the world. The intellectual world in Puerto Rico in the 19th century reflected these changes and tendencies.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 4

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

The intellectual universe in Puerto Rico was highly attached to the political structure. The propagation of ideas and the development of an intellectual community were always highly restricted by our colonial subordination to the Spanish government. Even more ideas that could promote a challenge to the establishment and their representatives: the State and the Catholic Church. At certain times, the Spiritualist Doctrine became a dangerous proposition against the *status quo*.

The first Spiritualists centers in Puerto Rico appeared in the city of Mayaguez in the early 1870's. In those days, the practice of this new philosophy was barely permitted by the government officials. Too close in time to the insurrection in Lares (1868), any unusual meeting of undisclosed nature was unwelcome by the State's representatives. The *Guardia Civil* guarded the locations used for the reunions, usually a member's house.¹

In 1888, the implementation of the Law of Association toned down the opposition of the local government to the practice of the Spiritualism Doctrine. This short-lived atmosphere of tolerance facilitated the emergence of more visible Spiritualists centers: *El Centro Unión* in Mayaguez (1888); *La Caridad* in San Juan (1888); the *Centro Espiritista* in Lares (1893); *La Unión* en Barceloneta (1893); the *Sociedad Espiritista* in Aguadilla (1897), among others.² Well-known and respected individuals in their community directed the centers. Considering the character of the Spiritualism Doctrine, it is understandable the attraction that it had within the local intellectuals during the last decades of the 19th century. The combination of philosophy and science; faith and experimentation, in the beginning, made its philosophical views attractive to the educated classes. For these first followers, Spiritualism was a symbol of modernity. To the emerging middle class of lawyers, doctors, teachers, dentists, business men and landlords, the spiritualism offered social organization, education and an emphasis in science.³

The philosophical postulates were also transferable into the social realm. Spiritualism views were used to criticize what these intellectuals saw as symbols of social and political backwardness: the lack of separation between the State and the Church; the exploitation of the working classes; the practice of the death penalty, etc. In the last decades of the Spanish control over the island, followers of the Spiritualist Doctrine used their moral principles to promote the triumph of science over superstition, of reason over the blind faith and harmony over social conflict. But these principles, expressed within a political context, became weapons to oppose the establishment.

¹ Teresa Yáñez. *El Espiritismo en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Cooperativa de Artes Gráficas Romualdo Real, 1963. p. 17.

² Lidio Cruz Monclova. *Historia de Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)*. Tomo III, Tercera Parte (1885 – 1898). Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1979. p. 333 – 334. Monclova affirm that its not well known how the Spiritist ideas first came into the local context, but that they were probably introduced by Puerto Ricans students attending European colleges.

³ Madeleine Michtom. *Becoming a Medium: The Role of Trance in Puerto Rican Spiritualism as an Avenue to Maze way Re-synthesis*. Thesis for Ph. D. in Sociology. New York University, 1975.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 5

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

It's no surprise then, that in 1897, Governor Sabas Marín González, gave instructions to all the city mayors to use any means necessary to closed-down all spiritualist centers.⁴ By the following year, Sabas Marín found himself out of work when Puerto Rico was transferred to the United States as part of the Spanish American War settlement.

With the US occupation in 1898 came the separation between Government and Church. The Catholic Church lost a great deal of its economic and politic strength. The new situation opened a window of opportunity for the followers of the Spiritualism. During the first two decades of the 20th century, Spiritualists centers appeared in all major towns. They had their own magazines, newspapers and libraries. By the end of the previous century, there were eleven spiritualists' centers in the island. By 1920, there were one hundred and fifty (150).⁵

As a result of the spread of the Doctrine, a Spiritualist Federation was organized in 1903. The first convention was celebrated in Mayaguez with the participation of delegates from twenty-six centers. From that moment on, conventions were conducted annually. A quick look at some of the resolutions adopted during the annual meetings shows that the movement kept the social orientation that made it so ideologically advanced and dangerous to the establishment in the previous century. In the 1905 meeting the Federation established a program for the members: each center had to establish a night school to teach how to read and write to any person that requested it; each center had to have a library with the main Spiritualists writings and other philosophical subjects; each center will try to establish a local hospital to provide free assistance to poor children, old people and the physical impaired. In the sixth meeting in 1908, some of the resolutions adopted had a deep social character: opposition to the practice of the death penalty; the promotion of the creation of public libraries and housing-cooperatives; the establishment of the eight-hours working day, among others.⁶

Most definitely, the social postures adopted by the movement and the moral principles behind it, became very attractive to a large, and frequently, outcast sector: people from humble social extraction and women. It's evident in the records of the Federation the significant participation of both groups. Women found in the Spiritualism a social and intellectual space that was denied to them by the official establishment.⁷ This posture of equality among the different social classes and genders practiced within the Spiritualist Doctrine derived from the philosophical

⁴ Op. Cit. p. 337.

⁵ Nancy Herzig Shannon. *El Iris de Paz: El espiritismo y la mujer en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2001. p. 54 – 56.

⁶ Archivo General de Puerto Rico. Fondo: Departamento de Estado. Serie: Corporaciones sin fines de lucro. Legajo: Federación Espiritista.

⁷ The suffragist and feminist American activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton once affirmed: "The only religious sect in the world that had recognized the equality for women has been the Spiritualism", cited by Ann D. Braude in "Spirits Defends the Rights of Women: Spiritualism and Changing Sex Roles in 19th Century America", in *Women, Religion and Social Change*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 6

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

view that we are all spiritual equals. By 1907, twenty-five percent of the delegates to the annual convention of the Federation were women.⁸

In that sense, the Spiritualist centers became truly social melting pots. They were ahead of their time (and ahead of the official institutions) in promoting social programs that impacted their surrounding communities; class harmony; education; ideologically advance postures; and the creation of a “space” where socially forgotten groups (women, the poor) could actively participate in their communities’ social life. The Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1 embodies this complex and rich social process.

The **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1**, better known as **Casa de las Almas** (House of the Souls) is located in San Juan, in the ward of Santurce. The three-story reinforced concrete 1928 building occupies the same lot where the original 1910 spiritualist center was located.

Fig. 3. Center “Casa de las Almas”, 1922. Mr. Vázquez is at the center of the table.



Mr. Balbino Vázquez and his wife, Mrs. Maria Cruz Carpintero, founded the Center in 1910. They were both mediums. Mr. Vázquez’s humble residence was used as the Center. As the years went by and the number of attendees increased, the living room in the house became too small to serve the needs of the congregation. It was decided to build an annex to the house. A wooden meeting-room was finished by 1922, with a capacity for three hundred people. The annex was erected with the financial contributions of the members, which were simple workers of the local neighborhood. Mr. Vazquez, who was a carpenter, was responsible for most of the actual construction of the new center. The new meeting-hall was named **Casa de las Almas** (Fig. 3).

From the very beginning, most of the attendees of **Casa de las Almas** came from within its own working class neighborhood. In that sense, the social extraction of the membership reflected the spread of the movement beyond the circle of intellectuals. Also, as seen in Fig. 3, women had a high level of participation.

⁸ Nancy Herzig Shannon. *El Iris de Paz*...p. 49.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Fig. 4. Pediment in front elevation.



The first cornerstone of the structure that stands today was placed on November 29, 1926. It took great personal and collective sacrifices to complete the project. Because of the economic level of the members, it was extremely hard to come-up with the financial means. The members organized different activities to raise the money needed for the construction: neighborhood's parties for children where home-made food, cakes and candies were prepared and sold by the members; women would work at night sewing clothes for sale; tickets were sold for artistic gatherings and recitals; personal contributions from the very low income of its members; and the volunteer work in the actual construction. All these activities made possible the raising of \$1,400 dollars, which at that time was a considerable amount, to start the construction. Through hard collective work, the building

was finished by September 1928, as indicated at the very top of the main façade.⁹(Fig. 4) The enthusiastic participation of the surrounding community in the raising of the funds and in the actual construction of **Casa de las Almas** makes the building a communal product, a very special quality not commonly found in any other property from Puerto Rico included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Balbino Vázquez died in 1937. Just before his death, Mr. Vázquez and his wife agreed to leave, by testament and publicly registered document, the thirty thousand dollar building and the lot to the *Gran Logia*. According to the document, the building was going to be administered by a seven members Board of Directors. In addition it was stipulated that the building would not be used for any other purpose except the original one. In case that for any reason the **Gran Logia Número 1** had to cease its function, the building would become automatically property of the government of Puerto Rico, which could only use the building for charitable or educational purposes.¹⁰

⁹ Roberto H. Todd. "La Casa de las Almas en la Vereda Estrecha de Santurce". *El Mundo*, 31 de octubre de 1937, p. 9. The building has kept a great level of architectural integrity. Only the original wooden windows had been changed.

¹⁰ Registro de Propiedad. Santurce Norte. Tomo 5; Finca 205; Folio 207. Hato Rey, PR.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 8

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Fortunately, there has been no need to enforce any of these stipulations because the *Gran Logia* has function as a community study center and promoter of the philosophical postures of the Spiritist Doctrine since its foundation until present time.¹¹ Incorporated under the laws of Puerto Rico as a non-profit organization in 1930, the institution has been functioning with no pecuniary interest since it was established. It sustains itself from voluntary contributions from visitors and a minimum three-dollar monthly fee from its members. No fee is charged for the services of the mediums or “channellers”.

Great intellectuals and renowned personalities have been historically associated with the **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1**: Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, Vicente Géigel Polanco, and Roberto H. Todd, among others. But more important than the presence of well-known figures, it is the continuing relationship that the institution has kept with its surrounding working class community and its high standing among the other Spiritualists Centers in the island and in Latin America. The *Gran Logia* is considered by other centers as the most important representative of the Spiritist Doctrine in Puerto Rico and its meeting-hall has become the mandatory tribune for the most distinguished intellectuals in the Doctrine.

The building has kept an extraordinary physical integrity, as shown in the figures 5 through 8 below.

Fig. 5. Casa de las Almas, 1937.



Fig. 6. Casa de las Almas, 2006.



¹¹ According to the data provided by the Spiritualist Federation, there are 25 officially recognized centers (and probably another 125 unofficial). Three of these are older than Casa de las Almas, but none of them occupy their original location or building, with the exception of *Círculo Lumen* in the city of Ponce, which has been located at the same site since 1903.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

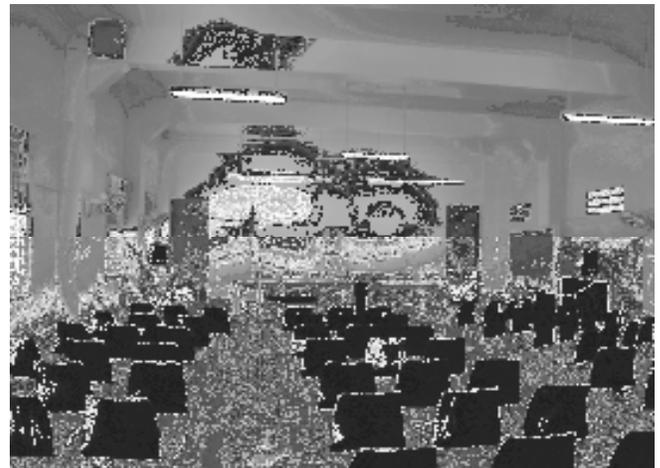
Section 8 Page 9

Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Fig. 7. Second floor, 1937.



Fig. 8. Second Floor, 2006.



But the integrity of the **Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1** goes well beyond the reinforced concrete building. The Center is recognized as probably the most strict follower and practitioner of the principles codified by Allan Kardec. *Casa de las Almas* has kept the doctrinal and social postulates of the movement: a non-sectarian, non-profit organization; serving as a social melting pot where people from different economic backgrounds interact beyond class-lines; serving as an educational facility open to the study and the peaceful argumentation of controversial ideas; serving as a “space” where socially subordinated groups can find room to express themselves and it keeps providing a myriad of activities oriented to integrate the surrounding community with the institution.¹²

Most definitely, the building of *Casa de las Almas* symbolize the establishment, development and permanence (against very strong odds) of a highly important social and philosophical movement in our history.

¹² In the present time, out of the seven members of the Board of Directors, six are women. This reflects another continuity in the social orientation of *Casa de las Almas*.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 10

*Gran Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Bibliography

Archivo General de Puerto Rico. Fondo: Departamento de Estado. Serie: Corporaciones sin fines de lucro. Legajo: Federación Espiritista.

Braude, Ann D. "Spirits Defends the Right of Women: Spiritualism and Changing Sex Roles in 19th Century America". *Women, Religion and Social Change*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

Cruz Monclova, Lidio. *Historia de Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)*. Tomo III, Tercera Parte (1885 – 1898). Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1979.

Herzig Shannon, Nancy. *El Iris de Paz: El espiritismo y la mujer en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2001.

Michton, Madeleine. *Becoming a Medium: The Role of Trance in Puerto Rican Spiritism as an Avenue to Mazeway Resynthesis*. Thesis for Ph. D. in Sociology. New York University, 1975.

Registro de Propiedad. Santurce Norte. Tomo 5; Finca 205; Folio 207 . Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

Rodríguez Escudero, Néstor A. *Historia del Espiritismo en Puerto Rico*. Quebradillas: Imprenta San Rafael, 1991.

Todd, Roberto H. "La Casa de las Almas en la Vereda Estrecha de Santurce". *El Mundo*, 31 de octubre de 1937, p. 9

Yañez, Teresa. *El Espiritismo en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Cooperativa de Artes Gráficas Romualdo Real, 1963.

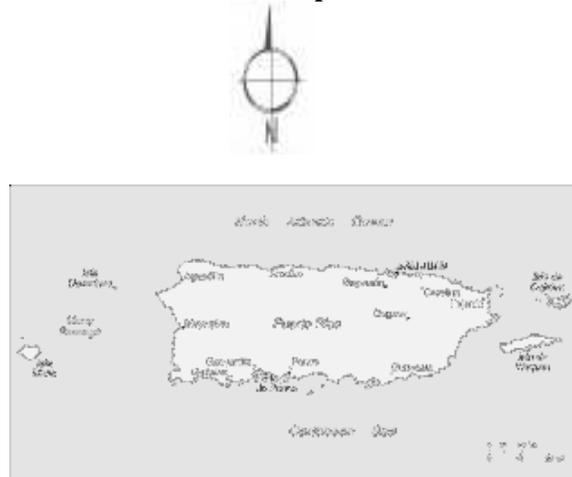
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 11

Logia Espiritual Número 1
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Site Map



Casa de las Almas

