NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)

OMB No. 10024-0018
(Expires 1-31-2009)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name La Giralda

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 651 José Martí Street ☐ not for publication

city or town San Juan **X** vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county San Juan code 127 zip code 00927

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 ☐ nationally ☐ statewide **X** locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Aida Belen Rivera Ruiz
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or Tribal government

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):

Signature of the Keeper: Linda McClelland

Date of Action: 8-11-08

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- X private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- 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

Name of related multiple property listing

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 08000786 Date Listed: 8/11/08

Property Name: La Giralda

County: San Juan State: PR

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.

Linda McClelland 8-11-08

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Area(s) of Significance

The nomination is hereby amended to delete **Social History** as an area of significance.

The nomination claims Social History and Community Development and Planning as areas of significance under Criterion A. La Giralda was constructed at the earliest stages of the development of Miramar; it is representative of the larger, more expensive houses that the development was to attract. While there are no doubt social overtones to the design, setting and location of the house, the claim of significance in Social History is not supported. The building, though, does reflect the original design intent of the neighborhood and as one of the sole survivors of the original construction in the area, demonstrates significance in Community Development and Planning.

Section 10: Boundary Justification

The following statement is added as boundary justification for La Giralda:

> "The current boundaries encompass the building and lot historically associated with La Giralda c. 1910."

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

DISTRIBUTION: National Register property file; Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Domestic / Single Dwelling Residence

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Commercial / Private Business Offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mixed
Neoclassical and Victorian elements

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Concrete
roof Wood, Corrugated metal
other

Narrative Description
(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)

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
(See Continuation Sheets)

Social History
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1910 - 1950

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Valinés Cofresí, Francisco

Narrative Statement of Significance
(See Continuation Sheets)

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	19	807817	2043216	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
The property is historically associated with lot number 040-037-006-16 as registered in the Puerto Rico Register of Property.

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Berenice Sueiro / Juan Llanes Santos PRSHPO

First draft nomination (2004) prepared by Mr. Francisco Arteaga

organization Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office date June 25, 2008

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

city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00906-6581

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Francisco G. Arteaga

street & number Corporate Office Park, CPM Plaza, Suite 200, Road 20, Km. 2.6

telephone 787-999-4000

city or town Guaynabo state PR zip code 00966

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

La Giralda is a four-story (two-story with cellar and attic) reinforced concrete, eclectic residence (Neoclassical and Victorian) with an intersecting gabled roof and irregular square plan. The building is located at 651 José Martí Street (formerly known as Comercio Street) corner of Miramar Avenue, in the Miramar sector of the Santurce Ward, Municipality of San Juan. During the beginning of the twentieth century, Miramar was one of the first residential suburbs developed in San Juan. It was during this period, circa 1910, that **La Giralda** was built. Its construction is commonly attributed to architect Francisco Valinés Cofresí. [1]

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Miramar Avenue and Martí Street were mainly composed of one or two-story wooden residences (Fig. 1). **La Giralda** stood out within its urban context. It was a prominent property, for the type of construction materials used, its height, volumetric mass, its corner position and location on the highest point of the neighborhood.

Strategically located at the highest point of Miramar, **La Giralda** must have had a complete view of the neighborhood, the ocean and the Condado Lagoon.[2] It surpassed other properties due to its monumental scale and articulate massive volume, yet retained balance in relation to its surroundings.

Fig. 1. La Giralda's setting, circa 1910-1917 [3]

[1] Enrique Vivoni Farage. Reconocimiento Intensivo de Miramar, Puerto Rico. Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica. 31 de marzo de 2006. Francisco Valinés Cofresí (1878-1949) born in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. From 1908 to 1912, he studied architecture in the International Correspondence School of Chicago. Architect Valines Cofresí designed Casa de Palmira López de Pereyó included in the National Register of Historic Places. He also contributed in the design of Parque Luis Muñoz Rivera.
[2] The name of the property, "giralda," means tower. …derived from the statue of a woman on the spire of the cathedral church of Seville. Common name of this tower ". *Velázquez Spanish and English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (1999), s.v. "giralda. "
[3] Colección Atilio Moscioni. Colección Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras.

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Even though the urban layout and residential nature of Miramar remains basically the same, the character of the neighborhood has changed. Many residences, from the beginning of the twentieth century, have been demolished and replaced with a variety of houses and apartment buildings. Different building typologies co-exist: Moderne, Art Deco, Neoclassical, Prairie School, among others, within the urban blocks. **La Giralda** excels among the twenty-one properties that have survived as representatives of the neighborhood of the beginning of the twentieth century. (Figs. 2 and 3)

Fig. 2. Plan of Miramar - Existing properties constructed before or in 1917.[4]

Fig. 3. Photos of the twenty one existing properties constructed before or in 1917. [5]

[4] Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica. Reconocimiento General Sector Miramar, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Abril 2005.

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Block 2 –Parcel 12

Block 3- Parcel 4- Capilla Nuestra Señ. Lourdes[6]

Block 5- Parcel 2

Block 5- Parcel 6

Block 5- Parcel 22 Residencia Mc Kinley

Block 6- Parcel 16 – **La Giralda**

Block 12- Parcel 12

Block 12- Parcel 15

Block 12- Parcel 19

Fig. 3. Photos of the twenty one existing properties constructed before or in 1917.

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[5] Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica. Reconocimiento General Sector Miramar, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Abril 2005.
[6] Capilla Nuestra Señora de Lourdes was included in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) September 27, 1984. Residencia Mc Kinley was included in the NRHP, October 19, 1991.

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Block 12- Parcel 20

Block 12- Parcel 21

Block 12- Parcel 22

Block 13- Parcel 20

Block 14- Parcel 16

Block 14- Parcel 17

Block 14- Parcel 19

Block 51- Parcel 8- Multifamily Residence

Block 57- Parcel 9

Fig. 3. Photos of the twenty one existing properties constructed before or in 1917.

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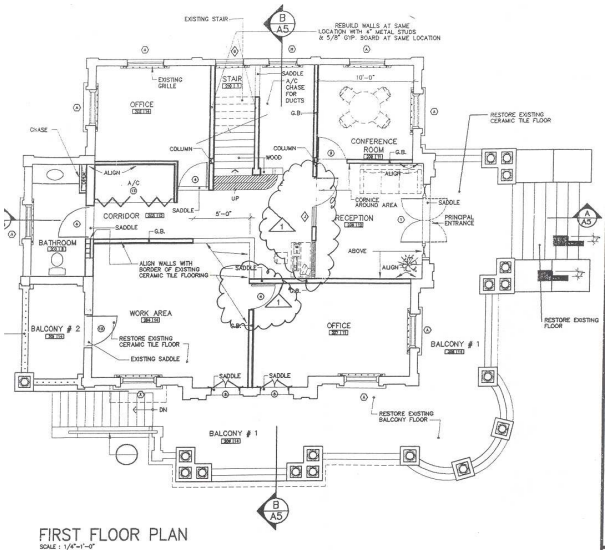
Block 57- Parcel 16

Block 58- Parcel 16

Block 59- Parcel – Asilo de Niñas de Miramar 1[7]

Fig. 4. First floor plan[8]



The house's basic floor plan is an irregular square with a rounded balcony at the corner of the building (Figure 4). This balcony, which creates the irregular form, is one of the character defining features of the property (Figs. 4 and 5). The main access to the building is from José Martí Street (South façade) by way of a short flight of stairs (Fig. 6), which leads to an "L" shaped balcony that extends through both South and West façades.

[7] Asilo de Niñas de Miramar was included in the National Register of Historic Places November 21, 1985. This property is related to another historic context.

[8] Drawing courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga, 2004

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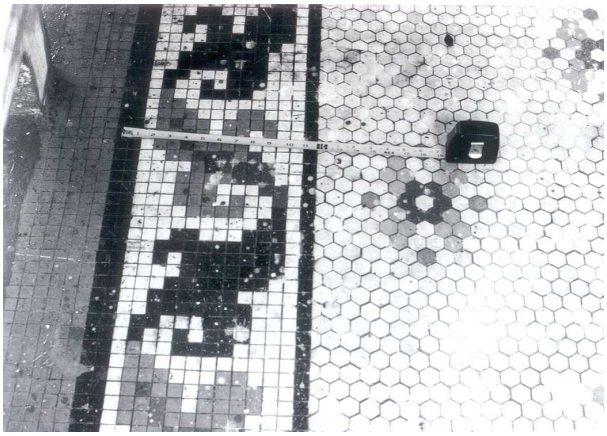
Fig. 5. Partial view of balcony

Fig. 6.Short flight stairs

Fig. 7. Floor details

The balcony floor is finished with concrete mosaic tiles of geometric motifs (Figs. 7 and 8). A secondary staircase on the West façade connects with the end of the balcony.

Fig. 8. Photos from 1995-97, while improvement and stabilizations works were carried out.[9]



[9] Photos courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2007.

The balcony leads up to the main entrance, consisting of a double door with fixed glass and wood panels on each side (Figure 9). Each window sash has frosted glass panels. Mr. Francisco Arteaga stated: "that the 1995 intervention included the replacement of the mahogany doors and windows, and brass hinges. A local craftsman, Mr. Paul Biver, reproduced the original design" (Figs. 10 and 11).

Fig. 9. Entrance door

Fig. 10 Photos original wooden windows[10]

Fig. 11 New wood window

FAÇADES

The façades feature elements and details of both Neoclassical and Victorian styles. From the Victorian style, it introduces asymmetry in the balcony. In many cases, the Victorian residence had a:

"partial or full width asymmetrical porch, usually one story high and extended along one or both side walls."[11]

From the Neoclassical style, it borrows symmetry. According to *A Field Guide to American Houses*:

"The Neoclassical style was dominated by full-height porch with roof supported by classical columns: columns typically have Ionic or Corinthian capitals; facades shows symmetrically balanced windows and center door. Five principal subtypes... the full height entry porch with lower full-width porch is relatively uncommon subtype… most examples were built from 1895 to 1915." [12]

[10] Photos courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2007.
[11] Virginia Savage and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (N. Y.: Alfred a. Knopf, Inc., 1992) 262.
[12] Ibíd. Page 262.

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If the balcony were detached from the main volume, all four façades would be symmetrical. Façades are vertically divided into three parts. In each section, windows are symmetrically placed. Each window opening is framed by decorative concrete lintels with keystones. The balcony features fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, crowned by a roof-line balustrade and low balustrade.

Fig. 12. Aerial view of La Giralda[13]

Another character defining feature of the building is the symmetrical two-cross gable roof (Fig. 12). Some Victorian residences have simple cross gable roofs. **La Giralda** combines the cross gable roofs (from the Victorian style) with the classical pediment (present in many neoclassical buildings). According to the map of the Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters of 1917,[14] the original roof was composed of wooden trusses covered by corrugated metal (zinc) panels.

A distinctive feature of this building is the various horizontal and vertical compositions of its façade. Due to the height of the stories (approximately seven feet – basement/twelve feet – first floor, second floor and attic, respectively), the positioning of its architectural elements and the volumetric balcony (approximately eight feet deep by twelve feet high) **La Giralda** keeps scale with the properties of its period.

Pilasters and other features emphasize its verticality. It is also emphasized by the volumetric roof. This stresses the effect of the tower and the monumentality of the building, which is another characteristic of the neoclassical style.

The different balconies, at various levels, contribute to that horizontal effect by adding architectural quality to the walls. It is exactly this effect which allows for different interpretations on the amount of stories of the property. The property deeds description mentions: "a four-story residence of reinforce concrete"[15]; and the Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters of 1917[16] map infers: three-story residence of reinforce concrete, but a pedestrian might interpret that **La Giralda** is a two-story house with a basement and an attic.

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[13] CRIM. Foto aérea. 2006-2007
[14] Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Mapoteca. The Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. No. 9. General Plan of Santurce. First Section. August 30, 1917.
[15] Registro de la Propiedad. Tomo 12, Finca 483, Folio 108. Santurce Sur, Sección Primera de San Juan. San Juan, Puerto Rico.
[16] Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Mapoteca. The Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. No. 9. General Plan of Santurce. First Section. August 30, 1917.

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SOUTH FAÇADE – Main Façade

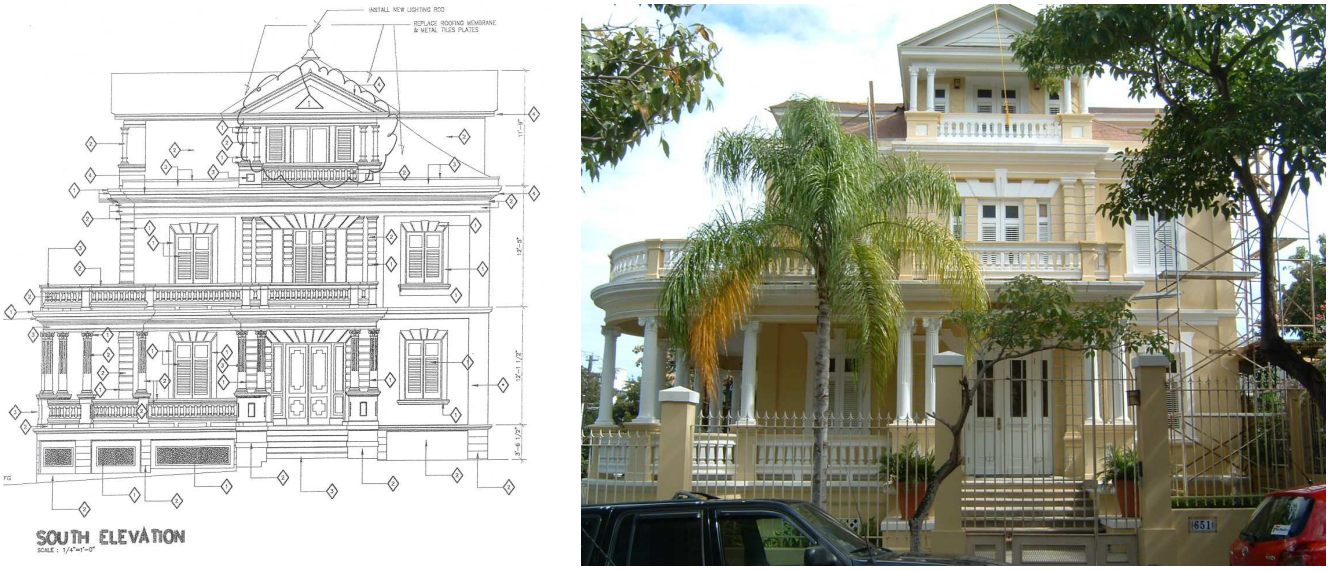

Fig. 13. Drawing and photo of the South facade[17]

On the first level, the main façade is organized in three sections or parts (Fig. 13). The central section corresponds to the main entrance door. It is a double glass and mahogany wood door with fixed glass panels. This element is crowned by concrete lintels with simulated keystones framed by two rusticated pilasters at each side. The entrance portico, which is part of the balcony, is emphasized by partially fluted Corinthian columns on a base of the same height as the balustrade.

At each side of the door, the other two sections of the façade contain centralized windows. Each framed by a concrete border, bottom cornice and crowned by concrete lintels. Each sash has glass and operable wooden jalousies. The wall is recessed and finished with smooth plaster. The right corner has a smooth pilaster and the left corner has a rusticated pilaster emphasizing the corner of the building. Both pilasters create a bas-relief effect on the wall.

[17] Drawings courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2004.

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The second level central section has a double wooden door that provides access to an open balcony. Each door has fixed glass panels and operable wooden jalousies. It is crowned by concrete lintels with keystone, framed by double rusticated pilasters of different widths to each side, creating a high relief effect. The other two sections are similar to the first level.

Fig. 14. Attic floor plan[18]

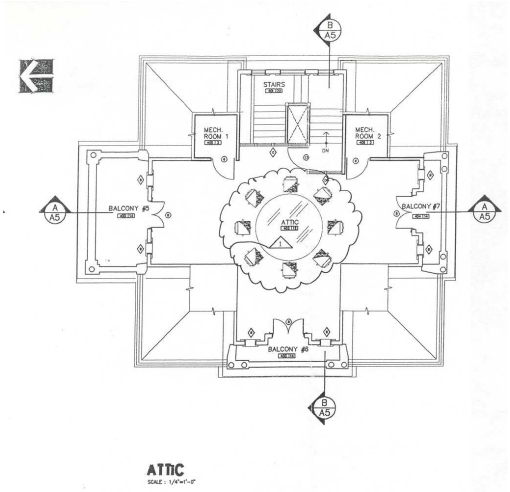

Fig.15. Roof detail

The third level responds to the smaller cross plan attic. It is characterized by a recessed covered balcony crowned by a flush wooden pediment, supported by double Corinthian columns over a base (Fig. 14). Photographic evidence shows that by 1945 the roof had been extended to cover the existing balcony. At the time, the roof was supported by thin circular metal columns. The Corinthian columns were added in the 1995-1997 project. Access to the balcony is through a double wooden door with fixed glass and operable wooden jalousies. A single leaf fix glass and operable jalousie wood window completes the façade to each side of the door. The corner recessed walls are covered with metal shingles.

At each side of the balcony one can see the roof of the second level, which is a low pitched roof covered with weather-proof bituminous cardboard membrane simulating wooden shingles (**Fig.15**).

[18] Drawings courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2004.

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West Façade

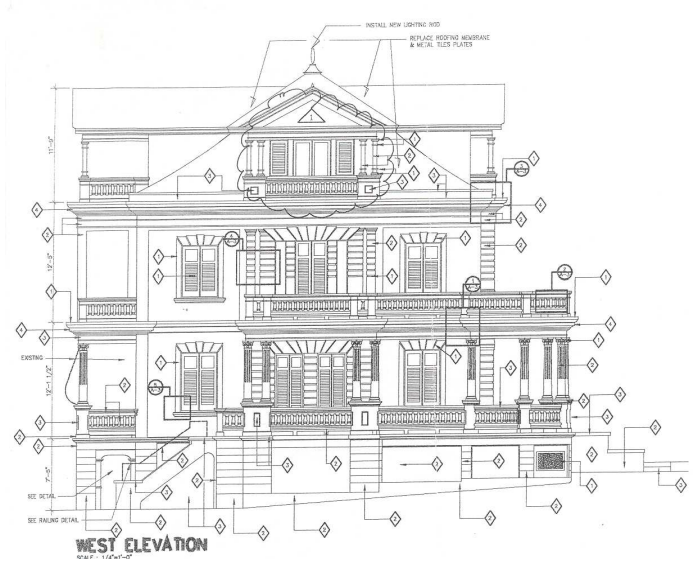

Fig. 16. West façade drawing [19] and partial view of West facade

The West façade is very similar to the main façade (Fig. 16). The main difference is the treatment of the central opening of the first level; the double doors are separated by a rusticated column. To the left side of the façade, and at each level, a balcony can be observed. From this side of the building, one can appreciate the attic level's balcony which is deeper on the Northern facade. This façade has the same level of richness in ornament as the main façade, which in combination with the balcony gives plasticity to the building.

Due to the slope of the site, the basement level can be appreciated on this facade. Today, this space is used as a specialty store, storage facilities and service area.

[19] Drawings courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2004.

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North Façade

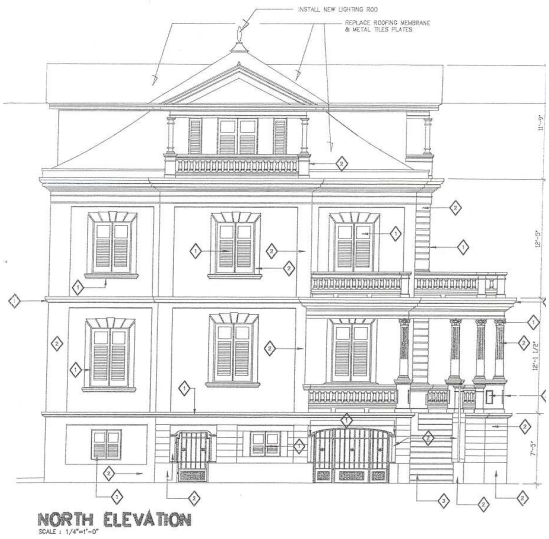

Fig. 17. Drawing and photo of the North facade [20]

The North façade is very similar in composition to the South and West facades (Fig. 17), but lacks their richness and level of ornamentation. The North façade has access to the main balcony, at the first level, by means of a lateral stair. At the first and second levels, to the right side of the North façade, two balconies define the corner. Each balcony has a double glass and mahogany wood door, crowned by concrete lintels with simulated keystones. The remaining two sections contain centralized windows with fixed glass and wood jalousies. Each window is also framed by a concrete border, bottom cornice and crowned by concrete lintels. The wall is recessed and finished with a smooth plaster. The corners have pilasters, creating a bas-relief effect on the wall. The attic level shows the same treatment as the balcony of the South façade but deeper in size.

[20] Drawings courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2004.

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East Façade

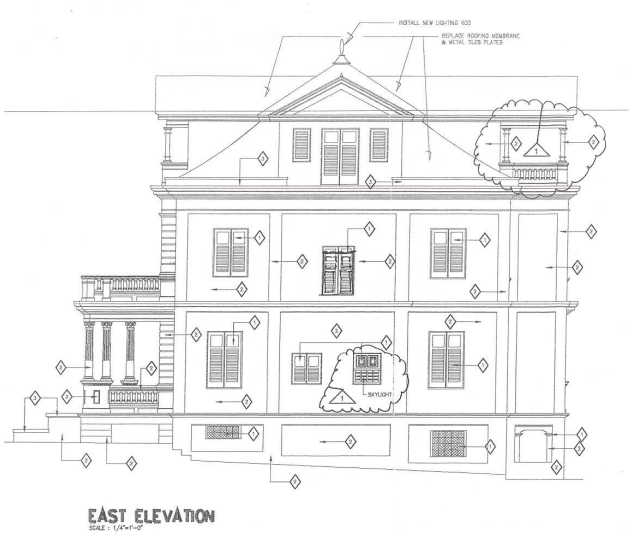

Fig.18. Drawing and photo of the East facade [21]

The East façade is very simple compared to the other facades (Fig. 18). It is symmetrical in composition, without balconies, nor doors, and scarce ornamentation. Each of its three sections has centered windows without concrete molding. The basement has two openings with metal grills. The attic level's central portion has a double wooden window with a single sash, operable fix jalousies wooden window to each side, and flush wooden pediment which completes this central section.

[21] Drawings courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2004.

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INTERIOR

Prior to the 1995-97 intervention, the original interior layout was almost non existent (Fig. 19). Years of abandon and neglect had taken the property to a serious state of deterioration. This was most evident in its interior and roof, which were primarily constructed of wood. Some walls were covered with wood panels, fastened with nails onto vertical wood segments imbedded into the concrete walls. When the wood elements were removed, the existing channels that remained were used to hold the new electrical and communication systems.

Fig. 19. Interior's condition [22]

The only portion of the original floors that remains in place is the dining room floor, which was constructed of concrete and finished with concrete mosaic tiles (Fig. 20). [23]

Fig. 20. Interior's condition[24]

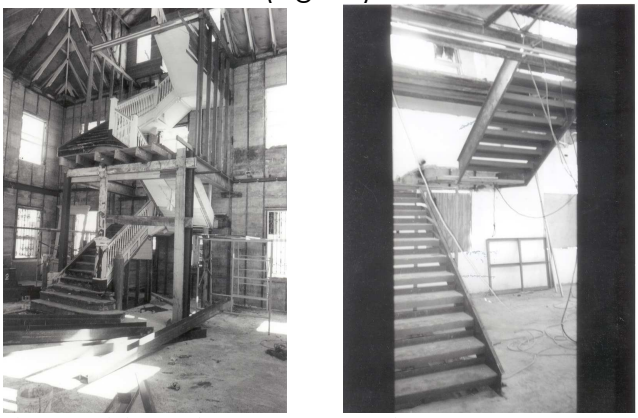

Fig. 21. Original staircase and new staircase[25]

[22] Photos courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2007.
[23] This information was provided by Mrs. Angelita Hernández Vázquez, descendant of the second owners.

The improvements called for a new use for the old mansion. It would become the corporate headquarters of an engineering firm. The project updated and implemented new construction and security codes. The proposed office layout was done in gypsum board partitions. The first and second floors are currently used as office space, storage and bathroom facilities. The attic houses a conference and meeting room, and the basement is used for storage and as a sewing store. The wooden roof structure was reinforced and anchored with steel beams, to comply with new hurricane codes.

INTEGRITY

La Giralda endured architectural trends and styles, urban development, economic and social changes in the Miramar neighborhood. It has also survived the lack of maintenance and repairs planned in advance to ensure its proper preservation. After several decades of neglect and deterioration, Mr. Francisco Arteaga bought the house in 1993. They undertook a project to stabilize, rescue and place in service this historic jewel.

Research in local archives failed to locate the architectural plans of the house for the project. No evidence exists of the interior distribution of this property. Historic photography was located, but only of the exterior of the property. Stabilization and improvement works lasted two years (from 1995 to 1997). The reinforce concrete (foundations, exterior walls) and wooden building (roof and interior walls) were deteriorated. The interior partitions were lost, except for the wooden staircase remaining. However, shortly after the stabilization project started, the staircase collapsed. Therefore, a new steel and iron stairway covered with carpet was constructed (Fig. 21). [26]

The 1995-1997 project included repairs to damaged cornices, wall surfaces, balustrades, columns and lintels for the four façades. It also included scraping and painting of all the walls, wood work and ironworks.

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[24] Photos courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2007.
[25] Photos courtesy of Mr. Francisco Arteaga in 2007.
[26] This information was provided in draft nomination, dated July 28, 2004, provided by Mr. Francisco Arteaga, owner.

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La Giralda, close to one hundred years old, epitomizes Miramar - a community planned and designed for the upper class - at the beginning of the twentieth century. **La Giralda** reflects the majesty and dignity of the design of its place and epoch. It is important to point out that although its interiors were lost, the essential exterior characteristics remain intact. It stands in the same location, a prominent corner where two important streets connect, on the highest point of the area.

Although in 1947 **La Giralda** lost the North gardens, the main garden has been preserved for over fifty years. This is another character defining feature of **La Giralda** and Miramar's vicinity (Figures 24 and 25). Gardens have been maintained in many of the remaining examples. Landscape contributed to create a buffer zone between each property (Figs. 3, 22, 23, 24 and 32) and the mixture of the different architectural styles merged and fused in the green foliage of the area.

Fig. 22. La Giralda's gardens 1945[27]

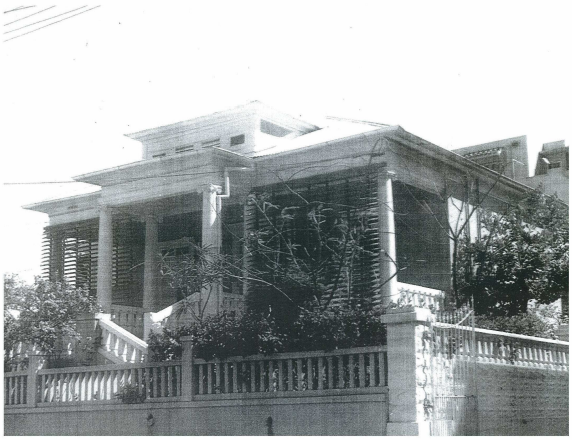

Fig. 23. Martinez Residence – Mc Kinley #658 [28]

[27] Photo courtesy of Mrs. María Arteaga. 2008.
[28] This residence was demolished at the end of 1980's. Photo courtesy of Mrs. María Arteaga. 2008.

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Fig. 24. La Giralda's setting, 2008

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The ability of architect Valinés Cofresí to construct this majestic property conveys a practice and workmanship in construction lost in our days. The different bass-relieves and high-relieves, pilasters, cornices, articulation of the roof and walls, diverse balconies, shadows and lights, shaped **La Giralda's** façades and contributed to the plasticity of its form and massive size. However, the design of **La Giralda** attained harmony and equilibrium with the properties that surround it. This created a special physical association between the property and the community in which it stands. The splendor of an era not found nowadays in new urbanizations.

La Giralda's architectural expression as an example of the early twentieth century neighborhood (Fig. 1) stands as evidence of a past that can still be integrated into the neighborhood of the twenty first century (Fig. 24).

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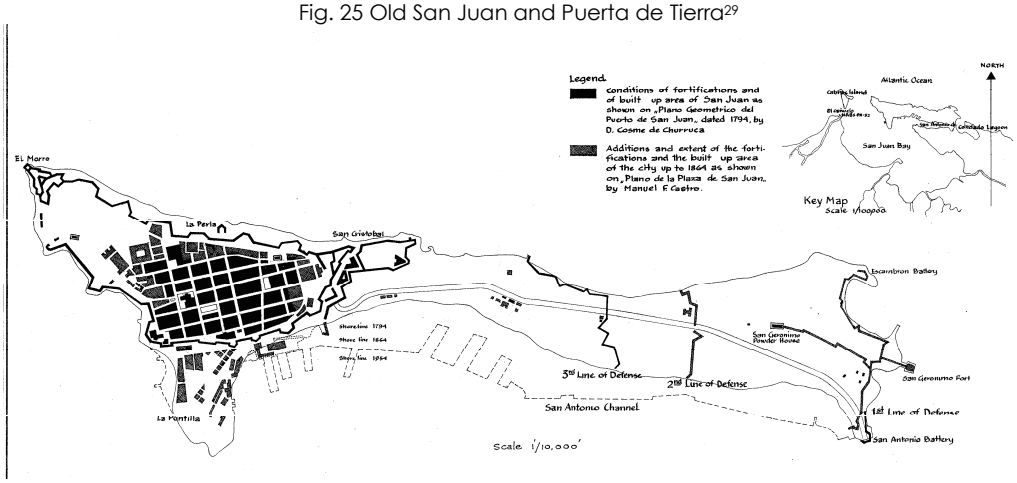
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The residence known as **La Giralda** is a property of local significance under the National Register's Criterion A in the area of Social History. Built by 1910, the property embodies the history, the development and the way of life of the upper class group that established Miramar, one of the oldest planned, residential suburb in San Juan. This ostentatious residence exemplifies the high social standing of the once exclusive neighborhood. Its Neoclassical style (with some Victorian elements) reflects a past class ideology that modified the architectural typology during the early twentieth century in Miramar. **La Giralda** possesses an architectural language that reflects a way of life adopted by the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie in the transculturation exchange with its new and dominant counterpart, the U.S. upper class nationals residing in Miramar during the early years of the last century.

Historical Background and Significance

The significance of **La Giralda** is only understandable within the comprehension of Miramar's early urban development. In the second half of the 19th century, the city of San Juan suffered a drastical increase in its population. Due to different factors, the old walled-city was not able to cope with this demographical explosion. At the time, those belonging to the lower classes had progressively started to occupy swampy areas around the Puntilla sector and agriculturally unproductive parcels in the southern side of the narrow strip of land known as Puerta de Tierra (Fig. 25)

Fig. 25 Old San Juan and Puerta de Tierra[29]



[29] Historic American Buildings Survey. Fragment of outer defenses. HABS-PR-53.

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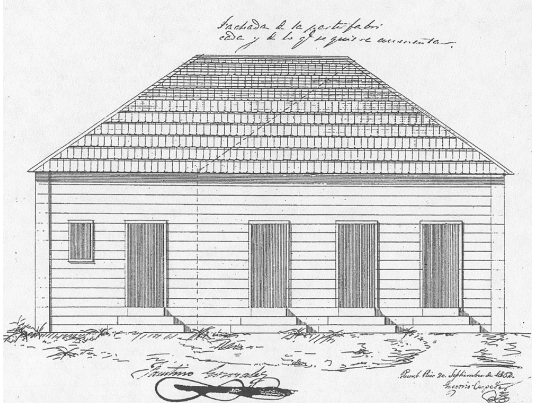
Members of the upper class took another direction. By the end of the 19th century, a growing number of local high-standing citizens began the process of occupying a high ground area located at the east end of the San Antonio Bridge. For centuries, that sector, known as "Alto del Olimpo" (later known as Miramar), was under Spanish military control as part of San Juan's defense system. The military had strict rules regarding the residential development of areas under their jurisdiction: houses could not reach an elevation that would obstruct artillery range of fire, creating blind spots that could be used by enemy forces; and all residences had to be of a non-permanent status, built with easily destroyable materials. The occupancy agreement between the civilian residents and the military also stated that the owner was to destroy his house in case of an enemy attack and that the government was not responsible for any type of compensation for such action.[30] Due to these restrictive rules, the early settlement of the future Miramar's site was slow and the typology of the initial residences responded to these conditions, as all the houses erected at the time were wooden low-level residences (Fig. 26).

Fig. 26. Example of a house built in Alto del Olimpo (Miramar), 1853.[31]



However, by the end of the 19th century, the use of Miramar as a high-class residential area increased substantially. Certain factors were crucial in this development, one of which was the weakening of the military control over the sector due to the absence of any foreign threat to the city for almost one hundred years-since the British attack in 1797. Just as crucial was the development of the proper infrastructure that facilitated the permanent occupation of Alto del Olimpo (Miramar): the construction of the Central Road, the establishment of the trolley and the arrival of the railroad

[30] Archivo General Militar de Madrid. Rollo 156. Código de Referencia: 5622.13. 1886.
[31] Ibíd. Rollo 154. Código de referencia: 5619.26. 1853

system. The first stretch of the road from San Juan to Caguas was begun in 1846 and inaugurated in 1857.[32] In 1878, the powerful and well connected merchant, Pablo Ubarri y Capetillo, received the commission for the private construction and management of the trolley railway. The line, connecting San Juan with the town of Río Piedras, was finished by 1880.[33] The third element that promoted the occupation of Miramar was the railroad, which, by 1891, was operating through the area (Fig. 27).[34]

Fig. 27. Detail of 1917 map that shows the intersection of the Central Road, the trolley and the railroad in Miramar (Alto del Olimpo).[35]

[32] Luis Pumarada O'Neill y María de los Ángeles Castro. La Carretera Central: un viaje escénico a la historia de Puerto Rico. Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo. Recinto de Mayagüez, UPR. Oficina Estatal de Preservación Histórica, 1977.
[33] Leandro Fanjul González. Don Pablo Ubarri y Puerto Rico. UPR, Río Piedras. Tesis para obtener el grado de Maestría en Historia, 1987.
[34] Luis Pumarada O'Neill. Trasfondo histórico del ferrocarril en Puerto Rico. Centro de Investigaciones de Ingeniería, Colegio de Ingeniería, Recinto de Mayagüez. Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica, 1989.
[35] Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Mapoteca. The Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. No. 9. General Plan of Santurce. First Section. August 30, 1917.

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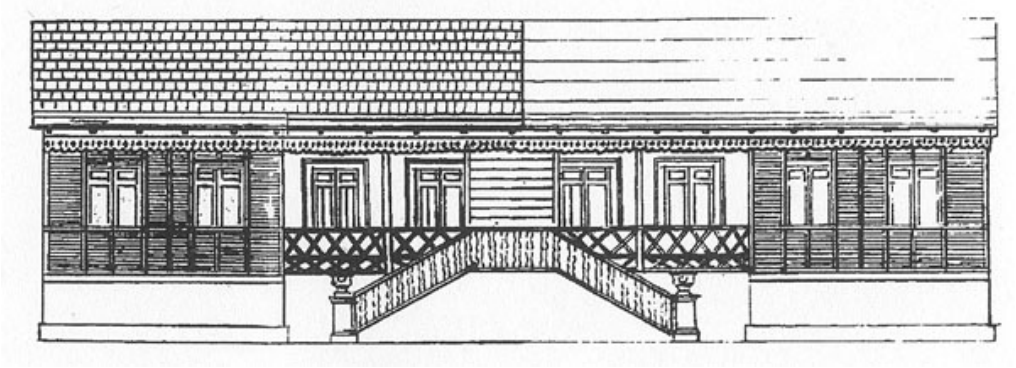
All those means of transportation, affordable to very few on a daily basis, interconnected at the junction in the eastern end of the San Antonio Bridge. The local bourgeoisie, now with feasible means to get away from the crowded city and the workers ward at Puerta de Tierra, were able to occupy with permanent residences the open, ocean-view high grounds of Miramar, while staying in touch with their commercial activities in the Old City. New, elegant and solid houses (combining wood, rubble and bricks) began to appear, changing the landscape and giving the sector a suburban high-class residential status (Fig. 28).[36]

Fig. 28. Example of the new type of houses built in Miramar (Alto del Olimpo) by the end of the 19th century.[37]



This trend in Miramar increased after 1898, when the island became a territory of the United States. The insertion of Puerto Rico within the United States field of influence brought new social, political and economical forces into the local theater. The United States' troops were immediately followed by boat loads of religious missionaries, casual travelers and adventures, commercial entrepreneurs, land speculators, among others. The new political power brokers immediately oriented the local economy toward its integration within the advanced US capitalism. This insertion eventually brought drastic changes into every aspect of the local collective life: from new corporate arrangements, political parties and strategies to new ideological projects and postures.

[36] AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Obras Municipales. Caja 325a. Expediente: Proyecto de urbanización del Distrito de Santurce. 1893.
[37] Archivo General Militar de Madrid. Rollo 156. Código de Referencia: 5622.13. 1886

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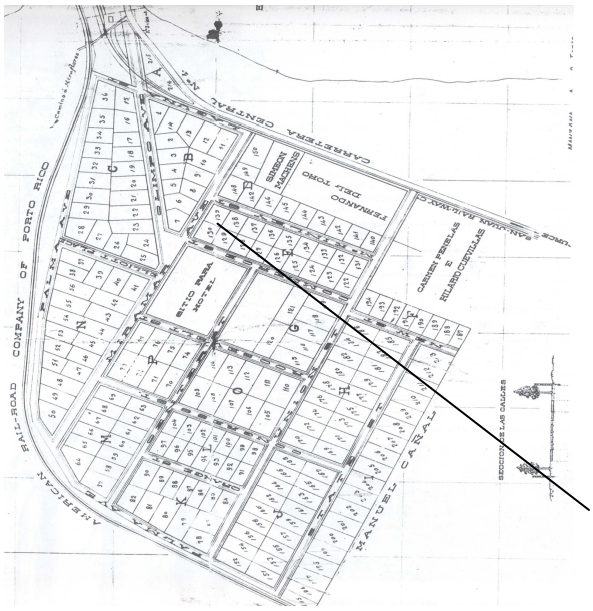
These social forces and their tendencies became evident early in the 20th century in Miramar. In 1903, the People's Cooperative Building Savings and Loan Association, incorporated in 1902, acquired ninety five acres in the old Alto del Olimpo area. The association was formed by local and US investors.[38] The People's Cooperative bought the lot for 25,000 dollars and registered the transaction in April 2, 1903.[39] Regulations and ordinances were established by the Association to guarantee an organized urban development of the community from the start: no houses could be built within three meters from the sidewalks; no commerce or commercial buildings were allowed within the residential area; the buyers, within the same street, were responsible for the upgrading and maintenance of the roads, sidewalks, aqueducts and sewerage system, among others.[40]

Fig. 29. People's Cooperative 1903 lot plan for Miramar.



The original lot plan divided the 95 acres into seventeen (17) blocks denominated A thru P, and one additional block designated for a hotel. There were two hundred fifteen (215) residential lots, with sizes that ranged between 250 and 950 square meters (Fig. 29). The first were sold in 1903, and by 1907, there were 17 buildings in the area and a total of 76 lots had been sold.[41] One hundred nine (109) lots were sold by 1920.[42]

La Giralda's future site.

[38] AGPR. Fondo: Departamento de Estado. Serie: Corporaciones con fines de lucro. Caja 2. The Board of Directors of the People's Cooperative reflects the presence of the new power brokers in alliance with the local counterparts. Among the members was H. W. Elliott, who was also serving as Secretary of the Department of the Interior and whose surname survived in one of the streets in Miramar (Elliott Place). Other member of the Board was the well known local intellectual and politician, José Celso Barbosa.
[39] Registro de Propiedad. Tomo 50, Finca 2163, Folio 238. San Juan, Puerto Rico.
[40] Ibíd. Tomo 68, Finca 2840, Folio 159. San Juan, Puerto Rico.
[41] AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Planillas de Hacienda. 1907-1908.
[42] Enrique Vivoni Farage. Reconocimiento Intensivo de Miramar, Puerto Rico. Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica. 31 de marzo de 2006.

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The Association was also interested in keeping the upper-class character of the neighborhood. They attained that by establishing that in certain streets the residences' value could not be less than $1,500.00 and nowhere in the suburb the value could go below $1,000.00. These policies helped to maintain Miramar as a residential pocket oriented to the upper-class: natives, US nationals and foreigners of long and high economic standing in the island.

By 1910, there were fourteen streets laid-out in Miramar: Miramar Avenue, Olimpo Avenue, McKinley Street, Comercio Street, Elliott Place, Roosevelt Street, Congreso Street, Central Street, Cuevillas Street, Union Street, Orange Street, Nueva Street, Palma Street and Laguna Street. The most populated area was the one comprised by Miramar Avenue, Olimpo Avenue and Comercio Street; all three combined had more than 60% of all the construction in the neighborhood (Fig. 30).[43] Miramar Avenue had the social peculiarity of being occupied mostly by US nationals. The Puerto Rican elite were the majority in Comercio Street. The 1910 Census also shows a strong presence of foreigners, primarily of Spanish, German and British descent.[44]

Fig. 30. Detail of 1917 map that depicts parts of the three main avenues: Miramar, Olimpo and Comercio.[45]

[43] United States Bureau of the Census. Census of Population. 1910.
[44] Ibid.
[45] AGPR. Mapoteca. The Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. No. 9. General Plan of Santurce. First Section. August 30, 1917.

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To reside in Miramar Avenue, Olimpo Avenue or Comercio Street, compared to any other street, was a reflection of the owner's high social standing. In other words, within the elite neighborhood there were areas more distinguished than others. Miramar became a micro-social-lab that reproduced, in small scale, the conflicts and negotiations of the new establishment and power relations created since 1898, when the US national bourgeoisie occupied a higher position, while the native and foreign upper-class where relegated to a subordinate rank.

Beyond the difference in their position in the relations of power, Miramar residents had a common factor: they were all power brokers, and the neighborhood reflected their status. The residences became a mirror of the occupants' economic power, social aspirations and even their ideological discourses. That is precisely why **La Giralda** is so significant; the building is representative of a social and class project developed during a precise historic context of Miramar.

La Giralda

Fig.31. La Giralda, 1910.[46]

La Giralda's exact date of construction is not clear. Oral tradition among the original owners' descendants usually mentions 1903 and 1905 as the possible dates. The documentation, on the other hand, shows that the lots originally occupied by La Giralda, lot 130 and lot 139, were sold separately by the People's Association. The first in 1908 and the latter in 1904.[47] However, the existence of the house by 1910 has been established beyond any doubts as **La Giralda** was documented through the work of the early 20th century photographer, Atilio Moscioni (Fig. 31).

[46] Colección Atilio Moscioni. Colección Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras.
[47] Enrique Vivoni Farage. Reconocimiento Intensivo de Miramar. P. 7

The Puerto Rican lawyer and sugar baron, Luis Manuel Cintrón y Sánchez, acquired both lots in 1908 and contracted the services of architect Francisco Valinés Cofresí to build the three story, plus a basement, reinforced concrete, Neoclassical and Victorian style residence. The house surpassed the price requirement established by the People' Association as the cost value was estimated at $15,000.00 by 1911, when Mr. Cintrón transferred the house to his niece, Maria Vázquez de Hernández, as a wedding present.[48]

The location of the house was, and still is, a constructive and social statement. The volume of the building dominated the entire corner, making an urban gesture.[49] Considering the information previously stated about the ethnical formation of that specific sector, **La Giralda** imparted a dominating presence toward both the United States' nationals at Miramar Avenue and the Puerto Rican majority at Comercio Street, becoming a discourse of power and, at the same time, an ideological meeting-ground.

The fact that it was a Puerto Rican family the one who built the most portentous residence, in the most exclusive corner, could also be interpreted as an economic and political statement.[50] **La Giralda**'s architectural language, which differed from the prototype residences in the sector early in the 20th century, spoke a dissident discourse. Even the name given to the house by the owners recalled a Spanish heritage, making the residence a cultural statement as well. [51]

The 1917 Porto Rico Board of Underwriters Map shows that the majority of the buildings in Miramar were one or two story high, wooden residences. **La Giralda**'s massive volume and the use of permanent building material represented an architectural challenge to all the wooden Queen Ann, cottages and medium sizes "quintas" already constructed within the area.[52] Sitting at the highest

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[48] Registro de la Propiedad. Tomo 12, Finca 483, Folio 108. Santurce Sur, Sección Primera de San Juan. San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[49] The dominance of **La Giralda** was even more evident during the early decades of the 20th century, as one entire lot (lot 139) was just for the gardens. The gardens were lost due to the construction of a building in lot 139 during the 1940s, after the house was sold to the Lema family.

[50] Mr. Luis Cintrón, like many other Puerto Ricans sugar barons, was a member of the Union Party (*Partido Unión*). This party became, during the early 20th century, the speaker of the native sugar producers' interests, in opposition to the US bourgeoisie's interests defended by the local Republican Party (*Partido Republicano*), (see, A.G. Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico*. CEREP-Huracán, 1976). Mr. Cintrón was also a founding member of the organization known as the Sugar Producers Association (*Asociacion de Productores de Azucar*), a powerful and influential lobbyist organization that represented the native sugar producers. **La Giralda** embodied its owner's economic strength and his political postures.

[51] The name "**La Giralda**" derives from the name of the tower of Seville's Cathedral, an architectural jewel, which Mr. Cintrón's wife admired. She wanted her house to be named after it.

[52] Enrique Vivoni Farage. Reconocimiento Intensivo de Miramar. Pp. 3-23. Most of the residences in Miramar during the period of 1903-1920 could be described as one those three typologies.

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point in Miramar, **La Giralda**'s three story height and watchtower appearance became a central focus and the obligated reference point within the neighborhood since its construction and up to this day.

Through the following years, the neighborhood changed. Between the 1920s and 1940s, a second development was added to the east of the original 95 acres, extending Miramar up to its current boundary at Cerra Street. The social character of the population also changed. The presence of the upper-class group reduced dramatically, as they moved into other high-class suburbs that emerged, such as Condado.

This reduction of the upper-class was accompanied by a substantial increase of the middle-class within the sector. The emergence of this group changed the urban landscape of Miramar. The single dwelling in large lots started to disappear as the middle-class oriented residential-high-raised constructions increased (Fig. 32).

Fig. 32. The house at the left, a Giralda's contemporary, located at 658 McKinley Street, was later replaced by the condo on the right.

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A lot of the old "quintas", cottages and other early 20th century types, disappeared as modernity came rolling-in in the shape of bulldozers. New architectural languages were introduced into the neighborhood: Mediterranean, Art Deco, and International Style, among others (Fig. 33).[53]

Fig. 33. Some of today's residences within La Giralda's immediate surrounding.

La Giralda witnessed all these changes while It changed too, but not for the better. In 1947, the house was bought by Antonio Lema and was soon leased and sub-leased. The maintenance was minimal, causing the house's condition (especially the wooden interiors) to deteriorate. In mid 1970s, the house was closed down. The abandoned property became a safe haven for drug addicts and homeless people, posing a threat to the neighborhood.[54] Years of neglect, humidity, pests and vandalism took a hard toll in the house. The interior's integrity was destroyed beyond repair.

La Giralda was left in oblivion until 1993, when it was purchased by the current owners. From 1995 until 1997, the property went through a process of renovation. Most of the wooden interior was removed during this period. The absence of any floor plans, blueprints, photographs or any other historic document of the interior, hindered the possibility of reconstructing, restoring or rehabilitating this property. The new interior was designed according to the projected use of **La Giralda** as an office building, using the cost-effective consideration as the ultimate guideline.

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[53] Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica. Reconocimiento General Sector Miramar, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Abril 2005. Pp. 25 – 34.
[54] El Nuevo Día. October 3, 1989. P. 3.

This was not the case with **La Giralda**'s exterior. After a period of research through the available sources (narratives, historic photographs) and with the fortune that the house had kept all its exterior features, a genuine renovation process was successfully accomplished.

This conflicting situation (a lack of integrity in the inside, with a high level of integrity in the outside) made difficult the evaluation of the property, which can only be resolved re-defining the significance of this property within its historic relation to its surrounding neighborhood. Even if lacking interior integrity, the impeccable exterior and presence of **La Giralda** still represents a historic context of Miramar. This conveyance it is done almost exclusively through its exterior presence. The metaphoric dialogue between the house and the neighborhood has always been through **La Giralda**'s exterior fabric. The dominant position that **La Giralda** imparted (and still does) it is through its outer volume and its exquisite details (Fig. 34).

Fig. 34.

1910

1945

1995

2007

The elements that convey the property's historic significance, like its association with the history of Miramar's urban development, its representation of the way of life of the upper-class during a particular time frame and their social and political project, are still transmitted through La **Giralda**'s visible physical features. The National Register Bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, indicates that "**Some historic buildings are virtually defined by their exteriors, and their contribution to the built environment can be appreciated even if their interiors are not accessible. Overarching significance of a property's exterior can overcome the adverse effect of the loss of an interior**."[55] **La Giralda** illustrates this statement.

[55] U.S. Department of the Interior. National Register Bulletin. How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. Date of publication: 1990; revised 1991,1995,1997. Revised for Internet 1995. P. 46.

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Today, **La Giralda** is a landmark of Miramar that allows the local residents and passers-by to glance into the neighborhood's past. If Mr. and Mrs. Luis Manuel Cintrón y Sánchez would walk through Miramar today, they probably would not recognize the neighborhood, but most definitely, they would immediately identify their former home.

The local residents regard the old mansion as one of their architectural icons. The Miramar Residents Association has even embraced the image of the elegant house and uses it as the association's logo (Fig. 35).

Fig. 35. Miramar Residents Association's logo.

La Giralda, against great odds, stands today as a witness of the development of one of the oldest suburbs in Puerto Rico; as the embodiment of a class project; as a remainder of a way of life and its architectural iconography and as a link of a neighborhood to its past history.

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