

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For NCRS use only  
received 8/3/83  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Polvorin de Miraflores

and/or common Capilla de Miraflores

**2. Location**

street & number Aramania St., Bldg #66, Antigua Base Naval de Miramar  not for publication

city, town Santurce  vicinity of  congressional district N/A

state Puerto Rico code 72 county San Juan code 0930

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Property belongs to the U.S. Government (GSA). See enclosure #1 and #2

street & number

city, town  vicinity of  state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. See enclosure #1 and #2

street & number

city, town  vicinity of  state

**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 type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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

Originally a gunpowder storage building, it was converted into a chapel c.1940. The building is detached and consists of a rectangular plan (50'4" X 189'1") surrounded by a wall (8'5" high) for protection. On this outer wall there are two sentry boxes, round shaped, pierced with three small windows and covered with a half dome. The space between the outer wall and the building proper was covered c.1940. The rectangular building was originally undivided, with seven bays marked on the outside by large buttresses. After 1940 the space was divided into four areas: a large chapel (22'7" X 99'2") a sacristy (22'7" X 17'), bathrooms, and a small chapel (22'7" X 33'5").

The principal building materials are brick masonry, with plastered walls. Reinforced concrete is used on the roof added c.1940 to the area between the building and the outer wall. A barrel vault covers the building. It is reinforced on the exterior with arches which rest on buttresses, eight on each side. The hallway added after c.1940 is covered with slanting reinforced concrete which has straight barrel clay roofing tiles on the outside.

When the building was modified around 1940, several elements were added: a bell-tower on the northeastern corner; eighteen large solid wooden doors (7'8" high) along the sides of the building, for which lunettes were carefully opened on the barrel vault. Eleven of these doors have been lost to termites. Transoms (3'2" high) above each door, made of carved wooden balusters, were also added. Coffered wood-panelling was placed along the bottom of the main chapel's walls and three large lamps made of iron, were hung from the main chapel's vault. A fourth lamp, missing, is being searched.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1776

**Builder/Architect** Spanish Military Colonial Government

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"El Polvorín de Miraflores" as it was called, is a legacy of Puerto Rico's Spanish Colonial times and an example of military architecture. It was one of four structures built as "polvorines" or gun powder storage buildings included in Thomas O'Daly's master plan for the defense of the capital city of San Juan during the eighteenth century. These structures were built to keep and store the thousands of pounds of gun powder and other military material required by the well fortified "Plaza de San Juan". They were constructed according to the necessity and urgency of the military; the first one being San Gerónimo in 1768, to supply those fortresses more distant from the city; "El Polvorín de Miraflores" in 1776, to supply the outside posts; Santa Elena in 1783, to supply the north region; and lastly, the smaller one named Santa Barbara. These gun powder storage buildings were built in strategic locations to adequately supply gun powder and other military equipment to all sectors of the "Plaza de San Juan".

Due to the growth of the city of San Juan in the nineteenth century, two of the buildings, Santa Elena and San Sebastián, were situated, the first one at a dangerously close distance to the urban zone. In 1870, gun powder was prohibited to be stored inside Santa Elena. In 1847 all new construction work was prohibited in a strip of land thirty yards wide surrounding San Sebastián, and due to continuous protests of the neighborhood, it was finally closed in 1880. Of these four structures, "El Polvorín de Miraflores", "San Gerónimo" and "El Polvorín de Santa Elena" still stand.

These gun powder buildings were built using brick, stone and masonry. The walls were reinforced by thick buttresses. The exterior roofs were steep sloped to the sides of the building, so in case of bombardment, the bombs would fall down easily. Structurewise, the main area was built using thick barrel vaults, bomb proof. The ventilation was ingeniously achieved by small openings blocked at the center of the wall, so as to avoid direct communication between its outside and inside face, because the openings would widen parallel to the sides of the block. To make it fire proof, all nails used were made out of copper and all windows and doors covered with copper grills.

"El Polvorín de Miraflores" was built on the east sector of the "Plaza de San Juan", on a mangrove section of the bay, on a small islet named Miraflores, thus its name. It was well guarded with a small garrison of soldiers. The islet of Miraflores, inside the bay, with the San Antonio Channel as its northern boundary and a short distance from the city, with its land front and east flank exposed, was more or less easily assailable by the enemy batteries which could be placed in it. For the English, the occupation of Miraflores meant a position of advantage, since from it the defenses of the island could be assailed from the rear and right flank. The "Polvorín de Miraflores" was captured by the English in 1789 and recaptured by the militiamen of the garrison.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. De Hostos, Adolfo, Historia de San Juan, Ciudad Mirada, ICP, San Juan, 1966, pp.235-37
2. Abbad y Lasierra, Fray Iñigo, Historia Geográfica, Civil y Natural de la Isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico(1783), Editorial Universitaria, Río Piedras, P.R., 1970
3. La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico, Tomo 9, pp.44-45, sept. 1976

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .8021 acres

Quadrangle name San Juan

Quadrangle scale 1-20,000

UMT References Note: Polyconic projection P.R. datum 1940 adjustment 2000-meter

grid based of P.R. coordinate system; Lat.18°27' 06", Long. 66°05' 40"

A 

	1	8	8	2	2	0
Zone	Easting			Northing		

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing		

C 

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D 

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E 

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

F 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The property is bounded to the east 39.786 mts by Aramania St., to the north 83.308 mts by San Juan Ballet Co., to the south 75.048 mts by the Fire Department and to the west 40.954 mts by a passive recreation area.

**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 State Historic Preservation Office

date June 9, 1983

street & number La Fortaleza

telephone (809)721-7000 ext.2232, 2241

city or town San Juan

state Puerto Rico

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Antonio Pabón de los Angeles*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 20, 1983

For HCRS use only

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

*Walter Dubois*

date 3/9/1989

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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8/2/83

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

On December 19, 1898, the United States acquired this tract of land, about 41.40 acres, from the Spanish Crown, under the Treaty of Paris. On February 11, 1941, the Federal Government assigned the land to the Department of the Navy for the installation of the U.S. Naval Station. The structure was altered to accomodate its new use as a chapel. Although altered, it still retains its principal architectural characteristics such as the wide and heavy brick and masonry walls and the barrel vaults supported by exterior arches and thick buttresses. When the Naval Station closed operations in 1971, the property was declared surplus Government property and was placed under license to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico which assigned the structure to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture to be used as the San Juan Children's Choir and "Ballet de San Juan" headquarters.

PART 9 Major Bibliographical References

y  
Abbad/Lasierra, Fray Iñigo, Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico (1783), Editorial Universitaria, Río Piedras, 1970, p. 105.

De Hostos, Adolfo, Historia de San Juan, Ciudad murada, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan, 1966, pp. 235-237.

Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico, Tomo 9, Página 44, 45  
Edición, Septiembre 1976

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

This building is part of a group of buildings used by the U.S. Navy, and enclosed in the same property. Today this land and buildings are administrated by the Government of Puerto Rico. The line of property of this piece of land and the location of the Buiding within it, may be observed in the location plan enclosed.

HELIPORT  
MARKING

AREA DE PIZC  
(USO COMUN)

VEREDAS DE SAN JUAN

AV. V. S. E.

BANCO IMPERIAL  
CUCURUL, NAVE 1  
CZ SAN JUAN

(PARKING EMPLEADOS & PUBL. CO)

COM. NIÑOS DE  
SAN JUAN

CAPILLA

← ACCESO ACTUAL  
AL AREA DE PIZC

(ESCUELA DE ADIESTRAMIENTO  
DE BOMBEROS)

AREA TRANSPORTE Y  
PROP CONFISCADA

(CENTRO ECUESTRE - ESTABLOS)

ESTABLOS  
CALLE S. J. T. H.

REMOVED

T-7

T-1

T-2

T-2

T-11

T-4

T-4

T-2

71 301 67  
66

263

52  
53

62

57

252  
253  
254

41

40

19

8

34

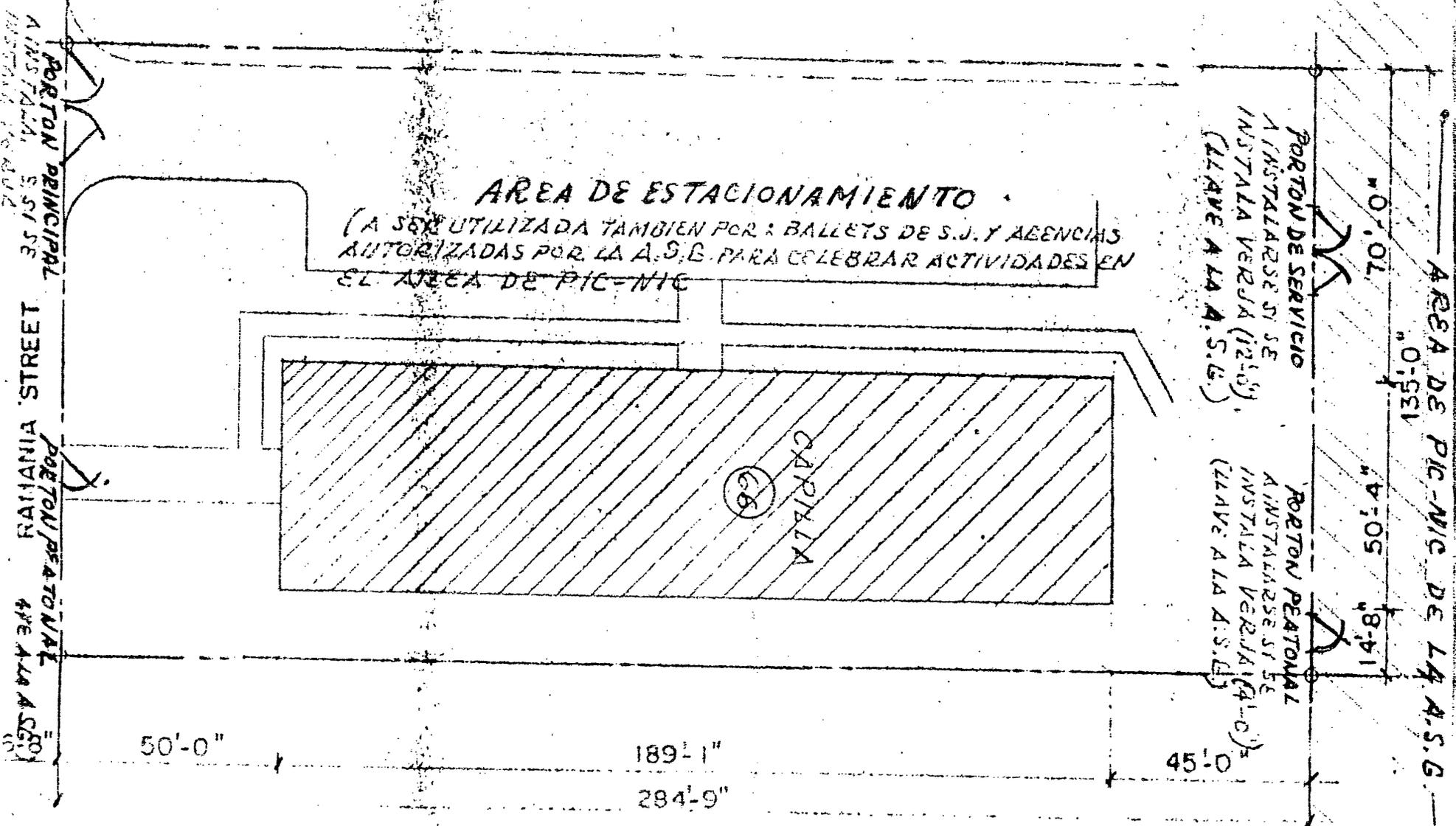
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257

2

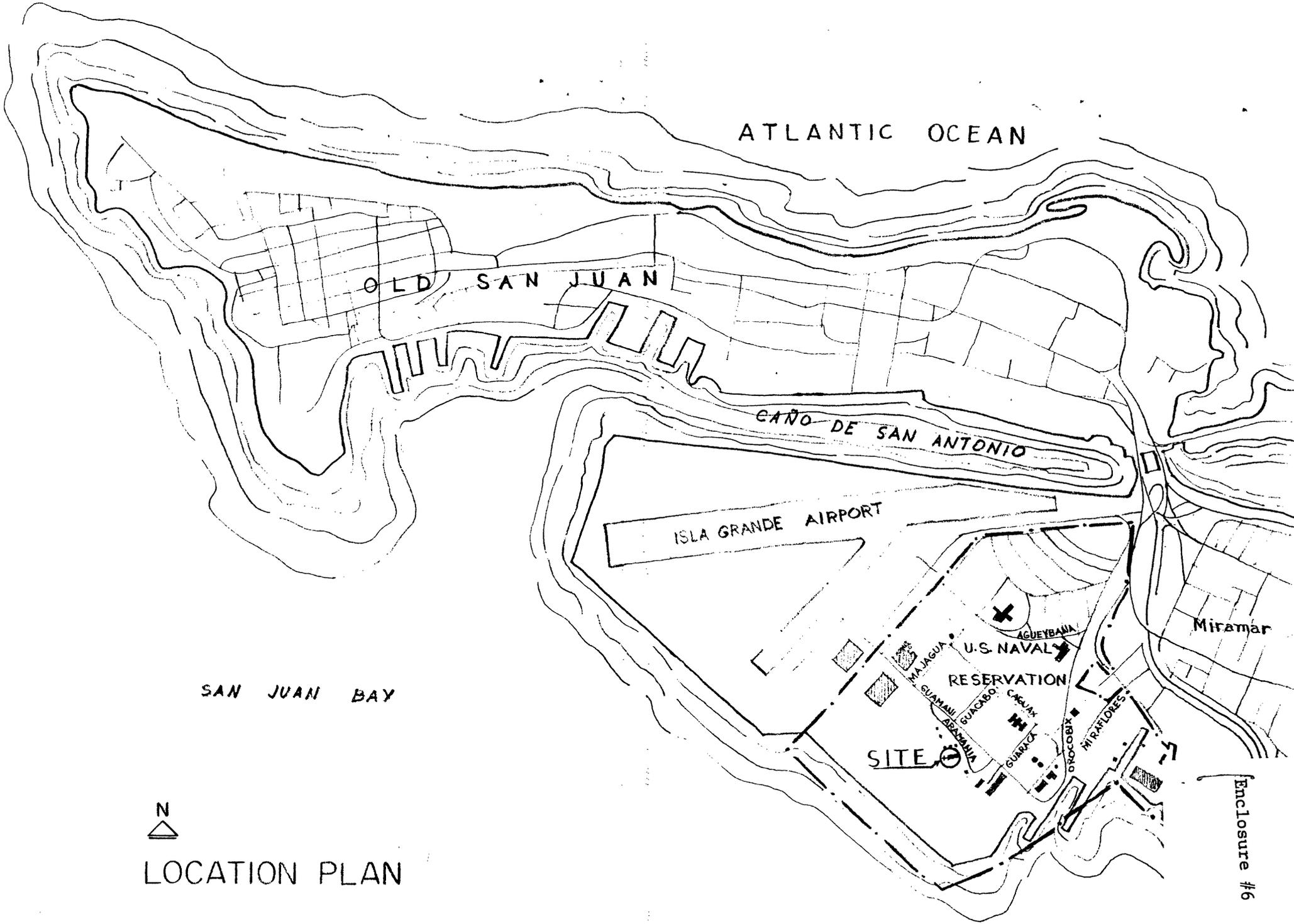
2

POLVORIN DE MIRAFLORES (1770)  
CAPILLA DE MIRAFLORES (1940)



AREA :  
3,571.192 SQ.MT.

SITE PLAN  
SCALE: 1 = 400



ATLANTIC OCEAN

OLD SAN JUAN

CAÑO DE SAN ANTONIO

ISLA GRANDE AIRPORT

SAN JUAN BAY

Miramar

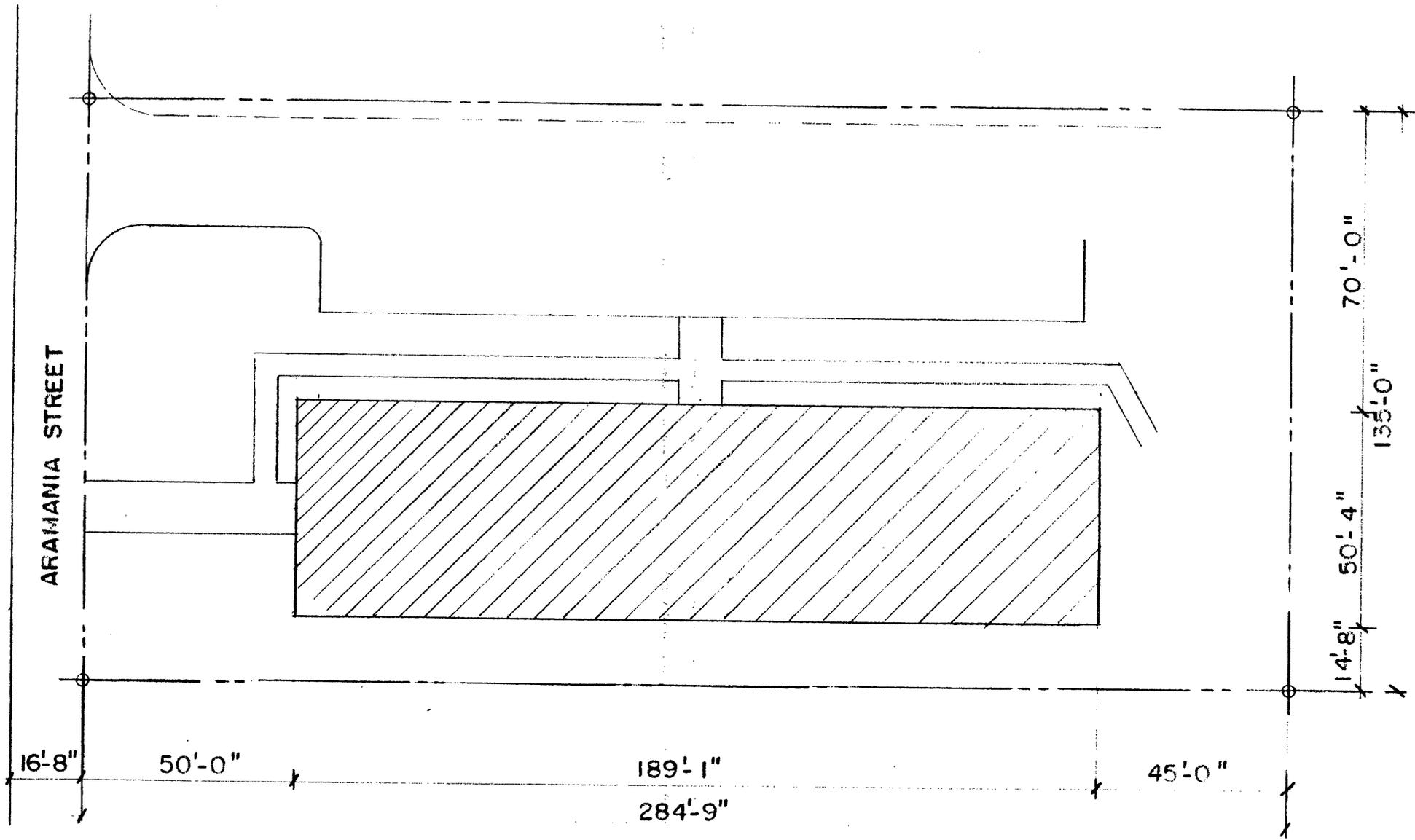


LOCATION PLAN

..... U.S. NAVAL RESERVATION PROPERTY LINE

Enclosure #6

POLVORIN DE MIRAFLORES (1776)  
 CAPILLA DE MIRAFLORES (1940)



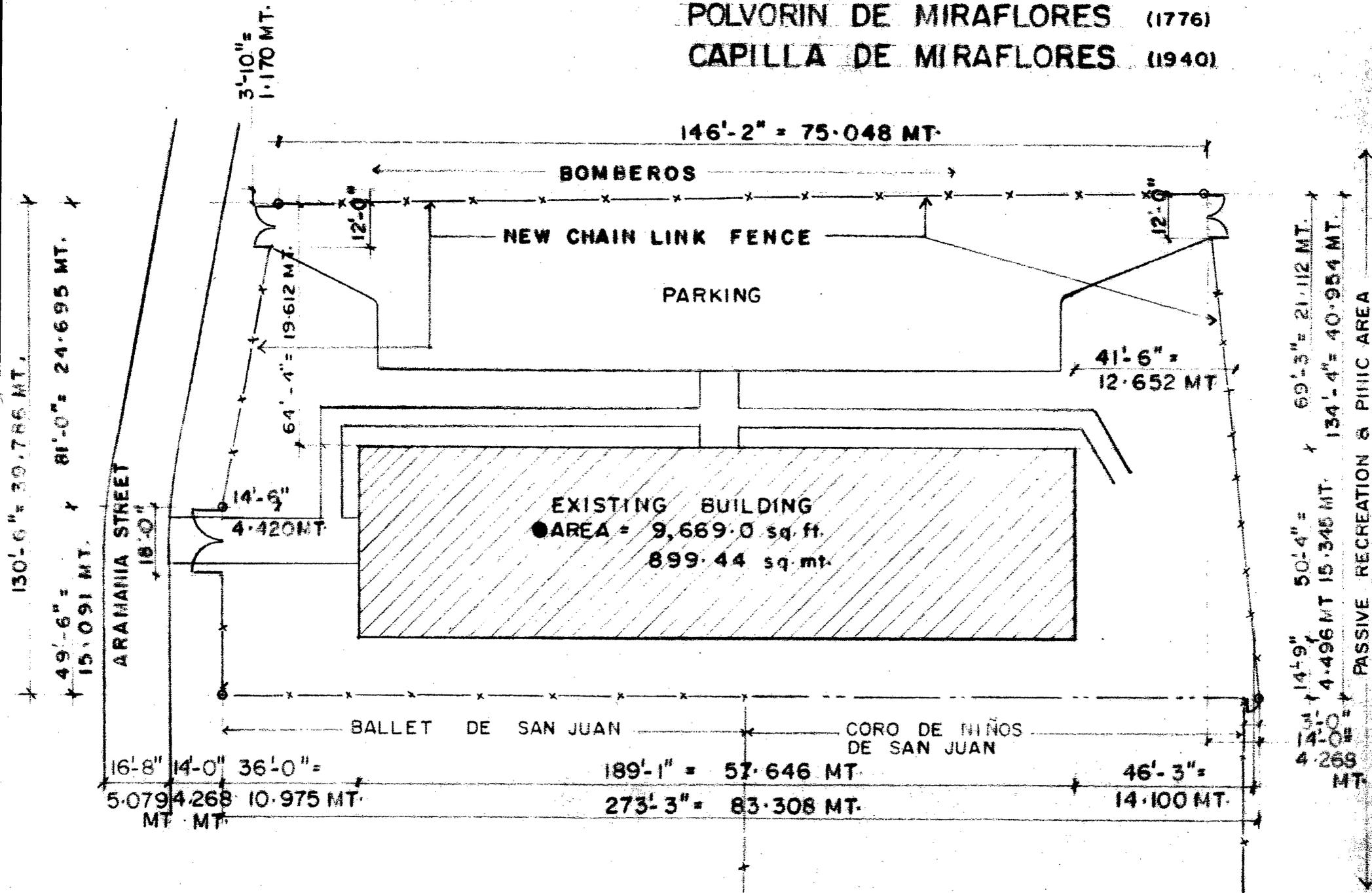
ARAMANIA STREET

● AREA :  
 3,571.192 SQ. MT.  
 .882 ACRES

SITE PLAN  
 SCALE: 1 = 400  
 0 5 10 20 40 80

POLVORIN DE MIRAFLORES (1776)

CAPILLA DE MIRAFLORES (1940)



● LAND AREA

3,246.278 SQ. MT.

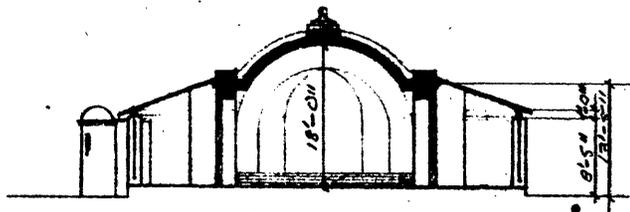
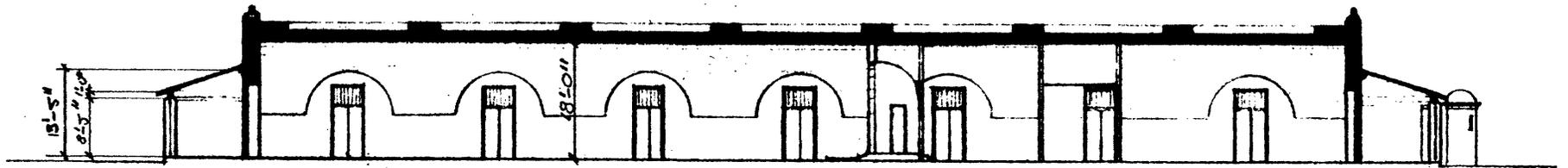
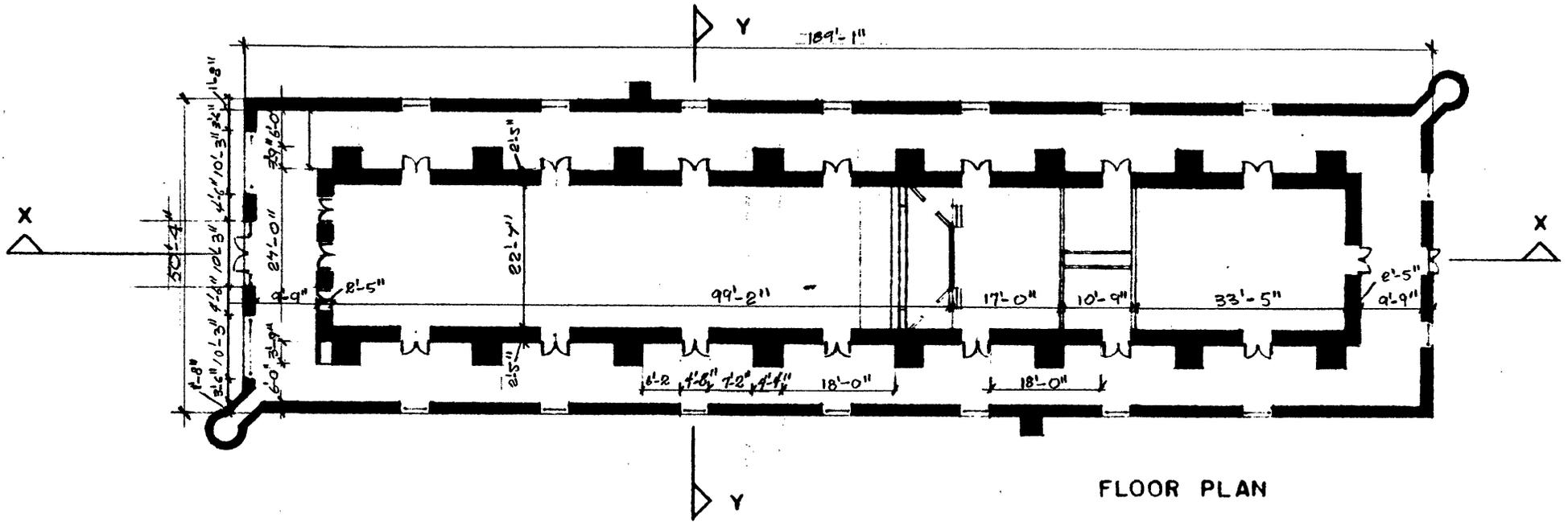
.8021 ACRES

SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1=400

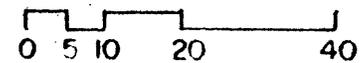


POLVORIN DE MIRAFLORES (1776)  
 CAPILLA DE MIRAFLORES (1940)



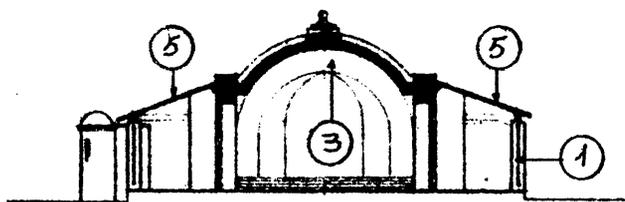
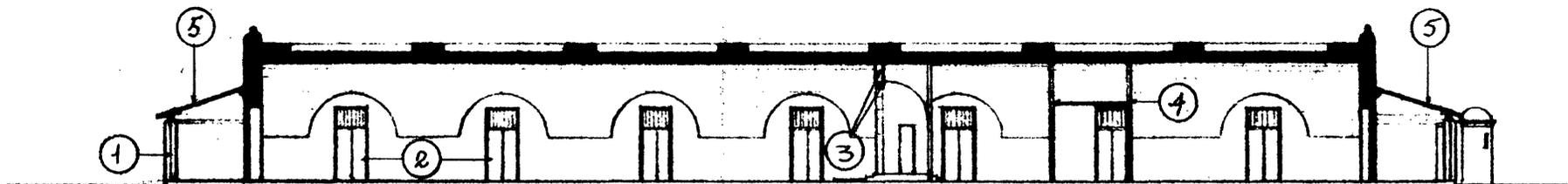
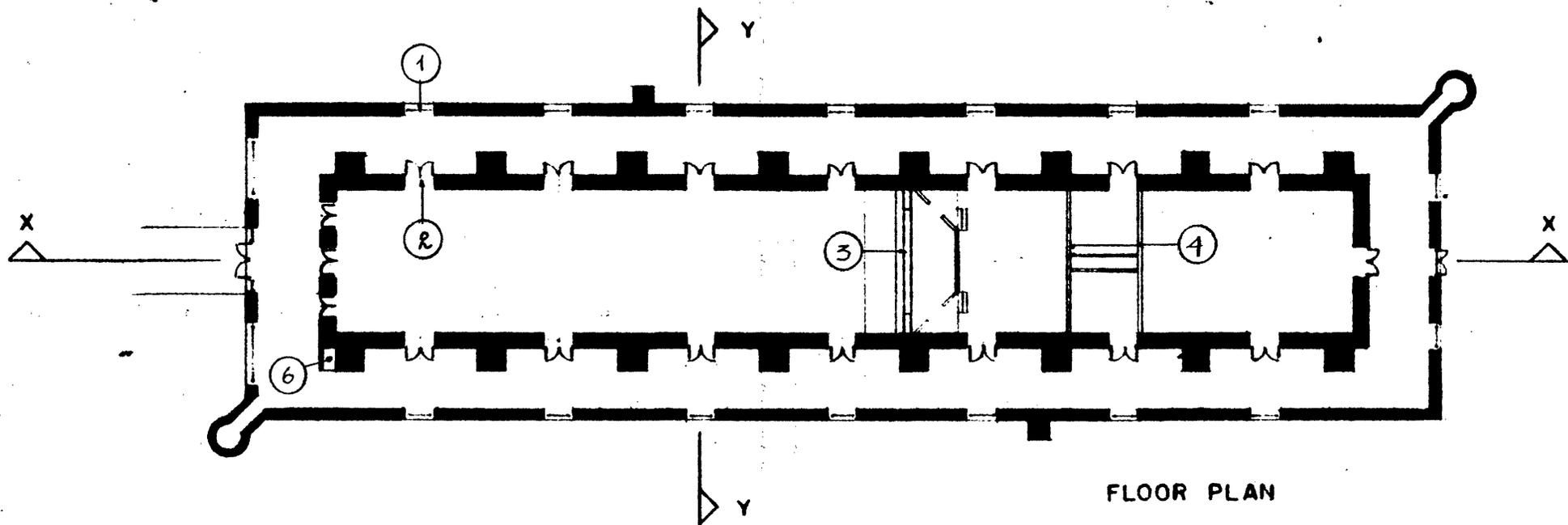
● AREA = 9,669 sq. ft.

SCALE: 1" = 300"



POLVORIN DE MIRAFLORES (1776)

CAPILLA DE MIRAFLORES (1940)

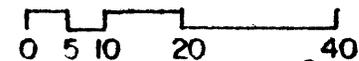


● ALTERATIONS

- 1-OPENINGS & ORNAMENTAL METAL GRILLES
- 2-OPENINGS & WOODEN DOORS
- 3-METAL LATH & PLASTER ARCH
- 4-CONCRETE BLOCK PARTITIONS
- 5-STRAIGHT BARREL CLAY TILE ROOFING & REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB
- 6-BELL TOWER (not shown)



SCALE: 1" = 300"



Property belongs to the government of the United States. It is considered "Crown Land". The petition transfer of this land to the government of Puerto Rico was solicited under the disposition of Section 7 of the (Carta Orgánica de Puerto Rico de 1917 (48 USC 748)). Included copy of the letter written by our governor Hon. Carlos Romero Barceló on April 23, 1980 to former President Carter formally asking for the transfer. (See enclosure 7).