NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

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Exp. 10-31-84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received AUG 8 1984

date entered SEP 18 1984

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

1. Name

historic Church Nuestra Señora de la Concepción y San Fernando of Toa Alta

and/or common Church San Fernando of Toa Alta

2. Location

street & number Ponce de Leon St., Town Plaza ___ not for publication

city, town Toa Alta ___ vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county San Juan code 0970

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	X religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Catholic Church, Archdiocese of San Juan

street & number Box 1967

city, town San Juan ___ vicinity of state Puerto Rico 00903

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, Church Litigation Case #2, 1904

street & number Box 2392

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Churches of Puerto Rico has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1984 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00901

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The church Nuestra Señora de la Concepción y San Fernando of Toa Alta, built from 1752 to 1826, sits on a block by itself facing the town plaza, and is basically oriented on an east-west axis. It is separated from its immediate surroundings by a simple wall enclosing garden areas around the main structure.

The building plan consists of only one nave covered with a large barrel vault 38.6 feet wide. The brick of the barrel vault is exposed on the interior of the church. Walls of great thickness and wide buttresses receive the weight of the vault. Four lunette openings were placed above the nave in order to illuminate the interior space. There are four bays plus the apse and sacristies area. The apse and sacristies are also covered by individual barrel vaults. The entire structure is constructed of durable materials, such as mortar and brick. The floors are covered with colored native cement tiles of various designs. The original floors were probably replaced during the first half of this century. The interior decoration was altered in 1945. Pilasters were attached to the side walls in addition to a frieze of Renaissance design.

The facade is emphasized by two Corinthian columns with fluted bodies which support a small frieze above the entrance door. Above this area, two pilasters and the espadaña, or bell gable, with three bells highlight the importance of the entrance. Curious decorative elements top a series of small buttresses on the facade. The side facades are treated in a simple fashion. One arched door flanked on each side by enormous buttresses allows ventilation and light to the interior. The stucco of the arches above these side doors was scraped and the brick work has been exposed (1977), as in an interior arch between the nave and the apse. The exterior of the church is deteriorated, having vegetation growing on the walls and buttresses.

The most noticeable alteration to the main structure is the addition of a new parish house which is attached to the rear facade of the original church. The doors and windows in the main building are not original and are in a very deteriorated state.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1752–1826 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The church Nuestra Señora de la Concepción y San Fernando is of historical and architectural significance. In 1751, at the same time the city of Toa Alta was founded, the church construction began. The building is dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Concepción and to San Fernando. It retains most of its original construction and design elements. It is a good example of the churches built from 1720 to 1820 on the Island that have a single nave covered with a barrel vault. The space created by the bold brick vault, finished in 1802, is surprising and impressive, and has miraculously survived until today. The barrel vault, 38.6 feet wide, is the largest of its kind in the Island. Construction of the church was finally finished in 1826. The small frieze on the facade is a rare example of a decorative treatment to this area. The columns at the entrance have fluted bodies. Both elements relatively of a small scale present an interesting contrast to the overall size of the church. The espadaña was placed after it was recommended by José Y. Hernández in a report in 1861. The most noticeable alteration that somewhat detracts from the significance of the property is the addition of a new parish house. The traditional relationship between the town plaza, the church and city hall is, however, maintained, presenting an example of early Puerto Rican town planning.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Marvel, Thomas S. and Maria Luisa Moreno, Architecture of Parish Churches in Puerto Rico, Editorial Universitaria, Rio Piedras, P.R., unpublished.

Villar Roces, Mario, "Los Municipios de Puerto Rico", La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico, Vol. 13, Vicente Báez, ed., C.Corredera, Madrid, 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 5303 sq.mts.

Quadrangle name Bayamón, PR — Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	790820	203540
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The church is bounded on the north by José de Diego St., on the west by Ponce de Leon St. and the town plaza, on the south by Muñoz Rivera St. and on the east by Alfonso XIII St.

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

N/A

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ester Cardona, Arch. and Marisa Gómez, Arch. (reviewed by Dr. Arleen Pabón de Rocafort, PRSHPOfficer)

organization Investigaciones Bonaire, Inc. — date February 1984

street & number Tetuan 103 — telephone (809) 724-4997

city or town San Juan — state Puerto Rico 00901

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ✓ state ___ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Arleen Pabón de Rocafort

title State Historic Preservation Officer — date July 20, 1984

For NPS use only

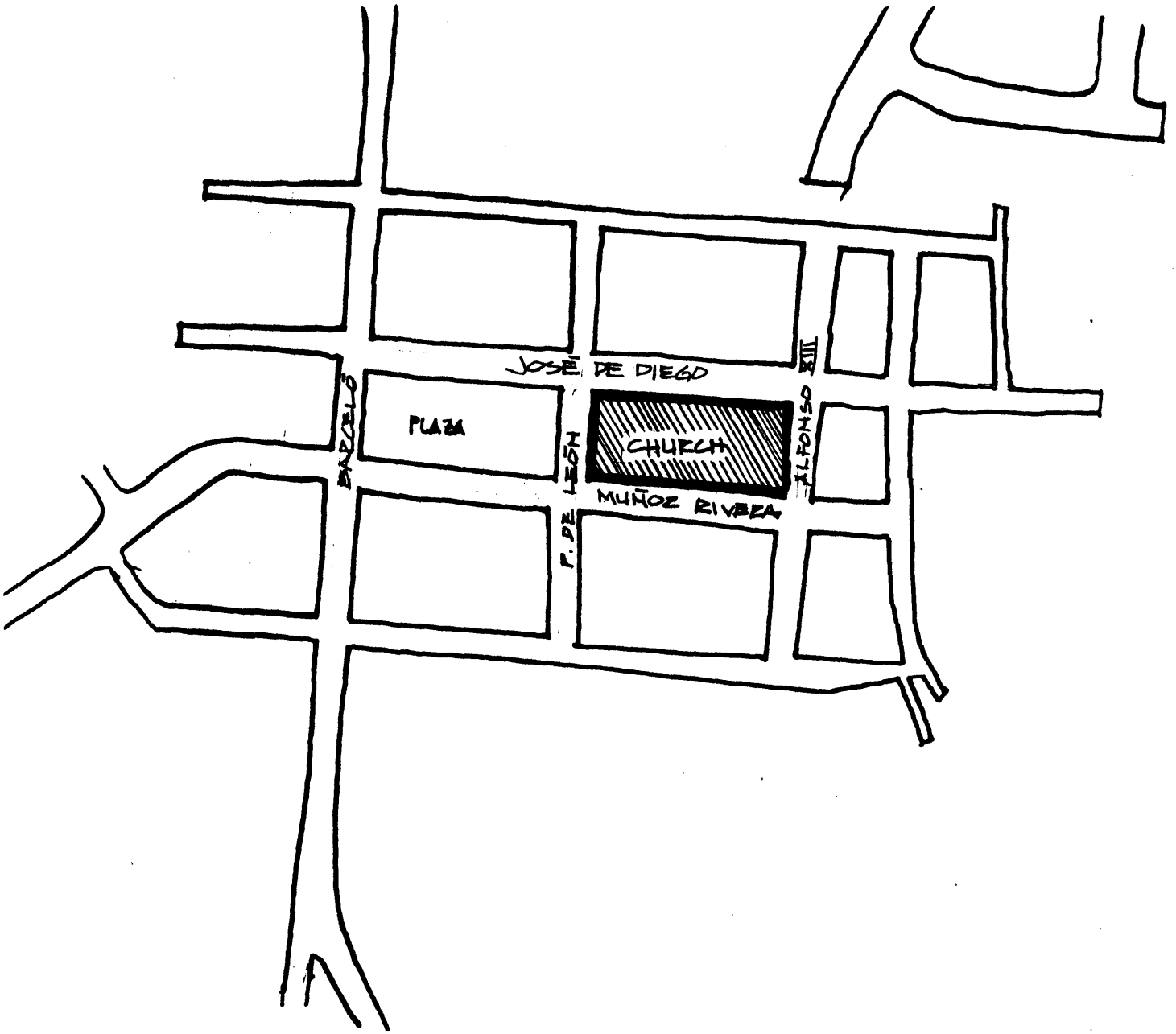
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See Continuation Sheet for listing — date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: — date

Chief of Registration



town: TOA ALTA scale: 1:2000 north

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