NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

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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 Santa María del Rosario of Vega Baja

and/or common Nuestra Señora del Rosario

2. Location

street & number Town Plaza ___ not for publication

city, town Vega Baja ___ vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county Arecibo code 1020

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 , Diocese of Arecibo

street & number Box 616

city, town Arecibo ___ vicinity of state Puerto Rico 00612

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Box 2392, Old San Juan Station

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The church of Santa María del Rosario in Vega Baja sits directly in front of the town plaza, with its entrance facing west. It is separated from its immediate surroundings by a low concrete and iron grillwork wall which encloses garden areas around the main structure. This church, as well as the parish church of Carolina, was designed by Engineer Antonio María Guitián. The facades of both churches and the arrangement of the interior spaces are very similar.

A cruciform plan is used. The nave is covered by a barrel vault. It has two side aisles, a transept and a semicircular apse. Arcades resting on bulky pilasters, decorated with simple moldings and cornices, divide the aisles from the nave. The side aisles are lower than the central nave, allowing space for a clerestory area made of rectangular wood louvered windows above the arches that permit light entrance to the interior space.

At the entrance, there is a vestibule with a small room at each side. To the right, a stairway leads up to the choir loft. The main nave, consisting of three bays, is relatively short, and the space is perceived as if it were a central plan with one of its sides elongated. This impression is reinforced by the great spatial importance given to the crossing. This area is covered with a large lanterned dome mounted on a drum perforated with windows. The importance given to this central space is such, that in a recent restoration the floor was raised in this area and the altar brought forward and placed under the dome. Behind this space, the semicircular apse, of secondary importance, is covered with a half dome.

The construction of this church began in 1860 and was finished in 1867. The entire structure is built of durable materials, mainly, mortar and brick. The floors are covered with the original gray and white marble tiles.

The facade, similar to that of the Carolina church, has slender proportions, highlighting the impression of verticality. Doric pilasters frame the entrance arch. There are two niches on each side of the entrance and rustication is used on the corners of the facade. Two side doors, recessed from the plane of the main entrance indicate the presence of the two side aisles in the interior. A Doric frieze separates the first and second levels of the facade. Double pilasters flank the choir loft window. Rustication is also used in this part of the facade. The belfry crowning the facade, has a single pilaster on each corner. The side facades are dominated by a monumental entrance to the transept. A large flat wall with an arched doorway runs the entire height of the transept and ends with a round window and a triangular pediment above it.

The exterior, as well as the interior, of this church are impressive and monumental, specifically the dominant volume of the dome. The building was restored in 1979 and is in excellent conditions. The most noticeable alteration to the main structure is the addition of a parish house attached to the rear facade of the church.

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	
1700–1799	art	engineering	music	theater	
X 1800–1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	transportation	
1900–	communications	industry	politics/government	other (specify)	
		invention			

Specific dates 1860–1867 **Builder/Architect** Engineer Antonio María Guitián

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The church of Santa María del Rosario in Vega Baja is of architectural and historical significance. In 1860, the old church of Vega Baja was torn down and the present one was begun, following the plans of Engineer Antonio María Guitián. It was finished in 1867. The building retains most of its original construction and design elements. It is a good example of the churches covered with multiple vaults built between 1790 and 1870 on the Island. The Vega Baja church was designed by the same engineer that designed the Carolina church, and its facades and interior spaces are very similar. These churches are distinguished from others around the Island by their plan, proportions and structural roof system. The use of a cruciform plan and the great importance given to the central space under the dome appear to have been inspired by traditional centrally planned churches. The only alteration that has somewhat distracted from the significance of the property was the addition of a parish house at the rear of the church. The traditional relationship of the town plaza, city hall and the church is maintained to this day, in accordance with Spanish Crown ordinances, a living 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, Puerto Rico, unpublished.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property aprox. 2007 sq. mts.

Quadrangle name Manati, PR Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	775980	2041450	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The church is bounded on the north by Acosta St., on the east by Padilla St., on the south by Betances St. and on the west by the town plaza.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marisa Gómez, Arch. and Ester Cardona, 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 Old 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

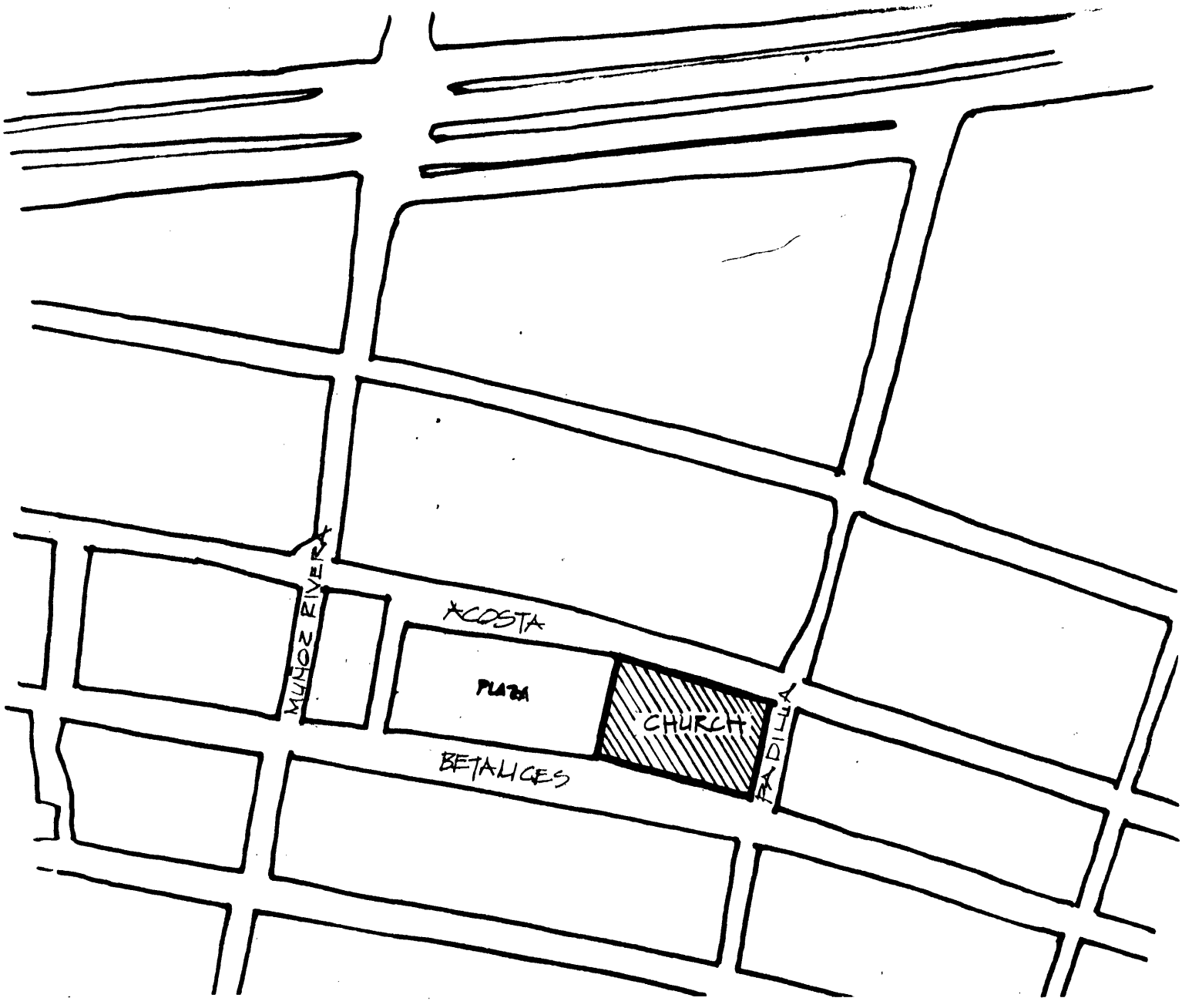
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See Continuation sheet for listing date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration



town: VEGA BAJA scale: 1:2000 north

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