

1238

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Ventana Archeological District

other name/site number: 12VPr2-5 & 12VPr2-61

2. Location

street & number: [REDACTED]

not for publication: X

city/town: Barrio Llave, Vieques

vicinity:

state: PR county: Humacao

code: 069

zip code: 00765

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - Federal

Category of Property: Site (s)

Number of Resources within Property:

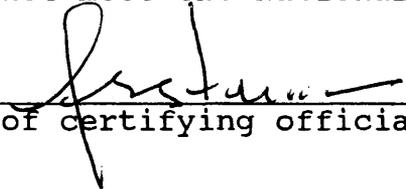
Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
<u> 2 </u>	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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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. _____ See continuation sheet.



Signature of certifying official

7-13-92

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

please see attached letter dated 20 May 92

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification
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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): _____

Janet E. Townsend 9-10-92

Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

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6. Function or Use
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Historic: AGRICULTURE Sub: _____

Current : AGRICULTURE Sub: _____
MILITARY _____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification: N/A

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation _____ roof _____
walls _____ other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

In 1938, in the course of a brief reconnaissance of the island of Vieques, Irvin Rouse, of Yale University, recorded (as "Vieques 5") an archeological site that had been reported to him by local informants [REDACTED]. It is hard to say exactly where the site registered by Rouse was located. He describes it in his field notes, for example [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

firm evidence of their having been utilized in any way either by Indians or by pirates.

Having failed to find any prehistoric remains in the course of his exploration of the hillside, Rouse abandoned his search for the Ventana site and turned his attention to places elsewhere on the island. Thus it is that, though he recorded the site in his fieldnotes (which are on file at Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History), he did not mention it in his published report on his work in Vieques, for in that report (Rouse 1952) he confined his attention solely to those places from which he himself had personally recovered archaeological materials.

Though the alleged cave site has continued to elude discovery, there are indeed some archaeological remains to be found [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In 1978, in the course of a general reconnaissance of Vieques, a team of archaeologists headed by Marvin Keller, of Ecology & Environment, Inc., discovered a small prehistoric dwelling site (subsequently registered as 12VPr2-61) [REDACTED]

Meanwhile, a local collector, Mario Solis, had managed to locate a sizeable late prehistoric site in a similar setting, [REDACTED] one spotted by Keller and his associates. In cataloguing the archaeological sites of Vieques, G.S. Vescelius opted, in 1979, to treat the latter site as the one that Rouse had called "Vieques 5", and to register it, accordingly, as 12VPr2-5.

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The district in which the two aforementioned sites are located has been owned ever since 1942 by the U.S. Navy, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] For about a century prior to its acquisition by the Navy, most of the area had been under cultivation, for it includes some of the best farmland to be found anywhere on Vieques, and it formed part of the sugar plantation known as the Hacienda Resolucion. Since the Navy purchased the property, all of it has lain fallow, and it appears to have been utilized for only two purposes: by the Navy itself as an ammunition depot, and (under a lease arrangement) by the Vieques Cattlemen's Association as grazing land. A number of large magazines have been constructed in the area (which explains why Solis, its discoverer, has referred to 12VPr2-5 as the "Magazine Site"); but those bunkers themselves do not lie directly atop any of the archaeological deposits, nor is there any reason to suppose that deposits of that sort were obliterated in the course of their construction. Grazing cattle are unlikely themselves to do a great deal of damage to archaeological remains of the sort found in the Ventana district. It might be thought, then, that the activities that have taken place in the district since the time of the Navy's takeover would have had relatively little impact on the historic resources. Unfortunately, however, even though the present land-use pattern can be characterized as being one of low intensity, a lot of damage has been done, some of it quite recently, in the course of bulldozing. Some bulldozing was probably done in the area years ago, at the time the bunkers themselves, and the road leading to them, were built; but most if not all of the recent activity of that sort is attributable to the cattlemen, who have made regular use of earth-moving equipment for brush-clearing purposes and in connection with their fencing operations. Still, it is improbable that there were any sizeable undisturbed refuse deposits in the Ventana district even in 1941, on the eve of the Navy's purchase of the property, for if (as is likely) the greater part of it was once planted with sugarcane, the farming operations alone would have sufficed to churn the ground up very thoroughly. Cane ploughs can cut to depths of as much as 18" (46 cm), and that is enough to affect even the bottommost portions of the average prehistoric refuse deposit on Vieques.

Notwithstanding the fact that they have been heavily disturbed, 12VPr2-5 and 12VPr2-61 have both produced a certain amount of useful archeological information, and can be expected to yield a far larger amount of information in the future if they can be afforded some reasonable degree of protection. Of the two sites, 12VPr2-5 is surely the most interesting and important. With an area [REDACTED] it is one of the largest sites ever to have been recorded on Vieques. Mario Solis has found it to be a fairly rich source of late prehistoric pottery. Extensive test-pitting, undertaken in 1980 on behalf of the Navy by a team headed by L.S. Robinson and C.A. Tronolone, failed to produce any large amount of additional pottery of that sort but did serve to demonstrate that ancient refuse was spread far and wide (albeit rather thinly) over a very sizeable area. The 13 test pits dug in 1980 were designed mainly to probe the limits of the site, rather than to zero in on places that had already been determined to be productive, and allowances must be made for that fact in assessing their yields, which were rather low in a number of cases. With an [REDACTED] those excavations produced a total of 7404

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coarse-grade specimens (items large enough to have been caught on a screen with a 1/4" mesh) and an as yet undetermined but very considerable number of tinier objects. More than half of the coarse-grade specimens were stone particles exhibiting no signs of human workmanship or use, and capable of being dismissed as natural ingredients of the soil; but the collection also included 1247 artifacts (1205 potsherd, eight other ceramic objects, 10 pieces of modified shell, one piece of modified coral, 21 pieces of worked stone, and three glass fragments) and 6157 culturally significant ecofacts (1599 pieces of unworked shell, 88 unmodified bone fragments, four pieces of unworked coral, four lots of wood charcoal and one piece of coal-like stone). With the exception of the glass fragments and the piece of coal-like stone, all of the artifacts and non-lithic ecofacts can be supposed to date from prehistoric times.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the test excavations at 12VPr2-5 were made on the site's outer fringes, the overall artifact densities are fairly high by local standards. Coarse-grade potsherds occurred at a rate of 2037/m³, for example; and high rate of 180/m³. Only with respect to the amount of shell refuse do the figures for 12VPr2-5 fall well below average. Unmodified shells occurred at the rate of only 2855/m³, and the shell/sherd index, 1.32, is very low. If, however, we take into consideration the fact that the Ventana district lies well inland, rather far removed from any possible source of shellfish, the relative scarcity of shell is readily understandable. In fact, the figures might even be viewed, under those circumstances, as being rather high. They certainly imply a substantial degree of dependence on shellfish by a group of people who would have had to go literally to fairly great lengths in order to supply their needs.

The second of the Ventana sites, 12VPr2-61, is far smaller, and otherwise less impressive, than 12VPr2-5. Investigations undertaken in 1980 by the team headed by Robinson and Tronolone served to suggest that it has an area of only about 975 m² and that the total volume of the refuse deposits amounts to only 273 m³ or thereabouts (vs an estimated total volume of 13,770 m³ for the deposits at 12VPr2-5). Not only are the deposits at 12VPr2-61 less extensive than those at Site 5; they also appear to be slightly shallower. At both sites, the maximum recorded depth of the refuse is about 55 cm; but at Site 61 less extensive than those at Site 5; they also appear to be slightly shallower. At both sites, the maximum recorded depth of the refuse is about 55 cm; but at Site 61 the average depth is a mere 24 cm, as opposed to a mean of 34 cm for Site 5. Nevertheless, there are still some heavy concentrations of refuse to be found at Site 61. Of the three small test pits dug there in 1980, one proved to be virtually sterile; but the other two produced a considerable amount of material: 335 artifacts (a shell bead, 332 potsherds and two other ceramic objects) and 1290 culturally significant ecofacts (1257 pieces of unmodified shell, 26 bone fragments and eight pieces of unworked coral), in addition to 1258 native stone particles. Those two pits had a combined area of only 18 dm² and a total volume of merely 72 liters, roughly four of which corresponded to sterile subsoil. For the remaining 68 liters, the density figures are very high: coarse-grade potsherds occurred at a rate of 4912/m³; bone fragments at a rate of 382/m³; unmodified shell fragments at a rate of 18,485/m³ (a higher rate than that noted at many coastal sites).

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A preliminary analysis of the pottery from 12VPr2-5 has served to suggest that all of it dates from late prehistoric times. Most of it could probably be assigned to the Esperanza style, in the sense in which Rouse (1952) defined that style on the basis of his work in Vieques; but the collections also include some Elenoid sherds, and a few pieces of what may eventually prove to have been trade ware from somewhere in western Puerto Rico. The samples from 12VPr2-61 are of a somewhat different character. They, too, consist mainly of late prehistoric pottery; but they include occasional examples of alder ware, some of which may date from as early as Period 4C (c 600-800 AD). All of these observations are of a very preliminary nature, and it will be some time before we can be certain exactly how old the "older" ware from 12VPr2-61 really is. It would appear, however, on the basis of the studies made thus far, that the Ventana district may have been colonized originally in late Saladoid times, by a group of people who settled at 12VPr2-61. Then, a good many centuries later, a second village was established somewhat further east, in the area of 12VPr2-5. The latter community prospered, and ultimately became what must have been, by local standards, a very sizeable town.

Most of the non-ceramic artifacts in the collection from 12VPr2-5 are items recovered from the site's disturbed surface; the excavations produced only a few stone chips, a shell celt and a fragmented (but restorable) shell disk. The surface collections include five additional shell celts (all of them made from the palatal lips of conchs), one other piece of worked shell, two stone celt fragments, a couple of stone grinding implements, and what appears to be a small section of a stone ballgame belt. It is worth noting that, though conch shell tools occur with some suggest that the tools were being manufactured elsewhere (probably at some littoral site) and carried into the Ventana district in finished form. The non-ceramic artifacts from 12VPr2-61 include an olive-shell bead, a shell celt, one complete stone celt, and one fragment of such a tool.

The shell refuse recovered from the Ventana sites has two noteworthy features. In the first place, it includes a good many large land snail shells, of two distinct genera (Pleurodonte and another as yet unidentified). There is reason to suppose that the inhabitants of the Ventana sites were actually eating those snails. No firm evidence of land-snail consumption has been recovered from sites elsewhere on Vieques; but most of the other sites that have been investigated lie fairly near the shore, and it is quite possible that the sort of snail-gathering that was done by the Ventana people represented an adjustment to their inland environment. The second outstanding feature of the Ventana shell assemblage is its very select character. The specimens collected in the course of the work at 12VPr2-5 and 12VPr2-61 represent a grand total of a mere 24 genera, only half a dozen of which are of major importance. The assemblage is dominated by a small clam (*Anomalocardia brasiliensis*) and a tiny snail (*Neritina virginea*), both of which are denizens of the quiet waters of the mangrove swamp. Two other mangrove swamp species, the oysters *Crassostrea rhizophorae* and *Isognomon alatus*, are also well represented in the samples from the Ventana sites; but the remaining members of the shell assemblage derive from a number of other, very different settings. The Ventana people were eating, for example, large clams of the species *Lucina pectinata* and *Codakia orbicularis*, which had to be obtained from sand-bottomed seagrass meadows; whelks (*Cittarium pica*),

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which are to be found along wave-swept rocky shores; and arks of the species *Arca zebra* and pearl oysters (*Pinctada imbricata*), both of which are to be gathered from hard, open-water substrates such as those afforded by fringe reefs. The ventana assemblage is not unique, either in terms of its select character or in terms of its component species, for an inland site on a small northeastern Caribbean island. The same sort of limited shell assemblage representing a wide range of littoral habitats is also characteristic of the Glynn site (12VAm1-13), a prehistoric dwelling site [REDACTED]. Indeed, even the individual components of the Glynn and Ventana complexes are much the same. In trying to pinpoint possible collecting stations, however, it is much more difficult to deal with the Ventana sites than with the one on St. Croix. Whereas all the habitats represented by the mollusk shells in the Glynn deposits can be found in one fairly small area [REDACTED] there does not appear to be any single location [REDACTED] that would have afforded ready access to such a range of habitats. It must be assumed, therefore, that the Ventana people were obtaining their shellfish from a number of different points on the coast, some of them widely separated from one another.

No structural remains of any type have been noted to occur at the Ventana sites, and it is quite unlikely that any will be discovered in the future, in view of the fact that the ground has been so heavily disturbed. Nevertheless, there is a good possibility that there was a ballcourt somewhere on 12VPr2-5, and is conceivable that vestiges of that structure are still to be found there.

In their choice of an area in which to settle, the Ventana people positioned themselves midway between two of the finest zones of alluvial soil on Vieques, at the head of the Resolucion valley, near the pass leading to the Playa Grande basin. Floored with a relatively fertile clay loam of the Coamo series, the Resolucion valley should have been very well adapted to the needs of Indian farmers. In terms of their agricultural potential, the Ventana sites are some for the highest ranking localities on Vieques.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: STATE AND LOCAL

Applicable National Register Criteria: D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: ARCHEOLOGY - PREHISTORIC

Period(s) of Significance: PREHISTORIC

Significant Dates : _____

Significant Person(s): _____

Cultural Affiliation: SALADOID, OSITONOID, ELENOID, CHICOID

Architect/Builder: _____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
 X See continuation sheet.

Though the sites of the Ventana District have been heavily damaged in the course of the agricultural and military activities that have taken place on and around them during the last century and a half, they retain a considerable degree of significance and must be classed, on certain grounds, as unique historic resources. One of them, 12VPr2-5, is the only large aboriginal dwelling site ever to have been found [redacted] and it is a place that is likely to have played a very important and rather special role in the later stages of the island's ancient history. However much of it may have been disturbed by ploughs or bulldozers (and it is by no means certain that all portions of it have indeed been heavily affected in that fashion), it has been proven to be capable of producing substantial quantities of archaeologically useful artifactual and ecofactual material, and it should definitely be preserved. The nearby site 12VPr2-61, though far smaller than 12VPr2-5, is likewise important, for its refuse deposits have been demonstrated to be relatively rich, and to represent a somewhat different time span than those of its larger neighbor. Of all the Navy-owned archaeological sites on Vieques, those of the Ventana district are perhaps the most promising ones on which to investigate problems of ancient land use, and they are virtually the only ones of which we are presently aware from which it might be possible to learn something about special aboriginal adaptations to an inland, as opposed to a littoral, habitat. There is at least a slight chance that 12VPr2-5 functioned not merely as a dwelling place but as a ceremonial center. Places of the latter type would appear to have been few and comparatively far between on Vieques. For all of the aforementioned reasons, the archeologists who investigated the sites of the Ventana Archeological District (and who have been responsible for the definition of the district itself) are of the opinion that they clearly deserve to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Vescelius, Gary S., & Linda S. Robinson. The Archaeology of the Ventana District of Vieques. Reports of the Archaeological Survey of Vieques, Series B, Number 20. Charlotte Amalie: Archaeological Services, 1980.

Rouse, Irving. Porto Rican Prehistory: Excavations in the North and East. Scientific Survey of Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Volume XVIII, Part 4. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1952.

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 -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: [REDACTED]

Sector A (12VPr2-5)

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Area: [REDACTED]

Sector B (12VPr2-61)

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Area: [REDACTED]

Sector C (12VPr2-135)

OMITTED (from the original nomination form)

Verbal Boundary Description:

[REDACTED]

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY:

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Name/Title: Linda S. Robinson & Gary S. Vescelius
(Archaeologist) (Archaeologist)

Organization: Archaeological Services & Ecology and Environment

Street & Number: P.O. Box 7818 P.O. Box D

City/Town: Charlotte Amalie, VI 00801 Buffalo, NY 14225

Date: 5 July 1980 Telephone: (809)774-3575 & (716)632-4491

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Form Re-submitted By:

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Name/Title: Dr. John B. Murphy/Cultural Resources Manager

Organization: Naval Facilities Engineering Command Date: 23 January 1992

Street & Number: 200 Stovall Street Telephone: (703) 325-7353

City or Town: Alexandria State: VA ZIP: 22332-2300

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92001238 Date Listed: 9-10-92

Property Name	County	State
<u>Ventana Archeological District</u>	Vieques	PR

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.

Janet E. Swinson
Signature of the Keeper

9-10-92
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

The county location is incorrect and the period of significance is not unclear. This nomination is amended as follows: The county is Vieques. The Period of Significance begins with the Saladoid Culture and extends into the Chicoid Culture. For data base purposes the Period of Significance is A.D. 600 - 1500.

Mr. J. Bernard Murphy, the Navy FPO, was contacted regarding these amendments.

DISTRIBUTION:

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