

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Yabucoa Fire Station

other names/site number Parque de Bombas de Yabucoa

## 2. Location

street & number 22 Luis Muñoz Rivera Street  not for publication

city or town Yabucoa  vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county Yabucoa code 151 zip code 00767

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Title

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register                       determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register                       removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Fire Station  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ civic  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Art Deco

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Concrete/Masonry Units  
roof: Concrete  
other: Wood, Metal

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Puerto Rico’s Fire Corps completed Yabucoa’s now “Old” Fire Station in 1944 in accordance with prototypical plan Type B, one of three basic models endorsed for such purpose at that time. The station sits on a rectangular, 423.25 square meters lot, at 22 *Luis Muñoz Rivera* Street, in the vicinity of Yabucoa’s main square. The one-story, 1,070 square feet, reinforced concrete property currently houses Post #64 of the American Legion (named *Arturo Malavé*). Several design elements recall Art Deco traits in subdued expression, prevailing the sober character of many reinforced concrete buildings built for pragmatic purposes during World War II. A one story high addition in the same construction material was incorporated west of the original after 2006, providing 970 additional square feet. Today the property is occupied by the *American Legion, Arturo Malavé Post #64*, and in spite of some deterioration, it retains its stern architectural character. The station constitutes an icon of a period characterized by community engagement for the protection of people and property, and continues to be valued as such, even though its use has subsequently changed and some contemporary features seem non-appealing.

**Narrative Description**

The town of Yabucoa is located amidst the low-lying plains of the southeastern coastal region of Puerto Rico. The municipalities of San Lorenzo, Las Piedras and Humacao border the settlement on the north; San Lorenzo and Patillas to the west. Maunabo lies in adjacency on the South and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Yabucoa’s Old Fire Station occupies a rectangular lot within the northernmost region of town, at the outskirts of *Barrio Pueblo*, its most urban area. Its location at 22 Muñoz Rivera Street attests to the property’s original strategic placement. Said street is a main access road into town, threading it from east to west, gently sloping from the community’s main open plaza and its Catholic church, only a few blocks away (250 mts), as well as other buildings of institutional characters.

Constructed in a lot originally embracing 0.10 acres (423.25 m<sup>2</sup>), the building occupies a footprint of 2,050 ft<sup>2</sup> (190 mts<sup>2</sup>). South of the firehouse, the topography drops over 35 meters by sloping into an undeveloped, green open plain. To the southwest and adjacent to the resource lies a building owned by *The Puerto Rico Telephone Company*. To the east, various residential buildings line up alongside Muñoz Rivera Street. Some now house small businesses and offices. Additional

residential and small-sized business buildings sit north of the property, across the street, including a bar named *El Mavilandia* and an up for-sale building and parking lot. The applicable land zoning classification for the site nowadays pertains to C-I (*Distrito Agrícola Mecanizable*) as defined by the Puerto Rico Planning Board.<sup>1</sup> The fire station sits in an area unlikely to be affected by flooding<sup>2</sup>.

Yabucoa's firehouse was built from 1943 to 1944, and follows one of the design prototypes officially endorsed by *Puerto Rico's Fire Corps* after 1942, interested as it was in providing similar facilities at diverse Island locations for the protection of the population. **(Fig. 1)** Different models were available, but so-called *Prototype B* was chosen for Yabucoa. In adherence to its original construction documents, the property consists of a single story, asymmetrical model built in reinforced concrete.<sup>3</sup> This original fire station for Yabucoa is currently home for the *American Legion, Arturo Malavé Post #64*.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, the former fire station occupies a footprint 33'-0" wide and 66'-8" long, and it is set back 10'-0" from the street by an uneven, highly undulating sidewalk. The change in dimensions (those of the original prototype were 34'-6" x 22'-0") includes two additions made later to the original building. In the 1970s, another garage was adhered to the west, adding 11'-0" to its original width<sup>5</sup>. **(Fig. 2)** Another expansion late in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century provided congregational space to the back. The added volumes, clearly plug-in solutions, now provide three distinct spaces for assembly. The "lean-to" addition is built in reinforced concrete, echoing the original property dating from 1944 by using rigid joints, a beam and post system, and cement masonry blocks. Floor and roof slabs are also in concrete, of flat surface. Walls are stuccoed in cement and painted over.

The main (northwest) façade faces Muñoz Rivera Street. The original fire truck garage (on the west end) and the original entrance door (to the east) comprise the two key features on the original façade. **(Fig.3)** Towards the east, the original, wrap around, L-shaped eave (still in place) frames over the truck entrance that, as expected, faces towards the street, always needed to be ready for dispatch. This original garage opening has been sealed with a cement wainscot finished with a popcorn stucco texture and a protruding horizontal band above it. Two metal jalousie-type windows sit on the wainscot, at center. Cement block at each side closes off the original opening originally fit for the width of the fire truck. A similar treatment was applied to the original, pedestrian entrance, now sealed. One single, metal jalousie type window stands in its place.

Six small, square-shaped, recessed openings in this main elevation provided light for its interior spaces through glass panes, now painted over. The horizontal eaves (sometimes extending down vertically) – together with roof parapets of rounded edges – recall vaguely the Art Deco style. A round escutcheon above the six openings, at center, emphasizes the institutional character of the

<sup>1</sup> Puerto Rico Planning Board, *Geolocalizador*. Interactive Map of the Land Registry, <http://gis.jp.pr.gov/GeoLocalizador/Internet/> for plot number - 376-030-010-15.

<sup>2</sup> The firehouse location is categorized as ZONE X Floodable. *Federal Emergency Management Agency Panel 1795J*-Map number 72000C1795J, revised November 18, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230. *PD-200 Form, War Production Board – Application for authority to be begin construction*, Serial Number: P-034-R, Project Rating: AA-3, Reference Order: P-19-H.

<sup>4</sup> The *American Legion* is a social and mutual-aid veterans' organization for members of the United States armed forces. The organization was founded in 1919 by veterans returning from Europe after World War I. It was subsequently chartered as an official American patriotic society under Title 36 of the United States Code. It sponsors commemorative events and volunteer veteran support activities.

<sup>5</sup> Retired chief and firefighter of the Yabucoa station, Sergeant Johnny Ortiz, can't specify the precise year construction took place, but remembers it was made while he was chief during the 1970's. Interview, November 2, 2012.

property. **(Fig. 4)** The official fire service emblem appears as an architectural appliqué used in standard fashion in other fire stations dating from the same period. This circular, shield includes the fireman's distinguishing hat (with a longer brim at the rear), a single or straight ladder (among the basic tools of the profession) and two horns (sirens) all in bas-relief and painted in contrasting colors. Two iron flagpoles clamped to the façade at each side highlight the escutcheon's presence. The façade also incorporates a third flagpole placed at the northeastern end, above the concrete overhang.

The one-story garage incorporated to the original building volume in the 1970's lies parallel to its northwest façade. It added about 13'-6" to the main façade and rose 12" higher than the parapet of the original fire station. At a later date, two double swing gates in iron tubing were installed for security reasons. Above the fire vehicle opening, a concrete eave connects to the original eave over what was the main entrance and wraps around the corner of the building. The additional garage stretches all along the southwest elevation. Between its concrete beams and columns, ornamental cement-block walls provide closure. Stacked over an eighteen-inch (18") low parapet, the fourteen-inch (14") square decorative blocks are laid out in a 6 by 7 grid. **(Fig. 5)** The floor in this area is in exposed concrete and the roof is a flat slab over the concrete beams.

The interior of the added truck garage now incorporates a side entrance to the main building and two additional doors corresponding to separate restrooms for women and men. Accessible from the covered garage, the men's restroom is tiled with 12" x 8" wall ceramic and 12" vinyl floors. The women's restroom is an elongated space with two different types of vinyl flooring and wood paneling veneer around walls and columns. A similar wall treatment and floor finish can be found throughout the interior spaces of the former fire station, also including acoustic ceiling tiles, vinyl wall bases, fluorescent lighting and several wall mounted fans. Wooden wall partitions segregate office spaces and storage areas. **(Fig. 6)** The space used as fire truck's garage in the original construction project is now used for holding communal meetings; a door has been added to provide an additional means of egress. **(Fig. 7)** A third, smaller, restroom is accessible through the meeting room. It is finished with two-inch (2") mosaic tiles on the floor and six-inch (6") ceramic tiles on some of the walls. Wooden doors are used in the interior, while aluminum doors are used for the exterior. The locations of the original windows have been changed to make way for the new entrance and correspond with the interior spaces used as offices. A small window has also been added over the men's restroom door.

Towards the back of the lot, a second addition was made after 2006 to provide for a larger enclosed meeting area. Occupying slightly more than 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, the room provides enough space for all types of protocol activities, social and commemorative events of the American Legion. **(Fig. 8)** The area also includes a small kitchenette attached to the back of the former fire station. **(Fig. 9)** The grid-like steel structure of this volume steps up a few inches higher than the older building and its corrugated metal deck roof drops towards the back of the lot in a shed like manner. Windows provided in this latter addition line up with those from the main building. On the northeast façade, almost at center, and on each side facade of the expansion, a single opening incorporates two aluminum jalousie-type windows and an aluminum door. The rear elevation has two sets of windows flanking an additional exit door. The original concrete eave from the fire station back facade runs its full extension and is visible from the interior of the expansion. Indoor spaces include exposed fluorescent lighting and several wall-mounted fans. One exposed, wall-mounted, double sink with wooden cabinetry has been installed in the back. Most pipes are PVC and exposed. Twelve-inch (12") ceramic floor tiles with a four-inch (4") high wall base cover floors.

All around the former fire station, windows are the aluminum, operable jalousie type. Walls are finished in rough concrete on the outside, but smooth cement on the inside. Exposed electrical equipment and conduits, telephone lines (dead or in use), as well as a variety of plumbing PVC pipes and a single gas tank appear haphazardly in the station's facades. Cement stucco – some original, but mostly pertaining to repairs - is coming off at some walls and ceilings. Paint is peeling off at some locations, due to the weight of one coat being applied over another throughout the years without proper use of any primer or without the recommended removal of any previously applied material. All of these improvised interventions have been "inflicted" primarily in components added later, not in the original structure, which retains all of the identitarian elements of Prototype B. Said prototype was not reproduced extensively on the Island and, moreover, very few of these remain standing, all of which underlines the resource's importance.

### *The Impact of Time*

Those modifications to which Yabucoa's fire station has been subjected throughout the years are mostly related to interior reorganization and expansion. To overcome the problem of a new, higher fire truck, a second garage was added and the entrance opening for the original vehicle was sealed. The pedestrian entrance door, out of wood and a glass transom, was then removed and sealed. In both cases, metal jalousie-type windows were incorporated to the main façade. Unadorned iron grills were later added to the truck garage. The name of the building – in letters projected from the concrete wall - appeared originally over the garage lintel and read "PARQUE DE BOMBAS". It was eventually removed, as were the letters "F-S" (*Fire Service*) over the original pedestrian entrance on the main façade. The southwest façade (now facing unto the second garage) has endured a number of changes, including the provision of a new entrance and access to men's and women's' restrooms. Windows along on this wall were also moved to fit new programmatic changes. Inside, vinyl tile on the floor, although not original, is in poor condition, as well as most ceramic wall and floor tiles in restrooms.

Acoustic ceiling tiles are placed a few inches below the roof concrete slab; they have been placed to cover the concrete. Many tiles are damaged by water leakage. In some places where these tiles have fallen down, the detrimental conditions of the concrete roof are visible, including chipped areas and reinforcing steel bars exposed due to spalling. Interior spaces have been altered haphazardly to accommodate office and storage space using wood frame partitions. Original wooden windows – with louvers, shutters and a transom with glass panes - have been substituted by metal jalousies, easily removable. All windows and ventilation transoms originally in wood have been changed more than once, the last time resorting to the metal, louvered ones. Proportions of most original openings are retrievable, even if some openings have been walled up to fit the smaller dimensions of new fenestration. Given the original, austere treatment of façade surfaces, minor damage to these can be subverted. Illumination of the fluorescent type now substitutes incandescent lighting originally provided. Electrical and plumbing systems have been replaced and remade. Surface mounted cable and piping installations prevail. Damage as such, is mainly the product of lack of maintenance and disregard of the property's unassuming character in spite of its significance. On the outside, faulty paint jobs are evident, as is the presence of plant material, corrosion, and grunge.

All in all, alterations and additions have not contributed to the loss of character in Yabucoa's old firehouse. The property still retains its urban presence within town, its original volumetric configuration, distinguishable Art Deco surface and profile articulations, as well as key compositional

elements (escutcheon, flagpole, and eaves) that succeed at granting the fire station an unequivocal historical and nostalgic character in town.

**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)

- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1943-1962

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1943,1944

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Department Public Works of Puerto Rico

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance of the property starts when the building was erected in 1944, and closes at the 50-year period cutoff date (1962).

**Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Yabucoa's 1944 fire station claims local significance under Criterion A (Social History). Its erection, operation, and operators are credited for their active role in preventing the spread of fire emergencies in town. More than one generation avidly acknowledges the pivotal role played by the station along the settlement's development in the 20th Century. The property embodies key historic conjunctures, among these: the governorship of Rexford G. Tugwell in Puerto Rico; the dawn of the Popular Democratic Party; and, predominantly, the impact preparations for World War II had on the Island. It exemplifies the idiosyncratic distinctiveness of a prototypical building type associated to the Island's 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural heritage. As such, Yabucoa's historic firehouse recalls the town's initial firefighting efforts to protect people and property in times of imminent military threat. The American Legion, a civic entity, took possession after the fire station closed in the late 1990's, when the Corps moved to more modern and comfortable facilities at a different location in town.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The construction of the firehouse at Yabucoa is tied to the Government of Puerto Rico's ambitious fire station building plan originally conceived in mid-20th century in response to the imminent threat World War II represented at that time. Originally implemented as part of war "readiness" efforts, the plan continued to carried out in the last years of the conflict and subsequently into the 1950's. Yabucoa's involvement with the plan echoes what other comparable municipalities experienced: each town provided the land; the State facilitated money and the construction plans. Collaboration proved crucial to produce a property that succeeded at sheltering its original use program for over half a century. In consequence, Yabucoa's fire station claims architectural integrity, in spite of its spare design and modest features. The resource remains in its original location along one of the town's most important and visible arteries. Changes -unfortunate but inconsequential – have yet to challenge its scale, proportions, fenestration patterns, and ornamental details that, even if of restrained nature, remain true to the original intentions of the designer and the builders.

The station's context has been partially changed, but without great consequence. Use of concrete as prime construction material in this property attests to the partiality exhibited at that time for a sturdy material, reliable in case of hurricanes or fires. Currently (and probably because concrete was used in its erection) the fire station at Yabucoa is one of the best preserved of its type in Puerto Rico. The workmanship and the finishes are representative of the use of cement as structural and surface-treatment material at the time the fire station was built. The building's positioning within the urban milieu, its architectural features, and tectonics contribute to communicate the aesthetic and

historic “fiber” of the specific epoch in which the firehouse was erected. By association, the resource ignites reminiscence of crucial fires in town that still resonate amongst many as personal time markers: that of a large gasoline truck that caught fire amidst town (1973); and when Yabucoa’s Commercial Center burnt down (1979). On all of these occasions, participation from firefighters of Yabucoa proved decisive. To this day, Yabucoa’s firehouse epitomizes permanent societal values regarding public service, as made real through decades of firefighting commitment.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Built between 1943 and 1944, Yabucoa’s Fire Station construction was budgeted at \$5,000.00, but ended up costing \$4,064.84, almost \$1,000.00 less than estimated. Documents in the Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR) include this information along files and documents pertaining to the station’s erection.<sup>6</sup> Engineer Sergio Cuevas Bustamante was Commissioner of the Department of the Interior and Engineer Miguel J. Nolla was the builder to whom construction of the fire station was entrusted. Ernesto Carrasquillo Hernández was Mayor of Villalba at that time. Raúl Gándara was the Fire Chief of *Puerto Rico’s Fire Corps*.

On May 24, 1943, representatives of the *War Production Board* (WPB) in Puerto Rico, the entity granted authority to approve or refute construction projects during the military conflict, received the “*Application for Authority to begin Construction*” of a fire station at Yabucoa.<sup>7</sup> The project was slated to start in July 10, 1943; completion projected to January 10, 1944. As described in the application, firefighting facilities were much needed for civilian defense in rather remote towns, due to the relatively small size of the Island and the scattered, scarce location of garrisons and airfields. Protection against fires was argued in terms of the “*obvious danger in any war outpost as is Puerto Rico*”. A brief description of the station to be erected established it would be one-story, measure 22’-0” x 31’-0”, and be built in reinforced concrete. A column and beam frame structure would be used in combination with cement block curtain walls and reinforced concrete floor and roof.<sup>8</sup>

In June 29, 1943, WPB authorized construction to proceed.<sup>9</sup> Materials were scarce and builders had to secure materials like wood and cement with the approval of the War Production Board. For Yabucoa’s fire station it was argued that... “*Conservation of critical materials has been attempted by adopting a very simple design with cement block curtain walls*”.<sup>10</sup> However, the project was bid in June 25, 1943, apparently before authorization was granted officially by the WPB.<sup>11</sup> The four day difference might be related to the haste with which defense-related projects were carried out at the time. The builder selected, Miguel J. Nolla, was awarded a contract dated June 30, 1943 to

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<sup>6</sup> Two key sources are: AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 808; Leg 222; and AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230.

<sup>7</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230. *PD-200 Form (Rev. 2-1-43), War Production Board – Application for authority to be begin construction*, Serial Number: P-034-R, Project Rating: AA-3, Reference Order: P-19-H. The applicant is Sergio Cuevas, Commissioner of the Interior.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>9</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230. Letter to Sergio Cuevas, Commissioner of the Interior, from Harold Lockheimer, District Manager of the *War Production Board* in Washington, D.C.

<sup>10</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 808; Leg 222. List dated May 14, 1944, “*Status de los Edificios para Parques de Bombas*” in official stationary from Puerto Rico’s Department of the Interior. Item 4C-8 of the application.

<sup>11</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230. The bid date is made reference to in a letter from Frank Rullán to Miguel Blanco, of Juncos.

build – not just one - but five (5) Type A fire stations and two (2) Type B around the Island.<sup>12</sup> Shortly after, Yabucoa's Mayor Ernesto Carrasquillo, requested information regarding the size of the plot needed as project site, apparently reconsidering the original choice.<sup>13</sup> On July 1st, Frank Rullán, Subcommissioner of the Department of the Interior, replied it had to be 16 meters long by 20 meters deep.<sup>14</sup> By mid-August, construction had not yet started, given that some preliminary site work to be carried out by the municipality had not been finished.<sup>15</sup>

Early in September, Carrasquillo complained to the Commissioner of the Department of the Interior that the contractor was building the fire station too close to Highway #3, the town's (and the eastern region's) most important artery. The Mayor's objection was two-fold: lining up the firehouse against the road would make difficult to maneuver the fire truck and related equipment in case of an emergency and, in addition, it would have a negative effect on the appearance of the public realm.<sup>16</sup> It is not clear what was the Mayor's concern in this respect, but he not only requested the Commissioner his immediate intervention, but sent a similar communication to Dr. Carlos E. Muñoz MacCormick, General Executive Director of the Civil Defense.<sup>17</sup> The bottom of the original telegram to Sergio Cuevas was added a handwritten phrase in red: "*se trató por teléfono*" (the subject was addressed by phone).<sup>18</sup>

On September 29, 1943, Rullán granted a notice to proceed to Engineer Miguel J. Nolla, three months after having been selected as project contractor.<sup>19</sup> By December 2, 1943, Miguel Ángel García Méndez, former district engineer of Humacao, had been designated project inspector, the first of a few to undertake this task at Yabucoa.<sup>20</sup> On December 15, having visited the fire station the day before, Inspector García Méndez rendered his report. Although some deficiencies were observed, he recommended provisional acceptance of the firehouse.<sup>21</sup> In just two weeks, Fire Chief Raul Gándara

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter dated September 8 1943, to Miguel J. Nolla, contractor, from Carlos A. Molina, Director, Division of Public Buildings and Municipal Projects.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Telegram dated July 2, 1943, from Yabucoa's Mayor Ernesto Carrasquillo to Carlos A. Molina.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Frank Rullán, Subcommissioner of the Department of the Interior to the Mayor of Yabucoa, dated July 1, 1943.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Ernesto Carrasquillo, Mayor, to Frank Rullán, dated August 17, 1943.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Telegram from Ernesto Carrasquillo Mayor, to Sergio Cuevas, Commssioner of the Interior, dated September 27, 1943. Carrasquillo uses the words: "LA CONSTRUCCION HECHA ESTA FORMA DESTRUYE ORNATO PUBLICO" ("The construction has been made in such a way that it destroys the overall appearance of town"). The term "*ornato*", it must be added, lacks an exact word in English translation. In Spanish, the concept relates simultaneously to the beauty and upkeep of a city or settlement, embodying both esthetic and practical concerns regarding urban and civic responsibilities. For a discussion on the meaning, background and use of the word, see Jorge Rigau, **Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the Caribbean** (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992) 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, On September 27, 1943 the Mayor of Yabucoa sends a similar telegram to Dr. Muñoz MacCormick.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Telegram from Ernesto Carrasquillo, Mayor, to Sergio Cuevas, dated September 27, 1943.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Frank Rullán, Subcommissioner of the Department of the Interior to Miguel J. Nolla, dated September 29, 1943. As part of his contract, Nolla also built fire stations at Caguas, Cayey, Gurabo, Humacao, Juncos, and San Lorenzo. See AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 808; Leg 222; List dated May 14, 1944, "*Status de los Edificios para Parques de Bombas*" in stationary from Puerto Rico's Department of the Interior.

<sup>20</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230; "*Memorandum al Honorable Comisionado*" p/c del Superintendente de Obras Públicas", dated December 2, 1943, signed by Carlos A. Molina and approved by Sergio Cuevas. García Méndez was also hired as inspector for the fire stations at Humacao and Juncos. See AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 808; Leg 222; List dated May 14, 1944, "*Status de los Edificios para Parques de Bombas*".

<sup>21</sup> AGPR: Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230; "*Memorandum al Hon. Comisionado del Interior p/c del Sr. Superintendente de Obras Públicas*", signed by M. García Méndez, and dated December 15, 1943.

had designated personnel to operate the fire house effective January 1st, 1944<sup>22</sup>. By late April 1944, what was called the project's "*conservation period*" had expired. It was customary to establish a 5 to 6 month period after a project's substantial completion during which the contractor would address small issues pending or any problems surfacing along that time. Final acceptance of the project from the builder would take place after a final inspection. Architect Luis González Córdova was designated to carry out this review. After performing his duty, the architect advised against a formal acceptance, stating that most items from the punch list prepared before by García Méndez had yet to be addressed.<sup>23</sup> It would not be until July 11, 1944, when González Córdova advised the Department to accept the fire station on a definitive basis.<sup>24</sup>

Archival records reveal that four (4) years later, some repairs were needed. Manuel Martorell, civil engineer and Director of the Division of Public Works and Municipal Projects of the Department of the Interior, requested Gabriel Benítez Rexach, Public Buildings Supervisor, to submit a budget to address them.<sup>25</sup> At this point, available documents fall short in attesting to the resource's subsequent transformation. Persons interviewed recall the garage for the taller fire truck was built in the 1970's and the station abandoned in the 1990's. The *American Legion* came into the premises afterwards, incorporating an additional meeting space after 2006.<sup>26</sup> It seems appropriate that facilities built for readiness in World War II now "shelter" war veterans from the Yabucoa community. Furthermore, local history grants nostalgic value to the fire station as the "home base" for three decades of "*Cachiro, el bombero*". Teófilo Quiñones (nicknamed *Cachiro*) worked in the Yabucoa firehouse from 1959 to 1991 and distinguished himself for dedication and valor, as well as good temper. Those who knew him acknowledge that his participation in suppressing large fires in town was crucial. As a legendary, small town character, *Cachiro* adds humble luster to the Yabucoa Fire Station when framed against the larger, more significant events in History that originally fueled its construction.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

### Primary Sources

Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR)

Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 808; Leg 222.

Fondo: Obras Públicas; Serie: Edificios Públicos; Caja: 813, Leg 230.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Map, Panel 1795J- Map number 72000C1795J (Revised November 18, 2009).

Puerto Rico Planning Board, *Geolocalizador*: Interactive Map of the Land Registry, <http://gis.jp.pr.gov/GeoLocalizador/Internet/> for plot number - 376-030-010.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, As per a letter from Carlos A. Molina, Director, Division of Public Buildings and Municipal Projects to Juan Freites, Project Manager, dated December 29, 1943.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter dated April 28, 1944, from Pedro Méndez, Architect of the Division of Public Works and Municipal Projects, underlining the fact that the conservation period for Yabucoa's fire station had expired.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, "*Memorandum al Honorable Comisionado p/c del Director de la División de Edificios Públicos y Obras Municipales y del Superintendente de Obras Públicas*", dated July 11, 1944 and signed by Luis González Córdova.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter dated November 4, 1948 from Manuel Martorell to Gabriel Benítez Rexach.

<sup>26</sup> Johnny Ortiz, interview, November 2, 2012.

**Secondary Sources**

Rigau, Jorge. *Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-century Architecture in the Caribbean* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).

**Figures**

Guillermo Marrero, AIT, February 9, 2012

**Interviews**

Johnny Ortiz, retired fireman, November 2, 2012

**Internet**

<http://gis.jp.pr.gov/GeoLocalizador/Internet/> for plot number - 376-030-010-15.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality Yabucoa

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre (.13)  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>20</u>	<u>195376</u>	<u>1998307</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying base map, and are shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map. See continuation sheet, section 10.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the Yabucoa Fire Station. .

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Arq. Jorge Rigau, FAIA  
organization Jorge Rigau Arquitectos date November 12, 2012  
street & number #67 calle Los baños, 1er piso telephone (787) 982-0002  
city or town San Juan state Puerto Rico Zip Code 00911  
e-mail \_rigau@jorgerigau.com

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
  - **Continuation Sheets**
  - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)
- 

### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

1. **Yabucoa Fire Station**
2. **Yabucoa, Puerto Rico**
3. **Eduardo Miranda**
4. **Noviembre 5, 2012**
5. **Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico**
6. **Ground-level Floor Plan. Currently, the former fire station occupies a footprint 33'-0" wide and 66'-8" long, and it is set back 10'-0" from the street. The change in dimensions includes two additions made to the original building. The first, an additional garage was adhered to the west adding 11'-0" to its original width in the 1970's. An expansion late in the first decade of the 21st Century added congregational space to the back part of Legion.**
7. **#1**

1. **Yabucoa Fire Station**
2. **Yabucoa, Puerto Rico**
3. **Guillermo Marrero**
4. **September 10, 2011**
5. **Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico**

6. Northwest elevations, looking southeast, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The piece of land occupied by the fire station is located on #22 Muñoz Rivera Street. The Municipality of Yabucoa owns the former firehouse, but in the late 1990's it was granted custody of it to the American Legion *Department of Puerto Rico – Arturo Malave Post 64* , which holds meetings and events on the premises.

7. #2

1. Yabucoa Fire Station

2. Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

3. Unknown

4. Unknown

5. Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico

6. Northwest elevations, looking southeast, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. Photograph of the firestation when it still had the name "*Parque de Bombas*" featured in bas-relief concrete at the parapet over the truck opening.

7. #3

1. Yabucoa Fire Station

2. Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

3. Guillermo Marrero

4. June 10, 2012

5. Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico

6. Interior east elevation, looking east, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The southwest elevation is composed by a three bay ornamental cement blocks walls that encloses the 1970's expansion. Built over an eighteen inch (18") low parapet, the fourteen inch (14") squared decorative blocks are laid out in a six high by a seven wide grid.

7. #4

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 13000015

Date Listed: 2/13/2013

Property Name: Yabucoa Fire Station (Fire Stations in Puerto Rico MPS)

County: Yabucoa Municipality

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

2/13/2013  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

#### Section 8: Area of Significance

The nomination is hereby amended to change the Area of Significance from Social History to **Politics/Government**.

The creation of the fire response system as outlined in the MPS cover was a political decision. The construction of the stations, both in their design and in their locations, was an exercise of political control by the government. The new fire stations were a local manifestation of governmental control and paternity throughout Puerto Rico.

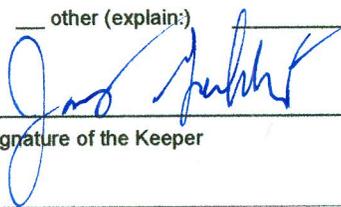
\_\_\_\_\_  
The Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain:)



Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

		Contributing	Noncontributing	
		1	0	buildings
		0	0	district
		0	0	site
		0	0	structure
		0	0	object
		1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Fire Station  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL/ civic  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Yabucoa Fire Station

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

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Additional Documentation Photographs



FIG. 1: Guanica Fire Station in Guanica, Puerto Rico. Similar to the Yabucoa Fire Station. *Prototype B* was the one chosen for Yabucoa; the original, basic plans consisted of a single story, asymmetrical model with a flat roof, yet open space for one truck, measuring 34'-6" x 22'-0". An entrance door to its right completed the main façade. Six small, square-shaped openings in this main elevation provided light for its interior spaces through glass panes or glass block, as well as an articulation of the otherwise plain concrete wall. Horizontal eaves (sometimes curving down) and roof parapets with rounded edges reverberate traces of the Art Deco style. Some of these structures include a flagpole in iron piping. The name "*Parque de Bombas*" is often featured in bas-relief concrete at the parapet over the truck opening. Source: Gobierno de Puerto Rico Servicio Insular de Bomberos de Puerto Rico, Informe Annual 1945-1946. Publicacion del Servicio Insular de Bomberos.

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Yabucoa Fire Station

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Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

Section number 7 Page 2

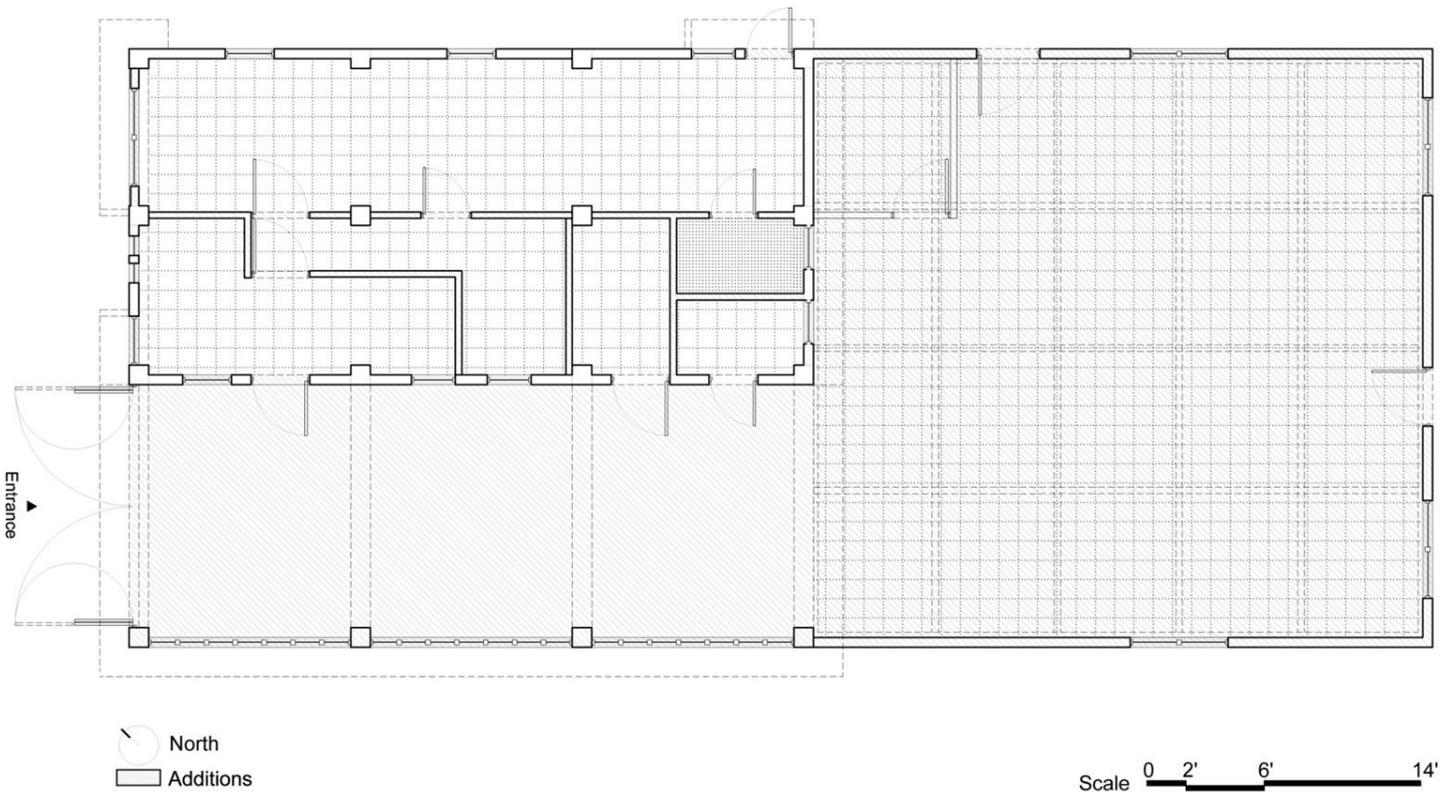


FIG. 2: Yabucoa Fire Station Ground-level floorplan, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. Currently, the former fire station occupies a footprint 33'-0" wide and 66'-8" long, and it is set back 10'-0" from the street. The change in dimensions includes two additions made to the original building. The first, an additional garage was adhered to the west adding 11'-0" to its original width in the 1970's. An expansion late in the first decade of the 21st Century added congregational space to the back part of Legion. Drawing: Eduardo Miranda, Noviembre 5, 2012.

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Yabucoa Fire Station

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

Section number 7 Page 3



**FIG. 3:** Yabucoa Fire Station northwest elevations, looking southeast, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The piece of land occupied by the fire station is located on #22 Muñoz Rivera Street. The Municipality of Yabucoa owns the former firehouse, but in the late 1990's it was granted custody of it to the American Legion *Department of Puerto Rico – Arturo Malave Post 64* , which holds meetings and events on the premises. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, September 10, 2011.

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Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

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**FIG. 4: Yabucoa Fire Station detail view, looking northwest, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. Six small, square-shaped openings divided into two columns, used to provide light for its interior spaces through glass panes. six small, square-shaped openings divided into two columns, used to provide light for its interior spaces through glass panes. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.**

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Yabucoa Fire Station

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Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

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**FIG. 5: Yabucoa Fire Station interior east elevation, looking east, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The southwest elevation is composed by a three bay ornamental cement blocks walls that encloses the 1970's expansion. Built over an eighteen inch (18") low parapet, the fourteen inch (14") squared decorative blocks are laid out in a six high by a seven wide grid. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.**

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FIG. 6: Yabucoa Fire Station south elevations, looking north, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The original fire truck garage now incorporates small office spaces covered with wood paneling veneer around the walls and columns including acoustic ceiling tiles, vinyl wall base, fluorescent lighting and several wall mounted fans. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.

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Yabucoa Fire Station

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Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

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**FIG. 7: Yabucoa Fire Station south elevations, looking north, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The original fire truck garage is utilized for meetings, portions of the walls are painted and not covered; a door has been added to provide an additional means of egress from the room. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.**

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Yabucoa Fire Station

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

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Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

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**FIG. 8:** Yabucoa Fire Station Interior view looking southeast, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. Towards the back of the lot, a second addition was made after 2006 to provide for a larger enclosed meeting area. Surpassing 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, the room provides enough space for all types of protocolary activities, social and commemorative events. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.

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Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

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Fire Stations in Puerto Rico, 1942-1952

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FIG. 9: Yabucoa Fire Station east elevations, looking west, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. The area also includes a small kitchenette behind paneled divider and attached to the back of the former fire station. Photo: Guillermo Marrero, June 10, 2012.

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Yabucoa Fire Station

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Fire Stations in Puerto Rico 1942-1952

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10. Geographical Data

PARQUE BOMBAS DE YABUCOA,  
YABUCOA, PUERTO RICO

Location: Muñoz Rivera Street #22 Yabucoa, Puerto Rico 00767  
UTM Reference: 20, 195376, 1998307  
Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.10 acre)



JORGE RIGAU  
ARQUITECTOS



- ▣ Contributing resource
- Parcel boundary

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Yabucoa, Puerto Rico

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The limits of the plot were obtained from the official boundaries map provided by the Puerto Rico Planning Board. The boundaries of the nominated resource are identified by an outline. Image taken from Google Earth.

PARQUE BOMBAS DE YABUCOA,  
YABUCOA, PUERTO RICO

Location: Muñoz Rivera Street #22 Yabucoa, Puerto Rico 00767  
UTM Reference: 20, 195376, 1998307  
Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.10 acre)



JORGE RIGAU  
ARQUITECTOS

