

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received APR 13 1987

date entered MAY 14 1987

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

1. Name

historic 19th Century Civil Architecture in Ponce (Thematic Nomination)

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number See individual nominations N/A not for publication

city, town Ponce vicinity of N/A

state Puerto Rico code 072 county Ponce code 0760

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

street & number La Fortaleza

city, town San Juan vicinity of N/A state Puerto Rico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ponce Registry of Deeds

street & number Centro Gubernamental de Ponce

city, town Ponce state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architecutral Survey of Ponce has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July, 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Puerto Rcio State Historic Preservation Office

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

XIX th C. Civil Architecture in Puerto Rico

Deposite the diversity of function, the civil buildings constructed in XIX century Puerto Rcio incorporate characteristics design elements and proportions which allow their treatments as a whole, not only conceptually, but architecturally as well. As part of an even greater context, these structures across the island exploit the "Neoclásico Isabelino" vocabulary proliferating throughout Spain and her exterior provinces during the reign of Queen Isabel II.

Because of Puerto Rico's history as a military outpost, this architectural style is adapted to its context by such military characteristics as massive volumes and extraordinarily thick walls (1-2 feet), which together with neoclassical articulation, result in austere, powerful faced expressions. Walls were commonly constructed of either masonry, a lime and rubble mixture, or a combination of brick and rubble, always plastered with a lime and sand stucco. Generally, the buildings follow "u", "o", or "l" shaped plans which form large quadrangle masses, one to two storeys, with approximately 16 feet per storey height. Contributing to the military appearance of some of these buildings, repetitive rows of generously-spaced rectangular or arched windows puncture the exterior wall masses, creating a strict rhythm of solid and void. Classical examples of this type in Ponce are the "Cuartel de Ballayá", and the "Asilo de Beneficiencia".

In other cases, the military tendencies in desing are portrayed in architectural elements. The "Casa Alcaldia", for example, incorporated at the lower level and angled water-table with the appearance of a buttressed fortification wall. Some examples also utilize base-story rustication, contributing to the perception of authority, integrity to their function and their more formal urban context.

Facade articulation is simple, usually expressed in the use of the Tuscan or the Roman Doric orders, althought the Ionic and Corinthian were also used less frequently. Generally, the use of pilasters outweighs columns throughout civil structures in Puerto Rico, their placement usually limited to the main portal, flanking the entrance bay in a simple, unornamented mode.

* THIS IS A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THIS TYPE OF ARCHITECTURE IN PUERTO RICO AND PART OF THE CONTEXT FOR THE THEME.

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Originally, windows were wall articulated as inward-opening casement shutters with operable louvers. Smaller shutters within the windows concealed the louvers for additional security and better elimination of light. Transoms and glass panels were not commonly used. Many windows, in fact, consisted of full-height solid doors with balaustered railings for protection. Window surrounds were usually simple and planar, often lacking ornament or moldings whatsoever, as in the "Asilo de Ciegos". In other buildings, a simple keystone or architrave caps the window composition. In applicable cases, a planar string course divides the upper storey from the base; and in all cases, a simple, running cornice and parapet crowns the structure.

Principal entrances are commonly expressed with more detail, in contrast to the austere and often monotonous rhythm and application of elements throughout. Projecting porticos and/or frontispieces, usually articulated with either pilaster order or arcades, pronounce the main central entrance and gives a third dimension to the otherwise planar facades.

Consistent with the austere, massive appearance of the elevations, original doors are usually solid, consisting of heavy, vertical hardwood timbers with smaller casement hatches within, and large, heavy hardware. Windows are often full-height, double-leaf wooden doors with operable louver panels, utilizing wooden or stone balausters within each bay. In some cases, openings begin at the normal, three-foot height, consisting nevertheless, of double-leaf wooden shutters as well. In buildings of two or more storeys, the ground floor windows tend to be of the latter type, whereas full-height windows occupy upper-storey bays. Because of the harsh climatic conditions of the tropics, wooden demat have been replaced various times, resulting in completely altered windows. In some cases, similar-to-original windows have been installed. In other cases, and in abandoned buildings, there has been a total loss of original window fabric.

Interior space distribution is centered around arched galleries opening into courtyards.

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Repeated at every floor in the buildings, these arcades provide the major means for ventilation, circulation and act as transitional elements between the patios and the interiors to which they provide access. Rooms are open, uninterrupted spaces with high ceilings, opening directly into the exterior galleries. Ceiling and floor constructions consist of flat, clay-tiles supported by closely-spaced floor joists and sleepers of ausubo, a local tropical hardwood. A series of heavy, square piers, simply articulated by the use of planar impost blocks or minimal tuscan capitals, support arcades of wide, roman arches along a periphery of the court.

Of design significance in these structures is the predominance of massive walls of stone and/ or brick, galleries and interior courtyards; elements representative of Spanish architectural tradition successfully used in America.

In particular these buildings are the product of the mid 19th century Spanish neoclassic interpretation commonly known as "neoclásico isabelino" (in honor of Isabel II Queen of Spain) adapted to the needs of a tropical settlement like in Puerto Rico.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	
	1840-1898				(See individual nominations)
Specific dates	(See individual nominations)	Builder/Architect	various		

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) **

As a result of the Latin American Wars of Independence, Spain lost all of its colonial possessions in continental America. In the Caribbean area only Puerto Rico and Cuba remained under Spanish rule. This loss caused the Spanish Crown to change its attitude towards the islands, which until then had only been considered as military garrisons for their strategic location in the defense of the Spanish development in the new world.

In Puerto Rico, as well as in Cuba, measures were taken by the Spanish Crown to populate these provinces with people akin to its political and economic policies, in order to assure the Crown's domination, over the remaining colonies. Individuals from the recently independent Latin American nations, from Corcega, Haiti, and other French possessions, as well as from the Spanish mainland, promptly established themselves in the Caribbean islands. Various incentives were created to foment migration of Spaniards to the underpopulated colonies, thus ameliorating the ill economic burden on the motherland while bringing settlers and needed laborers to expand the island's economies. By the "Real Cédula de Gracia" (Royal Decree) of 1815, lands in previously unpopulated areas were granted to the petitioner making the voyage. Sugar, coffee, and tobacco production quickly flourished throughout the island's countryside. New towns sprung and older settlements developed into cities, thanks to agricultural production in their immediate hinterlands. Coastal towns thrived on sugar, while the mountain region bloomed with coffee. The inhabitants of the southern region made Ponce their permanent home. By the mid 19th century the population of Puerto Rico had increased dramatically, bringing growth to previously underpopulated areas. Spain's colonial policies spurred government sponsored development and construction outside the capital of San Juan. Ponce was one of the areas that profited more from this boom. Its good harbour and fertile lands were an asset to the south's growing economy.

** THIS PART OF THE GENERAL HISTORIC CONTEXT FOR THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CIVIL ARCHITECTURE IN PUERTO RICO AS IT APPLIES TO THE CITY OF PONCE.

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By the fourth decade of the 19th century Ponce rapidly approached its status as the second largest urban area in the Island and in fact became the cultural and economic center of the south coast, rivaling with the Capital, San Juan, and older townships such as San Germán and Coamo. In 1848 the town was decreed a city.

The economic and population boom of the period made it necessary for the colonial government to develop buildings in which to house its seats of power. The "Casa Alcaldía, Cuartel Militar" and the "Hospital Militar" were some of the buildings constructed by the Spanish Royal Corps of Engineers for this purpose. Other structures built by the Spanish government for public service included hospitals, theaters, market places, roads, sewers and aqueducts.

In Puerto Rico in general, and in Ponce, these buildings are products of the late XVIII and XIX century European neo-classical style, adapted to Spain and her colonies through the application of local design attitudes and building materials. In Ponce the period of development spanned from the late 1840's to 1898, time at which Spain lost its last American Colonies to the USA.

The austere facades and massiveness of these structures are a living example of Spain's latest attempt to preserve her position of power in the Americas, and a reflection of the economic and historic development of Puerto Rico and its people.

The intervention of military in the construction of government and religious buildings dates back to the early 16th century. This was due mainly to Puerto Rico's status as a military colony. Their main task was to develop military fortifications to protect the colony of attacks by foreign powers.

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These properties are significant to the City's history since they represent Spanish government and colonial ideas, such as military power and the lack of democratic decisions. The architectural style clearly depicts a governmental policy of austere totalitarian views.

Another aspect of these structures' significance lies in that they reflect the relationship between Church and State. During the period in which those properties were built, there was no division of powers between Church and State. Many of the public facilities built by the Spanish Royal Corps of Engineers were administered by the Church, and many church properties were, in turn, built by the Government.

Built within the city limits of Ponce during the 19th century for public, military, religious or government use in the then popular "Neoclásico" style, structures of this style were important in the development of the city of Ponce and contributed to the formation of a local governmental policy.

These properties are grouped under architectural significance since their architecture is the characteristics detail which unites them. Their uses on the other hand were varied but all involved in one way or another government policies and planning.

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The Spanish Royal Military Corps of Engineers was formed by Royal Decree on April 17, 1711. This Corps was responsible during the 18th and 19th centuries for the construction not only of fortifications but also of public and religious buildings throught the island.

The Spanish Military Corps worked on the design and construction of many of the island's public works until 1898. POnce, the Pearl of the South was one of the main areas on the island where this type of construction took place.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name 19th Century Civil Architecture in Ponce TR
State Ponce County, PUERTO RICO

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover

Keeper

Amy Schlager 5/14/87

1. Albergue Caritativo
Tricoche

Keeper

A Schlager 5/14/87

Attest

2. Antigue Cuartel Militar
Espanol de Ponce

Keeper

Amy Schlager 5/14/87

Attest

3. Antiguo Hospital Militar
Espanol de Ponce

Keeper

A Schlager 5/14/87

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest