

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received FEB 19 1984
date entered MAR 31 1984

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

1. Name

historic Hermitage Church of Nuestra Señora de Valvanera of Coamo

and/or common same as above

2. Location

street & number Quintón St. Corner of Carrión Maduro St. not for publication

city, town Coamo vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county Coamo code 0290

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Catholic Church, Diocese of Ponce

street & number Box 205 Station No. 6

city, town Ponce vicinity of state Puerto Rico 00732

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Box 2392

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Churches of P.R. has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00901

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

The Hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Valvanera is located in the town of Coamo, on the corner of the Quintón St. and the Carrión Maduro St. It shares a plot of land with a catholic school (Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Valvanera) which was inaugurated in 1929. On two sides of the building, structures belonging to the school have been attached; these structures are non contributing to the architectural and historical value of the Hermitage. The original main entrance of the Hermitage church now faces the interior patio of the school building.

The Hermitage church or chapel, roughly measuring 68 feet by 34 feet, consists of one single nave, divided into two sections: the nave and the apse. It has a new reinforced concrete choir loft (which substitutes the old choir loft). The wooden balaustrade of this loft was preserved and is seen in situ today. All original wooden doors (main entrance and side door) were also preserved. Instead of the traditional clerestory of windows, three oculi are set high on each side wall. In the 19th century two windows were opened in the apse area. The sacristy is a small room located to the left of the apse. All original roofing elements in the sacristy (wooden beams, smaller wooden beams "alfajías", and brick roofing) are still preserved. The principal construction material of all side walls is brick masonry, in both the church and the sacristy.

The reinforced concrete roof slab was constructed in the early 20th century to substitute the original roof which was seriously damaged during a 19th century earthquake and a 20th century hurricane. In 1894 major repair work was done to the building. The facade's bell gable or espadaña, was added at this time.

The floors are covered with the original gray and white marble tiles, set at a diagonal axis with regards to the main axis of the building.

As mentioned before, the main facade is partly hidden from view by the school construction. It has a single door archway which encloses a small rectangular window. A cornice decorated with dentils runs the whole length of the facade. A small espadaña crowns the facade. The side facades have a single arch opening each, which act as doorways. Each arch is framed by pilasters. The sacristy roof is lower than the roof of the church.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input 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) History

Specific dates 1685, 1894 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Valvanera in Coamo is of great value to the history of the Island. It is a vivid example of how Old World Religious traditions were deeply rooted in the new settlements.

The origins of the worship and devotion to the Virgin of Valvanera (a site in Spain associated since the Middle Ages with this Virgin) in the Coamo region go all the way back to the 17th century. Early in the year 1683 a cholera epidemic spread throughout the Valley of San Blas de Illescas, now the town of Coamo. According to historian Ramón Rivera-Bermúdez, the cholera epidemic was so intense that it almost exterminated the whole town of Coamo. It is still considered the most severe plague that the town has suffered since its foundation in 1579. Don Mateo García and a few fortunate others that were not infected asked all Coameños to pray to the Virgin of Valvanera for the deliverance of the town. He firmly believed that if the town prayed to Her, the cholera epidemic would end. A promise was made, on behalf of the town, to held a Mass in Her honor every 8th of September. After this promise was made, the cholera epidemic ended in Coamo. The townspeople considered this a miracle.

It. Don Antonio Colón Lullando on behalf of the townspeople asked government and religious authorities for a special authorization in order to build a hermitage church to this Virgin. Permission was granted on April 15, 1684 by the ecclesiastical authorities. Don Mateo García donated the painting (oil and wood) of the Virgin to the new building. This painting has its own importance in terms of Puerto Rican history of art. Experts who have studied it carefully agree that this might be the oldest painting in the Island today. In all probability it was painted in the Island, making it the oldest painting in existence painted by a Puerto Rican artist.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Rivera Bermúdez Ramón, La Ermita Nuestra Señora de la Valvanera 1685-1979.

Coamo: Notas para su Historia, La Villa Añeja Síntesis de su Historia, Model

Offset Printing San Juan 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.59 acres

Quadrangle name Caomo, PR

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References Lat. 18°04'53" N., Long. 66°21'35" W

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

The hermitage is bounded on the North by José I. Quintón St., on the East by Carrión Maduro St., on the south and west by private schools. (see enclosed location plan)

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

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

organization Investigaciones Bonaire, Inc.

date July, 1984

street & number Tetuán 103

telephone (809) 724-4997

city or town Old San Juan

state Puerto Rico 00901

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mariano G. Coronas Castro

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date January, 1986

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

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date 3/31/86

date

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Continuation sheet

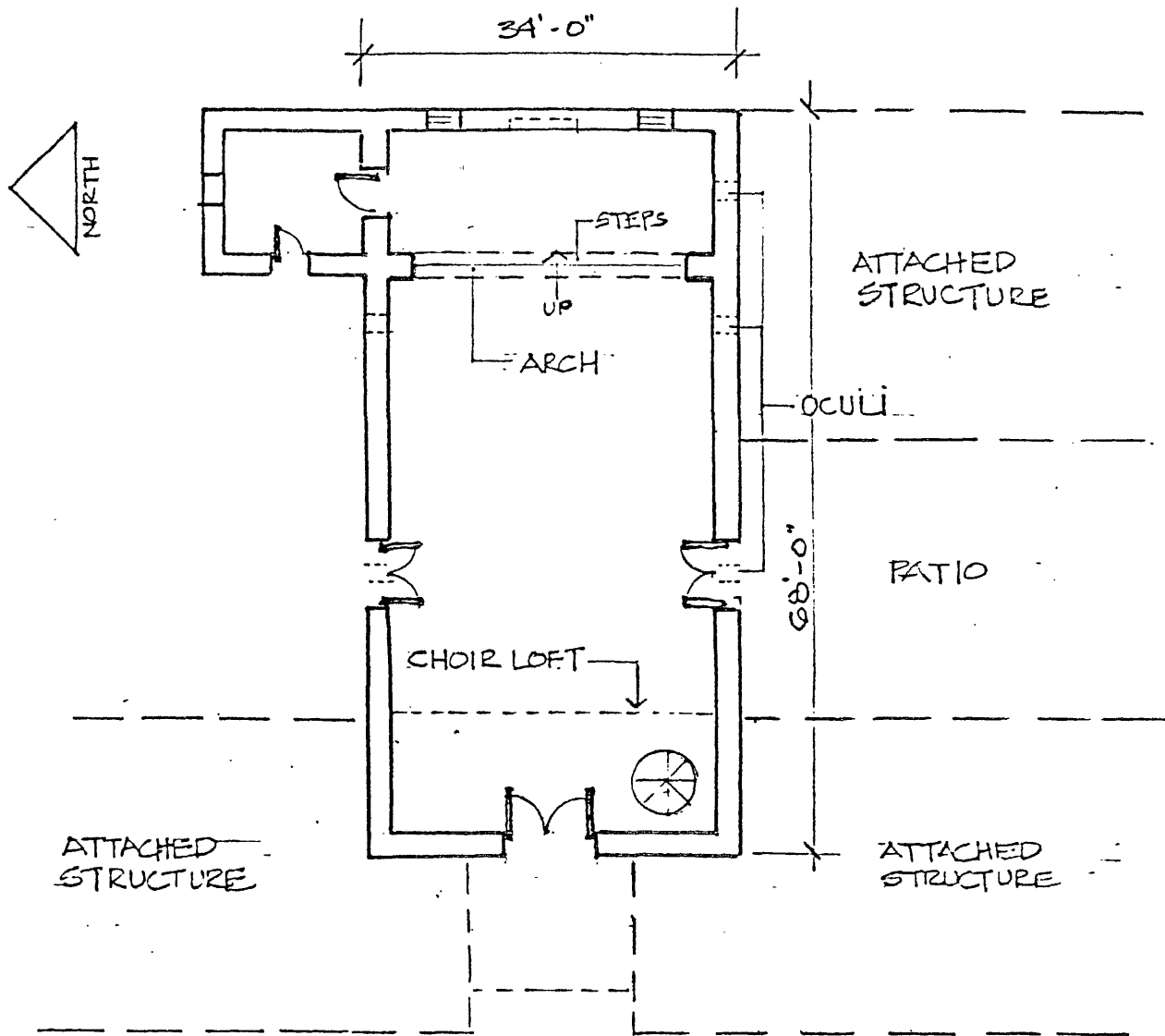
Item number 8

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On February 9, 1685 after this painting was blessed, a procession took the painting to the Hermitage Church. The procession was headed by Bishop Fray Francisco Padilla. A solemn mass was then held with the participation of all the local clergy. This hermitage church has been a pilgrimage center for believers from all corners of the Island.

Many miraculous cures have been attributed to this Virgin's intercession. The town's old hospital built during the late 19th century was located opposite to the hermitage where many supposed cures occurred due to the Virgin's blessings.

In 1894 a major repair project was undertaken. Parts of the walls and foundations of the original structure were used, but the facade was completely renovated. The bell gable was also added at this time. It was re-inaugurated on the first of April of 1894. Although the building's roof has been replaced by a reinforced concrete one, the basic morphology of the building remains intact. Minor repairs, such as the addition of wooden beams, could easily restore the building to its original state. The fact that the school has built a new addition enclosing the main facade was carefully studied. It was found, however, that the corridor added in front of the facade has not altered negatively the structure in terms of its integrity. These early XX century buildings do not contribute to the historic value of the property. The Hermitage is of great importance to the Coamo community and to the people of Puerto Rico, who see it as a symbol of special favors and graces granted to our people by the Virgin.



HERMITAGE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA VALVANERA
OF COAMO

APPROXIMATE SCALE 1:200