

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Edificio Patio Español  
other names/site number La Filarmónica

**2. Location**

street & number 153 Cruz Street  not for publication  
city or town San Juan  vicinity  
state Puerto Rico code PR county San Juan code 127 zip code 00902

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Elizabeth Olá Oliver  
Signature of certifying official/Title

Dec. 30. 2004  
Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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#### 4. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

*Jr*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*Wancel J. Viana* 2/18/05

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#### 5. Classification

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##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

##### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

###### Contributing

1

0

0

0

1

###### Noncontributing

<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	Total

##### 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

\_\_\_\_\_

*Edificio Patio Español  
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

*Domestic / Multiple dwelling*

*Commerce / Specialty store*

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

*Domestic / Multiple dwelling*

*Commerce / Specialty store*

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

*Eclectic*

*Spanish Revival*

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation *concrete*

walls *concrete*

roof *concrete*

other *terracotta (roof tiles)*

**Narrative Description**

See continuation sheets.

**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.

*Edificio Patio Español  
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Community Planning and Development

**Period of Significance**

1937 – 1954

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Eduardo Fossas López

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

X See continuation sheets.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography**

See continuation sheets.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreege of Property** \_\_\_\_\_ .5011 acres \_\_\_\_\_

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>19</u>	<u>804455</u>	<u>2044260</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

*Legally recorded lot: (040-002-35-15 cadaster registry Puerto Rico State Government)*

**Boundary Justification**

*Legally recorded lot limits.*

*Edificio Patio Español  
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title *Ingrid Iglesias, Architect / Juan Llanes Santos, Historian*

organization *PRSHPO* date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number *PO Box 9066581* telephone *(787) 721- 3737*

city or town *San Juan* state *Puerto Rico* zip code *00906-6581*

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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Patio Español

name of property

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**Summary**

*The **Patio Español** is a four-story, reinforced concrete, eclectic, domestic/multiple dwelling building with an almost symmetrical floor plan and two commercial spaces in its ground level. The walls are finished with cement plaster and all the cornices and moldings are made in concrete. The main façade is also symmetrical, vertically organized in five zones. The main space of the building is the interior courtyard that runs from the first to the last floor and gives the name to the building. The incorporation of this patio and other four ventilation shafts, in the backside of the building, effectively promotes natural ventilation and light into each unit. The property is located facing Cruz Street in the San Juan historic center. The building maintains its integrity; although minimal changes had been made.*

**Description**

***Patio Español** is a residential and commercial building located in Old San Juan, one of the best-preserved historic centers in Latin America. The lot, rectangular in its configuration faces the Cruz Street and is basically flat. Due to the streets and blocks' arrangement in "cardo" and "decumano", the building has a party wall condition in three of its sides. Although the lot is large, the building, 70 feet wide by 140 feet long, occupies only 75 percent of the whole area.*

*The main space of the building; the interior courtyard, is slightly displaced to the backside of the building, measuring 40 feet wide by 55 feet long. It extends through the four stories of the building and divides into two units; a rectangular one in the frontal side of the building and one in U shape, that surrounds three sides of the courtyard.*

*The first level of the frontal side of the building is occupied by two commercial spaces that have direct access from the street and are located side by side of the "zaguán" or main entrance. The other three floors house two identical apartments each. The unit in the backside of the building also has a symmetrical configuration, with four apartments in each floor. Access to these apartments is through staircases at both sides of the courtyard.*

*The building presents a longitudinal axis that runs from the front side of the building, passes through the courtyard and ends in a wall with a fountain that faces it. There are also four ventilation shafts symmetrically located in the backside of the building that run from the second level to the last one.*

*Four of the units with three bedrooms and 1½ bathroom have the living room facing the interior patio. The other fourteen units have four bedrooms and 1½ bathroom. Each unit has an individual staircase foyer that provides direct access to it. The apartments have excellent natural illumination and ventilation due to the interior patio and the geometrical configuration of the building.*

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*The building responds to the scale and nature of the surrounding urban environment, by surface volume and articulation in the main façade. The façade is, basically symmetric and flat, no matter all the ornamental details, added to it. Vertically organized in five zones, the façade has a central zone defined by the slight, outwards projection of the façade plane, along with the establishment of a figurative pediment on top, underlining the axis of symmetry. At either side of the central bay there is a narrower bay with one door and balcony on each floor. The doors and balconies of the second floor are larger than those of the third floor. Nevertheless, they are joined together by a two story high aedicule that frames the two balconies as one. Another couple of narrower bays, at either side of the composition, appears as a continuous treatment of the façade plan of the second set of bays. However, the inclusion of some double-height pilasters from the second to the third floor, and an extension of these into the first floor, reinforces the vertical composition. The building has four levels, but just three are visible from the street, only showing the towers at the corners.*

*The exterior walls are clad with cement plaster, and all the details like cornices and moldings are made in concrete. The interior walls are cement plaster clad also. The main staircase and the circulation corridors are finished in 6" x 6" quarry tile with bull noses and wall bases. The courtyard is finished in 4" x 8" quarry-tile placed in herringbone pattern and blue "azulejos" as inserts in some parts. The entrance "zaguán" has a glazed ceramic wainscot imported from Seville. All the floor units in the backside are finished in 8" x 8" hydraulic cement tile with bull noses and wall bases as needed. The tiles used for the flooring of the living spaces in every unit, has a pattern featuring a border. All kitchens and bathrooms have 2" x 2" ceramic tile flooring. Both kitchen and bathroom have 4-1/4" x 4-1/4" standard ceramic tile wainscots of 60", with bull noses along the edge.*

*All the floors and roofs of the building are constructed in reinforced concrete, including the main staircase. The interior non-bearing wall partitions are built in concrete masonry. In the frontal side of the building a reinforced concrete post and lintel system was used, its modern approach established by the structural grid on the first floor is subdued by a more traditional handling of space in the upper housing stories. Nevertheless, the concrete columns can be seen at different corners of some spaces within the dwelling units. This system was used to satisfy the need of a huge open space for commercial use.*

*The style of the building could be defined as eclectic, having Spanish Style elements as the figurative frontispiece, along with the entrance doorway at the center bay, merging with other varied stylistic elements, like the classical top balustrade of the turrets, ionic pilasters, the different cornice types employed and the pinnacles. The inner courtyard façade displays more elements of the Spanish Style in the iron works and brackets of the balconies, the glazed tile mosaic work, the clay roof tiles and the proportions and handling of the openings and ornaments. The Spanish Style courtyard (which gives the building its name, **Patio Español**) is a strong formal focus, as well as the main common space in the building. The court is symmetrical along its two axis, a condition acknowledge by a centrally located octagonal planter. The prevalence of the longitudinal axis is stressed through the placement of a wall fountain to the back of the court.*



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*Throughout time some minor changes have been made, not affecting the integrity of the building whose condition is excellent. The building maintains intact the interior patio, the space distribution, and the ornamentation used in the interior and exterior, among other elements that make the **Patio Español** eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.*

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**Summary**

*The **Patio Español** is significant locally under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an outstanding Spanish Renaissance Revival building in the Municipality of San Juan. Its also significant locally under Criterion A because is extremely associated with a pattern of historical events within the Social History and Community Planning and Development of Old San Juan.*

**Historical Background**

*The city of San Juan, where **Patio Español** is located, has a very complex urban development history. Historical patterns of urban development used by the Spaniards were extremely relevant in the design of the city from the very beginning of its foundation in 1519. Because of the geographical location of the island within the trading routes and the natural disposition of the islet, San Juan emerged as a perfect location to be used and developed as a military bastion. The city became the recipient of a massive military infrastructure. The Spanish forts in San Juan evolved from their 16<sup>th</sup> century nucleus. Part of their construction also dates from 17<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but most of the massive fortifications were built between 1765 and 1800.<sup>1</sup> This massive military complex (fortresses, artillery bastions, lines of defenses, the walls system, etc.) responded to the role of the city in the wide scheme of the defensive system of the Spanish Empire, but they were also essential in making up the political, economical and social life within. The urban development within the city was highly determined by these military and strategic requirements.*

*The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought an economical and demographical boom in San Juan. The city's population went from 8,907 in 1816 to 32,048 in 1899.<sup>2</sup> The increase in the city's inhabitants created an enormous pressure on its infrastructure, especially in the housing availability. The construction of a massive complex of official and governmental buildings within the already cramped space in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ballaja's Barracks, the Mental Hospital, the Military Hospital, la Casa de Beneficencia, etc) increased the lack of dwelling space available. This insufficiency of space hit harder the lower working classes, which made up most of the population within the city walls by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Even the complex of official buildings developed within the city was done at the expense of the lower classes.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service. *The Forts of Old San Juan*. Washington D.C.: Divison of Publication, 1996. Pp. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Adolfo de Hostos. *Ciudad Murada*. San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1981. Pp. 21

<sup>3</sup> Archivo General de Puerto Rico. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Expediente: 771-817. Legajo: 24-D. Años: 1848-1852. Censo Poblacional. Estado del número de artesanos, jornaleros, esclavos y fabricantes en esta Ciudad.

<sup>4</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Legajo: 24-F. Expediente: 882. Expediente contiene el proyecto para derribar los bohíos de Ballajá y otros sectores de barrios de pobres.

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*By mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the social problems created by the rapid increase of population within the limited space of the city walls were evident. Old San Juan became the most densely inhabited town in the island with an average of 19.7 persons per household.<sup>5</sup> A large sector of the population, from different social backgrounds, opted for moving outside the walls toward places like La Puntilla, Puerta de Tierra o Cangrejos. Abundant documentation recorded this exodus toward the still available land in these areas. But even in these sectors (especially in La Puntilla and Puerta de Tierra), the restrictions imposed by the military were motive for controversy between the last ones and civilian groups interested in the real estate development. The Spanish Army Corp of Engineer's influences extended forcibly to these so-called "polemic areas".<sup>6</sup> Even with this exodus, a large sector of the population, especially members of the lower working class, remained within the city walls. The disappearance of their traditional living spaces forced them toward the economical trend of "renting", transforming Old San Juan into a "city of tenants". A Property Census done in 1850 showed that the owners did not occupy a large number of their dwellings in San Juan; most of the residences were inhabited by groups of tenants in the same house or by a combination of owners and tenants.<sup>7</sup>*

*This real estate tendency, combined with the limited space available, pushed the city to grow vertically. Although the Spanish authorities attempted to regulate this tendency by imposing limits on the height of the residences to only one floor in 1867, the law was unable to stop the trend. By 1878, there were 511 one level dwellings, 398 two floors residences and 171 with more than two levels within the city walls.<sup>8</sup> All these factors (the population's increase, the limited space available, the tenancy system) combined to create the wall-sharing pattern so "typical" of Old San Juan.*

*The local authorities contributed to the development of this physical arrangement of the living spaces, as much as the market demands and the economical practices of the local bourgeois. Although the government was not able to enforce the height regulation proposed in the 1860's, it was more successful in regulating the alignment of the houses along the sidewalks and some specifics patterns for the facades.<sup>9</sup> The town was aligned according to the official view and the facades became the representation of the "Official City".*

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<sup>5</sup> Manuel Ubeda y Delgado. *Isla de Puerto Rico, estudio histórico, geográfico y estadístico de la misma*. San Juan: 1878. Pp. 281-287.

<sup>6</sup> Archivo General Militar de Madrid. Fondo: Sección de Ultramar del Ministerio de la Guerra. Serie: Correspondencia sobre edificaciones civiles. Legajos: 2107-2265.

<sup>7</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Legajo 24-D. Expediente: 743. 1850.

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Ubeda y Delgado. *Isla de Puerto Rico...* pp. 119.

<sup>9</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Legajo: 24-D. Expediente: 812. Año: 1852. Expediente sobre alineación de casas y fachadas.

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*The popular city, the proletariat settlements, the spaces where the poor and the skilled worker recreated their life in contradiction to the dominant upper-classes values, disappeared within the wall-sharing system. The social world of the subordinate classes was relegated to the backyard (“el patio”). “El patio” was early recognized as a very important social element within the dwellings in San Juan by one of our first historians:*

*“Son pocas las casas de esta Ciudad que no tienen algún patio o huerto que les sirve de mucho desahogo”. (“There are very few houses in this City that don’t have a yard or a garden, which give them great relief”.)<sup>10</sup>*

*In the densely inhabited town of San Juan “el patio” became the place where the social classes living in this reduce space recreated old social patterns and modes. An “unofficial city” was created in “el patio”; it became a space for social negotiation within the conflictive worlds of the “well-to-do” and the political elites and the working and lower middle classes that became the main residents in the city. But even this socially important element of living space was integrated in to the tenancy system:*

*“The housing demand, increased by the disappearance of the worker’s settlements, it was such that it became necessary to occupy the patios, previously used as ramshackle, gardens and orchards, and to build in the roofs. Practically every roof available was rented. Besides the vertical development, the house’s lower levels, the yards and halls were subdivided into small, extremely tight rooms.”<sup>11</sup>*

*Equally important within this real estate tendency in San Juan, was the emergence of an economical phenomenon usually associated with the agricultural sector: the formation of the “absentee landlord”. A significant amount of the owners of Old San Juan’s dwellings were not residents of the city. Some of them lived outside the city limits, in other towns in the island, or inclusive, outside the country; leaving their properties to be managed by a selected resident or a legal representative.*

*The building **Patio Español** is an extraordinary example of all the economical, physical and social patterns indicated previously. In that sense, **Patio Español** is extremely significant, not only for its architecture, but also because its represents a continuation of a historical trend initiated by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century that eventually characterized Old San Juan.*

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<sup>10</sup> Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra. *Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico*. Publicado en Madrid en 1778. Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1979. Pp. 100.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin R. Quiles Rodríguez. *San Juan tras la fachada. Una mirada desde sus espacios ocultos (1508-1900.)* San Juan: Editorial del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2003. Pp. 59-62 (The translation is ours.)

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The building

*Patio Español, as we know it today, dates from 1937. During that year, the owners contracted the services of a local civil engineer to change the appearance and size of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building that it was just simply known then as House 21, located in Cruz Street, one of the oldest streets in town.<sup>12</sup> To establish the historical connection and the feeling of continuity between the old House 21 and **Patio Español**, it is necessary to briefly relate the history of the first one. As described in early documents, House 21 was a rubblework; two stories residence from its very beginning. The house was highly associated with the tenancy system that strongly developed within the city after mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest records found during the research, show that tenants early in 1850 already occupied the building. In the last year mentioned, fourteen people, most of them listed as skilled artisans, lived in House 21.<sup>13</sup> This fact corroborates the problems of population density and the lack of dwelling spaces suffered within the city walls. The old House 21 was also described as having that important social element (which has maintained until present time): the patio. This space served as a socialization area where the residents conducted an active relationship, the place where the tenants built an "alternate" city in opposition and in negotiation with the "official" one.*

*But House 21 had a social life that went beyond the limits of the interior yard. The house became the meeting place for a local cultural association founded in 1846. The group, Sociedad la Filarmónica (the Philharmonic Society) was established by two of our most distinguished nineteenth century scholars, Manuel de Elzaburú y Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, to promote cultural activities within the city. In his memoirs, Tapia y Rivera (who was himself a tenant in House 27 in Cruz Street) mentioned that the association used to meet often in a house just a few numbers below his home, on the very same street.<sup>14</sup> That House 21 was the official site for this culturally important group, would explain the historical name associated with the property: la Filarmónica (the Philharmonic.)<sup>15</sup>*

*"La Filarmónica" was also a great example to sustain the historical emergence of the "absentee landlord" related to real estate within the urban context that so profusely developed in San Juan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1850, House 21 was owned by the Texidor family, residents of Guayama (who were also the owners*

<sup>12</sup> Adolfo de Hostos. *Historia de San Juan* Pp. 31.

<sup>13</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Legajo: 24-D. Expediente 43. Censo de casas en la ciudad de San Juan, propietarios y quien la habita; número de jornaleros y esclavos.

<sup>14</sup> Alejandro Tapia y Rivera. *Mis Memorias o Puerto Rico, como lo encontré y como lo dejo*. Segunda Edición. San Juan: Imprenta Venezuela, 1946. Pp. 137.

<sup>15</sup> Registro de Propiedad. Sección San Juan. Tomo 20, Finca 821, Folio 34, San Juan, 8 de mayo de 1885. Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. This is the oldest register of property related to House 21. Although its dates from 1885, the document gives data about the property starting in 1853. One of the things mentioned about the 1853 structure, is that House 21 was also called La Filarmónica (the Philharmonic). The name still associated to the property in the present time, as Patio Español is also called La Filarmónica.

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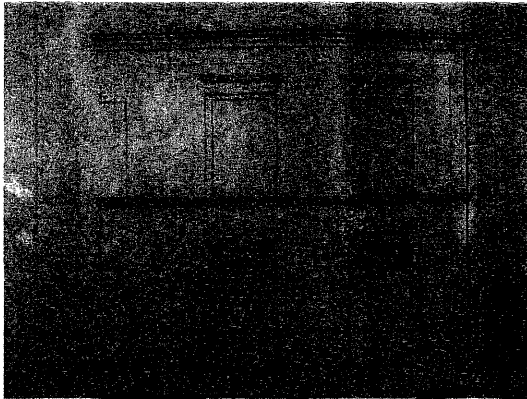
name of property

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of House 27, *Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's* residence). The house was sold to Don Agustín Dansá y Delmas in 1892, resident of New York City. Renard Victor Gerard, Count of Cheresey, resident of Paris, France, acquired the dwelling in 1909. The last absentee landlord that owned House 21 was Francisco Vias Ochoteco, resident of Madrid, Spain, who bought the house in 1911. The Vias Family was the owner of the property until the decade of 1970.<sup>16</sup>

It was precisely during the Vias Family ownership that House 21 was transformed into the building that we know today as **Patio Español**. In 1937, the owners contracted the services of the Civil Engineer Eduardo Fossas López. A resident of Old San Juan, Fossas López has distinguished himself mainly for his restoration works in old buildings within the city.



*Façade of House 21, Cruz Street. 1899.<sup>17</sup>*



*Patio Español's façade, 153 Cruz Street.*

In 1939, the Vias Family included in the Register of Property the changes done to the old building. A part of the old house was destroyed and part was kept. The document described the new building as consisting of a new façade resembling the Spanish style, with two towers flanking the upper level and the Puerto Rican Coat of Arms at the center. Iron balconies and concrete balustrades were also added to the new façade. Two additional stories were added over the old structure, making the building (according to the 1939 inscription), a combination of concrete and rubblework (*mampostería*). The new building consisted of 22 apartments and two commercial spaces in the first level.

<sup>16</sup> Registro de Propiedad. Sección San Juan. Tomo 20, Finca 821, Folio 34/ Tomo 34, Finca 821, Folio 67-68/ Tomo 75, Finca 821, Folio 200-201/ Tomo 72, Finca 821, Folio 201-224. Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

<sup>17</sup> AGPR. Calle Cruz # 21. Plano de reforma de casa. Legajo 93. Expediente 1,068. 1899.

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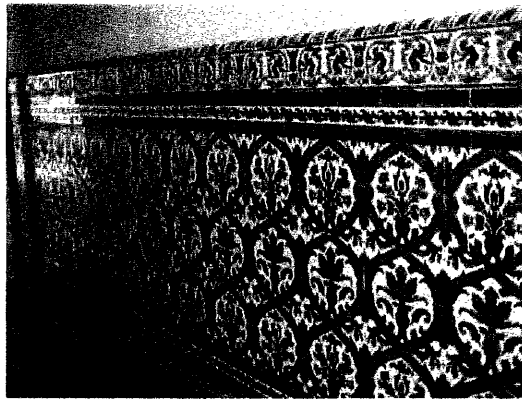
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*A wide zaguán (vestibule) was added, decorated with tiles imported from Seville (Spain). The patio was also altered during the 1937-39 restoration. It was divided into five sections. The main patio was decorated with flower stands at ground level and a beautiful fountain with Spanish tiles was added to the center of the main yard. The other four yards are smaller in size: two belong to the ground level front side apartments and the other two patios were integrated on the backside of the ground level apartments.<sup>18</sup>*



*A partial view of the Spanish tiles in the main hall.*



*Details of the main yard at Patio Español. (Photos: Juan Llanes)*

<sup>18</sup> *Registro de Propiedad. Sección San Juan. Tomo 75, Finca 821, Folio 202/ Tomo 113, Finca 821, Folio 59. Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. These documents contain the changes done by Eduardo Fossas in 1937-1939, as recorded by the Vías Succession in the Register of Property in 1939.*

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*With these changes, the Vias Family was trying to maximize the profits enlarging the building to accommodate a larger amount of tenants. The changes requested by the owners were an architectural challenge to Fossas López. Civil Engineer Eduardo Fossas López, because of his vastly experience working in Old San Juan, was completely aware of the regulations in existence at the moment. In the 1930's, the city's construction codes required that every room or dwelling for rent be provided with access to direct sunlight.<sup>19</sup> In a two-story building with an interior yard, like House 21, this requirement was easily obtainable. But with the changes that the Vias Family wanted it for the new **Patio Español** in 1937 (twenty two apartments and two commercial spaces) the requirement was extremely hard to accomplish in a city already characterized by the wall-sharing pattern, cramping the buildings one against the other. Another significant challenge faced by Fossas López in 1937 was in the process of creating a façade for **Patio Español** that could represent the new architectural styles and at the same time blend in with the facades patterns in Old San Juan. In this aspect Fossas opted for an eclectic route combining classic details, neocolonial lines and a sober Spanish style ornamentation.*



*View of the wall-sharing pattern in Cruz Street. **Patio Español** is the third building, right to left. (Photo: Juan Llanes)*

<sup>19</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Municipio de San Juan. Serie: Asuntos Diversos. Legajo: 28-C. Expediente 38. Código de construcción para el casco de la ciudad de San Juan. 1936.



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*In the matter of maximizing the building, Fossas López was able to make use of the space available and in the process brilliantly created a residential complex considered “ the best example of multiple tenants dwelling constructed in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic between the 1890’s and the 1930’s” in a recent publication.<sup>20</sup> In no other residential building in Old San Juan, so many windows and balconies face the interior yard, providing a sense of opening and allowing every interior unit access to direct sunlight. The building presents an effective transition between the private space and the public space, with the “patio” being the mediator between these two.*



*Patio Español. A partial view of and from the interior yard.*

*These architectural changes, however, didn't break the historical continuity and spatial functionality between House 21 and the new **Patio Español**. Even the old house's name, *La Filarmónica*, remained attached to **Patio Español** in the legal records and in the collective memory until present time. More important than just the name, the 1937-39 building remained associated with social, economical and community development trends deeply rooted in Old San Juan since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The new building was administered as an absentee land lorded property under the tenancy system until the end the decade of 1970. By 1979 **Patio Español** was acquired from the *Vías* Succession by the Puerto Rican Architect Eduardo Fossas Dávila, son of the very same*

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<sup>20</sup> *Jorge Rigau, Architect, Dean of the School of Architecture. Politecnia University of Puerto Rico. Booklet titled , Los Rincones de una Ciudad.*

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engineer that made the changes to the building in 1937.<sup>21</sup> In 1981, Mr. Fossas sold **Patio Español** to the tenants.

In a letter to the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture) dated 1980, Fossas indicated that the prices of the dwellings were going to be kept relatively low in order that the tenants, who were mainly from "the low middle class", could acquire the apartments.<sup>22</sup> This shows another historical continuity in the socio-economical genealogy of the building since the 19<sup>th</sup> century: a tenancy system dominated by the working and low middle classes. Since 1981 the owners of **Patio Español** have been administering the building as a corporation, Cruz 153 Inc.

Beyond the architectural beauty of the building, **Patio Español** has a great significance in illustrating the economical, social and urban development of Old San Juan. The property is a great example and is extremely associated with a pattern of historical trends: the community development and physical arrangement of San Juan, the social emergence of the tenancy system, the development of a tenancy system dominated by the presence of the working and low middle classes within the city walls and the sociological appearance of the absentee landlord class in the urban context.

**The architect**

Eduardo Fossas López was born in San Juan in 1885. Fossas studied at Columbia University, from where he graduated as a Civil Engineer in 1907. He belongs to the first generation of Puerto Ricans engineers that received an education in the United States. The academic instruction that Fossas received at Columbia, emphasized, among other things, a plurality in subjects, which explains Fossas's inclination toward architecture.

Through his entire career (totally in the private sector), Fossas distinguished himself in the restoration and rehabilitation of old residential buildings in San Juan. Besides his work in **Patio Español**, Fossas was responsible for the work done in twenty-one residences and buildings in Old San Juan. He was also the designer and contractor of the well-known school Colegio Puertorriqueño de Niñas. Besides his work in the construction business, Fossas acquired a large number of properties and houses in Old San Juan, becoming a very important landlord within the city. Some of the properties still belong to the Fossas's Family. Eduardo Fossas López died in San Juan in 1952.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Telephonic interview with Architect Eduardo Fossas Dávila . September 4, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Eduardo Fossas Dávila to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. May 1, 1980. Copy of the letter is located at PRSHPO.

<sup>23</sup> Op. Cit.

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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

*See enclosed site map.*

**Boundary Justification**

*The boundary includes the city lot 040-002-35-15 as recorded in the Registry of Property. Since 1937, until present time, the lot has been historically associated with the property.*

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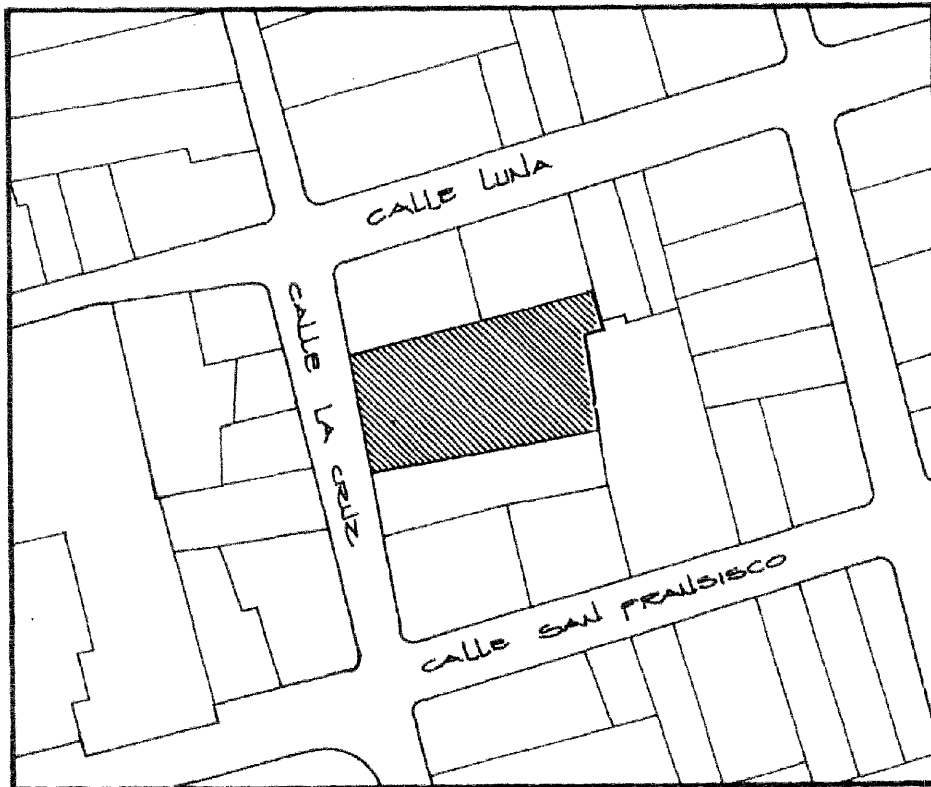
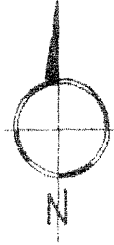
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**Site Map**



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A southeast view of Patio Español's facade. (Juan Llanes, Photographer)



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***Apartment Floor Plan***

