

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



1. Name of Property

historic name Condado Vanderbilt Hotel

other names/site number Grand Hotel Condado Vanderbilt; The Condado Hotel; Hotel Condado; Condado Beach Hotel; Hyatt Puerto Rico Hotel

2. Location

street & number 1055 Ashford Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town San Juan ☒ vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county San Juan code 127 zip code 00907

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 ☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
José Luis Vega Colón, PhD

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency or Tribal government

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

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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):

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

*Patrick Andrus*

Signature of the Keeper

*11/25/2008*

Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

##### Category of Property

- ☒ 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

0 buildings  
0 sites  
0 structures  
0 objects  
0 Total

##### Name of related multiple property listing

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic / Hotel

Commerce / Restaurant

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic / Hotel

Commerce / Restaurant

Work in Progress

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century revival

Spanish Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_ concrete

walls \_\_\_\_\_ concrete

roof \_\_\_\_\_ ceramic tile roof

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

X (See Continuation Sheets)

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Designed in 1917 by the renowned New York architectural firm, Warren & Wetmore, the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel is situated on an elongated strip of land between the Atlantic Ocean to the North and the Condado Lagoon to the South (**Fig. 1**). The Condado Vanderbilt is aligned with Ashford Avenue, the main access road from San Juan to the Condado area. Beginning at the Dos Hermanos Bridge, which crosses the Condado lagoon, Ashford Avenue runs southeast along the Condado peninsula. The arrow in the photo below, taken in 1995, marks the site on the Condado peninsula where the five-story reinforced concrete building topped by a hipped terracotta roof called the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel has overlooked the Atlantic Ocean for almost ninety years: more detailed location plans can be found below (page 11).



Fig.1. Image courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey, The National Map, 1995

The full legal dimensions of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel property can be found in the Segregation of Land, Constitution of Right of Way Easement and Second Amendment to Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Lease, San Juan, Puerto Rico, filed with the Puerto Rico *Registro de la Propiedad* in the Municipality of San Juan by Jorge M. Ruíz Montilla, Esq., as the first entry filed on 8 August 2007. For the purposes of the inscription, the urban parcel, once bounded by the Maritime-Terrestrial Zone of the Atlantic Ocean to the north; Ashford Avenue to the south, Parcel D, *Plaza del Mar*, to the east,



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and the property of Modesto Bird to the west, has been segregated into two parcels: Parcel B-1 and Parcel B-2.<sup>1</sup>

Its perimeter defined by Parcel B-2 and the Maritime Terrestrial Zone of the Atlantic Ocean, Parcel B-1 has a total surface area of 3,547.2835 square meters (three-thousand-five-hundred-forty-seven and two-thousand-eight-hundred-thirty-five ten-thousandths square meters). Bounded to the North by the Atlantic Ocean and to the South, East and West by Parcel B-2, Parcel B-1 has a Right-of-Way easement over Parcel B-2 that lets it communicate with Ashford Avenue to the South. The right-of-way easement measures 937.4816 square meters (nine-hundred-thirty-seven and four-thousand-eight-hundred-sixteen ten thousandths square meters); its northern limits are the variable radial arch used to access the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel; the southern limits are the section of the Ashford Avenue boundary line drawn from one base of the arch to the other measuring 62.84-meters (sixty-two and eighty-four hundredths meters).

Parcel B2, identified in the inscription as the "Condado Vanderbilt Parking Parcel, has a total surface area of 7734.9506 square meters (seven-thousand-seven-hundred-thirty-four and nine-thousand-five-hundred-six ten-thousandths square meters). Roughly U-shaped, Parcel B-2's interior perimeter is bounded to the North by Parcel B-1; its exterior perimeter is bounded by the Maritime-Terrestrial Zone of the Atlantic Ocean to the North; Ashford Avenue to the South, Parcel D, *Plaza del Mar*, to the East, and the property of Modesto Bird to the West.

For the purpose of the Nomination, the property will be bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the North, Ashford Avenue to the South, and two lines perpendicular to the Ashford Avenue property line running from Ashford Avenue to the Atlantic Ocean. The western-most of these lines will pass through a point located at 39'-7" west of the west façade of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel; the eastern-most of these lines will pass through a point located at 37'-0" east of the East façade. Falling well within the limits of the boundaries of the Nomination Property are Parcel B1 and the Right of Way Easement for Public Access (**Fig. 2**). Extending beyond the legal limits of Parcel B-1, the nomination boundaries ensure that the hotel exterior, the sea-coast, and the chief point of access to the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel will be maintained as originally designed and will be visible and physically accessible on all sides.

<sup>1</sup> Segregation of Land, Constitution of Right of Way Easement and Second Amendment to Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Lease, San Juan, Puerto Rico, by Lic. Jorge M. Ruiz Montilla, August 8, 2007, num. 1.

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Building and Site Boundary Plan

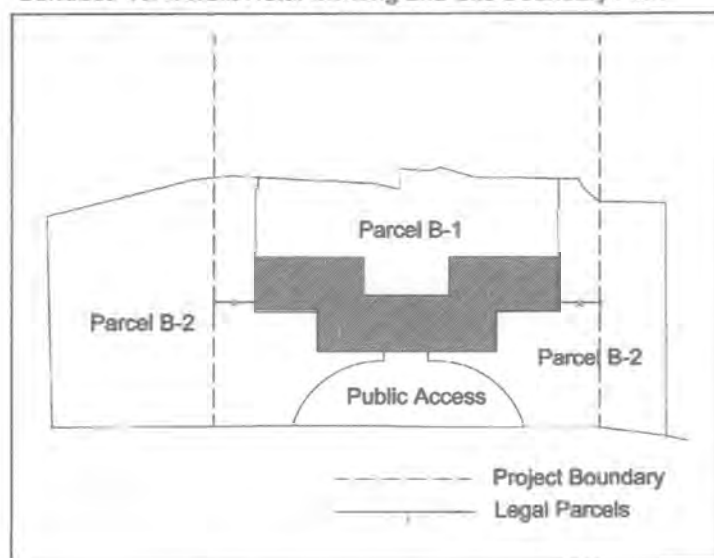


Fig.2 Drawing by the Author, 2007

The Condado Vanderbilt sits in its original location and retains its essential physical features. The building's scale and proportion, structure, construction design and basic layout, and its materials and exterior ornamentation have either survived or been restored to conform to the architects' original plan. The demolition of a western Annex has restored the building to its original stand-alone design; continuous concrete walls perforated for window and door openings remain the basic pattern of exterior fenestration (**Fig. 3**). All interior and exterior wall surfaces have retained the original smooth plastered cement finish from the time of their original construction, and the original façade details and ornamentation that make the Condado Vanderbilt recognizable as a Beaux Arts building of historic significance have survived into the present day.

The basic organization of interior space also remains the same:

The first floor of the hotel retains the structural walls of the hotel lobby and the original terrazzo floors. The grand second floor lobby preserves the interior space as in the original plans. The grand ballrooms and connecting galleries survive as originally designed; original terrazzo floor finishes also survive on this floor. The upper three tiers of the hotel where the guest rooms were located retain their concrete bearing walls and their hydraulic tile flooring. The restoration of the roof in 2003

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proceeded in accordance with the Warren & Wetmore drawings, the only structural changes being that steel beams have replaced the wooden ones. The original wood and glass paned windows were changed out in the 1976 remodeling for metal and glass windows of similar design. With an eye toward weather-proofing the building, the windows installed in the present remodeling project are made of aluminum and glass following the design of the windows that were replaced.

The building once boasted an interior patio with a veranda and a front carport where entering guests were greeted. The interior patio on the second floor was replaced with a ballroom in 1976; the *porte cochere* was demolished in 2002. Demolition of the hotel's interior began in 1997 when the Condado Vanderbilt was closed down by the local government: furniture, decorations and the metal railing of the staircase were lost to looting. The ceiling plaster, doors and windows that survived the looting were removed in 2002.

Despite the losses of its interior furnishings, the building retains the spatial layout and exterior façades that define it as an early-twentieth-century exemplar of the typology of a Grand Hotel. Visible from Ashford Avenue since its construction, the south façade remains part of the collective memory of visitors and residents. The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel was the building all mansions in the neighborhood aspired to emulate. It represented the stand-alone palace surrounded by gardens that became the staple of the residential park in Condado. Only a handful of the mansions linger today that were built when the Condado Vanderbilt was constructed; the hotel remains the chief reminder of the high-end suburban community development of Puerto Rico's past. Though Condado itself has grown more urban, it is clear to the observer who stroll Ashford Avenue today that this hotel still conveys its distinguished presence in the Condado area.

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Fig.3 View Condado Vanderbilt Hotel in Ashford Avenue, author's photo, February 2007

As it originally stood, today the Condado Vanderbilt rises five-stories above Ashford Avenue as a free standing building protruding from the open space of its lot. The topographical features of the lot remain the same: Ashford Avenue runs in front of the building; the building overlooks the Atlantic Ocean with its natural rock formations to the rear. In the 1920s and 1930s, when the properties to either side of the Condado Vanderbilt were undeveloped, the hotel lot was flanked by palm trees and conifers. In this respect the broader setting of the hotel has changed. But the change shows the Condado Vanderbilt's importance: this particular area of San Juan developed into a prolific high-end commercial, residential and hotel area because the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel marked Condado as a tourist area. Once the only hotel on the Condado peninsula, today, the Vanderbilt is one of many hotels in the Condado area that caters to tourists from abroad.

Recognizable as having been built in an earlier era than the rest of the buildings in the neighborhood, the Condado Vanderbilt still conveys the typology of a Grand Hotel. As will be shown below, detailing in the façade belongs to that moment in history when symbols served to mark the high social standing of those who participated in building the Hotel. The Condado Vanderbilt influenced the design of the hotels later built in this part of the city, which were built with an eye for sophistication and elegance. The Beaux Arts design of the Condado Vanderbilt as a stand-alone palatial building dominating its lot, influenced also the design of the residential homes in this part of the city, as will be fully demonstrated in section 8.

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Building Mass

The building's mass is orthogonal, standing five stories high. A hipped ceramic-tile roof covered crowns the entire structure. The Condado Vanderbilt's central rectangular volume, 157'-4" long by 47'-6" wide, runs parallel to Ashford Avenue; its East and West wings, also rectangular, measure 95'-5 3/4" long and 47'-10" each. Recessed to the north, the East and West wings overlap the east and west facades of Central volume for a distance of 31'-4 1/4" on each side and extend beyond the Central volume to the east and west by approximately 55'-6 3/4". The central axis of each of the three intersecting volumes is aligned on a parallel with Ashford Avenue. The site plan of the Hotel can be referenced in Section 10.



Fig.4 Aerial view of the Vanderbilt Hotel circa year 2002, Image courtesy of Google Earth

As can be seen in the aerial view above (**Fig. 4**), the orthogonal morphology resulting from the overlapping of the side and central volumes produces a large central mass protruding to the South flanked by two recessed wings and, an open rectangular space recessed to the North, the three sides physically defined by the three elevation sides of the three volumes, joined at perpendicular angles, and its fourth northern side is implicitly defined (**Fig 5**).



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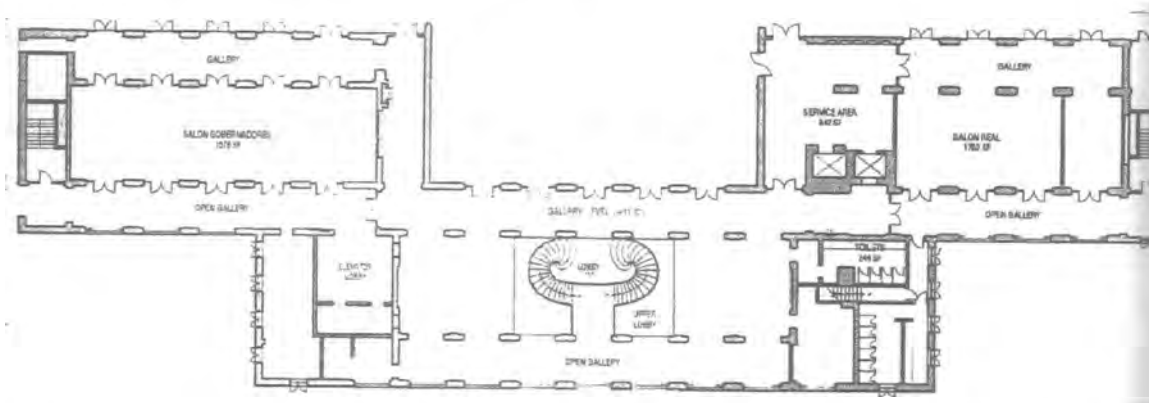


Fig.5 As built drawing second floor plan from *The office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

The building exterior is constructed from reinforced concrete. All exterior walls are structural bearing walls. The primary and secondary beams that run the shortest distance of each volume vary in height and width depending on the structural function each serves. At the first floor level, most of the interior dividing walls also bear weight. The floor slabs between levels are flat, made with a stay in place metal form<sup>2</sup> where the concrete was poured (**Fig. 6**).



Fig.6 Interior of third floor concrete slab detail, author's photo, January 2007

<sup>2</sup> This metal is not a structural element and was used as a molding to pour the cement and obtain the desired shape. Once dry, the metal molding was not removed. Metal forms survive in their original positions in all floor slabs within the building.

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Arched and squared rectangles cut out from the surface plane comprise the wall openings on the first two floors, where the public lounges were located. The three upper floors – where the private guest rooms are located – are supported by the peripheral concrete bearing walls and two sets of 1'-6"x1'-6" square columns, spaced along the central corridors every 13'-0" to define a 7'-0" wide hallway. As indicated in the floor plans, the columns in the upper three tiers stand directly above the arches on the second floor.<sup>3</sup>



Fig.7 Section detail from As-built drawing, *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

<sup>3</sup> The disposition of the rooms is to be arranged along the north and south joined by an interior corridor. The guest room distribution intended for the three upper floors was each the same with the columns allowing the organization of interior divisions for the guests' bedrooms. The interior divisions made of wood comprised the doors, and the partitions forming the bathroom and closet areas. Ephemeral in nature, these divisions were eaten away by termites or rotted away and were removed in 2003. According to the As Built plans archived in *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects* in October 2002, the bathroom and closet area differ from the original plans. It is consequently likely that the 1972 rehabilitation project undertaken by the architects Toro y Ferrer changed the bathroom partitions.



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The Spanish Revival Style pervades all aspects of the design, disposition, structure, openings and details of the building. Typical of this style was the complexity of the volume projections in the facades (**Fig. 7**), which the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel exemplifies in a simpler form.



Fig. 8 Condado Vanderbilt Hotel oblique view of the South elevation, author's photo, January 2007

The composition of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel employs local and multiple symmetries to propose balanced solutions to the distribution of space (**Fig. 8**). Balconies and galleries serve as intermediate, transitional points, celebrating and permitting the simultaneous exploration of interior and exterior spaces. Insisting upon its essential Spanish character, the builders of the Condado Vanderbilt employed ceramic tile on its angled roof; arched openings in its first two levels; wood-framed glass windows in the upper three tiers; and terrazzo, hydraulic tile and ceramic mosaic floors, punctuating particular features with heraldic, mythological and maritime ornamentation that lends an old world palatial ambience to the hotel.

Reconstructed in 2002 in conformity with the original design plans, the hipped ceramic-tile roof descends at a twenty-two-degree angle and extends two feet beyond the building's façade. The two feet of overhanging eaves permits the stop-molding detail of the supporting beams, spaced two

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feet apart, to be seen from below. Once supported by wooden beams, the ceramic tile roof now sits atop a metal structure held in place by a concrete slab that doubles as the fifth floor's upper ceiling. At the joining point of the Central volume and the East wing raises a rectangular tower, capped with a smaller hopped roof (Fig. 9). This tower houses the original elevator shaft.



Fig.9 Corner roof detail, author's photo, February 2007

The South Façade

The details and window openings in the South façade overlooking Ashford Avenue are symmetrically organized around the building's central axis. A base block rises three-feet high from the ground to protect the base of the building. Above the base block, 7'-6"-wide square openings based with a one-foot-high plinth penetrate the center of the central volume's façade. These three arched openings present themselves as the hotel's principal entrances, leading into the first floor lobby. The three entrances are flanked on either side by a four-foot-by-six-foot rectangular window, echoing the three tiers of windows in the upper floors. To the outside of each window, the façade is penetrated by another 7'-6" wide square opening, making a total of five entrances in the South façade's Central volume. Flanking each of these two entrances three-feet above the base are two additional windows of the four-foot-by-six-foot type. Penetrating the south façade of both the recessed East and West wings are four extra-large windows placed equidistant from each other. The same width as the five entrances in the central volume, the four windows in the South façade of the East and West wings serve to anchor the pattern, and, like the other piercing on the ground level, to establish the vertical line that will be developed in the piercing of the four upper tiers.

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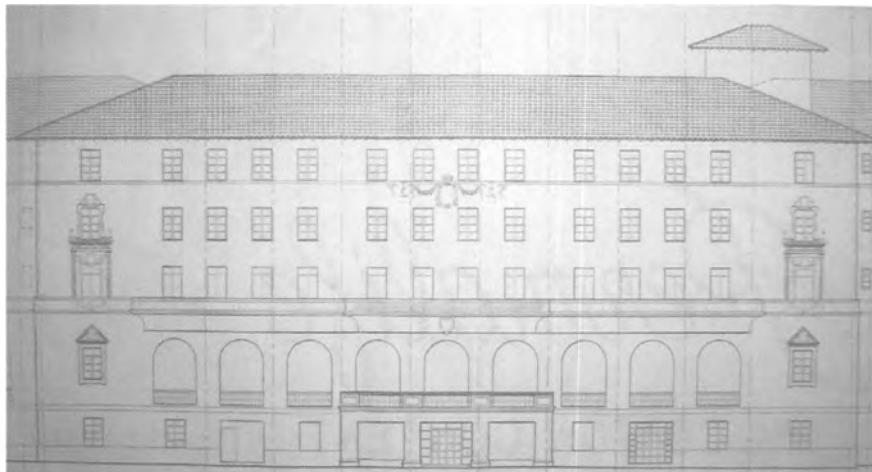


Fig. 10 Center Wing Façade from As-built drawing, *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

Distinguishing the southern façade as the hotel's *piano nobile* are the nine arched rectangular openings in the southern façade's second story (Fig. 10). Centralized and symmetrically arranged, these double-height openings constitute the largest piercings in the building. The same pattern of arches is repeated within the interior galleries of the building, creating a symmetrical passage and maximizing the circulation of air and light in the second-floor lobby (Fig. 11).



Fig.11 South façade detail, author's photo, February 2007

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Concrete balustrades rise from the floor level on the outer six arches, allowing these arched openings in the façade to double as *balconettes* that enable persons within the second-floor lobby to have a close relation with the outside. Echoing the central volume, the second story of the south façade of the recessed East and West wings also boasts three arched openings with balustrades. To the outside of these arches in the center volume and in the each of the wings is a 4'x6' rectangular window, trimmed with projecting molding.

Sitting atop the center arch of the south facade, resting on the bead of molding that initiates the balcony and just below a similarly cornice molding, is a coat-of-arms that bears the hotel's initials "CV" (a more recent addition), crowned with a laurel wreath. Completing the heraldic motif are vegetal supporters – leafy sheaves on either side of the coat-of-arms – visually linked to the initial-bearing shield by a scroll that, emerging from behind the boss, appears to wrap around the sheaves.



Fig. 12 Second floor coat of arms detail, author's photo, February 2007

Framed by a projecting molding, the rectangular window opening to the East and West of the nine arches is topped by a beaded cornice and a denticulate pediment, ornamented within by a scrolled coat-of-arms detail and ribbons (**Fig. 13**).

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Fig. 13 Second floor window detail of pediment, author's photo, February 2007

The façade of the two secondary volumes on the second floor have three arched openings with balustrades that begin close to the center volume. Next to the arches, at the far end, a trimmed projected molding frames a rectangular window opening. Identical in size and proportion to the windows flanking the nine arch-topped rectangles in the central volume, this feature is more restrained in its decoration, lacking the cornice and denticulate pediment that crown the eastern- and western-most windows in the central volume.

The third floor façade of the central volume has three sets of four rectangle window openings centralized with the volume spanning the length of the nine arches on the second floor. Each group of four rectangles is directly above three arches. The axis that divides each set is centralized with the central axis of the middle arch below. One extra rectangle at each side of the outer set is located directly above the ones on the stories below. This opening is elaborately detailed as in the *Plateresque* style of architecture: the ornamentation joins the detailing of the window above and below so that they appear to be a singular architectural element (**Fig. 14**). Placing emphasis on specific places within an elevation, this style of exterior window dressing suggests a supplementary vertical structure resting against but independent from the rest of the building's wall.

Formed in cast concrete, the ornamentation linking together the Center volume's outermost windows on the third- and fourth-floor levels boast the most elaborate detail in the entirety of the façade.

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Fig.14 Third- and fourth-floor window detail, South façade, author's photo, February 2007

Adorning the balcony under the third-floor opening is a florid frieze flanked and ornamented with two pilaster bases. The coat-of-arms at the center of the frieze is supported by two dolphins' descendant. Garlands and beading fill in the remaining space. Two cherubs appear as corner brackets at the bottom of the composition as if holding the two story-tall window dressing on their shoulders (**Fig. 15**). Above the rectangular molding, atop the third-floor window, unfolds a small scrolled coat-of-arms with infant triton supporters. A projected molding frames the opening; two scored pilasters with base and florid capitals edge the composition.



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Fig.15 Detail on bottom of third floor window, author's photo, February 2007

Atop the florid capitals rest full-face bulldog-head capitals. These flank a mid-level entablature adorned by another detailed frieze. Standing out against the sea-shell motif of the mid-level frieze are two mermen recumbent as if supporters. This frieze sits atop the simple cornice that marks the dividing line between the third- and fourth-floor ornamented windows.

Above the mid-level entablature runs a beaded cornice on which the fourth-floor window opening, framed by projecting molding and flanked by dolphins descendant, appears to rest. Fruit-bearing urns atop scrolled vertical consoles, positioned directly above the bulldog-head capitals, grace the square top of this cornice (**Fig. 16**). Overlapping the molding that frames the fourth-floor window opening, a scrolled coat-of-arms supported by ribbons tops the multi-story composition that adorns the outermost windows of the central volume's South façade.



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Fig.16 Frieze detail on top of third floor window, author's photo, February 2007

Returning to the third level, a base molding ending with a cornice below it runs the perimeter of the building. At this level, an elongated balcony, 3'-0" deep at its ends, 4'-0" deep at its midpoint, at this level projects in a gentle curve beyond the central volume's southern façade. The original plans as well as the existing building show divisions for the elongated balcony that correspond to each guest room, but it seems likely that the balcony was ornamental: Even with the divisions in place, there is no evidence of doors being designed<sup>4</sup> or constructed that might allow guests to step out of their rooms onto the balcony, nor do the window openings allow the balcony to be easily accessed. The cornice located at the bottom of the balcony has a diamond-web surface pattern detail.

At the focal point of the central volume's South façade atop the bead molding that courses around the entirety of the hotel between the fourth and fifth floors, survives a large ornamental coat-of-arms bedecked with garland details, topped with an adorned seashell as its crest; festooned with floral

<sup>4</sup> El Condado Hotel for the Porto Rico Hotel Corporations, Condado, Warren and Wetmore, 1917, Rafael Carmoega Collection, UPR URP RCA/ 0132/ P0001-P0009

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motifs on either side, it is joined to two smaller coats-of-arms, each scrolled at the top and bearing the fouled anchor (**Fig. 17**).<sup>5</sup>



Fig.17 Encarpus and Coat of Arms detail in front façade, author's photo, February 2007

The side volumes exhibit five rectangular window openings that have no surrounding detail. There is a smaller rectangle on each side closest to the central volume. The midpoint of next three of the four rectangular apertures aligns with the axis of the arches beneath. The subsequent opening falls at midpoint above the inside edge of the rectangle at the second floor. The same window arrangement occurs on the subsequent floors above on the center and East and West wings.

North Façade

As on the South façade (**Fig. 18**), the window openings on the north façade are symmetrically organized in relation to the central axis. Most windows in the top three floors measure 4'x6'. The monotony of this pattern is occasionally broken up by vertical rows of smaller windows, measuring 4'x2', placed so as to emphasize the verticality of the structure and the building's horizontal symmetry. Combined with the base cornices that run horizontally from one end of the façade to the other on the third-floor level and at the base of the windows on the fifth-floor level, the North façade's distinctive signature of piercings allow the hotel to be easily identified from out at sea.

<sup>5</sup> The symbols on all detailing and coat of arms have a maritime subject that can be a consequence of the sea's proximity because many guests arrived to Puerto Rico on the cruise liners at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another way of interpreting the symbolism of the detailing may be due to the Vanderbilt family association who originally came into fortune from the shipping business.

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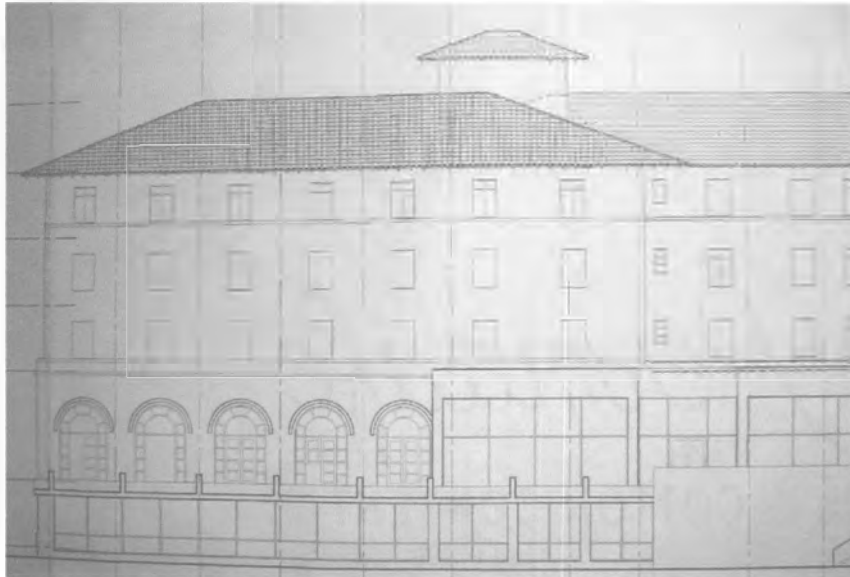


Fig.18 East Wing Façade from As-built drawing, *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

Though the first-floor level of the side and back façades has undergone the most changes since the hotel's opening in 1919, the symmetry of design is still evident in this facade.<sup>6</sup> A single door opening is located at the midpoint of the central volume on the first floor. A door opening to the far right and the far left remain the only other piercings on this level. Otherwise, the central volume's first floor presents a solid wall to the sea. Above this solid wall, five centralized arches of equal proportions to and in alignment with the arches of the south façade open up the second floor lobby to an unobstructed ocean view. The simple pilaster details adorning these arches give them the appearance of being recessed into the wall. The arches within the building boast similar proportions, alignments and detailing, permitting the normally occurring land breeze to cross-ventilate the second-floor galleries and public areas and conveying a sense of symmetrical organization.

At the third-story level, a base cornice runs from one end of the façade to the other. A bead molding in the same pattern connects the bottom of the openings in the fifth floor. From the third floor to the fifth floor of the central volume's north facade, two sizes of windows are used, the larger 4'-0" by 6'-0" type used on the south façade and a smaller 2'-0" by 4'-0" type. Starting at the solid distance

<sup>6</sup> Toro and Ferrer, Architects, Plans for the Rehabilitation Project of the Center Wing of the Condado Beach Hotel, (1 May 1972), archived in *The office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*.

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midpoint moving west, this façade cites the pattern employed in the southern façade of a set of four windows equidistant from each other. After an initial use of the pattern, this façade adopts a different pattern, positioning a large window twice the distance away, and a window of the smaller type a span and a half away to complete the line of windows. The arrangement of the windows on the fourth and fifth levels repeats the linear composition of the third. A series of rectangular openings with an elongated one in the center flanked by two smaller ones can be found at the east volume at the first level.

The orthogonal columns of this single-story reinforced concrete structure support a concrete roof slab that doubles as a veranda, easily accessible to guests through the six arched openings that penetrate the East wing's second-story façade. Other additions to this façade include the semi-circular concrete eaves surfaced with ceramic tile atop each of the arched openings and the mezzanine floor slab dividing in half the double-height space at the far right of the East wing's second story. Three stories of seven rectangular windows, each measuring 4'x6', spaced equidistant from each other, and two intact horizontal bead cornices that run around the structure between the second and third floors and just beneath the fifth-floor window openings complete the decoration of the East wing's north façade.

A 1922 addition to the building is projected from the East side wing towards the sea (**Fig. 19**). This reinforced concrete structure has orthogonal columns and beams that support a concrete roof slab. The second level of the East wing displays a set of six arched openings as described in the front elevation. At this point, there is no recessed detail as can be found at the center wing North facade. Added later to each arch was a projecting eave made of concrete to which were fixed ceramic tiles. At the far right, a mezzanine floor slab, added sometime after the original construction, divides a rectangular opening in two parts.

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Fig.19 Oblique view of the East and North elevation from the coast, author's photo, February 2007

Seven arched rectangular openings arranged at equal distance from each other span the second story of the East wing's north façade and appear to organize the façade's three upper stories, as the seven windows of the larger 4'-0" by 6'-0" type are spaced equidistantly from each other on each of the tiers and the center window of each floor is centered in the façade. Both the bead cornice that passes around the building between the second and third floors and the bead cornice that joins the bottom of the fifth-floor windows appear intact in this elevation.

The West wing's North façade presents rectangular openings of various sizes on the ground-floor level. A large door opening is located at the westernmost end of the wing. Another door opening appears under the fourth of the second story's six arches, counting from left to right. These arches are proportional to and aligned with the arches in the North façade. Above the fourth arch and the sixth arch are three stories of the smaller rectangular window openings, measuring 2'x4' each. The rest of the windows in the upper three floors are of larger type, measuring 4'x6'. (Fig. 20)



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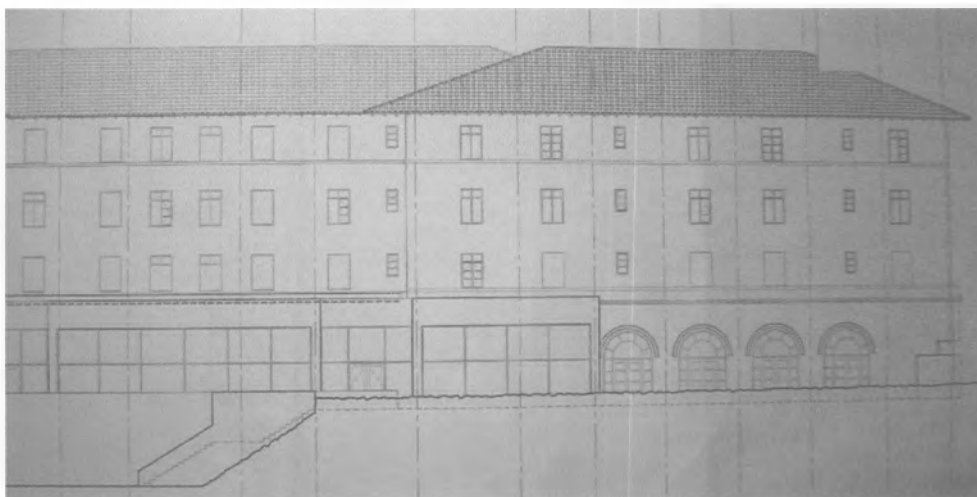


Fig.20 West Wing Façade from As-built drawing, *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

The inner façade created where the West wing joins with the central volume demonstrates a different pattern from the other façades. The first floor is completely open, revealing a perpendicular wall that divides the gallery from the central space. The second floor presents a closed wall without any openings. The building's verticality is emphasized in the patterns of windows in the three upper floors. Running from left to right, the West wing's façade presents to the ocean three lines of windows in the pattern, two large, one small, two large, one small, one large.

The inner projecting sides of the side volumes overlap the central volume at ninety degree angles to enclose on three sides a rectangular space looking out on the Atlantic. The entirety of the ground floor of this enclosure is open to the elements. The second story presents an unpenetrated wall to the sea. The three upper floors of the side elevations, mirroring each other, adopt an identical linear pattern: beginning with the corner closest to the sea and moving to the interior corner, a pair of windows of the large type is followed by one window of the smaller type and one window of the larger type.

West Façade

The side volume that stands projected in this view of the building falls to the left of the Ashford Avenue façade (**Fig. 21**). Aside from the large rectangular door opening to the right, the façade at the ground-floor level presents a solid wall. The central arched aperture on the second floor is identical in proportions to the arched openings in the rest of the hotel. Flanking this opening are two

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large rectangular openings of unequal proportions – the one on the left, hugging the northwest corner, the size of a single door, the one on the right identical in size to the opening underneath. At the center of the second-floor level, a recessed arch centered with the wing's axis indicates where there used to be an opening. Above this central arch are extra large window openings that are positioned half-way between the floors. On either side of this central axis are windows of the larger 4'x6' type, typical of the guest rooms. Cornices and bead molding running the perimeter of the building between the second and third floors and at the fifth-floor window level remain intact in this section of the building as well.

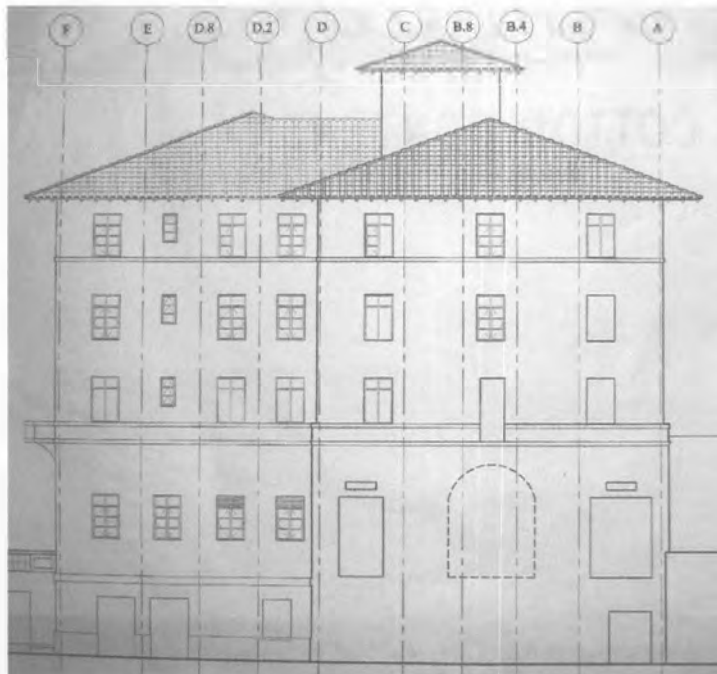


Fig. 21 Facade detail from As-built drawing, *The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

The central wing that appears recessed from the west elevation falls to the right side of the composition (**Fig. 22**). One rectangular window opening starting at first level to the left is followed by one small square opening of about 2'-0" that does not align with the rest of the opening arrangement. The second floor has four rectangular openings equidistant from each other; the pattern is centralized in relation to the plane of this elevation. The windows in the three upper levels are vertically aligned with the northern-most edge of the second-floor windows; however, the pattern of windows is different: beginning from the north, two large openings are followed by a window of



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the small type and a window of the larger type. The moldings appear as a continuation from the other façades.



Fig.22 Oblique view of the West and South elevations, author's photo, January 2007

East Façade

Though the base moldings are missing from the East façade, this façade is almost a mirror image of the hotel as seen from western approach (**Fig. 23**): the windows of the central volume are placed exactly parallel with the windows in the West façade of the central volume. The East wing's first-floor door is similarly proportioned and positioned; two apertures have been added above the doors for ventilation grilles. Unlike the West face of the West wing, the center window of the third floor has been filled in and the three windows in the fourth and fifth floors of the East wing's east façade are all of the same 4'x6' dimensions.

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Fig.23 East façade detail, author's photo, February 2007

Interior East and West Façade

The ceiling height of first-floor level of the central volume measures 11'-0". Rectangular apertures permit passage to the interior spaces. The loggia is located on the south side, perpendicular to the building's central axis. Across from the loggia, the ground-floor lobby area showcases the grand staircase that connects the first and second level. The area is graced by a double-height ceiling. Simple columns adorn the central area walls.

The galleries on the first level are orthogonal with rectangular openings that form perforated planes that contribute to the general feeling of open space within the public areas of the building. The disposition of the interior space is not strictly symmetrical, the assignment of space varying logically according to functional criteria, (i.e. whether the space is intended to serve as an office, bathroom, lounge, auxiliary stair or elevator). At either side of the lobby and loggia, a wall separates the space into smaller rooms that were once dedicated to serve as administrative offices. A corridor running parallel to the entrance gallery connects the east and west wings. To the left lies an elongated central space encircled by galleries; to the right, past the elevator core, lies another rectangular space encircled by galleries. None of the original floor finish survives in this section.

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Fig.24 Interior view of second floor south west corridor, author's photo, February 2007

With its double-height ceiling measuring 17'-0" and its perimeter of galleries bordering the rectangular public spaces, the second floor of the Hotel presents itself as the Condado Vanderbilt's main lobby (**Fig. 24**). The basic arrangement of galleries coursing around the perimeter of a central space in the central volume repeats itself in each of the two wings. Connecting one with the other, the galleries, exposed to the outside space through arched openings in the façade, progress around the interior lounge areas not unlike a formal promenade, with the arches in the façade mirrored by arches in the building's interior, creating a symmetrical composition that permits the free circulation of cool ocean air and natural light.

The principal central space on this level showcases the double, lyre-shaped flying staircase that links the first- and second-floor levels. The sensation generated by the vertical visual connection is of an area that is larger and grander than it actually is. The pilasters that adorn the arched walls in this space continue upward from the ground-floor level, interrupted in their thirty-foot ascent only by a projected terrazzo molding that defines the contours of the column above and below the dividing floor slab.

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A fountain flanked by two dragons adorns all of the arches in the central lobby except the central arch to the North (**Fig. 25**). Adorning the northern central arch is a coat-of-arms. Ceilings display the rectangular beams that run the short length between the wings.



Fig. 25 Detail view of second floor arch opening, author's photo, February 2007

Five pairs of symmetrical arches oriented North and South, run the length of the central space (**Fig. 26**). As shown below, at both ends, on the short side walls, an arch fails at midpoint, becoming recessed within the wall because the wall was closed. The central lounge in the West wing, called the Governor's Salon, has five pairs of arches that span the length of the room. Some detail is suggested by the trace of paint surrounding the arch in the Royal Salon located in the East Wing.

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Fig.26 Detail view of second floor arch opening, author's photo, February 2007

To the right of the central volume is the original elevator shaft. A mezzanine that was not part of the original design occupies part of the second floor hallway. The three upper floors that housed the guestrooms have 10'-0" high ceilings. Wooden interior divisions have been removed in preparation for restoration. Elevator shafts and stairs join the floors vertically.

Staircase

The most impressive interior vertical element in the building is the lyre-shaped flying grand staircase that connects the first floor lobby to the main lobby on the second. The space revealed to both floors is a rectangular space so large that it spans the width of three of the gallery arches. The long part of the oval is transversal to the central axis.

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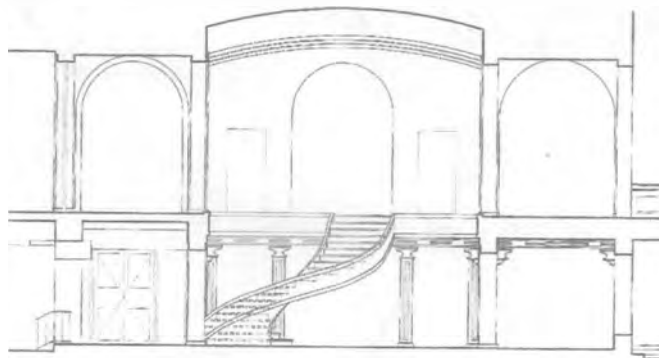


Fig.27 Section detail of as built drawing from *The office of Marvel and Marchand Architects*, October 2002

Divided into two equal flights, the grand staircase occupies two-thirds of the central vestibule space (**Fig. 27**). The remaining third is occupied on the upper floor by a landing that serves as a bridge to the front gallery hallway. In terms of its horizontal displacement, the two parts of the staircase fill the perimeter of an oval form whose narrow axis is aligned with the center axis of the building and whose longer axis is perpendicular to the central axis.

Its vertical movement gives it its elegance. Ascending to the main second floor (**Fig. 28**) in plain view of both the first and second floor lobbies, the staircase, unsupported from below, cascades on either side as the structure scrolls downward on each side, the narrow steps at the top becoming wider near the bottom as they appear to melt, each set of nineteen stairs turning inward toward the center of the hall in the direction of the main entrance in the south façade. Echoing the transition details in the lobby floors on the landings that launch it at each level, the reinforced concrete staircase is surfaced in its run, riser and top- and bottom-corner details with black terrazzo.

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Fig.28 Interior view of second floor stair opening, author's photo, February 2007

Floors and Surfaces

The entirety of the interior and the exterior of the building are plastered with a smooth cement finish. Repairs to the plaster have been made where necessary, and, recently, a new coat of paint was applied. The building's first two floors boast a continuous flooring of terrazzo. Visually distinct spaces are created in the public-level galleries as terracotta-colored-based tile, speckled with white, cream and orange, and a black-based tile, speckled with white, grey, orange and yellow, are arranged in different patterns on the floor.



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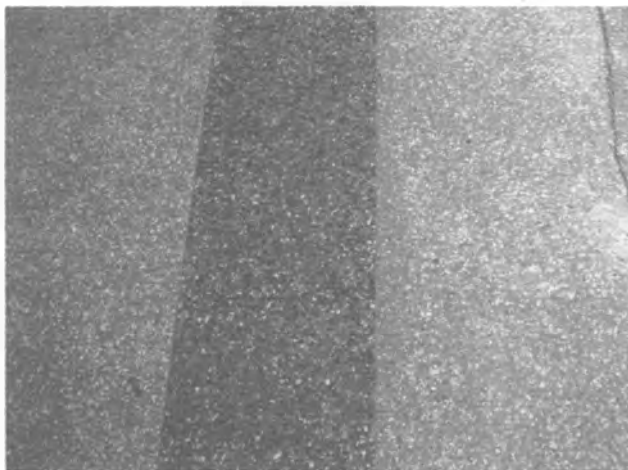


Fig.29 Detail of original second level terrazzo floor in lobby area and of second level terrazzo floor at the Royal Salon, author's photo, February 2007

The *Governors' Salon* displays orange and black terrazzo floors very similar to the ones found on the lobby and galleries while the *Royal Salon* has black and white checkered terrazzo tile floors arranged at a forty five degree angle (**Fig. 29**). Hydraulic tiles, colored green with white swirl streaks in a pattern much in fashion at the beginning of the twentieth century, have been found in the third-floor guest rooms, indicating that at one time the finished look for the rooms depended on this flooring. In contrast, the corridor floor at these levels is surfaced in an unpatterned gray polished concrete finish.

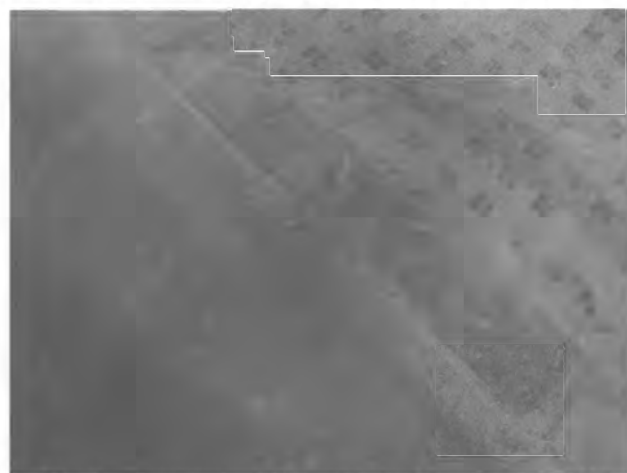


Fig.30 Interior of third floor hydraulic tile detail and interior of third floor terrazzo flooring and ceramic tile author's photo, January 2007

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Toward the East wing, some small solid-black- and terracotta-colored tiles, approximately 2" square, were discovered to have been arranged in a square-in-square pattern (Fig. 30).

Changes in the building since construction

In 1917, the building was designed; by 1918, it was under construction. At its opening in 1919, the building was christened the Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel. According to the inscription in the Deed's Register, by 1929, the Hotel lot also contained a concrete building with a metal roof for *tren de lavado* and four wooden houses.<sup>7</sup> Other buildings built on the lot later on, according to the *Registro de la Propiedad*, were a swimming pool; a dance pavilion made of wood and ceramic tiles; a concrete building that housed an ice plant, four boilers, and a carpentry workshop, and a concrete building for use as a garage and storage building.

The Fire Underwriters plan of 1918 shows that Helen Street once ran from the center of the hotel's Ashford Avenue façade to the Condado lagoon. A few years later, Helen's Street was eliminated when a land tract belonging to the Hotel measuring 10,354.75 square meters was developed into a garden and tennis courts. This parcel of land was bordered by streets which still exist today.

According to the first inscription, the San Juan Hotels Corporation, a Delaware corporation based in New York listing its headquarters in Wilmington, operated the Condado Vanderbilt under the new name of The Condado Hotel in 1930.<sup>8</sup> In the deed of partial cancellation and mortgage modification dated October 5, 1935, Manuel González Martínez took over the property loan in 1931, as agreed to by the Condado Holding Corporation of New York. Charles Dunlap, president of the San Juan Hotels Corporation, ceded the mortgage note to the estate of John E. Berwind. Mr. Berwind died in Manhattan on 23 May 1928. The estate executors were Edward J. Berwind, Harry A. Berwind and the Banker's Trust Company of New York, represented by its vice president, Henry F. Wilson. The estate executors listed Gorge E. Dickinson as trustee of the warrantee bonds for the cancellation of the loan on the property. All bonds above a million-one-hundred-and- fifty dollars from San Juan Hotels Corporation were destroyed for the cancellation of said loan. This inscription ends with the date 23 June 1930.<sup>9</sup>

The Great Depression of the 1930s marked a time of economic turmoil for United States and Europe. Two devastating hurricanes aggravated the situation in Puerto Rico. The tract of land South of

<sup>7</sup> Deeds Register, San Juan, Santurce North Section, inscription IX, property 639, volume 78, folio 210.

<sup>8</sup> Deeds Registry, San Juan, Santurce North Section, inscription II, volume 140, property 6496, folio 29.

<sup>9</sup> Deeds Register, San Juan, Santurce North Section, property 6496, volume 140, folio 29.

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Ashford Avenue dedicated to gardens was segregated and sold sometime after 1931, for the 1945 Deed description of the hotel property no longer included the garden parcel.

The hotel building has suffered changes as well: beginning twenty years or so after its initial construction, the original hotel building underwent several additions that disguised its original design. An evolution plan that diagrams and dates the extent of the alterations to the building can be found below (**Fig. 31 and 32**). Early in the 1940s, an addition to the first floor was made in the North façade. At the same time, the East Wing Annex, a five-story L-shaped building providing additional rooms and public areas, was adjoined to the far end of the East façade of the original Condado Vanderbilt building. The East Wing Annex was demolished in the 1975 renovation.

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Building and Evolution

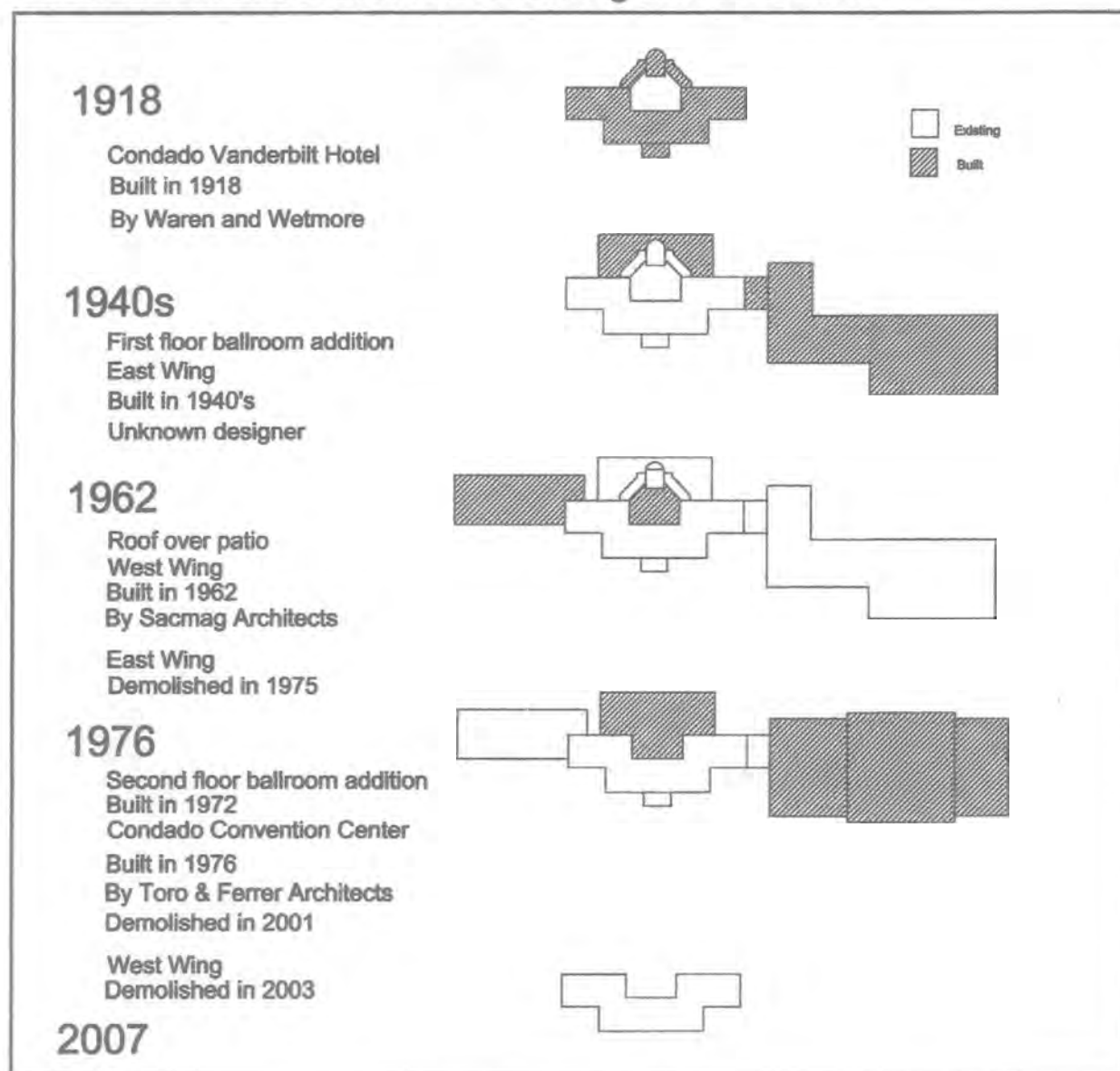


Fig.31 Author's drawing, 2007

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Building Elevations

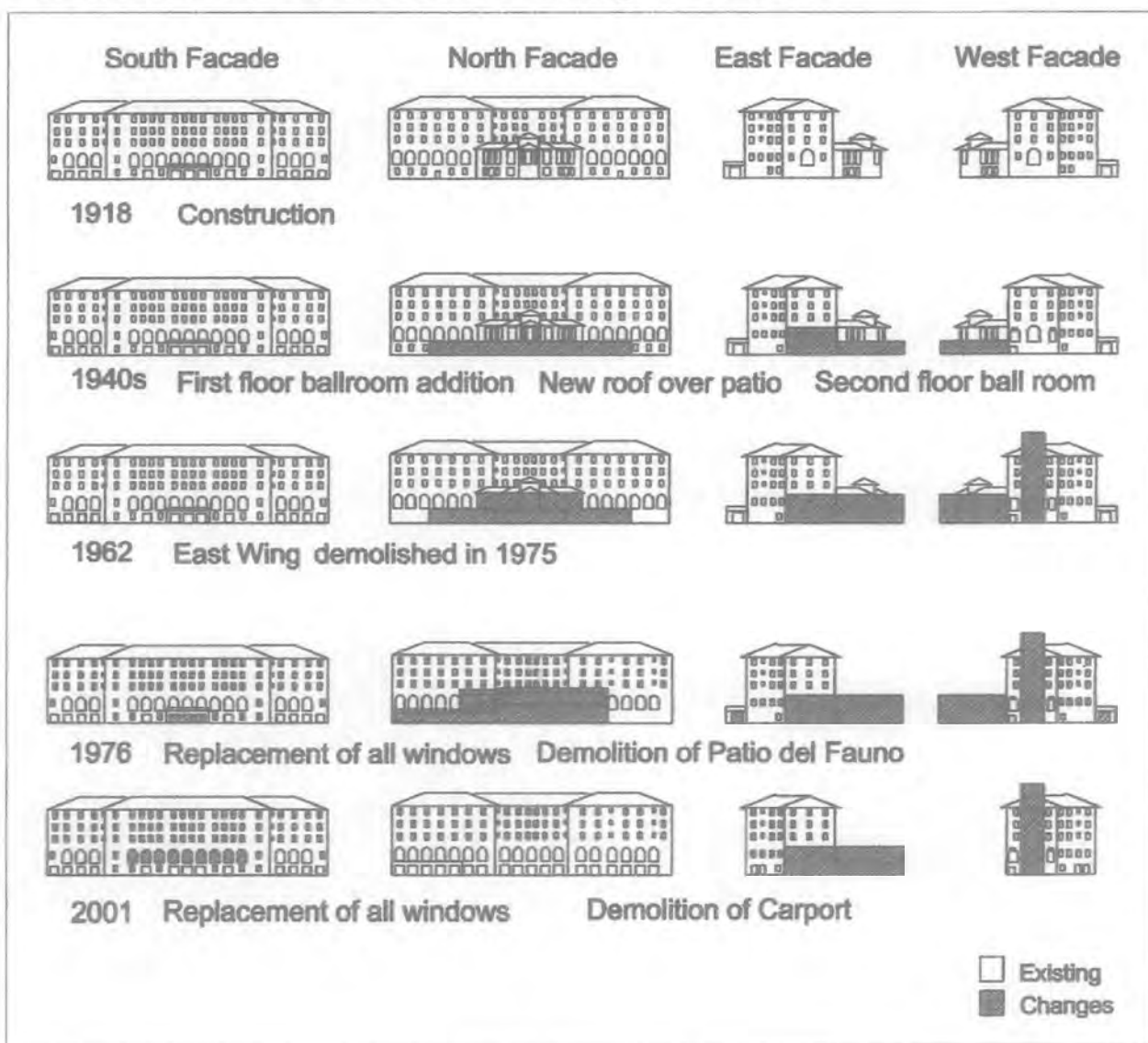


Fig.32 Author's drawing, 2007



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During the life of the East Wing, the original hotel building (Condado Vanderbilt) was called the Center Wing. It maintained a size of 102,717 square feet. Around 1962, Sacmag Architects added another separate building with guest rooms to the Condado Vanderbilt, this time to the west façade (Fig. 32) later demolished in 2003. The West Wing hotel annex consisted of a nine-story reinforced concrete building with a total area of 212,885 square feet. The Annex boasted one-hundred-fifty-six fully air-conditioned guest rooms equipped with cable television and direct dial phones. They were all considered outside rooms because they had balconies facing the Atlantic Ocean or the Condado Lagoon. The basement parking area had room for 105 cars. A ramp connected the basement parking to the ground level. The ground level parking area could handle 80 cars at a time. A shop space with its front to Ashford Avenue, an engineering office, a maintenance shop, an engine room, and the employees' cafeteria and restroom with lockers completed the street level program. The second floor included the upper part of the shop spaces, service areas, swimming pool bathroom, upper part of the first floor General Manager's office, the accounting offices and meeting rooms. The main attractions of the third floor were the swimming pool, pool deck, waterfall and *Bohío* Bar. These were located on the south side. A number of guest rooms were located on the North side at this level. There was also an open corridor connecting the annex to the beach.<sup>10</sup>



Fig.32 Condado Vanderbilt Hotel with East and West Wings after 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Deeds Register, San Juan, Santurce North Section, property 40,585, volume 963, folio 13.



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In 1959, La Concha Hotel was built on a parcel of land just east of the Condado Vanderbilt. It was later to become part of a group that included the Convention Center building (Fig. 33). This last was joined to the original structure of the Condado Vanderbilt at the second floor level. The Convention Center building<sup>11</sup> under construction by 1976 replaced the East Wing addition built in the 1940s that had been demolished a year before. Together the Condado Beach Hotel (Vanderbilt), La Concha Hotel and the Convention Center constituted a government-owned conglomerate called The Condado Trio. The partial cancellation and mortgage modification of October 5, 1935, between the Condado Holding Corporation and Manuel González Martínez indicates that *Fomento Industrial de Puerto Rico* owned a large property that bordered the Condado Vanderbilt property on the east at least as early as 1935; it was not until the 1970s, however, that the *Fomento Industrial* Company became the owner of the Condado Vanderbilt property lots.



Fig.33 Convention Center building before demolition, Toledo Engineers 2003

Prior to undertaking the remodeling of the Condado Vanderbilt in the 1970s, the local architectural firm Toro & Ferrer had designed La Concha Hotel and the new Convention Center. Among the changes called for in the plans for the Rehabilitation Project of the Center Wing of the Condado

<sup>11</sup> Toro Ferrer Collection, AACUPR, TFA 0351/ F0114-F027.

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Beach Hotel<sup>12</sup> dated 1 May 1<sup>st</sup> 1972 were new public function rooms. During the 1970s remodeling, the *Patio del Fauno* was replaced with a new ballroom to accommodate other activities; the original saloons were converted into restaurants. A pre-existing second floor terrace to the east of the building was incorporated into the re-design. New awnings were provided; changes were made to the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel building's second floor façade doors; and all the original wood-and-glass pane windows in the building were changed out for metal windows. Apparently also changed in the 1976 remodeling were the interior partitions defining the distribution of bathroom and closet space in the guest rooms on the upper three floors.<sup>13</sup> Since the partitions were not made of an enduring material, only the structural columns (**Fig. 34**) remain from the original construction. A pantry service mezzanine and guest elevators were added left of the *Salon Real*. Evidence of a mechanical room for air conditioning appears in the second floor gallery left. Two elevators had been added at some time since the original construction.



Fig.34 Interior view of typical guest floor, author's photo, February 2008

Used continuously as a hotel from the time of its opening until the late 1990s, the building as originally constructed suffered many additions to increase capacity. Many of these changes enveloped the original architecture and disguised from view that the Condado Vanderbilt had been originally

<sup>12</sup> Copy of the current Project plans were provided by the Office of Tom Marvel Architects, October 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Plans for the guest rooms from the third floor were not found but the 2002 as built drawings had different configuration for this part. It is likely that the original interior divisions were changed at that time.

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designed and built to be a stand-alone building. Demolition of the West Wing annex building, the Convention Center with both its underground parking areas, and the ballroom added in 1976 today allow the original Condado Vanderbilt building to stand alone as originally designed and constructed. Thus, it can be fairly claimed that more than at any time in the past sixty years, today's Condado Vanderbilt preserves the design plan originally intended by the architects Warren & Wetmore. These efforts at reconstruction have made the building historically significant by the standards of *Criterion A*: an important building in its own time, the Condado Vanderbilt survives intact in its original location, it preserves its original volumetric design, and it still showcases the original detailing of the façade that make it a recognizable example of the typology of a Grand Hotel designed in the Beaux Arts style.

The building maintains location integrity. Nonetheless, the setting has changed. The original hotel once stood among a field of palm trees. Today, the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel is surrounded by large competing hotel complexes exemplifying later architectural styles. That the Condado neighborhood of today has been transformed from a high-end residential suburb of large single family homes into an upscale hotel and high-rise apartment district of considerable size is due in no small part to the economic acceleration initiated by the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel itself. In this respect, the building complies with *Criterion A*, because its existence as a tourist destination shaped, not only the way that the Condado area developed, but the history of the tourism industry in Puerto Rico.

The building's design integrity is still visually apparent in the scale of the volumetric exterior; the façade's cast stone detailing, and the organization of interior and exterior space. The techniques and quality of the original workmanship can still be appreciated in the metal forms for the concrete slabs, the surviving terrazzo floors, and the window opening details of the southern façade. These identify the building as an example of the Grand Hotel typology built in the Spanish Revival style in the early part of the twentieth century. The physical features of the hotel like the disposition of the buildings wings, the hipped ceramic tile roof and the patterning and detailing of the fenestration openings still project the same sense of grandeur that locals and visitors report experiencing from the time its inauguration nearly ninety years ago.

The loss of the hotel's interior ephemeral furnishings was a process that occurred over time. Many factors intervene in the changes of a hotel typology. Some can be attributed to modernization of the guestrooms, changes in taste in interior décor and social transformations that bring about the changes in the recreational activities that guests enjoy. The different remodeling projects over time altered all windows, doors, game room spaces and guests' room layout from the original design.

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Further damage to the interiors was done by the closing of the hotel in 1997, looting, and the passing of Hurricane Gorges in 1998. Still, the building has endured the test of time: The building's exterior still provides the keys to understanding the style and character of the particular period and historical circumstances when the Condado Vanderbilt was built.

Many of the surviving design features help to identify the building as a Grand Hotel. The design of the mass, façade and second floor spaces have served to fuel visitors' imaginations from the time of its construction until today. And it is probably because of what these elements have expressed as a hotel typology that, in spite of major remodeling, these enduring features remain intact. Committed to respecting the architects' original plan, the current project has done away with those invasive, poorly considered additions that enveloped and hid the hotel's original shape. Today the hotel's mass stands alone as it was originally designed. The current rehabilitation project respects this feature of the hotel. Out of respect for the architects' original plan for the interior, the present rehabilitation project will also replace the interior ceilings and staircase railing in accordance with the architects' original specifications. Though more durable materials were used in their recent reconstruction, the doors and windows have already been replicated in accordance with their original design. In similar fashion, the project aims to respect the interior layout of the second floor public areas and implement a layout for the partitions on the three upper floors similar to Warren & Wetmore's original plan. The integrity of the Condado Vanderbilt hotel building's location, volume, mass, spatial layout, original floors, design and original façade details already have and will continue to prevail over the loss of interior detailing, ceilings, windows and doors in establishing the architectural identity of this hotel. Retaining the physical features that identify it as an early-twentieth-century Grand Hotel, today's Condado Vanderbilt Hotel meets the standard of a historically significant site as defined in Criterion A.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### 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.

### 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

X (See Continuation Sheets)

Social History

Community planning and development

Entertainment/Recreation

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**Period of Significance**

1917 to 1937

**Significant Dates**

1919

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Whitney Warren and Charles Wetmore, architects

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

X (See Continuation Sheets)



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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel is of statewide significance under Criterion A as the building is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of Puerto Rico. Not only does the property possess historical significance as a local representative of Beaux Arts tradition for city planning, but, as the first Grand Hotel built in Puerto Rico. The Condado Vanderbilt played a fundamental part in the development for this part of the city of San Juan and first concretized the idea of an invented Caribbean as a destination for American tourists and forever marked the once sleepy suburb of Condado as the tourist section of San Juan.

**Historical Background and Historic Context**

When originally built, the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel occupied the width of an elongated strip of land bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the north and the Condado Lagoon to the south (**Fig. 35**). The structure's lot retains its northern border with the beach and its southern boundary is Ashford Avenue, the main access road from the Islet of San Juan, continuing the Behn Brothers Bridge to the Condado area and west towards Santurce.



Fig. 35 A 1776 Topographical map detail showing the Condado Area by Thomas O'Daly. Aníbal Sepúlveda, *San Juan: Historia Ilustrada de su desarrollo urbano, 1508-1898*, San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones CARIMAR, 1989

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Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there have been four roadways linking the mainland to the San Juan Islet. Three of these access roads connect via Miramar to the south of the Condado Lagoon; Ashford Avenue and the Behn Bridge connect to the North of the lagoon, via Condado.

The Old City of San Juan communicates with the rest of the island principally by way of two major traffic bridges, the *San Antonio Bridge* and *Guillermo Estevez Bridge*. The San Antonio Bridge (no. 1) carries Muñoz Rivera Avenue's inbound traffic to Old San Juan, while Bridge no. 86 (also called Guillermo Estevez) running parallel to the San Antonio Bridge, deposits the Old City's outbound traffic on Ponce de León Avenue property of the American Railroad Co., the old train bridge (no. 1571), dating from 1932, lies between these two. To the north of the lagoon, perpendicular to the San Antonio Bridge and connecting Old San Juan to Condado in the most direct way from the hotel is *Puente Dos Hermanos*, known in English as the Behn Brothers Bridge.

The San Antonio Bridge, which connects the islet of San Juan and the Miramar area, was the first important bridge built by the Spaniards. The original structure dates from c. 1519 - 1521 when the capital city was moved from Caparra to San Juan (**Fig. 36**).<sup>14</sup> A series of six bridges in the same place succeeded the first wooden passage. At the time of the construction of the Vanderbilt Hotel, the 1894 bridge, designed by Joaquín Gisbert, was standing.<sup>15</sup> This bridge was one of two ways to get from the Old City to the Condado area where the hotel is located. Because of greater traffic demands, the San Antonio Bridge was rebuilt in 1925 to replace the 1894 bridge and the Guillermo Estevez Bridge was designed and finished in 1927 by Rafael Carmoega and Rafael Nones.

<sup>14</sup> Luis Pumarada O'Neill, *Los Puentes Históricos de Puerto Rico*, Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo, (Mayagüez: Editorial Universidad de Puerto Rico, para Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación de Puerto Rico, December 1991) p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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Fig. 36 Puerto Rico Urbano, Aníbal Sepúlveda., Atlas Histórico de la Ciudad Puertorriqueña, San Juan: CARIMAR, 2004, Vol. 3, p. 388.

The piece of land where the hotel building stands lay in a primitive state at the turn of the century. At the heart of the transformation of this parcel and of Condado as a whole lies the story of two brothers.

Having been an agriculturally worthless tract of vacant land since the earliest years of the founding of San Juan, the Condado became more desirable when two very enterprising brothers decided to purchase a parcel of some 150 acres in the Condado and develop a residential park along the lines of the American streetcar suburb.<sup>16</sup>

The two brothers mentioned above were Sosthenes and Hernand Behn who, through their entrepreneurial vision for Condado, established themselves as part of Puerto Rico's social elite. Theirs is an immigrant story:

*"Bearing a Greek first name ("life strength"), Behn came out of the Virgin Islands, son of a Danish father and French mother, began in 1898 as a \$3-a-week bank clerk in New York. With his brother Hernand he ran a small sugar brokerage house in Puerto Rico, in 1914 launched his real career by buying a tiny telephone company."<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Jerry Torres Santiago. *The Invention of the Gates of Paradise: Images, Architecture, and Context in the Development of Hotels in San Juan*, Enrique Vivoni Farange ed., Ever New San Juan, (Río Piedras: Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000), p. 128.

<sup>17</sup> "The Global Operator," *Time Magazine* Vol. LXIX no. 24 (Monday June 17, 1957) page 1, [www.time.com/magazine/article/0,8816,867755,00](http://www.time.com/magazine/article/0,8816,867755,00). Consulted August 3, 2008.

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Military service played a part in the development of their entrepreneurial vision:

The brothers Behn saw the growth potential of the phone in 1917 and through their little phone company began to buy and install telephones throughout Cuba and Puerto Rico. Late in 1917, Sosthenes enlisted in the U. S. Signal Corps (WW I) and rose to the rank of colonel. After the war, the Behn brothers decided to get serious about the phone business and in 1920 organized the International Telephone & Telegraph Corporation. They deliberately named their company IT&T to confuse investors (especially foreign) with AT&T.<sup>18</sup>

But the development of the Condado area was even more crucial to their success as telephone entrepreneurs. Since early in the last century, the principal military communications headquarters for the 10<sup>th</sup> Naval District resided in the capital city,<sup>19</sup> from where the lines extended to other strategic points on the island. As can be seen in the plan detail below (Fig. 37), the commercial telephone lines both from San Juan to the Condado area and from San Juan to Caguas used Sosthenes and Hernand Behn's (Dos Hermanos) bridge. As a consequence, both the Residential Park and the Hotel benefitted when the military communication lines were laid. It is very likely that the Condado area had telephone service long before other high-end neighborhoods in the San Juan suburbs.

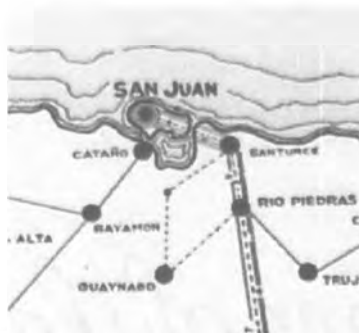


Fig. 37 Plan detail showing Telegraph and Telephone Lines in Operation by the Insular Government 1906-1907, Note the crossing from San Juan to Santurce in the area of Condado of the most important lines that run to Caguas. Golden Album of Puerto Rico: a work of intellectual propaganda for American fraternity (Havana: Artes Gráficas, 1939), p 21.

According to one local newspaper, by the end of 1920, the banking and brokerage firm of Behn Brothers, Inc., boasted diversified holdings that included telephone, insurance, banking, shipping

<sup>18</sup> International Telephone and Telegraph, [www.telcomhistory.org/vm/histories/ITT](http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/histories/ITT)

<sup>19</sup> ConservAcción, Inc., "Update of the Architectural Inventory Naval Security Group Activity Sabana Seca, Puerto Rico," 22 July 2002.

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and real estate companies.<sup>20</sup> By 1936, Sosthenes and Herman had truly internationalized IT&T, achieving controlling interests in *Compañía Telefónica de España*, International Western Electric Corporation, Standard Telephones and Cables, and *Standard Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft* in Germany, among others (Fig. 38). At one point revenues from the company reached \$22 billion. IT&T's earnings alone were \$560 million. A small company that started in Puerto Rico grew to over 400,000 employees and became the fifth largest employer in the United States.<sup>21</sup>



Fig.38 Capital Stock certificate issued to the Prudential Assurance Company, 1936.

The Behn family residence occupied the lot of Condado land closest to Behn's Bridge. The brothers inherited the parcel of land where the Residential Park was established and where the Hotel would later stand from their stepfather Don Mateo Luchetti. According to advertisements in local newspapers at the time, the first streets lay laid out in Condado date from 1908 and lots began selling shortly soon after. An *a priori* for upscale residential development was that a more direct access to the Capital City be built so as to connect the Condado area to the Old City where the bourgeois families conducted their business. It is sometimes imagined that the bridge was constructed prior to the street alignments.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Porto Rico Progress*, (December 31, 1920). Colección Puertorriqueña, José M. Lázaro Library, University of Puerto Rico, CPR/CM S-27

<sup>21</sup> International Telephone and Telegraph, [www.telcomhistory.org/vm/histories/ITT](http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/histories/ITT) (June 14, 2007)

<sup>22</sup> Thus, Dr. Jesus Vega writes, "The first bridge across Boquerón (Condado) inlet was a wooden bridge built by Behn Brothers in 1908-09. Soon after, the Behn brothers began developing lands in the costal lowland area of northern Santurce known as El Condado.." Jesús Vega, "Archeological Evaluation Stage II, Replacement of Dos Hermanos Bridge, Bridge no.1750, San Juan, Puerto Rico," *Terrestrial and Underwater Archaeology*, (May, 1998) p. 39



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However, the bridge and street alignments appeared to have been developed simultaneously. According to advertisements in local newspapers at the time, the first streets laid out in Condado date from 1908 and lots began selling shortly soon after.

In 1910, a year after it was completed, the *Dos Hermanos* Bridge was sold to the Municipal Government of San Juan.<sup>23</sup> An advertisement from the newspaper *El Gráfico* informed readers that the number of cars that crossed was 150 a day since its opening. Not only local transportation benefited from the construction of the Behn Brothers Bridge, but commerce was also facilitated as the bridge reduced the distance from San Juan to Condado and other parts of Santurce to less than two kilometers according to an ad in the journal *El Gráfico* (Fig. 39).<sup>24</sup>

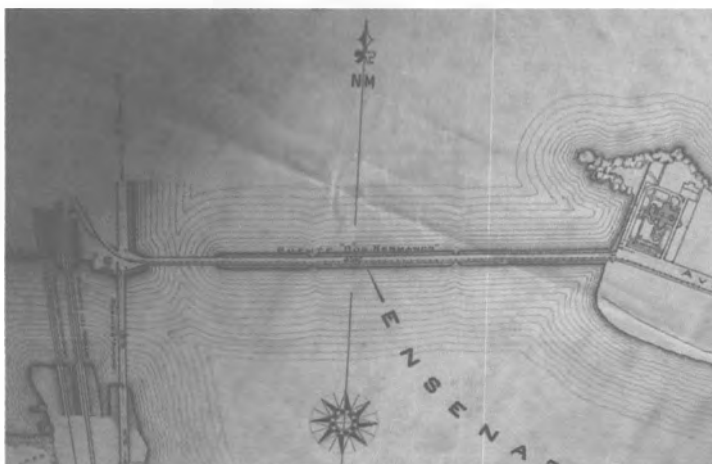


Fig.39 Plan detail showing *Dos Hermanos* Bridge and the Luchetti Mansion from Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters., *General Plan of Santurce, first section*, August 30, 1917.

Advertisements for the sale of lots by the Behn Brothers appearing in the local newspaper, *La Democracia*, in 1910 read: All dimension lots in the logical place.<sup>25</sup> The development was called El Condado Residential Park and included among the conveniences and amenities for the residents; access through the Bridge, rainwater drainage system, wetland infill, the three acres of park, The Esplanade, The Kiosk and construction of three Boulevards. Since October 1<sup>st</sup> 1909, it was announced

<sup>23</sup> Luis Pumarada O'Neill. *Los Puentes Históricos de Puerto Rico*, Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo, Recinto de Mayagüez, Universidad de Puerto Rico, para Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación de Puerto Rico, Diciembre de 1991, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Anibal Sepúlveda. *PR Urbano*, volumen III, Ediciones Carimar, San Juan, 2004, p. 392

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Pp. 392



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that the upper class homes of M. Rodríguez Serra, F. Ramírez de Arrellano, Ralph Swigget and José Llompart had been completed. The advertisement concluded by stating that the lots had been purchased for half of their current value only a year before.<sup>26</sup>



Fig.40 Postcard that shows Boulevard at Condado in Rodríguez, *San Juan, Ciudad Soñada*, The Americas Series. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005; n. p.: Editorial Tal Cual, 2005, P.154

The "Borinquen Park Company" was incorporated as a franchise in August, 1909. Its main business was to operate and maintain pleasure parks, amusement enterprises and eating and drinking establishments.<sup>27</sup> This company operated the Borinquen Park, which catered to the Condado residents' and the general public's need for amusement in the fashionable manner of the European and American metropolis (Fig. 40). Because of the efforts of the Borinquen Park Company, Sanjuaneros dressed in the latest fashions enjoyed afternoon strolls and could mingle in the shade of the palm trees that bordered the park's northern border.

The first decade of the 20th century saw the trolley system change from coal (steam) to electric power. A rail for the San Juan Condado Electric Trolley<sup>28</sup> was installed in 1928 along the Dos

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Pp. 392

<sup>27</sup> Archivo General de Puerto Rico, section Departamento de Estado, Corporaciones, Caja 9.

<sup>28</sup> Jesús Vega, "Archeological Evaluation Stage II, Replacement of Dos Hermanos Bridge, Bridge no.1750," *op cit.* p. 41

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*Hermanos Bridge (Fig. 41)*. The new line used *Dos Hermanos Bridge* to access the residential park. This new line continued towards *Parque Borinquen*, at the end of the urbanization, by way of *Magdalena* and *Ashford Avenues*. From there it went through *Del Parque Street*, perpendicular to the Park, until it connected again with the main line on *Ponce de León Avenue*.<sup>29</sup>



Fig.41 Photo c. 1910 of Ubarri's trolley going through Condado, Ánibal Sepúlveda Rivera, *Puerto Rico Urbano* Vol. 3, San Juan: CARIMAR, 2004, p. 391

Very little today remains to remind us of the Behn Brothers design of Condado. The original houses of the residential development centered on *Ashford Avenue* has largely been displaced by high-end hotels and apartment buildings. The trolley system has been eliminated, and, though Condado's chief means of crossing to San Juan is still called the *Dos Hermanos Bridge*, widened in 1941 to facilitate automobile traffic, further improved in 1953, rebuilt as a concrete and steel trestle bridge in 1981.<sup>30</sup> The *Dos Hermanos Bridge* is undergoing another total replacement at the time of the writing of this report. Only the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel has survived, in large part because it was the agent of change that transformed the suburb of Condado into the tourist area it is today.

Historical Background of Tourism and Hotels in Florida

<sup>29</sup> Anibal Sepúlveda, *Cangrejos Santurce: Historia Ilustrada de su desarrollo urbano 1508-1950*, (San Juan,: Centro de Investigaciones CARIMAR, 1987), p.33

<sup>30</sup> Jesús Vega, "Archeological Evaluation Stage II, Replacement of Dos Hermanos Bridge, Bridge no.1750," *op cit.* p. 41

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To understand the allure of the tropics at the time of construction of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, it is important to identify the origin of this desire. Palm Beach and Miami in Florida had already begun to emerge as vacation destinations where affluent families could escape the harsh winters of the northern states. This trend was initiated by Standard Oil Magnate Henry Flagler who visited the city of St. Augustine in 1885 and "proposed to build a hotel in the manner of a palace, with towers courts, fountains, loggias and cool retreats."<sup>31</sup> The proposed architecture had to inspire a fantastic experience of distant lands, and so the design adopted for the San Augustine hotels involved a palace typology for the buildings, surrounded by exotic vegetation that were very much sought after.

The architectural realization of Flagler's vision was also greatly responsible for establishing the cities of Southern Florida as a viable alternative to the exoticism of European resorts. As the United States had recently achieved the status of a global power, American architects looked back toward the Golden Age of the Spanish Empire when designing the Florida hotels. Appropriating the Spanish colonial style and reviving it, was a way for the bourgeois society to identify with the grand opulence of a distant imperial era. The historical allegory came from the Spanish regime that was established in Florida before becoming US territory. Thus, "hotels and resorts developed a means of providing people with the opportunity to escape the dreariness of their own life in the city, and offered everyone a sense of luxury and historical associations"<sup>32</sup> This style was also used "when they built their winter homes along the warm coasts of Florida, creating their sub-tropical version of the prestigious area of Newport Rhode Island."<sup>33</sup>

When retreating to a distant place, the wealthy wanted to get there with a minimum of inconvenience. A good transportation system was an *a priori* for the development of Southern Florida as a tourist area. "By 1896, the railroad had reached the little town of Miami, and by 1912 the entire eastern coast of Florida, from St. Augustine to Key West, was linked up."<sup>34</sup> If one wanted to go still further south and still be in U.S. territory, one set off to Puerto Rico. As the island of Puerto Rico was still mostly pristine and undeveloped, it was an idyllic place to set off to.

<sup>31</sup> Rafael A. Crespo. *The Spanish Revival Styles in Florida, Hispanophilia Architecture and life in Puerto Rico 1900- 1950*, (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998), p. 34.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> Jerry Torres Santiago. *The invention of the gates of paradise*, op cit., p. 124.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 124

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Means of Transportation for Tourists going to Puerto Rico

During the early twentieth century, the only way for tourists to get to the island of Puerto Rico was via passenger ships that sailed directly from the East Coast. "A good percentage of that new influx of wealthy tourists came from New York City"<sup>35</sup> owing to the steamship lines that connected Puerto Rico with the United States. Originally, maritime traffic connecting Puerto Rico to the United States was primarily ancillary to the sugar trade:

The extremely busy trade of Puerto Rico has had tremendous influence in the development of her maritime traffic, which in 1913 was almost limited to three steamship companies and at the present time comprises not less than twelve." The New York and Porto Rico Line, Bull Insular Line and Red D Line, maintain passenger and freight service between the Atlantic ports of the United States and Puerto Rico.<sup>36</sup>

The direct connection between commerce in sugar to tourism at El Condado is easy to trace. Not only did the Luchetti and Behn family fortunes have their origins in sugar and shipping, but "[a] good percentage of that new influx of wealthy tourists came from New York City"<sup>37</sup> aboard the steamship lines that connected Puerto Rico with the United States.

As the need and opportunity to transport passengers in a grand manner arose, ships were furnished for that purpose. Passenger ships became more specialized, and voyages became more frequent. As the voyage itself had to be a continuation of the lifestyle to which the tourists were accustomed, tourist companies placed great emphasis on the excellence of service and comfort aboard the ocean liners as the voyage itself had to be a continuation of the lifestyle accustomed by the tourists. It also served to show all the advantages and progress of Puerto Rico since the means of transport was a portal to the tourist destination and experience. After all The Condado Vanderbilt was "An American hotel [that] had been transported, lock, stock, and barrel to an exotic spot."<sup>38</sup> The Condado Vanderbilt was advertised as these liners' luxurious port of call.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Antonio Monteagudo. *Álbum de oro de Puerto Rico: a work of intellectual propaganda for American fraternity*. (Havana: Artes Gráficas, 1939) p 34.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

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Fig.42 Map from the New York and Puerto Rico Steamship Co. showing various services to the Island, [www.timetableimages.com/maritimeindex.htm](http://www.timetableimages.com/maritimeindex.htm)

Maritime passenger traffic was a key component in the early development of Puerto Rican tourism. The many cruise lines connecting San Juan with ports on the Eastern seaboard and other ports within the Caribbean Sea made this type of tourism economically viable (Fig. 42). The Bull Insular Line maintained a frequent and splendid passenger service between San Juan and the ports of Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Norfolk. The Red "D" Line, subsidiary of the Grace Line, operated ships calling at New York, San Juan, Venezuela and Curacao. *Compañía Naviera de Cuba* offered passenger service to the Dominican Republic, San Juan and Cuba. The Lykes Line and Waterman Line also carried passengers and freight between San Juan and ports of the Gulf of Mexico. The New York and Porto Rico Line accommodated the majority of its passengers in the ships named *SSS Borinquen*, *Coamo* and *Puerto Rico*. All were devoted to tourist travel: the first two of them alternated weekly trips, and the latter offered fortnightly service.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Monteagudo. *Album de oro de Puerto Rico*, op cit., p.34



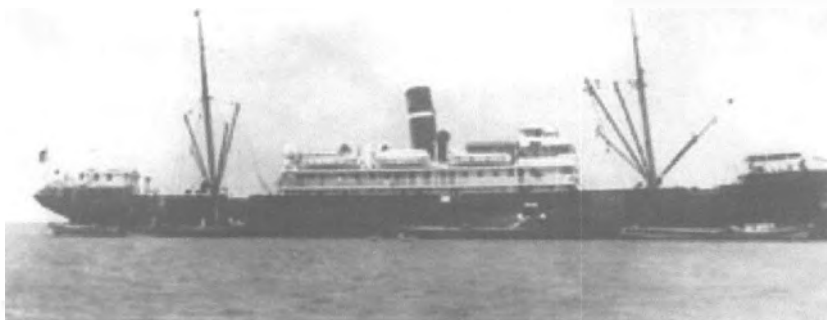
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*The San Juan built in 1900*

Fig.43 The ship S.S. *San Juan* aboard which the Condado Vanderbilt's staff traveled from New York. Björn Larsson collection. 2001-2006.  
Maritime Timetable Images.com

As important as were San Juan's communications with the Eastern seaboard of the United States, Puerto Rico was also accessible from other regions of the world: *Compagnie Generale Transatlantique's* French liners connected San Juan to ports in France and Great Britain. The Horn Line connected the Caribbean to Germany and Belgium. Both the McCormick Line and American Hawaiian Steamship Co. operated between San Juan and the Pacific ports of United States (Fig. 43), and the Canadian National Steamship Co. connected San Juan to the ports of Montreal, Halifax, Bermuda, and the Lesser Antilles.<sup>40</sup> This easy accessibility by sea was the first step in putting Puerto Rico on the map as an international tourist destination: once the early navigation routes made feasible the idea of a sustainable tourist industry in Puerto Rico, then the existence of the Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel promoted more passenger ship traffic.

The Connection of the Vanderbilt-family to the Property

Descendants "of Dutch settlers who had migrated to America in the latter half of the 17th century,"<sup>41</sup> the Vanderbilt family name was originally "van der Bilt." The Vanderbilts owe their importance to the vast wealth that they accumulated from the transportation industry from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The story begins with Cornelius Vanderbilt, who began in the shipping business at a very young age working for a small wage. He worked his way up the ladder and

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 35

<sup>41</sup> Charles W Snell. *Vanderbilt Mansion*, National Historic Site, New York, National Register of Historic Places, Historical Handbook Series, no. 32 (Washington, D.C., 1960). [www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books).



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founded his own ferry company. His business prospered: soon his company's ships were calling at ports all around the world, and the Vanderbilt family name became synonymous with international maritime transportation.

The second chapter of the story begins late in Cornelius's life when his eldest son, William Henry Vanderbilt, persuaded him to invest in America's railroads. Soon after the family's involvement "the name Vanderbilt was inseparable from railroading in the United States."<sup>42</sup> A direct consequence of William Henry Vanderbilt's expansion of the Vanderbilts' railroad holdings was the family's involvement in public architecture and luxury hotel design. One of the major railroad systems that came under the Vanderbilts' control was the New York Central Railroad. The master plan for the section of the city where the railroad came to an end called for the design of hotels, among other buildings, close to the terminal. Thus, when adding value to their investment in this railway, the Vanderbilts found themselves in a position to commission the city blocks that surrounded the main railroad station in midtown Manhattan as well as the Grand Central Terminal itself.

The Vanderbilts gave the contract to design Grand Central Terminal and the surrounding blocks to the New-York-based architectural firm, Warren & Wetmore. From the time of its establishment, the firm Warren & Wetmore had been the architect of choice for the Vanderbilt family. One of the architects of the firm, Whitney Warren, was, in fact William H. Vanderbilt's cousin.<sup>43</sup> The many projects commissioned by the family propelled the firm's reputation as well as dignified their designs. "In 1908 Vanderbilt called upon Warren & Wetmore to design a guesthouse at 49 East 52<sup>nd</sup> street, one block away from his mansion on Fifth Avenue."<sup>44</sup> With the backing of the Vanderbilts, the very young firm of Warren & Wetmore soon gained vast experience in grand scale hotel and residential building design. Indeed, the Biltmore Hotel, the Vanderbilt and the Hotel Commodore emerged as the most prestigious luxury hotels in the vicinity of Grand Central. Not surprisingly, it was this firm that the Vanderbilts turned to build the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel in San Juan.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. [www.cr.nps.gov/history/online](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online) books.

<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Powell. *Grand Central Terminal: Warren and Wetmore*, (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., London, 1996), p.11.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker. *The Architecture of Warren and Wetmore*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton, New York, London, 2006), p. 133

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The Architectural Firm of Warren & Wetmore

The firm that built the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel was founded in New York in 1898 by Whitney Warren and Charles D. Wetmore. Whitney Warren (1864-1943) studied architecture at the prestigious and rigorous *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Many aspiring architects from the United States wanted to attend this school because the emphasis of the program was on the classical architecture tradition, the emerging style of the times. The training at the *Ecole* was based on employing strong drawing and sketching skills, developed in the classroom, to copy the details of classical architecture so as to learn them. Warren traveled to Europe, as many young students did, and started to build a "visual library of details that would become part of his architectural vocabulary."<sup>45</sup> The drawings that he collected from antique structures from many different parts of Europe, would later manifest themselves as details and architectural elements on modern buildings of his own design dispersed throughout Europe and the New World.

Warren's not insignificant inheritance allowed him to remain in France for ten years after attending *L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. Upon returning to the United States, he designed a country house for a Charles Wetmore, a wealthy young lawyer very interested in architecture. While working on the project, they became friends and later professional partners. Wetmore had been working in the law offices of Carter & Ledyard in New York. Due to partial deafness, he was encouraged to try a new profession. In 1898, the firm Warren & Wetmore was consolidated and Charles Wetmore commenced his formal architectural training. The firm designed and completed over three hundred major projects during its existence from 1898 to 1931.<sup>46</sup>

The time period between the Spanish American War and the Great Depression when these architects worked, was a time of such great economic expansion in the United States that it came to be known as the American Renaissance or the Gilded Age. During this time, some families who took advantage of the commercial growth became wealthy to a degree ~~an~~ unprecedented in North America. The Vanderbilts are an example of a family that emerged from humble origins to amass enormous wealth. To translate their wealth into quasi-aristocratic status, they needed an architecture that would display their new riches and reinvent their history.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Powell. *Grand Central Terminal: Warren and Wetmore*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1996, p.11.

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*The Vanderbilts' class anxiety paralleled the nations. The United States was still a young country and yet it was possessed of great economic strength. American society in general was searching for a way to represent its prosperity in a way that Europe would understand. To this end, a symbolic history had to be architecturally created. As class status in Europe derived chiefly from ancestral lines and wealth, it was left to America's very rich families to establish suitable monuments to America's newfound status a world power.*

In the hands of America's architectural firms, the style known as "Modern French" served this purpose well. This style was based on making free use of classical architectural elements and recombining them to achieve modern building typologies with old style allure. The firm of Warren & Wetmore "was devoted to Beaux-arts classicism, as taught in the Paris Ecole."<sup>47</sup> Beaux Arts classicism as taught in the Ecole rested on the idea that the study of traditional architectural elements and details enabled designers to appropriate historical iconography and make it serve new ends. Remaining faithful to the architectural principles taught at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, its students aimed to design buildings that followed "a clear and legible plan that gave would give rise to a clear and legible elevations and sections."<sup>48</sup> Precise rules of symmetry and balance lent a sense of order and tradition to the buildings' internal sequence, while the allusive architectural elements drew on iconography of the past to convey new meaning in the present.

The firm Warren & Wetmore became very successful both in the United States and abroad. Before the Great Depression of 1929, many urban public projects were private endeavors. In a way the Vanderbilts encouraged the development of the City Beautiful with the projects they commissioned. Warren & Wetmore was their favorite architectural firm. After designing Grand Central Terminal in midtown Manhattan, Warren & Wetmore came to specialize in the design of railroad stations. Hotel design came to be another area of expertise for Warren and Wetmore. Their influence extended outside of the continental United States: indeed, they designed ground-breaking hotel projects in Canada, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

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Fig.44 Local news paper advertising of the most important Hotels in New York City, *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, (October 1919) p.2

When the opportunity arose to design a luxury hotel in Puerto Rico, Warren & Wetmore already had a standing in hotel design. "By the time construction on Warren & Wetmore's Biltmore Hotel began in 1912, the firm had successfully carved a niche for itself as hotel architect with earlier designs for the Belmont, Ritz, and Vanderbilt hotels."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, their standing contributed to the local fervor for the project: These three hotels were advertised with illustrations in *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, a popular magazine of the time, providing local patrician society with the images of elegant hotels that they wished to emulate (Fig. 44).

Prominent display of personal beauty was a means to achieve status at the time. Elite Society's theatrical behavior at the beginning of the century resulted in all public buildings being designed as places where people could gather and be seen. In Grand Central Station, for example, Warren & Wetmore aimed at creating a public space that would make the most significant impact on urban life. Toward this end, galleries were designed to enable visitors to stroll and look down at the busy scene of the main waiting hall. Just as the architects had conceived of the human traffic passing through the train station as an event to be watched, so they approached hotel design, creating spaces for strolling in full view of galleries:

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 118.



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With its city hotels, Warren & Wetmore successfully demonstrated that a hotel's complex program could be shaped into a functional, efficient, and livable form capable of providing the scenographic variety demanded for society's stage.<sup>50</sup>

To see people and be seen, was an important consideration for sequence design in the public areas both inside and outside of the Condado Vanderbilt because, just as in New York, the Hotel's public gardens and lobbies constituted for Puerto Rico's status conscious socialites both grounds on which to promenade and places to meet with members of the same social circle (Fig 45).



Fig45 Warren and Wetmore's Project rendering for the hotel and gardens, (1917) International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Office Archives

Architectural style associated with the property

The architectural style known as the *Spanish Revival* enjoyed much popularity in Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean. Buildings built in this style combine the use of complex spatial volumes and sequences and architectural motifs common to the Spanish colonial period. The origins of the style lie in the continental United States:

The style was born, quite appropriately, in St. Augustine, the center of the earliest introduction of the European presence into what is now the United States. St. Augustine became the center for

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 118.



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the exploration of a new venue of architectural expression that could reflect the character of the city and the Spanish tradition in Florida.<sup>51</sup>

The city of St. Augustine's use of Spanish revival architecture provided historical references that were understood to have value in attracting tourists to the city. This style came indirectly to Puerto Rico via the architectural influence of Florida's hotels rather than from its origins in the Spanish Colonial historical references.

In the early twentieth century, the American imaginary was filled with Spanish derived architectural forms given a particular color by the academy and the built legacy of the Californias.<sup>52</sup>

Though Puerto Rico at the opening of the twentieth century was closer to the Spanish colonial tradition than either Florida or California, paradoxically, the architectural style of the Spanish Revival came indirectly to Puerto Rico, filtered through the architectural influence of Florida's and California's revival styles, rather than drawing on authentic local Spanish Colonial architectural modes. Moreover the examples used as models for the Condado Vanderbilt were hotels designed by John Marven Carrère and Thomas Hastings like the Hotel Ponce de León in St. Augustine that "...preserve a relative simplicity in their structures, with the ornamentation contained within specifically designated areas in order to maintain clean lines."<sup>53</sup> Recognizing that feeling had to be expressed as well as reason, the architects turned to history for inspiration. The search for a modern building type that could stimulate the imagination and claim an association with America's past was achieved through the Spanish Revival Style.

As an architectural genre, hotels can be considered as standing in a reciprocal relationship with historical reality. As a principal door way or threshold into a country, hotels have the potential to reciprocate or reflect both the yearnings and dreams of a society and its contradictions and conflicts.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, though an import, the Spanish revival style was appropriately used by Warren and Wetmore in Puerto Rico for the Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel since it had a clear reference to the country's past but refused to be limited by it.

<sup>51</sup> Crespo, *The Spanish Revival Styles in Florida*, op cit., p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> Torres Santiago, *The Invention of the Gates of Paradise*, op cit., p. 124.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

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The expensive and innovative buildings of the early twentieth century marked the beginning of a new era in architecture, for they were part of the first program of public, multilevel buildings in the United States executed throughout in concrete. Among its several new uses, this material both worked well as a replacement for stone and permitted the emulation of Renaissance structures, without being too expensive. Coquina concrete allowed architects to explore its architectural possibilities as a replacement for the authentic stone employed in sixteenth-century exemplars.<sup>55</sup> Since concrete can be molded to any form, it was easier to recreate the complex volume overlapping found in old Spanish buildings that, in the originals, usually had been the result of the accumulation of additions made over generations to strongholds, fortifications and castles that gave rise to the building's irregular shape. Concrete's strength and malleability permitted twentieth-century architects to achieve the look of severity and authority associated with the sheer massiveness of Spanish Renaissance buildings and their overlapping volumes at the same time that it permitted the delicate work that adorned their buildings' facades. With this building material, "designers effectively increased the contrast and ornamental character of the building planes, while reducing the dependence on highly skilled labor, as well as the cost of constructing the hotel."<sup>56</sup>



Fig.46 Postcard of the Hotel showing the main façade through the gardens with kiosk, circa 1920. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 43

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

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In accordance with its original design, the massive concrete volumes of the Condado Vanderbilt overlap symmetrically (Fig. 46), and its characteristically Spanish elements – its arches, balconies, window details, and terracotta roof – remain its most prominent exterior features. Also surviving is the iconographic ornamentation of the façade, whose combination of anchors, shells, and sea creatures, both natural and mythological, continue to speak more loudly to the Vanderbilt's desire to make reference to the origins of their fortune in maritime commerce and at the same time project themselves as the modern-day Admirals of the Ocean Sea, into whose demesne fell the city of San Juan than to the true nature of the Island economy as it existed at the time.

For the guests staying at the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, the overall presentation created a sense of belonging to a social circle that was represented by one of America's most prominent families. The Vanderbilt name was already associated with hotels in New York which guaranteed a modern American lifestyle to travelers far away from home. "It is significant that the exotic Spanish wrappings were used as part of the publicity of the hotels, since it establishes a marketing practice that would continue to be used until our day."<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, the pristine undeveloped surroundings became part of the Condado Vanderbilt's charm as long as comforts and customs available at the hotel were exactly the ones to which tourists were accustomed to use at home.

The Building's Significance to the Development of Condado

At the beginning of the twentieth century, hotels and guesthouses in San Juan were used basically for city visitors doing business and calling on family. Because the Spanish word "hotel" refers to the big family houses built in the city blocks of Paris, the connotation of the word in Puerto Rico had up to that time conveyed the sense of a domestic space: The style of accommodations typical of a so-called "hotel" in that time ended more toward those provided by a guesthouse than toward what we would think of as hotel accommodations today, in part because they were used for long or short stays. Prior to the building of the Condado Vanderbilt, the most important hotel in the Old City was the Hotel Palace, located in the corner of Tetuán and Tanca Street. Totalling six floors in height, the building had 110 rooms and a roof garden used for the gatherings of the upper class. The building typology for hotels in San Juan before the Condado Vanderbilt did not differ from the typology of apartment or commercial buildings in the city.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Crespo. *The Spanish Revival Styles in Florida, Hispanophilia*, op cit., p. 47

<sup>58</sup> Torres Santiago. *The Invention of the Gates of Paradise*, op cit., p. 125.

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Fig 47 Postcard c. 1920 showing the hotel set on the lagoon and Behn Brothers Bridge at a distance.  
International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

After the triumph that World War I represented to the American economy, the American upper class society became interested in traveling to exotic spots like Florida and Puerto Rico that, unlike Europe, had not been ravaged by war. The war had left a surplus for the upper classes and money was ready to be spent on luxuries, like travel. Right after the war, the Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel was ready to provide the luxuries required by the upper classes. "The typological and ideological concept of the grand hotel arose in Puerto Rico as a direct reference to the American tourists."<sup>59</sup> In accommodating and marketing itself to the desires of American tourists, the Condado Vanderbilt introduced into Puerto Rico the concept of the hotel as a type of resort (Fig 47).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

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Fig.48 Detail from Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters, *General Plan of Santurce*, first section, August 30, 1917

The Grand Condado Vanderbilt was the pioneer tourist hotel enterprise on the island. It was unique in the sense that it was the first to transport the typology of a grand hotel like as the ones in Palm Beach to an unusual American territory that had a different tradition of guest accommodations (**Fig. 48**). As the first, it became the model, the paragon that changed the paradigm: Not only did the hotel changed the way that Americans vacationed in the Caribbean but also changed the way that Puerto Ricans understood leisure time on their Island. An advertising brochure that pronounced the advantages of the Hotel can also be understood to have expressed the wishes of both the hotel owners and their guests:

The fine Hotel Condado is situated in the residential section bearing its name. Its magnificent location facing the Atlantic Ocean and the maximum comfort of its rooms make it one of the principal establishments of its kind in Spanish America.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Monteagudo, *Album de oro de Puerto Rico*, op cit., 34.



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The idea of Condado as a magnificent location sprang from minds of the brothers Sosthenes and Hernand Behn who owned the land and wanted to embark on a business that made use of the natural scenery to attract American clientele. Conceived as a business enterprise by the company that operated the Hotel Vanderbilt in New York City,<sup>61</sup> the Condado Vanderbilt arose out the collaboration of the Behn brothers, the Vanderbilt Hotels Company and John E. Berwind. John Berwind was one of four brothers who was a major player in the U.S. coal industry. The Berwind-White Coal Mining Co. was one of the major suppliers for the Pennsylvania Railroad and the important civil and naval ships that sailed from New York.<sup>62</sup> The Porto Rico Coal Company, one of the many subsidiaries under Berwind's control, linked John Berwind's fortunes to the island's development. John E. Berwind was not only involved in the construction of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel in Puerto Rico, he had shares in the hotel totaling one-million-one-hundred-fifty dollars in 1928 at the time of his death.<sup>63</sup>

The Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel

The Grand Condado Vanderbilt Hotel project was designed in 1917 with plans to open the following year at a cost of one million dollars. The inauguration took place on October 16, 1919, with an extravagant party that reunited many distinguished people from Puerto Rico's high society including Madame Luchetti. According to the account in the newspaper *El Mundo*, published two days later<sup>64</sup> Mr. Julian Howard was present at the gathering in representation of the firm Warren & Wetmore. When it mentions the "modernity of the building" and how it the Hotel, with grand interiors and elegant exterior "contributes to beautifying" with the grand interiors and elegant exterior look the charming area of Condado, the newspaper article hints at the expectations that the Condado Vanderbilt created for the future of the city of San Juan.

Beautifying the Condado area of San Juan was self-consciously part of the designers' intent. A promotional brochure from the era announced that "the Condado-Vanderbilt Hotel will be opened as a beautiful and completely appointed hotel on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919, at the edge of San Juan, chief and most alluring city of the island of Porto Rico, U.S.A. (Fig. 49).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>62</sup> Lou Athey, "The Berwinds" in *Kaymoor, A River Community* [westvirginia.topcities/BerwindFamily.htm](http://westvirginia.topcities/BerwindFamily.htm)

<sup>63</sup> Deeds Register, San Juan, Santurce North Section, Inscription II, property 6496, volume 140, folio 29.

<sup>64</sup> *El Mundo*, (October 18, 1919) p 3.

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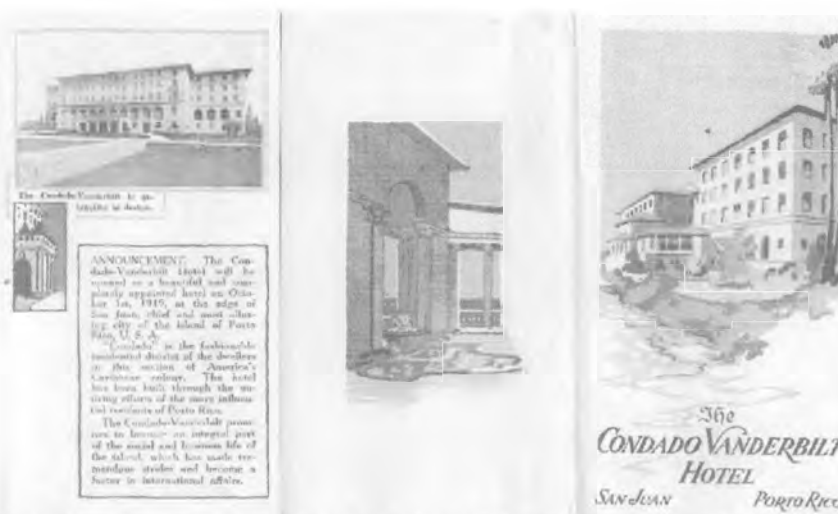


Fig. 49 Advertising brochure announcing the opening of the Hotel, circa 1919. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

The ad went on to describe the location setting of the new hotel as follows:

With its classical lines, its porticoes, and its surrounding gardens, the Condado-Vanderbilt will be a veritable Alhambra to the traveler. Imagine a Venetian blue ocean, rimmed by a craggy, white beached shore. Picture tennis courts, golf courses, sailing yachts, motor cars and straight hard roads. Rush over the quiet lagoon in a motor speed boat. Drive your car two miles to San Juan, quaintest city flying the Stars and Stripes. Over it all, throw the indescribable glamour of palm trees and pale half tropical moonlight, with its languor and mystery. It is an irresistible appeal.<sup>65</sup>

The American imaginary was prepared to jump at the prospect of visiting this new tourist destination where guests could enjoy an invigorating swim in the ocean and then a languid boat ride on the quiet waters of the lagoon. On the other side of Ashford Avenue, "[t]he great delight of the Condado Vanderbilt was its gardens: walled and hedged spaces of exotic beauty" <sup>66</sup> A trolley ride allowed hotel guests to enjoy *Borinquen* Park where boulevard walks through the tropical landscape communicated with alluring ocean waters. The San Juan Country Club in Condado close to the

<sup>65</sup> The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, propaganda brochure, from the original piece, circa 1918, inner form, International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Torres Santiago. *The Invention of the Gates of Paradise*, op cit., p. 130.

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hotel was available for the practice of tennis, polo, and golf. When describing the building itself, the ad went on to state that "The Hotel itself is an anomaly. It is decidedly a part of modern, progressive Porto Rico, yet it also recalls the fragrance and memory of the past. It meets every requirement set by the best standards of America."<sup>67</sup> Associated with the fashionable residential district it belonged to and the influential residents who built it, the Condado Vanderbilt boasted the most modern amenities: indeed, it is likely that the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel had the first elevator in Puerto Rico.

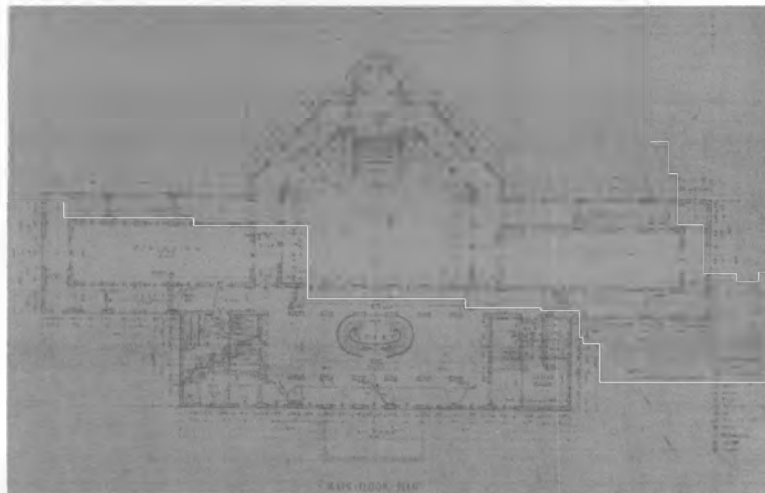


Fig.50 Second floor Plan detail of El Condado Hotel for the Porto Rico Hotel Corporations, Condado, Warren and Wetmore, 1917, Rafael Carmoega Collection Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico, RCa 0132/P0001/P0009

The building has the shape of three overlapping rectangles. The center mass projects forward to the façade leaving a gap that used to be an internal patio (**Fig. 50**). "The Patio" was described as the courtyard of a Roman Villa. This space came to be known as the *Patio del Fauno* (**Fig. 51**). Surrounded by covered porticoes that were a continuation of the interior galleries of the main floor at the second level, the *Patio del Fauno* had an opened area with fountain at the end of the central axis. From this vantage, the patio established an interesting relation to the sea such that, when viewed through colonnades, the sea appeared to be part of the hotel itself. The verandas above the patio permitted an ocean view from the second floor to promenading guests.

<sup>67</sup> The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, propaganda brochure, from the original piece, circa 1918, inner form, International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives.

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Fig.51 Postcard of the Hotel showing *Patio del Fauno* gallery overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and Interior Gallery of *Patio del Fauno*, ca. 1920. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

The starting point for any guest began in the first floor lobby, where the lyre-shaped double curved staircase, curling up to the second floor, would lead him upward to the main lobby and onward to the open-air galleries around the perimeter of the building. The vertical sequence in Warren and Wetmore designs are important because they achieve through variation in shape an unexpected dramatic effect. It is thus important that this staircase survives intact. The curved shape of the principal stair at the Vanderbilt Hotel in Condado is very similar to the stair found in the hall at Crow's Nest House, also designed by Warren & Wetmore, which is contained in an oval shaped entrance hall. It also bears a resemblance to a stair at the apartment of William K. Vanderbilt Jr. at 651 Park Avenue in New York City.<sup>68</sup> What is most striking about the staircase at the Condado Vanderbilt is that the double staircase stands alone in a focal rectangular shape liberated from the wall, rising upward from the central space to the second floor in two branches.

Wetmore wrote an article entitled "The Development of the Modern Hotel" for *Architectural Review* in April 1913.<sup>69</sup> In the article, he asserted that it was important to use contrast when designing large

<sup>68</sup> Penoyer and Walker. *The Architecture of Warren and Wetmore*, op cit. p.. 227

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 118



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hotels, especially in public rooms, for there is a danger of the interior sequence becoming monotonous. He recommended varying the materials used, the shapes and proportions of the rooms as well as the decoration schemes. This way, the architect assured, harmony would be achieved in general yet individuality could be perceived in each room. This design philosophy explains why there was a difference in treatment for the interior scheme of the principal salons even though they were placed symmetrically in the plan.

The firm mastered the complex problem of arranging the public rooms, bedrooms, apartments, and service spaces in plan, often creating elaborate sequences for entertaining rooms, while placing the more private rooms in an adjacent atmosphere of domesticity.<sup>70</sup>(Fig. 52)

The Condado Vanderbilt is a testimony to this type of arrangement, for galleries envelop the two ballrooms and make the complex sequences possible. Although the two salons had the same area allocated, they differed in shape and internal decoration technique. Even the false ceilings were finished differently: where the *Salon de Gobernadores* had scalloped semi segmented arches, the *Salon Real* was flat with decorations, using corbels where the arched ceiling met the wall. Elegant, these large rooms met an unserved need, providing a prestigious space to celebrate important social functions. Because of these rooms, from carnivals to weddings to special luncheons, the Condado Vanderbilt was the preferred hotel for debutante balls, weddings and special luncheons since its opening.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 119



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Fig.52 A Postcard that shows the interior at the mezzanine level of the second floor. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

In November, 1919, just after the Hotel's grand opening, at a luncheon given by Mr. Hernand Behn to Press members in the Grand Condado Vanderbilt, (the luncheon itself described in the report as "very enjoyable") it was already being affirmed that the Hotel brought honor to the culture and progress of the country. The article went on to assert that people would take pleasure in the Hotel's splendor and refinements that were so agreeable as to elevate human existence. "It is a hotel that dignifies its time, and that will attract many tourists to Puerto Rico", the article concluded.<sup>71</sup>

Attracting tourists to the hotel was paramount in the designers' minds, and the hotel provided its guests with recreational activities at least as well as it served the formal requirements for social functions. So as to attract golf enthusiasts to Puerto Rico, the Condado Vanderbilt Golf Course was built as part of the project at about the same time as the hotel. The course consisted of nine holes on seventy-three acres of land located in Sabana Llana, Río Grande, about thirty minutes from San Juan (Fig. 53). The greens of the course were made of sand designed by Seth Rayner, a well known golf course architect. The Head Pro for the hotel was Mr. William V. Hoare who was in charge of tournaments and who offered golf instruction for the hotel guests and club members.<sup>72</sup> "In March

<sup>71</sup> *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, (November, 1919), p.2.

<sup>72</sup> Jaime Monge, *History of Golf in Puerto Rico*, (San Juan: Self-published, 2004), p. 1

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1930, members of the Condado Vanderbilt Golf Club got together and bought the Sabana Llana property and renamed it "Berwind Country Club" in memory of John E. Berwind.



Fig. 53 Photo of the Vanderbilt's Golf course from ad brochure circa 1920. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

Other sports activities provided included tennis, boating, swimming and even bowling. A four lane bowling alley was located on the first floor of the hotel building next to the four table billiard room. There was even a mini-golf course added to the hotel property in the 1920's. This course was later eliminated: This area is notorious for always having the wind blowing from the north east and probably interfered with the game.

The activities undertaken by guests who had the privilege of staying at the hotel shaped the concept of leisure in the local public's mind. Even the practice of swimming in the ocean as pure recreation was established by the American tourist. Until the opening of the Condado Vanderbilt, local social clubs did not include beach facilities for swimming because it recreational swimming wasn't a local custom. For instance, the very prominent local social club, *El Casino de Puerto Rico*, established in 1898, was built in front of *Plaza Colón* in the urban context, where San Juan's old city walls left a prominent space. In contrast, *El Escambrón Beach Club*, established after the opening of the Condado Vanderbilt, catered to a select clientele of Puerto Rican society, offered sports, swimming

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and dance facilities where locals of elite standing could meet and socialize. What the contrast between the two local clubs reveals is that the Condado Vanderbilt typology and setting provoked new ideas of leisure in the local culture and so transformed the way that people socialized that the very setting of luxury and leisure transferred from the city to the coastline in the local imaginary by taking advantage of the scenery. With the establishment of El Escambrón Beach Club leisure perceptions were changed along with the setting echoing the hotel's amenities and setting in the coast near San Juan. In order to satisfy these and other new recreational needs El Escambrón Beach Club complex was created for a selected clientele of Puerto Rican society. The club provided sports, swimming and dances where people of the same standing could meet and socialize. The new social practice and new thinking about leisure space brought about by the establishment of the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel became important and in helping develop other areas in the city of San Juan.

The "Volstead Act" or Prohibition was passed by Congress the year of the Condado Vanderbilt's inauguration. Prohibition affected tourism in Puerto Rico because it inspired some Americans to go to places like Mexico City or Havana where alcohol wasn't illegal. The idea of tourism in the Caribbean was radically divided as a result of Prohibition. Places like Cuba or Mexico received visitors that sought a more dangerous experience: not only did the hotels in these places offer alcohol, casino gambling, and vaudeville style entertainment, but political instability was a reality in these destinations and required the traveler to assume some degree of risk. A U.S. controlled territory where drinking was illegal, Puerto Rico became by contrast a more reputable tourist destination, better suited for the family-oriented vacation. As the Condado Vanderbilt "continued to be, for almost forty years, the Island's best and most luxurious hotel,"<sup>73</sup> The Grand Hotel typology in Puerto Rico, as exemplified in the El Condado retained a respectable veneer as opposed to the dubious repute of the "swanky" hotels in foreign cities that developed their reputations and their tourist industries by catering to adult vice as the concept of vice had been defined in American law.

Certainly, World War I brought challenges for Puerto Rico tourism as passenger ships, confiscated by the US Navy, were unavailable to transport tourists to the island. This challenge, however, ended with the Treaty of Versailles. During the Roaring Twenties, tourism to Puerto Rico provided an escape for people who could afford the trip. Indeed, according to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the Governor of Puerto Rico from 1929 to 1932, the island of Puerto Rico was "The Switzerland of America." A 1931 Pamphlet entitled "What Porto Rico Offers" that used this quotation in its introduction, also boasted that "Porto Rico" was a land of

<sup>73</sup> Torres Santiago. *The Invention of the Gates of Paradise*, op cit., p. 132.

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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Beautiful verdant valleys, nestled amongst the hills; mighty mountains" "Blue Caribbean on one side, the vast Atlantic on the other "Waving palms in the soft evening breeze" and Beautiful sun-bathed villages, picturesque, quaint, inviting <sup>74</sup>(Fig. 54)

Among the three major components of the economy "Tourist appeal" was categorized third in order of importance, after agriculture and industry. With tourism advertised as one of the major economical advantages of the Island, investors soon started capitalizing on Puerto Rico's sunlight for purposes other than agriculture.

It helped that the massive forts and palaces of the Old Spanish regime were said to mingle in Puerto Rico with beautiful modern American homes and quaint native huts. Brief as they are, the descriptions published in brochures and advertisements speak volumes about what tourists looking for: attractive as Puerto Rico was in embodying an exotic ideal, it was apparently equally important to inform potential visitors about the good conditions of the roadways and the railway system. Likewise, just as the even climate and good health of the people were noted in the pamphlet, it was apparently also important to indicate that the excellent hotels at San Juan, Ponce and Coamo Springs were idyllic places to stay.

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<sup>74</sup> Héctor Lazo, Manager of the New York office, *What Porto Rico Offers*, pamphlet from the Bureau of Commerce and Industry of Porto Rico. Archivo General de Puerto Rico. Fondo Gobernador 96-20, Caja 213.



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San Juan, Puerto Rico



Fig.54 Aerial photo showing Condado Vanderbilt Hotel and the gardens, circa 1930. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

After World War II, air traffic began to take on more importance as a means of travel. As flights became more frequent, Puerto Rico became still more attractive alternative for tourists. Planes left San Juan to Miami 3 days a week and arrived 4 days a week. Stops included Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic; Puerto Príncipe, Haiti; and Antilla, Cuba. Other countries connected by air were Jamaica, Trinidad, Venezuela, Colombia, Guyana, Brazil and Argentina.

The air navigation company "Pan American Airways Inc., has for several years past includes Puerto Rico in the regular schedules of its passenger, mail and freight service between Miami Florida, and the various countries of the American Continent. The company's airport, located in Isla Grande, back of San Juan Bay, is provided with all the conditions required for a first class service station.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Monteagudo. *Album de oro de Puerto Rico*, op cit., p.37



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Many local businessmen tried to tap into the tourist market. However, it wasn't until the construction of the Normandie Hotel in San Juan in the early 1930s that another hotel could reasonably compete with the Condado Vanderbilt. Despite Puerto Rico's natural beauty, not everything was smooth in the hotel industry. In a letter to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., dated January 28, 1931, the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Puerto Rico<sup>76</sup> demanded legal protection because boarding houses in the island were challenging the hotel industry. The secretary of said association, Andrés Gasparini, requested that the Governor of Puerto Rico order a revision of the sanitary guidelines of 1915 for the industry and those boarding houses be included among the restrictions since many did not have to comply with many regulations. The letter described the critical situation regular hotels experienced because business was going to guest houses which prospered, did not pay the same taxes, and did not have to comply with municipal orders or workers' demands.

Puerto Rico had retained an agrarian economy from the time of the Spanish Conquest in 1493 through the nineteenth century. The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel inaugurated an outward-looking tourist industry that offered Puerto Rico a new opportunity for economic growth. With the new building typology, a new industry emerged – one that meant economical improvement for Puerto Rico through foreign tourism in no small part because the Condado Vanderbilt changed the way Americans thought about Puerto Rico as a travel destination. The Grand Hotel was an enterprise packaged and placed in the Caribbean with all the luxuries and amenities that American visitors expected of its type.

But the Condado Vanderbilt is not only historically significant important as a vacation locale that changed the way that tourism was practiced in Puerto Rico: The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel established the elegant tone that characterized the style accustomed by the upper classes neighborhood of Condado. The same infrastructure that made possible the enterprise of a Grand Style Hotel in Condado – the bridge, the paved streets, the gardens, the water service, the electrical service and the telephone service – also made the area of Condado attractive as an upscale residential suburb of San Juan. Like the hotels around Grand Central Terminal, the hotel Condado and the Condado neighborhood were part and parcel of the same plan to beautify this area of the city. Just as the hotel and grounds constituted an example of the Beaux Arts architectural style, so the Condado neighborhood's supporting infrastructure, the generous size of the lots and upscale family residences, tree-lined streets, boulevards and parks were drawn from the Beaux Arts principles of City Beautiful design, as exemplified in the plan below: (Fig. 55).

<sup>76</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Gobernador, Work 96-20, Hotel Business, box 196.

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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Fig. 55 Detail of Fire Underwriters plan of 1919, First section, AGPR

The hotel designed as a stand-alone building surrounded by gardens and vegetation provided the model for elegant lot development in the Condado residential park of the 1920s. As shown in the photo below (Fig. 56), the development of the Condado Residences as a suburban area in the style of the Beaux Arts was characterized by a detached building type, usually two stories high with much detailing to convey its elegant design, surrounded by a clear lot of ample size that boasted gardens and trees. (Fig. 56)



Fig. 56 Trolleys in the Residential Park of Condado, in Sepúlveda Puerto Rico Urbano p. 392

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
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The construction of the hotel also influenced the design of the houses that were subsequently built in this part of the city because the residents exercised their best efforts to imitate its opulent style. Even if the urban fabric of 1900s Condado has been fundamentally altered, with many single family mansions replaced by high rise buildings and hotels, the elegant ambience of Condado as an upscale tourist destination, first established by the Condado Vanderbilt, still survives.

In sum, the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel is an historically significant building for many reasons: first, the building was designed in 1917 by the world-renowned New-York-based architectural firm, Warren & Wetmore, and constitutes the only design project example of this famous Gilded Age architectural firm in Puerto Rico; second, the building's typology, based on the urban Beaux Arts tradition of the early twentieth century makes the Hotel the forerunner of large scale building types in Puerto Rico, in particular the many hotels of varying scales located in this section of the San Juan metropolitan area that contribute to the island economy (Fig. 57).



Fig. 57 Aerial photo of Condado showing Baldorioty de Castro Avenue, circa 1960. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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Third, the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel contributed to the development a new hotel typology and industry, the first of its kind to market abroad the beauty of Puerto Rico's coastline landscape for vacationing purposes. The resource's significance is that it's the first of this kind and changed within Puerto Rico what it means for Puerto Rico to be a vacation destination. Fourth, as it is the first Grand Hotel built in Puerto Rico designed within the urban Beaux Arts tradition, which established the building a single object within a large lot. Its inception had consequences for the development of the housing areas of Condado and its development. The historic context developed in this study demonstrates the importance that the resource has had within the urban, economic, and cultural development of the greater Condado area. Furthermore The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel embodies the idealization of the Caribbean.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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X (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
- x Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_ General Archives of Puerto Rico \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property Less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 19 808841.27 2043426.63  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

X See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The property is historically associated with lot 040-028-001-02 as recorded in the Puerto Rico Register of Property.

### Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet.



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Rafael Carmoega Collection  
Toro Ferrer & Torregrosa Collection

Archivo General de Puerto Rico  
Department of State, Corporations  
Governors, Franchises  
General Plan of Santurce, First section, *Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters*, August 30, 1917

Departamento de Transportación y Obras Públicas  
Topographical Maps Office  
Office of Bridge Studies

International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives  
The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, propaganda brochure, original postcards and photographs

*Registro de la Propiedad*, San Juan Division, Santurce North Section  
Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Deeds Register

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), San Juan  
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Historic assessment from Bridges no. 1 & no. 86 San Juan Puerto Rico, by UMA Engineers, March 25, 1997

The Office of Marvel and Marchand Architects  
As built plans and historical photographs

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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
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Zone 19 Easting-808841.27 Northing-2043426.63  
Plan detail from Topographical Plan of San Juan. USGS Data, 1982 revised.

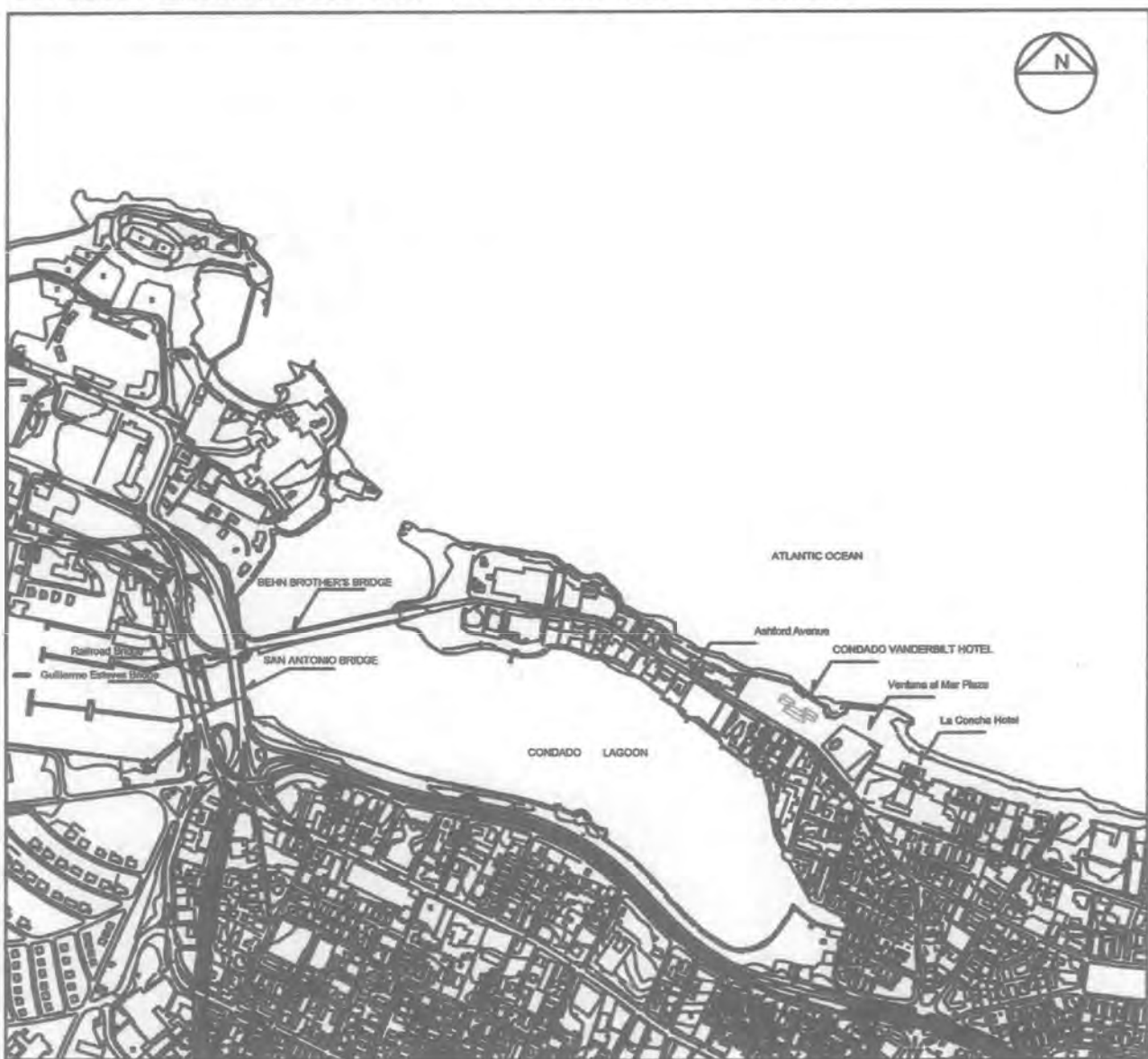
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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Site Plan with the Condado Context



Site plan courtesy of Tren Urbano DTOP

Not to scale



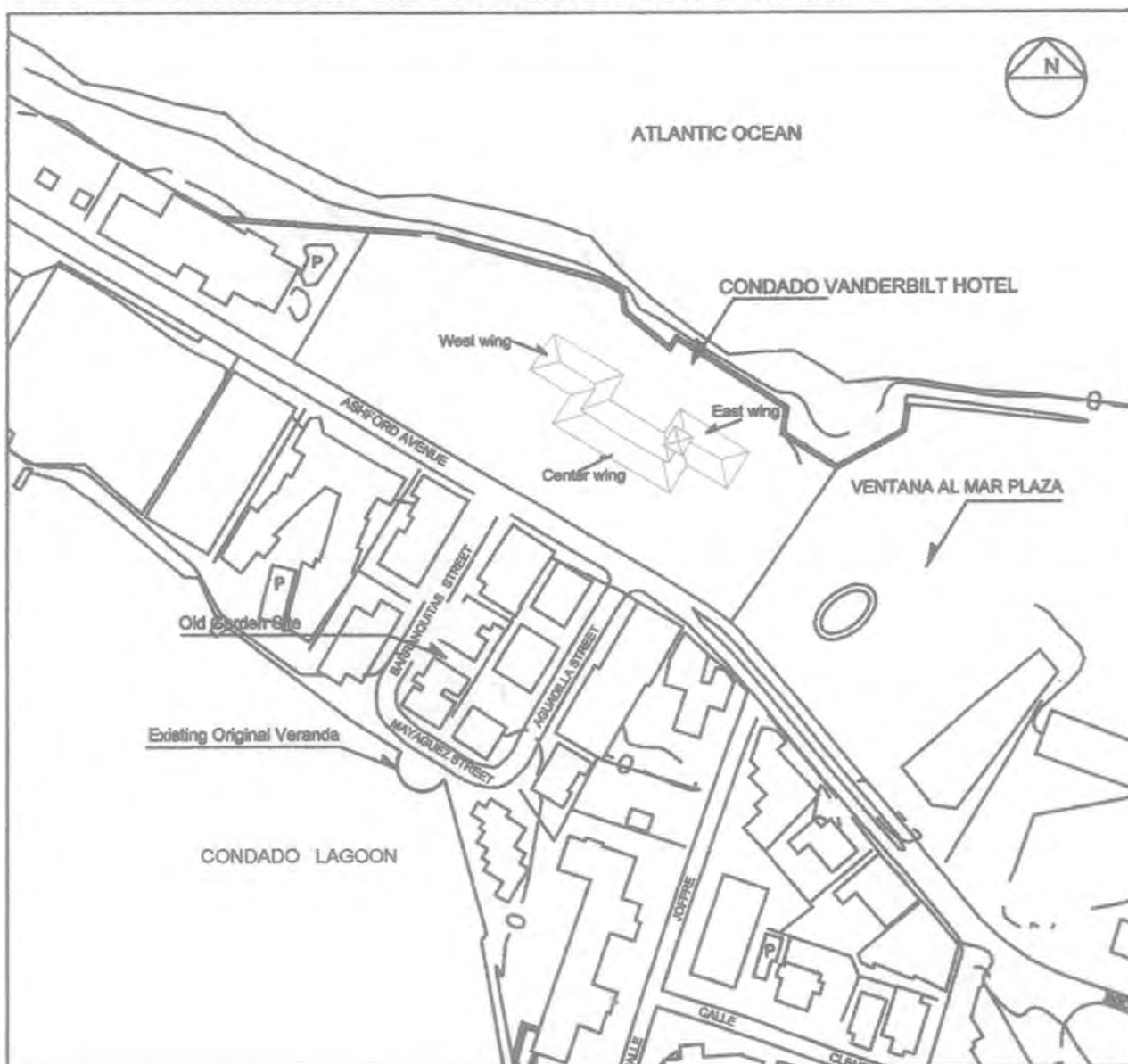
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Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Site Plan with the Condado Context



Site plan courtesy of Tren Urbano DTOP

Not to scale

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### 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title María Fernanda López Martínez, AIT

Technical assistance provided by: Juan Llanes and Berenice R. Sueiro, PRSHPO

organization María Fernanda López Martínez, DBA date October 9, 2008

street & number 33 Ponce St. telephone 787-756-8676

city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00917

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### 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.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

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name International Hospitality Associates

street & number 1357 Ashford Avenue telephone 787-729-3636

city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00907

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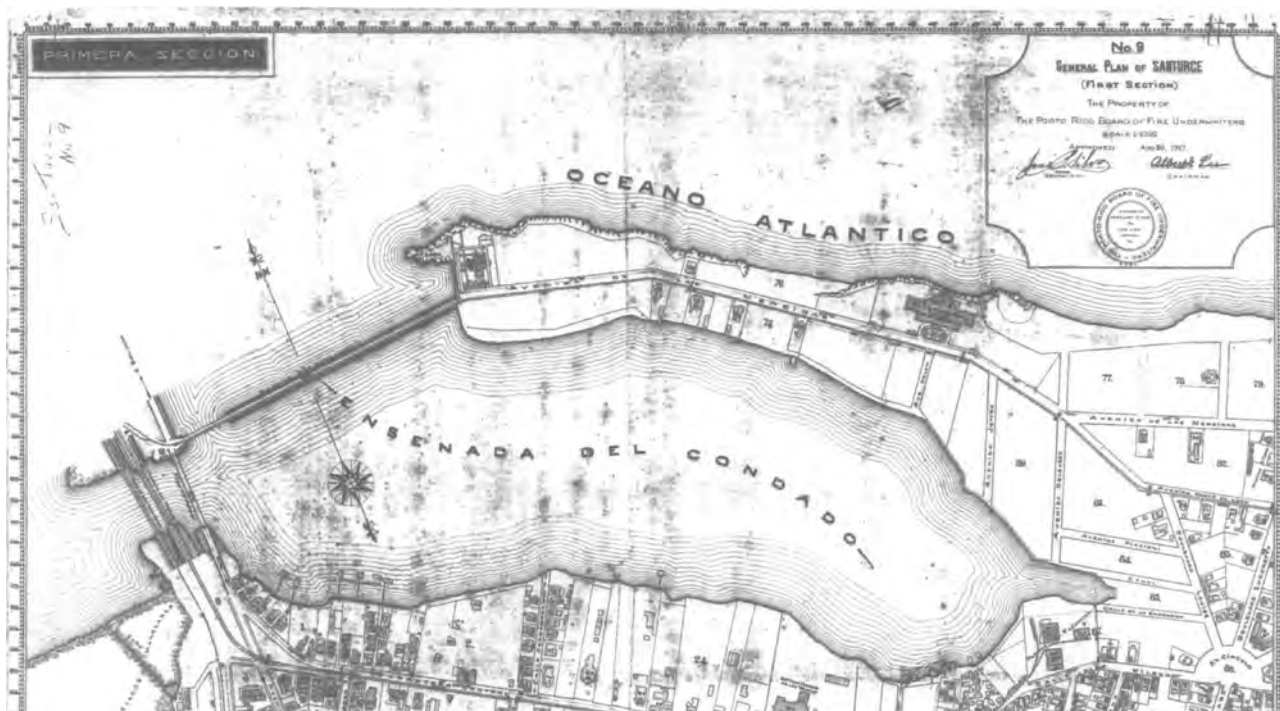
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Additional photos



Detail. Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. General Plan of Santurce, first section. August 30, 1917. Archivo General de Puerto Rico

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Detail that shows the hotel in its residential context. Porto Rico Board of Fire Underwriters. *The General Plan of Santurce, first section* August 30, 1917. Archivo General de Puerto Rico

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CONDADO VANDERBILT HOTEL—SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO.

111571

Original postcard of Condado Vanderbilt Hotel painted photograph. Date unknown, International Hospitality Enterprises Office Archives



ESCAMBRON BEACH CLUB, SAN JUAN, P. R.

Postcard from Escambrón Beach Club, Edgardo Rodríguez, *San Juan, Ciudad Soñada, San Juan, Ciudad Soñada*, The Americas Series. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005; n. p.: Editorial Tal Cual, 2005, p 90.



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Picture of Sosthenes Behn and burial tablet. arlingtoncemetery.net, July 14, 2007

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View of the hotel in its context from Miramar residential area across from lagoon, circa 1920. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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Aerial photo of, from lower left to upper right of Condado, the Condado lagoon, Miramar, San Juan Bay and Cataño at a distance, circa 1960. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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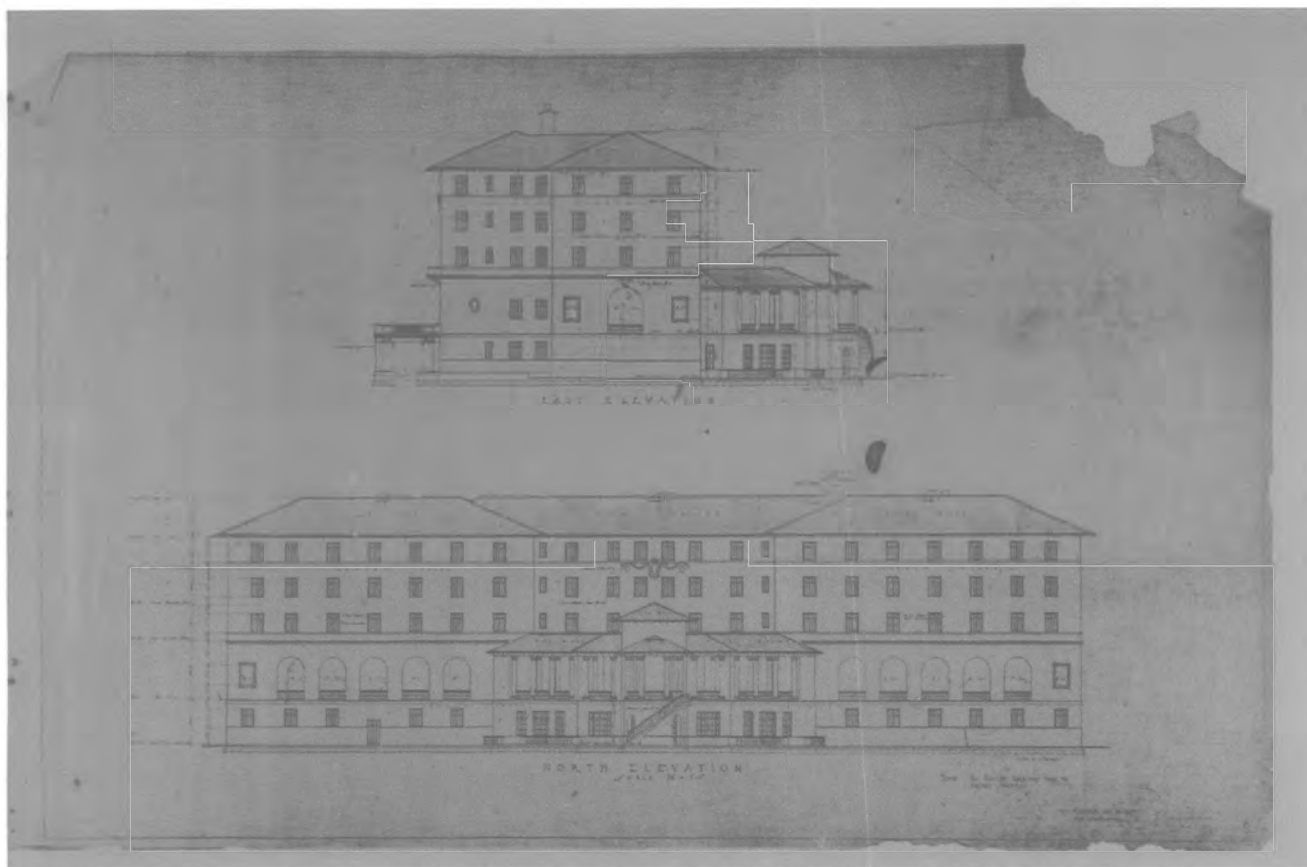
Aerial photo of Condado showing the connections to the San Juan islet circa 1960. International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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Warren & Wetmore, Elevation drawings for El Condado Hotel for the Porto Rico Hotel Corporations (1917) in Rafael Carmoega Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico, RCa 0132/P0001/P0009

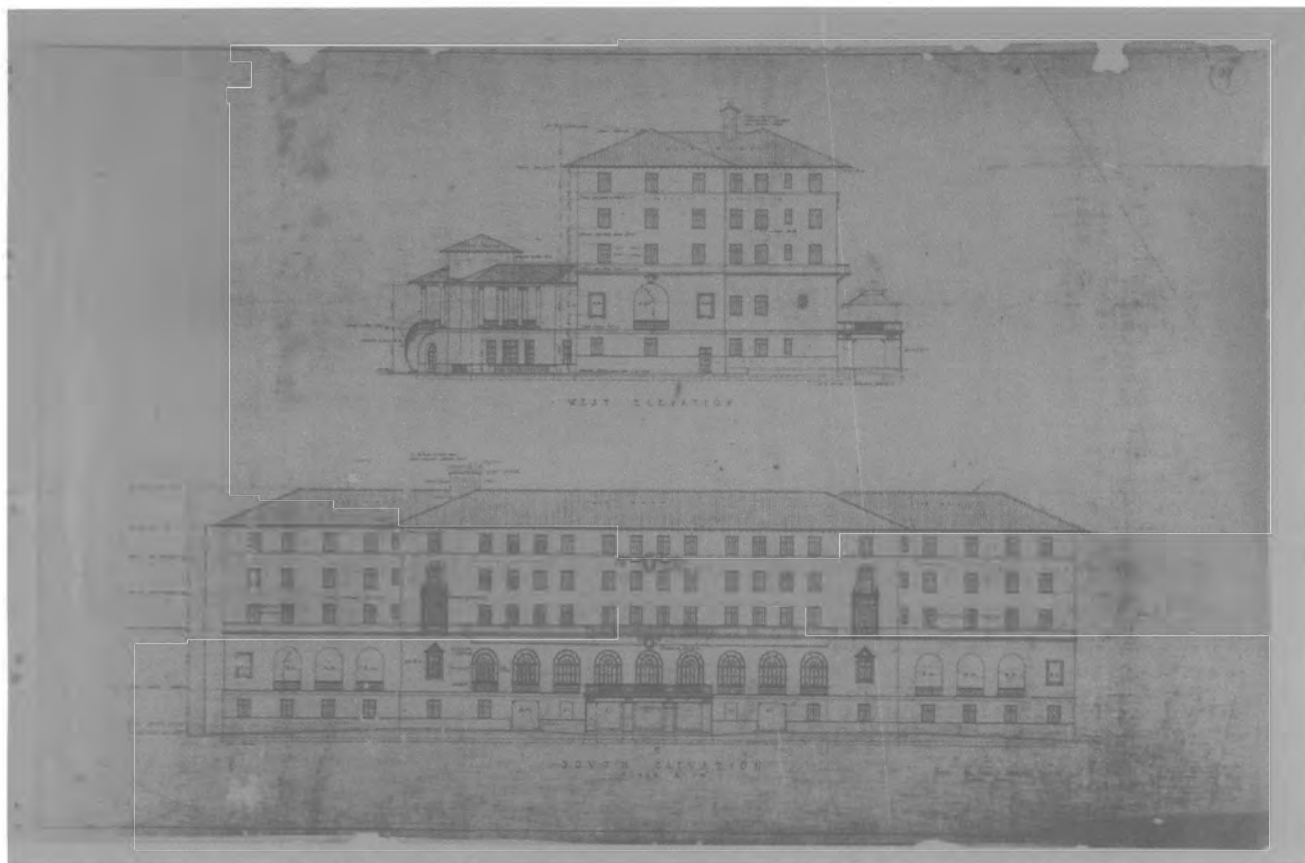


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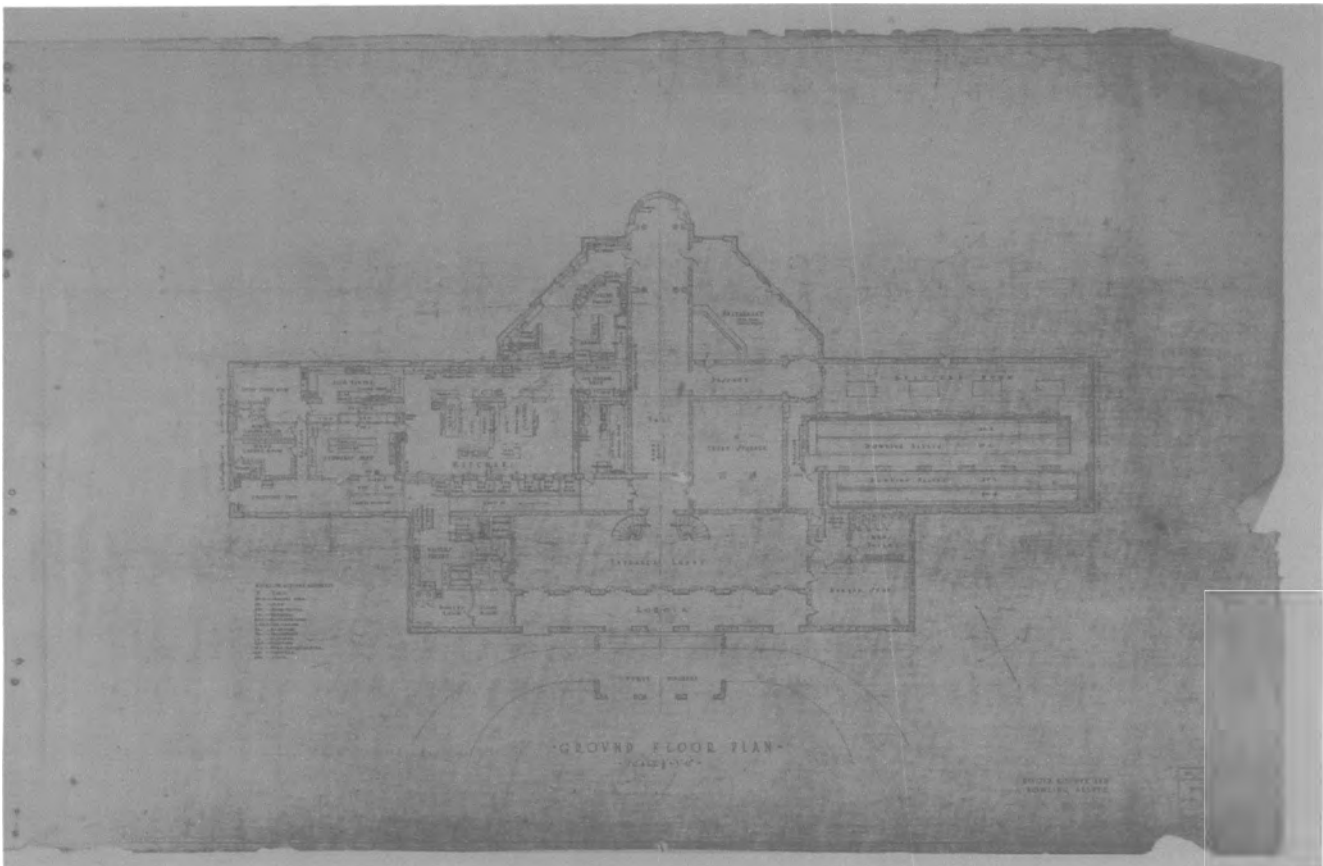
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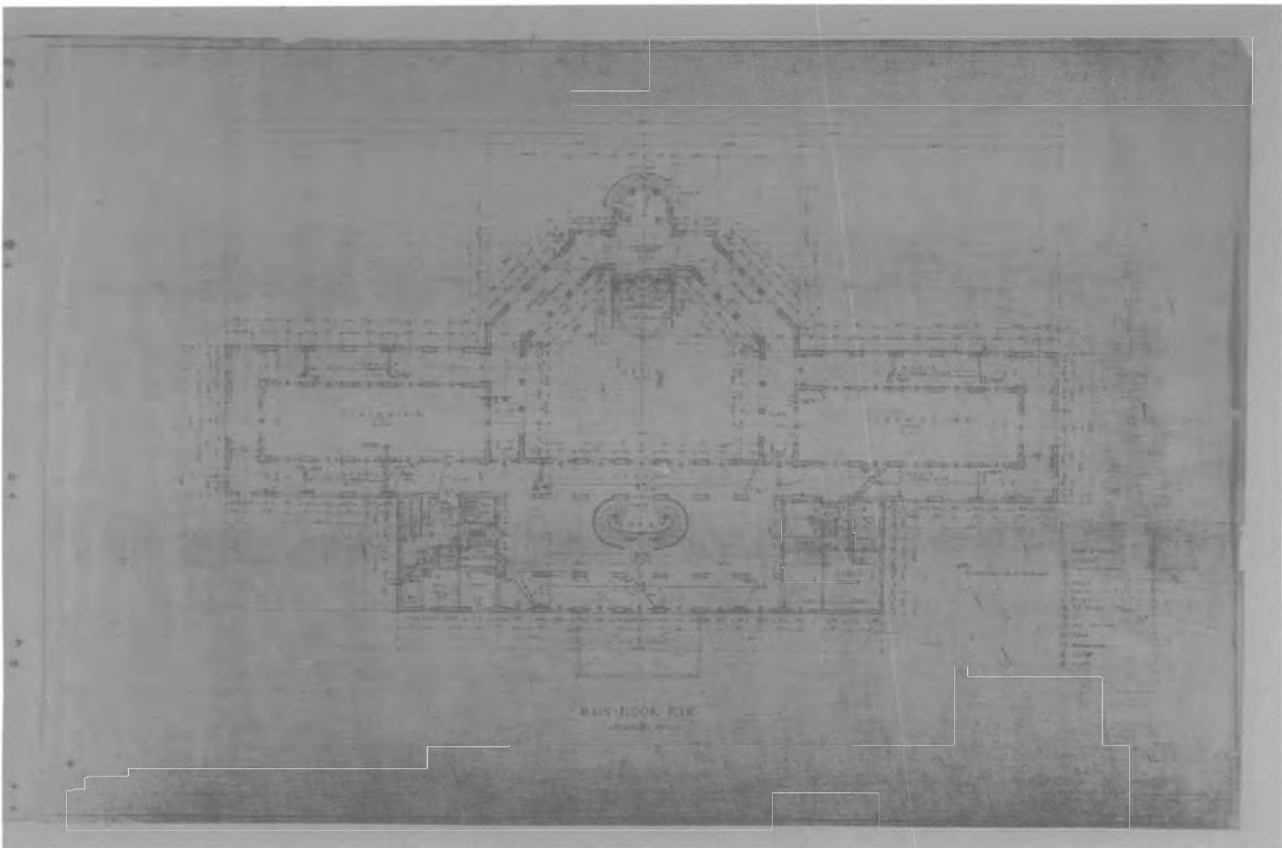
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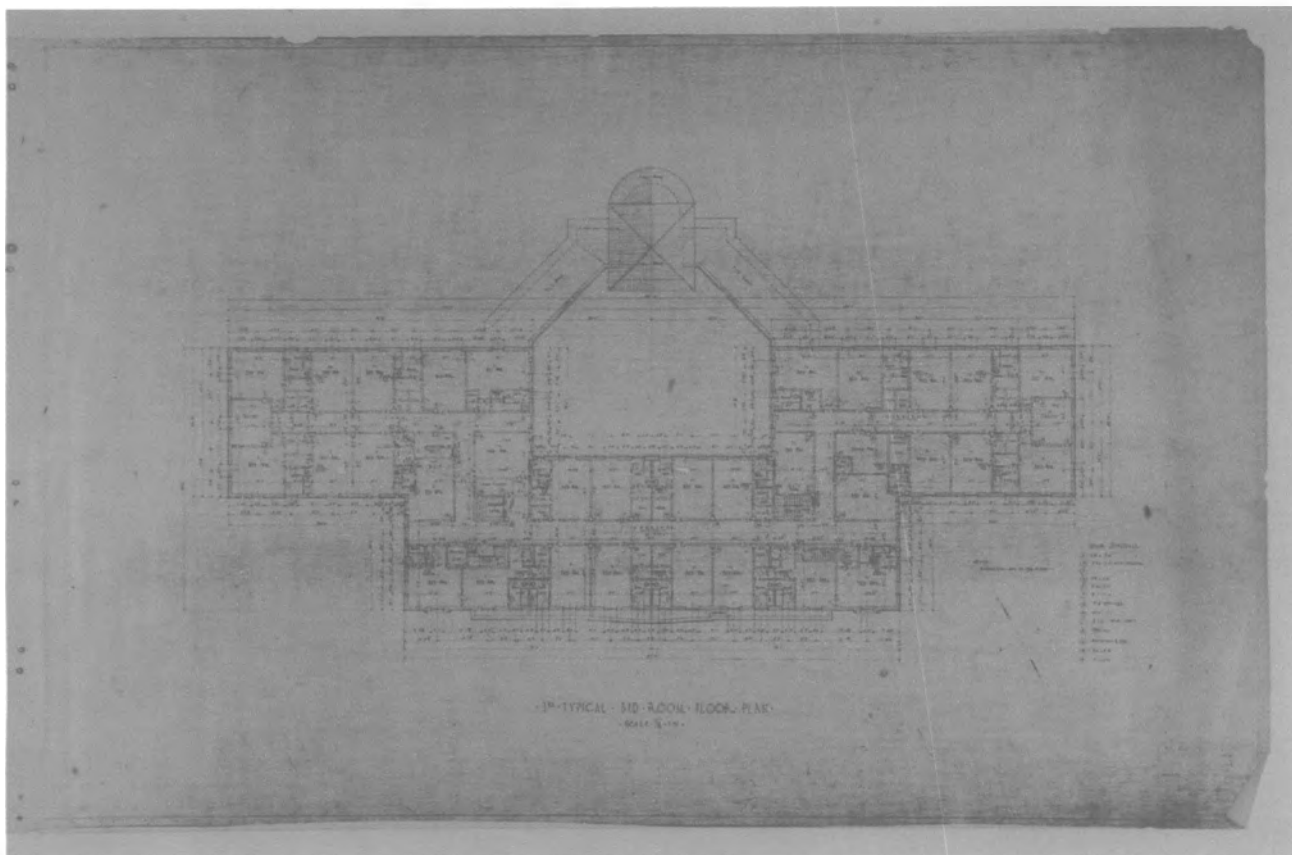
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Warren & Wetmore, Plan drawings for El Condado Hotel for the Porto Rico Hotel Corporations (1917)  
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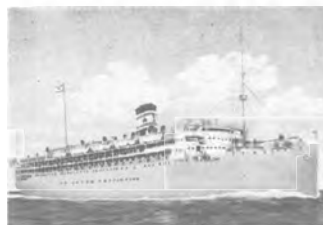
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PORTO RICO LINE



*S. S. Borinquen*

Designed for the Caribbean trade the "Borinquen" is equipped with many facilities for the comfort and enjoyment of passengers. Among these are —

Broad Decks	Music
Lounge	Dancing
Smoking Room	Movies
Tea Room	Sports Deck

New York and Porto Rico Line Advertisements, (c. 1920), Björn Larsson collection, Maritime Timetable Images.com, July 10, 2007



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Some prefer a cozy table for two

..... THE

The steamers "Borinquen" and "Coamo" of the Porto Rico Line's fleet were designed and built to meet the most exacting requirements of a critical passenger trade, and to transport perishable and other cargo between the mainland of the United States and

SHIPS...

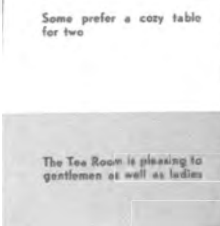
ting for social life at sea. Private quarters are as attractive as the public rooms.

The broad decks, some enclosed in glass, are delightful for deck games, sports and exercise, and for the quieter joy of a deck chair.

An excellent orchestra provides



Perfect service and exquisite meals are enjoyed in the Dining Saloon



The Tea Room is pleasing to gentlemen as well as ladies



The beautiful Lounge is the scene of many festivities



Beds like these assure perfect rest



Sending news home is a pleasure in a Writing Room like this

the Islands of the West Indies.

Passengers are surrounded by sumptuous luxury. This note of supreme refinement is found in the spacious lounges, the dining saloon, the library, tea room, writing room, smoking room, music room and other public places which provide an extraordinary set-

music for daily concerts and for dancing every evening. Service in every department is of the highest quality, and the cuisine is unexcelled. Every element aboard these splendid and popular turbine steamships contributes to the delight of those who enjoy the best that the age has to offer.



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Captain Helgeson on the bridge of the Coamo circa 1936

Left: Cover, AGWI Steamship News (January 1916). Right: Photo of Captain of the SS Coamo, (1936), Björn Larsson collection, Maritime Timetable Images.com, 2001-2006, July 10, 2007



Porto Rico Line, Photo, SS Puerto Rico, (c. 1930) , Björn Larsson Collection, Maritime Timetable Images.com, 2001-2006, July 10, 2007

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Photo of San Juan Harbor and Porto Rico Line Terminal, n.d., Edgardo Rodríguez, *San Juan, Ciudad Soñada*, The Americas Series. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005; n. p.: Editorial Tal Cual, 2005 p. 113



Interior form, Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Brochure, International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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CONDADO BEACH HOTEL--SÁN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

Left: Photo, Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, Arched window detail, Interior view, (c. 1960). Right: Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, Façade, South-eastern approach (c. 1960), International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Condado Beach**  
**HOTEL**  
**un paraíso**  
**en Borinquen...**



La foto muestra uno de los cómodos y modernamente diseñados cuartos en el Condado Beach Hotel... Para el viajero cansado que llega a San Juan para pasar la noche... para escapar del diario ajetreo en el fin de semana... para tener todas las comodidades modernas en un hotel que es como un hogar... un fin de semana en el Condado Beach Hotel...



Condado Beach Hotel Advertisement, "Paradise in Borinquen", (c. 1970), International Hospitality Enterprises,  
The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives



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

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Photo, Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Façade, Southeast approach, (c. 1970), International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives



Photo, Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Flying Staircase and Main Lobby, Mezzanine view, (post-1972) International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives

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

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San Juan, Puerto Rico

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Photo, Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, Second floor lobby, interior view, (post-1972), International Hospitality Enterprises, The Condado Vanderbilt Hotel Office Archives



Photo courtesy of Toledo Engineers, Demolition of Condado Hotel West Annex, aerial view, (2003),

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, San Juan

DATE RECEIVED: 10/16/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/03/08  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/18/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/29/08  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08001110

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Condado Vanderbilt hotel meets Criterion A. The construction of this Resort hotel introduced a new typology to Puerto Rico, influenced societal views of what a luxury hotel entailed, and opened up a new section of Suburban San Juan to Resort and high-end Residential construction.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Crit A

REVIEWER J. Gabbert

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.































Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1962. Field checked 1963. Revised from  
aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1969  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 903 (1964) and  
908 (1965). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. Puerto Rico Datum, 1940 adjustment  
2000-meter grid ticks based on Puerto Rico coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 19  
Barrio and municipality boundaries by the Puerto Rico Planning Board  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the  
National or State reservations shown on this map

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial  
photographs taken 1977 and other sources. This information not  
field checked. Map edited 1982  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

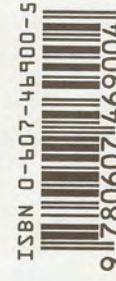
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 METERS  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 1-METER CONTOURS  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 0.3 METER  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA, 22092  
AND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS, SAN JUAN, P. R. 00910  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

CONDADO VANDERBILT HOTEL  
E-808841.27  
N-2043426.63

PUERTO RICO  
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather  
Insular Route

SAN JUAN, P. R.  
N1822 5-W6600/7.5  
1969  
PHOTOREVISED 1982  
DMA 1323 11 SE-SERIES E835







October 9, 2008

Ms. Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D.  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" Eye Street, N.W., 8<sup>th</sup> floor (MS 2280)  
Washington, D. C. 20005

SUMISSION – Condado Vanderbilt Hotel

Dear Ms. Snyder:

We are pleased to submit for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places the nomination of Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, in the Municipality of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Should have any questions on the nomination, please contact Arch. Berenice Sueiro, AIT, Historic Preservation Manager at 787-721-3737 or at [bsueiro@prshpo.gobierno.pr](mailto:bsueiro@prshpo.gobierno.pr).

Sincerely,

José Luis Vega Colón, PhD  
State Historic Preservation Officer

JLV/BRS/

Enclosures