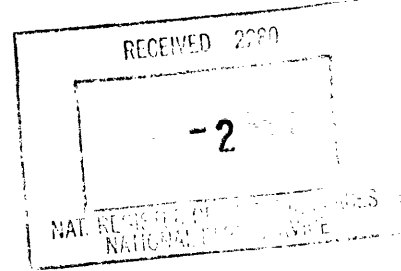


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name: **Casa Klumb**

other names/site number: **Cody Ranch**

2. Location

street & number: **#1 Ramón B. López Street**

___ not for publication

city or town: **San Juan**

vicinity ___

state: **Puerto Rico**

code: **PR**

county: **San Juan**

code: **127**

zip code:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally X statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lilliane D. López
Lilliane D. López, Architect

September 29, 1997

Signature of certifying official

Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

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

M. J. M. Lopez 11/14/97

___ other (explain): _____ *for* _____ Signature of Keeper _____ 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:

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
| <u> 1 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | buildings |
| <u> 0 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | sites |
| <u> 0 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | structures |
| <u> 0 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | objects |
| <u> 1 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Cat: **Domestic**

Sub: **Single dwelling**

Current Functions:

Cat: **Vacant/Not in use**

Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification: **Mixed: Vernacular and Modern Movement**

Materials

foundation: **wood/concrete**

walls: **wood**

roof: **wood/metal**

other:

Narrative Description: **See continuation sheet**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria:

- 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; represents the work of a master; and possesses high artistic values.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations:

- 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: **Architecture**
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance: **1947-1958**

Significant Dates: **1947, 1958**

Significant Person: **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Klumb, Henry**

Narrative Statement of Significance: **See continuation sheet**

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción de la Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 6.5 acres

UTM References:

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|------|---------|----------|
| 1 | 19 | 813255 | 2037035 | 3 | _____ | _____ |
| 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ | 4 | _____ | _____ |

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: **See continuation sheet**

Boundary Justification: **See continuation sheet**

11. Form Prepared By

first original nomination draft: **Otto Reyes Cassanova**

revised, rewritten and edited by: **Karen González Jensen/Staff Architect**

organization: **Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office**

date: **February 14, 1997**

street & number: **Cuartel Ballajá 3th floor**

telephone: **(787) 721-3737**

city or town: **San Juan** state: **PR**

zip code: **00901**

Property Owner

name: **University of Puerto Rico**

street & number: **P.O. Box 364984**

telephone: **(787) 765-5955**

city or town: **San Juan** state: **PR**

zip code: **00936-4984**

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Narrative Description

The *Casa Klumb* is located in an area comprised by 6.5 acres of what, at the time, was the outskirts of the town of Río Piedras. A dense "wall" of lush tropical vegetation -with trees that range in height from 60 to 100 feet- surrounds the property. As a result, the building can not be perceived from the street. A chain link fence surrounds all the property. A gravel pathway connects a modern design steel gate, designed by Klumb, which marks the formal entrance to the property. This gate was conceived as a free-standing element that marked a symbolic property boundary as Klumb's intention was never to built any kind of surrounding fence, living the site as "natural" as possible. What used to be Klumb's professional office is located across the street from this gate. Entering the property, one is immediately surrounded by a dense vegetation composed of tropical trees, ferns and flowers overflowing with tropical birds, insects and reptiles. Because of the intense development of its surrounding area, the property has become a sanctuary for the flora and fauna and a "lung" for the metropolitan area.

The house is located to the right side of the pathway- in a clear area in the middle of the site. To the left side of the pathway, just across the main facade of the house, a kidney-shaped pond and a modern 1958 metal sculpture ("Boy with a bird on his shoulder") lay between two trees (see photo #1). The sculpture was a gift to Klumb from Australian artist Lindsay Daen. The pathway crosses the main facade and ends in the carport area, at the side of the house.

The one-level house is composed of *ausubo* columns with wooden walls and trusses, finished with a corrugated metal sheets roof. Built in the vernacular style, the house is raised above the ground and consist of an almost symmetrically organized facade, a balcony that surrounds almost the entire building, and a low overhanging four gabled roof, which protects the building from the climatological elements (see photo #2). The facades of the house are divided in two levels: the ground floor and the main floor. When examined closely, one notices the difference in distance between the posts and the two similar, yet not identical, post designs. The reason for these slight variations are unknown yet presumed to be due to the enlargement of the house, in 1923, and Klumb's replacement of deteriorated elements in 1948. The ground floor was traditionally used as a service area (storage space, chicken pen, laundry, among others) and is accessed through a secondary stair beside the kitchen. The main floor was destined to the family life and contains the living areas. The main facade is symmetrical, with the right side slightly wider than the left. A balustrade with lath-turned posts and crossed planks surrounds three sides of the house. A wooden trellis covers the ground floor. A simple concrete stair gives access to the main floor through a Klumb-designed pivoting wooden gate (see photo #3). In conjunction with the attic, the elevation of the living areas from the ground conform a traditional ventilation system that cools the house utilizing natural breezes.

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Section Number 7 Page 2

**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Though the original distribution of the house is unknown, based on the remaining original structure and popular design at the time, the house would have had a simetrically-organized plan with *en enfilade* rooms. Traditionally, the *fogón* (hearth) and the latrine were located at the rear of the house, separated from the main building. For this reason, Klumb latter added two bathrooms and a kitchen to the structure. Overall, Klumb maintained the original exterior appearance of the house, however, to fullfil his desire for an open-space plan, he had to add structural support to the building. Klumb placed some concrete columns on the ground floor and incorporated steel rods to the traditional design balaustrade to reinforce the structure and help it withstand up-lift in case of a storm or hurricane.

The plan of the house is a slightly "L"-shaped plan resulting from the addition of the kitchen. All the spaces were organized as an open-space with freestanding walls and columns, allowing the passage of natural light and breezes. The ground floor (see photo #4) contains a room, the maid quarters (one room and a bathroom), a cistern, a storage area, and a *tormentera* (storm shelter) which were added by Klumb. The ground floor has direct access to the kitchen by means of a wooden back stair. The design of this stair combines cantelever steps to make an interesting design of what is, basically, a service access constructed of rustic materials. The organization of doors and walls clearly separates the private areas from the public. The arrangement of rooms and the space sequence between them, reminds us of Frank Lloyd Wright's residential designs. Klumb's scheme is also based in the vernacular plan organization: main living spaces in the front, rooms in the middle, and service areas in the back of the house. Some of the original walls of the main level were maintained and others were re-arranged to conform new spaces. Existing elements, such as the vernacular doors and windows, were re-used and incorporated as part of the new design.

The new areas incorporated to the house by Klumb were the two bathrooms and the kitchen. These later additions are totally modern in style and have all the characteristics of Klumb's architecture. Klumb added other unique features: a dinning table (composed of two free-form platforms that pivot in one of the existing columns)(see photo #5), a cantilevered free-form bar (attached to a balaustrade post), an attached roof that served as a carport (now disapeared), vertical wooden pivoting screens, egg-crate hanging ceilings in the bathrooms and dinning area (see photo #6), and interesting features such as the ones contained in the design of the maid's bathroom (with various levels and angled stairs that lead to an elevated shower). These are the elements, of Klumb's vocabulary, which he integrated to the existing design of the building.

Until recently, the site was devoid of its existing surrounding fence - as was Klumb's intention- which was installed by its current owner: the University of Puerto Rico. This non-contributing element could be easily removed without mayor consequences. Beyond the instalation of this fence, the property has not suffered any other new additions or alterations.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 8 Page 3

**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Narrative Statement of Significance

The *Casa Klumb*, built during the second half of the 19th century, was once the main house of an hacienda which was owned by José Ramón Latimer y Fernández and his wife, Esther C. Cody. This hacienda produced a variety of tropical fruits -pineapple, mangoes, and citrus - which were exported to the mainland.

In 1923, Latimer died and Mrs. Cody inherited the property. At this time, the house was enlarged and the hacienda was diversified to produce cucumbers, onions, peppers, beans, and pineapples. The house was referred to as the Cody House or Cody Ranch. Cody later married Mr. Holger Rhode Fog and the house became known as *la casa del americano* (the American's house) even though Mr. Fog was originally from Denmark. With the aging of the owners, the property's agricultural use receded and it was rented to be used as a plant nursery for Pennock Gardens -one of the first business of its kind in the island.

In September 20, 1947, Henry Klumb -a German architect - and his wife, Else Schmitz, bought the property from Mr. Fog. Klumb, a Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice in Taliesin East from 1929 to 1933, followed Wright's philosophy of "organic architecture." This modern architectural philosophy, which was introduced to the island through Klumb's work, will reach its maximum expression in this, his own house.

In 1948, Klumb remodeled the house by "taking out a few walls along the front to make one large open room . . ." Oral history indicates that Klumb wanted to eliminate all walls from the property but his wife, Else, did not approve of such drastic measures. Being devoid of most of its walls, the design of the house represents the perfect fusion of the interior with the exterior, total communion of man with nature. The garden was conceived and developed to act as a natural "wall" created to replace the physical ones (see photo #7). For this reason, the structure has a profound and direct relationship with its site -the garden is not merely decorative vegetation, it becomes part of its architecture.

This garden is the result of Klumb's interest in the study of plants and his artistic talent, creating what is the only private botanical garden in the island. Its design follows the traditional "english garden" concept: even though the finished product seems natural and spontaneous, Klumb personally studied, choosed and arranged each plant, taking into consideration the height, color, time of bloom and form of foliage of each specie in its design (see photo #8). Klumb began utilizing the plants that were left in the site by the nursery business, but through the years he introduced native and foreign varieties of ferns, vines, orchids, palms, and trees, which included endangered and rare species. Don Agustín, the gardener of the property, explained that each morning, before leaving for his studio, Klumb traced with his cane the outline of the area where Agustín had to work that day. As Don Agustín explained, he not only outlined and designed each area but had specific instructions for its eventual care. For example, each

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**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

day the foliage was to be raked and piled under each plant to create a composte. This system enabled each plant to produce its own fertilizer and to maintain the humidity of its surrounding soil. The contour of each area had to be outlined by a ditch which served, as Klumb used to explain, to collect and direct the rain water under the plants, preventing the erosion of the garden. As can be seen, the organic theme not only pertained to the design of the garden but also to its maintenance and conservation. His methods will be considered today as "organically grown."

The *Casa Klumb* is a significant property under Criterion C for the distinctive characteristics of its building and its garden design. Its design epitomizes "organic architecture," an architectural philosophy introduced in the island by Klumb and developed from his years with Frank Lloyd Wright. With its many inventions and imaginative solutions to tropical architecture, this house served as a lab where the architect could experiment and develop concepts later used on his designs.

It is the only building in the island, maybe even in the nation, which combines vernacular and international style architecture -a very rare and unusual combination- which creates a unique architectural piece that serves as an example of the creativity of a regionally prominent architect: Henry Klumb (see photo #9). It is important to note that Klumb, who designed only new construction, choosed an existing historic property for his home. For this reason, *Casa Klumb* cannot be compared with any other residential projects designed by Klumb or traditional haciendas in the island. Because it has a unique combination of discontinuous architectural styles, this property cannot be compared to any other building -in the island or abroad- though it is unique within its context.

There are other considerations that add to the significance of this property. Henry Klumb was responsible for a great number of projects in the University of Puerto Rico -ranging from 1945 to 1982- and was a personal friend of various of its Presidents, chancellors, deans and proffesors. For this reason, the property was constantly used for university activities and served as a place for intelectual and cultural affairs (concerts, gatherings, lectures, parties). The Metropolitan Opera, on its several season tours to Puerto Rico during the 50's, ended their concerts in it. Also, many distinguished visitors, including governors of Puerto Rico, cabinet members and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, visited and admired the property.

Klumb and Else died in 1984 and the University of Puerto Rico, aware of the significance of the property and its direct association with its development, bought it in 1985. The house and garden have been preserved and still maintain their integrity, even after hurricane Hugo afected them both severely. The University has no definite plans for the property and its building, which is rapidly deteriorating. They have contracted Don Agustín as the keeper of the property and to this day the garden is beign maintained using the same methods Klumb specified. At the time, the property is beign used as a learning facility and inspiration source for architecture, landscape and botanical students.

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Section Number **8,9,10** Page 5

**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Also, *Casa Klumb* is directly associated with the architectural education and profession in the island. Even though the property has achieved significance within the past 50 years, *Casa Klumb* is specially important to the local architectural community. Klumb was an admired and respected architect (the *Colegio de Arquitectos* - Puerto Rico's local professional organization- main achievement award is named after him) and as such a great number of the most important architects in the island remember having architectural and philosophical discussions with Klumb in this house. Also, the School of Architecture of the University of Puerto Rico, which is in charge of the property, has intensively studied the building, including carrying out as-built drawings of the property. As can be seen, *Casa Klumb* is a property which is appreciated by the new and old generations of puertorrican architects. Combining its vernacular and modern style, *Casa Klumb* is a symbolic and literal link between the past and the future of architecture and its profession in the island.

Major Bibliographical References

Pérez-Chanis, Efraín E. **Vida, Pensamiento, Obra del Arquitecto Henry Klumb**, fragment of Chapter Num. 7 dedicated to the residential architecture of Klumb, inedit manuscript, February 11, 1997, pages 65-93.

Vivoni-Farage, Enrique. **Hacia una Modernidad Tropical: la obra de Henry Klumb, 1928-1984**, Capitel, Informative Buletin from the *Colegio de Arquitectos de Puerto Rico*, May 1995, pages 6-11.

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

See enclosed map.

Boundary Justification:

The preservation of the garden and the bucolic character and rural setting of this property is specially important. The design and composition of the garden is a integral part of the physical concept of the building. For this reason the boundary of the property would include the house and its site. To preserve and protect it from the urban expansion of the area, the site that comprises the property is beign defined.

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**Casa Klumb
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

SKETCH MAP

