

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin 15A to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A". Do not check "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Puente Río Portugués  
Other names/site number Bridge 0145/ Puente Río Portugués Playa Ponce/ Portugués River Bridge  
Name of related multiple property listing Historic Bridges of Puerto Rico, c. 1840-1950.  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & Number Eugenio María de Hostos Avenue, km. 3.5, State Road # 10  
City or town Ponce State Puerto Rico County Ponce  
Not for publication  Vicinity

## 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 at the following level(s) of significance:  national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Diana López Sotomayor  
Diana López Sotomayor SHPO/Director

NOV 13 2014

Signature of certifying official/Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby, certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature]  
Signature of Keeper

1-6-2015  
Date of Action

Puente Río Portugués  
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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property** (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
1	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/ road-related/ pedestrian-related  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/ road-related/ pedestrian-related  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco/ longitudinal beam  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Reinforced concrete, steel, cast iron

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## Description

**Summary Paragraph** (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

**Puente Río Portugués** (also known as Bridge 0145) is a 1933, seventy-six meters long, fifteen meters wide, steel longitudinal beams, reinforced concrete vehicular and pedestrian bridge, that spans over the historic bed of the Portugués River, at Eugenio María de Hostos Avenue, kilometer 3.5 of State Road # 10, between the ward of Playa and Ponce center, Municipality of Ponce. The bridge was designed in a subtle Art Deco style by well-known engineer Rafael Nones, of the Puerto Rico Department of the Interior. The bridge, with its concrete foundations, girders, slabs and balustrade of the same material, is the most significant structure in the vital road that connects Ponce center and Playa. The structure retains all aspects of integrity.

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

The **Puente Río Portugués'** superstructure is divided in three sections, each twenty meters in length, with an additional eight-meter long approaching entryway on each end. This superstructure is directly supported by thirty-three steel beams located under the bridge's concrete deck. These longitudinal beams are supported by eight reinforced concrete piers anchored in the riverbed.

The piers are paired-off, evenly spaced at twenty meters interval. The piers at the North and South ends of the bridge are embedded in an eight-meter, rectangular shaped, concrete abutment. Each abutment is fastened to wooden piles, drove deep into the ground. The four additional reinforced concrete pier columns supporting the bridge's middle section are also fastened to wooden piles embedded into the riverbed (**Fig. 1**). The mid-section piers are connected by a reinforced concrete curtain that runs transversely, adding support to the longitudinal steel beams.

The sixty-meter long superstructure (upper deck) is formed by the asphalted, two-ways, ten-meter-wide roadway; a two and a half meter wide pedestrians' concrete steeped-up sidewalk on each side and a safety barrier formed by the use of seventy-two reinforced concrete cross-shaped balustrade (thirty-six on each façade). On the western bank, at the base of the pier marking the entrance to the bridge coming from the city to Playa, an original 1933 bronze plaque commemorates the bridge's inauguration. The bridge illumination is provided by eight original cast iron ornamental lamp posts (**Fig. 2**).

The **Puente Río Portugués** remarkably retains all aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.



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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Engineering

**Period of Significance**

1933-1964

**Significant Dates**

1933

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Nones, Rafael (Engineer Designer)

Auffant, Victor (builder)

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The **Puente Río Portugués** (Bridge 0145) is statewide significant under Criterion A in the area of transportation as the property is the most significant structure spanning over the Portugués River in the road connecting Ponce's urban center with Ponce Playa (Marina). Built in 1933, Bridge 0145, up to the 1970s, provided the only direct vital communication and transportation access between Ponce's urban center and the Playa sector, Ponce's port and commercial center, an economical relationship that was significant for the two sectors, the southern region and the island as a whole. The property is also the oldest longitudinal steel beams/ reinforced concrete bridge built within the historic *Carretera Central*. The resource is also statewide significant under Criterion C, for its association to Rafael None's engineering production. The period of significance of the property extends from its construction date in 1933, until 1964, the fifty years cut-off date.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

In 1692, with an estimated population of three hundred and fifty-two souls, a small and rustic chapel established years before received its official designation as a church dedicated to the *Virgen de la Guadalupe*, giving official recognition to the establishment of what it would be known as Ponce's traditional urban center. By late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the city's urban center consisted of one hundred and fifteen (115) houses and 5,038 souls scattered around a small plaza with a little church at the center.<sup>1</sup>

By the 1870s, however, Ponce's urban center showed a dynamic city with four town squares, an urban grid with thirty-four major streets, one thousand and eighty-four (1084) houses and two thousand two hundred and four (2204) families residing in town.<sup>2</sup> Through its intensive agriculture, its internal commercial activity, the power of its commercial houses and firms, and its capacity to capitalize and capture its municipal neighbor's production, Ponce became the richest town in the island. Its economic strength translated into a thriving cultural progress and social refinement, providing the base for Ponce's XIX century's popular names like "*la Ciudad Señorial*" (the Manorial City) and "*la Perla del Sur*" (the Pearl of the South).

While Ponce's urban center reflected the social life, the architectural taste, and the power of its foreign and local bourgeoisie, Playa (also known as *La Marina*) became the center of the city's commercial activity. Slightly over two miles south of the urban center, Playa's settlement was as old as the urban core. An ideal location for smugglers during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the opening of the port facilities during the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, turned Playa into a commercial hub. Playa became a mandatory port-call for many foreign ships bringing and taking cargo, mail and passengers.

<sup>1</sup> Ifigo Abbad y Lasierra, *Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico*. Anotada en la parte histórica y continuada en la estadística y económica por José Julian Acosta y Calbo. Ediciones Doce Calles, 2002, 326.

<sup>2</sup> Manuel Ubeda y Delgado, *Isla de Puerto Rico. Estudio histórico, geográfico y estadístico de la misma*. Puerto Rico. Establecimiento Tip. Del Boletín, 1878, 219-222.

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Just in 1876, the port records showed 213 passenger ships, 200 cargo ships, 145 steamships and the arrival 1775 passengers.

Playa was also extremely significant to the city's interests as a communication center receiving the mail steamships from Spain three times a month; four times a month from England; twice from Germany and once a month from the United States. Playa was also the logical location for the telegraph offices that managed the two underwater telegraphic cables connecting Ponce with the British colony of Jamaica (inaugurated in 1873) and with the Danish colony of Saint Croix, in service since 1875.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, in his 1876 Ponce's description, Ramón Marín referred to Playa as "the most important ward or district outside the city limits".<sup>4</sup> Nearly closing the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Playa surpassed San Juan as the most important port in Puerto Rico's export oriented economy. By 1890, Ponce was exporting 33.2% of the national gross production, while San Juan was responsible for 21.2%.<sup>5</sup>

The neighborhood received special treatment from the city's officials as the first recipient of every innovative mean of communication and transportation. In 1880, the first telephone lines lay-out in Ponce were between the town center and Playa; the first stretch of the steam locomotive ran from Ponce's main square to Playa; in 1902, the rails of the new electric trolley installed in Ponce followed the *Camino Real* from the city's center directly into Playa.

Playa began the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a self-sustained community with schools, a catholic church, pharmacies, two cemeteries, industrial workshops, grocery stores, bakeries, lawyer's offices, accountant offices and doctor's offices. Every important commercial firm in the city had their office or their warehouse at the ward, walking distance from the port facilities. Playa also had a residential area formed of small wooden houses with their corrugated metal roof, raised on stilts to avoid the ground humidity, but especially the frequent destructive floods of Río Portugués. The humble houses served as shelters for the artisans, industrial and unskilled workers that provided the workforce for the port activities, the sugar cane production, the fishing trade, and a large variety of factories.

This vital and symbiotic socio-economic relationship between Ponce and its ward was totally conducted through the two mile stretch that served as an umbilical cord among the two areas. The road, known under a variety of names like *Camino Real*, *Calle Marina* and *Avenida Eugenio Maria de Hostos* (today's name) was for many years the only direct link between Playa and the urban core. The **Puente Río Portugués** was the most important structure within this significant route.

<sup>3</sup> Ramón Marín, *La Villa de Ponce considerada en tres distintas épocas. Estudio histórico, descriptivo y estadístico hasta finales del año 1876*. Editoriales publicados en el periódico "La Crónica". Establecimiento Tipográfico "El Vapor", Ponce, 1877. See, Ramón Marín, *Obras Completas*. Ponce, Puerto Rico, 1989, 346-348.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Gobierno de Puerto Rico. Estadística general del comercio exterior o balanzas mercantiles, 1895.



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### Puente Río Portugués

In the 1770s, the two-mile stretch from Ponce's town square to Playa was described as a difficult and battered road.<sup>6</sup> Authorized to function in 1804, but not open until 1812, the establishment of the port facilities at Playa demanded the improvement of the only direct route between the city and its ward. The increase in the commercial and human movement between the sectors required a better road, while a better road system facilitated the movement increase of merchandises and human resources. By 1828, sixteen years after the port was opened, the 1770's battered road was described as "*a delicious and comfortable stroll for those on foot and a first order road for those on the commercial trade*".<sup>7</sup>

Actually, the road between Playa and Ponce was one of the very first roads designated a first order road in the entire island, a clear implication of its significance. Running mostly in a linear North-South direction, the only considerable topographical obstacle in the *Camino Real* from Ponce to Playa was the section physically bisected by the untamed Río Portugués. The currents of the powerful river were born at a high point in Adjuntas in the mountains of the *Cordillera Central* and ran south passing Ponce's urban center on the east, making later a western turn hallway between Ponce and Playa, and later returning southbound towards the Caribbean. Throughout the entire nineteenth century and part of the last, the Portugués was the western boundary of Playa's settlement (Fig. 3).<sup>8</sup>

More than likely, during the early stages of the nineteenth century (and earlier), the locals forded the river at narrow areas in its path between Playa and the city, or crossed it, over an earth causeway with an open segment for water passage. As the commercial activities at the port intensified, wading across in oxcarts and passenger wagons became unreliable, demanding the need of a more permanent and solid construction. By the 1840s, a wooden bridge was in place at today's site. Wooden bridges, however, were seen as temporary structures for such a vital route and constructions of more durable material were proposed, including the possibility of a suspension bridge.<sup>9</sup> In 1864, the then existing twenty-seven meters wooden bridge was destroyed by a Portugués's flood. A temporary bridge was set-up; meanwhile the city's officials kept on planning and arguing for a more permanent construction. In 1876, a plan to build a metal bridge was approved, and for the next few years a special tax was imposed upon the bridge's users to provide the needed funds. In 1880, the new forty-meter metal bridge, designed by engineer Miguel Martínez de Campos and custom built in France, was installed (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> Eight years later (1888), the bridge was carried seventy-meter downstream by

<sup>6</sup> Iñigo Abad y Lasiera, *Historia geográfica*, 326.

<sup>7</sup> Pedro Tomás de Córdova, *Memorias geográficas, históricas y estadísticas de la isla de Puerto Rico*. Tomo II. Año de 1831. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1968, 253. (Translation is ours)

<sup>8</sup> In the 1970s, for flood control purposes, the U.S. Corps of Engineers diverted the river's waters from its south-southwesterly to a south-southeasterly course. The diversion starts about half a mile north of **Puente Río Portugués**, directing the current to feed into Bucaná River. Since then, the bridge spans over the dry riverbed, which has been claimed by thick vegetation.

<sup>9</sup> Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2154. Legajo 53N.

<sup>10</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2155. Legajo 530.

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another flood.<sup>11</sup> The metal bridge was reinstalled again, using the salvaged sections, but in 1899, with the island recently placed under the United States' control, the bridge was wiped-out by the floods caused by the destructive forces of hurricane *San Ciriaco*.<sup>12</sup> In 1901, a concession was given to the Ponce Railway Corporation (later, Ponce Electric Company) to install and operate an electric trolley, running from the city to Playa. In the concession, the company was required to build and maintain a bridge at the current site.<sup>13</sup> The result was a wooden structure, fifty-five meters in length, with masonry abutments (Fig. 5). The bridge was privately owned and operated until 1929, when the company relinquished its control to the local government, as the electric trolley came to an end. The wooden structure, now under the central government jurisdiction, remained in use until replaced by the current bridge.

The 1914 inauguration of the new and larger port facilities at Playa's Peñoncillo Point, the increase in sugar production, the 1918 establishment in Playa of the Porto Rico Iron Works (which became the largest iron foundry in the Caribbean providing industrial services for the huge sugar factories), a population increase, among other factors, imposed an augmentation of traffic of heavy motor vehicles, machinery and pedestrians over the existing wooden bridge. These conditions created the need for a more solid, wider and reliable bridge over the Portugués.

By 1931, engineer Rafael Nones, from the Puerto Rico Department of the Interior, had the plans and construction costs for the new steel and reinforced concrete bridge. After a public auction on November 11, 1931, the bid accepted was Victor A. Auffant's, who offered to build the bridge over Río Portugués for \$48,484, the lowest bid among the eleven proposals. The construction began by February 1932 and was finished and provisionally accepted on June 6, 1933. Work was maintained by the contractor for a period of another four months and finally accepted by the official authorities on October 26, 1933 (Fig. 6).<sup>14</sup>

The construction period exceeded the ten months stipulated in the contract. The effort was delayed by two floods in 1932-1933, disagreements in planning and construction methods, quality problems of material that had to be returned to the suppliers, among other problems. By the end, "the monumental bridge" involved massive use of locally produced material and hand labor; the direct and indirect participation of well-known companies like the *Bethlehem Steel Company* (who provided the 518,170 pounds in steel beams), the *Porto Rico Iron Works* and the hands-on presence of significant individuals in Puerto Rico's built legacy like Rafael Nones (the bridge's designer), René

<sup>11</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2156. Legajo 53P.

<sup>12</sup> This metal bridge remained abandoned at the Portugués river bank for many years. Between 1914-1915, was salvaged and re-installed over Río Yauco, on State Road Number 127, km. 0.9, in the municipality of Yauco. Luis Pumarada O'Neill, *Los Puentes Históricos de Puerto Rico*. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo. Recinto de Mayaguez. Universidad de Puerto Rico. Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación de Puerto Rico. Diciembre de 1991, 120-121.

<sup>13</sup> Franchise Ordinance No. 3. *Franchises Granted by the extinct Executive Council and the Public Service Commission of Porto Rico*. Volume I. November 26, 1901 to May 21, 1915. San Juan, PR. Bureau of Supplies, Printing and Transportation. 1924.

<sup>14</sup> AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2157. Legajo 53q. Construcción Puente Río Portugués.



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Esteves (engineer from the Puerto Rico Department of the Interior, overseeing the construction) and Victor A. Auffant, (the bridge's builder).

Between the 1920s and 1930s, only three longitudinal steel beams/reinforced concrete bridges were built along the *Carretera Central's* one-hundred and twenty-eight kilometers: the *Guillermo Esteves* (1927) and *Martin Peña* (1939) bridges in San Juan and the 1933's **Puente Río Portugués**.<sup>15</sup> By 2005, the *Guillermo Esteves* Bridge was totally demolished, making **Puente Río Portugués** the oldest and best preserved longitudinal steel beam bridge in the *Carretera Central*. Along with its pedestrian and vehicular functionality, the structure retains all its original construction material in both the substructure and the superstructure, including the balustrade, the commemorative 1933 bronze plaque and the original 1936 cast iron lighting posts (Fig. 7).<sup>16</sup> The bridge still retains also its 1930s architectural details (Fig. 8).

**Puente Río Portugués** is statewide significant under Criterion A in the area of transportation as the most significant structure within the road between Ponce and Playa, a vital ground connection extremely important not only for the mentioned areas, but for the entire southern region. The structure is also significant under Criterion C in the area of engineering as the oldest and best preserved longitudinal steel beams/ reinforced concrete bridge built within the historic *Carretera Central* and for its association to the production of well-known engineer Rafael Nones.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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**Bibliography** (Insert bibliography here – cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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<sup>15</sup> Luis Pumarada O'Neill y María de los Angeles Castro, *La Carretera Central. Un viaje escénico a la historia de Puerto Rico*. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo. Recinto de Mayaguez. Universidad de Puerto Rico. Oficina Estatal de Preservación Histórica. Septiembre de 1997, 14. The *Carretera Central*, planned by the Spanish government in 1859 and completed by 1886, connected the Island's capital on the Atlantic Coast with Ponce, the Island's most important commercial center. In 1880, the road between Ponce and Playa became officially part of the *Carretera Central*, under the central government jurisdiction.

<sup>16</sup> Op Cit. In the 1931 plan, one bronze plaque was to be placed at each entrance of the bridge. By 1933, to make some savings, it was agreed to place just one plaque at the bridge's Northern entry, where is currently located. At that time it was also decided to postpone the illuminating posts for the bridge, although by 1933 all electrical connections were done by Auffant. In 1936, the Antilles Electric Corporation was commissioned to install the lighting posts at a cost of \$1,239.00. Those very same cast iron posts still currently used.

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Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2154. Legajo 53N.

Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2155. Legajo 53O.

Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2156. Legajo 53P.

Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Carreteras y Puentes. Caja 2157. Legajo 53q. Construcción Puente Río Portugués.

Gobierno de Puerto Rico. Estadística general del comercio exterior o balanzas mercantiles, 1895.

Postales de la Colección Jungham.

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Marín, Ramón. *La Villa de Ponce considerada en tres distintas épocas. Estudio histórico, descriptivo y estadístico hasta finales del año 1876.* Editoriales publicados en el periódico "La Crónica". Establecimiento Tipográfico "El Vapor", Ponce, 1877. See, *Ramón Marín, Obras Completas.* Ponce, Puerto Rico, 1989.

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**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 #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other (Name of repository)  
Archivo General de Puerto Rico

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre USGS Quadrangle \_\_\_\_\_

(Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates. Delete the other.)

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map): \_\_\_\_\_

- |    |                                   |                       |  |  |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|
|    | <input type="checkbox"/> NAD 1927 | or                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAD 1983 |  |
| 1. | Zone <u>19Q</u>                   | Easting <u>752517</u> | Northing <u>1991082</u>                      |  |
| 2. | Zone _____                        | Easting _____         | Northing _____                               |  |
| 3. | Zone _____                        | Easting _____         | Northing _____                               |  |
| 4. | Zone _____                        | Easting _____         | Northing _____                               |  |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is a rectangular shaped parcel measuring seventy six meters in length and fifteen meters wide, which is centered on the coordinates indicated in Section 10. Included within this rectangular parcel are the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, wing walls and approaching entryways.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated structure includes the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, any approach spans and the property on which they rest. These boundaries encompass, but not exceed, all of the property that has been historically associated with the bridge.



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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos/ Historian  
organization PR State Historic Preservation Office date November 12, 2014  
street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737  
city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00902-3935  
email jllanes@prshpo.gobierno.pr

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Additional Items:** (Check with the SHPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property Puente Río Portugués (Bridge 0145)  
City or Vicinity Ponce County Ponce State PR  
Photographer Juan Llanes Santos Date Photographed August 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

1. Puente Río Portugués, looking south. Photo 0001
2. Puente Río Portugués, looking north. Photo 0002
3. Bridge's west bank section, looking southwest. Photo 0003
4. Bridge's east bank section, looking southeast. Photo 0004
5. Detail of original bronze plaque, at the northern entrance, looking west. Photo 0005
6. Detail of cross-shaped balustrade and exposed aggregates bas-relief panel; looking southeast. Photo 0006
7. Partial view of bridge's substructure longitudinal steel beams, looking southeast. Photo 0007

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Puente Río Portugués

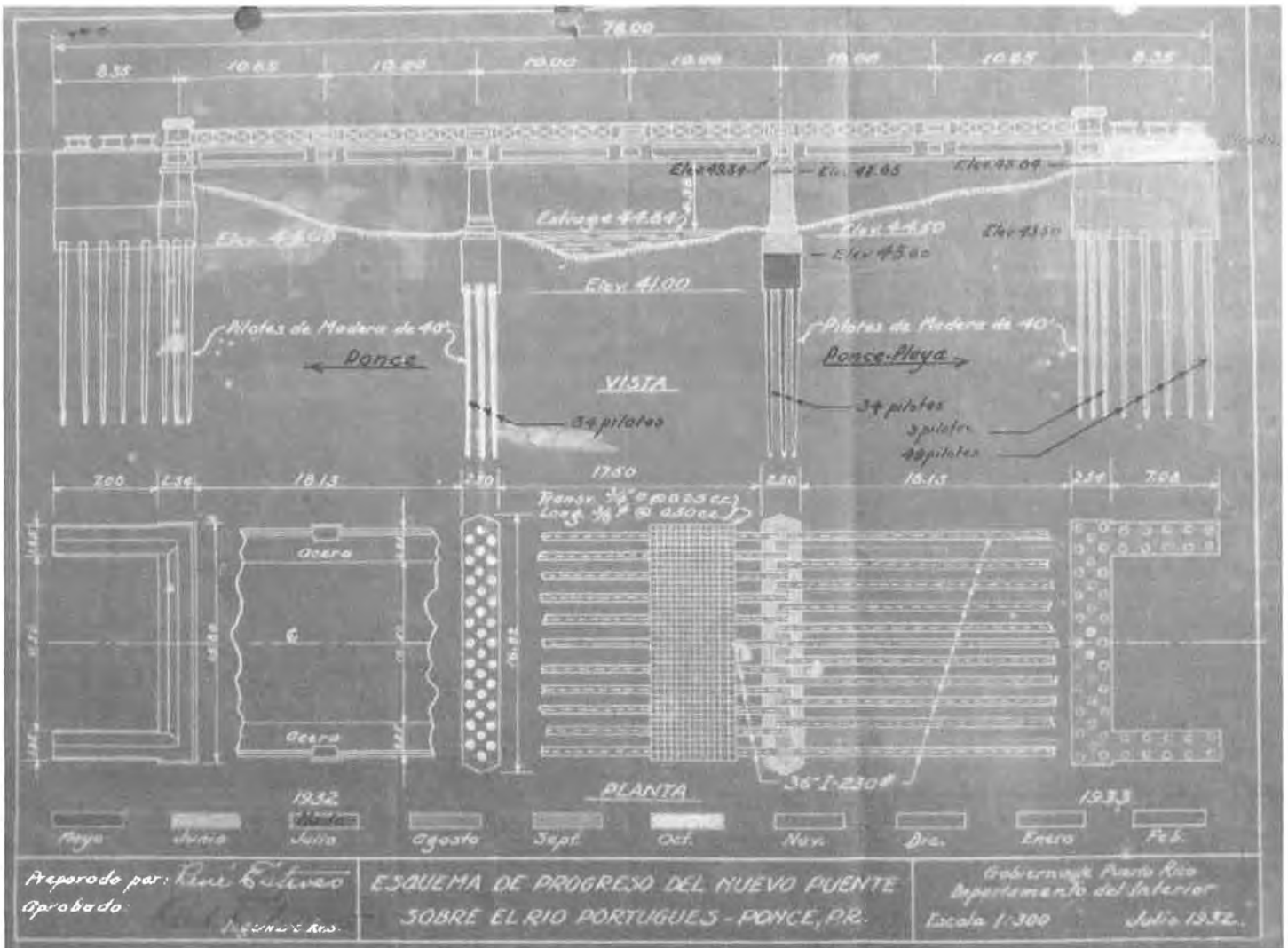
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Figure 1. Detail of Puente Río Portugués' drawing plan. (Source: Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR))



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Figure 2. Puente Río Portugués. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos)





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Figure 3. A Playa 1884' sketch (left) and a 1913 map, showing the Portugues River 's flowing pattern from the City to Playa. Both drawing show the point where the river bisects the Camino Real, current location of Puente Río Portugués.



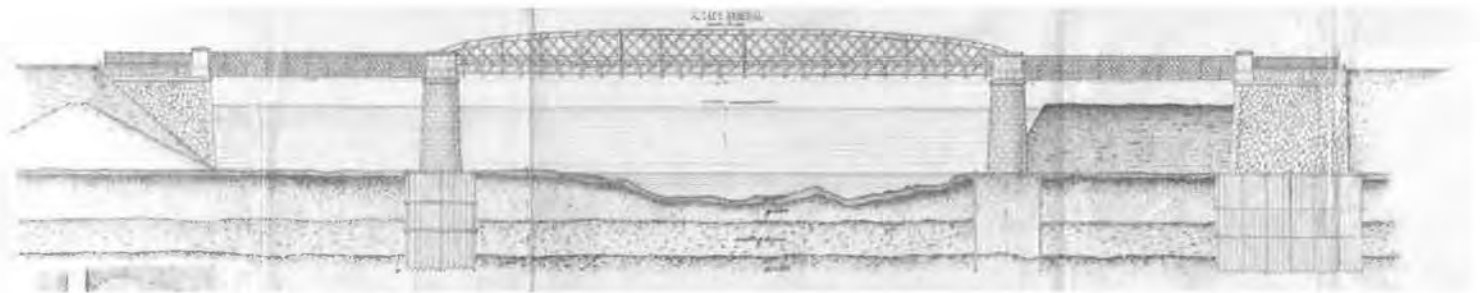
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Figure 4. Drawing of the 1880s metal bridge over Río Portugués. (Source: AGPR). Below, a 1990 picture of the metal bridge that was at Playa in 1880. It was knock down by a flood in 1899, abandoned for many years at the riverbank, and later re-installed over Río Yauco in 1915, in the municipality of Yauco. (Source: Luis F. Pumarada O'Neill, *Los Puentes Históricos de Puerto Rico*, 121).



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Figure 5. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcard showing the bridge built by the Ponce Electric Company. (Source: AGPR)





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Figure 6. Puente Río Portugués, as shown in the 1934's front-cover of the June's edition of the *Revista de Obras Públicas de Puerto Rico*.



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Figure 7. Puente Río Portugués. (Source: Juan Llanes Santos)



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Figure 8. Comparative view between the 1934 picture in *Revista de Obras Públicas* and present day, shows the remarkable level of integrity of the architectural details retain by the property. View shows a detail of the pattern of exposed aggregates bas-relief rectangular pannels, visible in the 1930s, but hidden by the vegetation today. The reinforced concrete cross-shaped balustrade remains also the very same.

1934



2014





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**Geographical Data**

Zone 19Q E 752517 N 1991082



Puente Río  
Portugués





Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1941. Field checked 1942. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1970.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 902 (1970) 926 and 927 (1968). 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  
Kilometric reference distances shown in red

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

SCALE 1:20,000  
1 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET  
1 5 10 15 20 KILOMETER  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 METERS  
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 5-METER CONTOURS  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 1-METER CONTOURS  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
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, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR 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

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

126

PLAYA DE PONCE, P. R.  
17066-H5-TM-020  
1970  
PHOTOREVISED 1982  
DMA 1222 II SE-SERIES E835

17°52'30" N  
66°37'30" W

17°52'30" N  
66°37'30" W





















JAMES R. BEVERLEY  
GOBERNADOR DE P.R.  
FRANCISCO PONS  
COMISIONADO  
DEL INTERIOR,  
LEOPOLDO TORMES GARCIA  
REPRESENTANTE  
DEL DISTRITO  
ENRIQUE ORTEGA  
SUPERINTENDENTE  
DE CERAS PUBLICAS  
RAFAEL NONES  
INGENIERO DEL PROYECTO  
FRANCISCO FORTUNA  
INGENIERO  
DE CONSTRUCCION  
VICTOR A. AUFRANT  
CONTRATISTA









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Puente Rio Portugues  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Historic Bridges of Puerto Rico MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, Ponce

DATE RECEIVED: 11/21/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/07/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001134

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: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 1.06.2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Meets Registration Requirements for MPS  
Significant for engineering as early example of the type  
important linkage between town & Park*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A & C

REVIEWER J. Gibson DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

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.





COMMONWEALTH OF  
PUERTO RICO  
Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica  
State Historic Preservation Office



November 13, 2014

Ms. Carol D. Schull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> floor (MS 2280)  
Washington, DC 20005

**SUBMISSION – PUENTE RIO PORTUGUES**

Dear Ms. Schull:

We are pleased to submit for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places the nomination of the **Puente Río Portugués de la Playa de Ponce**, located in the Municipality of Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Should you have any questions on the nomination, please contact Juan Llanes Santos, at 787-721-3737 or [jllanes@prshpo.gobierno.pr](mailto:jllanes@prshpo.gobierno.pr).

Sincerely,

Diana López Sotomayor, Archeologist  
State Historic Preservation Officer

DLS/NPT/BRS/JLS

Enclosures