

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

For NPS use only

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

received JUN 29 1987

date entered

AUG 4 1987

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

**1. Name**

historic Ponce High School

and/or common Ponce High

**2. Location**

street & number Cristina Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Ponce \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of N/A

state Puerto Rico code PR county Ponce code 113

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Department of Education - Departamento de Instrucción Pública

street & number Urbanización Industrial tres Monjitas

city, town Hato Rey \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of San Juan state Puerto Rico

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ponce Registry of Deeds

street & number Ponce Government Center

city, town Ponce \_\_\_\_\_ state Puerto Rico

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Early XXth C. High Schools in Puerto Rico Survey \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes  no

date October, 1986 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

city, town San Juan \_\_\_\_\_ state Puerto Rico

# 7. Description

## Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

## Check one

unaltered  
 altered

## Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Ponce High School's 1915 E-shaped, two story concrete building sits in one of the largest lots of the Southern city, two blocks away from the main plaza. Its front facade faces North, its back one is oriented towards a concrete-paved pedestrian area which connects with three other school structures built on the block in subsequent years. Haphazardly located on the site, these later buildings are all free-standing, but none exhibiting the size or character of "Ponce High".

Of late 19th century neoclassical inspiration, the symmetrically laid out "Ponce High" is entered on axis from the street, through a raised portico and a lobby area, with the spatial sequence culminating at the school's library facilities on the ground floor, and at the auditorium on the second floor. At both Eastern and Western sides of the lobby, and at both levels, L-shaped arcaded hallways lead to the classrooms. Two semi-enclosed patios are thus defined between the library-auditorium wing (much higher and wider) and the identical classroom wings facing East and West. Three sets of stairs are symmetrically laid out in the scheme: one of secondary importance at either side of the lobby; the most public one next to side entrances at the L-shaped circulation wings. A third set, probably (but so far unconfirmed) a later addition, faces the patios and is the only one not to connect to the building's basement where more classrooms are to be found.

The most continuous side of the E-shaped structure constitutes the front facade; it is articulated to best reflect and express the internal organization in plan. Sophisticated neoclassical details, although integral to the building's public "face" are not used with such insistence anywhere else on the building, except for the lobby, which includes some mouldings, cornices and relatively simple pilaster inlays. Set back from the street, the front facade is enhanced by (2) small green parterres adjoining the concrete & iron fence and sidewalk. The elevation includes doric columns and pilasters running two stories high, identical pediments (with denticles) at each end and an escutcheon-like crowning piece with a clock. The latter is dead center over the entrance portico. Concrete flat roofs (new), an extended parapet and a wide horizontal cornice tie together all elements, therefore underlining the horizontal continuity of the structure. Fenestration consists mainly of wood louvered windows with glass. Some have been substituted by contemporary metal louvered windows, which are found all over the rest of the building.

On the school's back ends, all surface articulation (except for the cornice treatment) is done away with, being limited to uneloquent raised window sills. The overhang of the zinc sloped roof in the auditorium-library wing becomes a main feature from this side. The L-shaped arcades consist, at floor level, of flat semicircular arches. At the second level, larger openings separated by round "lollipop" doric columns with lintel create a lighter effect. Side elevations are identical: repetition of a pilasters and windows module is only interrupted once to accommodate and underline the side entrances.

A most significant feature of Ponce High School is its two stories high, elongated auditorium, with a generous stage area and a U-shaped wood mezzanine supported from the concrete ceiling. Its original lighting fixtures were removed and replaced by fluorescent ones. Classrooms are well lit and ventilated; openings (with inside mouldings) are many. Walls are plain, having been painted over and over throughout the years. The original wood floor finish is still retained in the library, the auditorium and many of the classrooms; some have been substituted or changed to concrete.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1915 **Builder/Architect** Adrian C. Finlayson (?)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Ponce High School is one of the five best school buildings built in Puerto Rico at the beginning of the XXth century; and outside San Juan, the capital, certainly the most impressive. Between 1900 and 1925 over 3,000 schools were erected on the Island; only four included fully equipped auditoriums (not just assembly rooms) in their design: San Juan's Central High, Luis Muñoz Rivera School in Salinas, Arecibo's own Luis Muñoz Rivera School and Ponce High School. In that sense, these are the most representative examples of school building ideas being developed at the time in the United States by architects of renown, such as Haussander and Perkins of Chicago, Snyder of New York, Cooper of Boston and, especially, William B. Ittner, of St. Louis.

So far, the name of the architect for Ponce High remains unconfirmed; many facts point to Adrian C. Finlayson as designer. Mr. Finlayson was, at the time, architect of the Insular Government's Interior Department, and was responsible for many other structures of similar use, size and style. As such, he is a key figure on our Island's architectural development.

Given the date of erection ( earlier than for most other public schools built on the Island) Ponce High School emerges, as one of the earlier USA government sponsored construction efforts at such a large scale on the Island. Strikingly significant is the fact that with the choice of building vocabulary (strongly reminiscent of Mc Kim, Mead & White's Pennsylvania Station in New York) the use of the neoclassical style for educational structures was introduced in Puerto Rico. Ponce High School is today one of the most dignified, imposing structures in the city, a fact underlined by its architectural style, scale and overall architectural merits.

The siting, on a block surrounded by other schools also of architectural merit, adds to the school's important urban role. The site itself is a historic one, where once the U. S. Army barracks were located, before a fire ravaged the premises. The event is widely remembered in Ponce.

Some of the city's most important public figures attended the school; three of Puerto Rico's governors graduated from there. Its auditorium sponsored drama events have later been acknowledged as definitive for the development of a Puerto Rican theatre tradition. The auditorium at Ponce High housed the beginnings. In conclusion, the architecture of Ponce High stands out among the Island's built legacy for historic, stylistic, conceptual and symbolic reasons.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ponce Historic Archives

NONE

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name USGS Ponce 1970

Quadrangle scale 1 : 20,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

see enclosed location plan

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jorge Rigau, AIA Secretary

organization Colación, Inc.

date March 16, 1987

street & number Ponce de León 653, Miramar

telephone (809) 725-3948

city or town San Juan

state Puerto Rico

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mariano G. Coronas Castro

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date June 17, 1987

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 8/4/87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Ponce High School

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Description continued...

Hallways and stairs are paved in the latter. Vinyl is used at offices. Glazed concrete tile is found at the lobby, where the original iron grilles, of geometrical design, are still in use.

Two small lean-to wood and zinc structures were added a few years ago. The auditorium was adapted to air conditioning features, with acoustic ceiling and related fixtures having been added. In spite of it all, and probably because of the school's imposing scale, well balanced proportions and well kept classical detailing, the integrity has not yet been lost. In fact, it would be relatively easy to restore the building in its entirety to its original character.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

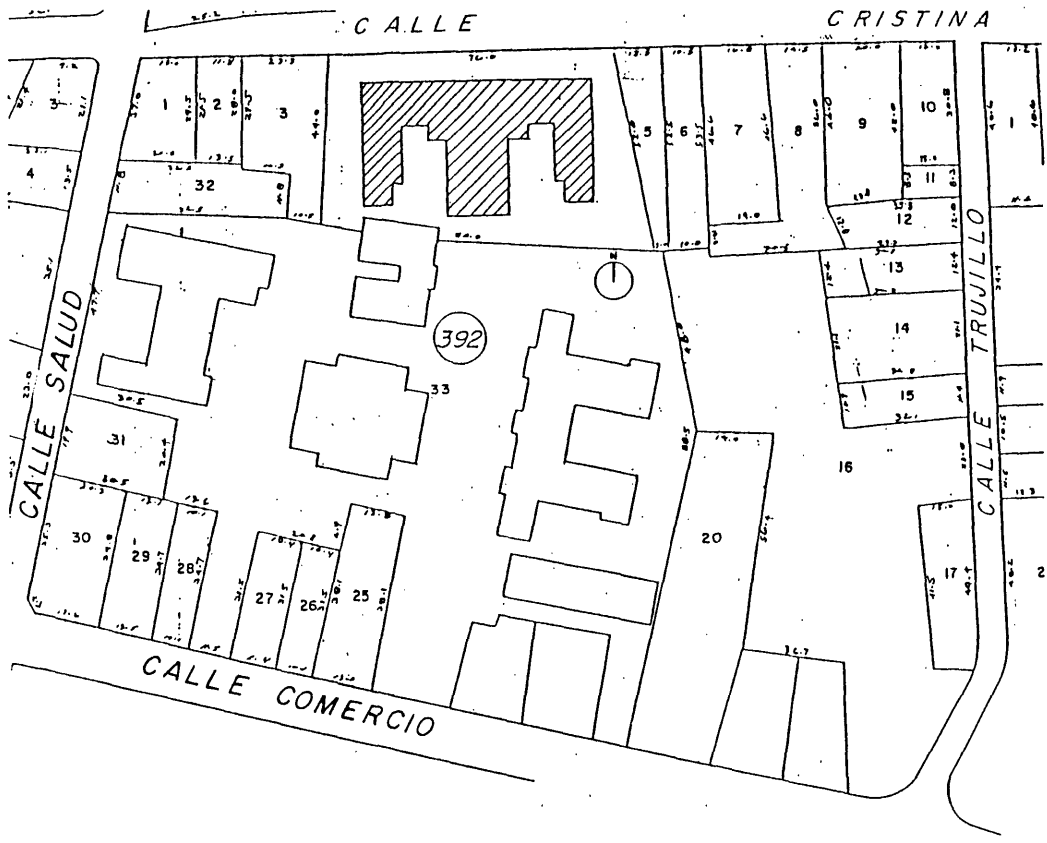
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SCALE 1:10,000