

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

For NPS use only

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

received OCT 22 1985

date entered

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

DEC 3 1985

1. Name

historic PLAZA PUBLICA

and or common PLAZA DE COLON (COLUMBUS SQUARE)

2. Location

street & number MC KINLEY STREET (parcela 330)

not for publication

city, town MAYAGUEZ

vicinity of

state PUERTO RICO

code PR 72

county MAYAGUEZ

code 00650

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 type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name MAYAGUEZ MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT, CITY HALL

street & number PERAL AND MC KINLEY STREETS

city, town MAYAGUEZ,

vicinity of

state PUERTO RICO

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. REGISTRO DE LA PROPIEDAD, DEPARTAMENTO DE HACIENDA
(RECORDER'S OFFICE)

street & number GOVERNMENT BUILDING, BARRIO MIRADERO

city, town MAYAGUEZ,

state PUERTO RICO

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title SURVEY AND PLANNING
PROJECT OF MAYAGUEZ

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date JULY, 1984

federal state county local

depository for survey records STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

city, town SAN JUAN,

state PUERTO RICO

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Historically, the towns of the island developed from a central nucleus or main square ("plaza mayor"). Plaza Colon is the main square in Mayaguez from the which the major streets stem out. The plaza is centrally located and denominates the urban plan of the town.

The space itself is surrounded on its four sides by principal streets. Lining these streets are some of the most important buildings of the town. Among these are: City Hall, exemplifying the power of the state; the Cathedral, the power of the church; the Casino, as social center; and commercial buildings at the ground floor levels of private residences. These buildings exhibit a great variety of architectural styles. Some were designed by important, local architects of the first half of the 19th century such as Perocier and Porrata Doria.

Plaza Colon has a rectangular plan, with its major longitudinal axis running West to East- from City Hall to the Church. 1

Starting at the West end, or that directly across from City Hall, the square is divided into three areas: 1) a reception section with six sitting spaces; 2) the Columbus Monument or central section and 3) the East area which completes the sequence. This last section has eight sitting areas and a small monument dedicated to the founders of the town. A shorter axis intersects the plan approximately mid-way and this is where the Columbus Monument is located.

The plaza has four entrances, each opening to a different street and facing one of the cardinal points. The level of the square is raised from that of the surrounding sidewalk and varying numbers of steps on each side take up the level variation of the sloping streets.

The main material used in the plaza design was travertine; used for paving as well as for the sitting and planter areas. The predominant color is cream with accents in a coffee color of the same material. This darker color outlines the low enclosing wall, divides the three areas of the plaza paving and creates a simple diamond and triangle pattern along the sides of the main axis. The octagonal base of the fountain beneath the Columbus Monument is also made of the same material with the same color combinations.

The peripheral planters and the very dense high trees provide the plaza with needed shade and buffer from noise. This makes it enjoyable and usable even during the hottest hours of the day. Twenty bronze statues placed on rectangular podiums carry spherical light fixtures and add variety to the sitting layout as well as provide rhythm to the spacial sequence.

Besides providing a physical division to the plaza at its two main axes, the Columbus Monument, as the oldest element in the plaza, provides a focal point to the space. Its structure is set inside the octagonal fountain. The classic-inspired pedestal is eclectic in spirit and in drastic difference to the simplicity of the fountain below. The statue faces City Hall. The four-sided pedestal is symmetrical and oriented to the entrances of the square. The main body, of the concrete, white-washed pedestal is ornamented with political and religious characters related to the European Discovery of America, some of which are: King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, Fray Bartolome de las Casas, and others.

Above the pedestal is a large bronze sphere of the world upon which stands the statue of Christopher Columbus, arms spread out, holding the Spanish flag in his right hand.

A small monument dedicated to the founders of the town is located at the east end of the plaza. The monument consists of a square base surmounted by a cylindrical podium, upon which is an open book with a cross on top.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) HISTORY

Specific dates 1760, late 19th cent., 1920, 1945, and 1966 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In 1576 a decree of the Spanish emperor Felipe II established a set of rules and regulations for settlements in the New World. These were compiled in 1680 in the Laws of Indies. These norms were quite strict. They established the location of the Plazas or main squares in the settlements' core. A rectangular reticulae of streets was to originate from this space. All major governmental and ecclesiastical institutions were to face this central space. Important commercial and residential structures would also surround this main area.

According to these regulations the area for the Plaza of Mayaguez was designated in 1760 following the Laws of Indies and by 1836 it had already been paved. During a few years in the late 18th century it was used as market place until the church officials complained. Ever since this area has been used for social, cultural and political purposes. In 1842 after the 1841 fire destroyed part of town the plaza was remodelled. In 1896 to commemorate the discovery of America by Columbus, a bronze statue made in Barcelona by sculpture A. Cole y Pi was erected in the center of the square which was then officially named "Plaza de Cristobal Colon".(1)

In 1920 the main square was rebuilt for a third time. The earthquake of 1918 damaged it.(2) Since then the Plaza has been remodelled several times, (1945–1956–1966). During all these remodellings the integrity of the area has been preserved. The "Plaza de Colon" is still today a good example of colonial urban rules.

Today as in the past Columbus square is used as a center for the city's social, commercial and political life.(3) During the day time you can see people resting from their shopping, selling their products or enjoying a conversation with a friend. During the night hours various groups gather in the Plaza to play dominos or simply chat.

Special holidays are celebrated with music and dancing in the center of the square.

(1) A second monument dedicated to the founders of Mayaguez was erected in 1944 in the Plazas' oriental side. This monument consists of a column crowned with an opened book topped by a cross.

(2) During the 1918 reconstruction of the Plaza a series of Bronze statuettes that represent various ethnical groups were placed.

(3) both local and foreign political figures have used the Plaza de Colon to deliver speeches. In 1934 during a visit to the island President F.D. Roosevelt received in the square a document handed out to him by a private citizen Mr. Ramón Justiniano, who represented the "Liga Defensora de Mayaguez" (League for the Defense of Mayaguez). This document contained twelve written requests for improving the physical, economic and general living condition of the city.

9. Major Bibliographical References

General Archives of Puerto Rico. Series: Municipalities and Public Works.
Fernández García, Eugenio. The Book of Porto Rico. San Juan, Puerto Rico:
El Libro Azul Publishing Co., 1923

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 22,074 sq. mts.

Quadrangle name USGS MAYAGUEZ

Quadrangle scale 1: 20,000

UTM References LAMBERT- 18°12'11"
67°08'21"

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

organization Colegio de Arquitectos de P.R.

date September, 1984

street & number Box 2299

telephone (809) 724-1213

city or town Hato Rey

state PUERTO RICO

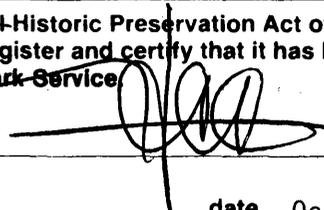
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 15, 1985

For NPS use only

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

date 12/3/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet PLAZA DE COLON

Item number 7

Page 2

¹Since the foundation of Mayaguez in 1760, the city had its main open space at its present location. Originally a large expanse of dirt, the plaza always boasted the most important buildings of the town around it. The space was remodelled in the late 19th century at a (date not known;) subsequent remodellings took place in 1920, 1945, 1956 and 1966, to render its present state.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

NOMBRE COMUN	PLAZA DE COLON
NOMBRE HISTORICO	
ARQUITECTO	
DIRECCION	Parcela 330 solar

INFORMACION GRAFICA		
		

PLANO DE SITUACION

Scale: 1: 1000