

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

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

For NPS use only

received **NOV 6 1984**

date entered **DEC 10 1984**

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

**1. Name**

historic Church San Blas de Illescas of Coamo *(Historic Churches of Puerto Rico)*  
and/or common same *(Rio TK)*

**2. Location**

street & number Mario Braschi St., Town Plaza \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Coamo \_\_\_ vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 72 county Ponce code 0290

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Catholic Church, Diocese of Ponce

street & number Box 205, Station 6

city, town Ponce \_\_\_ vicinity of state Puerto Rico 00732

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, Church Litigation Case #2, 1904

street & number Box 2392

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00903

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Inventory of the Historic Churches  
title of Puerto Rico has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date 1984 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records 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

The parish church of San Blas de Illescas of Coamo is located inside the town plaza. It is oriented on an east-west axis, its entrance facing west. The church is raised above the level of the plaza and separated from it by a series of ceremonial steps and a low cast iron fence modulated by masonry pillars.

The rectangular plan consists of a nave and two aisles. Open arcades (five arches) resting on wide rectangular pillars with attached pilasters divide the space. There are four bays plus the apse/sacristies. The first bay is the vestibule or sotocoro. On the right, a wooden stairway leads to the original choir loft. The choir loft is supported by wooden beams and conserves the original wooden balustrade. The main space is covered with the original stone masonry barrel vault supported by arches perpendicular to the nave. The buttresses necessary to support this structural system remained on the inside, differing from other churches using the same system but placing the buttresses on the exterior. The side aisles are covered with a flat brick masonry vault modulated by arches set at a lower level than the main nave. Four clerestory windows permit light to enter the interior space. The plan culminates in a square apse crowned with a brick masonry lanterned dome, resting on pendentives. The sacristies are located on both sides of the apse and are covered by the original ausubo wooden beams and layers of brick. The floor is covered with the original gray and white marble tiles. The church conserves its original wooden doors.

The main facade consists of a flat wall ending with a delicately curved cornice reminiscent of Latin American Baroque architecture. Two pilasters topped with pinnacles flank the entrance. Above the door a simple cornice and a round oculi window express the existence of a choir loft. A two level espadaña with five open arches, but holding only two bells, gives height to the facade. The side facades are simple, having only one arched door flanked by very small pilasters holding a cornice. Another cornice runs the whole length of the building. The buttresses are crowned by pinnacles. A parish house was constructed at the rear of the church in 1925, but this structure does not touch the main building.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1661, 1784      **Builder/Architect** unknown

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

The church of San Blas de Illescas of Coamo is of architectural and historical importance. It is one of the most important works of religious architecture in Puerto Rico. By 1661 parts of the church were already built in brick and rubblework. The present building was finished in 1784. In 1867, an earthquake damaged the structure and some repairs were made. The church retains all of its original construction and design elements: stone masonry vaults, brick masonry domes, walls, arcades and pilasters. Two important paintings are kept in the church, one by Campeche and the other by Oller, as well as wood carvings of great value. The town of Coamo was founded in 1579. The parish of San Blas of Coamo, being one of the oldest in the island, played an important part in the development of the country. At one time or other twenty-two towns of the region were subordinated to this parish. According to Arch. Thomas S. Marvel and Art Historian Maria Luisa Moreno, in their book Architecture of Parish Churches in Puerto Rico, "The use of a square apse covered with a dome above pendentives has been established as one of the characteristics of religious architecture in Puerto Rico. If the Coamo church was finished at the end of the 17th or beginning of the 18th century, it would be the first church to incorporate this feature. Also, the use of a rectangular floor plan divided into three aisles without a transept or chapels, was initiated with this church, becoming the prototype for 19th century plans." The traditional relationship of the church to the main town plaza and city hall is maintained, in accordance with Spanish Crown ordinances at the time the town was founded. In this case, the church occupies a prominent location inside the plaza itself.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Marvel, Thomas S. and Maria Luisa Moreno, Architecture of Parish Churches in Puerto Rico, Editorial Universitaria, Rio Piedras, P.R., unpublished.  
Rivera Bermúdez, Ramón, Coamo: Notas para su Historia, La Villa Añeja Síntesis de su Historia, Model Offset Printing, San Juan, 1983.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 2000 sq.mts.

Quadrangle name Coamo, PR

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References Lat. 18°04'57", Long. 66°21'24"

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The church is bounded on the north, west and south by the town plaza, and on the east by Ruiz Belvis St. (see enclosed location plan).

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ester Cardona, Arch. and Marisa Gómez, Arch.

organization Investigaciones Bonaire, Inc.

date July 1984

street & number Tetuan 103

telephone (809) 724-4997

city or town Old San Juan

state Puerto Rico 00901

## 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.

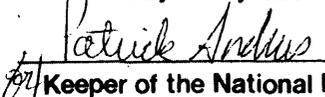
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 30, 1984

### For NPS use only

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

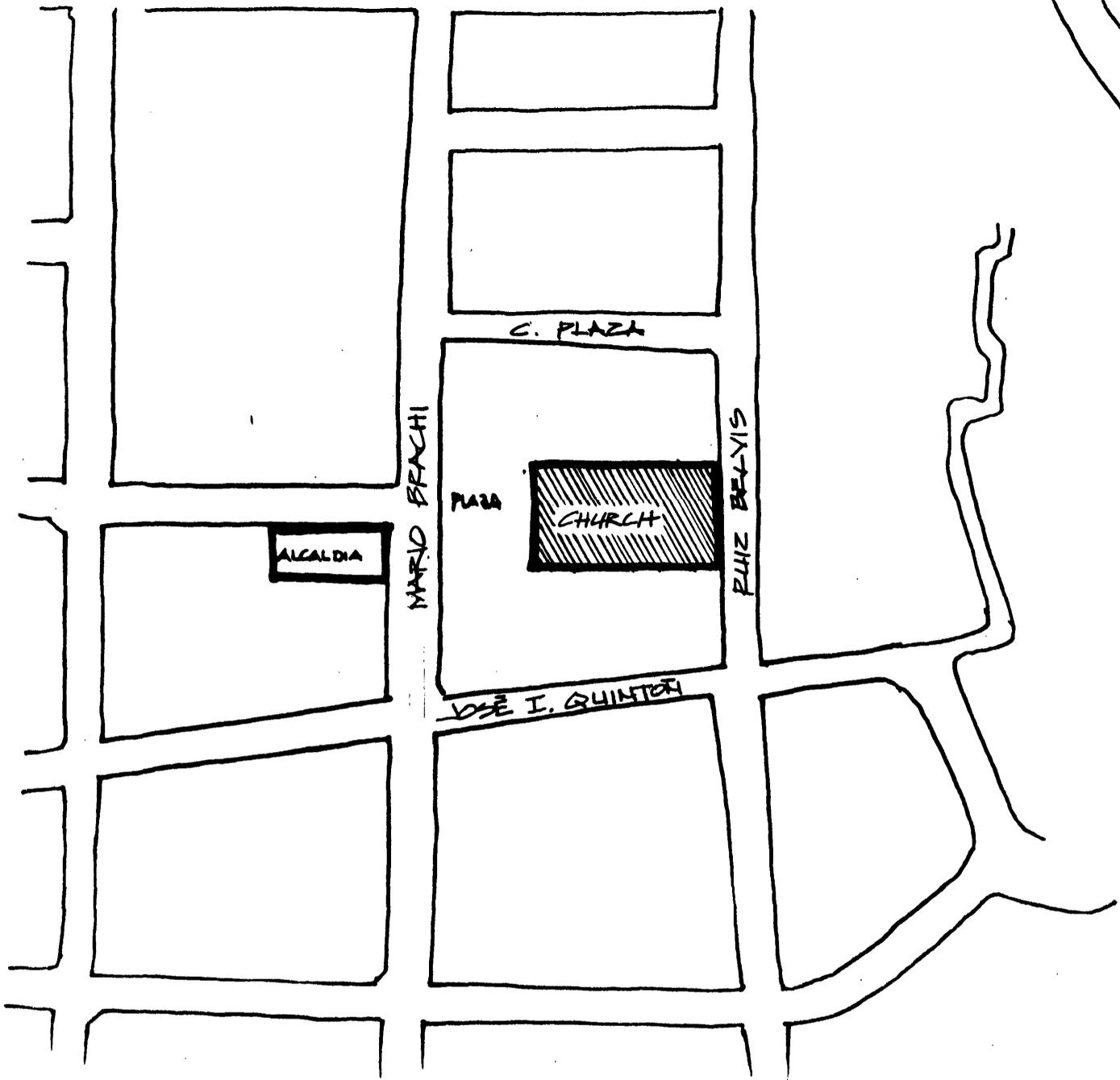
  
Keeper of the National Register

date 12/10/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



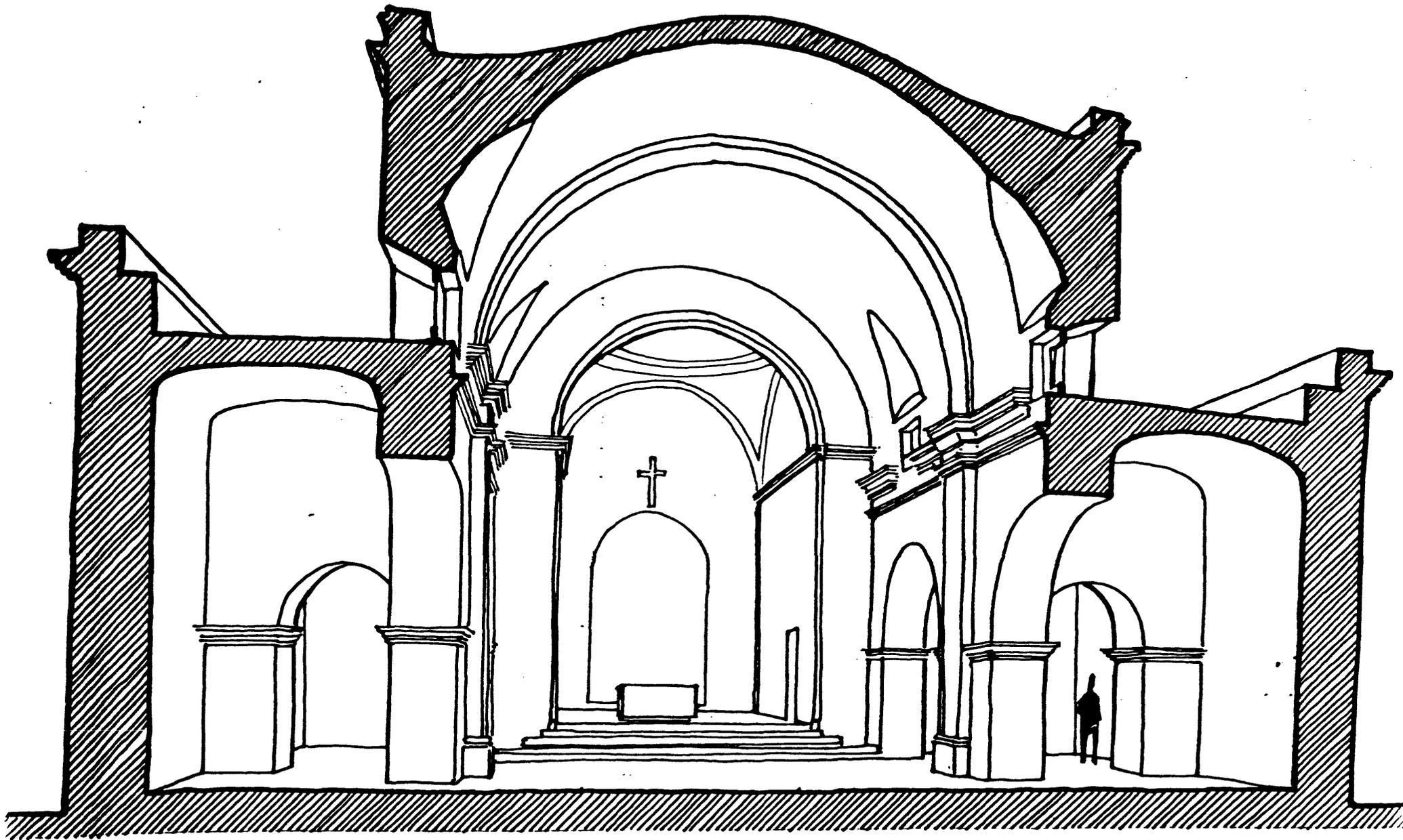
town: **COAMO**

scale: 1:2000



**INVESTIGACIONES BONAIRE INC.**

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Church San Blas de Illescas of Coamo  
Drawing by Arch. Thomas S. Marvel