

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAY 19 1987  
date entered JUN 25 1987

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

**1. Name**

historic Banco de Ponce

and/or common Banco de Ponce

**2. Location**

street & number Amor and Comercio Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Ponce vicinity of Ponce

state Puerto Rico code 072 county Ponce code 113

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input 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 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Banco de Ponce

street & number Amor and Comercio Streets

city, town Ponce vicinity of Ponce state Puerto Rico

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Ponce Government Center

city, town Las Americas Ave. Ponce state Puerto Rico

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Ponce  
title Historic Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July, 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records P.R.S.H.P.O.

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico

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## 7. Description

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Condition  
 excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

Check one  
 unaltered  
 altered

Check one  
 original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Banco de Ponce building is a four story brick and concrete structure on the southeast corner of Ponce's main plaza. It is set in a very narrow triangular lot defined by near-parallel Amor and Comercio Streets. The architect's solution to the lot's curious geometry was the development of a continuous facade enveloping these two streets and the narrow front to the main square.

The predominant style is related to the Beaux art neoclassical, with three horizontal bands defining this wraparound facade. The base is made of a pinkish stone extracted from a quarry close to the city. This stone has been commonly used in other Ponce buildings. Over said base, there is a body defined by a colossal Corinthian order, with paired pilasters turning into columns at the most dramatic point, where the front to the Square is defined. Between the pilasters and columns there are openings for the first and second floors, the latter arched and balustered. On top of this colonnade, there is a classically detailed frieze which has a cornice that, on top of the round columns, bends upward in an inverted vee fashion. The frieze protuberates on top of all column and pilaster pairs.

The upper level is the third body; it is articulated by pilasterlike, paneled protuberances of the wall. It is topped by a smaller cornice, and, on the Plaza facade, by a medallion surrounded by two cornucopiae. This medallion reads "B de P".

A pedimented aedicule emphasizes the main entrance to the interior. The main banking floor is detailed in stone and marble panels, though not as exuberant in detail as outside. There was a balustered mezzanine opening onto this floor from the office level above; however, it was subsequently closed off - by a design of the building's original architect! - and resurfaced in a more modern austere way.

The second and third (office) floors were rendered in elaborate plasterwork with square Corinthian columns, brackets, medallions and panels between the structural beams ornamented with paterae. Naturalistic motifs are ubiquitous.

Parts of the interior have been altered; the third floor ceiling, for example, has been closed off with a false acoustical - tile job and liberal use of gypsum; windows in that level are modern reflective glass within the original frames.

## 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** 1924–25 **Builder/Architect** Francisco Porrata Doria

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The building's major occupant since its construction - the Banco de Ponce - was founded in 1912, as a bank oriented to finance the needs of the locally-based large-scale cane and coffee industry. At that time, Ponce was in the midst of an economic boom which entailed the construction of Beaux arts and eclectic buildings in the city reflecting the "cultured" taste of the wealthy landowning class.

This particular building is a relatively late but very successful example of Ponce interpretation of the Finde Siecle Beaux Arts architects. Its architect Francisco Porrata Doria, had, at the time, recently returned to Puerto Rico, after studying engineering at Cornell University and some architectural courses at Columbia University. This may account for the academic correctness of the detailing, also evident in the next-door Banco Crédito y Ahorro Ponceño, another of his works. Later Porrata-Doria would evolve stylistically to execute Streamline, Art Deco, and even early International Style designs; several of these examples are located very close to this building, right on Ponce's main square\*.

The Banco de Ponce's setting on the city's main square contributes to the elegance of this part of the city. Several adjacent structures are already listed in the National Register: the old Firehouse (1883, NR 07-12-84) the City Hall \*1845, NR 11-19-86) and the Cathedral (1841, NR 12-10-84). The latter's facade is a 1932 Porrata-Doria design.

Banco de Ponce's monumental exuberance expresses the pride of the institution, its solidity and its capacity to hold its own against far more wealthy Stateside institutions competing for the dollars of the local moneyed classes.

For a time, the building's third floor was used as the ballroom of the city's Spanish Casino.

\*Porrata Doria was one of the Island's finest architects, a pioneer in the development of a local modern architecture and amongst those responsible for what can be called.

"Ponce monumental architecture".

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ponce City Archives  
Banco de Ponce Archives  
Porrata Doria Family Archives

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Ponce

Quadrangle scale 1:20000

### UTM References

A 

1	9	7	5	2	7	0	1	9	9	3	0	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is bounded to the north 40.8 meters by Amor St., to the South 35.86 meters by Comercio St., To the West 13.63 meters by Atocha St. and to the East 22.53 meters by a lot owned by Banco de Ponce.

### 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 Félix J. del Campo, State Historian/Jorge Ortiz, Architect

organization PRSHPO date March 27, 1987

street & number Box 82 La Fortaleza telephone (809) 721-3737

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 Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Officer date March 27, 1987

### For NPS use only

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

Amy Schwab date 6/25/87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

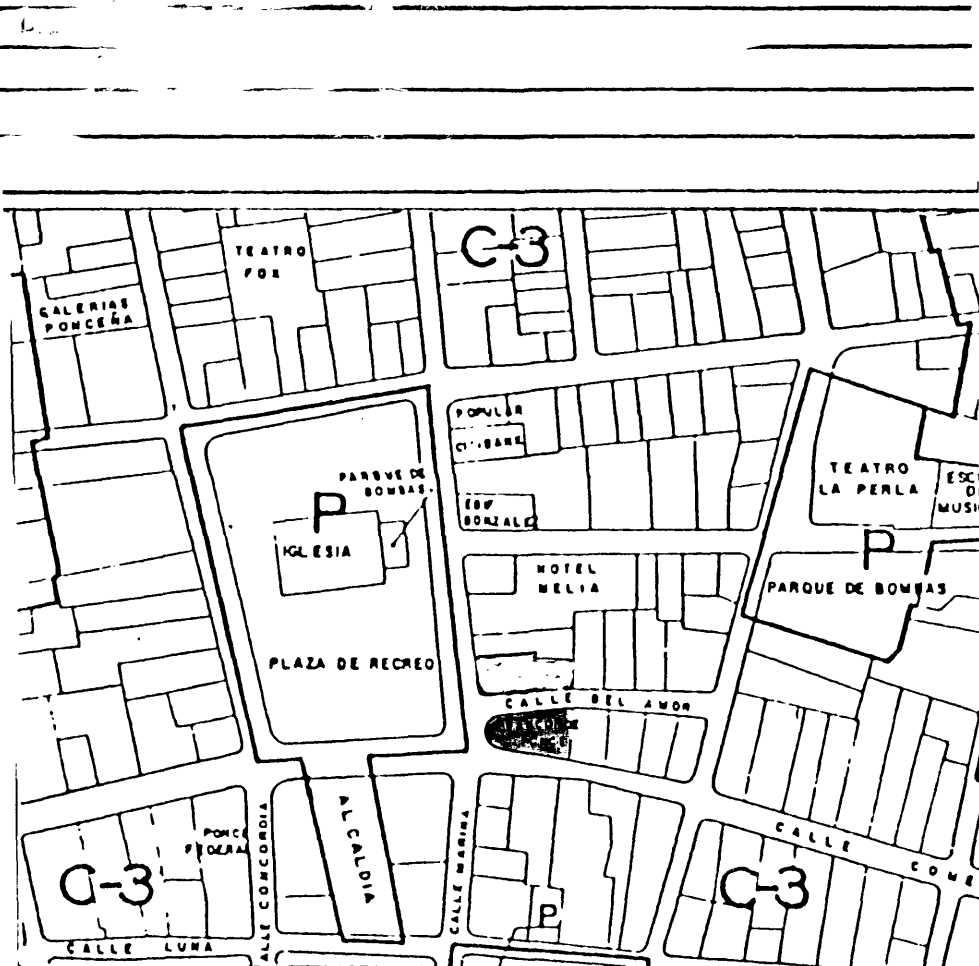
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CONTINUATION SHEET

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SCALE 1:200