

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 8 1987
date entered OCT 29 1987

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

1. Name

historic Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church

and/or common Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida de Ponce

2. Location

street & number Calle Villa No. 135 not for publication

city, town Ponce vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code 072 county Municipality of 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 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" 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
	<u> </u> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida de Ponce

street & number Calle Villa #135

city, town Ponce vicinity of state Puerto Rico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registro de la propiedad

street & number Centro Gubernamental de Ponce

city, town Ponce state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural-Historical
 Inventory of Ponce

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

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 First United Methodist Church of Ponce is a magnificent example of early XXth century eclecticism, integrating Neo-Gothic, Spanish-Revival-Baroque and byzantine elements. It is constructed entirely of rusticated, reinforced-concrete with gabled wood and corrugated sheet metal roofs.

In volume, the church consists of a gabled single-nave, parallel to the street and subdivided into three sections. A large, central cross-gable creates the main facade at Calle Villa, facing north.

On Calle Villa, the cross-gable is articulated by a Spanish-baroque style rope pediment. Flanking this gabled, central transept are two square-plan towers, a shorter turret on the west and a taller bell-tower on the east, both resting upon the intersections of the main nave and cross-gable. The main gable is divided into three bays, a wide, central bay with a large, wide, four-centered gothic arch stained-glass window and two flanking bays with similar but smaller and narrower stained-glass windows. Above the central bay, a stained glass Spanish-renaissance oculus (consisting of a square with semi-circular projections at each of its four sides) occupies the area within the pediment.

The east bell-tower consists of a two-storey rusticated base and step-backs to an onion-shaped cupola above the bellfry. At the ground storey, an entry vestibule is created by an open, four-centered archway. At the second storey, still within the tower's rusticated base-section, a series of four narrow, stained-glass strip windows provides a distinct, modernist element. The first segment of the step-backs of the tower contains two smaller strip windows, and the following, taller set-back houses the church-bell behind narrow arches, one on each of the four sides, supported by corinthian columns. The onion-cupola caps the composition.

The smaller, west tower is completely rusticated and terminates in a rope pediment, at a level slightly lower than the base of the opposite tower. At the ground storey there is a vestibule similar to that of the other tower and above, a circular opening with an oculus within.

The main nave extends only one bay beyond the towers. These bays are identical to the smaller stained-glass bays of the main gable.

A series of low buttresses supports all major walls, one at each extreme of each wall.

The side gables of the main nave repeat, exactly, the articulation of the facade of the main cross-gable.

A rusticated concrete and wrought-iron gate surrounds the property, articulated by square pillars at approximately 20 foot intervals, and spanned by an approximately 2 foot high rusticated concrete base and bar-like wrought-iron railings above.

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 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 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 1907

Builder/Architect Antonín Nechodoma

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ponce is a very good example of Antonín Nechodoma's religious architecture. This Czech architect was one of the first non-hispanic designers to work in Puerto Rico. A colleague of Frank Lloyd Wright under Louis Sullivan, Nechodoma was responsible for the development of the Puerto Rican Bungalow style which spread rapidly throughout the Island during the 1920's and 30's. Nechodoma was author of at least three non-Roman-Catholic churches and many magnificent prairie-style upper-class residences. Most of Nechodoma's buildings have unfortunately been demolished, and most of his remaining structures are now considered landmarks.

Nechodoma's works were carried out between 1907 and 1928, and the original plans of the church are dated 1907. This fact provides reason to believe that the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ponce was the first structure erected in Puerto Rico by the celebrated architect.

The materials used to construct the church are also of importance in the history of construction in Puerto Rico. Reinforced concrete, the principal material used in the church, was seldomly, if at all, used at this early date in Puerto Rico. Contemporary concrete buildings exhibited a lack of understanding of the then new material, evidenced by extremely thick walls and excessive use of iron beams (traditional means of construction applied to modern materials). These characteristics are not found in the construction of this building; quite the contrary, the concrete is used in an elegant and even decorative fashion, evidencing Nechodoma's knowledge of North-American techniques and complete distance from the local building customs. In fact, the building appears to be made of stone and not concrete.

This church is also important in Puerto Rico's religious history since it was one of the first non-Roman Catholic churches built after the change of sovereignty in 1898. Until then, the only non-Catholic church allowed to practice in Puerto Rico had been the Anglican church. The Methodist Church is an example of the freedom of worship instated after the U.S. occupation of the island, and is the most prominent non-Catholic structure in the city of Ponce.

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Puerto Rico Eagle, Feb. 1, 1909.
Architects and Builders' Magazine, 1909, p. 289.
Newman Gandía. Historia de Ponce, Ponce: 1913.
Directorio Comercial de Ponce, 1985.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Ponce, PR

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

A

1	9	7	5	2	4	2	1	0	1	9	9	1	3	0	1	4	1	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 Methodist Episcopal Church is bounded to the north by Calle Villa, to the south by Calle Luna, the the east cy the Clauselles building, and the west by the ballet school of Julie Mayoral (see location plan)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Héctor F. Santiago / State Architectural Historian
Félix Julián del Campo / State Historian

organization P.R. S.H.P.O. date August, 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

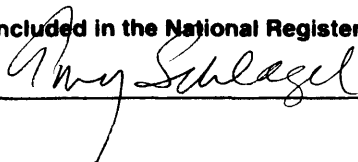
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date August, 1987

For NPS use only

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



date 10/29/87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

*Iglesia Metodista Unida de Ponce, Calle Villa,
Ponce, Puerto Rico*



Scale: 1:2,000