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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

other names/site number Escuela Rafael Balseiro

### 2. Location

street & number Georgetti Street # 1  N/A not for publication

city or town Barceloneta  X vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county Barceloneta code 017 zip code 00617

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Carlos A. Rubio July 10, 2012  
Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

*Edson H. Beall*  
 Signature of the Keeper

8.28.12  
 Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico, 1900- 1930

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
 in the National Register

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ School  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ School  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Prairie School, Eclectic

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### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete

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roof: Concrete

other: Glass/ Cast Iron/ Faience Tiles/

Brick

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

The *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* at Georgetti Street #1, in the Municipality of Barceloneta, Puerto Rico, is an I-shaped, two story, reinforced concrete building erected near the entrance of town, close to its main open public square. Constructed in 1921 in a lot originally embracing 0.81 acres (3,276 m<sup>2</sup>), the eight-classroom school stands among the most distinguished academic facilities of the time. Designed by US architect Adrian C. Finlayson in an eclectic, yet traditional vocabulary, it was built by a local contractor, engineer Antonio M. Navas, Jr. During construction, novel textural treatments were applied to the building's exterior surfaces, these being also highlighted by the use of face brick and Faience tiles. A highly representative example of the public effort to erect school buildings in Puerto Rico during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* remains, to this day, relatively well preserved.

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### Narrative Description

The *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* is located in the Municipality of Barceloneta, a small town founded in 1881, close to the northern shore of Puerto Rico, forty (40) minutes away from the capital city of San Juan. Built in concrete in 1921, the eight-classroom school was designed by US architect Adrian C. Finlayson, having as contractor Engineer Antonio M. Navas, Jr. This information is included in an incised text at a cornerstone on the northwestern end of the front façade. The school stands among the most distinguished erected at the time: design, construction, and its current conservation status, among other considerations, grant it extended merit.

The school sits close to the heart of town, along Georgetti Street, Barceloneta's main artery running north-south. **(FIG 1)** Throughout the decades, the school has lodged all public, K-12 educational levels: elementary, intermediate and high school. Along that time, several smaller buildings have been clustered incrementally next to the original school, and used as complementary facilities for classrooms, storage rooms, a dining area, bathrooms and offices. Taken together, all school buildings currently occupy an area totaling 3.12 acres (12,642 m<sup>2</sup>). Now closed down for three years, all buildings currently house students from the adjacent *Fernando Suria Chávez School* on a temporary basis, whose own facilities are being renovated.

South of the site lies the *Suria Chávez* public school, while North of it, the town's relatively new public transportation terminal is located. Directly across from the *Balseiro Maceira* a triangular, open plaza extends – honoring local composer Benito de Jesús, (a former school alum) and one of the members of the famed singing trio, *el Trío Vegabajeño*. Within the school's lot, open areas have been alternately paved in concrete, a practice widespread for decades throughout the Island by the Department of Education in order to avoid garden maintenance costs and related administrative work.

A few ornamental plants are scattered around, predominantly "cruz de malta" (*Ixora coccinea* L.). Shrubs and low trees edge the western side of the lot. Shaped as the letter I, the building configures (as a consequence of its form) an inner open space (court-like) highlighted at center by an obelisk on axis with the entrance of the original resource. Other site components, however, adhere to no particular or purposeful organizational principle, beyond pure pragmatics. The footprint of the property comprises 0.13 acres (515 m<sup>2</sup>). With respect to its letter I configuration, the school's main façade faces west, and its patio faces east. This orientation seems to respond to the Trade Winds, benefitting from them for natural ventilation.

The applicable land zoning classification nowadays pertains to DT-G (*Distrito Dotacional General*) as defined by the Puerto Rico Planning Board.<sup>1</sup> Site topography is 100% flat, mirroring Barceloneta's valley-like context. The school's lot sits in an area prone to flooding. FEMA maps (2009) categorize it as *A99 Floodable*<sup>2</sup>. It is probably for said reason that the first level of the property is raised three feet above grade, a design decision that also hinders direct heat transmission to the floors, guaranteeing lower temperatures in an otherwise hot, humid tropical climate. This concern was so prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that many building codes at the time required the separation between ground and first floor.<sup>3</sup>

As originally designed by architect Adrian C. Finlayson for the Puerto Rico Department of the Interior, the *Balseiro Maceira* totals eight classrooms. At each side of its entrance hallway, spaces are all symmetrically disposed: two classrooms, a restroom and a double tread stair, in each case. The entrance hallway culminates at an arcade from which all adjacent spaces can be reached. Three sets of steps - one at center and another at each side - allow access to the school's backyard. All four classrooms in the first floor are identically proportioned. The original construction documents included a narrative that still describes the school as it stands today:

*"The school will be a two stories, concrete building designed in a simple manner with brick trimmings to relieve the monotony of plain concrete. The building will be set off about fifty feet from the road, granting ample playground for the pupils and sufficient land in the rear... The plan, which takes the form of a block I, will provide on the first floor four standard classrooms, two restrooms, a main corridor, and an arcade in the rear, at either end of which will be a stairway leading to the second floor. On said floor will be four standard classrooms and a principal's office, access being gained to each room by means of the arcade extending along the rear of the building... All classrooms measure 24' X 30', are well ventilated and lit... Halls*

<sup>1</sup> Puerto Rico Planning Board, *Geolocalizador*. Interactive Map of the Land Registry, [http://gis.jp.pr.gov/GeoLocalizador/Internet/for plot number - 033-044-017-10](http://gis.jp.pr.gov/GeoLocalizador/Internet/for%20plot%20number%20-%20033-044-017-10).

<sup>2</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency Panel 0260J- Map number 72000C0260J, revised November 18, 2009. *Classification A99* pertains to areas to be protected from 1% annual chance flood by a federal flood protection system under construction; no base flood elevation determined.

<sup>3</sup>See Jorge Rigau, "La posible felicidad del país: Optimismo, pragmatismo y responsabilidad social en la reglamentación finisecular puertorriqueña relacionada a la construcción", *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, Núm. 98, 1991, and from the same author, *Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-century Architecture in the Caribbean* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).



*and corridor are of ample width and especially designed to provide convenient access to all rooms...<sup>4</sup>*

All in all, not much changed from intention to realization at the *Balseiro Maceira School*.<sup>5</sup> It is built, as projected, in reinforced concrete, at that time newly popular. More traditional materials like brick and wood are incorporated, but their use was limited, as evidenced in the project's construction specifications:

*"Reinforced concrete, for reasons of economy, durability and appearance, is used in the construction of the building. First grade face brick is used in the trim of the window and door openings and also in the cornice. Floors of corridors, arcades and toilets and the stairs are of concrete, being more durable and giving better appearance than wood... while exterior walls are to be hatched faced to resemble natural stone."<sup>6</sup>*

At each floor, ceilings reach 12'-0" high. Restrooms at both floors include lavatories, water closets, toilet partitions, urinals and slop sinks. Stairs, corridors and the rear arcade are protagonical circulation features. The first floor gallery incorporates flat, round (Roman) arches, all surrounded by a trim. Above it, svelte rectangular columns of little depth define an open corridor at the second level. Plain horizontal banding (in the manner of a coping) culminates the hallway parapet. Hallways are finished in polished cement, slightly grooved to imitate a traditional, reticulated flooring pattern. Interior walls are plastered. Discreet cast iron ventilators allow the space between ground and floor to breathe.

As it stands today, the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* retains its main distinctive architectural attributes. In spite of two additions to provide restrooms in the second floor above those in the first, the original building massing prevails. **(FIG 2)** Facing east and not noticeable from the street (also easily retrievable, if needed or wanted), these additions do not detract from the public enjoyment of the school's commanding architecture along Georgetti Street. To this day, the scale of the property continues to overwhelm most adjacent urban elements. However, size and bearing are not the only distinguishing features; materiality and craftsmanship are equally ennobling traits of the *Balseiro Maceira*, given the spare, pragmatic tectonics that pervade the surrounding context.

In terms of volumetric composition, the school underlines a three-unit arrangement in its two main elevations, front and back. A main central block is set back and flanked by two identical volumes projecting outwards at each end of it (as serifs of a capital letter I). **(FIG 3)** Each component used to have its own single direction roof, all sloping inwards. The symmetry suggested by these "bookends" and the receding wall plane in between them, is further underlined by the location of the main entrance iron gate at center. The axial disposition is echoed in plan by an entrance hallway and steps

<sup>4</sup>Archivo General de Puerto Rico, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1 *Memoir for the construction of an 8 classroom graded school building at Gurabo, Puerto Rico; as amended for Barceloneta, Puerto Rico.* The name of commissioner Manuel V. Domenech is crossed out in pencil to include Guillermo Estevez; architect Adrian C. Finlayson, p. M-2, M-3.

<sup>5</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 990; Legajo: 12, Exp:1. The original construction documents (plans, specifications, and correspondence) at Puerto Rico's National Archive (AGPR) prove invaluable for the assessment of original and existing characteristics and conditions of the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School*. Photos, however, are missing from the files.

<sup>6</sup>AGPR, Caja 990, Exp 12, Leg 1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior, Division of Public Buildings, San Juan, Porto Rico. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 class-room Graded School building at Barceloneta, Porto Rico*, no date. This documentation was annexed to the construction contract dated December 2, 1920.

that lead to the patio in the back, where an obelisk culminates the linear sequence. Mirror spatial conditions at each side of the axis reinforce the overall symmetrical lay out. The obelisk, dating from 1948, commemorates three local veterans from World War II: José I. Machado, Belén Reyes, and Serviliano Rivera.

Both projecting masses that cap the center volume further the perception of total equilibrium in the property. While most of the building emphasizes horizontality, the “bookends” – in contrast – endorse verticality. This is achieved through the expressive bas-relief treatment of the facades, made richer through inset panels and raised (fielded) ones. Shying away from abstract, wholesome wall planes, architect Adrian C. Finlayson opted instead for a sculpted surface treatment. Through the manipulation of myriad architectural elements (cornices, moldings, reveals, lintels, trims, belt courses and other bands raised from wall surfaces for emphasis, but also to contrast their textures) the designer provided the school’s center mass/volume with abundant horizontal lines. These succeed – through implied movement - in bringing together the two protruding capping volumes, simultaneously closing the façade composition by stacking vertical lines to suggest structural piers (and stability). A similar lay out in plan is applied to the back (east) elevation, but treated accordingly.

In general, horizontality prevails in the two-story school. Windows and surface treatments – also flower boxes, piers, and lintels - incorporate the proportional predilections of the Prairie Style.<sup>7</sup> The uppermost cornice and parapet, assisted by a ribbon of red brick arranged in soldier course, seem to simultaneously stretch and contain the building. Vertical windows, used in pairs, closely spaced, and highlighted with flat lintels and lower moldings “read” as horizontal fields in the overall building composition. Thin concrete columns often separate one window from the other, to the point of becoming mullions instead of being perceived as wall segments. A continuous, articulated wall base and the frieze above the second floor that highlight rectangular, linear panels, also contribute to the school designer’s unremitting commitment to horizontality.

Most noteworthy, the textural treatment of reinforced concrete- used at the *Balseiro Maceira* to capitalize upon the tectonic value of exposed aggregate- constitutes one of the school’s main architectural attributes. Poured with soft contour stone of very small proportions, as was required by the project’s construction specifications, cement was left to set within its formwork for a period shorter than normal. Once exposed, walls were hosed down with the appropriate pressure to lift only the superficial excess of the material, and thus reveal the aggregate stones embedded in the cured cement. Construction specifications for the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* reiterate, in more than one instance, the architect’s expectations on this matter: “...exterior walls are to be hatchet faced to resemble natural stone.” “Finish of this work to be rubbed resembling stone.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Prairie School Style (1900-1920) is primarily associated with houses designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright and many of his followers at that time. For them, “the Prairie house was deliberate and composed, conceived as a practical, cohesive whole... Its natural textures and horizontal profile, accented by broad, hovering roof planes and spreading terraces, were in concert with the flat landscape of the midwestern plains. Inside, the simplified open plan had a minimum of rooms, defined by screens and panels, radiating from a central living space.” Prairie style precepts were subsequently applied to buildings other than residences. The “open floor plan, clean lines, and human scales associated with the style made a permanent mark on American architecture...” See Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 202-207.

<sup>8</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 classroom Graded School, M-4.*



Stylistic and ornamental concerns are specifically evidenced at the school's entrance portico and the uppermost parapet. **(FIG 4)** Reached by steps with piers on each side, the main entrance is highlighted by stepping pilasters crowned by a *congé* cornice and bordering molding, all supported by a pair of relatively big scroll brackets. A keystone is simulated above the door, at center of a splayed lintel. Small brackets are placed below the first course of windows above the two flower boxes. Each planter has a weep hole, an iron grate, and a protruding surround in concrete. At the roof, beyond the cornice, ornamental faience tiles are imbedded in the concrete, in adherence to their traditional usage in Arts & Crafts and Prairie style architecture. These glazed tiles are used as color accents and, in Barceloneta, selectively located at corner conditions, as well as at left and right of the entrance axis. Three colors (turquoise, terracotta, and green) are laid out in a square shape. **(FIG 5)** An inner, smaller square (green) is surrounded by one frame (terracotta) and yet a second one (turquoise). Elements as minute as these decorative tiles – evident only to the curious observers - are carefully incorporated to the building, in order to reinforce the design intentions of the overall composition.

### The Impact of Time

Since it was built 90 years ago, the *Rafael Balseiro School* has been used as a public educational facility for elementary, junior high and high school students. This has proven to be both a blessing and a handicap. That it still serves its original purpose has limited any drastic transformation of the property unrelated to its initial reason for being. And it has succeeded in grafting the school in the collective memory of many people from Barceloneta who have attended it. However, impromptu additions, crude repairs, and lack of maintenance – conditions often pursuant to lack of funds and planning from its owner, the Department of Education of Puerto Rico – have consistently challenged the school's architectural attributes. Luckily, so far, the property has managed to retain its integrity, as the inflictions have not yet affected permanently the building's integrity.

The school's site, once open and ample, is now shared with another local academic facility, *Escuela Fernando Suria Chávez*, and has been somewhat cramped with ancillary buildings added throughout the years to fulfill expanded program offerings. Either one-story or two-story, all of them feel too close to each other for comfort. A basketball court in steel overpowers the back of the lot. This echoes similar conditions around the Island, where the Department of Education has tried to make the most out of its originally generous lots, now insufficient to accommodate persistent growth. Limited frontage has also been a by-product of progress at the *Balseiro Maceira*, whose main elevation patio was diminished by engineering improvements to Georgetti Street. Trees, palm trees and other vegetation have been lost here; also in the back yard.

In its front façade (west), changes can be said to have been of relatively minor impact. Wooden windows have been substituted by metal жалюзи, easily removable. Minor damage and poor paint jobs impinge now upon several architectural finishes. A bronze plaque with the name of the school was years ago superimposed over the splayed lintel of the entrance and its *faux* keystone. The original gate in iron is gone. Higher up, an air conditioning unit protrudes from a metal louvered window. Grillwork has been installed at the three lower level windows north of the property. The commemorative cornerstone has been painted over. **(FIG 6)** Some Faience tile inserts have fallen off from the peripheral parapet. Several frieze panels have come off and some segments are missing. Electrical conduits are now exposed to the left side of the main entrance, and also close to the northern flower box. For security reasons, exterior lighting has been installed at all elevations. Many of these lighting fixtures do not work, but have been left in place nonetheless. At the building's base,

a bronze plaque commemorating the school's 50th anniversary lies occluded by an air conditioner condensing unit and its enclosing iron grillwork.

Some changes relate to the lot's west enclosure. Although the building was inaugurated without any three-dimensional boundary marker, in subsequent years, a low concrete fence was erected. Openings in it replicated the square-with-diagonals muntin pattern of the school's original wooden windows. Apparently too low to detract trespassers, it was subsequently made higher through the addition of chain-link fencing. More recently, it was eliminated and substituted by concrete piers with iron fencing in-between.

Inside, the spatial flexibility originally granted by Finlayson's design has been lost. As specified by the architect, *two classrooms and principal's office on the second floor were to be provided with folding door partitions, so that they could easily be converted into a large assembly room.* Later changes were enacted (at an uncertain date) to provide permanent wall divisions and substitute the folding doors that originally allowed spatial and academic integration of the different rooms. The original adaptability was thus sacrificed.

Through the decades, however, essential changes have been related to the substitution of all wood components of the building, including floors, the roof, and most fenestration. Originally, the school was raised on 12" x 12" concrete piers, holding 2" x 10" wooden girders that, together, held the two floors above them. Although molded reinforced concrete was the primary construction material for the overall project, roofs were originally erected in wood rafters and joists. Sizes used were 2" x 6" and 2" x 8" for rafters; also 1 ½" x 6" for purlins. Wooden plugs were used to anchor the roof to the purlins, aided by galvanized iron screws. The roof was covered with corrugated galvanized iron, and provided with flashing and counter flashing. The architect argued for it as follows: *"As the roof of the building is not a prominent feature of the design, it is covered with galvanized iron, this material being economical and requiring less framing than tile."*<sup>9</sup> In order to access the top of the property, a roof scuttle (with a wooden ladder and exterior zinc shielding) was located at center of the building, above the space designated in plan as principal's room, in the second floor.<sup>10</sup> Ceilings were in "tablancillo", a local wood installed in tongue and groove assembly ("*machihembrado*"); these *"...being painted to neutralize the bright light which is injurious to the eyes of the children."*<sup>11</sup> Gutters and downspouts were in cast iron. The preference for wood as a building material was repeatedly stated in the project specifications:

*"Wood floors, however, are used in all classrooms to relieve the hardness of the concrete on the feet of the pupils. Ceilings throughout, except in toilets and first floor arcade, are of wood, as this construction is more economical than plaster and wears better. The interior openings*

<sup>9</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. *Memoir for the construction of an 8 class-room graded school building at Gurabo, Puerto Rico; as amended for Barceloneta, Puerto Rico*, M-4.

<sup>10</sup> From the project plans and specifications it is difficult to ascertain how practical this principal's room turned out to be. Located directly above the entrance hallway, it appears in drawings defined by dotted lines, in acknowledgement that, when the accordion doors of the adjoining classrooms were opened, this space would disappear (?) and give way for assemblies and other activities. One cannot help but wonder: where would the furniture and belongings of the principal go?

<sup>11</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 class-room Graded School*, M-4.



*and around blackboards are trimmed with yellow pine giving a neat appearance to the finished building.”<sup>12</sup>*

Baseboards and wall moldings were used in traditional manner, as were picture and ceiling moldings. Wooden floors at classrooms were oiled; wooden fenestration was stained. Doors were paneled, crowned with ventilation transoms. Classrooms were provided additional, wooden ventilation transoms on their walls facing corridors. Paneled shutters complemented casement windows with glass panes. High in each windowpane, muntins combined vertically, horizontally and diagonally against the glass, emulating Roman windows. The hardware for their operation was imported from *P. & F. Colton*, 101 Park Avenue, New York.<sup>13</sup> To account for his choice of hardware finish, architect Finlayson argued: “*Galvanized steel is more predominant in the finish of the hardware than brass, as the latter does not give satisfactory results in this climate.*”<sup>14</sup>

The original top, originally in single-slope wooden construction and corrugated galvanized iron, is now a thin, flat slab in concrete, reaching as high as the lowest part of the original roof, and projecting a timid eave in the southern elevation. Because a parapet originally shielded the roof from viewers, this change is unnoticeable from Georgetti Street. In contrast, when viewed from the east, the parapet rises awkwardly, higher than expected, missing as it is, its original roof counterpart. The more contemporary roof has fostered the installation of acoustic tile systems at classroom ceilings; unfortunately many of them already damaged by water leakage. Illumination is now of the fluorescent type, where it used to be incandescent. Much of the electrical and plumbing systems has been repaired or replaced.

Two additions, if not transcendental (for they could, in fact, be demolished without great consequence), have a bearing on the school’s current appearance. Two individual terraces above each first floor restroom have been closed off to provide additional bathroom space, north and south of the building, at the second floor level. Built in concrete – without any design intention beyond fulfilling pragmatic needs – these additions contrast sharply with the rest of the building’s volume and its tectonic treatment. They are awkwardly butted against the originally textured walls, covering portions of these. In parallel, their metal jalousie windows and thin concrete eaves stand out from the property’s original mass. Partly because of the visual impact of these additions, the eastern façade evidences the largest amount of interventions. Below the additions, at first floor level, the original hatchet faced texture has been painted over, without any consideration to the architect’s imaginative wall finish. On top of this elevation, the roof’s substitution becomes evident, highlighted not only by the thin concrete eave above the gallery, but by the (seemingly) excessive height of the parapet in the building’s perimeter and its ostensibly abrupt conclusion.

On the north façade, a low molding below a first floor window has been damaged. To accommodate an aluminum jalousie window, the opening of the original fenestration had to be filled, changing its proportions. Exposed electrical conduits are plentiful, running across the building and vertically towards the roof. An area of the exposed aggregate has been painted over, as if having cleaned paint rollers on it. Student graffiti abounds. On the south façade, four original window

<sup>12</sup>AGPR, Caja 990, Exp 12, Leg 1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior, Division of Public Buildings, San Juan, Porto Rico. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 class-room Graded School building at Barceloneta, Porto Rico*, no date. This documentation was annexed to the construction contract dated December 2, 1920.

<sup>13</sup>AGPR, Caja 990, Leg. 12, Exp. 1 *Schedule of Hardware from P. & F. Colton, the American Hardware Corporation of New York*, dated April 4, 1921.

<sup>14</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 classroom Graded School, M-4.*

openings have been filled in. As in the rest of the building, all windows and ventilation transoms originally in wood have been substituted by aluminum louvered ones. Nevertheless, the proportions of the original openings have been retained. Where needed, original window openings have been walled up to fit the smaller dimensions of the new windows. The windows at the bathroom wall facing south have had iron grilles installed, as all other restroom windows at the school.

Cement floors have been repaired haphazardly and painted over in red color. The original stairs remain, but several steps need repair. Water leakage is evident at the stair roof. Beneath the second tread, a storage area has been improvised with wood paneling, closing off the area. An iron grill gate controls access to the second floor. Because the whole building is raised above grade and reached through steps, complementary ramps were added to account for prevailing ADA regulations. These are located in the east façade, reaching the first floor arcade. The original steps were cut in half to accommodate the ramps. Additional ramps also mediate between hallways and classrooms, the latter being about 6" higher than the former. None of the ramps, however, fulfill ADA codes. As a matter of fact, the original upper gallery railing does not either meet applicable height regulations.

In general – as it stands today – the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* evidences a rather benign impact of time, when compared to many other buildings of its own period or claiming a shorter life: updated electrical and plumbing installation is exposed throughout; several air conditioning units are visible; concrete walls face the ordeal of scattered hammering and perforations; careless plastering has added unwanted scars; and insistent, yet non rigorous paint application challenges an otherwise beautifully textured building skin. All in all, however, the school has weathered well its existence of almost a full century.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Education

Period of Significance

1921-1962

Significant Dates

1921

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Finlayson, Adrian Clark

Carmoega, Rafael

Navas, Antonio M.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

As stated in the Thematic Nomination for *Early 20th Century Schools in Puerto Rico*, the Island's initial public school building efforts span from 1900 to 1930. Along those three (3) decades, architectural work of significance was produced in abundance throughout diverse localities in the Island, impacting its urban profile and people. These schools brought to bear in Puerto Rico many of the United States' stylistic, formal, climatic, and technological concerns regarding the construction of educational facilities. Siting considerations, typological variations, innovative techniques, and the social and cultural implications of it all, eventually coalesced into an architecture of consequence. In spite of many shared influences that underscore the thirty-year period that spans from 1900 to 1930, the process by which public schools were built in Puerto Rico at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century comprises three (3) identifiable phases that roughly coincide with each decade: 1900-1910, 1910-1920, and 1920-1930. Having been built in 1921 – with the 1920's yet to unfold fully – the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* relates to two decades and, as such, must be understood as the product of a transitional period.

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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A**

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* is of statewide significance under *Criterion C* (Architecture) as the property represents an example of substance regarding early 20th century methods and modes of construction as these were applied to a large number of educational facilities erected in Puerto Rico at that time. Built when traditional assembly systems (wood and brick) were being initially substituted by reinforced concrete, the *Balseiro Maceira School* constitutes one of the Island's initial successes in adopting new, related building technologies. Designed by Adrian C. Finlayson, one of the most prolific and dexterous architects of the period, the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of school building types pursuant to the early 20th century, while simultaneously claiming individual distinction. Statewide significance of the property is also acknowledged under *Criterion A* (Social History) as its construction pertains to a period in which tensions between sugar cane workers and management led the latter to appease shared anxieties through philanthropic efforts.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

From 1915 to 1920, school construction in the Island had slowed down.<sup>15</sup> Causes for it were not lacking: World War I, local political queries regarding the enactment of the Jones Act, and labor strikes, among others. In order to secure proper school facilities for the town of Barceloneta, Puerto Rico's Commissioner of Public Schools requested the Island's Commissioner of the Interior to prepare construction documents for a project for an eight-

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<sup>15</sup> Ángela López Borrero, *Mi Escuelita: Educación y arquitectura en Puerto Rico*. (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005), 141.



classroom school building.<sup>16</sup>The *Plazuela Sugar Company*, which included among its owners Eduardo Georgetti and Rafael Balseiro Maceira, donated the land.<sup>17</sup> Georgetti was a wealthy sugar baron committed to politics; Rafael was his father in law.<sup>18</sup>

During the first half of the 1920's, sugar corporations in the Island bloomed and became major focuses of economic activity. Sugar planting municipalities benefited from this boom, committing matching funds to build up to date schools within their districts. In 1923, the local government set aside one million dollars to complement their efforts.<sup>19</sup>The architect entrusted the job by the Department of the Interior was Adrian C. Finlayson, who had previously led the agency's Public Works Division. He had performed considerable work for the school system: *Ponce High School* (1915); the *Eugenio Brac School*, in Naguabo, and the *Rafael M. Labra High School*, in Santurce (both from 1916); schematic plans for the *José Julián Acosta School* in Camuy (1917);<sup>20</sup> *Escuela María Luisa McDougall*, in Guánica<sup>21</sup> and San Juan's *Román Baldorioty de Castro Graded and Technical School*<sup>22</sup> (1918); also the *Matías González García School* in Gurabo (1919)<sup>23</sup>. Finlayson also rehabilitated the *Pedro Arroyo School* in Orocovis<sup>24</sup>, and made alterations to the *Whittier Public School* in San Sebastián, providing it with a new façade.<sup>25</sup> The same year, Finlayson was responsible for repairs in Vieques to the *José Gautier Benítez* and *Victor Duteil schools*.<sup>26</sup>

In 1920, the magazine *Architectural Record* included a profile of the architect's work in Puerto Rico. In it, author Sylvester Baxter simultaneously praised Finlayson's sensibility to the tropical climate, his understanding of compositional problems, and dexterity in issues pertaining to architectural style.<sup>27</sup> In Baxter's early opinion, "...His extensive architectural legacy includes some of the most impressive, elegant, and highly regarded institutional buildings in the Island, unsurpassed in the rest of the Hispanic Caribbean".<sup>28</sup> With his designs, indeed, Adrian C. Finlayson epitomizes the eclectic spirit behind schools designed in Puerto Rico from 1910 to 1920.

<sup>16</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 990; Legajo: 12, Exp:3. Originally, Barceloneta was to have a four-room school, as contemplated under Law No. 64, approved December 5, 1917. Arguing "it would not fill the needs of the municipality", the local authorities opted for building an eight-room one, and procuring a loan to meet the excess cost. From a carbon copy of a letter to an unacknowledged recipient from the Commissioner (signature undistinguishable).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 990; Legajo: 12, Exp:3. Carbon copy of letter dated April 24, 1920, to unknown recipient from the Sub-Commissioner presenting the site plans donated by the *Plazuela Sugar Company*.

<sup>18</sup>Delma S. Arrigoitia, *Eduardo Georgetti y su mundo: la aparente paradoja de un millonario genio empresarial y su noble humanismo* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Puerto, 2001), 218.

<sup>19</sup> See Teachers' College, Columbia University, *A Survey of the Public Educational System in Puerto Rico* (New York City, Bureau of Publications, 1926), 19-20: "At various times since 1900, the insular government has also appropriated sums for the erection of school buildings. The last considerable appropriation was in 1923, when one million dollars were set aside for this purpose. The increasing tendency has been, however, to place upon the municipalities... the burden of providing and maintaining schoolhouses."

<sup>20</sup> AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 994, Leg. 15, Exp. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid,Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 1007, Leg. 29, Exp. 1.

<sup>22</sup>"Let's Save the Baldorioty de Castro School", Jorge Rigau, *The San Juan Star*, June 18, 1978, Sunday Magazine, 6.

<sup>23</sup> AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 1009, Leg. 30, Exp. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.,Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 988, Leg. 10, Exp. 1-4.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 1063, Leg. 63, Exp. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja 1074, Leg. 72, Exp. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Sylvester Baxter, "Recent Civic Architecture in Puerto Rico," *Architectural Record* 48 (1920), 138-139, 146-147, 155.

<sup>28</sup> Jorge Rigau, *Puerto Rico 1900*, 147.

At that time, Paul G. Miller was Commissioner of Education, leaving the post in 1921. As reported officially, prior to construction, architect Finlayson visited and analyzed the proposed site on which the school was to be located, finding it fitting.<sup>29</sup> Although the evaluation of a site to determine its suitability for a project usually constitutes a routine procedure, at Barceloneta it was particularly important. For the new school, plans originally developed for a school erected in Gurabo were to be reused.<sup>30</sup> Contextual conditions had to be ascertained, in order to endorse said decision: lot sizes, capacity, and slopes. The municipality was given the choice to decide where should the school's main entrance be located. It should not come up as a surprise that the building was laid out to face Georgetti Street, to this day, Barceloneta's main artery. Students then reached the school by foot, easily accessible from diverse town locations.

The Department of the Interior's Division of Public Works, entrusted at that time with all government building initiatives, initially budgeted the project at \$41,839.91, as stated in the official bid notification by Guillermo Esteves, then Commissioner of the Interior.<sup>31</sup> Contractor Antonio M. Navas, Jr., from the nearby town of Vega Baja, was the single bidder at \$45,903.84.<sup>32</sup> After some bureaucratic issues were tended to bridge the 9.7% gap, Navas was awarded the project.<sup>33</sup> Puerto Rico's Commissioner of Education, however, approved the schools' plans in December of that same year.<sup>34</sup> Julio Rivera was named inspector for the construction phase by December 20, but by January 25, 1921, Carlos De Choudéns had supplanted him.<sup>35</sup> Noted architect Rafael Carmoega signed the project specifications as head of the Division of Public Works of the Department of the Interior. Architect Pedro A. Bigay, then working as interim architect for said division, also participated in the process.<sup>36</sup> With most official documents and correspondence related to the project having been written in English, the command of the language by the local professionals is surprising. It also attests how far back Puerto Rico's construction industry was already carrying out business in both Spanish and English.

<sup>29</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A. *Memoir for the construction of an 8 class-room graded school building at Gurabo, Puerto Rico; as amended for Barceloneta, Puerto Rico*, M-1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, Caja 990, Leg. 12, Exp. 3. Carbon copy of letter dated April 24, 1920, to unknown recipient from the Sub-Commissioner presenting the site plans donated by the *Plazuela Sugar Company*. "*Con referencia al proyecto para un edificio escuela de 8 salones en Barceloneta, el que según lo expresado por Ud. al Sub-Comisionado del Interior, desea Ud. sea hecho utilizando los planos empleados en la erección del edificio de Gurabo, tengo el gusto de informarle que antes de proceder a este trabajo será necesario llevar a cabo la mensura del solar en el cual ha de enclavarse este edificio. Esta mensura debe incluir las dimensiones y ángulos del solar, así como los desniveles del terreno. Así también debe indicar las calles adyacentes e indicar hacia cual de los lados del mismo desea esa municipalidad se sitúe la fachada principal.*"

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, Caja 990, Leg. 12, Exp. 1. Bid notification by Guillermo Esteves, Commissioner of the Interior, dated October 8, 1920.

<sup>32</sup>Idem. See letter from Juan Puig, Public Service Commissioner for Public Works, to the Commissioner of the Interior, dated October 22, 1920. Official stationary samples from Navas, identify the contractor, alternately, as "architect" and "consulting engineer". See Letter of September 22, 1922, (Idem.). An article in *The Puerto Rico Herald* from July 20, 2001, offers additional information on the contractor: "...Antonio M. Navas, was an architect and a veteran of both World Wars. In 1917, he became one of the first Puerto Ricans to be commissioned as a U.S. Army officer, eventually attaining the rank of colonel. Antonio Navas later served as Chief of Staff and Army Attaché for U.S. Army Forces in Brazil." (<http://www.puertoricoherald.org/issues/2001/vol5n29/ProfNavas-en.html>).

<sup>33</sup>Idem. Memorandum to the Commissioner of the Interior from architect Adrian C. Finlayson dated October 25, 1920.

<sup>34</sup>Idem. Letter from Paul G. Miller, Commissioner of Education to the Commissioner of the Interior, dated December 2, 1920.

<sup>35</sup>Idem. Letter from Carlos de Choudéns to architect Adrian C. Finlayson dated January 24, 1921.

<sup>36</sup> A street at *Urbanización Baldrich* in Hato Rey, San Juan, is named after architect Pedro A. Bigay.



As with most construction projects, completion of the Rafael Balseiro Maceira School took longer than stipulated in the contractor's original agreement. Navas requested extended time, arguing contract fulfillment had been impeded by imported wood arriving late, a railroad strike, and unexpected rain days.<sup>37</sup> An official extension was denied, arguing "*There has been a tendency on the part of the contractor and inspector of this building, not to follow the specifications strictly*". In spite of it, the project was provisionally accepted as terminated by January 18, 1922.<sup>38</sup> Navas was fined \$200.00 for "*non completion of the works at the time specified in the contract.*"<sup>39</sup>

When initially erected at the dawn of the 1920's, the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* stood proudly in Barceloneta – as a sign of progress – amidst the surrounding countryside, an impressive agricultural valley highlighted by the nearby *Río Grande de Manatí*, and the low hills of Puerto Rico's northern *Karst* country in the distance. For decades, trains loaded with sugar cane drove past the school to reach *Central Plazuela*, the main sugar factory of the area, around which everyday life centered at Barceloneta from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, well up to the 1950's. No documents have been found to support, with precision, when was the eight-room school renamed to honor Rafael Balseiro Maceira. Born in Galicia, Spain, in 1823, he arrived to Puerto Rico at age three. Married twice, he dedicated most of his life to agriculture and business, and "*contributed notably with the progress*" of Barceloneta. He pioneered sugar cane growth techniques, designing and overseeing the drainage systems of his farms. He passed away in 1902.<sup>40</sup>

For many years, across the *Balseiro Maceira* used to stand Barceloneta's Masonic Temple, demolished a long time ago.<sup>41</sup> With their particular institutional deportment, temple and school must have granted an imposing scale and significant architectural bearing to the area. In its early years, boasting more frontage, the school incorporated small *parterres* at each side of its main entrance, in keeping with the era's trends. Low concrete dividers, still extant today, bear witness to the fact. In front of one of these rose a single, iron flagpole to hoist "Old Glory" and educate locals on US history and citizenship values.

The decision to raise the school's first floor level above grade echoed one of the period's basic strategies for heat transmission control and safer sanitary practices. Prevalent codes also required fixed ventilation devices, often placed above doors. Building in reinforced concrete, however, nonetheless, a novelty deemed by many a necessity after in 1918 the Island's western region experienced the impact of an earthquake and tidal wave that destroyed schools and other buildings in some towns, damaging many. Probably in awareness of the slow-pace at which construction practices come to terms with change, construction specifications granted project bidders the opportunity of building Barceloneta's school completely in brick:

<sup>37</sup>Idem. Letter from Navas to the Commissioner of the Interior, dated July 30, 1921,

<sup>38</sup> AGPR, Caja 990, Leg. 12, Exp. 3. Carbon copy of letter dated April 24, 1920, to unknown recipient from the Sub-Commissioner presenting the site plans donated by the *Plazuela Sugar Company*.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Caja 990, Leg. 12, Exp 1. Contractor's estimate No. 10 for the Provisional Acceptance of the Project, January 18, 1922.

<sup>40</sup>*Ecós de Plazuela*, Órgano Oficial del Centro Cultural de Barceloneta adscrito al Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, Año 12, Núm. 45, Abril-Mayo-Junio 20011, pp. 9-10

<sup>41</sup> Named *Logia Acacia #66*, the temple's original building also housed, for some time, Barceloneta's Masonic Lodge School. A "continuation school", by 1924-25 it offered education at eighth, ninth, and tenth grade levels. See Francisco Díaz Marchand, *Album Histórico y Cultural de Barceloneta 1881-1979*. (Manatí, Puerto Rico: City Printing, 1981).

*“As they may be some contractors willing to do this work in brick construction at a lower figure than reinforced concrete, an alternate has been placed in the proposal for making the walls of brick but in every case be two (2) inches thicker than those of concrete.”<sup>42</sup>*

And yet Antonio M. Navas, the single bidder and eventual builder, opted for concrete. After all, architect Finlayson had designed a building where brick and wood were to play second fiddle to Portland cement. **(FIG 9)** Brick was used as facing only; wood limited to fenestration, ceilings, and floor finishes. With cornices, moldings, friezes and inlay panels, the school's design seems to be evocative of the neoclassical style. Faience tiles, used as accents and trimmings, underscore the “academic” appropriateness of the architectural design.<sup>43</sup> And yet, proportional choices regarding the building's volume are more akin to the Prairie style idiom. Moreover, the tectonic enhancement of concrete walls through the stone dressing anchors the property in yet to come, more modern expressions. Finlayson reiterates this attention to surface texture often, particularly in the project's construction specifications, the set of instructions by which the contractor is to execute the work:

*“FINISH OF EXTERIOR WALLS: All concrete on exterior walls of building except cornices, frieze, parapets, piers, sill, lintels and a base course around the building and for two (2) inches around all angles and openings are to be dressed with the point of an ordinary hatchet. Care must be taken in cutting to cross cut continually in order to avoid a series of lines.*

*WASHING AND CLEANING OF WALLS: After all joints have been cut out and the entire surface of exterior walls have (sic) been dressed as specified, same are to be gone over with a solution of acid, sulphuric, muriatic, or hydrochloric, in a proportion of (1) part acid to ten (10) or twelve (12) parts water. The exact proportions and kind of acid is to be determined by the materials in the concrete. Solution is to be kept in wooden buckets. After this solution has dried, go over all treated surface with a scrubbing brush and clean water to remove acid. After this has been done, go over entire surface with a stiff wire brush to remove all dead and loose cement killed by acid. Wall to resemble natural chipped stone when finished.”<sup>44</sup>*

To this day, the results obtained dressing the concrete in Barceloneta remain among the most successful examples of experimentation with cement since it became popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Puerto Rico. This can be stated, even if Finlayson himself might have been disappointed by the end result. In the construction specifications, he had warned *a priori* about the consequences of incorrectly pouring the concrete. Take care, he advised, “to cross cut continually in order to avoid a series of lines”. These lines indeed, ended up showing. Dirt accumulated in them now betray them. The different batches of cement poured along the process “telegraphed” wave patterns on the walls, as evidenced at all walls of the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School*. From a contemporary perspective, instead of detracting from the building, these “marks” attest to superior (if not perfect) craftsmanship and labor, not to mention the architect's design determination to pursue a delicate tectonic effect. Several, if not many other schools in Puerto Rico exhibit a similar finish: the *Federico Degetau School*, in Ponce; the *Padre Nazario School*, in Guayanilla; and the *Matías González García School*, in Gurabo, among others. As can be expected, they share many other merits.

<sup>42</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. *Memoir for the construction of an 8 class-room graded school building at Gurabo, Puerto Rico; as amended for Barceloneta, Puerto Rico*, M-4.

<sup>43</sup> For an interpretation of glass and ceramic inlays as last vestiges of the classical vocabulary in 20th century architecture, see Viviana Maldonado Freytes, *La última expresión del vocabulario clásico en Puerto Rico: el cosmatesco caribeño como elemento arquitectónico (1915-1935)*, Mid-Career Research Project, Polytechnic University, 2011, n. p.)

<sup>44</sup>AGPR, Fondo: Obras Públicas, Serie: Edificios Escolares, Caja: 1009, Legajo: 30A, Exp:1. Government of Porto Rico, Department of the Interior. *Specifications for the Construction of an 8 class-room Graded School*, S-9, S-10.



As if to summarize all arguments stated above - in his relatively recent history of Barceloneta - chronicler Marcelino Canino Salgado offers a capsule impression of the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* as “a beautiful building of sober classical lines in-keeping with buildings in continental USA”<sup>45</sup> The property could be awarded statewide significance under *Criterion C* (Architecture) of the *National Register of Historic Places*. The property exemplifies, not without singularity, early 20th century methods of construction pursuant to a large group of educational facilities then erected in Puerto Rico. Built when common place usage of brick and wood was questioned *vis à vis* the advantages of reinforced concrete, the *Balseiro Maceira School* constitutes one of the Island’s initial successes in adopting new, related building technologies. Designed by Adrian C. Finlayson, a skillful, resourceful architect, the property embodies a wide array of attributes pursuant to school building types dating from the early 20th century.

Statewide significance of the property is also acknowledged under *Criterion A* (Social History), considering the context under which the *Balseiro Maceira School* came into existence. By 1899, Barceloneta's population had reached 9,357. There were two schoolhouses at the heart of town, and two in the countryside. A new school was built in 1913, another in 1918-19. The *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* – much more imposing than any other before - followed in 1921, after the local population census showed a 44% increase from the previous three decades (adding up to 13,442). When sugar baron Eduardo Georgetti, owner of *Central Plazuela* (the leading employer in Barceloneta), donated the land to endorse the school’s construction, his gesture was not completely unselfish. Any philanthropic vocation aside, Georgetti the business man faced an unstable social panorama, one certain to raise concerns regarding prevailing unrest amongst sugar cane workers employed by him at *Central Plazuela*.

By 1918, a newly appointed parish priest had already decried the deplorable material and spiritual state of Barceloneta.<sup>46</sup> The economy – and hurricane San Ciriaco in 1899 - had hit hard the settlement. As a consequence, many young men were leaving for the United States to earn a living abroad. In parallel, Luis Muñoz Marín and Santiago Iglesias Pantín were actively promoting socialist ideas in town, not to say all over the Island. In spite of it all, repeated claims for improved living conditions and increased salaries met strong opposition from management. By June 1922, factory workers led a labor strike.<sup>47</sup> The same year, undoubtedly to appease protesters, Georgetti inaugurated an *Association of Employees and Workers from Central Plazuela* offering, among other things, opportunities for moral-intellectual improvements through education.<sup>48</sup> Construction of the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School*, most probably, was fueled by these aggravating circumstances.

Upon understanding Puerto Rico’s architectural heritage in relationship to the social milieu against which it emerged, early 20<sup>th</sup> Century schools emerged as key components of an all-inclusive legacy that repeatedly commands extended attention, interpretation and recognition. The latter will be furthered by the fact that, in the Island, most school buildings from the period – and the example from Barceloneta is no exception – are often praised as a most efficient social fulcrum in Puerto Rican society. With most townfolk attending the same public school for over 90 years, it surprises no one that nostalgia over the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School* is an ever growing attribute that clings to the

<sup>45</sup> Marcelino Canino Salgado, *Historia Documental y Cultural de Barceloneta*, Puerto Rico (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Puerto, 2002), 111-12.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

building with the same insistence that Finlayson's stone aggregate remains firmly embedded in the façade.

The authenticity of the school's historic identity is evidenced by the joint survival of multiple physical characteristics that illustrate significant aspects of the property's historic period. The relationship between the school building and its location remains eloquent, sitting as it does, at the entrance of town, permanently welcoming visitors to Barceloneta. The actual location is complemented by its surrounding setting, in adjacency to other schools, and unchallenged by the scale of nearby contemporary buildings. Design wise - form and massing; plan configuration; spatial sequence; structural bearing, patterns of fenestration, stylistic ornamentation, and function – all contribute to convey, unhesitant, the property's significance. Moreover, the choice, textural treatment, and combination of materials – highly visible witnesses to the school's period of significance – contribute to feeling and association. Taken together, they exfoliate the school's historic character, a property with enough integrity to communicate the period when it attained significance and its importance to any casual or curious observer. At the *Rafael Balseiro Maceira School*, the overall sense of past time and place remains evident.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information**(if appropriate)

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Celina Bocanegra, April 26, 2012

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http://www.puertorico-herald.org/issues/2001/vol5n29/ProfNavas-en.html

**Interviews**

Sr. Iván Rodríguez, ex alumno y maestro de la escuela

Ignacio "Nachito" Cruz Báez, ex alumno, maestro e historiador del pueblo

Luis F. Castelló, teacher, historian and employee of the *Centro Cultural del Municipio de Barceloneta*

Juan Guzmán, School Director, 1983-1998

Gilberto Méndez, Director, Fernando Suria Chaves School

Lucy Pérez, Tourism Director, Municipality of Barceloneta

Bianca Vázquez, Public Relations Director, Municipality of Barceloneta

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.13 acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	19	759940	2042029	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying base map, and are shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map. See continuation sheet, section 10.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the Rafael Balseiro School.



---

### 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Arq. Jorge Rigau, FAIA  
organization Jorge Rigau Arquitectos date \_\_\_\_\_  
street& number #67 calle Los baños, 1er piso telephone (787) 982-0002  
city or town San Juan state Puerto Rico zip code 00911  
e-mail rigau@jorgerigau.com

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### Additional Documentation

---

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** **AUSGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
  - **Continuation Sheets**
  - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)
- 

### Photographs:

---

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

1. **Rafael Balseiro Maceira School**
  2. **Barceloneta, Puerto Rico**
  3. **Celina Bocanegra, AIT**
  4. **April 26, 2012**
  5. **Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico**
  6. **West facade and south side elevation, looking northeast. Despite the development of the adjacent context, the Rafael Balseiro Maceira school building still prevails as a key and emblematic urban property.**
  7. **#1**
- 

1. **Rafael Balseiro Maceira School**
  2. **Barceloneta, Puerto Rico**
  3. **Celina Bocanegra, AIT**
  4. **April 26, 2012**
  5. **Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico**
  6. **East facade, looking west, later additions: access ramps, exterior lighting, the concrete roof and the two volumes added to accommodate bathroom facilities on the second level. Notice the obelisk dedicated to three local fallen veterans, erected in 1948.**
  7. **#2**
- 

1. **Rafael Balseiro Maceira School**
  2. **Barceloneta, Puerto Rico**
  3. **Celina Bocanegra, AIT**
  4. **April 26, 2012**
  5. **Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico**
  6. **West facade, looking east. Window openings of ample dimensions provide cross ventilation and natural illumination. The symmetrical disposition of the facade and its overall state of conservation are evident.**
  7. **#3**
-

1. Rafael Balseiro Maceira School
  2. Barceloneta, Puerto Rico
  3. Celina Bocanegra, AIT
  4. April 26, 2012
  5. Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico
  6. West façade main entrance, looking northeast. School entrance highlighted with stairs, pilasters, scroll brackets supporting acornice with congé moulding and brickwork set in soldier course and stack bond.
  7. #4
- 

1. Rafael Balseiro Maceira School
  2. Barceloneta, Puerto Rico
  3. Celina Bocanegra, AIT
  4. April 26, 2012
  5. Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico
  6. North façade detail, looking south, displays (from top to bottom) parapet with horizontal ledge, Faience tiles, cornice with congé moulding, red face brick arranged in soldier course, bas-relief rectangular panels and exposed concrete with stone aggregate poured in layers.
  7. #5
- 

1. Rafael Balseiro Maceira School
2. Barceloneta, Puerto Rico
3. Celina Bocanegra, AIT
4. April 26, 2012
5. Jorge Rigau Arquitectos, San Juan Puerto Rico
6. West façade detail, looking east. Epigraph engraved on marble stone (corner stone) shows the year of construction 1921, the name of Commissioner of the Interior, Guillermo Esteves, the Commissioner of Education, Paul G. Miller, the architect, Adrian C. Finlayson, the commissioner of Public Service, Juan T. Puig and the contractor, Antonio M. Navas.
7. #6

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

Barceloneta, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico,  
1900-1930

Section number 10 Page 1

10. Geographical Data

The boundaries are indicated with gray shading. Map shows the contributing resource. The limits were obtained from the official boundaries map provided by the Puerto Rico Planning Board.

RAFAEL BALSEIRO MACEIRA SCHOOL, BARCELONETA, PUERTO RICO

Location: Georgetti St. #1a Barceloneta, Puerto Rico 00617  
UTM Reference: 19, 759940, 2042029  
Acreage of Property: Less than one acre



JORGE RIGAU  
ARQUITECTOS



- ◀ Contributing resource
- Property boundary



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

Barceloneta, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico,  
1900-1930

Section number 10 Page 2

Photographs viewpoint are indicated, shown as an arrow. The numbers correspond to the list of figures.

RAFAEL BALSEIRO MACEIRA SCHOOL, BARCELONETA, PUERTO RICO

Location: Georgetti St. #1a Barceloneta, Puerto Rico 00617  
UTM Reference: 19, 759944, 2042026  
Acreage of Property: Less than one acre



JORGE RIGAU  
ARQUITECTOS



- ◀ Contributing resource
- Property boundary
- ← Visual angle of photography

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

Barceloneta, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico,  
1900-1930

Section number Additional Documentation Page 3

Additional Documentation Map

The limits of the plot were obtained from the official boundaries map provided by the Puerto Rico Planning Board. The boundaries of the nominated resource are identified by an outline.

RAFAEL BALSEIRO MACEIRA SCHOOL, BARCELONETA, PUERTO RICO Location: Georgetti St. #1a Barceloneta, Puerto Rico 00617  
UTM Reference: 19, 759940 , 2042029  
Acreage of Property: Less than one acre



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

Barceloneta, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico,  
1900-1930

Section number Additional Documentation Page 4

Additional Documentation Photographs



Historical view of the main (west) façade. The resource is one of several properties in a progression by which the city dweller can enjoy the town's open spaces and many buildings in sequence. Photographer: Unknown, Date: Unknown, Source: AGPR, Fondo Obras Públicas Album, # 229.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

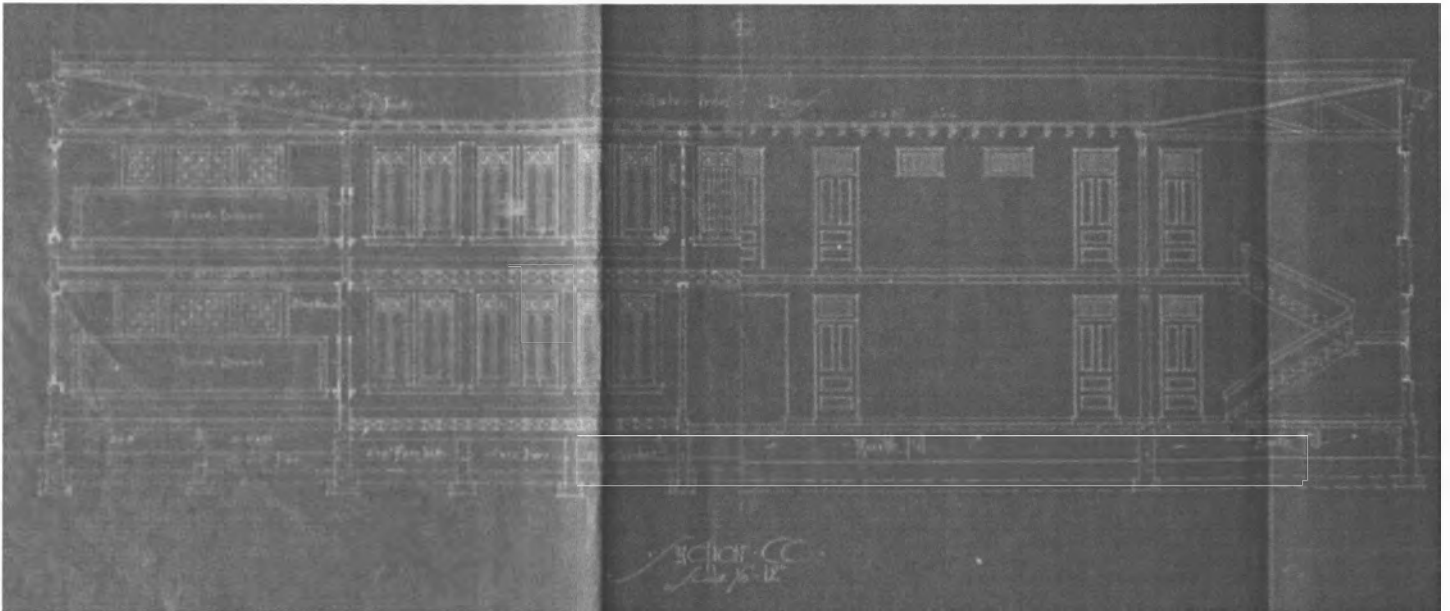
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rafael Balseiro Maceira School

Barceloneta, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
Early XXth Century Schools Puerto Rico,  
1900-1930

Section number Additional Documentation Page 5



Section CC, shows simultaneously the interior of the classrooms and the elevation of the main hall and stairs. Notice the raised wooden floors illustrated in the left side and the concrete slabs in the corridors on the right side. Source: AGPR Fondo Obras Públicas, Edificios Escolares. Caja: 990, Legajo, 12, Exp. 1.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Maceira, Rafael Balseiro, School  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Early Twentieth Century Schools in Puerto Rico TR  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, Barceloneta

DATE RECEIVED: 7/13/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/10/12  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/27/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/29/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000583

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 8.28.12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.









ESCUELA  
RAFAEL BALSEIRO MACEIRA

BONDAD

COMUNISMO







ERECTED · MCMXXI.

G·ESTEVEES · —  
COMM·OF·INTERIOR

PAUL·G·MILLER  
COMM·OF·EDUCATION

A·C·FENLAYSON ·  
ARCHITECT

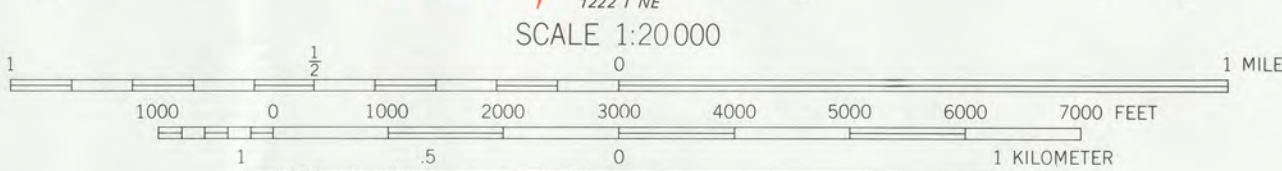
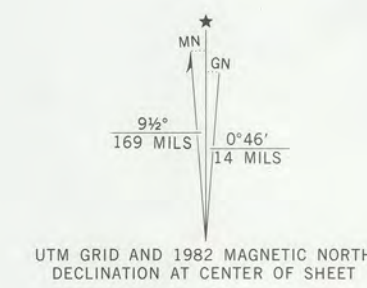
JUAN·T·PUIG  
COMM·OF·PUBLIC·SERVICE

A·M·NAVAS ·  
CONTRACTOR

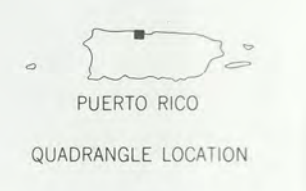




Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1941 and planetable surveys 1940 and 1943. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1969  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 903 (1970). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. Puerto Rico Datum, 1940 adjustment  
2000-meter grid ticks based on Puerto Rico coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 19  
Barrio and municipality boundaries by Puerto Rico Planning Board  
Kilometric reference distances shown in red  
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1982



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 METERS  
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 5-METER CONTOURS  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 1-METER CONTOURS  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 0.3 METER  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS, SAN JUAN, P. R. 00910  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
Insular Route	

Rafael Balceiro Maceña School  
Barceloneta, Puerto Rico  
Zone Easting 19 759740  
Northing 2042 87304

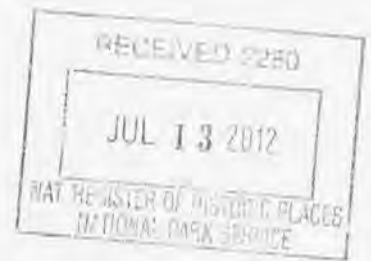
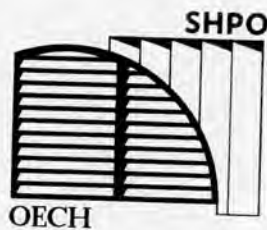
BARCELONETA, P. R.  
1822.5-W6630/7.5  
1969  
PHOTO REVISIONED 1982  
DMA 1223 II SE-SERIES E835





OFICINA ESTATAL DE  
CONSERVACIÓN HISTÓRICA  
OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION OFFICE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



July 10, 2012

Ms. Carol D. Shull, Ph.D.  
National Park Service 2280, 8<sup>th</sup> floor  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20005

**THREE SUBMISSIONS - ESCUELA JOSÉ FONTÁN, MOROVIS; ESCUELA RAFAEL  
BALCEIRO MACEIRA, BARCELONETA; LA BOLERO, CIDRA**

Dear Ms. Shull:

We are pleased to submit three nominations for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The nominated properties are:

- Escuela José Fontán, Morovis, PR
- Escuela Rafael Balceiro Maceira, Barceloneta, PR
- La Bolero, Cidra, PR

Should have any questions on the nomination, please contact Berenice R. Sueiro, Deputy SHPO (787) 721-3737, extension 2002.

Sincerely,

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela, Architect  
State Historic Preservation Officer

CARC/BRS/JEM

Enclosures