

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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JUL 11 1988

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cementerio Catolico San Vicente de Paul

other names/site number Cementerio Catolico de Ponce

2. Location

street & number na  not for publication na

city, town Ponce  vicinity na

state Puerto Rico code PR county Ponce code 113 zip code 00731

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
288	23	structures
1629	184	objects
1918	213	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Cemeteries in Puerto Rico 1804-1920

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Mariano G. Coronas Castro May 1988

Signature of certifying official Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Amy Schlagel

8/25/88

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary-Cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary-Cemetery

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Spanish Revival

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick and/or concrete

roof na

other Ponce pinkstone/granite

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The San Vicente de Paul Cemetery is located in the Canas suburb of Ponce, on a very steep site. The layout of the cemetery was done following the Spanish tradition of having two main axes forming a cross. The rest of the precinct's layout was done in a square grid fashion.

The cemetery follows the contour lines of the steep site. For this reason some of the streets had to be built as stairs. The steep slope of the site allows for many interesting tomb designs.

Culminating the main axis there is the pantheon for the priests of the Paul order. In this truly monumental tomb, sculptural forms are integral part of architecture. An interesting feature in this design with double function is the baldachino, which protects not only the altar, but also the tomb. The altar table is also very reminiscent of the table tomb, which was derived from a table used for ceremonies to mourn the dead. The baroque style of this structure can be appreciated in the free use of forms, its large scale and sweeping vistas, and the complexity of its composition.

The entrance gate to the cemetery is a simple one, with an iron gate flanked by two masonry pilasters. Although Catholic, this cemetery never had a chapel unlike the one at San Juan or Manati.

The niches found in the San Vicente de Paul Cemetery are simple brick structures with the only ornament of a simple cornice arranged in rows to form a block within the precinct. A unique feature of the cemetery is a group of niches that were built forming a basement, in which the burials occurred beneath ground level, thus giving the effect of a catacomb.

This cemetery has a clear arrangement of larger tombs placed along the major central and secondary axes. The rest of the graves, then fill out the grid. Many of these larger tombs are mausoleums of many different styles ranging from the classical revival to the art-deco. Of special significance for their architectural value are the Serralles family mausoleum composed of a central chapel raised over a raised plaza ( see photo # 8), the Mercado family mausoleum also over a raised plaza and the Valdivieso family mausoleum. The Toro family mausoleum also presents a funerary chapel but it is not raised over a plaza nor is the Chardon family mausoleum.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1901-1935

1901

Cultural Affiliation

na

Significant Person

na

Architect/Builder

various

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

During the turn of the century the priests of San Vicente de Paul built a private Catholic cemetery in Ponce. The site was blessed and opened to the public during 1901. The wealthy families of the area bought plots for \$60.00 ( the basic plot) and began to develop the cemetery with magnificent graves and mausoleums.

Ponce, located in the south coast of the island, was one of the wealthiest ports of Puerto Rico during the turn of the century period. The Catholic cemetery offered an exclusive precinct in which the rich could bury their dead. For this reason almost all the tombs are magnificent in their design, ornamentation and construction. Some of the best examples of funerary architecture in Puerto Rico of the early 20th Century period can be seen in this precinct. Marble sculptures from Italy, Spain and other parts of Europe adorn many of the tombs ( see photo # 14, 15,16). Other graves and mausolea have less sophisticated funerary monuments designed by unknown local artisans ( photo # 3 and 13). Most tombs are covered with Ponce's pinkstone, granite or marble( local and imported).

The larger mausolea which belong to the wealthiest families of the south are magnificent examples of monumental funerary architecture of the period. Some of the best examples are the mausolea of the Serralles family (photo # 8), the Mercado family( photo #5 ), the Toro family ( photo #7) and the Valdivieso family ( photo #11).

Many of these magnificent tombs have been abandoned after their owners moved corpses of their dead to the Civil Cemetery. This was due in part to the high cost of maintenance and the strict regulations set by the administration. Under no condition would they allow a non catholic to be buried there. Some families did not want to be separated by this rule and moved their loved ones to the Civil Cemetery. As a result some graves have been abandoned and cannot be sold by the cemetery administration since they are private property and have a legal uninterested owner.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Archivo General de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Fondo de Obras Publicas Municipales  
Archivo Historico Municipal de Ponce, Fondo de Obras Publicas  
Cruz Cassé, Marta, Funerary Architecture and the Preservation of Cemeteries in Puerto Rico,  
Gainsville, Florida, School of Architecture, UF, Unpublished manuscript, 1987  
Fortuño Janeiro, L., Album Histórico de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico, 1963

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Cemetery Archives

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 9.2 acres

UTM References

A	<u>19</u>	<u>750490</u>	<u>1993840</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>19</u>	<u>750505</u>	<u>1993600</u>

B	<u>19</u>	<u>750615</u>	<u>1993780</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<u>19</u>	<u>750287</u>	<u>1993740</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

see enclosed location plan and the polygon whose vertices are marked with the UTM references cited above.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are those historically associated with the cemetery and are defined by the wall which encicles it.

See continuation sheet

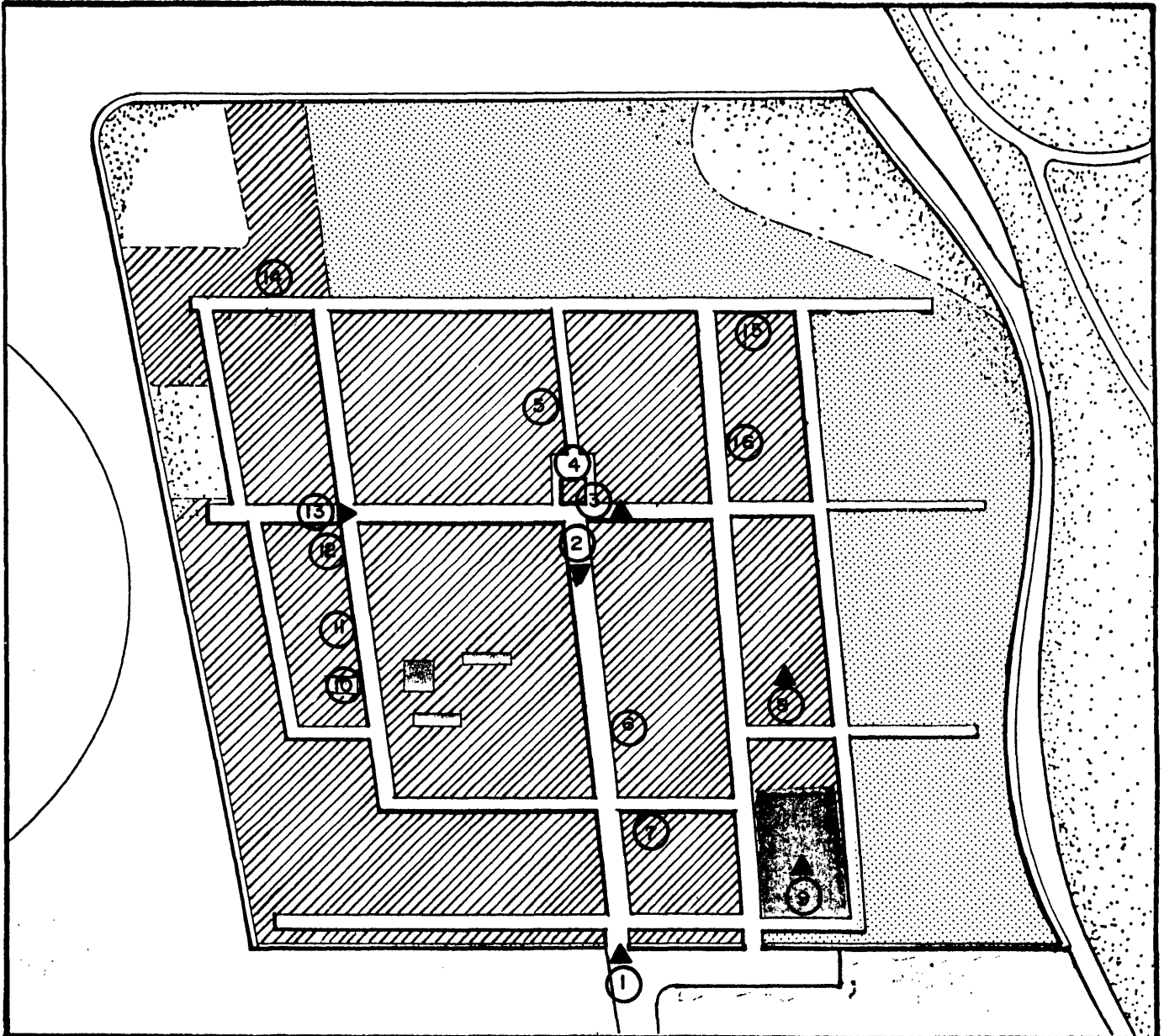
**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title <u>Marta Cruz Case, Graduate Architect</u>	date <u>April 1988</u>
organization <u>Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Off.</u>	telephone <u>(809) 721-3737</u>
street & number <u>Box 82 La Fortaleza</u>	state <u>Puerto Rico</u> zip code <u>00901</u>
city or town <u>San Juan</u>	

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

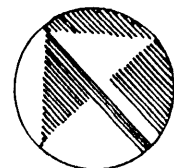
Section number PHOTOS Page 1



PLAN

APPROXIMATE SCALE 1:1,200

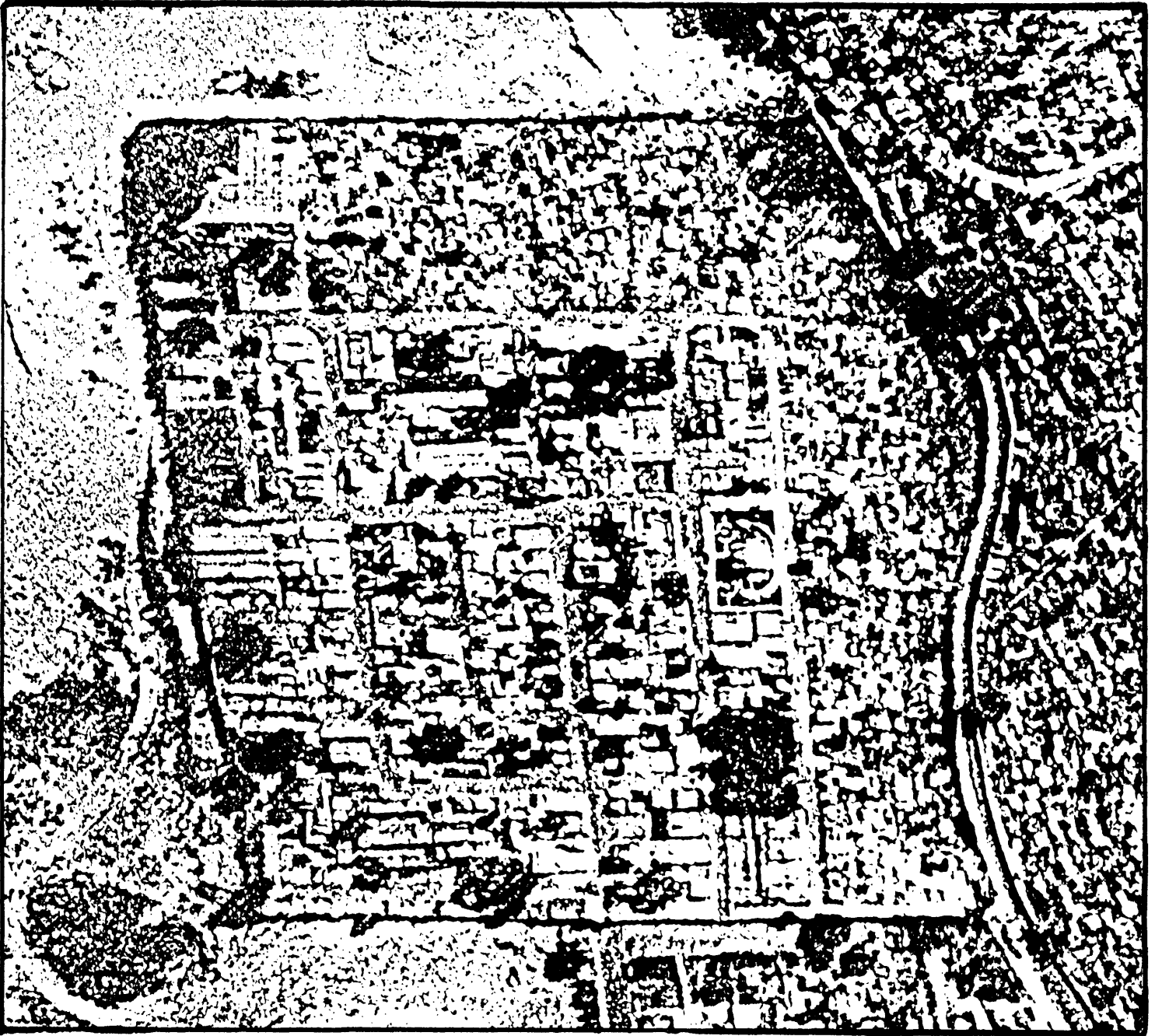
- EMPTY LOTS
- SMALL GRAVES
- LARGE MAUSOLEUMS
- NICHEs



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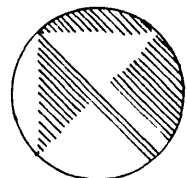
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_



AERIAL VIEW

APPROXIMATE SCALE: 1:1,200



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001249

Date Listed: 8/25/88

Cemeterio Catolico San Vincente de Paul Ponce  
Property Name County

PR  
State

Cemeteries in Puerto Rico, 1804-1920  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Timothy Schlegel*  
Signature of the Keeper

1/9/89  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Each of the elements noted as contributing resources must be catalogued individually to be counted in the classification section of the nomination. Therefore, the count for this property should include 7 contributing structures (entrance gate, one set of niche structures and catacombs, the priests pantheon, and several monumental tombs for the Serralles family, the Mercado family, the Toro family and the Chardon family) and 1 contributing site (the cemetery grounds), totalling 8 contributing resources. There are no contributing or non-contributing buildings, no contributing or non-contributing objects, and no non-contributing structures or sites.

Discussed and concurred in by the Puerto Rico SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)