

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 07 1988
date entered FEB 10 1988

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

1. Name

historic U.S. Custom House, Fajardo

and or common Aduana de Fajardo

2. Location

street & number Calle Union n/a not for publication

city, town Fajardo n/a vicinity of

state Puerto Rico code PR county n/a code 053

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name U.S. Customs Service

street & number 1301 Constitution Ave., NW

city, town Washington n/a vicinity of DC state DC 20229

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Centr o Judicial

street & number

city, town Hato Rey state PR

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title no has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The United States Customhouse in Fajardo's Puerto Real was built in 1930 on a waterfront site which was originally directly on the beach, without a street. Today, the first and second floor of the building are used by the U.S. Custom Service and part of the first floor by the U.S. Postal Service. Part of the second floor is believed to have formerly been the residence for the customs port director, although the architect's drawings indicate only office use.

The customhouse is a 2-1/2-story, rectangular-plan, poured-concrete and concrete-frame structure with a rear one-story-with-roof-terrace wing, also of concrete. The main portion of the building is 33'0" by 49'0" and the rear wing is 16'6" by 49'0". The waterside east elevation is three bays wide with an original entrance door in the northernmost bay. Each first-floor bay on the east and north elevations has a large round-arch opening. As part of the extensive alterations of 1975, the other two east elevation arches have been blocked in except for small central windows and the corner opening last brick in the arch. The two openings on the north left and center retain their original doors and decorative iron and grillework and terra cotta. The righthand opening to the post office is a plain arch opening replacing the original rolled-steel door. There is a terra-cotta string course with four crests between the floors on the east side. On the second floor of the east side, the end bays have modern paired windows and the center bay has one paired and one single metal window of 1975. There are three gabled dormers each with copper louvers instead of windows. The roof is covered with red Spanish tile. The south side windows have been replaced by glass blocks while the original double board door remains in the center. The north and present front elevation on Calle Union is a gable end and is three bays wide on the first floor, two bays upstairs. Above the filled-in attic fan window, on either end is a standard for a flagpole.

The building is in generally sound condition but with significant alterations made in 1975. There has been some modification of the original plan on both floors which has caused elimination of some of the architectural elements and the incorporation of new materials and techniques with no historical relationship to the building's original appearance. These changes include the installation of wall mounted airconditioners and acoustical-tile suspended ceilings, removal of decorative ironwork, blocking of openings, and replacement of original metal casement windows with modern metal windows. The second-floor east windows were originally steel casement-awning sash, with four sets in the center flanked by pairs at the sides. The south side had two pairs of windows and the north side was single windows. The casement windows are comprised of two eight-light casement sash topped with two four-light awning windows.

The first-floor plan of the building is based on the division of the space by a wall that runs the length of the building north to south and divides the space into two approximately 15' wide rectangles that are then subdivided by partitions, creating small rooms and offices. At the northeast corner of the building is the entrance lobby, principal public space of the original building. Approximately 15' x 10'8", it contains a simple, single-turn staircase to the

See continuation sheet # 7.1.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1930 Builder/Architect Albert B. Nichols

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

MENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The United States Custom House, Calle Union, Fajardo, Puerto Rico, was constructed in 1930. The poured-concrete building is significant architecturally and historically for the role it played in the first, transitional phase of the American customs service in Puerto Rico, from 1898 through 1931. This period is bracketed on one end by the cession, on December 10, 1898, of the island of Puerto Rico to the United States by Spain as a condition of the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War, and on the other by the completion in 1931 of the major building and rehabilitation program undertaken by the U.S. Customs Service following World War I.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While the Fajardo Custom House is the least imposing of the customhouses included in this multiple-resource nomination, it is still more impressive than those at Arecibo, Arroyo and Aguadilla, which were constructed during the same period but are no longer owned by the United States Customs Service. Its simplified Spanish Colonial-Revival style is in keeping with the somber economic import of its construction date, and the building provides a feeling of permanence and dignity in a minimally developed area. It was design by Albert B. Nichols, architect and building inspector, Puerto Rico Field Office of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Ten sheets of drawings of the Fajardo construction signed by Nichols (out of a total of twelve sheets) are in the San Juan Custom House files.

Fajardo was in use as a port of entry at the end of the Spanish era and through much of the early American period. A small plain customhouse of the Spanish period is known to have existed here.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Multiple Property Nomination.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Fajardo, P.R

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

A

2	1	0	2	2	1	9	3	1	0	2	1	0	2	1	9	2	1	4	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

See continuation sheet ##10.2.

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 James C. Massey, Exec. Vice Pres. and Shirley Maxwell, Associate

organization National Preservation Institute date July 27, 1987

street & number National Building Museum
Judiciary Square, NW telephone 202-393-0038

city or town Washington state DC

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.

Federal [Signature] date 11/18/87
State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature] date 11/20/87
Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Management),
title Department of the Treasury

For NPS use only

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

[Signature] date 2/10/88
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.

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7.1. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (cont.)

second floor along the west side and features a masonry rail. The southern wall contains an ornamented cashier's window and door, all with wrought-iron decorative grilles. The door provides entrance to the general office behind. The floor is quarry tile. The general office, approximately 15 x 22 feet, has a suspended acoustical-tile ceiling, as does the next and last room on this side, the port director's office.

The western half of the customhouse contains storage and warehouse area, except for the northwest corner, which is partitioned for the U.S. Post Office, Puerto Real branch of Fajardo, located in what was originally warehouse space. There is a small L-shaped lobby and two customer windows. The second floor is devoted to general working area and offices, along with a kitchen, bathroom and the roof terrace over the rear wing. A portion is believed to have been originally used as the Port Director's residence, as noted. Portions of the terrace have now been closed in or roofed. On the exterior, the first-floor windows and doors on the north and east elevations are placed in large, slightly recessed arched openings, creating an arcade along the base of the building. Only the three doors on the north elevation have wood-paneled double doors. Only the original east entrance door, the present north entrance door and the north center door retain their original decorative glazed tiles in the lintels over the door. Only the north left and north center doors retain the decorative iron grillework in the arch. The north center door has also retained its original ornamental ironwork gate in front of the wooden door. Between the second-floor windows on the north side there is a large terra-cotta U.S. Customs Service crest. On the east elevation the words, "U.S. Custom House," are located in masonry letters above the first-floor windows. On the interior, the lobby retains its original ceiling, quarry-tile floor, and steps with polished-concrete treads. The original ornamental iron grille survives in the upper panel of the door to the general office and the cashier's window beside it. The other floors are covered with vinyl tile, and the ceilings are obscured by suspended acoustical 2x4 tile. On the second floor there are a few places where the original gypsum ceiling and simple cornice moldings are still visible. There is a ladder and scuttle opening to the attic, which is unusable space filled with roof trusses and concrete framing.

The rear of the building is plain. The first floor initially had small, fixed, steel sash, now closed in. On the second floor, opening to the original porch, are five doors and three windows from the original plan. There is a 1975 iron fence around the north and east sides of the building, and a masonry wall is on the south lot line. There were originally decorative posts and gate at the south side of the building. Ten of the 12 architect's drawings for this building, by Albert B. Nichols, Architect and Inspector of Buildings, survive in the files of the San Juan Custom House.

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U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.

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10.1. Geographical Data:

Verbal Description of Boundary:

From the intersection of the south side of Calle Union and the waterfront bulkhead, south along the waterfront to the Customs lot line (9' south of Custom House); thence west to the west lot line (coinciding with west wall of building); thence north to the south side of Calle Union; thence east to point of origin at bulkhead line.

Justification:

The north and east boundaries— street and waterfront— provide natural boundaries and include the waterfront street, since it was constructed between the customhouse and waterline after the customhouse. The south and west boundaries are property lines, and the surrounding property does not relate historically or architecturally.

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U.S. Custom Houses in Puerto Rico
Photographs

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PHOTOGRAPHS: FAJARDO

U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.
Calle Union, Puerto Real, Fajardo, P.R.
Photo by James C. Massey June 1987
Negative filed with National
Preservation Institute, Washington, DC
General view, looking southwest.
Photo #1

U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.
Calle Union, Puerto Real, Fajardo, P.R.
Photo by James C. Massey June 1987
Negative filed with National
Preservation Institute, Washington, DC
General view, looking northwest.
Photo #2

U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.
Calle Union, Puerto Real, Fajardo, P.R.
Photo by James C. Massey June 1987
Negative filed with National
Preservation Institute, Washington, DC
Entrance door and gate, north facade,
looking south.
Photo #3

U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.
Calle Union, Puerto Real, Fajardo, P.R.
Photo by James C. Massey June 1987
Negative filed with National
Preservation Institute, Washington, DC
Entrance lobby, looking south.
Photo #4

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U.S. Custom Houses in Puerto Rico

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U.S. Custom House, Fajardo, P.R.
Calle Union, Puerto Real, Fajardo, P.R.
Photo by James C. Massey June 1987
Negative filed with National
Preservation Institute, Washington, DC
U.S. Post Office lobby, looking south.
Photo #5