## National Register Of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property				
historic name	Casa de la Masacre			
other names/site number_				
2. Location				
street & number	32 Marina Street		_ □ not fo	r publication
city or town	Ponce			vicinity
state Puerto Rico co	ode PR county Ponce	code <u>113</u>	zip code	00731
3. State/Federal Agency (	Certification			
sheet for additional commo	2	ationally □ statewide	40 - 65	(□ See continu
Signature of certifying official/T		Date		
Puerto Rico State I State or Federal agency and bure	Historic Preservation Office			
In my opinion, the property $\square$ r	meets   does not meet the National Regis	ster criteria. (  See conti	nuation sheet	for additional com
Signature of certifying official/I	Title	Date		

4. 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);	Signature of the Keeper  Signature of the Keeper  Jani L J. Va	Date of Action  120/20/05
5. Classification		
Ownership of Property  (Check as many boxes as apply)  private public-local x public-State public-Federal	Category of Property  (Check only one box)  x building(s)  district  site  structure  object	
Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
Contributing 1	Noncontributing 0	buildings
<u>Ω</u> Ω	Ω Ω	sites
Ω	Ω	objects
	0	Total
Name of related multiple property listing Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)	Number of contributing reso listed in the National Register	
N/A	N/A_	

6. Fu	nction or Use	
(Enter ca	ric Functions  Itegories from instructions)  Domestic / Single Dwelling  Commerce/ Specialty store  Social / Meeting Hall	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) Recreation and Culture/Museum
7. Des	scription	
	tectural Classification	Materials
(Enter ca	tegories from instructions)	(Enter categories from instructions)
Ver	nacular Creole	foundation <u>masonry</u>
		walls masonry / wood
		roofgalvanized metal
		other
	ntive Description ontinuation sheets	
8. Sta	tement of Significance	
	cable National Register Criteria "in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property	for National Register listing)
ΧA	Property is associated with events that history.	t have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of ou
□в	Property is associated with the lives of 1	persons significant in our past.
ХC		acteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents esses high artistic values, or represents a significant and its lack individual distinction.
$\Box$ D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield,	, information important in prehistory or history.

	ria Considerations erty is:
$\Box_{\mathbf{A}}$	owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
□в	removed from its original location.
$\Box$ C	a birthplace or a grave.
□D	a cemetery.
ΠE	a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
ΠF	a commemorative property.
$\Box$ G	less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.
	s of Significance  Itegories from instructions)  Social History  Architecture
Perio	d of Significance
Signi	ficant Dates1937
-	ficant Person te if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
Cultu	ral Affiliation N/A
Arch	itect/Builder Unknown

## Narrative Statement of Significance

X See continuation sheets.

## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1	Casa de la Masacre	
	name of property	
	Ponce, Puerto Rico	
	County and State	

#### Summary

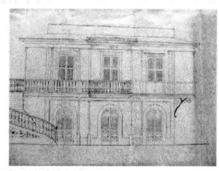
The property commonly known as "Casa de la Masacre" (House of the Massacre) is a two-story, brick masonry, vernacular style building of both domestic and commercial use with a modified rectangular floor plan, a flat roof and an "L"-shaped, wood balcony that runs along the two main façades at second level. The exterior walls are finished in stucco while wood predominates in most interior subdivision, floors and ceilings. It is located in a corner lot at the intersection of Marina and Aurora streets in the historic urban zone of Ponce. Given its dual function, the building features an attached independent entrance for the upper dwelling - a staircase enclosed in masonry and wood jalousies in the first and second floors respectively. Additionally, a carriage entrance from Marina Street echoes the main building in design and materials. Since the tragic event of 1937, the property retained an overall integrity and was restored in 1990. It presently houses the "Museo de la Masacre" (Museum of the Massacre).

#### Description

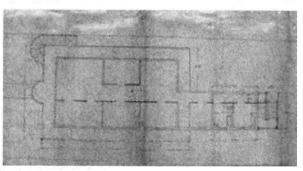
Written and graphic evidence found in the historic archives of the Municipality of Ponce confirm the existence of a domestic building at the "Casa de la Masacre" site as early as 1886. However, the existing property dates from the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1906, the owners of the property contracted the services of well-known civil engineer Blas Silva to design their new property. The result was a two-story, brick masonry and wood building very similar to the one that was eventually constructed excluding all-around setbacks, a more elaborate spiral staircase and a continuous upper floor balcony. Even though the final project was not executed after Silva's design, most of his ideas were implemented in a more austere manner granting the appearance that the property would have by 1910, when the changes to the 19<sup>th</sup> century residence were completed.



Façade of house in Marina Street, 1886



Blas Silva's 1906 design.2



Blas Silva's 1906 design.

Archivo Histórico del Municipio de Ponce. Fondo: Ayuntamiento. Serie: Obr as Públicas. Caja 21/7 05-1886.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid. Caja 25 09-1906.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Caja 25 09-1906.

## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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1

Casa de la Masacre
name of property
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The building's main façades feature five double doors on each level, a continuous molding between ground and upper levels, a cornice well below the parapet and a covered "L"-shaped wooden balcony. The ground level entrances are solid wood plank doors emphasized by a simple offset and open transoms featuring curved wrought iron details; the upper level doors are wood as well and have jalousie panels, these have more elaborately designed brackets and cornices. The balcony has a rounded corner that follows the building's slightly curved corner; it features wrought iron support brackets, a simple balustrade and a corrugated iron roof supported by eight wood columns.

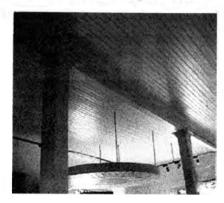








The ground level is divided into two main areas: a commercial space towards the corner of Marina and Aurora streets and a "garage" or carriage entrance that faces Marina Street. The commercial space is in turn divided in two areas as well; one opens on two sides towards the sidewalk and street, the other smaller space faces Marina Street. A wood beam supported by wood columns runs the length of the ceiling in the larger area. All interior ceilings and trims are wood, "bull's-eye" windows dot the back wall facing the side yard underneath the stairs; this area is accessible from the commercial area through two doors similar to the ones facing the streets.









## **National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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An independent staircase located on Aurora Street leads to the upper-level residence. These stairs are enclosed in brick masonry at ground level while the landing upstairs becomes a wood shutter enclosed hallway or "galería" that connects three of the four living spaces. All rooms open onto the balcony, the "galería", they connect inside through the use of openings. All interior partitions, ceiling, floors, windows, doors and trim are wood. The building's roof is a timber structure covered with corrugated zinc panels.



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#### Summary

The "Casa de la Masacre" Building is significant under Criterion A as the property is very closely associated with an important event in the local history. It's also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an example of construction patterns at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Puerto Rico.

#### Historical Background

After the United States occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898, the island's political status within the US frame became a very complex and ardent theme within the local parties. A number of local political parties came about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In one manner or another, these groups represented the very same three main tendencies that have dominated the political spectrum in Puerto Rico until present times: Statehood, Commonwealth and Independence. Within the Independence movement of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one party came to symbolize the radical opposition toward the presence and control of the island by the United States: the Nationalist Party.

Founded in 1922, the Nationalist Party became an extremely active organization (although with a small membership) when Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos gained its presidency in 1930. Born in a humble neighborhood in the aristocratic city of Ponce in 1892, Albizu Campos distinguished himself in the academic field in his local hometown schools. His remarkable qualities as a student earned him a scholarship to pursue a college education in the United States. Albizu attended the University of Vermont and later Harvard University, from which he graduated in 1921 with a law degree. Albizu entered the Nationalist Party in 1924 and by 1926 the party commissioned the young lawyer to serve as a political messenger of the Nationalist Party in Latin America. Albizu spent the next three years traveling through the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Perú.

Pedro Albizu Campos



At the time of his return in 1930, Albizu was transformed into a strong supporter for the open and militant challenge toward the United States' presence in Puerto Rico. In the next years, Albizu and the Nationalist Party became dedicated critics of what they perceived and defined as the North American colonialist policy in the island and advocated armed struggle as a mean to achieve independence. The deteriorated economical conditions created by the Great Depression during the 1930's provided the Nationalist Party the proper forum to spread their vision of proud nationalism and economical and political independence within a wider audience.

At the very same time that the Nationalist Party was increasing its militancy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt designated a new governor for the island: General Blanton Winship. The sixty-five year old soldier assumed the governorship on February 15, 1934. The next five years of Blanton's government were characterized by an open struggle against the Nationalist Party and a direct persecution of its leadership.

NPS Form 10-900-a (8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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

## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Blanton Winship's term initiated the most politically convulsive time in our history. From 1935 until 1939, the "undeclared" war between the government and the nationalists moved violently fast. In October 1935 the State Police in the town of Rio Piedras murdered four party members. The Nationalists responded by killing the State Chief of Police, Colonel Francis Riggs, in February 23, 1936. That very same day, the two young men responsible for Riggs's death were captured and executed by the police in San Juan.<sup>2</sup>

Riggs's death provoked Winship's rage. The governor ordered raids to be conducted in the Nationalist Party's Committees in all mayor towns. The purpose of the raids was to find evidence that incriminated the party's leadership in Riggs's assassination. Such evidence was never found. Nonetheless, the government finally brought against Albizu Campos and other leaders of the party charges of "sedition". In two very controversial trials, Albizu and seven other persons were found guilty and received sentences ranging from two to ten years in federal prisons in the United

Gov. Blanton Winship

States. But the elimination of the "party's heads" did not stop the Nationalists' militancy or the government repression. This dual intransigency embarked both sides toward the violent collision that took place in Ponce in 1937.

The local committee of the Nationalist Party in Ponce (called the Nationalist Club) was located at 32 Marina Street, corner with Aurora Street (the property presented in this nomination). The house had been used as the group's meeting hall since 1926. In 1937, the Ponce committee planned the annual celebration of the Slavery Abolition Commemoration. The day picked for the parade was Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937, unbeknownst to the nationalists that date was to become one of the darkest days in our history.

The nationalists were planning to use the parade not only to commemorate the historic date but also to publicly criticize the incarceration of the party's leadership. They had planned the event for weeks and were expecting the assistance of party members from other towns of the island. The parade had also received the City Mayor's (José Tormos Diego) permission. But at the last minute, Governor Winship instructed the new State Chief of Police, Colonel Enrique de Orbeta, to contact Tormos Diego and have him cancel his authorization to the parade. At the very same time (as it was latter confirmed) the Governor ordered Orbeta to increase the police force in the southern city and to stop, by all means necessary, any demonstration conducted by the nationalists in Ponce.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Life. February, 1938. pp. 21.

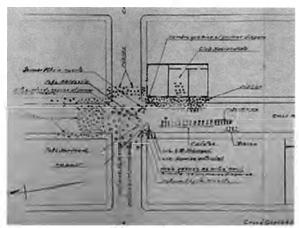
Francisco A. Scarano. <u>Cinco siglos de historia</u>. Segunda Edición. México: McGraw-Hill, 2000. pp. 793 – 799.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Raúl Medina Vázquez. Verdadera historia de la Masacre de Ponce. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2001. pp. 50 – 65.

### National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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	name of property Ponce, Puerto Rico	

The permission was revoked the very same morning of the activity. The local Nationalist's leadership refused to cancel the parade and instructed their members to form as planned in front of the Club House. Party members (the male cadre, a small music band and a female group called "The Daughters of the Republic"), their families, friends and local bystanders started to crowd about noontime in their fatal positions around the house. At the same time, a detachment of about one hundred and fifty police officers started to tactically occupy strategic positions around the house, enclosing the demonstrators.





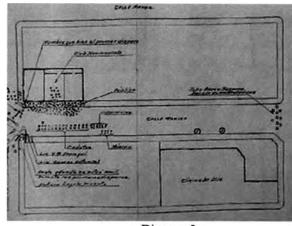


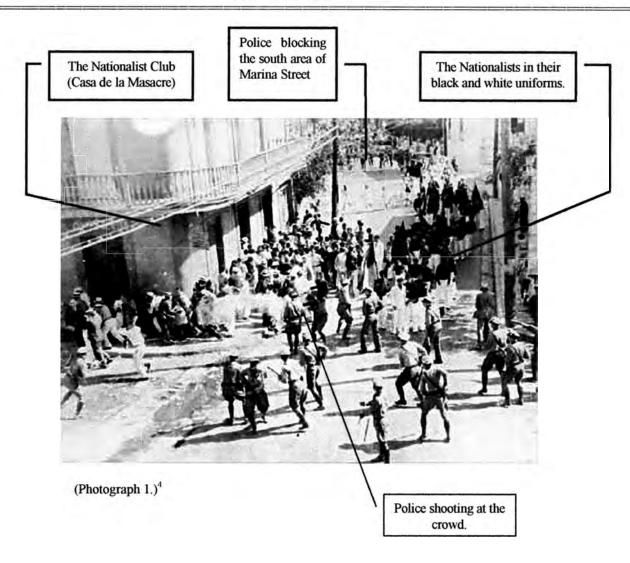
Diagram 2

The diagrams show the location of the public, the police and the party members during the parade in the afternoon of March 21, 1937. The house is marked as "Club Nacionalista" in the upper right hand corner (Diag. 1) The public is on front of the house. The party's cadre is shown lined up in two ranks in front of the house in Marina Street: first the male cadre, then the females and the music band. The police are shown blocking the party's formation (Diag. 1) and also blocking the rear of the formation (Diag. 2) (The Diagrams were made by the Hays Commission.)

After strong indications that neither side was going to retreat, the Nationalists started their parade at around 3:00 p.m. with the accompaniment of "La Borinqueña" (now Puerto Rico's National Anthem). Suddenly, a shot was fired. The police responded to the unknown shot with a massive counter-fire toward the defenseless crowd. By the time the shooting was over, fourteen people were killed in the streets surrounding the Club House. Five additional people died within the next few days, elevating the number to a total of nineteen deaths and almost two hundred wounded.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> *El Imparcial*. 23 – 27 de marzo de 1937.

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Section	0	Page	0
Section	8	Page	8
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Casa de la Masacre
name of property
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Photograph 2.



Photograph 3.

The picture labeled as Photograph 1 was taken by a photographer of a local newspaper ("El Imparcial") at the very beginning of the shooting. The picture was crucial during the investigation conducted by the Hays Commission to attribute the responsibilities in the events to all those involved. The pictures above (2 and 3) appeared in the 1938 Life magazine article about the incident. The pictures show family members of some of the victims in front of the bullet's ridden walls of "Casa de la Masacre".

The violent and disturbing incidents occurred in Ponce deeply shook the entire population in the island, regardless of political beliefs. Representatives of the *American Civil Liberties Union* (ACLU) immediately came to Puerto Rico and formed a group of well-recognized citizens to investigate the incident. After months of research, the Hays Commission (Dr. Arthur Garfield Hays was the President of the ACLU and served as the commission's president) came to the conclusion that the Government (Governor Winship directly) was responsible for the incidents; that the Nationalists were exercising their basic rights of freedom of speech and association; and that the killing of defenseless party members and by-standers had to be recognized as a "massacre". The afternoon of Palm Sunday March 21, 1937, became the most violent and one of the saddest days in our political history.

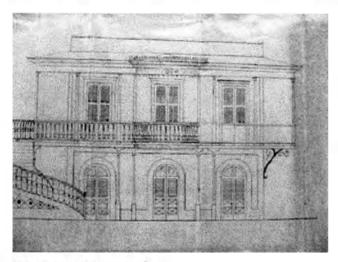
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> *Life Magazine*. February 1938.

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#### The Building

The house popularly known as "Casa de la Masacre" (House of the Massacre) is located at #32 at the Marina Street and Aurora Street intersection in the Municipality of Ponce. It's a two-story house built in brick masonry and wood. The existence of a residence at that location is shown in the 1886 diagrams found at the Historic Archives of the Municipality of Ponce. But the present building dates from early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1906, the owners of the property contracted the services of well-known Civil Engineer in Ponce, Blas Silva, to design a new façade and a new space arrangement for the property. Although the changes done to the house did not follow completely Silva's design, his signature can still be found in the appearance that the property will have by 1910, when the changes to the 19<sup>th</sup> century residence were completed.



Blas Silva's 1906 drawing.6



Photograph 1937

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Archivo Histórico del Municipio de Ponce. Fondo: Ayuntamiento. Serie: Obras Públicas. Caja: 27/09-1906.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, UPR, Recinto de Río Piedras. Colección Benjamín Torres. Caja: Fotos de la Masacre de Ponce.

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With the second	name of property	

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County and State







Photograph, 2005.

The house follows an architectural style typical of the vernacular pattern used at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It's also a good example of the economical development of the city, as the house was used as a residence and a commercial space, very typical of other residences in the economically growing city of Ponce. The property was under the economical pattern of "absentee landlord", as the house was not usually occupied by the owners, but used as real estate income.

At the time that the house reached national notoriety (1937), the owners were Francisco de Jesús y Graciela Toro Vendrell. They sold the house to Juan Riera Ginard and Carmen M. Toro de Riera in 1945. These last owners never occupied the residence, but used it as source of income, renting the upper floor as a residence and the first floor as a commercial space.

In 1987, through a Joint Resolution of the Legislature (Joint Resolution # 2951), the corner where the house is located was designated a Historic Zone. Realizing the historical importance of the building, the Legislature decided that the house should become property of the People of Puerto Rico and assigned the amount of \$60,000 to the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture) to acquire the residence. The house was bought in 1988 from the previous owners and is currently used as the "Museo de la Masacre" (Museum of the Massacre). The interventions in the house have kept it consonant to his historical appearance as it was at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Registro de Propiedad. Municipio de Ponce. Folio: 93, Tomo: 395, Finca: 4731.

## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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But beyond it's architectural merits, and definitely more important than these, is the relationship of the property with the significant events of 1937. For the people of Puerto Rico, the house represents and symbolized the tragic events of March 21,1937. In our collective memory, there are very few properties so vividly associated with historical events as "Casa de la Masacre". The association in the popular mentality of "Casa de la Masacre" to the tragic incident is as deep as the events at Wounded Knee in 1890 are to the American Indians (Native Americans) or as profound as the events in Boston in 1770 are to the American people.

53:6:05	bliograp	hical Reference	ees			
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**Verbal Boundary Description** 

Legally recorded lot: (389-062-472-01) cadastre registry Puerto Rico State Government.

## **Boundary Justification**

Legally recorded Lot Limits

## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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#### Bibliography

Archivo Histórico del Municipio de Ponce

Fondo: Ayuntamiento. Serie: Obras Públicas, Planos.

Plano Núm: 02 – 1873 Plano Núm: 27 – 1894 Plano Núm: 09 – 1895

Fondo: Ayuntamiento. Serie: Obras Públicas

Caja 21/7 05- 1886 Caja 25 09- 1906

Cámara de Representantes. Resolución Conjunta Número 2951.

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## National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

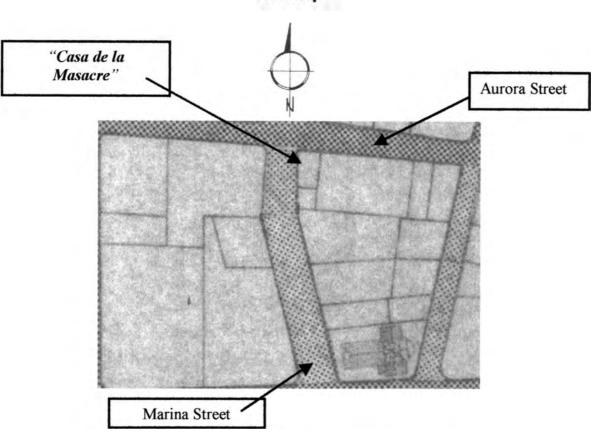
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Casa de la Masacre
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#### Map of Puerto Rico



## Site Map



## **National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Casa de la Masacre
name of property
Ponce, Puerto Rico
County and State



A southeast view of Casa de la Masacre. (Photo: Juan Llanes)

11. Form Prepare	d By				
name / title	Juan Llanes Santos, Historian / Jacqueline Pagán, Architect				
organization	PRSHPO	date June 2005			
street & number _	PO Box 9066581	telephone(787) 721-3737_			
city or town	San Juan state PR	zip code00936-4267			
Property Owner					
(Complete this item at the rec	quest of the SHPO or FPO.)				
name	Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña				
street & number _	PO Box 9024184	telephone(787) 724-0700			
city or town	San Juan state PR	zip code00902			

## **National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Casa de la Masacre
name of property
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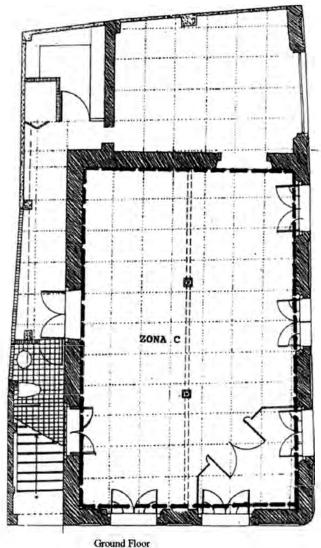
Partial views of "Casa de la Masacre". (Photos: Juan Llanes)

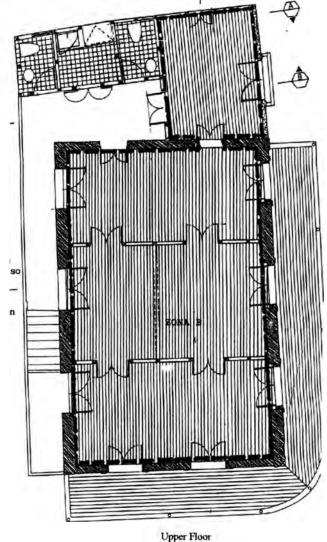
## **National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Casa de la Masacre
name of property
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# Floor Plans

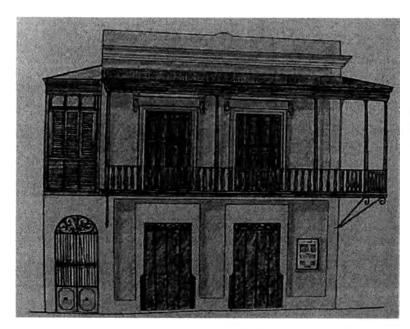




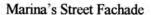
## **National Register Of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

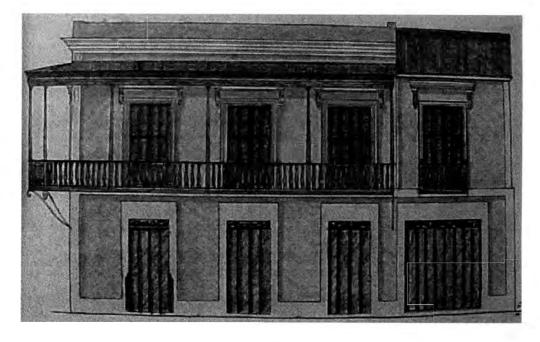
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name of property
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Aurora's Street Fachade





#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION			
PROPERTY Casa de la Masacre NAME:			
MULTIPLE NAME:			
STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, Por	nce		
DATE RECEIVED: 8/18/05 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/28/05 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:		PENDING LIST: 45TH DAY:	9/13/05 10/01/05
REFERENCE NUMBER: 05001098			
REASONS FOR REVIEW:			
	OSCAPE: N	LESS THAN 50 Y	
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERI REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR	IOD: N DRAFT: Y	PROGRAM UNAPPRONATIONAL:	OVED: N N
COMMENT WAIVER: N			
ACCEPTRETURNREJE	ECT	DATE	
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: The Casa de la Masacre is locally significant under Ponce and under Criterion C as an example of a cwas designed with commercial space on the ground in Ponce and other urban settings throughout Puer Nationalist Party (commonly known as the Nation in Puerto Rico's political history that occurred on between police and the Nationalists resulted in nit Today, the building reflects the social and archite of significance.	common vernace and level and restro Rico. Used nalist Club), the the afternoon neteen deaths a	cular building type. The sidential occupancy about as the meeting hall of the building is associated of March 21, 1937, whand left nearly two hundred.	the two-story building ove, a pattern common the local chapter of the li with a tragic chapter ten a confrontation dred people wounded.

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

54 - 2252 DATE

DISCIPLINE\_ +/istoria

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









# STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE Office of the Governor

August 17, 2005

Ms. Carol D. Shull Keeper National Register of Historic Places 1201 Eye Street, N.W. 8<sup>th</sup> floor Washington, D. C. 20005



RE: SUBMISSION - CASA DE LA MASACRE DE PONCE, PONCE

Dear Ms. Shull:

We are pleased to submit for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places the nomination of the Casa de la Masacre de Ponce, located in the Municipality of Ponce, Puerto Rico.

If you should have any questions on the nomination, please contact Juan Llanes Santos, Historic Preservation Specialist.

Sincerely,

Aida Belén Rivera Ruiz State Historic Preservation Officer

ABR/JM

**Enclosures** 



Cuartel de Ballajá

PO Box 9066581 San Juan PR 00906-6581 • Phone (787) 721-3737 Fax (787) 722-3622



# STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE Office of the Governor

OCT 1 8 2005

October 11, 2005



Janet Snyder Matthews, PhD Keeper National Register of Historic Places National Park Service 1201 Eye Street, N.W. 8th floor Washington, D. C. 20005

RE: CASA DE LA MASACRE DE PONCE, PONCE (NRIS # 05001098)

Dear Dr. Snyder:

We are pleased to submit the corrected pages of the nomination of the Casa de la Masacre de Ponce. The corrections have been completed after consulting today with Mr. Daniel Vivian, Historian of the National Register staff.

If you should have any questions on the nomination, please contact Juan Llanes Santos, Historic Preservation Specialist.

Sincerely

Aida Belén Rivera Ruiz

State Historic Preservation Officer

ABR/JM

c. Daniel Vivian, Historian, National Register of Historic Places

**Enclosures** 



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