

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received NOV 20 1985

date entered

DEC 30 1985

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

**1. Name**

historic Church, School, Convent and Parish House of San Agustín

and or common same

**2. Location**

street & number #265 Ponce de León Ave.

not for publication

city, town San Juan

X vicinity of Puerta de Tierra

state Puerto Rico

code 72

county San Juan

code 00930

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Catholic Church, Archdiocese of San Juan, Order of Padres Redentoristas

street & number Box 1967

city, town San Juan

vicinity of

state Puerto Rico 00903

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Archbishop House of San Juan

street & number Box 1967

city, town San Juan

state Puerto Rico 00903

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Inventory of the Historic Churches  
title of Puerto Rico

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town San Juan

state Puerto Rico

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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 building complex of San Agustín is located in Puerta de Tierra, an area of land to the east of Old San Juan, which is the only access by land into the historic city. The complex consists of three main structures housing a church, a school, a parish house and a convent interconnected among themselves, located between Ponce de León Avenue and Muñoz Rivera Avenue, near the coast. The church is the central structure of the complex, with the school and the convent to its left and the parish house to its right. The church is oriented on a north-south axis, its entrance facing south, away from the Atlantic Ocean. The main entrances of the other structures also face Ponce de León Avenue.

The church plan consists of a nave and two aisles. There are seven bays. The first bay includes the vestibule and a choir loft on the second level. A pipe organ is conserved in the choir loft. The main space consists of the next five bays. Arcades resting on square pillars divide the nave from the aisles. Above the arches, a decorative frieze separates the arcades from the clerestory. The clerestory is formed by large stained glass windows. The nave is covered by an articulated barrel vault which has a lantern in each of its bays. The side aisles are covered with groin vaults. The plan culminates in a semicircular apse covered with a half dome. The side aisles also end with a semicircular wall. A five-sided chapel projects from each side wall. The entire church is built of concrete. The floors are finished with round mosaic tiles of various colors. Beautiful stained glass windows decorate the entire church.

The facade is dominated by two towers of different heights. The central part of the facade consists of a large doorway recessed into a portico formed by marble moldings. Above the entrance, a large rosette stained glass window stands out on the facade as well when seen from the interior space. The towers have a doorway each, leading directly from the sidewalk into the side aisles. The upper part of the facade and the towers are decorated with mouldings and cornices with a rounded dentil design. The towers are covered with multi-sided domes. The side facades are divided into two levels and clearly indicate interior bay organization. The rear of the structure has a semicircular wall expressing the apse section.

The church is physically connected by a one-story structure with open arcades to the adjoining Parish House, thus creating an atrium and L-shaped cloister. A marble statue of San Agustín stands in the center of this courtyard. The Parish House is a three story structure with open arcades on all four sides. It is decorated on all levels with white granite trim. The interior facade is formed by pairs of arches containing windows or doors. Some of the original wood and glass windows have been replaced by metal jalousie windows. The interior floors are covered with mosaic tiles and colored native cement tiles.

A three story structure which houses a convent is located immediately to the west of the church. It has the same architectural elements as the Parish House and the church, large arches and granite trim. The convent is attached to the school which is the largest of the buildings in the complex. The San Agustín School, a three story building is very similar in design and construction to the Parish House, having open arcades on all sides and the same granite trim. However, the school, as well as, the convent are in a much more deteriorated state than the Parish House and the church. The cement plaster is badly chipped in many areas exposing the steel reinforcement. Some arches have been closed off with concrete block, wood, metal jalousie windows and glass blocks, altering the original aspect of the structure.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1915 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The church of San Agustín in Puerta de Tierra, San Juan, was founded by the order of Padres Redentoristas. In the year of 1911, Father John Lynch started to work in the parish dedicated to San Agustín, patron of one of the neighborhoods in the area. Father Lynch convinced his superiors of the urgent need for a new parish house, a school and a much larger church. Construction began in 1914 and the complex was inaugurated on the 8th of December of 1915. For many years this was the only catholic church in Puerto Rico that regularly celebrated service in the English language.

The three structures form an interesting and significant architectural complex, which is still in use today. It is built near the coast on a privileged location. The complex contributes to the monumental sequence along Ponce de León Avenue which includes the Capitol Building, the Casa de España, the School of Tropical Medicine and the Carnegie Library, all included in the National Register.

The church is impressive, and the most outstanding of the three structures. It forms an identifiable part of the San Juan skyline, as seen for many miles around. The graceful towers, and the wise use of fine elements like stained glass, granite and marble details give the facade its distinctive appearance (the church conserves in near perfect condition all of its stained glass windows, among the best in the island). Even when a symmetrical plan is followed, slight variations are present, giving interest to the composition. Good examples of this are the different heights of the towers and the regular arcade in the school vs. the alternated ones in the Parish house. By this, the building gives the impression of having been developed through a longer period of years, like its counterpart medieval and renaissance models in Europe.

This church is also a good example of the early use of concrete in religious architecture. This permitted taller, lighter and more economic buildings. Until the nineteenth century, brick masonry and wood was used almost exclusively, giving local town churches its distinctive character (thick walls, small openings for windows, etc). The extensive use of stained glass windows is also a variation from the traditional island church, with its rather dark and sober interiors.

Besides being architecturally important this complex has also been significant for its social, humanitarian and educational function.

Since 1915 the parish school, which offers grades 1 to 12, has provided economical or free high quality education for the poor in the neighborhood. The structure where the school is located as well as the one that houses the parish has served the community as refuge in times of disaster.

This parish being located in a predominantly low income area has provided various social services for the neighborhood such as: health education seminars, economic assistance, food services, etc.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

McKenna, P. Esteban, Historia de los Redentoristas en Puerto Rico, las Islas Vírgenes y la República Dominicana (1902-1977), Imprenta Cartagena, Inc., Caguas, P.R.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 6606 sq.mts.

Quadrangle name San Juan, Puerto Rico

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

### UTM References

A 

1	9	8	0	6	3	7	0	2	0	4	4	2	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

The church is bounded on the north by Muñoz Rivera Ave. and the Atlantic Ocean, on the east by a gas station, on the west by the school yard and Pelayo St. and on the south by Ponce de León Ave. (see enclosed location plan).

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marisa Gómez, Arch. and Ester Cardona, Arch.

organization Investigaciones Bonaire, Inc.

date July 1984

street & number Tetuan 103

telephone (809) 724-4997

city or town Old San Juan

state Puerto Rico 00901

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11-7-85 (date ok) (letter)

### For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

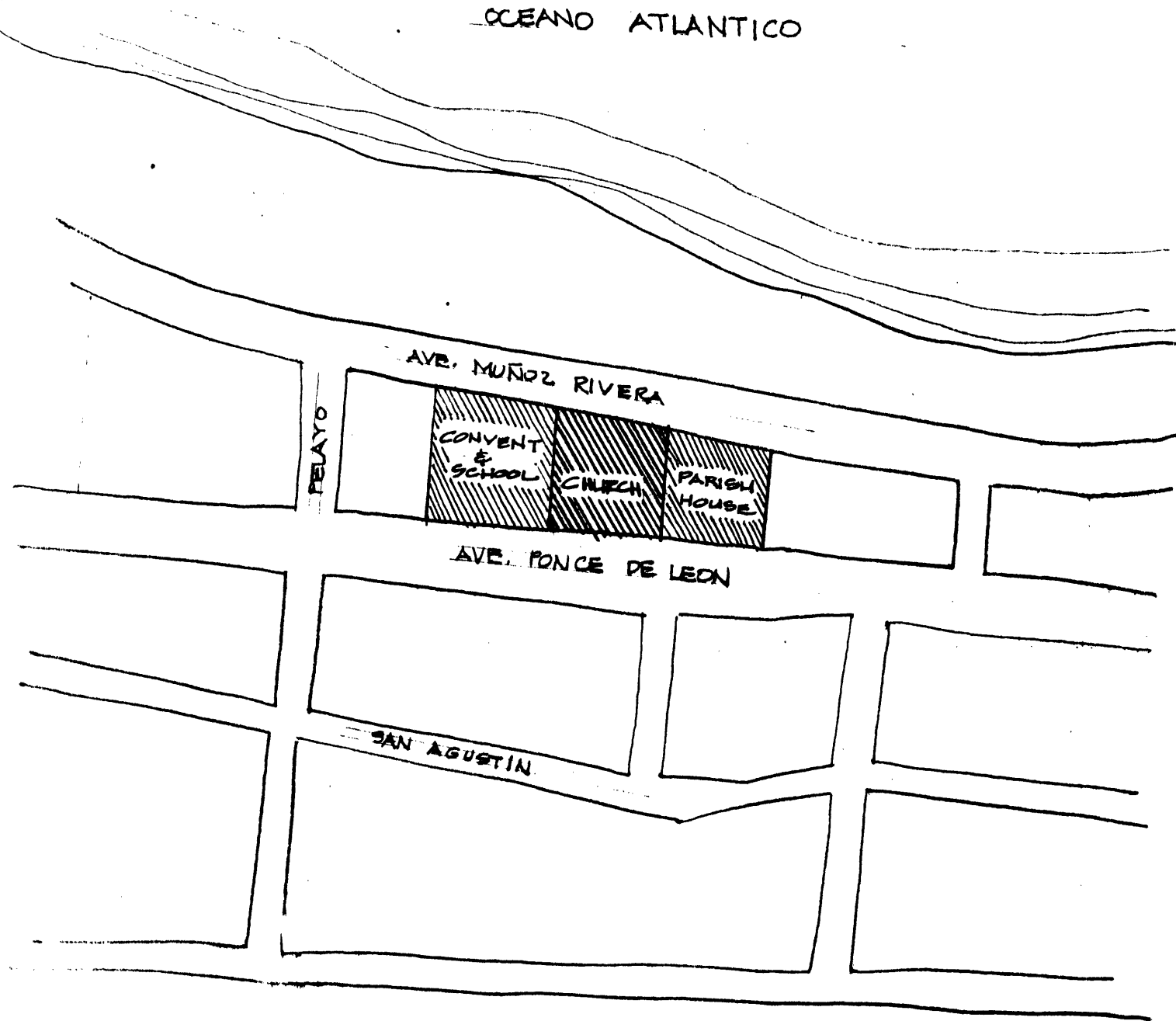
date 12/30/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

OCEANO ATLANTICO



town: PUERTA DE TIERRA

scale: 1:2000



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