

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 25 1986

date entered SEP 29

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

1. Name

historic Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad (Holy Trinity Church)

and or common Same

2. Location

street & number Marina St. intersection of Mayor and Abolición St. n/a not for publication

city, town Ponce vicinity of N/A

state Puerto Rico code 072 county Ponce code 0760

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Episcopal Church of Puerto Rico

street & number P.O. Box 5667

city, town Ponce vicinity of N/A state Puerto Rico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ponce Register of Deeds

street & number Ponce Government Center

city, town Ponce state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Hist. Arch. Survey of Ponce has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July, 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records P.R.S.H.P.O.

city, town San Juan state Puerto Rico

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Holy Trinity Church is a free-standing structure located on the east side of "calle Marina" at the intersection of "calle Mayor" and "calle Abolición", a public area formed by the merging of "calle Marina" and "calle Mayor".

The building follows the typical cruciform plan, created by a double-height nave with a crossing situated just west of the semi-circular apse. The nave incorporates an interior balcony addition above the main entrance. Concrete pilaster masses along the side walls support a concrete plate which, in turn, supports the wooden king trusses of the exposed roof construction. The side walls are divided into five bays of equal width by the pilaster masses. Bays 1 through 4 are punctured by attenuated, circular arch, glazed windows of gothic proportions, and the transept is located at bay 5. All interior walls are free of ornamentation.

The exterior is characterized by the combined usage of neo-gothic and Spanish-Colonial elements. The body of the church is buttressed between the window openings along the north and south facades. The transept rises only one storey in height and its gables are oriented along the north-south axis. The exterior walls are void of any ornamentation as well, and the composition is capped by a ceramic tile roof typical of mission-style churches.

The primary facade is particularly exemplary of the combination of North-American and Hispanic influences. This facade consists of a vertical rectangular frontispiece, surmounted by a bell gable with a bell in each of its two slender, roman arches, and a cross at the ridge, resulting in a composition similar to that of many of the colonial churches found on the island. Nonetheless, the frontispiece is flanked by buttresses and is punctured by a circular window at a second floor height, reminiscent of the neo-gothic church architecture common throughout the United States.

A projecting, one-storey, cubicular reception section provides access to the nave through a semi-circular arch with iron grillework. This foyer area is sheltered by a hipped Spanish-tile roof. In addition, its walls are whitewashed, in contrast to the unpainted appearance of the main body of the church, strengthening the impression of a mission-style addition to a gothic structure.

A small garden surrounds the building, fenced from the sidewalk by iron railings with concrete posts at equal intervals.

## 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 (history)
<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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1926 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

During the Spanish-Colonial period neither Jews nor Protestants were permitted to settle in the new world. By the late XVIII and early XIX century the rules were relaxed to permit non-Roman-Catholics to settle in various Spanish colonies.

With the fall of the Spanish monarchy in 1868, the first Spanish republic was formed and a Tolerance of Worship Act was approved the following year. In 1869 the first organized Protestant services in Puerto Rico were held in the city of Ponce. During that same year a representative group from this congregation met to plan the establishment of a free non-Catholic church, The Holy Trinity Church.

In 1873 the construction of a church building began with materials received from England as a present from Queen Victoria to her English subjects abroad. These materials included a bell cast in England, which bears the date 1870 and is still part of the church.

In 1874 the Spanish Republic fell and the monarchy was reinstated. Religious intolerance returned and the Holy Trinity Church was ordered to close. At the intervention of Queen Victoria and the British Consulate, the Spanish crown allowed the Church to function under certain conditions: The front doors were to remain closed, the bell would not be allowed to ring, and there were to be no services held in Spanish.

These measures remained in effect until July 25, 1898, when the American troops entered Ponce. On that day the bell rang to greet the soldiers and celebrate the restoration of religious liberty. Even today, this bell is known as the Freedom Bell by the residents of Ponce.

By 1923 the old wood and metal structure had deteriorated beyond repair. Funds were raised by public subscription to build a new, more permanent structure on the same site.

The new church was completed in 1926. It combined the use of neo-gothic and Spanish colonial elements which synthesize the building's tradition and function: the neo-gothic represents the British religious heritage while the Spanish colonial symbolizes the community it would serve. The combination of these architectural styles, not common in Puerto Rico, makes this structure a unique example of its kind in the city of Ponce. While other

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brau, Salvador; Breve Historia de Ponce; Ponce, 1914

Prats, José; The First Non Catholic Church in Spanish Possessions; Ponce, 1986

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 3,150 m<sup>2</sup> = .78 acres

Quadrangle name Ponce

Quadrangle scale 1:20000

### UTM References

A 

1	9	7	5	2	7	3	1	0	1	1	9	9	1	2	6	1	8	1	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

North - Ponciana Building  
South - Abolicion St.

East - Mayor St.  
West - Marina St.

See enclosed location plan

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Félix Julián del Campo, State Historian/ Héctor Santiago

organization P.R.S.H.P.O.

date July 14, 1986

street & number Box 82, La Fortaleza

telephone (809) 721-3737

city or town San Juan

state Puerto Rico

# 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 Office 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 Mariano G. Coronas Castro

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 14, 1986

### For NPS use only

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

date 9/29/86

Keeper of the National Register Amy Schaefer

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



Iglesia de la  
Continuation sheet Santisima Trinidad

Item number 8

Page 1

churches of Anglican faith have since combined characteristics of both styles, the Holy Trinity Church appears to represent the clearest convergence, resulting in hybrid forms and elements rather than Spanish apliqué on a gothic church. In addition, the church is a good example of construction in a period of cultural and architectural transition in Puerto Rico, utilizing concrete as a main building material, persisting yet the centuries-old tradition of exposed wooden rafters and Spanish-tile roofing.

The synthesis of styles, technologies, and cultures represented in this building, along with the history of the congregation it serves, have been admired and respected by the people of Ponce and merit the recognition and protection offered by inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

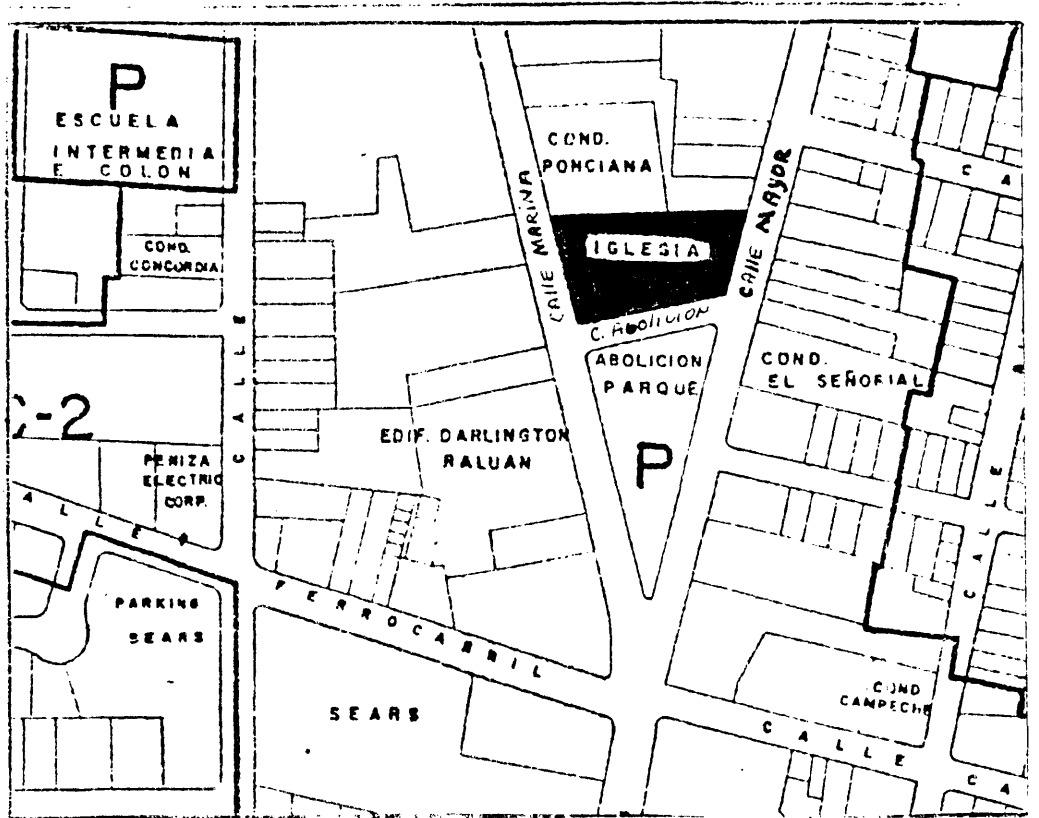
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Ig. Santisima Trinidad

Item number 10

Page 1



1

Scale: 1:6,500