National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

code

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

1 Name

historic La Fortaleza

and or common

2. Location

Calle Fortaleza, San Juan Island between San Juan Bay and street & number ____ not for publication Calle Recinto Oeste

city, town San Juan

vicinity of

county

Present Use

_ agriculture

_ commercial

____ educational

X government

____ industrial

military

entertainment

state

state Puerto Rico

3. Classification

Ownership

X public

_ private

N/Ain process

being considered

both

- Category _ district \underline{X} building(s) __ structure ___ site _ object
- Status <u>X</u> occupied ____ unoccupied ___ work in progress **Public Acquisition** Accessible

93

X yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no

Owner of Property 4.

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico name

street & number Apartado 7428 Barrio Obrero Station

city, town	Santurce	vicinity of	Puerto	Rico	state	00916

Location of Legal Description 5.

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

street & number

city, town San Juan

6.

title

date

city, town

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received

date entered

Institute of Puerto Rican Culture Apartado 4184 Puerto Rico state **Representation in Existing Surveys** _____ no has this property been determined eligible? yes federal state county ... local depository for survey records

code

_ museum

_ religious

other:

scientific

private residence

transportation

_ park

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
excellent X good fair	<pre> deteriorated ruins unexposed</pre>	unaitered X_ altered	_X_ original s moved	site date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

La Fortaleza (The Fortress) was San Juan's first true fortification. Repeated raids by French and English free-booters and Carib Indians led to its construction between 1533 and 1540. Within 15 years of its construction, a new fort named El Morro was built on the more strategic headland guarding the entrance to the bay, and La Fortaleza was relegated to a position of secondary importance in the defenses of San Juan. It then was used as the residence of the military commandant and other military officers and later became the home of the governors of Puerto Rico, a use that continues today.

When the Earl of Cumberland led the successful English attack on the city in 1598, he described La Fortaleza as "a strong castle, built of stone, square and commonly called the King's Palace...." La Fortaleza remained an integral, though secondary, part of San Juan's defensive system. It is a good example of the Spanish style, which is characterized by heavy-tiled flat roofs, sunlit patios, galleries, casements, graceful arches, grilled doorways, and wrought iron, tile, and mahogany staircases. Many of its existing features date from the major restoration of 1846, when the building was converted to full-time use as the governor's house.

Specific Elements

FACADE - The present facade dates from 1846 when the most important remodeling of the building took place. A marble slab at its top states that in 1846, during the reign of Isabella II while the Count de Mirasol was Governor, La Fortaleza was reconstructed by don Santiago Cortijo, Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers.

This facade replaced an austere wall of military architecture built in 1640. Its architecture is neo-classical with decorative motifs of the Isabelline era. The first floor has a massive pine door leading to the main staircase and the interior patio. The floor of the vestibule is paved with old stones called Canarias stones.

MAIN STAIRCASE - The staircase dates from the 1846 remodeling done during the Count de Mirasol's governorship, and its decoration is an example of 19th century Spanish style. In its profuse ornamentations there are characteristics of the baroque, gothic, neo-classical and Arabian styles. There are 3 decorative stucco plagues on which appear, under crowns, the emblems of Puerto Rico, Castilla and Leon. Further up there are four windows in the Arabian style. The dome is decorated with military standards and flags which at one time displayed the colors and insignia of the military units stationed in the country.

The staircase is tiled with Genoese marble and the steps are of Puerto Rican ausubo wood. The banisters are in the tuscan style and the risers are embellished with 19th-century Catalonian glazed tiles.

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SALA DE RECIBO - This room dates from the reconstruction in the middle of the last century during the Count de Mirasol's governorship and is tiled with Genoese marble. Four paintings hang on the walls, two representing Luis Munoz Rivera and Eugenio Maria de Hostos, 19th century Puerto Rican patriots and two others illustrating George Washington and Simon Bolivar. The wicker furniture was probably made in Puerto Rico. The beautiful gilt-framed mirrors are from the 19th century.

STATE DINING ROOM - On the dining room entrance there is a Spanish rococo coat of arms dating from the 18th century. It is painted in oils and surrounded by the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece whose Grand Master was the King of Spain. The coat of arms shows the Bourbonic fleur-de-lis, and the emblems of Castilla, Leon and other Spanish provinces.

The 18th-century type ceiling of the dining room has old Puerto Rican ausubo wood beams. The floor is tiled with Genoese marble, and the rug bears the seal of the Commonwealth and the coat of arms of Juan Ponce de Leon. A beautiful set of crystal fruit bowls is standing on the table. They bear the seal of Spain, and tradition has it that they were sent to La Fortaleza by Queen Isabella II.

STANDING CLOCK - In the interior corridor near the Sala de Recibo, there is an old clock made of mahogany. The last Spanish governor, upon leaving La Fortaleza, stopped in front of it and with his sword broke the face of the clock so as to mark the last minute of Spanish rule in the New World.

OLD KITCHEN - The old kitchen is found in the upper room of the South Tower and dates from the 16th century; it may be the oldest extant kitchen in Puerto Rico. In early colonial times, it was possibly also used to melt metals and make ammunition.

The circular construction of this room is very interesting. It has massive 6feet-wide walls and a skylight at the top of its semi-spheric vault. The steps of the stairway are of ausubo wood and the lintel of the window bears, as was the custom of those days, a picturesque row of glazed tiles. The thick bricks on the floor were made in the old San Patricio factory in Puerto Rico and arranged in the traditional palm-leaf pattern.

It was not until the summer of 1956 that this room was discovered to be part of the original kitchen of the old fortress. It was found when some old wooden boards that covered the cooking stove and chimney were removed. It has since been restored and furnished with the kind of old utensils that were in use at that time. There is in the kitchen an old Puerto Rican water pitcher made of ausubo wood with a porous stone that filters the water falling into a native clay receptacle. There is also an old coffee mortar, a corn grinder and rustic chairs made of tabonuco wood with woven rush seats. The old cooking stove holds such old utensils as clay pots and kettle, "jatacas," pans, a tub, an annatto seed container and a tray.

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SUN DIAL - In mid 17th century, most likely during the reconstruction of La Fortaleza after its burning by the Dutch, a sun dial was built on the flat roof of the South Tower over the old kitchen. It is mounted on a quadrangular stone prism and carries on each of its four faces the design of a quadrant.

SALON DE LOS ESPEJOS or Hall of Mirrors - The reconstruction of this spacious rectangular room, second largest in the building, dates back to the 19th century, the period during which the Count de Mirasol remodeled La Fortaleza.

The principal ornamentation of the well-disciplined decor of this room consists of ten beautiful mirrors whose gilt frames are topped by beribboned flower garlands. Twelve classic pilasters with Corinthian capitals run from socle to frieze and give the room an air of formality. The doors are of native wood, all with joined panels which fold in the middle and back to the sides. The floor is tiled with white and grey Genoese marble.

A stucco rosette in high relief stands out from the center of the ceiling, bearing six coats of arms containing, by order of surname, the heraldic emblems of General Prim and Count de Reus, who commissioned this work during his governorship (1847-48).

SALON DE MUSICA or Music Room - This room also dates back to the mid 19th century reconstruction and has a pretty, gilded stucco border along the top of the walls.

The oil painting of the Immaculate Conception was probably done in 18th century Puerto Rico and has been attributed to the studio of the Campeche family. The furnishings are traditional 19th century Puerto Rican.

Adjacent to the Music Room, facing the sunken garden, there is a covered gallery whose main adornment is eight classic columns. It contains an 18th century tapestry and a bust of the Puerto Rican patriot, Luis Munoz Rivera, by the sculptor Francisco Vizquez Compostela. There is also a handsome 19th century Spanish chest with a plaque indicating that it had been used in the Puerto Rican lottery.

SALON DE TE or Tea Chamber - The ceiling of this room is paneled with Puerto Rican ausubo wood, the floor tiled with Genoese marble. The doors, of a native wood called capa prieto, fold in the middle and back to the sides. The chandelier is of the Isabelline period and the furniture of a native mahogany.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - This large room running along the east front, which at present serves as the Governor's office, used to be called The Throne or Court Room, dating back to the Count de Mirasol's reconstruction. Inaugurated on November 19, 1848, with a sumptuous ball given at La Fortaleza by the Count de Cheste, who was governing at that time, it was used for official functions.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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The Isabelline decoration of this spacious room is most attractive. It is made of 12 Ionic pilasters rising from the ground to join countless putti in high relief and linked by flower garlands. At the center and ends of the ceiling there are three neo-Renaissance rosettes with three elaborate crystal chandeliers hanging from their centers. There are 12 wooden doors, three of them with delicate latticework, the others with joined panels folding in the middle and back to the sides. Over the doors there are 12 stucco shells containing the coats of arms of Puerto Rico, Spain, Castille, Minerva Protectrice of the Arts, Peace, Justice, Perseverance, Fidelity, Strength, Charity, Vigilance, and Mars. The floor is tiled with white and grey Genoese marble and contains three marble ornaments corresponding to the ceiling rosettes.

At the Throne Room's south end there used to be an elaborate canopied throne whose steps were lined with crimson damask. This throne set off a magnificent full-length portrait of Isabella II, the work of the noted Spanish portrait painter, Francisco Madrazo Y. Kuntz, First Painter of the Queen's Household.

CHAPEL - In the upper room of the circular North Tower, or Tower of Homage dating back to the 16th century, there is the Fortaleza Chapel, measuring 20 ft. in diameter and topped by a semicircular vault. It contains a "chapel gallery," or window where the Governor could hear Mass privately without being seen by other worshippers. In 1951, the ancient chapel was redecorated by the Dutch artist, Marcolino Maas. It was dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

On the altarpiece there rests a mosaic of opaque tiles representing Christ on the Cross. Prostrated at its foot there is Magdalene; the Virgin and the pious women on the left; and on the right, Saint John and Longinus, the centurion who pierced Jesus' side with a lance.

There is a stained glass window facing the bay. On the left you see Catherine of Alexandria, La Fortaleza's patron saint, who defended the Catholic faith in her writings. On the right is John the Baptist, patron saint of Puerto Rico's capital. Below these is the seal of Puerto Rico and the coat of arms of Ponce de Leon, the first governor.

GARDENS - In the course of time the gardens have undergone countless changes. The sunken garden is known to have existed as early as 1845; for it was in that year that Pedro Tomas de Cordoba described it as "a large, amphitheatrical piece of land for gardens and orchard."

On the wall, next to the Bastion of Santa Catalina, there is a two-ton cannon brought over from Vieques Island in 1954. The crown in relief is that of the British monarchs. The traditional monogram contains the initials G. R., Georgius Rex, with three linked symbols meaning that it was one of the cannons of George III (1738-1820), under whose reign the Independence War of the United States was lost.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—C			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	e religion
	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
<u>X</u> 1500–1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
<u>_X_ 1600–1699</u>	architecture	education	X_ military	social/
<u>X</u> 1700–1799		engineering	music	humanitarian
X_ 1800–1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
1900–	communications	industry	X_politics/government	transportation
		invention	the second se	other (specify)

N/A

Specific dates 1533, c.1649, 1846 Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

La Fortaleza, or Santa Catalina Palace, is the oldest Executive Mansion that is used as such in the Hemisphere. It was the first fort built in San Juan Harbor, and it was the first of a series of military constructions which, in the course of time, made San Juan de Puerto Rico and Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, the two strongest defense bastions of the Spanish Empire in America.

Its construction was started in 1533, and finished in 1540. At first it consisted of a circular tower and four walls enclosing a patio. This Tower, still in existence, has thick stone walls and two vaulted rooms, one of them the chapel. Its name--Torre del Homenaje or Tower of Homage--arose from the custom of the governor of the Castle to make a solemn oath of loyalty and courage at the top of the tower in times of danger.

Years later, a second circular tower, called Torre Austral, was constructed. The architecture of these towers is of the medieval military type, and their great interest stems from the fact that they are among the new structures in the Hemisphere that have the architectural style popular in Spain during the early days of America's history. Their tops served as watchposts of the arrival of threatening Caribe Indians and the departure of colonizing expeditions on their way to discover and conquer new regions in the Hemisphere. They have been mute witnesses to the flow of the treasures from the Indies and to the maritime traffic of Spain with its empire in America.

Only twice was this fortress taken by invaders. The first time--in 1598-occurred when the Earl of Cumberland took San Juan; the second when, in 1625, the Dutch Commander Boudewyn Hendrick took control of the community and installed himself in La Fortaleza.

A raging fire which marked the withdrawal of the Dutch caused great harm to the building. Its reconstruction was begun in 1640. By that time it had become the custom of the Governors to reside at La Fortaleza; the reconstruction of the fortress was adapted to the use it would continue to be given. The Santa Catalina hermitage existing outside of the walls was destroyed during this reconstruction. It was later integrated into the walls, thus giving rise to the name of Royal Fortress or Palace of Santa Catalina.

The fortress underwent many additions and alterations during the following years. In 1800, a wing was built on the southeastern part, which today houses the Governor's offices. The Artillery Arsenal and the Governor's honor guard occupied the first floor. Part of this building, used for government offices, was enlarged and remodeled in 1827.

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On November 27, 1822, it was officially decreed that La Fortaleza would be the residence of the Governors of Puerto Rico, thus making official a custom observed since the 17th century.

In 1846, the Count de Mirasol, who was governor at the time, started an enlargement of La Fortaleza, reconstructing the building almost completely, except for the west side. The austere facade was altered and adorned with neo-classical motifs, the main entrance was enlarged, the chapel was redecorated, the halls were embellished with applications of stucco, marble Genoese tiles were used on the floors, and the galleries were adorned with stained glass. This reconstruction gave the historic building the palatial appearance that it has today.



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	Major Bibliog	raphica	l Referen	ces	
A	A. Hoyt, <u>A History</u> P. Newton, <u>The Europ</u> 943).				
R	icardo T. Reyes, The H	larbor Defens	es of San Juan	in the 16th C	Century (Ms.
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	y San Juan Bay. (See G states and counties for p				
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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet La Fortaleza

Item number 10

Pagel

La Fortaleza or Santa Catalina Palace is located in the Southwest Litoral of the San Juan Isle.

Its boundaries are: To the Northeast Recinto Oeste Street and Fortaleza Street; To the Southeast the Siervas de Maria Asylum to the Southernmost corner of the wall; Northwest along the wall to the Marine's Walk, and Northeasterly along the Marine's Walk that leads to the San Juan Gate on the North. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

REVISED 11/15/63

Kerp

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

. STATE 2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO.				
Puerto Rico Theme IV				
3. NAME(S) OF SITE	4. APPROX. ACREAGE			
La Fortaleza	1.6 scres			
5. EXACT LOCATION (County. township, roads, etc. If diffic				
Southwest side of San Juan Isl	and, between Calle Recinto Geste and San Juan Bay			

6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner)

Form re 317

(Sept. 1957)

12.00

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Insular Department of Interior

7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)

La Fortaleza (The Fortress) was San Juan's first true fortification. Repeated raids by French and English free-booters and Carib Indians led to its construction between 1833 and 1840. Within fifteen years XI Morro was built on the more strategic beadland guarding the entrance to the bay, and La Fortaleza was relegated to a position of secondary importance in the defenses of San Juan.

La Fortaleza remained an integral, though secondary, part of San Juan's defensive system. When the Earl of Cumberland led the successful English attack on the city in 1598, he described it as "a strong castle, built of stone, square, and commonly called the King's Palace, ... and where we found a great stock of ammunition." 23 A Dutch expedition led by General Howdoin Hendrick captured La Fortaleza in 1625. El Morro held fast against the attacking Dutch, and the retreating army burned La Fortaleza along with the rest of San Juan. With its reconstruction early in the veventeenth century, La Fortaleza began to be used as the residence of the island's governors.

In 1939, the building was renovated under the direction of the United States Army. An inspection report submitted by Assistant Architect Stuart M. Barnette indicates that structural and functional considerations often outweighed the desirability of preserving the important historical features of the structure.

23 Diego Angulo Iniguez, Bautista Antonelli y las fortificaciones americanas en el siglo XVI (Madrid, 1942), 20; quoted in Ricardo T. Reyes, "The Harbor Defenses of San Juan in the Sixteenth Century," Ms. report, National Park Service, August 22, 1955.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) Adolfo de Hostos, Ciudad Hurada (San Juan, 1948); E. A. Hoyt, <u>A History of the Harbor</u> <u>Defenses of San Juan</u> (San Juan, 1944); Inigo Abbad y Lasierre, <u>Historia Geografica</u>, <u>Civil y Natural de la Isla de San Juan</u> (1782); A. P. Newton, <u>The Buropean Mations in</u> the Vest Indies, 1493-1688 (London, 1943).

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.) Ricardo T. Royes, "The Harbor Defenses of San Juan in the Sixteenth Century," Ms. research report, 139 pp., illus., appendices, San Juan MHS, August 22, 1955. (Copy in Southeast Regional files.)

A HOTOGRAPHS *	11. CONDITION	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.)	13. DATE OF VISIT
ATTÀCHED: YES NO	Excellent	Governor's Residence	(not visited)
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature)		15. TITLE	16. DATE
	Horace J. Sheely, Jr.	Historian	11/15/63

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 1012 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER) U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16-74018-1

UNITED	STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTER
	NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

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L viate.	2. Theme(s). If archeological site, write "Arch" before theme	No.
duerto Rico	These I	
3. Name (s) of site		4. Approx. acreage
La Portaleza		1.6 acres
5. Exact location (County, township, roads, etc. If a Southwest side of San June	difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) n Island, between Galle Recinto Ceste a	and San Juan Bay
6. Name and address of present owner (Also administ	trator if different from owner)	

7. Importance and description (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)

La Fortaleza (The Fortress), first true fortification of San Juan, was built between 1533 and 1540 as a defense against continuing raids by French and English freebooters and Carib Indians. Because of its comparatively poor location, however, La Fortaleza soon came to occupy a secondary importance in the defenses of San Juan. Within 15 years, a more strategically located fortification, El Morro, had been built on the headland guarding the entrance to the bay. La Fortaleza remained an integral part of the San Juan defensive system, and when the Earl of Cumberland led the successful English attack on the city in 1598, he described it as "a strong castle, built of stone, square, and commonly called the King's Falace,...and where we found a great stock of amaunitions". In 1625, La Fortaleza was captured by the Dutch expedition led by Gen. Bowdein Handrick; when El Morro held out against the Dutch attack, La Fortaleza was burned along with the rest of San Juan by the retreating energy. Since its reconstruction early in the seventeenth century, La Fortaleza has been used as the residence of the insular governors.

In 1939, the building was renovated under the auspices of the U.S. Army. It Saront from an inspection report submitted by Assistant Architect Stuart M. Dernette that the Army paid little attention to the desirability of preserving the important historical features of the structure at that t/me.

8. Bibliographical references (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) Adolfo de Hostos, Ciudad Murada (San Juan, 1948); E. A. Hoyt, <u>A History of the Harbor</u> Defenses of San Juan (San Juan, 1944); Inigo Abbad y Lasierra, <u>Historia Geografica</u>, <u>Civil y Natural de la Isla de San Juan</u> (1782); A. P. Newton, <u>The European Nations in</u> the Mest Indian, 1493-1685 (London, 1943).

9. Reports and studies (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Ricardo T. Heyes, "The Harbor Defenses of San Juan in the Sixteenth Century", Ms. research report, 139 pp., illus., appendices, San Juan NHS, August 22, 1955. (Copy in Region One Files)

otographs * 11. Condi	tion 12. Present use (Museum, farm, etc.)	13. Date of visit
	cellent Governor's Residence	(Not Visited)
14. Name of real (Signature)	15. Title	16. Date
	Historian	June 4, 1958

* Dry mount on an 8 x 10½ sheet of fairly heavy paper. Identify by view and name of the site, date of photograph and name of photographer. Give location of negative. If attached, enclose in proper negative envelopes.