

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary-cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary-cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls brick

roof plywood and concrete

other cast iron gate

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mayagüez Municipal Cemetery is located at the South end of Post Street, main throughfare of the city. The cemetery's principal axis runs East-West. The professional pathway commences at the foot of a grand set of steps on Post Street and climaxes at a small, stone-floored courtyard. The area is lined by dense trees on each side forming an enclosed natural arcade. The courtyard space serves as vestibule to the cemetery's entrance.

The cemetery's site follow the 1804 master plan in its layout: a rectangular plan measuring 655 feet by 315 feet with a circular focal point at its center. The center of the precinct was emphasized by placing a magnificent grave upon it. The periphery is defined by brick walls of niches, and the area is divided by two streets intersecting north to south and east to west. The trees in the cemetery form an integral part of the design. Tall shady trees are planted along the main road, providing a covered walk for the visitor. Smaller vegetation is planted along the secondary roads.

The entrance gate to the Mayagüez cemetery is an excellent example of the funerary triumphal arch adopted from antiquity. As in most cemeteries, the brick gateway is a rectangular structure articulated by Doric columns, the central one providing access to the precinct through a half-round arch. The mass and height of the entrance gate were increased to convey a sense of monumentality. One service area was constructed behind the gate, while the other one was placed to the east side of it. There is no evidence of a chapel ever built there.

According to a law established during 1872, this cemetery was build with an area destined for the people of non-catholic faith who died. This area was placed to the east, behind the main Catholic cemetery. It was also fenced with a brick wall, and was separated from the rest of the precinct by a brick fence. It had an independent entrance on the west side, with access from the street through a vacant lot.

Today the wall separating both cemeteries no longer stands, and thus the cemetery is considered one single site. Both are are integrated by their streets which follow the grid system. The niches found in the Mayagüez cemetery fulfill the double function of burial chamber and enclosure of the graveyard. They are found here in their original form. These walls are formed by rows of niches, three levels high. The brick structures are crowned by a simple cornice.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1868-1876

Significant Dates

1866
1868
1877

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Multiple

Architect/Builder

Vidal D'Ors, Felipe
Puig, Juan José

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

During 1866 the municipal government bought a piece of land in Barrio Sábalo for the construction of a new cemetery for Mayagüez. Although burials in this lot were common during the 1868 due to a small pox plague, the precinct was only marked by a net type of fence ("malla") directly over the ground. Construction of the entrance gateway and the masonry walls, and niches was not begun until 1876, and the cemetery was officially blessed in 1877, according to the sign on the entrance gate. The 1876 project was designed by Municipal Architect D. Felipe Vidal D'Ors and built by contractor Juan José Puig.

The city of Mayagüez, located on the west coast of the Island, was a wealthy port by the second half of the 19th century. The Mayagüez cemetery was one of the best sites found throughout the island to describe the social aspect of the city, explaining the abundance of magnificent tombs, which provide beauty and splendor to the main funerary street. The plots at the inner quadrants were given to poorer citizens. For those members of the lower classes who wished to escape the mass grave, there were masonry niches in the walls around the outer edge of the cemetery. In many cases the poor could only afford a hole in the ground, with no sign of monument above it. Sometimes the grave would be marked with a simple wooden cross. These graves were soon forgotten and lost within the cemetery. In the Mayagüez cemetery some poor citizens buried their dead outside the walls of the precinct, often attaching humble monuments to them. This reflects a side of society which could not accept the idea of disappearing from history and being forgotten forever.

In the Mayagüez cemetery, the municipal architect was in charge of approving any mausoleum, and assigning the plots to owners. This explains the unity of style found in the older parts of the cemetery, as well as the clear social-hierarchical organization.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Areco y Torres, D. (1889). Recopilación de disposiciones oficiales [Collection of official dispositions]. Mayagüez: Imprenta Areco Hijo
- Archivo General de Puerto Rico. [Puerto Rico's General Archives]. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Unpublished raw data. Unless otherwise specified it refers to the records of the Public Works Department of the Municipalities of Puerto Rico.
- Cruz Cassé, M. (1987). Funerary Architecture and the Preservation of Cemeteries in Puerto Rico. Gainesville, Florida: School of Architecture, University of Florida. Unpublished manuscript.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Cemetery of Mayagüez

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 5.34 acres

UTM References

A
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

North Altitude 18° 10' 00" x West Long 67° 07' 30" See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Mayagüez Cemetery is shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map entitled "Mensura Cementerio Viejo".

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entrance gateway as well as all the graves that have historically been part of the Cemetery and that maintain historic integrity. The northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the site are established by the plastered, brick-masonry wall, which surround the precinct. The western boundary of the site is set by the Post Street's sidewalk.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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city or town San Juan

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

The last mayor repairs done to the cemetery were carried between 1912 and 1913. During these years the concrete pavement of the main street and its transversals were done. A new sewer was also built to improve conditions inside the precinct. It is believed that during those works the wall separating the catholic cemetery from the non-catholic was demolished.

In general, the Mayagüez cemetery has a clear organization of bigger tombs placed along the major central and secondary axes. The rest of the tombs, then, fill out the grid.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

The cemetery of Mayagüez is one of the most elegantly and carefully designed cemeteries on the Island. It stands today as it was built during 1876. A great example of Mayagüez Neoclassical Style, it is still in use today by its citizens. The cemetery exhibits perhaps, the greatest variety of tomb typology found in Puerto Rico. It has grown in a very organized way and its tombs seem to be placed according to the pattern established by law.

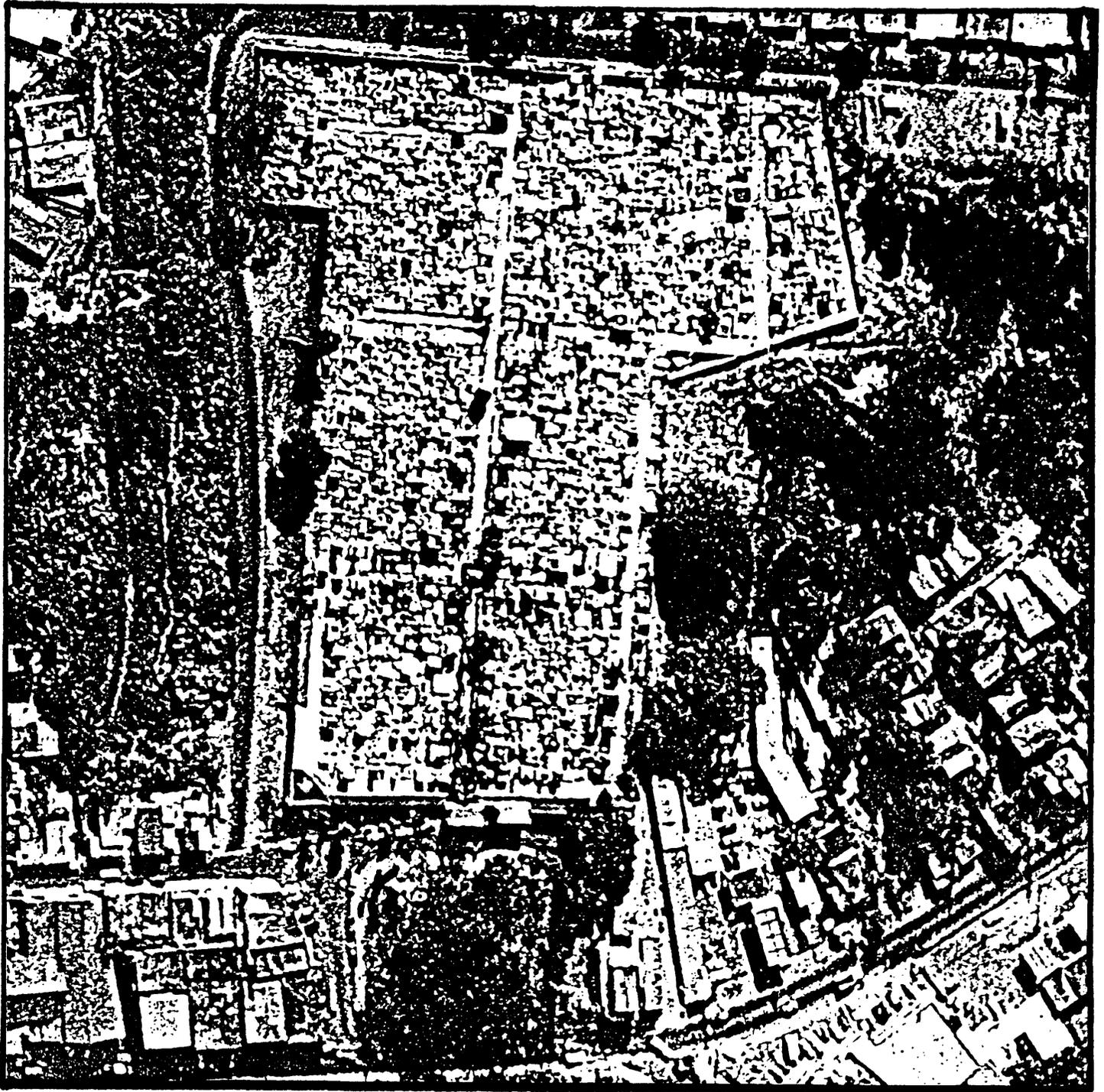
Many outstanding families and illustrious Puerto Ricans have been buried here. Among the most prominent are: the Basora Family, del Morán Family, Bravo Family, Ramírez de Arellano Fam., Tolosa Fam., Freire Nadal Fam., Brunet Fam., Berrocal y Sánchez Fam., Graniela-Seda-Carlo Fam., Bermúdez Fam., Diego García Fam., and others. Members of these families contributed considerably to the growth and development of Mayagüez and the western section of the island culturally, socially, economically and politically.

No information has been found regarding the previous cemetery. Interviews with people from Mayagüez lead to the conclusion that the ancient cemetery was demolished some time after the new one was officially founded in 1877. Dates on some of the tombs indicate that they were removed from the Old Cemetery and placed in this new one soon after it was built. The earliest tomb found is of D. Juan Bautista Cristy, dating back to 1850.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____



AERIAL VIEW

APPROXIMATE SCALE: 1:1,200



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001247

Date Listed: 8/25/88

Cementerio Municipal de Mayaguez
Property Name

Mayaguez
County

PR
State

Cemeteries in Puerto Rico, 1804-1920
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Amy Santiago

Signature of the Keeper

8/88

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Each of the elements noted as contributing resources must be catalogued individually to be counted in the classification section. Therefore, the count for this property should include 2 contributing buildings, no non-contributing buildings, 1 contributing site (the cemetery grounds), no non-contributing sites, 5 contributing structures (1 entrance gate, 1 staircase, and 3 sets of catacombs and wall niches, and no non-contributing structures. For the purposes of this nomination at this time there are no contributing or non-contributing objects.

Discussed and concurred in by the Puerto Rico SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)