

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: La Plata Community Center

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

Architecture of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA), 19325-1943

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Road 173, Km. 1.5

City or town: Aibonito State: PR County: La Plata

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,



I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

 Carlos A. Rubio Cancela	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	
Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____	_____
Signature of commenting official:	Date
_____	_____
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

James Gabbert
Signature of the Keeper

10.4.2021
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL / civic

GOVERNMENT / post office

Current Functions

SOCIAL / civic

GOVERNMENT / post office

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The La Plata Community Center started operations on November, 1937. It is a small single-story reinforced concrete building with flat roof designed as a gathering place for the community. It stands on a small mound at road 173, Km. 1.5 in the La Plata ward of the municipality of Aibonito. The building's most significant architectural features are a tripartite organization showcasing a simplified Art Deco style that follows the visual language of the version typically defined as PWA Moderne. Most noteworthy on the façade are four classicist fluted pilasters. These rest on a central volume, two at each side of an angled arch opening with an iron gate which serves as the main entrance. In addition, two lower attached volumes flank this central "pavilion" at either side; both have independent entrances. The building's main space is a multifunctional area with two simplified Art Deco zig-zag arches. These stylize the structural system's vocabulary becoming character defining features. An addition on the southwest elevation seems to be an old intervention (most probably around 50 years or more). The original wooden windows and doors were replaced by counterparts in aluminum. Furthermore, the original polished concrete floors are covered with vinyl tiles and security bars have been added to most windows on the outside. All these interventions, however, may be reversed.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Narrative Description

The La Plata Community Center is located on an L shaped lot at Road 173, Km. 1.5 in the municipality of Aibonito –at the Island’s Central Mountain Range. The building occupies the eastern corner of the lot. To its side, on the southwestern portion of the lot, there is a public plaza and behind the building is a rectangular structure that houses the *Ángel “Coco” Camacho* athletic court [Figure 1]. Built in 1937, the Community Center is a small single-story, flat-roof building in reinforced concrete, designed as a multipurpose gathering place for the community.



[Figure 1]
site / 2020
The boundary shown in this image is an approximation.
image from Google Imagery and USGS

It showcases a simplified version of the Art Deco style often recognized by scholars as PWA Moderne. According to members of the community, the Municipal Government of Aibonito is in charge of the facilities. The building remains in use and operates a limited program of community services. Up until hurricane María (2017) the building housed a Head Start. This service, however, was discontinued after the storm, but the local Police Athletic League and the neighborhood association keep using the space. In addition, part of the building’s footage is dedicated to a Post Office; a federal service which the La Plata community requested and was granted around 1945.¹

The La Plata Community Center building is oriented on a southeast-northwest axis and stands on a small mound. The *Centro*’s higher emplacement is noticeable from the northeast side and when

¹ A. M. de Andino to H. Stolberg (August 8, 1945), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

facing its façade. There, the road's upward incline is extremely perceptible when compared against the imposed flat stability of the building. The original stone veneered retention walls remain as a physical boundary surrounding parts of the building **[Photo 2- Figure 2]**. Currently, in recognition of the ADA guidelines, access to the *Centro* is mainly by way of a series of ramps. In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s however, it was through short, yet bold, concrete stairways leading to each of the three defined doorways at the façade –one for each of the recognizable volumes **[refer Figure 2]**.

The PRRA's rural community centers were built to service the established homesteaders of rural rehabilitation and resettlement projects and their families. There, administrators organized a series of educational, athletic, recreational, and leisurely activities. Hence, the buildings were designed as gathering places planned according to specific objectives drawn by the PRRA. As such, spaces needed to be multifunctional in order to cater to the various user groups and activities offered. The program for the La Plata Community Center included a space that could be turned into an assembly hall – with a stage–, a library, four spaces for teaching workshops, and two offices. Outside, in addition, there was a recreational space with a playground.²



[Figure 2]
view from the east / 1956
photographers: David & Mary Groh
from: Mennonites Collection,
LMMF

On the southeast side, the building's façade showcases a tripartite symmetrical configuration that organizes three volumes along the elevation. Larger, taller, and slightly projecting forward, when compared with the two that flank it, the central rectangular volume emphasizes the hierarchical arrangement of the façade. It is the central portion of the façade that carries the ornamental references to the Art Deco style in the PWA Moderne version. They manifest particularly, through the four classicist fluted pilasters applied as graphic abstractions **[Photo 2]**.

² Plan y programa para la organización del centro comunal en La Plata (August 14, 1937), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

The pilasters finish with a beveled detail which seems an effort in *trompe l'oeil*, as a fabricated depth in perspective intended, most likely, to express the idea of monumentality. In addition, sunken panels with a rusticated texture at the top of the pilasters read as capitals **[Photo 3]**.

As simplified angled arch delineate a centralized opening which serves as the main entrance to the building. It includes as well, an iron security gate that is original to the property. Other elements composing the central portion of the facade are the three ample overhangs that cover the entrance and the two windows to either side of it. Initially, windows were of the traditional wooden jalousies type with glazed transoms. They, however, were replaced with the aluminum blade windows that we currently find. Two attached smaller volumes with independent entrances stand at both sides of the central block. They showcase no other ornamentation than a concrete door surround in relief and a beveled detail in place of a cornice. When the community center opened in 1937, they featured double batten doors with glazed panels and glazed transoms. Today, the doors are of the solid metal security type.

The differentiation between the volumes was most noticeable from the side elevations. Both the northeast and the southwest sides of the building mirrored each other originally. Currently, the contrast between the volumes is best perceived from the view facing the northeast **[Photo 4]**. The volume protruding used to house two small classrooms/workshops where, for instance, the homesteaders' wives and daughters could attend needle crafts' classes. The larger receding volume enclosed the main gathering space of the community center.

Usually called an assembly hall in official documents, this space, as mentioned, was multifunctional and could be adapted in order to host a variety of activities such as reading, playing board games, putting up plays, among others. Today, the windows remain in their original place but, as is often the case with the PRRA buildings, these have been replaced with aluminum louver windows. As the reader may infer, windows at this elevation were similar to those described before; that is to say, traditional jalousie's wood shutters. In addition, in order to efficiently let light into the space, for the portion corresponding to the assembly hall, the architect specified glazed panel windows localized just under the overhangs –or close to the ceiling if seen from the interior. Furthermore, continuous overhangs provided protection against solar rays to all the windows.

The southwest façade has been altered. Although there is no information available, it however, seems to be an old intervention probably more than fifty years old. The addition consists of an attached block that runs the length of the elevation from the back of the protruding lower side volume of the building. The addition, mimics the height of the extending 1937's portion while aligning its overhang to the original **[Photo 5]**. Yet, as can be gathered from a recent photo, the newer overhang is shallower **[Photo 6]**. This addition, however, did not get rid of the overhang from the larger, originally receding volume and, although the architectural drawings for the community center are yet to be found.

Finally, as may be observed in the historic photograph below, the building's central volume, which, as mentioned, housed the assembly hall as the main architectural space, had a blind rear

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

wall while the two secondary volumes to its side had two small windows of the type already described but which hung higher than their counterparts throughout the building. Currently, their footprint is only visible on the western side **[Photo 7]**. On the rear elevation's eastern side, the addition that was built as an attachment to the southwest elevation stops flush with the central volume's wall. Hence, the original recession-regression relationship between volumes has been lost.

It remains, however, at the opposite side. As can be seen, an aluminum door and double window were added. The door is there in order to comply with contemporary codes regulating the provision of emergency exists. It should also be noted that windows have iron security bars which are not original to the building.

Going around the property it becomes apparent that the community center is built over a concrete platform. Hence, to access the interior from the street one needs to first go over a short stairway which has been half covered by an access ramp **[Photo 8]**. Then, one more step over the entrance's threshold leads into a small lobby or distribution space. At first, two small offices located one in front of the other—for the social worker and the recreation director—could be reached from this entrance hall. Then, a zig-zag arched entryway with Art Deco flair led into the assembly hall. Today, the archway is only visible from the interior as it was walled up in order to enclose the space. A standard aluminum door is now the entrance **[Photo 9]**.

The main space is divided into three bays by two simplified slightly pointed zig-zag Art Deco arches **[Photo 9 and 10 and refer to Figure 4 in page 20]**. Arches similar to these are character defining features of many of the PRRA's rural buildings. However, as architectural elements, the ones at the La Plata Community Center are more sophisticated and refined than those in others PRRA associated buildings. Currently, towards the back of the space and to the left when standing at the entrance, there is a small cantina and storage area which occupy the attached addition at the south west elevation that was described before. Noticeably, the stage that once stood at the back of the room is no longer there. This was foreseeable since it was not a permanent feature of the space but wooden platform and backdrop. Historic photographs show, however, that it was still in place during the mid-1950s. Surprisingly, most of the moldings surrounding the perimeter of the space are preserved **[Photo 12]**.

Furthermore, the space for the former office at the right side of the entrance hallway belongs now to the La Plata Post Office which occupies the same side's smaller volume at the façade. It should be noted that when the Post Office started operations in the latter part of the 1940s, once the community service program had been liquidated by the PRRA, this federal service was housed at the opposing volume to the other side.

As addressed above, the community center included outside recreational spaces. At the back, for instance there was a boxing ring. On a flat area to the southwestern portion of the lot, the PRRA built a playground, planted trees, and placed benches for sitting and recreating. Today, the space is a public plaza. The playground and recreational spaces were regarded as fundamental services of the community center. The plaza, still conserves the recreational significance in association with

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

the community center as it assists to understand La Plata as a district within the municipality of Aibonito with particular roots and a recognizable identity.

The La Plata Community Center has operated as a service building for the neighborhood since its inauguration in 1937. It still remains a vital part of the community which the neighbors recognize as fundamental to the history of the *barrio* and the larger historic context of the Island in regards to its connection with the PRRA. Although the Aibonito municipality is the administrative body responsible for the building, the neighbors take care of it and they support the recognition of the community center as a patrimonial asset.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1937-1960

Significant Dates

1937

1943

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The La Plata Community Center, built in 1937, is a significant example of a social/civic service building established by the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) in connection to their rural and urban housing projects. The community center at La Plata was the only PRRA associated rural community center built in concrete. The PRRA was the federal agency established in 1935 under the Federal Emergency Relief Act in charge of overseeing the efforts to drive the economic and social reconstruction to the then island-colony, under the New Deal. The social and recreational services rendered at the La Plata Community Center supported the PRRA's rural rehabilitation and resettlement project in Puerto Rico's tobacco region. Social services at La Plata began in 1937 and continued under the PRRA until 1939, when funding for social services was cut. The community center was then lent to the Department of Education for a short period. Then, during World War II, due to further cuts in New Deal expenditures, the health and social services were transferred to the Mennonite Central Committee in 1943, under the Civilian Public Service afforded to religious objectors. The property meets National Register Criterion A for its connection with the colonial instrumentation of the New Deal as well as for its link to the Civilian Public Service of religious objectors that began humanitarian services during World War II in Puerto Rico. For its architectural significance, the property also meets Criterion C. Both criteria are justified at the state level.

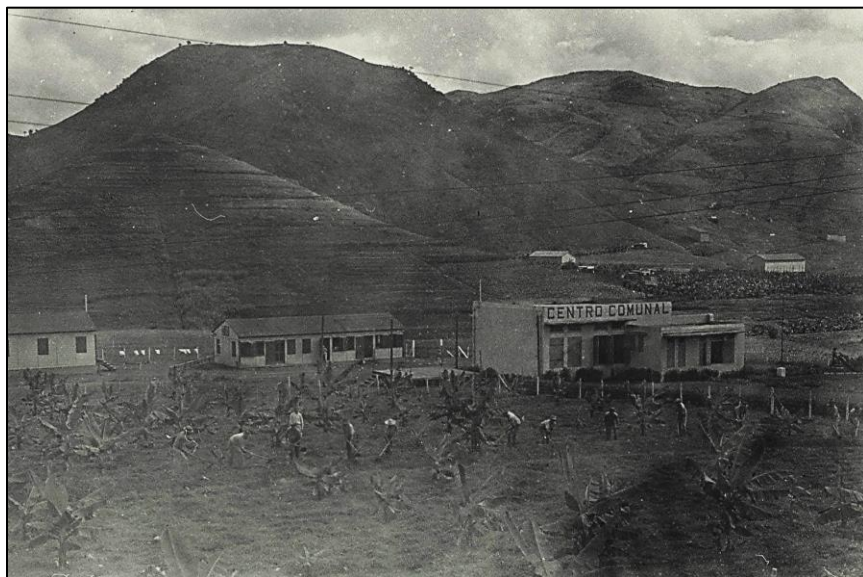
La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Social Services at the La Plata Agricultural Rehabilitation and Rural Resettlement Project

La Plata is located in the municipality of Aibonito, at the Central Mountain Range of Cayey. As part of the Rural Rehabilitation and Resettlement efforts, the PRRA established there the *La Plata Land Utilization Project*, after purchasing over 4,000 acres of lands property of the *American Suppliers and the Porto Rico Leaf Tobacco Company* in 1936.³ At La Plata, the PRRA developed one of its agricultural diversification and resettlement complexes. As outlined by the general objectives driven by the PRRA, the project was an effort in driving the comprehensive correction of the economic and social problems that had become endemic. According to the PRRA's General Administrator, these problems were culprit in rendering the progress of the colony an almost impossibility.⁴ Hence, at La Plata, the PRRA intended to show that a large tobacco plantation could be made self-sufficient through the application of modern and scientifically developed agricultural techniques such as proper land utilization, soil conservation, and crop diversification. Therefore, besides the cash-crop, vegetables and other minor crops were also cultivated in addition to the establishment of a modern poultry plant at its Central Service Farm.



[Figure 3]
south view / c. 1938
from: PRRA Collection,
PRDL

³ "Los edificios Universitarios que están siendo construidos por la PRRA. Forma en que progresan los proyectos de la PRRA," *El Mundo* (March 1, 1936). *Abstract of the Annual Report of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration for the Fiscal Year 1937-1938*, 6, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, Assistant Administrator – General Records, Annual Report (Abstract) 1937-1938, , Box 3, NARA-New York.

⁴ Ernest Gruening, "Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration," in Harold Ickes, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 318.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

Orchestrated around the idea of a rural village or “colonia center”, as discussed in the *Plan Chardón* (Chardón Report),⁵ the La Plata project consisted of several dependencies, the Central Service Farm⁶ being one of them. But, in addition to the agricultural technical support services catering to the 459 subsistence farms with houses,⁷ a vocational school, a medical dispensary, and a community center –which began operations in November 20, 1937– were also established to provide education, health, and social and recreational services to the homesteaders and their families. Ever since the colonial transfer, American authorities had recognized Puerto Rico’s wealth in agriculture. However, only six percent of local farmers were land owners. By the same token, one third of the Island’s agricultural lands were controlled by absentee corporations, such as *American Suppliers*.⁸ At the time, absentee ownership was considered by many on the Island one of the strongholds responsible for the continuous debilitation of the local economy.

As a countermeasure, the *Plan Chardón* outlined a path towards rehabilitation that encouraged the eradication of the agricultural monopoly that US and other foreign companies were taking advantage of and supported solutions aimed at reducing unemployment. Thus, one of the strategies operationalized by the PRRA was the establishment of a large number of small farms around supporting services allowing the forgotten *jíbaros* (country peasants)⁹ to become small land owners. In time, this would encourage, it was hoped, a more stable distribution of wealth that would eventually drive an increase in economic exchange. As mentioned, the grouping of a number of homesteads into an “agricultural colony” was addressed in the *Plan Chardón*.¹⁰ It, however, had been brought to light earlier in the study of Puerto Rico’s problems conducted by

⁵ In 1934, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed Puerto Rican intellectuals and public officials, Carlos Chardón (University of Puerto Rico’s Chancellor and former Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor), Rafael Fernández García (head of the Chemistry Department at the University of Puerto Rico) and Rafael Menéndez Ramos (Commissioner of Agriculture) to the *Puerto Rico Policy Commission*. The Commission was to prepare the strategic plan for the economic rehabilitation of the Island and present it to the newly established *Inter-Departmental Committee of the Economic Rehabilitation of Puerto Rico* –composed by Rexford Guy Tugwell (United States’ Subsecretary of Agriculture), Jacob Baker (Assistant Administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration), William Meyers (First Deputy Governor of the Farm Credit Administration and representative of the Treasury Department) with Committee Chairman, Oscar Chapman (Assistant Secretary of the Interior). The meetings of the Puerto Rico Policy Commissions were held in Washington between May and June, 1934 in order to keep at bay political intervention. The document produced by the Commission –commonly referred to as the Chardón Report or *Plan Chardón*, in Spanish– provided a comprehensive outline of ways to address the issues of unemployment and the historical economic distress of the Island.

⁶ The Central Service Farm provided the seeds for the cultivation of the individual subsistence farms given to the homesteaders. This was a loan based service where the small farmers returned the amount of seed they had received once they harvested their crops. Central Service Farms provided as well technical assistance to farmers and supplied seedlings, chicks, and livestock. They also loaned homesteaders barn space and farming equipment. PRRA, *Abstract of the Annual Report of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration for the Fiscal Year 1937-1938*, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, Assistant Administrator – General Records, Annual Report (Abstract) 1937-1938, Box 3, NARA-New York.

⁷ Resume of the Work Accomplished by the PRRA During the Fiscal Year 1939-1940 (Governor’s Report), 2, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, Assistant Administrator – General Records, Annual Report 1940, Box 3, NARA-New York.

⁸ PRRA, Sección de Informes, “La PRRA explica a qué obedece su compra de tierras. Dice que depende de la cooperación de los grandes terratenientes,” *El Mundo* (February 28, 1936).

⁹ A *jíbaro* is a Puerto Rican country peasant.

¹⁰ Carlos Chardón and others, *Report of the Puerto Rico Policy Commission*, June 1934, 17.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

the Brookings Institution in 1928. In their findings, the team of researchers, led by Victor S. Clark, underscored the following:

Any real improvement of the very grave condition of the rural community will ultimately involve grouping the rural population in some sort of village communities –each with a school in their center, with some means of organization. Some prospect of permanence – Something in the nature of a home in a group neighborhood instead of a hut at another mans will or an isolated mountainside.¹¹

Social services became a fundamental piece for the consolidation of the rural communities the PRRA was organizing. Furthermore, the lessons inculcated there were supposed to render proper Americanized colonial-subjects with “new habits and attitudes.”¹² As such, community centers were envisioned as gathering places built to train in social disciplines as the PRRA believed rural workers and their families, like those of La Plata, needed a supervised process of adaptation to their new living conditions.¹³ That explains why community centers were often recognized by the PRRA officials as an educational and social project aimed at improving the “physical, moral, social, and spiritual aspects of their members at the same time as it [strengthened] their family relations.”¹⁴ According to official records, to be able to have the most successful outcome, community centers needed to feel to the neighbors living within the rural rehabilitation projects like second homes. For that reason, as well as because of the opportunity to showcase democratic ideals, the PRRA’s rural community centers, of which the one standing at La Plata is the only remaining example that we know of, was open to all regardless of political or religious affiliations, race, or class.

Originally part of the PRRA’s Health Division established in 1936, the Social Service Section was in charge of the community centers. Again, the aim of the social workers was directed towards “social readjustment”¹⁵ in the form of the prevention or correction of social dysfunctions supposedly usual within the Puerto Rican poor: “delinquency, crime, craziness, nervous illnesses, and some organic and other great social problems including, among others, unstable family relations, illegitimate children, and many others.”¹⁶ As expressed in annual reports,

[t]he job of the community center in this aspect of our work was to determine and provide those group experiences which assured as many fundamental values as possible –fair play, tolerance, ingenuity, cooperation, etc.– and to fit group activities as much as necessary to individual needs. Wide spread unemployment in our rural areas forced on many unwillingly idle persons, full days of

¹¹ Victor S. Clark and others, *Porto Rico and Its Problems* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1930) 36.

¹² The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. Rafaela Espino to Luis E. Santiago (November 26, 1937), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

¹³ PRRA Information Section, “La PRRA inauguró recientemente en la zona de La Plata un centro comunal que estará al servicio de los pequeños agricultores, *El Mundo* (January 12, 1938).

¹⁴ The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. Plan y programa para la organización del centro comunal en La Plata, Aibonito (August 14, 1937) 1, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

¹⁵ PRRA, Community Centers Section, Biennial Report (July 1938-June 1940) iv, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 3, NARA-New York.

¹⁶ The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. *Ibid*, 4.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

leisure. The routine of every day labor, on the other hand, made it advisable for the employed to counteract the monotony of everyday life with leisure time activities affording variety, freedom, and creative outlets, which are so important to individual growth and happiness.¹⁷

In addition, in agreement with the colonial mindset, the section's chief, Rafaela Espino, underlined that community centers, besides attacking social evils, were even beneficial in terms of cost: "[h]aving a community center will never be excessive if taken into account that it costs around three dollars per person a year to keep it, while the Insular Government spends an average of \$225 annually in a boy in a reformatory or a man in prison."¹⁸ As she explained, boredom was nothing if not a waste of energy that could lead to destructive behavior such as alcoholism or gambling, social problems both of them that were reportedly present within the PRRA's community of homesteaders, as they were categorically recognized by the PRRA's authorities as *other*.¹⁹ As such, "ethical standards of conduct and obedience to the law" plus "teamwork activities" and ways to live a "healthful family life" were part of the instructional and disciplinary objectives of the community centers.²⁰



[Figure 4]
assembly hall / 1938
PRRA Collection, AACUPR

At La Plata, the community center [see **Figure 4**] hosted a library; organized plays, movies, and lectures; supported activities such as reading and playing board games; taught needle point and sewing classes for the women and the girls and held workshops for men and boys. Its personnel organized as well, several clubs and athletic leagues. A full time social worker was in charge of

¹⁷ PRRA, Community Centers Section, Biennial Report (July 1938-June 1940) 10-11, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 3, NARA-New York.

¹⁸ The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. PRRA, Social Work Section, Health Division, "El trabajo social de la PRRA y los campos de Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (January 16, 1938).

¹⁹ Memorandum from Rafaela Espino to Miles H. Fairbank (May 20, 1938) 3, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation, Community Centers – General Memoranda, 1 of 2, Box 3, NARA-New York.

²⁰ Justus G. Holsinger, *Serving Rural Puerto Rico: A History of Eight Years of Service by the Mennonite Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1952) 12.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

studying the needs of the community in order to develop group and individual activities that fostered cooperation, understanding among neighbors, conflict resolution, happiness, and wellbeing. Another important aspect touched upon by some of the activities organized by the community center was to address the lack of attention that had been given to the most vulnerable of the colonial subject-citizens. Connecting directly with President Roosevelt's acknowledgement of the *forgotten man*, these centers for the mountain *jibaros* –the local forgotten men– intended to correct (or so was the narrative) all the years of lack of concern by the Federal Government the Island had endured. Contradictorily, this realization was expressed in one of the last reports prepared for the section, just before its official liquidation:

The situation confronting us is the result of long years of inertia and neglect. Our people have reluctantly accepted the limitation of the environment. Years of existence on incomes far below what is needed for health and decency have helped to create in them an apathetic attitude and a purely pessimistic philosophy.

The job of the community center has been to try to break down this philosophy by supporting all efforts to join the community force in working a social, educational, and economic program, capable of lifting their standards of self-maintenance. To achieve these ends, individual attitudes have to be changed and community responsibility aroused. The method we have followed in an interchange of the practices of social case work, social group work, and social action. The program has tried to facilitate direct and individual attention, as well as to satisfy, as far as possible, the needs of individuals for companionship, varied interests, and personal expression.²¹

As can be seen, the discourse is one not far from the modern understanding of entrepreneurship directed at self-sufficiency. In one hand, the PRRA wanted to foster in rural families the pursuit of a better life by encouraging them to exponentiate their productive capacity.²² On the other hand, what the report does not say, but is evident in other records from 1898 onward –such as ones discussed previously–, is the desire of the Federal Government to invest as little as possible in the maintenance of the colony.

Despite all arguments in favor of their continuation, due to budgetary cuts, the program for the operation of community centers was severely reduced in 1939. In June 30 of that year all urban community centers closed, leaving operational only the rural programs. These began to be funded by the PRRA's Rural Rehabilitation Section by way of the agency's Revolving Fund. To try to save the program as much as possible, in 1940 the PRRA entered into an agreement with the Insular Department of Education. Through this agreement, the PRRA loaned the community centers to the latter in support of a program of social work and vocational education. By 1942, however, no services were being provided at most of the lent facilities, including La Plata.²³ The agreement, therefore, was not renewed for the fiscal year 1943. Fearing the complete discontinuation of health and social services in the established rural communities and with no other insular agencies able to

²¹ PRRA, Community Centers Section, Biennial Report (July 1938-June 1940), iv-v, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 3, NARA-New York.

²² PRRA, Sección de Trabajo Social, División de Salud, "El trabajo social de la PRRA y los campos de Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (January 16, 1938).

²³ Guillermo Esteves to H.A. Martin (March 30, 1942), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation, Community Centers, Agreement of the Operation of Community Centers (Department of Education), Box 2, NARA-New York.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

take on the work, the PRRA opened the door to the conscientious objectors from the United States' pacifists churches who were against serving in World War II. At La Plata, the Mennonite Central Committee found, in 1943, the "opportunity to assist in the constructive elevation of human personality rather than in the exploitation of human resources for nationalistic or materialistic gain."²⁴ At the same time, for them, it would be a chance, such as the PRRA's New Deal program had supposedly been, to correct "the terrible defects of empire."²⁵ At La Plata, the Mennonite's missionaries sponsored a social service and health program similar to the one ran by the PRRA previous to the budget cuts of 1939. From 1943 until 1951 a total of 146 Mennonite missionaries from 17 different states served at La Plata.²⁶ It should be noted that the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities purchased the La Plata project from the PRRA on February 1948. This purchase included, of course, the community center.

At the community center, the Mennonites organized clubs, taught English and crafts (such as sewing), and began a recreational program. They reopened, as well, the community library.²⁷ In addition, there were classes offered in nutrition and agriculture. Furthermore, in 1948 the program introduced a kindergarten for preschool children [see **Figure 5**] that ran from the community center three days a week, for two hours each day.²⁸ The children of La Plata were taught proper habits and cleanliness among other subjects. Although their work was not directly religious, the Mennonite missionaries sought to achieve the inculcation of Christian values through the health and social work done at La Plata and other PRRA related communities. However, despite the altruistic discourse, the missionaries were not except from the usual colonial nuances expressed as supposed defects:



[Figure 5]
kindergarten class and teacher / c. 1948
Wayne Swartendruber, photographer
from: Mennonites Collection, LMMF

²⁴ Holsinger, 13.

²⁵ Ibid, 15.

²⁶ Ibid, 58.

²⁷ Ibid, 21.

²⁸ Ibid, 122.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

As we descended the mountain we got a clear view of the hundreds of little houses that dotted the mountainside and valley, inhabited by the most beautiful of God's creation –human souls. The view was very beautiful, and yet quite ugly in all its beauty, with the poverty, disease, and sin so common within so many of the little homes. That afternoon's experiences gave us new vision, new determination, and renewed energy to throw ourselves into a service whose aim was to bring a better way of life to the people of the La Plata Valley.²⁹

Eight years into their service, in fact, the Mennonites celebrated how drinking, gambling, dancing, and fighting –that is to say, sin– had subsided since their intervention in the community. This proved that the objectives of developing “desirable principles of human conduct among the young people of the community...and ability to live work, and play together...”³⁰ had been mostly met. In other words, “it [was] no longer a question whether or not a Christian group doing religious work in a densely settled community must assume a certain responsibility in providing clean, wholesome, and profitable recreation for the young people. The experiences of the past...have shown that a well-organized and supervised recreational program is an essential part of the total Mennonite program.”³¹

Clearly, the PRRA's and the Mennonite's community center programs at La Plata were directed at correcting or eliminating the negative traits possessed by the so-called passive, lazy, apathic, individualistic, unorganized, uneducated, and superstitious *jibaros*. In that regard, the sinister traits commonly given by colonial administrators to the *bohíos* and rural shacks were passed along to their inhabitants. But once living in hygienic and orderly homesteads, rules had to be followed. Hence, discipline became –both for the PRRA and the Mennonites– one of the foremost objectives of the community centers. That is why the elevated location of the La Plata Community Center and its almost panoptic quality is not surprising. The reengineering of these subjects into true American citizens required civic mindfulness, a cooperative attitude, and social betterment. Acknowledgement for these aims is found in the 1939 *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* where, then regional PRRA Administrator, Miles Fairbank, pointed out the social workers' responsibility to create ideal citizens through the logics of what can be described as a *trickle-up* effect. That is to say, by improving “the individual's habits; through those habits to improve the family; and through the family to improve the community.”³² Thus, as may be argued, community programs seemed to serve as well, the bigger picture of colonial integration.

Community Center Architecture

The PRRA's key enterprise on the Island was rural rehabilitation and crop diversification. However, even within a programmatic scope focused on agriculture, as in the mainland, public works were one of the cornerstones of the work encompassed by the New Deal. In Puerto Rico, like in the US, public works were seen as an instrument to employ the jobless, but in the Island

²⁹ Ibid, 29.

³⁰ Ibid, 130.

³¹ Ibid, 131.

³² Miles H. Fairbank, “Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration,” in Harold L. Ickes, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 363.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

they were also recognized as a possible avenue for economic development and industrial diversification. Hence, as Jason Scott Smith argues, looking to provide relief and recovery from the economic constraints of the time, public works programs were critical for moving forward New Deal policies.³³ As such, it is not farfetched to think that the history of the New Deal is tightly linked to that of its architecture.

Following New Deal requirements, during the construction phase, the PRRA's community centers provided much needed jobs for the most vulnerable. As were the majority of the PRRA's sponsored buildings, community centers were erected mostly by unskilled labor. Thus, the objectives of work relief and economic recovery, although not truly accomplished in the end, certainly were tackled to the limited capacity the budget allowed. In order to reduce costs and perform efficiently, particularly for the rural projects, the PRRA typically designed reproducible model buildings. However, the La Plata Community Center is an exception. At La Plata, the PRRA built the only rural community center in reinforced concrete as a singular object. The building showcases as well, one of the best examples of the PWA Moderne still standing on the Island [see **Figures 6 and 7**]. Plus, in terms of function, the resource is one of the first iterations of the *community center* as building type produced in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, to date, there are no architectural drawings to speak of for the great majority of the buildings associated to the PRRA, including the La Plata Community Center. In fact, the complete public works building catalogue for the 1930s (including state, municipal, and educational facilities) –with very few exceptions– seems to be missing from the Puerto Rico General Archives. By the same token, there are almost no architectural drawings nor photographs in Record Group 323 (Records of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration) at the National Archives and Records Administration. Hence, we don't know which one of the architects employed by the PRRA is the actual author of the building.

Before the advent of the New Deal, Puerto Ricans gathered in clubs, associations, and/or societies. These, however, were exclusive to the higher social classes. In contrast, community centers were designed for the working masses with, as discussed above, specific layers of educational, social, and recreational objectives. The New Deal introduced the community center as a new building type in Puerto Rico to house the social and recreational services for the urban and rural housing programs the New Deal was establishing on the Island. Thus, initially, these buildings were associated to the PRRA's slum clearance or rural rehabilitation and resettlement efforts. As such, it is important to note that the community centers at the *La Plata Rural Rehabilitation Project* and the urban slum eradication exercise commonly known as *El Falansterio*, were the two given most media exposure when promoting the PRRA's social service and recreation programs. Therefore, we should consider them models.

³³ See Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



[Figure 6]
community center / 1938
PRRA Collection, PRDL

According to official records, of the 19 rural buildings operating in 1940, the only one that was built in reinforced concrete for the expressed purpose of serving as a community center was located at La Plata.³⁴ Following the opening of the community center at *El Falansterio*, the La Plata Community Center belongs to the second wave of like facilities established in rural areas by the PRRA.³⁵ All other rural community centers built specifically for such social and recreational purposes were wood frame buildings for most of which the wood from dismantled Reconstruction Camps had been recycled.³⁶

³⁴ The list includes a kiosk structure used as community center at the Dominguito project (Arecibo), squatter houses reused for projects Columbia (Maunabo) and Concordia (Arroyo), and a two-room schoolhouse at Guavate (Cayey). Description and Location of Community Center Buildings of the PRRA to Be Operated by the Department of Education (July 31, 1940), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers, Agreement of the Operation of Community Centers (Department of Education) Box 2, NARA-New York.

³⁵ Other community centers that opened on the same date as the one at La Plata were those for Saint Just in Trujillo Alto, Pitihaya in Arroyo, and Bordalesa in Maunabo.

³⁶ For information on the Reconstruction Camps refer to the multiple property nomination *The Architecture of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA)*, 42-45.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



[Figure 7]
southwest view / 1938
PRRA Collection, AACUPR

Due to its materiality and modern style, in terms of its presence within the rural landscape, the La Plata Community Center most certainly read in the 1930s as an urban object seemingly transposed into the countryside. Its monumental and classicist vocabulary, even if an abstraction, was an abrupt occupation of the rural setting. In that sense, the building was a rhetorical instrument that confronted the rural shacks and even, the tobacco sheds that were dispersed in the area. Bear in mind that the La Plata project was one of the prototypes for what were considered “semiurban and semirural villages” with “all the progress of the city and all the advantages of the country... where an efficient and enterprising humanity [was taking] grip around the Central Service Farm, the vocational school, the medical center, and the community center.”³⁷ Given this description, the La Plata project was intended to function as a hybrid. Furthermore, taking as benchmark the discourse rendered by the PRRA’s authorities regarding rural dwellings, it is easy to recognize a more ambitious projection that aimed at eventually redesigning the Island’s hinterlands in order to provide visible proof (to the external gaze) of Puerto Rico’s efficiency, culture, and civilization.³⁸ Like the PRRA’s rural houses, dispensaries, and schools, the community center at La Plata was an eloquent sign for the incipient Island-wide modernization outlined by the New Deal through the PRRA. By way of its architectural style, even if disjointed from time and space, the La Plata Community Center made modernization visible. But, despite its *newness*, the community center at La Plata belonged to a Puerto Rico that was not, yet. The building was modern, Puerto Rico –least of all its countryside– was not.

According to Joseph Maresca, the version of the Art Deco defined as PWA Moderne was developed as an American style. The New Deal architects that devised the vocabulary not only saw public buildings as vehicles for employment but also, as visual expressions of the “forward

³⁷ The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. Antonio Cruz Nieves, “¿Qué eran y qué han hecho los campamentos de reconstrucción? Diferencias entre los CCC y Campamentos de la PRRA,” *El Mundo* (September 11, 1938).

³⁸ The original text is in Spanish. The translation is by the author. “La PRRA instala en granjas a 477 familias,” *El Mundo* (April 5, 1937).

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

looking and hopeful” ideals of the New Deal. The PWA Moderne was, in fact, a style of modernization as opposed to modernity. The main characteristics of the style, which are obviously present at the La Plata Community Center, are the abstract quality, the emphasis on volume and mass, the strictly ordered façade, the use of minimal geometry, and the adaptation of classicist elements. In addition, the La Plata Community Center shares with other New Deal public works on the mainland, a compact monumentality and a “muscularity” that intended to make the building imposing yet inviting, at the same time as it assisted in starting to grow the “sense of pride in the local community.”³⁹

Notwithstanding, in more than one sense, as a style imported/imposed into the rural scenario of La Plata, the PWA Moderne may be acknowledged as a performative rendition. That is to say, through its function and its style, the community center seems to have been an opportunity to exhibit the best face of the colonial system then in operation.⁴⁰ As such, we should not dismiss the fact that this was a building supposed to project and put into motion the ideas of a New Deal that was colonial. Hence, as an architecture produced under colonial policies, as Tony Fry observes, we may say that the La Plata Community Center speaks about “an ontological design regime, a historical trajectory that was futural; [but] established conditions that effectively directed a form of the future and as such still have discernible traces in the present.”⁴¹ Those traces that remain still at La Plata support its future nomination as a district.

Going back to the community center, even if the building can be taken as an expression of authority, some forms of colonial negotiation peak through as the PWA Moderne was adapted to the local environment and tropicalized. So, the “American idiom”⁴² was translated to fit with the Island’s climate and culture. Hence, the use of traditional batten louver shutters that allowed for the control of air flow and light; the design of high ceilings that deflected the heat upward, the introduction of ample overhangs to protect against solar rays, and the placing of glazed windows near the ceiling to effectively let light into the larger hall are all ways in which foreign ideas were somewhat deflected in order to device a hybrid architecture, as is often the case in colonial settings such as 1930s Puerto Rico. The La Plata Community Center showcases then, an (*Other*) PWA Moderne made to be place specific.

One final point of significance has to do with the configuration of an architecture designed under the premise of disaster prevention or risk management. It is common to read justifications about the choice of construction materials for buildings projected by the PRRA in terms of their capacity to withstand hurricanes and earthquakes. After the hurricanes of 1928 (San Felipe) and 1932 (San Ciprián) and because of the lingering memory of the 1918 San Fermín earthquake, the PRRA’s officials preferred to build in reinforced concrete. Wood frame construction responded mainly to budgetary constraints or to buildings intended to function in a temporary capacity. Although

³⁹ See Joseph Maresca, *WPA Buildings: Architecture and the Art of the New Deal* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2016) 8-53.

⁴⁰ The idea borrows from Eduardo Lalo’s definition of the *performative*. See Eduardo Lalo. *Los países invisibles* (San Juan: Editorial Tal Cual, 2008) 129.

⁴¹ Tony Fry, “Design for/by ‘The Global South,’” *Design Philosophy Papers*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2017): 27.

⁴² Maresca, 28. Calling it Depression Modern, Martin Greif argues in favor of a style born during the New Deal which, according to him, embodied “a national style that was uniquely American.” See Martin Greif, *Depression Modern: The Thirties in America* (New York: Universe Books) 17.

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

documents about the La Plata Community Center do not discuss disasters, it seems clear that hurricanes, primarily, were a consideration taken into advisement at decision making moments about design. In fact, testimonies from the Mennonite service account for the use of the community center as a storm shelter on September 13, 1945:

Within a matter of minutes each worker was at his assigned task in the evacuation machine. A careful plan for evacuation had been previously worked out and unit members were assigned to a particular crew. The total assignment was to move all hospital supplies, records, and patients to the community center, where they would be secure from the storm. [...] After three hours of heavy lifting all was in preparation for the approaching storm. Following a warm breakfast, word was received from a radio report that the hurricane would probably by-pass the island. [...] At least one other time the procedure of evacuation was carried out when an alert was given of an approaching storm.⁴³

Although not the second time alluded to in the cited account, we know that during hurricane Betsy (known in Puerto Rico as Santa Clara) –a storm that made landfall on August 1956– the community center provided shelter, again, to the hospital’s patients. The community center, being in concrete, was better equipped to withstand the storm than the hospital, which occupied one of the former wood frame tobacco sheds. In fact, photographs from the Mennonites’ archives show the community center temporarily sheltering the sick members of the community [**Figures 8 and 9**]. This is significant, because the acknowledgement of the sheltering capacities of concrete buildings during disasters was part of the considerations taken on by the PRRA at a time when the local government had no official emergency protocols in place.

This nomination highlights the La Plata Community Center’s significance at the state level. The building’s connection to a process of rural modernization were amply discussed above. We should not dismiss, however, the building as a manifestation and an instrument of the colonial relationship between United States and Puerto Rico. Usually, narratives about architecture tend to underline what buildings bring to their environments. However, in the case of rural projects sponsored by the PRRA, the erasing intentions are equally important within a broader reading of these buildings’ historic-social context.

⁴³ Holsinger, 172.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



[Figure 8]
shelter during hurricane Betsy / 1956
Dr. Lavern Gerig, photographer
from: Mennonites Collection, LMMF



[Figure 9]
entrance from the assembly hall / 1956
Dr. Lavern Gerig, photographer
from: Mennonites Collection, LMMF

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Primary Sources from RG 323 (Records of the PRRA) at NARA-New York:

Andino, A. M. *Letter to H. Stolberg* (August 8, 1945), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

Espino, Rafaela. Letter to Luis E. Santiago (November 26, 1937), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

----- Memorandum to Miles H. Fairbank (May 20, 1938) 3, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation, Community Centers – General Memoranda, 1 of 2, Box 3, NARA-New York.

Esteves, Guillermo. Letter to H.A. Martin (March 30, 1942), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation, Community Centers, Agreement of the Operation of Community Centers (Department of Education), Box 2, NARA-New York.

Hirshberg, Henry A. *Memorandum to Dr. Padover* (January 26, 1943), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Washington Office, Colonial Policy, Box 5, NARA-New York.

PRRA. *Plan y programa para la organización del centro comunal en La Plata* (August 14, 1937), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 2, NARA-New York.

----- *Abstract of the Annual Report of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration for the Fiscal Year 1937-1938*, 6, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, Assistant Administrator – General Records, Annual Report (Abstract) 1937-1938, Box 3, NARA-New York.

----- Community Centers Section, Biennial Report (July 1938-June 1940) iv, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers in Different Towns, Box 3, NARA-New York.

----- Resume of the Work Accomplished by the PRRA During the Fiscal Year 1939-1940 (Governor's Report), 2, RG 323, Records of the PRRA, Assistant Administrator – General Records, Annual Report 1940, Box 3, NARA-New York.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

----- Description and Location of Community Center Buildings of the PRRA to Be Operated by the Department of Education (July 31, 1940), RG 323, Records of the PRRA, General Records – Rural Rehabilitation Division, Community Centers, Agreement of the Operation of Community Centers (Department of Education) Box 2, NARA-New York.

Newspaper Sources by Date:

PRRA, Sección de Informes, “La PRRA explica a qué obedece su compra de tierras. Dice que depende de la cooperación de los grandes terratenientes,” *El Mundo* (February 28, 1936).

----- “La PRRA instala en granjas a 477 familias,” *El Mundo* (April 5, 1937).

----- “La PRRA inauguró recientemente en la zona de La Plata un centro comunal que estará al servicio de los pequeños agricultores,” *El Mundo* (January 12, 1938).

PRRA, Sección de Trabajo Social, División de Salud, “El trabajo social de la PRRA y los campos de Puerto Rico,” *El Mundo* (January 16, 1938).

General Bibliography:

Cruz Nieves, Antonio. “¿Qué eran y qué han hecho los campamentos de reconstrucción? Diferencias entre los CCC y Campamentos de la PRRA,” *El Mundo* (September 11, 1938).

Rodríguez, Luz Marie. Architecture of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA), 1935-1943, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination (2018).

Collections in Archives and Libraries:

Architecture and Construction Archives at the University of Puerto Rico (AACUPR): PRRA Collection

Puerto Rican Collection, University of Puerto Rico (through ISSU): various digitized publications

Puerto Rican Digital Library, University of Puerto Rico (PRDL): PRRA Collection

Luis Muñoz Marín Foundation Archive (LMMF): PRRA Collection, Mennonite Collection

Puerto Rico General Archives: Photographic Archives

Hathi Trust: Various digitized publications.

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Internet Archive: Various digitized publications

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Historic Archive of Luis Muñoz Marín Foundation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 0.2310 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

Latitude: 18.154493

Longitude: -66.233428

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

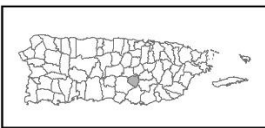
1. Zone: 19	Easting: 792719	Northing: 2009476
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)


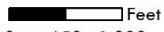
Property is on rural lot **274-000-007-72** from Puerto Rico Digital Cadastre Map / CRIM 2014

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



La Plata Community Center
Aibonito, Puerto Rico
19Q E792719 N2009476 UTM

1:1,20000 
 Feet
0 650 1,300

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



La Plata Community Center
Aibonito, Puerto Rico
19Q E792719 N2009476 UTM

1:1,800
0 50 100 Feet
N

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the building historically associated with the La Plata Community Center.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Luz Marie Rodríguez López, Ph.D.
organization: N/A
street & number: 5144 Copper Creek Dr.
city or town: Dublin state: OH zip code: 43016
e-mail luzmarier@gmail.com
telephone: 787.375.3535
date: August 28, 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Photographs



Photo 1



Photo 2

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



Photo 3



Photo 4

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



Photo 5



Photo 6

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

La Plata Community Center
Name of Property

Aibonito, PR
County and State



Photo 10



Photo 11

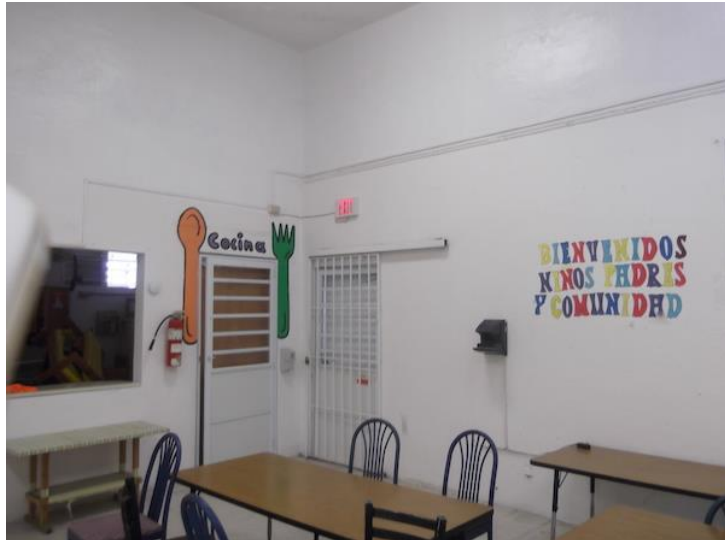


Photo 12

La Plata Community Center

Name of Property

Aibonito, PR

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: Street view of the La Plata Community Center looking at the southern and eastern elevations

1 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: View of south elevation or main façade facing northwest.

2 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: Detail of pilaster and overhangs in south elevation facing northeast.

3 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: View of eastern elevation facing southwest.

4 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: View of western elevation facing north.

5 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

La Plata Community Center

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Name of Property

County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Ada Bobonis
Date Photographed: 2020
Description of view: Details of overhangs in western elevation facing north.
6 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center
City or Vicinity: Aibonito
County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Ada Bobonis
Date Photographed: 2020
Description of view: View of eastern and northern elevation facing southwest.
7 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center
City or Vicinity: Aibonito
County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez
Date Photographed: March 3, 2020
Description of view: Detail of steps and ramp in southern elevation facing northeast.
8 of 12.

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center
City or Vicinity: Aibonito
County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez
Date Photographed: March 3, 2020
Description of view: Interior view of entrance of the southern elevation facing southeast.
9 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center
City or Vicinity: Aibonito
County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez
Date Photographed: March 3, 2020
Description of view: Interior details of the zig-zag arches of the central volume facing northwest.
10 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center
City or Vicinity: Aibonito
County: La Plata State: PR
Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez
Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

La Plata Community Center

Aibonito, PR
County and State

Name of Property

Description of view: Interior details of the zig-zag arches of the central volume facing northeast.

11 of 12

Name of Property: La Plata Community Center

City or Vicinity: Aibonito

County: La Plata

State: PR

Photographer: Luz Marie Rodríguez

Date Photographed: March 3, 2020

Description of view: Detail of the molding.

12 of 12

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.