

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Núm. 23 de Sabana Grande

other names/site number Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

2. Location

street & number PR Road 121, corner Street 1

not for publication

city or town Sabana Grande

vicinity

state Puerto Rico code PR county Sabana Grande code 121 zip code _____

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

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela
Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 13000014

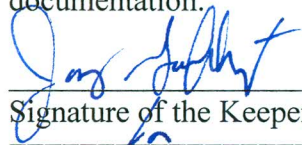
Date Listed: 2/13/2013

Property Name: Cementerio Masonico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Num. 23 de Sabana Grande
(Cemeteries in Puerto Rico, 1804 - 1920 MPS)

County: Sabana Grande Municipality

State: PR

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.



Signature of the Keeper

2/13/2013

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5: Resource Count

The nomination is hereby amended to change the Resource Count to **1 Contributing Site**.

The numerous graves, crypts, and mausolea that comprise the cemetery do not warrant counting as individual resources. The significance of the property lies in its creation and use by the Masonic order, not in the individual burial units.

The Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION: National Register property file; Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

Name of Property

County and State

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:)

[Handwritten Signature]

2/13/2013

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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	
0	0	buildings
0	0	district
1	0	site
120	0	structure
0	0	object
121	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Cemeteries in Puerto Rico , 1804-1920.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

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)

Neoclassical

Modern

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: _____

walls: Stone/Bricks/Masonry/ Concrete

roof: _____

other: _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Núm. 23 de Sabana Grande** is located in the Santana ward, in the municipality of Sabana Grande, town in the southwest of Puerto Rico. The cemetery occupies a lot of one thousand fifty six (1056) square meters, approximately 0.79 kilometers (0.49 miles) west from Sabana Grande's traditional urban center, along PR Road # 121, corner of local Road # 1. Officially built in the 1890s, but in use since 1886, the property is one of a kind, as it is the oldest private cemetery in the island, and the only cemetery in Puerto Rico and Latin America exclusively for Freemasons. As such, the cemetery represents a significant chain of historic events.

Narrative Description

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Núm. 23 de Sabana Grande** occupies a rectangular lot in the southeast corner of the nineteenth century civil cemetery. The masonic graveyard, a legally private parcel, is separated from the civil cemetery by a seven-and-a-half feet high and eighteen inches wide stone, brick and masonry wall. A five steps elevated walkway guides to the only entrance gate, which faces south towards PR Road 121, that provides access to the masonic cemetery. The present gateway is a 1969 construction consisting of a pair of iron grided gates (original gates from the old gateway), attached to two concrete columns. An iron grided arch crowns the columns with the words "*Cementerio Masónico*" and the year "1886". At the center of the metal arch there are three well known freemason's symbols: the compass (pointing downward), the square (pointing upward) and the letter G at the center of the triangle formed by the two previous figures (**Fig. 1**).

Pass the gateway, the central alley, which runs northerly towards the cemetery's rear, provides the main access to the entire lot. The avenues of approach to the tombs respond more to an irregular arrangement than to an organized plan. The walkways among the graves are mainly aligned along a north-south axis, while most of the graves are aligned in an east-to-west direction. All the walkways are concrete paved.

There are one hundred and twenty built graves, including markers and individual tombs, two mausoleums and one family crypt. The individual grave, containing only one interment, is predominant; but the family plot, containing two or more interments from the same family is also frequent. Most of the graves are properly identified, although some of the markers are illegible, due to deterioration. Although the graves arrangement do not seem to follow a distinguishable placement, most of the tombs are in straight rows, perpendicular to the pathways.

The two dominating typologies within the burial structures are the tomb and the marker. The cenotaph has no representation in the cemetery. Within the tombs category, the platform tombs predominate. There are three vaults, two mausoleums and one family crypt. The vaults have multiple tiers of individual burial of brick or stone slab construction, arranged to form a single block (**Fig. 2**). The two mausoleums (#1 / #63 on Site Plan), one on each side of the entrance gateway, have accessible interior space containing burial vaults. None of the mausoleums have a chapel, the usual practice in this mortuary buildings, as chapels are a religious element not consonant with the masonic perspective. The family crypt belongs to the Negrón López Family (#51 on Site Plan, **Fig. 3**).

As the interments chronology extends between the 1880s and late twentieth century, the Neoclassical and Modern styles are the main architectural languages within the cemetery landscape. Compare to others cemeteries included in the National Register from Puerto Rico, the architectural and artistic production at the **Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande** is humble, sober and restrained, but rich on masonic symbology.

It's precisely the freemason 's symbology and the membership into the society, the common factor among every single grave in the cemetery, regardless of construction date. Since it's official construction in the 1890s, the cemetery has served as the final resting place exclusively for Freemasons and their immediate family: parents, wives, sons and daughters. As such, all types of masonic symbols, from the most recognizable ones to very subtle masonic signs are found among the funerary structures.

Common freemasons' symbols are easily identifiable among many graves. The square and the compass are probably the oldest and most universal symbols of masonry, being the combination of the compass and the square, with the letter *G*, the most predominant symbols at the **Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande (Fig 4)**. The letter *G*, held to be sacred by the Pythagoreans, it was the initial letter of the Earth Goddess *Ge* or *Gaia*. It also stand for Geometry, or more recent in masonic symbology, for God.

Other symbols are more subtlety exhibited. The application of the triangle, one of the most significant symbols of freemasonry, is depicted in many ways. It can be found as part of the neoclassical frontispiece used on some of the oldest tombs and also in some of the Modern style more recent graves. One very curious and unique 1925 grave depicts the triangle in a very uncommon way: the usual geometric triangle with the very masonic all-seeing-eye in the center, at

the head of the tomb, and another triangle formed by the arrangement of three little hearts, with the all-seeing-eye at the center also (# 67, Site Plan, **Fig. 5**).

The columns, especially the broken columns, are also a strong freemason's symbol. The broken column is actually the symbol used in the oldest tomb in the cemetery, the 1886 José María Cos' tomb (# 104, Site Plan, **Fig. 6**). The column is adorned with acacia leaves, another freemason's symbol very common throughout the cemetery. Columns are also present in some graves that recreate a frontispiece as part of the tombs' front façade. The tombs built in such a manner, do resemble the neoclassic style found in most of the freemasons lodges. As such, those graves represent individual lodges at a small scale.

Although Freemasonry does not have a sacred masonic book, they do recognize the ones belonging to monotheist religions. The "Book of the Law" constitutes an indispensable landmark in every lodge.¹ Most Western Freemasonry groups use the King James version of the Christian Bible as one of the "lights" or main elements in the ritualistic meetings at the lodges. A bible is always open during the reunions. Sculptures representing open bibles are found in some of the graves at the **Cementerio Masónico**. Other known mason symbols found in the cemetery are obelisks marking the four-corner-boundary of a grave site, united by metal chains. Both, the obelisks and the chain, do have a special meaning among Freemason's tradition.

Freemasonry is well endowed with symbols, things familiar that could convey a hidden meaning only to those initiated. A very unusual set of those types of symbols are found at the northwest corner of the cemetery: three small masonry blocks aligned one behind the other. The frontal block is roughly shaped, the second is rectangular in form and the third block is an unfinished pyramid (**Fig. 7**). As conceived by the freemasons, the rough stone represents the newly arrival into the freemason teachings. Through hard work, study and perseverance, the initiated takes away his roughness, becoming better and more perfect, like a cubic stone. The unfinished pyramid is seen as emblematic of the continuous, but unfinished efforts in this mortal life to reach perfection. Members of the *Resp. Logia Igualdad # 23*, owners and custodians of the **Cementerio Masónico**, consider the blocks are marking the 1890s spot where the cemetery's consecration ceremony took place.

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Núm. 23 de Sabana Grande** retains all aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Humble in its funerary architecture, the resource its rich in its system of freemason symbols. Its existence, unique in the island and Latin America, represents a trend of significant social events.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Period of Significance

1886-1898

Significant Dates

1886

1890

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Resp. Logia Igualdad #23

¹ Albert G. Mackey. *A Text Book of Masonic Jurisprudence*. New York: Robert Macoy, 1859.

Period of Significance (justification)

In spite of the continuous and exclusive use of the property as a Freemason's cemetery, the period of significance indicated, 1886-1898, was selected using two particular events. The first, 1886, was the date of the first interment at the *Cementerio Masónico*. The second, 1898, correspond to the Cuban Spanish American War and the transfer of Puerto Rico to the US jurisdiction. As the separation of State and Church was shortly imposed after that, Freemasonry in Puerto Rico was no longer a persecuted activity either by the government or the church officials.

Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary)

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad #23** is eligible under Criteria Consideration D as the property derives its significance from association with historic events.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande** is of statewide significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the property is associated with a very important pattern of social and political events that took place during the nineteenth century in Puerto Rico. The construction of the cemetery came out as a result of the struggles among the Spanish political establishment and its ideological partner, the Catholic Church, against the presence of the philosophical brotherhood commonly known as the Freemasons.

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

As defined by the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), freemasonry is one of the world oldest and largest non-religious, non-political, fraternal and charitable organizations. It teaches self-knowledge through participation in a progression of ceremonies. Its members are taught its principles (moral lessons and self-knowledge) by a series of rituals dramas, which follow ancient forms and use stonemasons' customs and tools as allegorical guides.²

In 1717, speculative masonry, in its modern version, was born in the United Kingdom with the establishment of the Grand Lodge of England. It soon extended to other European countries. France became the second bastion of the speculative masonry in Europe. Initially, the francmasonry was influence by the Grand Lodge of England, but by mid eighteenth century France had a significant immigration from Scotland; a region that had developed its own freemasonry pattern. The freemasonry in France will eventually become the resulting combination of both the English and Scottish trend. This can be observed, for example, in the use of Londoners' ritualistic style combined

² United Grand Lodge of England. Booklet, *Are you thinking of becoming a Freemason?* UGLE, 2009.

with the gradation of the Scottish Rite.³ Because of the human transplant to America, freemasons groups with its variations quickly appeared on those territories associated with England and France.

Compared with other European countries, freemasonry had a late start in Spain due to the opposition of the Royal Power and the constraints imposed by the Catholic Church. The freemasonry philosophical system didn't have a foothold in Spain until early nineteenth century.⁴ It is no surprise then that the freemasonry organizations will also have a late appearance in the Spaniards colonies, and former colonies, in America. In Mexico they were introduced in 1806; 1821, in Argentina; 1840, in Chile; 1845, in the Dominican Republic; 1857, in Ecuador.⁵

As it can be documented, the first masonic ideas in Puerto Rico arrived through Haiti. The Haitian Revolution of the late 1790s brought a significant French immigration into the island, establishing their new residences mostly in the western part of Puerto Rico. Even so the masonic ideas were being promulgated by people like the Haitian Nicolas Sanson Panel since his arrival in 1802,⁶ it's not until 1811, that a lodge called "*La Restauración*" was properly established in the city of Mayaguez.⁷ Freemasons took advantage of the so called "liberal" government created in Spain as result of the Napoleonic invasion and the imposition of Joseph Bonaparte as King of Spain (1808-1813), who was, just like his brother the Emperor, a well-known freemason.⁸

Ironically, the slow development of the freemasonry in Spain promoted the establishment in Puerto Rico of masonic associations coming from various regions. The island became a free territory open to any Grand Orient. The two most prominent influences came from Hispaniola (sponsored by the French Grand Orient) and the United States, via an autonomous Cuban freemasonry. The Cuban line-of-influence was going to be crucial eventually in the formation of a creole freemasonry. Between 1808 and 1814, lodges were founded in the cities of Mayaguez, San German, Ponce and San Juan.

Ferdinand VII's return to Spain's throne in 1814 brought back the royal absolutism and the end of liberal institutions, including the freemason's lodges, in the mainland and its colonies. The movement will gain strength again during the liberal triennium of 1820-1823. During the ten-year government of the ultra-conservative Miguel de la Torre (1825-1835) all masonic lodges in the island were closed-down. The expansion and contraction of the freemasonry in Puerto Rico depended on Spain's political climate and the local authorities' attitudes.

The movement in Puerto Rico took-off again during the late 1850s and early 1860s. By that time, the local freemasonry became intrinsically linked to the insurgency of liberal postures that ranged from requesting participation within Spain's political structure, to autonomy, to the total independence of the island. The re-birth of the movement was definitely associated with the influence and support given by the freemasons of the Dominican Republic and Cuba. Supported by the first, two important lodges were formed in the island: *Unión Germana Número 8* in San German in 1866, and *Yaguez Número 10* in 1867, in Mayaguez. In *Unión Germana* will be initiated significant fellows

³ The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) has as one of its landmark that the ancient Masonry consists of three degrees: Entered apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. The Scottish Rite has a gradation of thirty-three degrees. The freemasonry in Puerto Rico is mostly aligned with UGLE's traditional practice.

⁴ J. A. Ferrer Benimeli, *La masonería en la España del siglo XIX*. Vol. I y II. Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1987.

⁵ ACACIA. Órgano oficial de la Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico. Enero-Marzo, 1979, 7.

⁶ ACACIA. Verano 2001, 5.

⁷ ACACIA. Octubre-Diciembre, 1978, 9.

⁸ Michael Ross, *The Reluctant King. Joseph Bonaparte, King of the two Sicilies and Spain*. New York: Mason Charter, 1977, 34-35.

like Dr. Ramon Emeterio Betances, Segundo Ruiz Belvis and Santiago Rosendo Palmer. The last one is referred to as “*the Father of the Puerto Rican Freemasonry*”.

The Cuban support was particularly significant in this phase of the Puerto Rican Freemasonry’s development. The Grand Lodge of Colón (Cuba), formed in 1859, took the initiative of promoting freemasonry in Puerto Rico. In spite of the formation in the island of various lodges sponsored by Spain’s two Grand Lodges, Puerto Rico had not been as yet properly claimed by any Grand Orient. The lodges sponsored from Spain in the island were dominated by the *Peninsulares*, the Spanish-born economic and political elite.⁹ The Cuban freemasonry efforts were mostly directed toward the Creole-class. In 1875, in the Universal Convene of the Supreme Councils of the Scottish Rites in Switzerland, the Grand Lodge of Colón was given the masonic jurisdiction over the Spanish West Indies, placing Puerto Rico under the Cuban freemasonry jurisprudence. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the decision was strongly opposed by Spain’s grand lodges and the Spanish oriented local masonic associations.

In 1878, the Cuban Grand Lodge designated Santiago R. Palmer to be its local representative with the title of District Grand Master. Palmer’s designation was a watershed on the local freemasonry history. The young lawyer, born in San German in 1844, and who received the title of Master Mason at the early age of 22, imparted an enormous impetus in the spreading of the freemasonry doctrine. Within a few years, the local freemasonry was strong enough to request the masonic independence from the Grand Lodge of Cuba. The first step on that direction was taken through the establishment of the *Gran Logia Provincial* in 1884, a quasi-autonomous body that operated under the Cuban Lodge. On June 4, 1885, under Palmer’s direction, named Provincial Grand Master, and with fifteen lodges operating under the *Logia Provincial*, a request was sent to the Grand Lodge of Cuba asking for the complete declaration of masonic autonomy for the island. On July 12, 1885, the request was approved. On September 20, 1885, at an assembly conducted at the Adelpia Lodge in Mayaguez, the *Gran Logia Soberana de Libres y Aceptados Masones de Puerto Rico* was officially established, with Santiago R. Palmer as its Grand Master.¹⁰ Almost immediately, the Gran Logia Soberana received the official recognition from the Grand Lodges of Portugal, Italy, Peru, Mexico, Rumania, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Australia. The masonic autonomy arrived thirteen years before the political autonomy.

The establishment of the freemasonry in Puerto Rico, up to the formation of the *Gran Logia Soberana* and until the very end of the nineteenth century, was a struggling process. During the first five decades, the formation of freemason’s lodges was a significant but sporadic event, where most lodges were formed by foreigners exiled in the island. After mid-century, however, the freemasonry movement took a strong foothold among the native middle class, intellectuals and professionals. The philosophical postures of a brotherhood based on the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity resulted extremely appealing to a Creole class searching for its placed in a social structure politically and economically dominated by outsiders. It’s no surprise then that eminent men like Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances, Segundo Ruiz Belvis, Santiago Palmer, José Julián Acosta, Román Baldorioty de Castro, Eugenio María de Hostos, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, Luis Muñoz Rivera, José Celso

⁹ José Antonio Ayala, *La masonería de obediencia española en Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX*. Murcia, España: Universidad de Murcia, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1991.

¹⁰ ACACIA, Verano 2001, 10-13.

Barbosa, among many others, associated with the fight against slavery and the attainment of political autonomy or independence for Puerto Rico, were militant Freemasons.

The dominating powers (the State and the Church), however, visualized freemasonry as a dangerous practice. Its questioning of authority, the opposition to predetermined dogmas and unquestionable truths, and its secrecy, if translated to the political and ideological arena, were seen as a troublesome arsenal that needed it to be suppressed. The State and Church officials in the island joined forces against the Freemasons. During the entire nineteenth century, the government used its legal prerogatives to persecute, suppress or limit the spread of the brotherhood.

In the last three decades of the 19th century, from the legal standpoint, two different phases could be distinguished. From the early 1870s until 1888, the freemasonry movement in the island operated mostly clandestinely, but its existence was an open secret, in general, tolerated by the State. In certain instances during those years, however, the government assumed a Police State attitude towards the local Freemasons, especially in moments perceived as politically dangerous for the government. That was the case, for example, during 1868 *Grito de Lares*, an unsuccessful armed attempt to gain independence from Spain. In those particular occasions, the government's persecution was directed toward the individuals seen as associated with the incidents. But because many of these men of liberal ideas were Freemasons, the government acted harshly against the lodges, especially on those whose members were mostly Creoles. In many occasions, the repression was directly enforced against the brotherhood. A good example was the 1874 incident where Santiago R. Palmer and other thirteen masons were arrested in the town of Sabana Grande while conducting an initiation. Jail sentences were imposed upon the group, ranging from two to four years in prison. The brotherhood, through their international network, applied pressure in Spain, finally getting the "brothers" released, but not before spending eighteen months in jail. One of the fellows died while in prison.¹¹

Eighteen eighty seven (1887) was probably the worst year for the local freemasons. That infamous year it's remembered in Puerto Rico's history as the "Terrible Year". In 1887, as part of a long chain of events, the liberal sector in the island, mostly composed of Creoles pushing for political autonomy, came under a hard repression by the government. Romualdo Palacios, governor at the time, ordered the arrest of hundreds of sympathizers. Teachers, workers, businessmen, writers, farmers, lawyers, doctors, and many others, were subjected to diverse and cruel ways of tortured.¹² Creole freemasons were among the many persecuted. The lodges were ordered to close-down and no Masonry activities were allowed to be conducted as their "secret meetings" were considered a perfect occasion to conspire against the government.

After 1888, the conditions for the freemasons change substantially, as the brotherhood could claim protection under a new law. On June 13, 1888, the Law to Exercise the Free Association Right was extended to Puerto Rico.¹³ To be covered, the lodges had to submit to the central government their official name, the lodge's location, name of all members and under what "obedience" was the lodge subscribed. Up until 1895, the freemason practice, always under the government's suspicion and surveillance, had mostly a normal development. However, from 1895 up to 1898, the

¹¹ ACACIA. Octubre-Noviembre 1978, 11.

¹² Antonio S. Pedreira, *El Terrible Año del 87*, 3ª edición. San Juan: Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1948, 57.

¹³ José Antonio Ayala, *La masonería de obediencia española en Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX*, 207-213.

brotherhood came again under duress as the Cuba's War of Independence gained momentum and the Creole freemasonry once again was seen as supporter of possible anti-government activity.¹⁴

While the relations between the local Freemasons and the government oscillated between open repression and tolerance, the ones between the brotherhood and the Catholic Church were always antagonistic. Since its initial appearance in Spain, freemasonry was in continuous struggle with catholic officials, as the Church demonized its postures from the very beginning. The Church prohibited its members from being Freemasons with its *In Eminentis Apostulatus* in 1738. Since then, the Vatican has issued several papal bulls banning membership of Catholics from Freemasonry under threat of excommunication.

Prior to the US policy of separation of state and religion, the Catholic Church was the ideological ally of the Spanish government in Puerto Rico. As such, the Freemasons in the island were subjected to a persecution not found in other parts of Protestant America. Every papal bull emitted by the Vatican was strongly enforced. There are many documented instances, during the nineteenth century, that express how the church officials perceived the brotherhood. In 1884, for example, it was published by the *Boletín Mercantil*, the government newspaper, an article about a conflict created by a Freemason publication called *Adelphia*, from Mayaguez. An article in *Adelphia* mentioned the recent death of Pedro Melendez. It was indicated that Melendez was a priest and also a Freemason. The *Boletín Mercantil* responded that the article in *Adelphia* was an abominable lie and that the comment about Melendez was "*a despicable and infamous stigma that would have offended the Priest while alive as it does upon his death*".¹⁵ Certain comments of the official article about this particular incident provide an insight in the Church postures. The article made reference to all the papal bulls against the brotherhood since 1738 Clement XII's *In Eminentis*. It emphasized also, the impossibility of Melendez being a Freemason as the priest received all the final sacraments, which would it be unthinkable if Melendez was a member of the secret organization. Another proof, according to the *Boletín*, that Melendez was not part of the condemned brotherhood, was the "*he was set to rest as the Church stipulates, and his body was properly placed in the Campo-Santo*".¹⁶

The Church's control over religious/cultural/social practices was a very strong and deterministic discourse. The power of denying sacraments such as baptism, marriage, communion, and many others, was a powerful tool in the Church's arsenal. The nineteenth century social structure and its way of perceiving and understanding the world was still intrinsically attach to the religious order. Among the many ideological weapons used by the Church against the Freemasons was the possibility of denying all the sacraments mentioned above, including the proper burial in the Catholic/Civil cemetery. The establishment of the **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande** responded, in its immediate sense, to this form of Church's repression and control, and it also reflects all the social and political events previously stated.

¹⁴ Archivo General Militar de Madrid. Capitanía General de Puerto Rico. As soon as the Cuban war started, the local central government continuously advised the municipalities to be on the look-out for political activities conducted by the secrets societies, especially those disguised as masonic meetings.

¹⁵ Boletín Mercantil. *Una escaramuza con la masonería en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1884, 11-13.

¹⁶ Ibid, 12.

Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande

Located in the southwest of Puerto Rico, Sabana Grande is a small town founded in 1813. During most part of the nineteenth century, the town's economy was based on agriculture and cattle raising. By 1875, the municipality was divided in six wards, with *Barrio Pueblo* containing the most prominent families, as usual.¹⁷ Two years later, in 1878, it was indicated in Manuel Ubeda y Delgado's work, that the main public constructions in town were the Church (rebuilt in 1853), a wooden house for City Hall, and a wooden house for the Guardia Civil and the cemetery, built in masonry.¹⁸ In an 1888-92 sketch done by the Spanish Corps of Military Engineers, the cemetery appears to be located at today's location.¹⁹

An incident that took place in the civil cemetery gave birth to the creation of the *Cementerio Masónico*. Even before the official establishment of the *Logia Igualdad* in 1888, the brotherhood was very active among the Sabana Grande's educated groups.²⁰ As previously mentioned, it was in Sabana Grande in 1874, that Santiago R. Palmer and another thirteen Masons were arrested during an initiation. In 1886, a Freemason from the neighbor city of Ponce, José Maria Cos, died while in a casual visit in Sabana Grande. As travel among the towns was a difficult enterprise, it was decided by the brotherhood to provide the proper burial at the civil cemetery. As the funeral procession approached the *Camposanto*, the entrance was closed and guarded by members of the *Guardia Civil*, who were under orders not to allow the burial of the known Freemason or the celebration of any masonic ceremony within the premises. The Masons stood their ground and argued the legal and moral rights of the interment, but with no success. As the day went by, looking for a way out of the humiliating situation, the group finally approached another local Freemason, Manuel Serra Soto, who was the owner of a lot adjacent to the civil cemetery. With the Guardia Civil soldiers gone, and with Soto's permission, José Maria Cos' remains were put to rest on a nocturnal ceremony outside the civil cemetery, with the Freemason's burial ritual, at the very same spot of its present location.

By early 1890, with the sad episode still fresh in their minds, the Logia Igualdad #23 formalized the acquisition from Serra Soto of the entire parcel where today's *Cementerio Masónico* is located for the amount of twenty dollars, with the intention of establishing a necropolis exclusively for Freemasons. The brotherhood took advantage of a Royal Decree of 1872, which allowed for the construction of private cemeteries. According to the decree, the private cemeteries could be built next to the civil or Catholic cemeteries. The new burial site had to be fenced and have its own entrance.²¹

A 1957 article in ACACIA indicates that the parcel was acquired by *Logia Igualdad* on April 16, 1890.²² However, the completion of the payments to buy the piece of land from Manuel Serra Soto was recorded on the Notarial Protocols of a lawyer in the town of Yauco on January 15, 1890.²³ Due

¹⁷ Luis R. Negrón Hernández, *Sabana Grande: Notas para su historia*. San Juan, 1986, 27.

¹⁸ Manuel Ubeda y Delgado, *Isla de Puerto Rico, Estudio histórico, geográfico y estadístico de la misma*.

¹⁹ Aníbal Sepúlveda Rivera, *Puerto Rico Urbano. Atlas histórico de la ciudad puertorriqueña*, vol. III. Carimar, 2004, 328.

²⁰ Prior to the official establishment of Logia Igualdad #23, Sabana Grande's Freemasons were affiliated to a lodge in San German, *Logia Tercera Prudencia Num. 28*, founded in 1871, under the sponsorship of the Grand Lodge of Colón (Cuba).

²¹ Marta Cruz-Casse, *Funerary architecture and the preservation of cemeteries in Puerto Rico*. Thesis presented to the University of Florida as part for the Degree of Master of Architecture. University of Florida, 1987, 43.

²² ACACIA, Enero-Marzo, 1957, 22-27.

²³ Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Fondo: Protocolos Notariales. Serie: Ponce. Pueblo: Yauco. Escribano: Juan Zacarías Rodríguez. Caja: 2689. Año: 1890. The inscription certifies that all payments due to Manuel Serra y Soto have been completed. Santiago Rodríguez and Silvio Damiani, founding members of Logia Igualdad #23, represented the lodge in the legal recording.

to lack of funds, the parcel of the *Cementerio Masónico* was initially fenced with barbed wire. The stone, brick and masonry walls that surround the cemetery today were built between 1897-1898.²⁴ The original entrance consisted of a neoclassic frontispiece, with the wording “Cementerio Masónico 1886” in the arched entrance bay. This frontispiece, unfortunately, was replaced in a 1969 intervention, keeping the grilled iron gates from the original construction.

The legal name assigned to the property was **Cementerio Masónico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande**. In 1933, a formal document was established to regulate the use of the property. Accordingly, only active and former members of the *Resp. Logia Igualdad #23* and their immediate families (parents, wives, siblings, sons and daughters), could be buried in the *Cementerio Masónico*. Also, other Freemasons that so desire, could be buried there with the written approval of the *Logia Igualdad’s* Master Mason and Secretary.

As far as it can be documented, through archives and field observation, there are no other nineteenth century graves at the cemetery besides José Marias Cos’ tomb. Initially, the parcel was reserved exclusively for the members of *Logia Igualdad #23*. As the founding members of Sabana Grande’s lodge seem to be of young age by the time of the official lodge’s formation (1888), their life expectancy transgressed the nineteenth century time-frame. A 1981 article in ACACIA, mentioned that the *Respetable Logia Igualdad Núm. 23* was formally constituted on April 9, 1888, by mason brothers Félix A. Tió, Calixto Carrera, Emilio Pietri, Silvio Damiani, Manuel Figueroa, Antonio Amill, Juan José Yunque, Santiago I. Rodríguez, Pedro Espada, Quiterio Velazco, Ángel Segarra, Ramón Almodóvar and José Castillo Mercado.²⁵ The tombs of three of the lodge founding members are found at the *Cementerio Masónico*: Silvio Damiani (d. 1905, #111 Site Plan, **Fig. 8**), Calixto Carrera (d.1919, #58, Site Plan, **Fig. 9**) and Emilio Pietri (d.1911). Pietri’s marker indicates that he was born in 1857, been thirty-one years old at the time of the lodge’s formation. Even though the other original members’ tombs have not been located in the cemetery, their surnames are present among the graves: Segarra, Almodóvar, Yunque, Velazco, Rodríguez, and Figueroa. These could be immediate families of the original founders. Curiously, José Castillo Mercado’s tomb, another founding member, is not located at the *Cementerio Masónico*, but at the adjoining Civil Cemetery. Mercado’s marker, located nearby the *Cementerio Masónico’s* western wall, identifies the Freemason as a 33 degree Master Mason, born in 1863 and dying in 1945, confirming the young age of the *Logia Igualdad #23’s* original members.

Even though the property derives its significance from the social and political events it represents, the *Cementerio Masónico* is the final resting place of Freemasons of individual importance like Vicente Soltero Pagán, the Luis Negrón Lopez Family crypt and Fidel Velez Velez’s tomb. Vicente Soltero Pagan was a well-known Sabana Grande’s politician. Luis Negrón Lopez was a founding member of the Popular Democratic Party, Signer of Puerto Rico’s Constitution, Senator and candidate for Governor of Puerto Rico in the 1968’s election. Fidel Velez Velez was one of the leaders of the 1897 *Intentona de Yauco*, the second and final major revolt against the Spanish rule in Puerto Rico.

²⁴ AGPR. Fondo: Obras Públicas. Serie: Obras Municipales, Sabana Grande. Caja 5. Legajo 84. In a 1903 document, the municipal authorities presented a request to *Logia Igualdad #23* to use the *Cementerio Masónico’s* western brick and masonry wall as the civil cemetery’s eastern boundary and offered to the Masons a monetary compensation for such use. The letter made a comment indicating that the walls of the masonic cemetery were finished by 1898.

²⁵ ACACIA, Abril-Junio, 1981, 4.

The **Cementerio Masónico de la Respetable Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande** is of statewide significance under Criterion A as the property represents a chain of social, religious and political events of great relevance to Puerto Rico's nineteenth century history. Born out of the Spanish government repression, the Catholic Church persecution and the preferential treatment towards the *Peninsulares* Freemasons, the property embodies and conveys the perseverance of the Creoles groups in affirming their social and philosophical project. As the Freemason's philosophy in Protestant USA didn't faced a context as antagonistic as it did in Puerto Rico, the character and representation of the resource within Puerto Rico and the United States cultural and social history made the *Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande* a very special and unique property.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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United Grand Lodge of England. Booklet, *Are you thinking of becoming a Freemason?* UGLE, 2009.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- _____
Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 19 Q 715144 2000147
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Lot of one thousand and fifty-six (1056) square meters, as recorded at the Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM), under number 335-036-121-04.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the masonic cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos/ Historian

organization Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office date December 13, 2012

street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737

city or town San Juan state PR

e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Entrance gate to the cemetery; looking north. 0001

1 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Exposed stone, brick and masonry of the cemetery's eastern wall; looking north. 0002

2 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Panoramic view; looking northwest. 0003

3 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Panoramic view; looking southeast. 0004

4 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Jose Maria Cos' tomb. The oldest tomb in the cemetery (1886) that started the eventual construction of the site exclusively for Freemasons; looking west. 0005

5 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: View of one of the two mausoleums that flank the cemetery's entrance; looking southwest. 0006

6 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: View of the cemetery's masonic consecration spot marked by the three symbolic stones; looking northwest. 0007

7 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: The 1905 Silvio Damiani's tomb, founder of the cemetery and the Lodge; looking west. 0008

8 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: A family vault with the 1919 internment of Emilio Pietri, one of the cemetery's and Lodge founder in the 1880s; looking west. 0009

9 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Detail of a tomb showing the classic masonic symbols; looking east. 0010

10 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Juan Llanes Santos

Date Photographed: June 13, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: View of a modern tomb (1960s), showing the classic masonic symbols; looking east.

11 of 12.

City or Vicinity: Sabana Grande

County: Sabana Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Respectable Logia Igualdad #23 de Sabana Grande

Date Photographed: N/A

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande's layout.

12 of 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 13000014

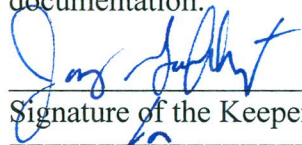
Date Listed: 2/13/2013

Property Name: Cementerio Masonico de la Resp. Logia Igualdad Num. 23 de Sabana Grande
(Cemeteries in Puerto Rico, 1804 - 1920 MPS)

County: Sabana Grande Municipality

State: PR

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.



Signature of the Keeper

2/13/2013

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5: Resource Count

The nomination is hereby amended to change the Resource Count to **1 Contributing Site**.

The numerous graves, crypts, and mausolea that comprise the cemetery do not warrant counting as individual resources. The significance of the property lies in its creation and use by the Masonic order, not in the individual burial units.

The Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION: National Register property file; Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

Name of Property

County and State

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:)

[Handwritten Signature]

2/13/2013

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	district
1	0	site
120	0	structure
0	0	object
121	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Cemeteries in Puerto Rico , 1804-1920.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/ cemetery

FUNERARY/ cemetery

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 1

Figures

Fig. 1. Cementerio Masónico's entrance.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 4

Fig. 4. Examples of the predominant symbol at the cemetery: the square, the compass and the letter G.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 5

Fig. 5. The 1925 grave with the triangles' variations.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 6

Fig. 6. José Maria Cos's 1886 grave, with the broken column and the acacia leaves.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 7

Fig. 7. The three masonry blocks, northwest corner.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 8

Page 8

Fig. 8. The 1905 Silvio Damiani's tomb.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 8

Page 9

Fig. 9. The 1919 Calixto Carrera's tomb.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 2

Fig. 2. An example of a vault type tomb.



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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7

Page 3

Fig. 3. The Negrón López Family's crypt.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

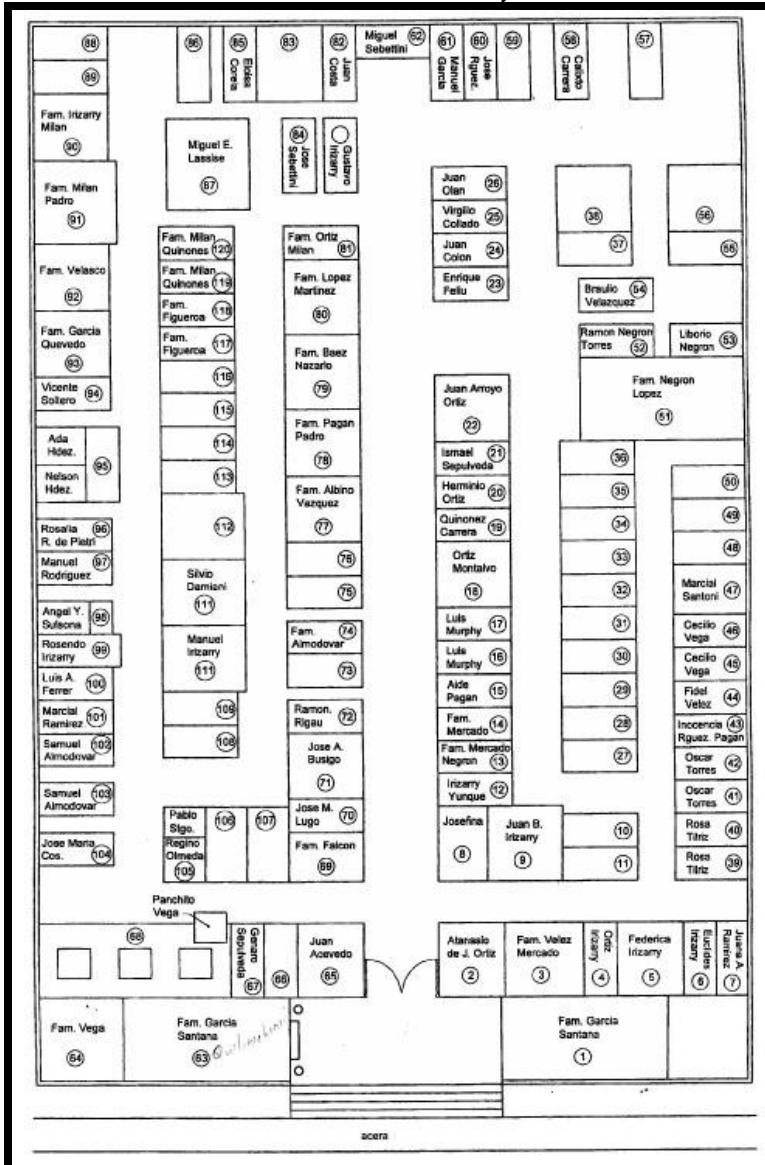
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 10

Page 10

10. Geographical Data

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande's Layout



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande

Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 10

Page 11

Easting - 715144 Northing- 2000147

Cementerio Masónico de Sabana Grande's boundaries are identified by a solid white outline. The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the cemetery as recorded at the Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM), under number 335-036-121-04.

