

PH0670090

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

MAY 4 1977

DATE ENTERED

NOV 18 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

**

HISTORIC El Capitolio de Puerto Rico

AND/OR COMMON same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Avenida Ponce de Leon and Avenida Muñoz Rivera

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

San Juan

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Puerto Rico

VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

STREET & NUMBER

Fortaleza

CITY, TOWN

San Juan

VICINITY OF

STATE
Puerto Rico

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registro de Propriedad

STREET & NUMBER

Municipio de San Juan

CITY, TOWN

San Juan

STATE
Puerto Rico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Inventario de Monumentos de Puerto Rico

DATE

1977

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña

CITY, TOWN

San Juan

STATE Puerto Rico

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure is one of the largest in Puerto Rico, covering over an acre of land. It is in the ~~Beaux~~ Arts style popular at the turn of the twentieth century, thus adopting neoclassical elements, yet it is not as 'pure' an example of revival when compared to certain other similar buildings on the island, mostly due to some of the eclectic ornamentation particularly on the exterior: the cornices have an 'arabesque' design which ~~tends to diminish~~ the austerity and clean lines usually linked to such design.

From the exterior the 3-story building presents an imposing array of corinthian and ~~doric~~ order columns. The corinthian columns are featured on both the south and north entrances as porticoes. The plan is rectangular except for the 2 porticoes which extend slightly, and the east and west sides are flanked by terraces with balustrades and urns.

The dome on pendentives is topped by a small 'lantern' tower. The building is of concrete and steel with a marble exterior facing. Interior materials include marble, plaster, mosaic. The entire building makes much use of marble, especially for floors, stairs, and balustrades.

Seven 'symbolic' arched doorways lead to the interior. These represent the original seven senatorial districts (prior to the current 8 and the status of the Commonwealth).

Entering the building and at the centre of the ground floor there is a large urn containing the Constitution of the Commonwealth. Along the sides of the stairway leading to the second floor there are murals. Columns of black veined marble frame the stairs. The plaster ceilings are in relief with polygonal and square ornament. The marble floors throughout have polychrome decorative motifs. The second floor which contains the the two legislative assembly halls also has as its distinguishing characteristic numerous columns. The meeting halls are columned with the semi-circular arrangement of seating for the senate and the representatives.

Directly under the dome and supporting the entablature are 16 pink marble columns. The pendentives are also decorated with panels and coffers of plaster. The semi-circular windows are framed in bronze. The dome has framing supporting it from the exterior as well as the interior. Between the vaults, covering the areas reaching to the columns, are four mosaic allegoric paintings decorate the pendentives. The mosaic work was done by an Italian firm, while the paintings were designed by renowned Puerto Rican artists:

Additional structures have been built to accommodate offices; these are not in an integrated style yet their scale does not interfere with the integrity of the Capitol. The only obvious intrusion or alteration are the modernizations, such as the addition of air conditioning equipment to the windows. The lower level is occupied by offices. Throughout the building are reliefs depicting historic events or ceremonies.

18 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1925-29	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Rafael Carmoega
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The idea for the project to build a Capitol for Puerto Rico originated with Luis Muñoz Rivera, an outstanding political leader and renowned patriot. At one time he served as Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, and he was the father of Luis Muñoz Marín the creator of the Commonwealth concept.

AS of 1907 steps were taken to fund such a project and some designs were even contemplated for the building by the Office of Public Works. The project for the erection of a Capitol achieved prime importance for the island, yet it took a number of years to be realized, until the inauguration in February of 1929, which was also the occasion for the first meeting of the Legislative Assembly. Rafael Carmoega, was a Puerto Rican architect educated at Cornell and recently employed by Public Works. He was assigned to design the building with the specific instruction that it be simple yet monumental to reflect its character and function. As a result, the Capitol is another example of neo-classical revival adopted for the use of Government buildings with the influence of the Roman Pantheon as the central element and the addition of the usual details such as columns and balustrades. It is also quite influenced by the design of the US Capitol. The dome was completed in 1961.

Numerous Puerto Rican painters were also invited to collaborate in the design of the interior paintings and mosaics. Among them were Rafael Rios Rey, Jose Oliver, Jorge Rechani and Rafael Tufiño, renowned for their imagery of the island.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Directorio, Camara de Representantes, 1973-76, Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico
March 1976

Diccionario Historico Comentado Bibliografico de Puerto Rico, A. Hostos,
Accademia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 1976

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.4 acre approx.

UTM REFERENCES

N. lat. 18°28' 8" W. long. 66°6' 10" ²³

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A		
B		
C		
D		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

South

The property is bounded on the ~~North~~ by Avenida Ponce de Leon and the ~~South~~ north by Avenida Muñoz Rivera, on the east by Calle Pelayo, and on the north by Edificio Casa de España.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

A. Tarr consulting preservation architect

ORGANIZATION

Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña

DATE

3/1977

STREET & NUMBER

Plaza San Jose

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

San Juan

STATE

Puerto Rico

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☒

STATE ☒

LOCAL ☒

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Executive Director, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robert B. Rettig

DATE 11/18/77

ATTEST: DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Charles A. Murray

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11/18/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 20, 1977
DATE ENTERED	NOV 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET Capitolio, S. Juan MEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Puerto Rico, since its discovery by Columbus and its subsequent colonial status under the Spanish Crown and the United States, has had a "crisis of identity". There have been sporadic yet unsuccessful attempts at independence. Never independent, however, the island nurtures its 'patriots and intelligentsia': Luis Munoz Rivera and later Munoz Marin have played major roles in elevating the status of island leaders and increase leadership in the context of Puerto Rico's political relationship with the the United States.

The Capitol is thus a powerful symbol of self-government, with more emotionally packed significance than a State Capitol.

Architecturally, it is one of the major structures to be built on the island in the 1920's during a boom of neoclassical civic monumental construction.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY El Capitolio de Puerto Rico
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, San Juan

DATE RECEIVED: 2/13/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/29/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 77001555

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

~~additional Documentation Accepted~~

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER

DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE

DATE

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

*Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 meets the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant statewide.


Norma Ilia Fuster Félix/Acting State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official/Title

February 09, 2009
Date

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or Tribal government

Description (continued)

Office Buildings for the Legislators

The office buildings for the legislators are two identical, reinforced concrete, two-story, International style properties with a rectangular plan and flat roofs. For each, the exterior features strip windows with aluminum sunshades, glass panes, Alabama marble facing and spray ponds. All spaces are laid along an interior courtyard with landscaped areas, reflecting pools and two entrance lobbies at each end. The simple, transparent and fluid interior enhanced by main and secondary bridges, floating stairs, terrazzo flooring, millwork, mosaic tiles and glass also reflects the style's design philosophy. Discreetly located in the nearby east and west grounds of the Capitol building in San Juan, their presence is barely noticed from both Muñoz Rivera and Ponce de León avenues which bound the complex to the north and south respectively.

The institution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952 represented a significant physical transformation for the then thirty-year-old Capitol building. As a result, adequate office and meeting facilities had to be provided for the new legislature. The former east and west Capitol gardens¹ would be the site of the new office buildings for the legislators, today known as Ernesto Ramos Antonini and Rafael Martínez Nadal. Designed in bold, International style, they were to accommodate ninety-two office suites (forty-six on each building), conference rooms, a library and additional office space for public agencies and corporations, comptrollers and stenographic and general services. The design was not meant to emulate or rival the presence of the existing Capitol; the dimensions of the annexes were neither taller nor wider than the historic building. As described by

¹ The previous gardens were built as part of a more comprehensive project promoted by then governor Horace M. Towner which, in addition to the Capitol surroundings, included the NRHP listed Luis Muñoz Rivera Park, the University of Puerto Rico and the State Penitentiary. The design was carried out in 1925 by Bennett Parson & Frost in accordance with the City Beautiful Movement ideals.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

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Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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State or Federal agency or Tribal government

Description (continued)

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2

*Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

the architects themselves, "the new buildings were kept low in mass, partly hidden by existing trees to preclude competition."² Despite their modern lines, the buildings harmonize with the Capitol; they are architecturally appealing, maintain a human scale and, at the same time, relate to its monumental silhouette. They also enhance the symmetry and formality that characterize the Capitol and are consequently discreet works of minimal impact to the area. This intentional horizontality anchors both buildings to the site and integrates them to the surrounding gardens.³

Rectangular in shape, each building measures 156' long by 90' wide and 20' high. The north and south exterior façades are protected by aluminum sunshades which provide the dual purpose of integrating the two-story structure behind a single, large-scale element that, at the same time, regulates natural light and views to and from the interior and the building surrounding gardens. In order to achieve a compatible new construction, one of the Capitol's most notable details was emulated in the sunshades design. The proportion and thickness of the units themselves relate to those of the Georgia white marble facing at the Capitol's podium (Photo 1), while the solid, Alabama marble slabs in both east and west façades were clad in a similar manner to those of the old building (Photo 2). However, the massive quality of the end elevations seems to disintegrate towards the central, glass walls that mark the entrance to both main and secondary lobbies (Photo 3).

Two rectangular spray pools that run along the north and south façades not only fulfill an esthetic purpose, but also constitute an integral component of the building's cooling system. This contrast between light materials (such as water or glass) and the solidity of concrete and other hard surfaces is a method frequently employed by the architects in their designs though in very few examples this balanced juxtaposition is achieved as in the office buildings for the legislators (Photo 4).

The simple floor plan consists of two parallel rows of office space laid along an interior courtyard with a main vestibule and secondary lobby at each end of the main axis. The main vestibules (one for each office building) face the Capitol and are connected to it by covered passages.⁴ Rustic Roman travertine-paved steps and a podium, lead to the small yet elegant, double-height vestibule that contains the main stairs which appear to be floating over a shallow, reflecting pool. The poured-in-place, reinforced terrazzo concrete base, landing and steps monolith is enhanced by an uninterrupted and massive mahogany handrail that rest on slim, aluminum newel posts. The stairs are flanked by four aluminum grilles whose outline also evokes the Capitol's rusticated

² José A. Fernández, *Architecture in Puerto Rico* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing, Co., 1963) 245.

³ Enrique Vivoni and Mary Frances Gallart, eds., *Tropical Modernity: Architecture & the Creative Force of the 1950s* (San Juan: State Historic Preservation Office, 2003) 23.

⁴ Two aluminum covered passages were built as part of the original project in order to connect the new office buildings with the Capitol. It was evident since then that the architects were also concerned about how such element would affect the historic building and designed a light and compatible structure that, still today, would comply with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* (standards #9 and #10). However, they were replaced between 1986 and 1988.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 3

*Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

ashlars. This same pattern is etched on three glass panes that serve as a backdrop for the whole ensemble; a material that was chosen in order to emphasize a transparency towards the courtyard beyond (Photo 5). From this point on, two main corridors run along each office row and overlook towards the courtyard which contains an additional reflecting pool and landscaped areas (Photo 6). At both first and second floors, they become an interstitial, interior-exterior, public space from which the Capitol's dome can be appreciated (Photo 7). Both corridors lead to a double-height lobby with a secondary, floating stair and the upper-floor, circulation bridge all located at the opposite end of the main vestibule. The space is adjacent to an enclosed service core containing public bathrooms, storage and janitor's closet (first floor) and transfer and air conditioning equipment rooms (second floor). Its solid, minimalist quality, enhanced by an original Standard Electric Time Co. flush-mount clock, counteracts the transparency of the main vestibule at the opposite end of the courtyard. Venetian terrazzo flooring and glazed, mosaic tiles are the predominant finishes throughout these areas. From a structural and functional standpoint, each reinforced concrete office space row is divided into twelve 12' x 28' bays by concrete block walls while the main vestibule and secondary lobby feature aluminum built-up roofing with perforated metal furring.

Despite decades of poor maintenance and lack of interest in their preservation, the setting, spatial relationships, construction techniques and materials that characterize the office buildings for the legislators have withstood the test of time. On 2004, both buildings underwent a rehabilitation project whose main purpose was to abate the presence of hazardous materials and make them code-compliant.⁵ The scope of work included the removal of the asbestos-cement, exterior sunshades which were replaced by compatible aluminum units. Twenty-four asbestos-cement board grilles along the courtyard (twelve on each building) were also removed but have not been replaced accordingly. The existing, second-floor railing was neither the original nor American for Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant at the time of the rehabilitation. Based on documentary evidence, architect Marcos Rodriguez opted to depict this non-surviving feature with a strong emphasis on the original design's level of transparency and the use of fine materials (mahogany).⁶ The remaining character-defining features were preserved.

⁵ Additional information and documentation regarding this project is available at the archives of the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office. Project name: *Restauración Edificio Rafael Martínez Nadal*. Project number: SHPO #09-11-00-02.

⁶ Please refer to Additional Documentation for historic photographs of the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Statement of Significance (continued)

Office Buildings for the Legislators

The office buildings for the legislators, adjacent to the Capitolio de Puerto Rico, are significant under Criterion C on a statewide level as they represent an early introduction of the Modern Movement ideals within Puerto Rico's architectural milieu. By integrating traditional and innovative concepts, materials and construction techniques, their design proves a unique concern towards the island's tropical context and the preservation of an existing historic monument. Within Toro Ferrer Arquitectos' body of work, its design stands out as one of their most representative examples of Commonwealth architecture. Despite interior alterations—specifically in the office space layout— and a rehabilitation project carried out in 2004, both buildings retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance.

Historical Background

The construction of the Insular Capitol was a dream for some of the most important politicians in Puerto Rico since the early years of the twentieth century. In 1907, the local legislature allocated the amount of \$250,000 for the eventual construction of the building and another \$50,000 to organize an international design competition. The contest was announced in the local newspapers and in architecture magazines throughout the United States and over four hundred participation forms were requested from firms across the nation, Cuba, Mexico, Canada and England. The number also included eleven local firms. By February 1908, one hundred and thirty nine firms submitted their designs. The selected project was the one submitted by Frank E. Perkins New York's based firm. Perkins' design followed the "*neoclassical style that evoked the Roman Pantheon in the design of its dome and the Greek Parthenon in its portico*"⁷ associated with the large majority of the state capitols within the Union, including Washington D.C. (Fig. 1) However, several circumstances (political ambiguities, economical recessions and World War I), hindered the construction of Perkins' design.

During the early 1920's, a second proposal for the Insular Capitol was developed by two Puerto Ricans architects working with the Division of Public Buildings: Francisco Roldán (1892-?) and Pedro de Castro y Besosa (1895-1936) (Fig. 2). As part of the Department of the Interior, the Division was supervised by State Architect Adrian C. Finlayson. Finlayson considered that the Perkins design, a brick and wood building, was not structurally adequate and proposed that the Division of Public Buildings produce a new one of reinforced concrete. The design proposed by Roldán and de Castro spoke the *lingua franca* of the Renaissance Spanish Revival, an influential trend of the moment. By 1921, the government initiated construction of the second

⁷ Phrase extracted from: Enrique Vivoni Farage. The Architecture of Power: From the Neoclassical to Modernism in the Architecture of Puerto Rico, 1900 – 1950. Article located at: www.cmu.edu/ARIS3/vivoni/vivoni.html.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 5

*Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

project. But once again, external circumstances intervened to suspend the already delayed construction progress: ambiguities and problems within the Executive branch and the local Legislature; Finlayson's resignation to the State Architect position and his eventual return to the United States; and the very important resignations of Roldán and de Castro y Besosa. Both architects decided to initiate private practices.⁸

Other crucial changes within the Executive branch that had an impact in the future plans for the Capitol building were also taking place. Puerto Ricans professionals were being designated to administrative positions. In 1914, Manuel V. Domenech (1869-1942) became the first Puerto Rican to occupy the position of Commissioner of the Interior. Guillermo Esteves replaced Domenech in 1918. It was Esteves who designated Rafael Carmoega Morales (1894-1968) as the State Architect in 1921, the first Puerto Rican to occupy the position. With Carmoega's designation, the future of public works in the island was under the direct responsibility of a Puerto Rican professional for the first time. Under his supervision, a new design for the Capitol was prepared. Carmoega recaptured a vocabulary similar to that of the Italian Renaissance Revival combined with elements of the Federal style, which was very common in other state Capitols (Figs. 3 and 4).

On July 17, 1925, the official construction of the Capitol building continued with the traditional lay of the first stone (Figs. 5 and 6). Almost four years later, on February 11, 1929, the building was inaugurated (Fig. 7). It was erected midway between the entrance to the islet and Old San Juan in the historic Ponce de León Avenue, covering a surface of 51, 814 square feet. The main entrance to the building faced the Atlantic Ocean.⁹

The building, as planned, became the seat for members of the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court and their respective staff. The number of members for these organisms changed through the years depending on the specific law in force at the time. Three US congressional acts or organic laws were used to structure the local government since the United States' occupation of the island in 1898. The first one, the Foraker Act, was in effect from 1900 until 1917. This First Organic Law established a civil government divided in three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The Executive comprised a governor designated by the president of the United States and an Executive Council (Cabinet) of eleven (11) members also designated by the president. The Legislature was bicameral, with the Executive Council serving as the Upper Chamber and a Lower Chamber (also known as the Chamber of Delegates), composed of thirty-five (35) members.

⁸ Enrique Vivoni Farage. "El Capitolio de Puerto Rico: 1907 – 1929. Origen y transformación de un ideal puertorriqueño." Ensayos de historia institucional. (San Juan: Senado de Puerto Rico, 1992) 84.

⁹ The orientation of the Capitol building quickly became an object of controversy. The fact that the main façade faced the ocean was not consistent with the building arrangement pattern of the historic Ponce de León Avenue. From the early years of the 20th century the strip of land extending from Plaza de Colón, along Ponce de León towards Santurce, was practically reserved for buildings of monumental character and elevated social significance whose main facades must face this important way. The concept applied to the development of Ponce de León Avenue was closely related to those of the City Beautiful Movement.

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

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 6

*Capitolio de Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

By 1917, the Second Organic Law (Jones Act) came into effect. The new law created a government based in the total separation of powers. Under the Jones Act, the governor had his own Cabinet; the Legislative Chamber was composed of eleven (11) members of the Senate and thirty-nine (39) members of the Representative Chamber. The new number of government officials had the adequate facilities and space needed in the new 1929 Capitol building. But as the years went by and as new government dependencies were created, the availability of work space within the Capitol building became highly reduced.

By the end of the 1940's, dramatic changes altered the political structure of the island. In 1947, the Law of the Elected Governor was approved, which, for the first time, allowed the Puerto Ricans to choose their governor in the 1948 elections. In 1950, the United States Congress approved Law 600, which allowed the local summon of a Constitutional Convention. The Convention was convened in 1951 and, by February 1952, the establishment of the *Estado Libre Asociado* (Commonwealth) and a new Constitution were ratified by a large majority of the local electorate. The new Constitution that came into effect on July 25 1952 reorganized the political structure once again. The island was divided into eight senatorial districts and forty representative districts. This change added twenty-seven (27) members to the Senate and a Chamber of Representatives of fifty-one (51) members (Fig. 8).

By 1952, given the increase of legislators and their staff, the need to expand the Capitol building was evident. To accommodate the new number of personnel and to ease working conditions, the idea to build a new office building was proposed at the very same time that the Commonwealth was established.

Office Buildings for the Legislators

Originally, the solution to add facilities for the new number of legislators and their staff was proposed as a single, five-story (92 office suites) building south across the Capitol. However, in 1952, Dr. Rafael Picó (1912-1998), Director of the Puerto Rico Planning Board, suggested the idea of two buildings along the longitudinal axis of the Capitol, in the same areas occupied by the east and west gardens (Figs. 9 and 10). In 1955 the Joint Legislative Commission voted to follow Dr. Pico's suggestion and agreed to build the annexes in the east and west sides of the Capitol. Each of the new office buildings for the legislators, designed by local firm Toro Ferrer Arquitectos and built by developer and engineer Antonio Texidor Díaz, had a capacity for forty-six office suites, a conference room and an interior courtyard with landscape designed by Hunter Randolph.¹⁰ While it is presumed that the design was carried out around 1955, they were already under construction in 1956.¹¹ Both buildings were -and still- not

¹⁰ Hunter Randolph (1907-1982), one of Puerto Rico's leading landscape architects of the time, collaborated with Osvaldo Toro and Miguel Ferrer on several commissions throughout his career: the Caribe Hilton Hotel (1949), the Puerto Rico International Airport (1955), the Supreme Court building (1956) and La Concha hotel (1958), among others.

¹¹ Departamento de Obras Públicas de Puerto Rico. Informe Anual del Departamento de Obras Públicas – Año Económico 1955-56. 82.

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invasive and respect the presence and character of the Capitol building; they were kept low in scale, partially hidden by the surrounding gardens. Strip windows along the north and south façades were protected from direct light by sunshades that integrate both first and second stories into a single, uninterrupted element. The dimension, scale and proportions of the units corresponded to those of the Capitol's Georgia White marble ashlar. This inverted interpretation integrated both history and new construction at the Capitol's podium; conceptually, the new office buildings would not rise higher in order to keep the extent or projection of the much needed space on a basement level.

Fine construction materials and finishes were also considered: Alabama marble on the building's end elevations; rustic Roman travertine for the entrance steps, podium and vestibule; Venetian terrazzo flooring and mahogany for all the millwork. In clear contrast, contemporary materials such as aluminum, glass and asbestos cement were widely employed in some of the building's outstanding details.

Both buildings were completed on January 7, 1958 at a total cost of \$952, 788.69.¹² By the 24th, the legislators were already occupying the new facilities. They were featured on *Progressive Architecture* (August 1959), the book *Architecture in Puerto Rico* by José Fernández (1963) and praised by renowned architect Morris Ketchum who, on his visit to the island on January 1960 as a member of the *Architectural League* of the New York, pointed them as exceptional works of Modern, Puerto Rican architecture.

The office buildings for the legislators were recognized by their own merits, in spite the presence of their predominant, historic neighbor. They have been accepted as admirable examples in how to integrate modern architecture with a historic monument without the need to disguise them behind a false, historicist design.

The one that accommodates the offices of the Representatives is officially known as the “*Ernesto Ramos Antonini*” building. Ramos Antonini (1898-1963) was president of the Chamber of Representatives from 1948 until 1963 and the strongest supporter of the idea to construct the buildings. The other, occupied by the Senate, was named after Rafael Martínez Nadal (1877-1941), chairman of the Senate from 1933 until 1941.

The architects

In December of 1945, just as World War II came to an end, architects Osvaldo Toro (1914-1996) and Miguel Ferrer (1915-2004) along with engineer Luis Torregrosa founded Toro, Ferrer & Torregrosa. From that moment on, they embraced the principles of the Modern Movement and adapted them to Puerto Rico's tropical context. The

¹² Departamento de Obras Públicas de Puerto Rico. Informe Anual del Secretario de Obras Públicas al Hon. Gobernador de Puerto Rico – Año Económico 1957-58. 64.

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firm quickly developed a solid reputation when it was awarded first place in the competition sponsored by the government to design a new hotel in San Juan. The hotel, which later came to be the Caribe Hilton (1949) was part of Operation Bootstrap's strong campaign to accelerate the industrialization of Puerto Rico. Even though tourism already was an important source of income for the State, the post-war policies propelled by Operation Bootstrap made necessary to revise existing facilities and to modernize the tourist industry in order to fulfill its new role. Simultaneously, Toro Ferrer Arquitectos became representatives and creators of the new architectural image promoted by the State. The firm was an integral part of the new tourism industry as designers of some of the most celebrated hotels of the forties, fifties and sixties (Figs. 12 through 16).

Toro Ferrer Arquitectos was also instrumental in providing this new image and architectural language to the modernization of government facilities. Along with the Puerto Rico International Airport (1955) and the Supreme Court building (1956), the Office Buildings for the Legislators is considered one of the three emblematic projects of the Commonwealth period and the new architecture proposed by one of Puerto Rico's leading Modern Movement exponents.

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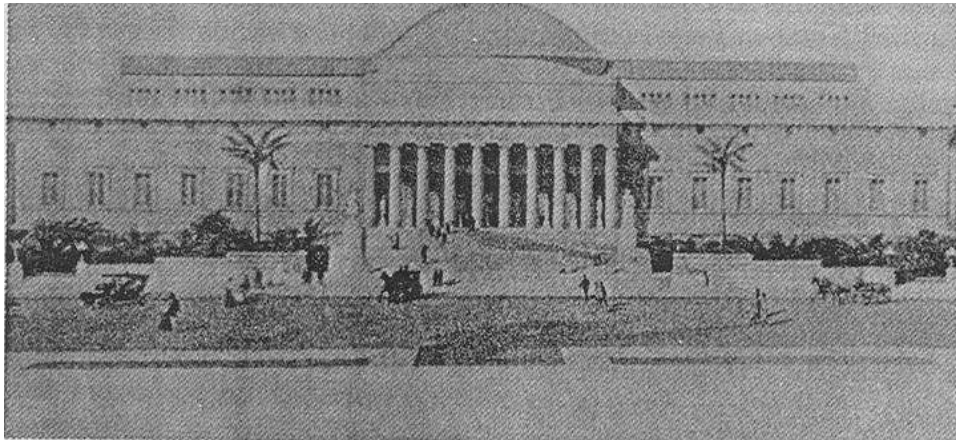


Figure 1: Frank E. Perkins' 1908 design for the State Capitol.¹³



Figure 2: Adrian C. Finalyson, Pedro de Castro y Besosa and Francisco Roldán.
Elevation for the second design competition.

¹³ *Informe del Comisionado del Interior al Gobernador de Puerto Rico*. 1908.

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Figure 3: Rafael Carmoega Morales, Architect, Albert B. Nichols, Associated Architect.
North façade, Capitol Building.

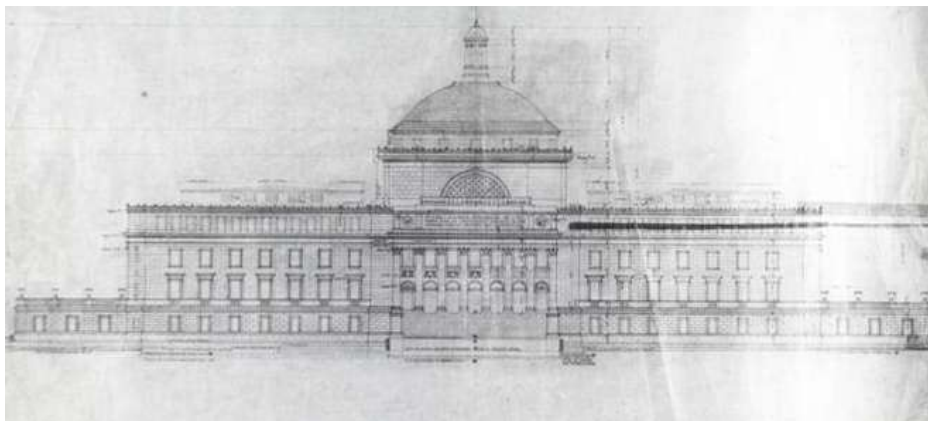


Figure 4: Carmoega and Nichols. South façade, Capitol Building.¹⁴

¹⁴ Report to the Governor of Puerto Rico from the Commissioner of the Interior. 1924.

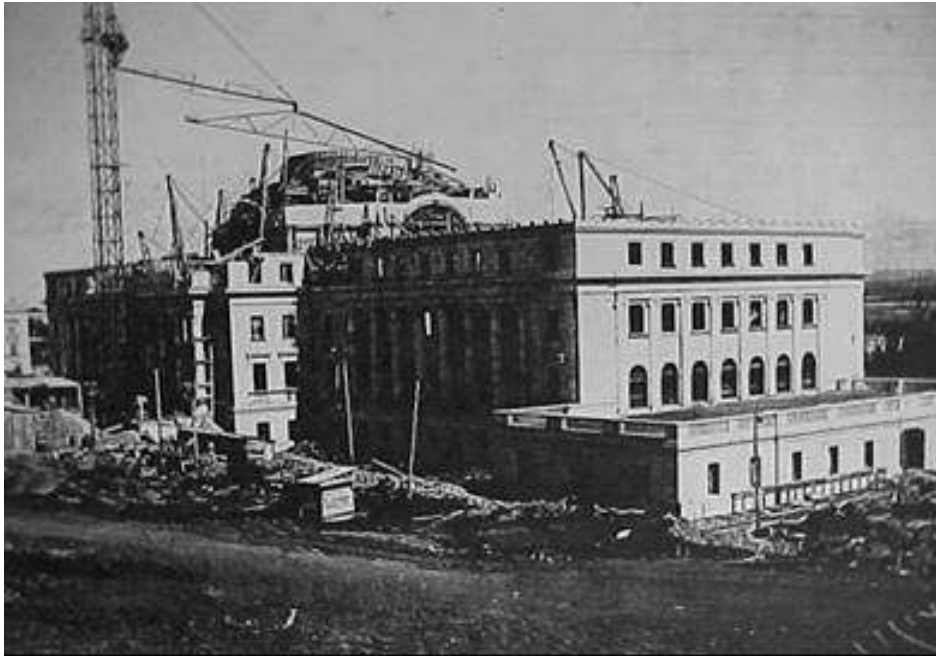
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Figure 7: Capitol building inauguration day on February 11, 1929.
Capitolio de Puerto Rico Collection, AACUPR.

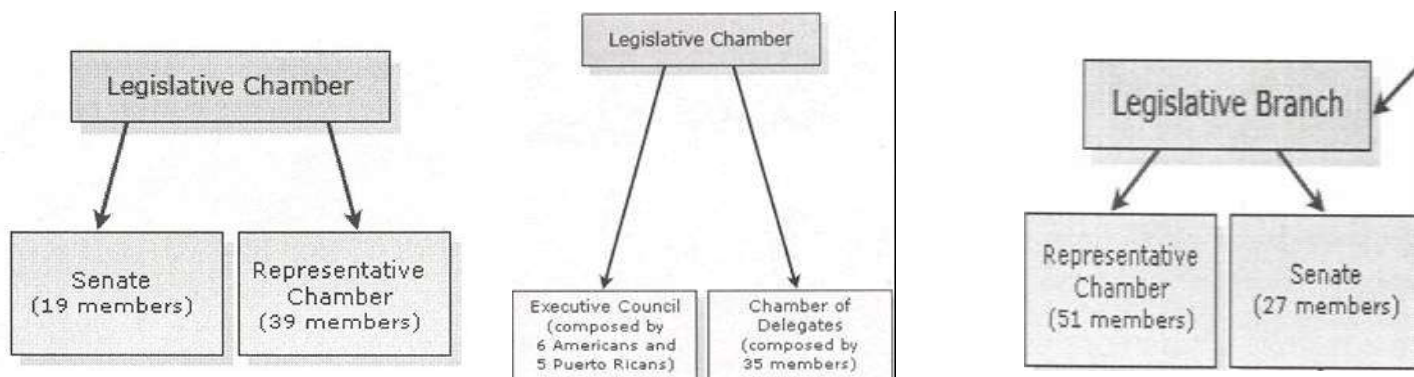


Figure 8: Legislative structure according to the Foraker Act (left), the Jones Act (center) and the Commonwealth (right).

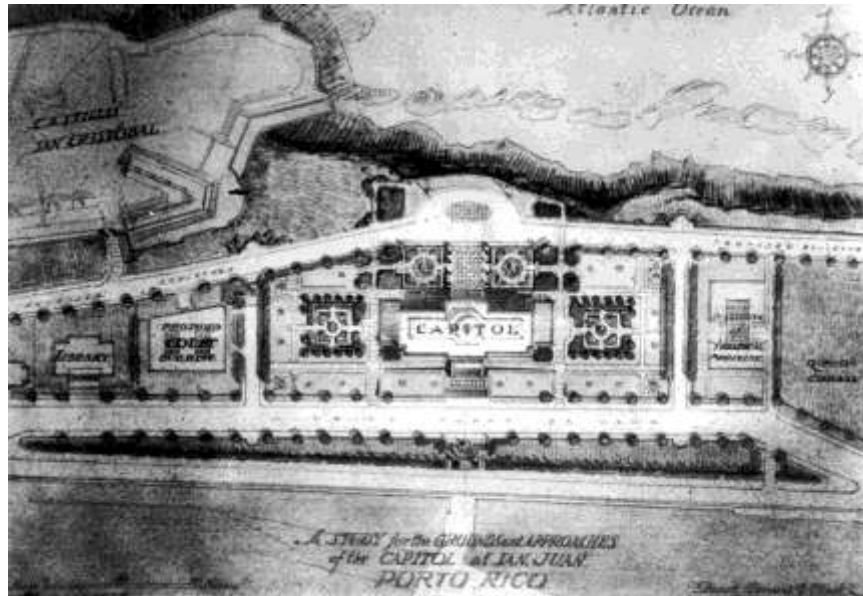
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Figures 9 and 10: "A Study for the Grounds and Approaches of the Capitol at San Juan, Porto Rico" Bennett Parson & Frost, 1925 (top) and aerial photograph, 1938 (bottom).

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Figure 11: Capitol building and the Office Buildings for the Legislators, 1967.
Capitolio de Puerto Rico Collection, AACUPR.

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Figures 12 through 16: Clockwise from top left: Luis Torregrosa, Osvaldo Toro, Conrad Hilton and Miguel Ferrer at the Caribe Hilton inauguration on December 1949; Caribe Hilton, San Juan (1949); Hotel La Concha, San Juan (1958); Supreme Court building, San Juan (1956); and the Puerto Rico Sheraton Hotel, San Juan (1963). Toro y Ferrer Arquitectos Collection, AACUPR.

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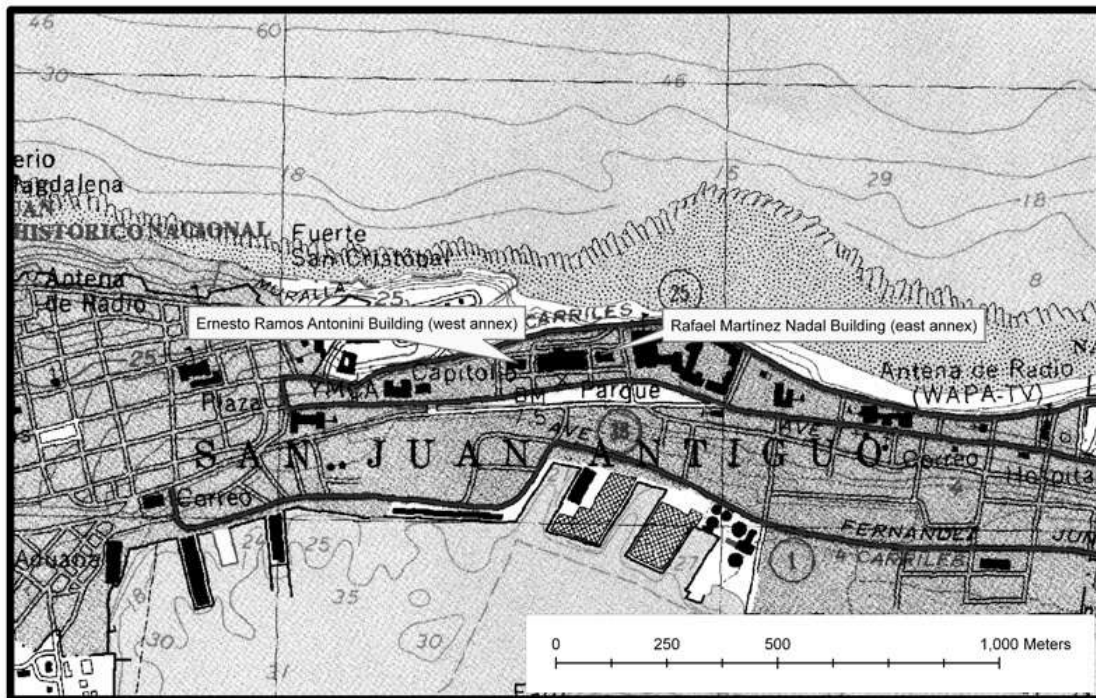
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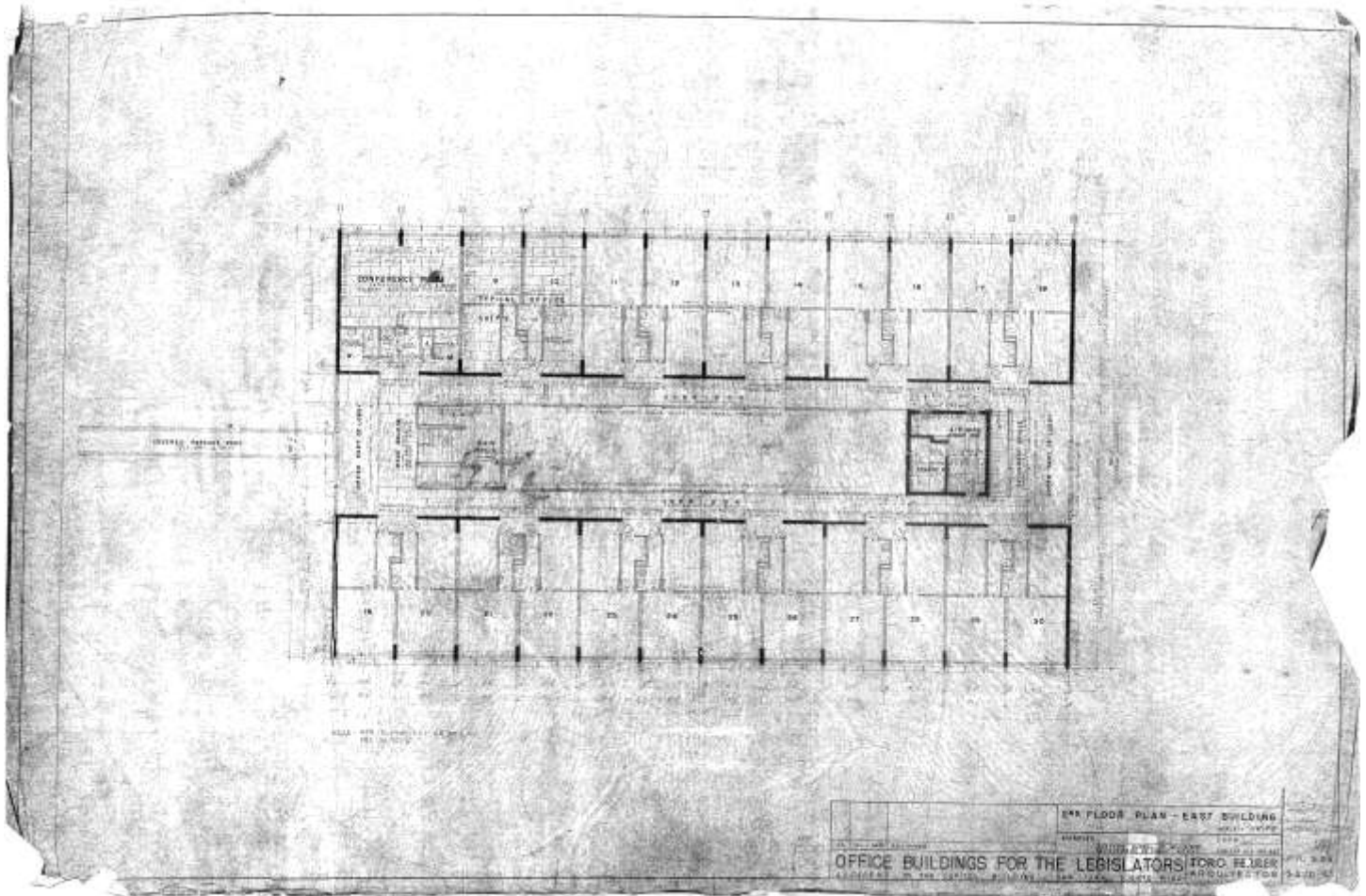
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Office Buildings for the Legislators (2nd Floor Plan – East Building). Toro Ferrer Arquitectos, 1955.
Courtesy of architect Pablo Quiñones.

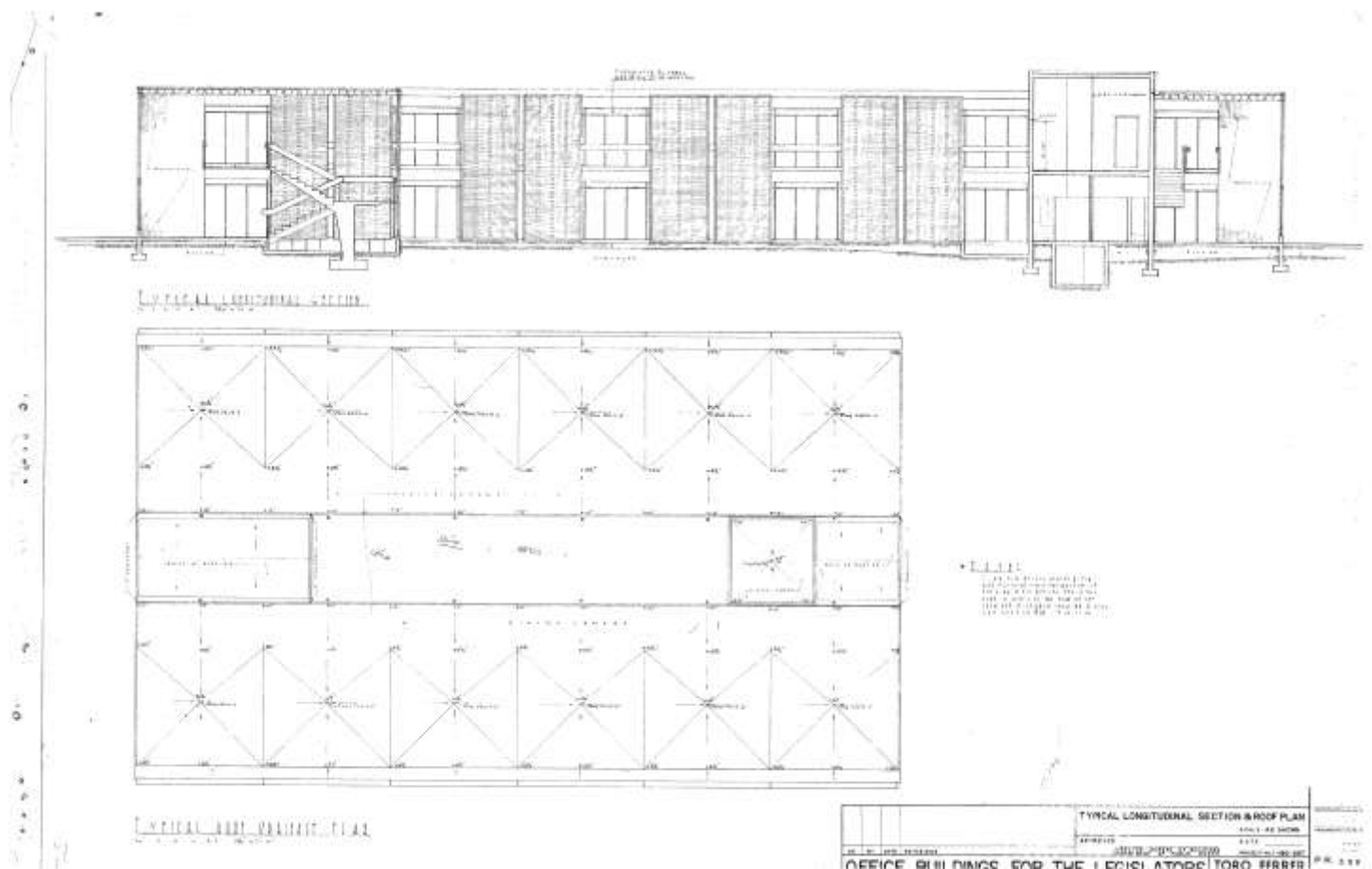
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. (Typical Longitudinal Section & Roof Plan). Toro Ferrer Arquitectos, 1955.
Courtesy of architect Pablo Quiñones.

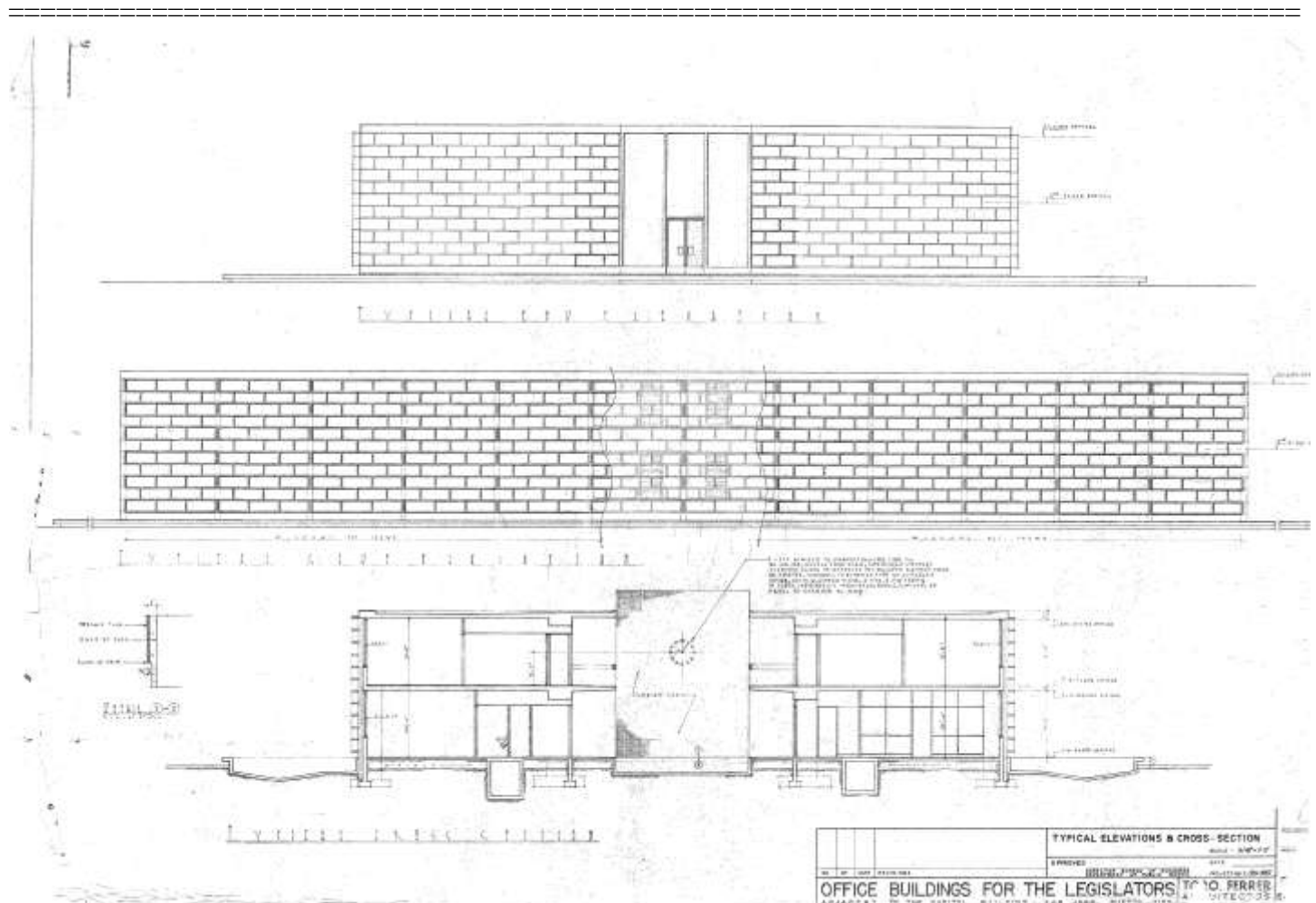
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. (Typical Elevations & Cross Section). Toro Ferrer Arquitectos, 1955.
Courtesy of architect Pablo Quiñones.

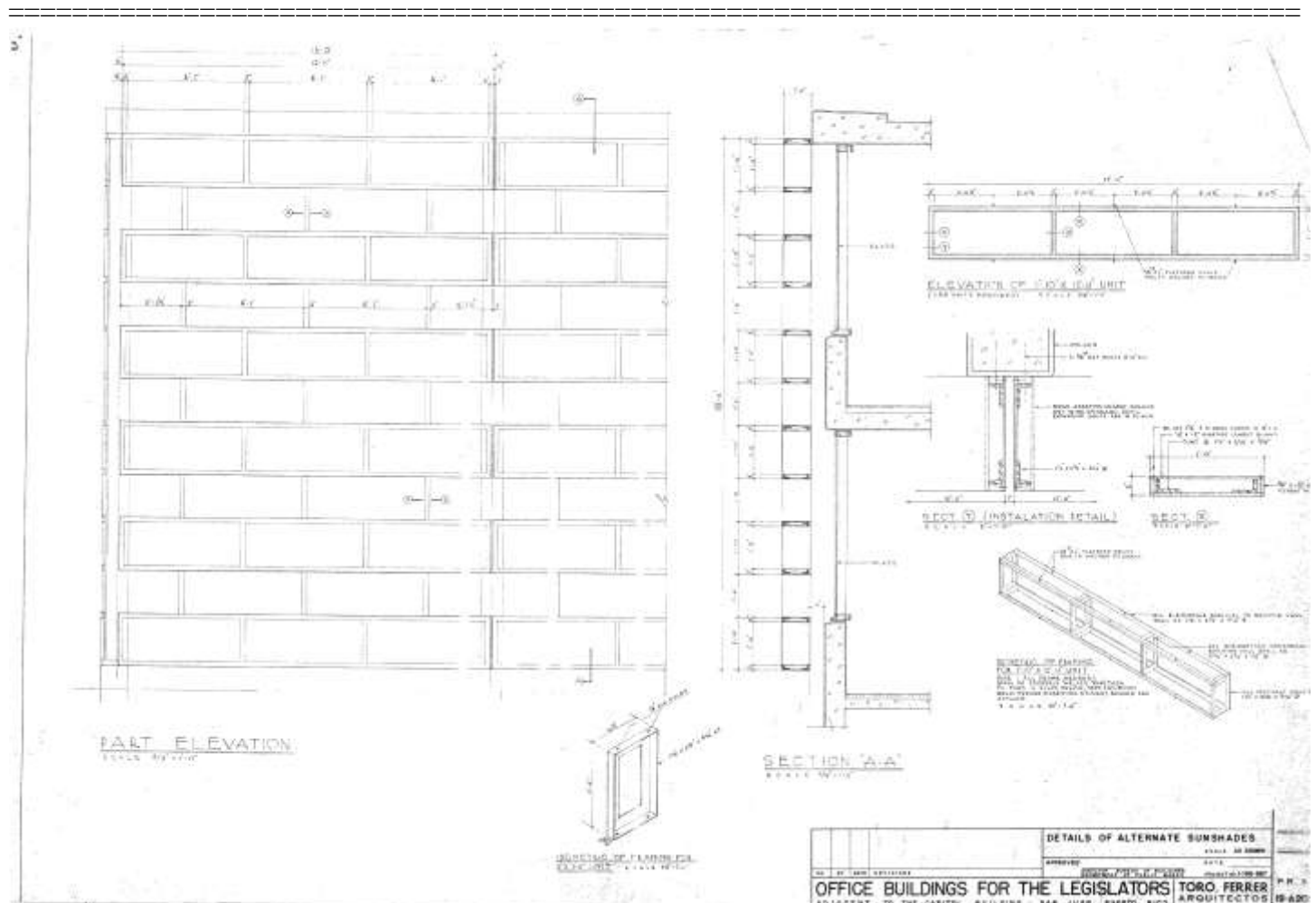
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. (Details of Alternate Sunshades). Toro Ferrer Arquitectos, 1955.
Courtesy of architect Pablo Quiñones.

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Office Buildings for the Legislators (west building). South façade.
Toro y Ferrer Arquitectos Collection, AACUPR.

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Office Buildings for the Legislators (east building). West elevation.
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. View of vestibule and main stairs.
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. View of courtyard towards the vestibule.
Toro y Ferrer Arquitectos Collection, AACUPR.

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Office Buildings for the Legislators. Main stairs and bridge from landing.
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. View from the main bridge.
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Office Buildings for the Legislators. View of second floor corridor.
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Office Buildings for the Legislators.
View of second floor corridor towards courtyard.
Toro y Ferrer Arquitectos Collection, AACUPR.



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