



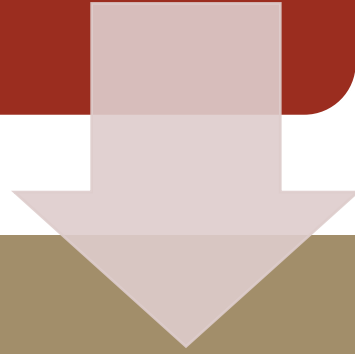
# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

Diplomatic and Government Research





**Palacio:** edificio monumental destinado a ser sede de actos públicos, como congresos, exposiciones y actos gubernamentales.



**Palace:** official residence of a sovereign, archbishop, bishop, or other exalted person, stately or official home.

## **HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL**



# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

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Historic location

# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- According to the NRHP\*, the Old San Juan Historic District is the oldest European settlement in Puerto Rico and the United States and the second one continuously inhabited in the American continent. It is historically documented that the Viejo San Juan had the first municipal government in the America continent after the city of Santo Domingo in neighboring Hispaniola.
- The Old San Juan Historic District's distribution and organization of the urban core by means of an orthogonal grid was inspired by European Renaissance ideas, particularly Italian of Classical extraction.
- The Old San Juan Historic District has the oldest house, Christian temple, executive mansion, convent and military defenses in the United States. All of these structures can be found within this unique core that includes the Diputación Provincial building.

\*National Register of Historic Places





To this day, the square bordering the Plaza de Armas is considered the heart of Old San Juan. In addition to this symbolic role as center of the urban core, the space continues to anchor the seats of both the island-wide and municipal governments, something it has done since the 17th century. By the 19th century and although the Spanish monarchy was not organized into independent branches (i.e. executive, legislative, and judicial), all the buildings relevant to the administration of the city and the island – Casa Alcaldía, Real Intendencia and Diputación Provincial – were located around this neuralgic square.

The space has been known by different names throughout history – Plaza Principal (Principal Plaza), Plaza Mayor (Principal Plaza), Plaza de la Constitución (Constitution Plaza), Plaza de las Verduras (Vegetable or Produce Plaza), Plaza de Alfonso XII (Alfonso XII Plaza), Plaza Baldorioty de Castro (Baldorioty de Castro Plaza), and Plaza de Armas (Military Arms Plaza). This last name, in use during the 19th century, made no sense to Tapia y Rivera.<sup>20</sup> One infamous rehabilitation project was nicknamed el Panteón de Pezuela (Pezuela's Pantheon).

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- The Casa Alcaldía de San Juan, Palacio de la Intendencia and Diputación Provincial form a government triad from which the Spanish Crown governed the city and the island until 1898. Their elegance and monumentality is a reflection of their role as visual icons of the Crown. The fact that they always served similar uses adds an additional layer of historic and cultural relevance.
- The Plaza de Armas is considered the heart of Old San Juan because the space (including the Diputación Provincial building) continually anchored the seats of state and municipal governments since the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all the buildings relevant to the administration of the city and state (Casa Alcaldía, Real Intendencia and the Diputación Provincial) were located in this square.
- The Casa Alcaldía, Intendencia Real and the Diputación Provincial formed a government triad from which the Spanish crown govern the island until 1898. These are three of the finest architectural examples in the city and the island; their location and architectural uniqueness are intrinsic components of the historic urban landscape forming Old San Juan.





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Diplomatic and Government Uses



In 1838 the lot first used as a cemetery was taken by the Spanish crown under the secularization of church property in Puerto Rico.

In 1849, the lot was sold to build the Plaza del Mercado (Marketplace). However once built, it was no longer thought to be the most ideal location for a Marketplace, according to Enrique Tomas Blanco.

For many years the new building remained vacant. It was used for a short time for rental housing, but was later abandoned. Its eminent location and the lack of space for government employees, required that the city find a more appropriate function.

## **HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL**





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- First Provincial Council (Primera Diputación Provincial) 1813
- Second Provincial Council (Segunda Diputación Provincial) 1869
- Third Provincial Council (Tercera Diputación Provincial) 1870
- Diputación Provincial building started the reconstruction in 1873 opening as Palacio de la Diputación in 1876. Cost: 30,000 pesos





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- In September 1869, Queen Isabel II was ousted, Puerto Rico regained its representation at the Cortes, and per royal decree, the third Puerto Rican Diputación Provincial was solemnly inaugurated on April 1, 1871. José Severo Quinones was the Vice President of the Diputación Provincial and later, he was the first President of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico from 1900-1909.

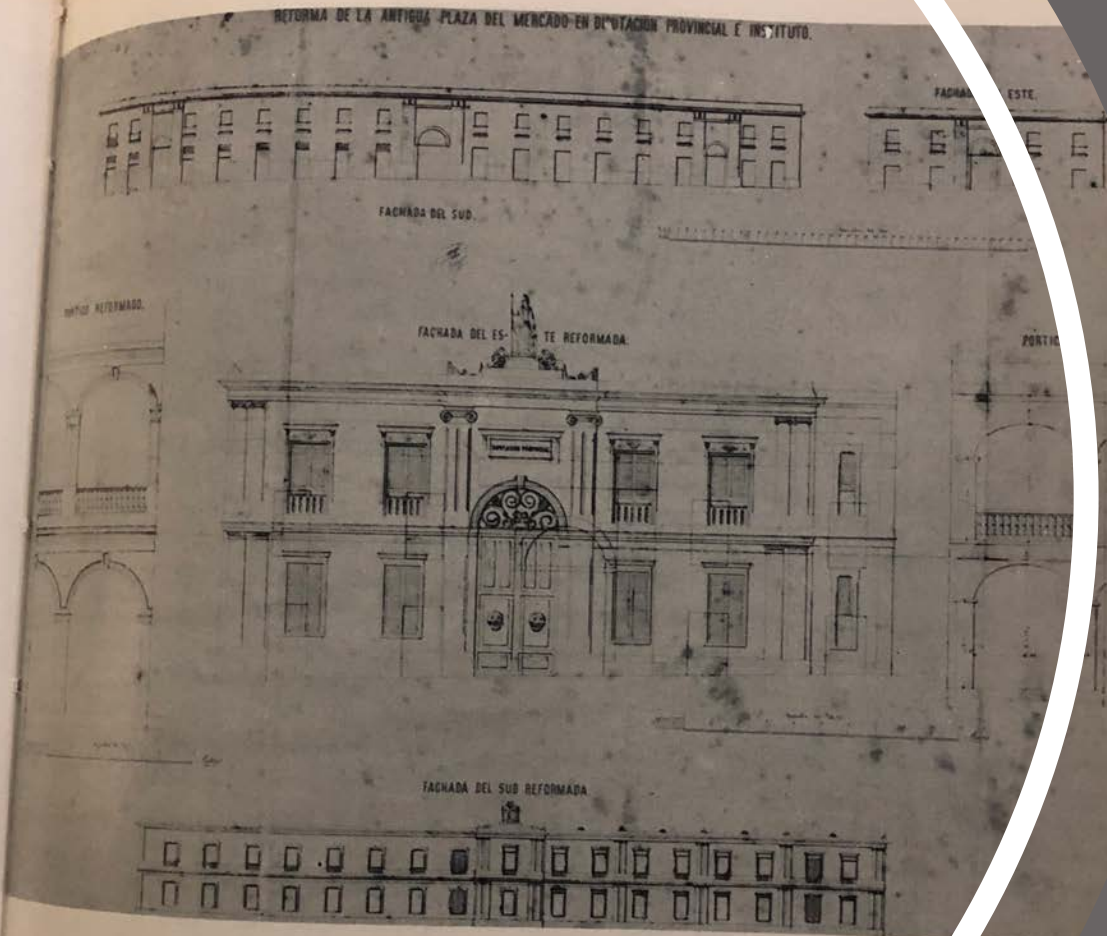
He was quoted by Adolfo de Hostos in his book *Historia de San Juan murada*:

- “*La Diputación, nace pobre y desnuda; sin hogar donde albergarse, ni sillas siquiera donde sentarse para celebrar tranquilamente sus sesiones.*”

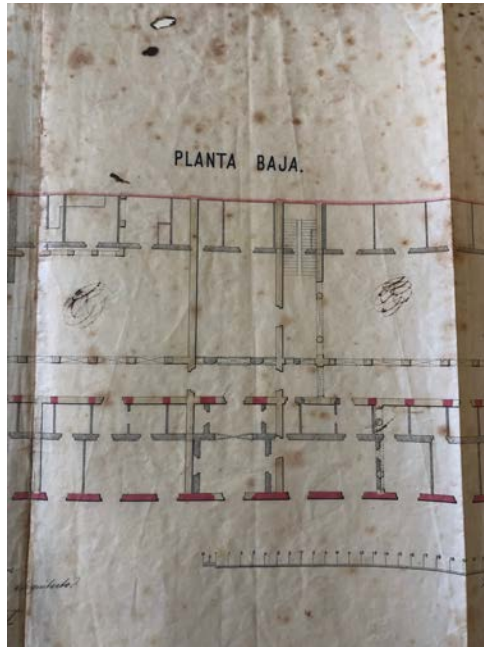




# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL



- In 1872 a proposal to house the Instituto Civil de Segunda Enseñanza (Civil Institute of Secondary Teaching) in the Diputación Provincial (Provincial Council) was accepted. Plans were drawn up by Enrique Berrocal, architect and civil engineer.
- Reconstruction of the site was completed during 1874-1875.



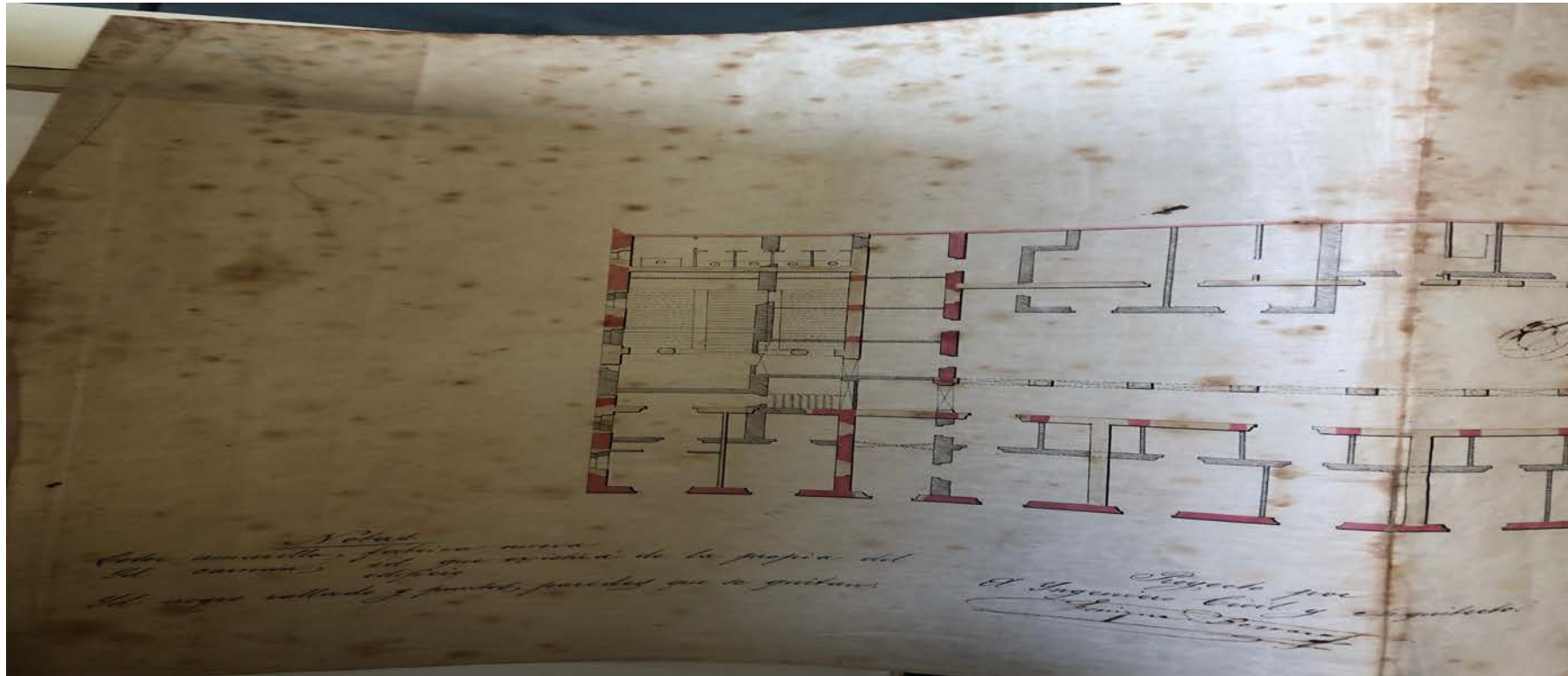
# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- Enrique Berrocal's original design was inspired by the work of architect Juan de Villanueva, a Spanish architect known for many majestic buildings like the Museo del Prado and one of the best representatives of the Neoclassicism in Spain.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL



Original design plan by architect Enrique Berrocal.



# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

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According to the National Register of Historic Places documents: “The Diputación, was given the old market building that stood where the cemetery existed for almost four centuries close to the Plaza de Armas. In 1873, 30,000 pesos were assigned and the old market was transformed into the Palacio de la Diputación (Diputación Palace).

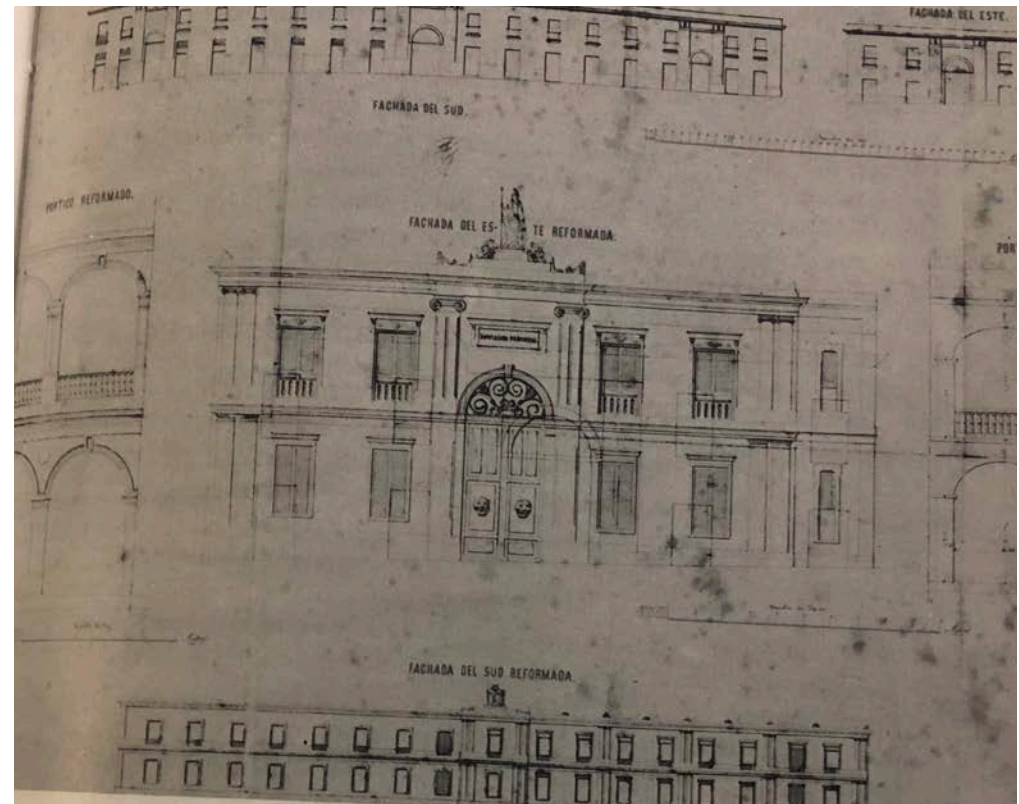
The Diputación Provincial building belongs to the Historicist/Enlightenment Period (1812-1898.) These buildings were all designed to be large public symbols. Their external scale and elegance is matched by the richly appointed interiors usually organized around one or two patios that allowed for gender and/or services segregation. Many include tribune-like elements in their façades that underscore their civic role. Some also incorporate information about the patrons, designers and construction dates in their façades. Neoclassical, Neo-Cinquecento and Second Empire Baroque and cognate modes are all represented, along with “Rundbogenstil” aesthetic influences. Most of these structures were constructed of mampostería (rubble stone masonry) and brick.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- Occupied three years later, the needs of the Diputacion provided the historic district with one of its architectural gems: a beautiful building with simple yet elegant lines, double cortiles, a majestic staircase and exquisite rejas (metal grilles).
- The masterful floor plan, inspired by architectural genius de Villanueva, the beautiful staircase, and unique grill work signify it as one of the architectural jewels of the historic district, as stated by the NRHP.



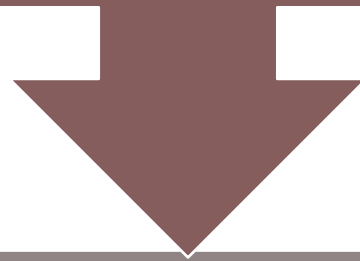


**HOTEL PALACIO  
PROVINCIAL**

- The elegance of the Diputación Provincial building was a reflection of its prominent role as a visual icon of the Spanish crown. It continued to serve similar uses under the United States government, adding another cultural and historical relevance.
- The inflexible, octagonal grid used to form the original settlement (in which the Diputación Provincial is located) acted as a mandala of power clearly establishing who was in that core.



According to NRHP, “After the market closed, the Diputación Provincial building sheltered varied uses, including a ciudadela (casa de viviendas or casa de vecindad or tenement house), an asilo de beneficencia (asylum) and an instituto civil (a kind of high school), known as the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza (Institute of Secondary Education). This last use continued after the 1873 remodeling work.



It is known that the Instituto occupied the western half of the building while the Diputación Provincial de Puerto Rico was located in the eastern half of the second floor in 1871.

## **HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL**



A circular logo with a dark red, textured background and a white border. The text "HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters in the center.

# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

Other governmental units, like the lottery, were also sheltered by the structure. Complete rehabilitation work of the building was finished in 1875.

After 1898, the eastern half of the building became the first US Post Office in Puerto Rico. In 1921, the Biblioteca Insular (Insular Library), the Telegraph and Telephone office, and a colecturía (Island Revenue Agency) were also located in the same building.

Finally, the structure served as the Puerto Rico's Department of State work center for the second half of the 20th century.



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In order to contribute to the Old San Juan Historic District NRHP registration, there is a description that fully synthesizes what the building represents:

“The Diputación Provincial de Puerto Rico building is a contributing property possessing urban, architectural and artistic national significance. It is the only extant architectural evidence that exists of the momentous transformations introduced by means of the diputación provincial political system within the Spanish colonial 19th century scheme. As such, it is a symbol of the cherished dream to have full, or as full as allowed, representation in the central peninsular government.”



# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

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Artists and Political Leaders



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- Between 1869 and 1873, a liberal government in Spain extended ample liberties to the Caribbean, including the rights of Cubans and Puerto Ricans to send representatives to the Spanish *Cortes* (parliament). Puerto Rico was given the status of *Diputación Provincial* (making the island a province of Spain) and the way was paved for the establishment of the first national political parties.
- In 1869, José Ramón Fernández was granted the title of “Marqués de La Esperanza.”
- Under the leadership of José Pérez Moris, José Ramón Fernández “Marqués de La Esperanza”, and Pablo Ubarri “Conde de Santurce”, the party changed its name first to *Partido Español Incondicional* (Spanish Unconditional Party) and then in 1880 to *Partido Republicano Español* (Spanish Republican Party). Both Fernández and Ubarri were presidents of the *Diputación Provincial*.



# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

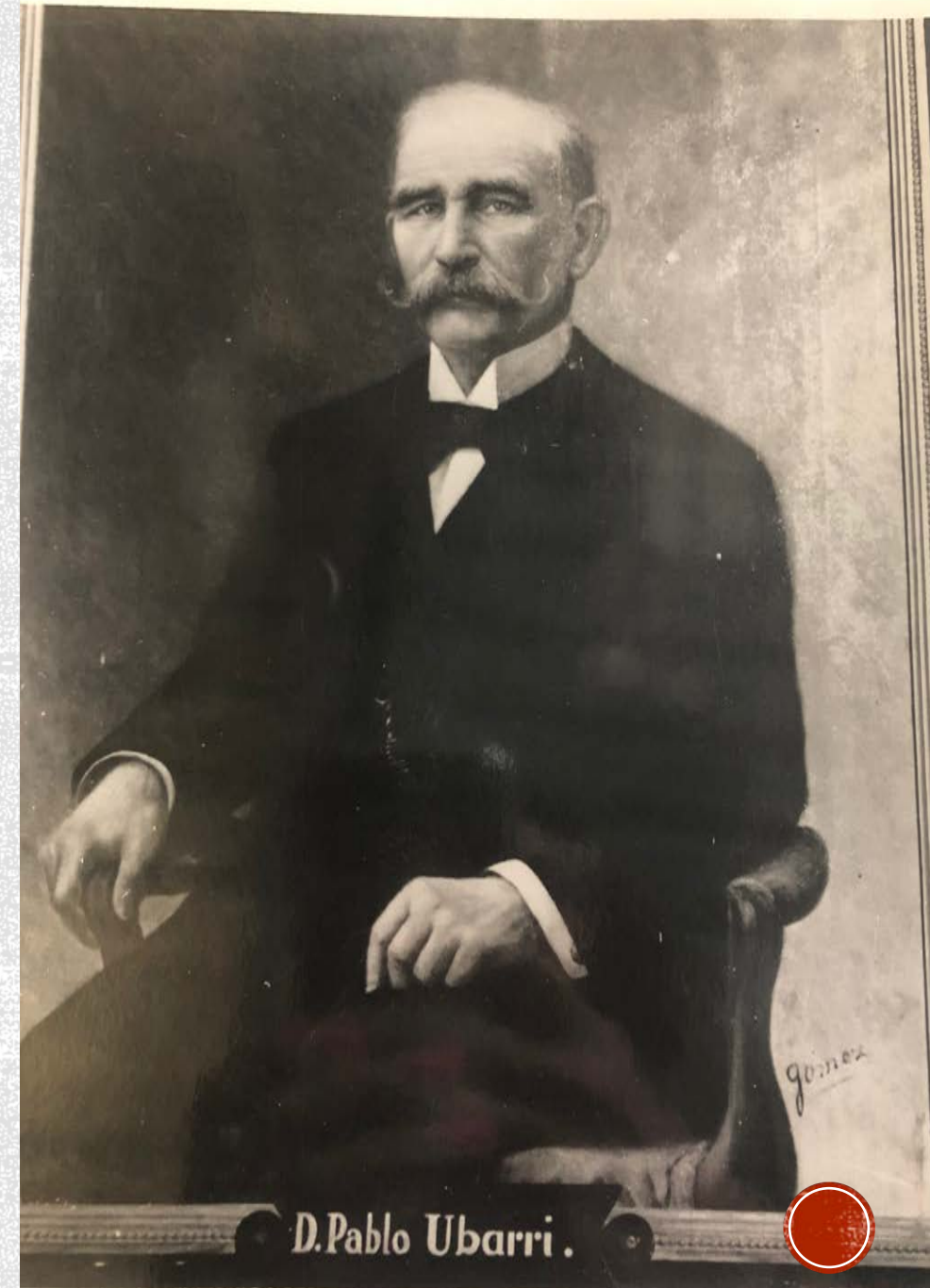
- José Ramon Fernández, Marqués de La Esperanza was the owner of Hacienda La Esperanza in Manatí and the wealthiest sugar baron in Puerto Rico in the 19th century. He was also one of the most powerful men of the entire Spanish Caribbean.
- He became involved with various businesses. In 1850, used his political influence to lobby for the establishment of a railroad line between San Juan and Arecibo, with the financial backing of Augusto de Cottes and Cornelio Kortwright. The improved transportation would help planters get their commodities.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

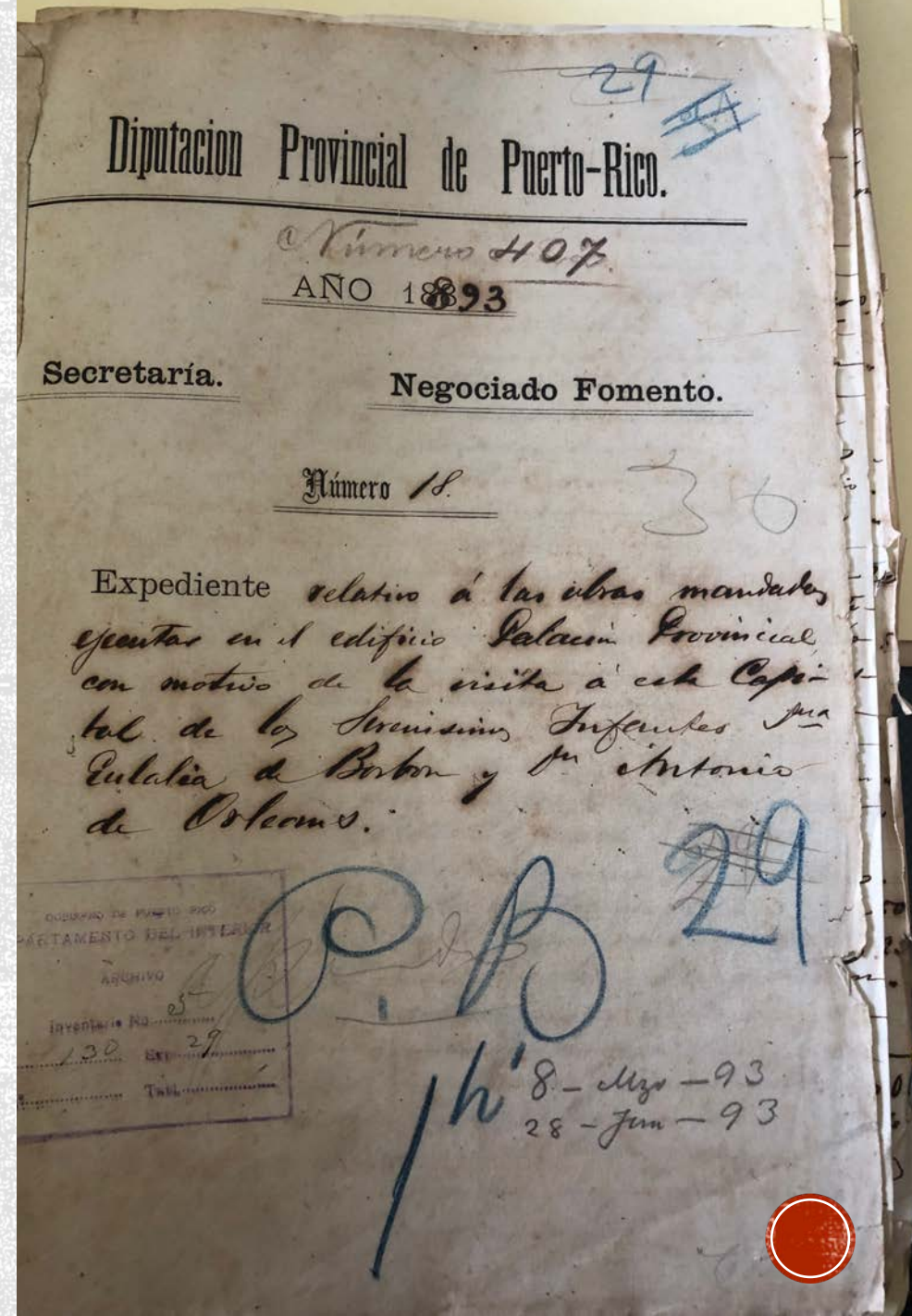
- Pablo Ubarri y Capetillo was known as the “Conde de Santurce”, a nobility title given by Alfonso XII. Ubarri was President of the Diputación Provincial de Puerto Rico in 1880.
- In 1876, Ubarri was an engineer from the port town of Santurzi in Spain's autonomous Basque Country region who arrived on the island to help in the construction of a railroad system and a steam tramway between San Juan and the town of Río Piedras through the center of "Cangrejos". Many years after his arrival he was granted the title of Count of Santurce (which is the Hispanicized equivalent of Santurtzi) by the Spanish Crown.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

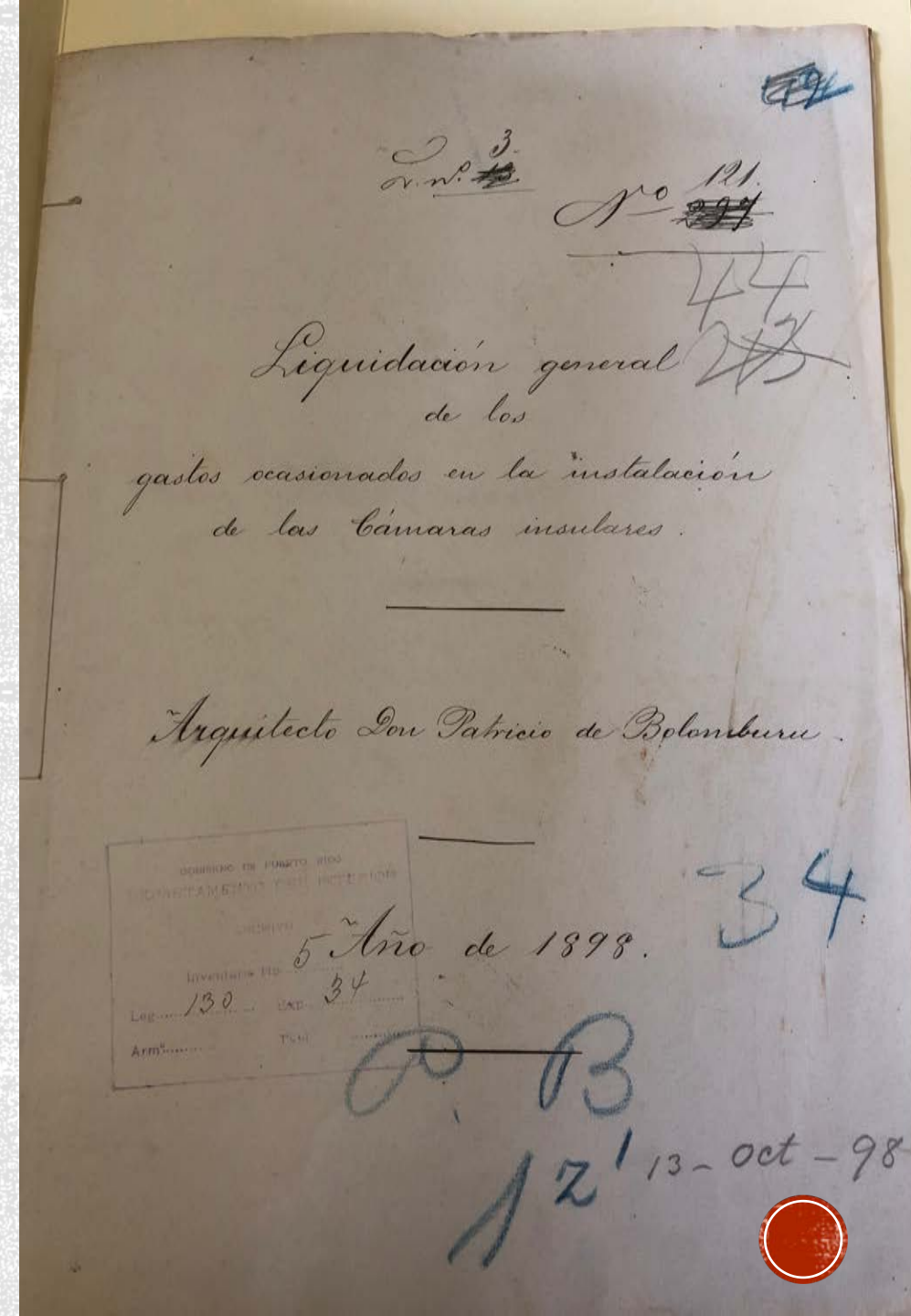
- In 1893, Infanta Eulalia of Spain, the youngest and last surviving child of Queen Isabella II of Spain and the youngest sister of King Alfonso XII and her husband Antonio de Orleans visited the Diputación Provincial representing the crown. They came to Puerto Rico on their way to the Chicago World Fair. The fair was to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World.
- To celebrate the anniversary of the “discovery” of America and Puerto Rico, a marble monument to Columbus was erected in the Plaza de Santiago, located at the entrance of the city. The forty-two feet high sculptural group motivated a change in name for the space to Plaza de Colón. The sculpture was the work of the famous Genoese Achille Canessa.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- In 1898, Spain granted autonomy to Puerto Rico and the Provincial Council became the Insular Chamber. Architect Patricio de Bolmburu redesigned the interior of the building in 1898, and this is where the first Puerto Rican Parliament conducted its affairs.







WAR DEPARTMENT,  
HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF PORTO RICO,  
SECRETARY OF FOMENTO.

No. 418.

San Juan E. U. de A. II de Febrero de 1899.

Remito á Ud. la adjunta instancia suscrita por Don Francisco Oller, Director de la Escuela de Dibujo y Pintura establecida en uno de los salones de este edificio, á fin de que, á la brevedad posible, se sirva informar acerca de lo que en la misma se solicita y se relacione directamente con el cargo de Ud.

De Ud. respetuosamente.

F. Degetau y González

Señor Arquitecto Don Armando Morales.

# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- Federico Degetau y González was was a member of the municipal council of San Juan in 1897, and mayor of San Juan in 1898. He was deputy to the Spanish “cortes generals” of 1898. After the Spanish-American War, he was appointed by the military governor General Guy Vernor Henry as the Secretary of the Interior in the first cabinet formed under American rule in Puerto Rico, in 1899.





Puerto-Rico 12 de Febrero de 1899.

Honorable Jefe de Departamento del Interior.

La solicitud del artista-pintor Francisco Oller dice:

Para que puedan trabajar las Señoritas alumnas de dibujo y pintura en el salon que para esa escuela se ha destinado, es necesario y se solicita al Sr. Jefe, haga retirar la tarima que para otros fines le habia colocado en dicho salon. D.<sup>o</sup> Armando Morales empleado de ese Departamento y encargado de realizar esas obras puede informar sobre el asunto.

Al mismo tiempo podria darse con mas facilidad la clase de dibujo industrial dedicada a los artesanos que tiene lugar por la noche y la que debe establecerse de perspectiva.

Que es de suma necesidad que se retiren los muebles que de la extinguida Diputacion Provincial se encuentran en el salon, echandose a perder tan los armarios como las mesas-escriptorio, y sobre todo, 26 sillones de gran valor que sirvieron para aque- nos Sres. Diputados Provinciales; y ademas, por lo mucho que entorpecen la buena marcha de las enseñanzas que en el salon tienen lugar. El Sr. Jefe de Hacienda está dispuesto a cooperar en este asunto.

Muy respetuosamente

F. Oller.

# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- Francisco Oller was the director and teacher of the art school he founded at the Diputación Provincial building in 1899.
- Oller (1833–1917) was the most celebrated Puerto Rican artist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He worked and studied in Madrid and in Paris, where he studied with Courbet and hung out with Impressionist painters like Pissarro, Monet and Cézanne.
- Oller founded around 10 short-lived art schools. He usually offered free tuition to those who couldn't pay and encouraged young women and minorities to attend.
- Oller and the Secretary of the Interior, in charge of the DP building Federico Degetau, exchanged letters regarding the property.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL



"The School of Master Rafael Cordero" (circa 1890), an oil by Francisco Oller. Ateneo Puertorriqueño, San Juan, P.R.





# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- On January 15, 1899, the military government changed the name of Puerto Rico to Porto Rico and on May 17, 1932, U.S. Congress changed the name back to Puerto Rico.

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF PORTO RICO  
CIVIL DIVISION  
SAN JUAN

April 28th, 1900.

S i r :

*for file in your office the original*  
I have the honor to enclose herewith proceedings of Board of Appraisers, No. 4981 B, for the property of The Provincial Deputation, with 21 enclosures, blue prints, from 1 to 21 inclusive.

very respectfully,

*J. H. Sackin.*  
Aide-de-Camp.

The President of

The Board of Public Works,

San Juan, P. R.

GWR

22 Enclosures.





## **HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL**

- On December 3, 1900, the first meeting of the first legislative body elected by the Puerto Rican people, known as the Chamber of Delegates met at the former site of the Provincial Council.
- Manuel F. Rossi was the first President of the elected Chamber of Delegates that met at the Diputacion Provincial building.
- Other members included: Francisco Mariano Quiñones, Jose Tous Soto, José De Diego, Luis Lloréns Torres and Nemesio Canales.







## **HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL**

- The first Chamber of Delegates elected in 1900: Seated from left to right: Pascasio Fajardo Cardona, Pedro Juan Rosaly, Eduardo Lugo Viñas, Aurelio Méndez Martínez, Pedro Descartes, José A. Vive Calzada, Luis Torregrosa and Cayetano Coll y Toste. Standing second row: Ulpiano R. Colóm, Tomás Carrión Maduro, Luis Sánchez Morales, Salvador G. Rosa, Manuel F. Rossy and José Tous Soto. Third row: Manuel V. Domenech, Ignacio Seín Isasa, Angel Mattei, Manuel Rodríguez and Manuel Zeno Gandía.





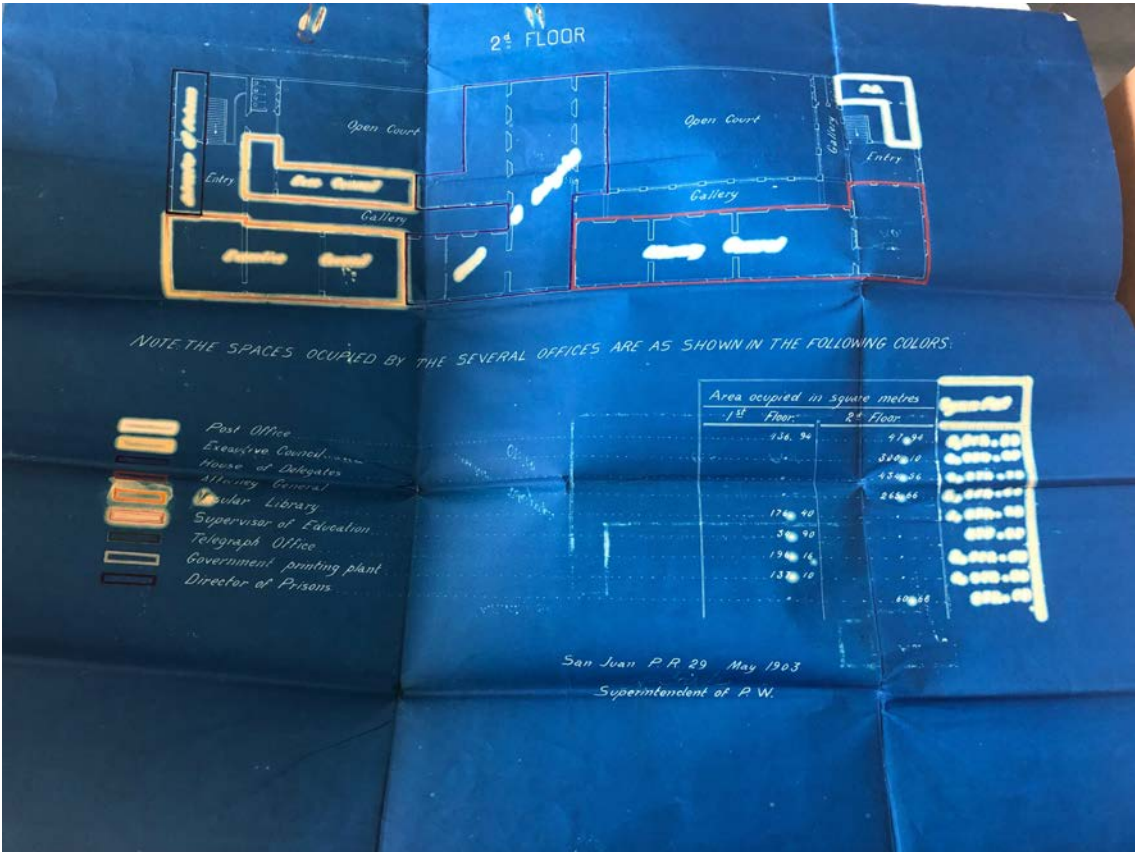
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The First Post Office and More...



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US Postal Office's original construction plan for the Diputacion Provincial building in the early 1900's. It was the first Post Office in Puerto Rico.







It was the Post Office in 1906.







*Edificio donde radican las oficinas principales  
del Departamento de Agricultura y Comercio,  
en San Juan.*

*Building where the main offices of Depart-  
ment of Agriculture and Commerce are located,  
at San Juan.*

The building  
was the office  
of the US  
Department of  
Agriculture  
and  
Commerce in  
1939.



# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

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Historic Photos





- March on the street in front of the building in 1905.







# HOTEL PALACIO PROVINCIAL

- A 1890 photo of the Diputación Provincial building taken from the “Álbum de Vistas de la Capital” by E. López Cepero.





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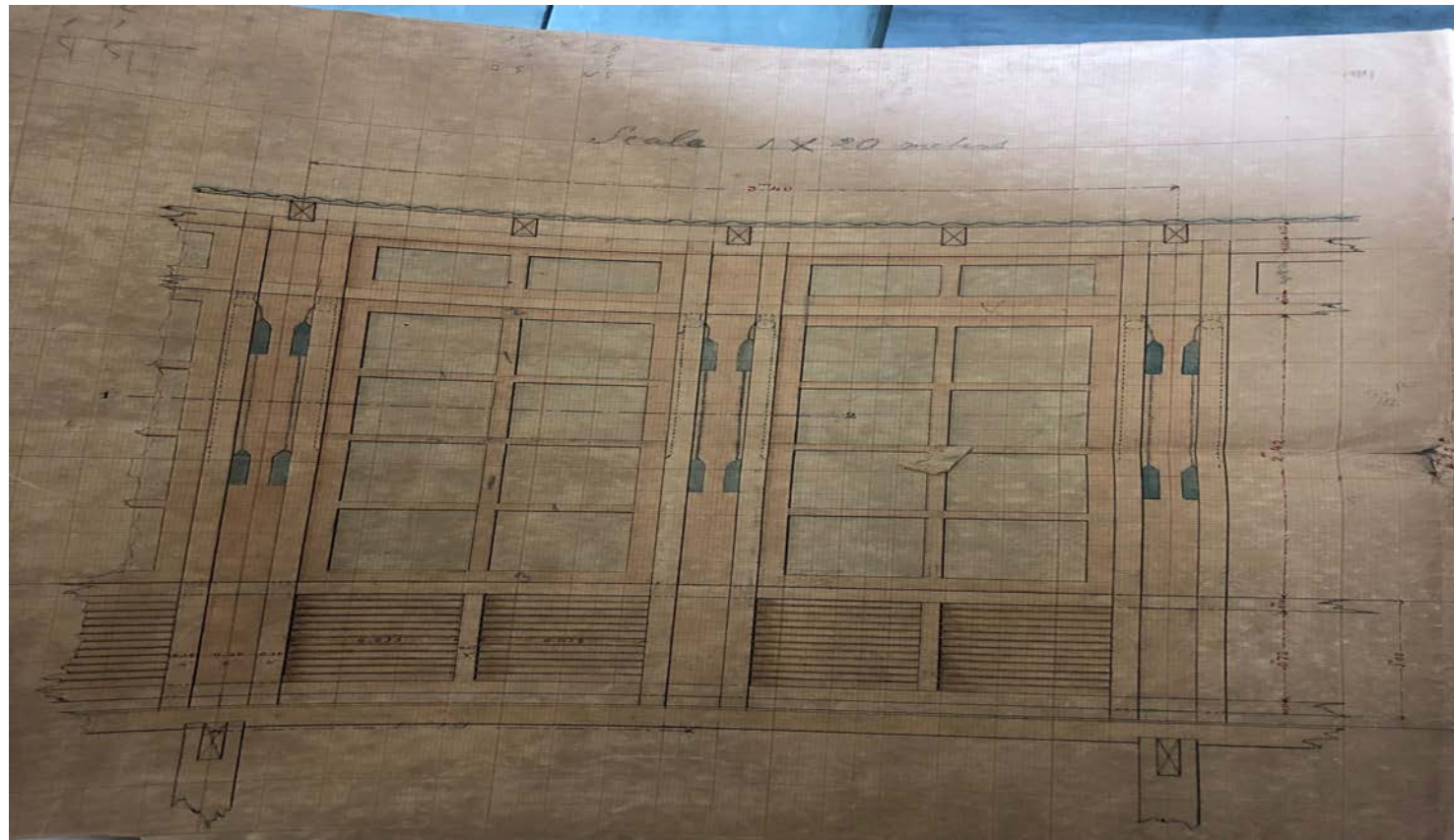


Collection Paris-Bazar

Postcard  
1901-1906.



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San Jose street  
in front of the  
building 1905.

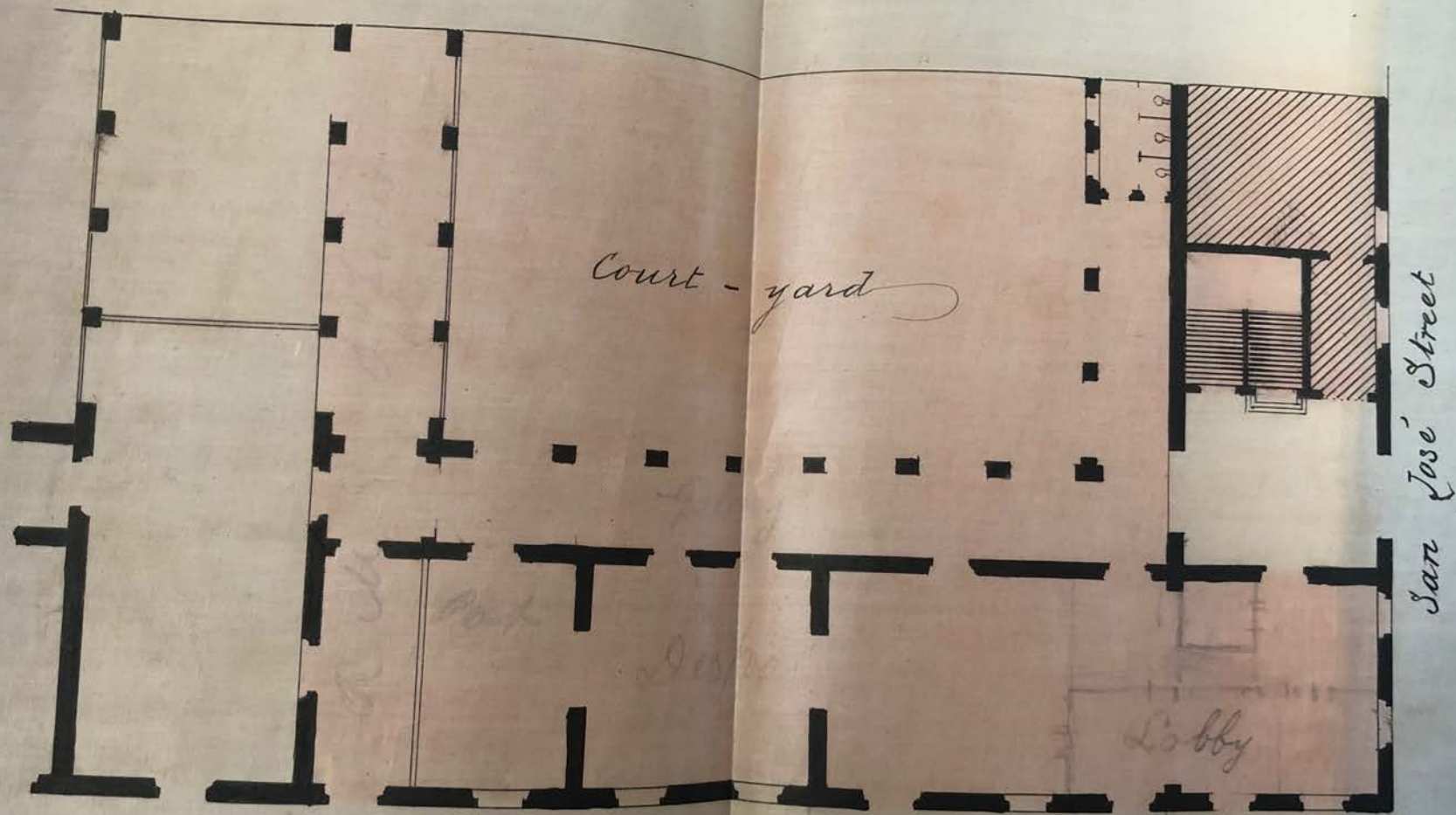






Plaza Principal.





Court - yard

San José Street

Lobby

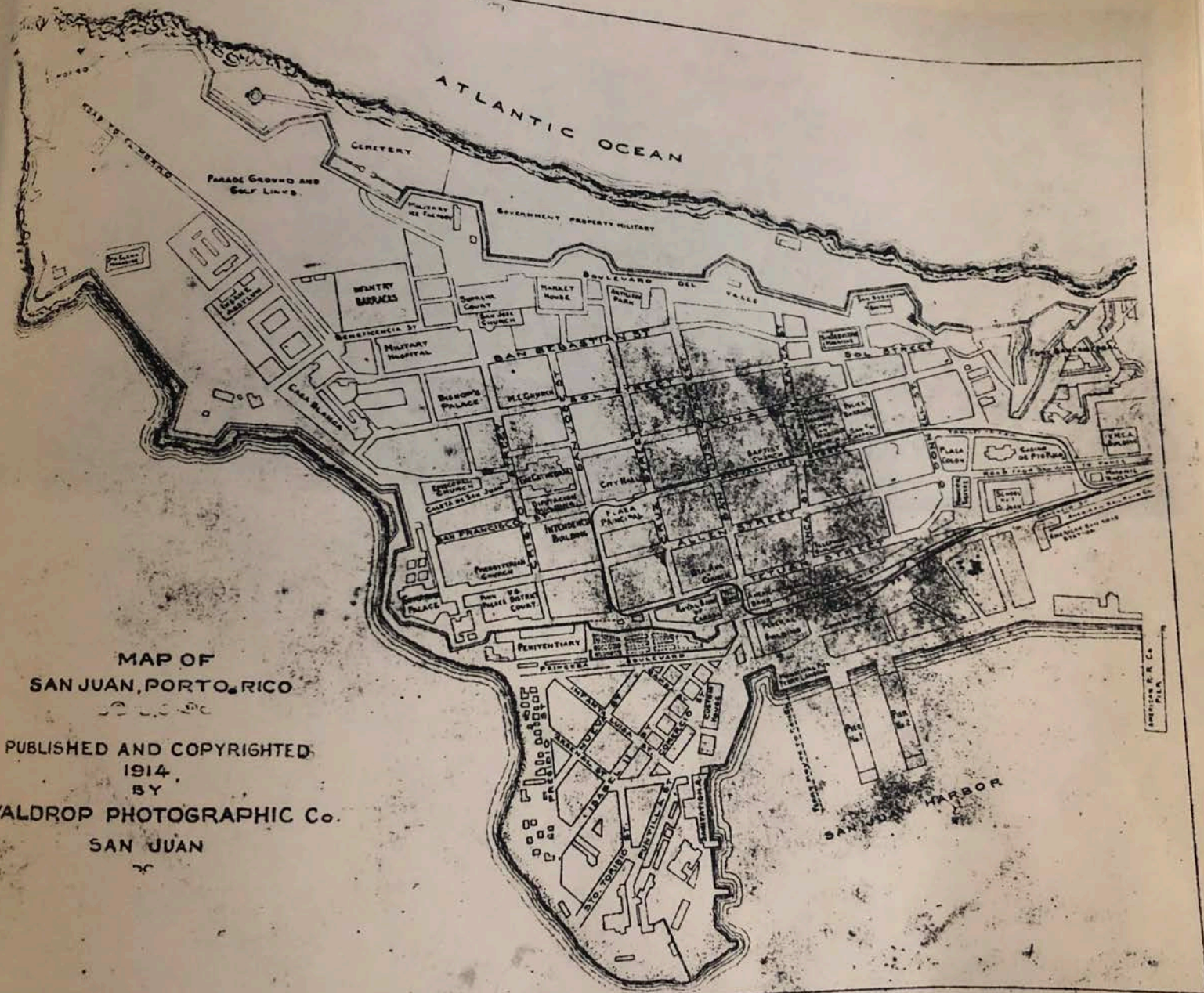
San Francisco Street

Scale 1 x 200 meters

San Juan P.R. 26<sup>th</sup> July 1900







MAP OF  
SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO

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1914  
BY  
WALDROP PHOTOGRAPHIC CO.  
SAN JUAN

1537

CO - C-5 no 120 (f)

