1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **Caparra**

Other Name/Site Number: **Ciudad de Puerto Rico**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: **State Road No. 2, Km 6.2** Not for publication: ___

City/Town: **Guaynabo** Vicinity: _X_

State: **Puerto Rico** County: **San Juan** Code: **061** Zip Code: _____

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-local: ___
Public-State: _X_
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): ___
District: ___
Site: _X_
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	__1__	buildings (museum)
__1__	_____	sites
_____	__2__	structures
_____	_____	objects
__1__	__3__	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: __1__

Name of related multiple property listing: **N/A**

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ 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 ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: **Government** Sub: **Capitol of Puerto Rico**

Current: **Recreation** Sub: **Commemorative Area**

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: **N/A**

MATERIALS:
Foundation:
Walls:
Roof:
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Site Type: The Caparra Site contains the intact archeological remains of the first capital of Puerto Rico, the oldest known European community under United States authority. Caparra was founded by the first governor of the island Juan Ponce de León, in 1508. The townsite, located on the south side of San Juan Harbor in the present suburb of Villa Caparra, was abandoned in 1521 with the removal of the capital to San Juan.

Environmental Setting: The island of Puerto Rico, at the time of the founding of Caparra (1508), contained about six hundred thousand Native Americans referred to as Arawaks or Tainos. Most of the Tainos lived on the south, or Caribbean, side of the island where the drier climate and good soil promoted the planting of cassava (manioc), sweet potatoes, maize, beans, and squash. Running east-west through the middle of the island is a cordillera, or mountain range, with the highest point of this range located in the northeastern quarter of the island, where placer gold deposits were shown to the Spanish by the Tainos (Sauer 1969:158-159).

> The island gold was found as placers, waste of weathering and erosion of mountains collected in stream channels, occasionally as residuum in the decayed mantle of bedrock. In the long process of wearing down of the mountains bits of heavy and inert gold were trapped on certain lower mountain flanks by deposit from small streams. The so-called mines were submerged bars (the meaning of the name "placer"), under water or alluvium. The productive districts were few, of small extent, and slight depth. In the islands of Haiti and Puerto Rico they were found immediately by native disclosure [Sauer 1969:197-198].

The northern third of the island, located on the Atlantic Ocean side, was primarily an open coastal savannah with hardwood forests located away from the sea. Caparra was established in this environment to be near the placer gold deposits, but the town also had access to a large bay (San Juan Harbor), and good water from several small streams in the area (Pantel et al. 1988:C-1).

Caparra was the hub of three roads; two went north across the savannah to the south side of San Juan Harbor, and the other went east to the mining district in the eastern mountains. The wetter climate of the northern side of the island made the maintenance of the roads a problem (See Figure 1) (Pantel et al. 1988:C-10). Throughout the occupation of Caparra, the residents complained about the unhealthy wet environment and its isolated position away from the harbor which increased the cost of merchandise shipped from the port to the city (Pantel et al. 1988:D-8).

Eventually in 1521, the capital of Puerto Rico was transferred across the bay to the present site of San Juan, and Caparra was

abandoned. The Caparra Site is presently surrounded by the community of Villa Caparra, one of the suburbs of San Juan, Puerto Rico (See Figure 2).

Historic Site Description: In 1506, Juan Ponce de León conducted a reconnaissance of Puerto Rico that disclosed the location of the gold deposits and identified what would become the townsite of Caparra as the best site for the founding of a colony. In early 1508, Juan Ponce de León returned to Puerto Rico with a grant from Governor Nicolás de Ovando, of Hispaniola, to establish a settlement on south side of San Juan Harbor. Ovando named the new settlement Caparra, but the King of Spain referred to it as Ciudad de Puerto Rico (Floyd 1971:99). Within two years (1510) Puerto Rican gold production exceeded all other Spanish colonies. By 1510 the King of Spain established Caparra as the capital of Puerto Rico and the location of the royal gold foundry (Wahenheim 1970:42).

During the next decade of Caparra's existence, Juan Ponce de León concentrated on developing the town into the capital of the island. Having had experience in founding settlements in Hispaniola, Ponce de León first constructed a wooden fortress (1508) to protect Caparra from attack. Two years later (1510), he constructed a large half **tapia** (concrete-like mixture of sand, shell, rock, and lime) and half stone masonry structure along the eastern edge of an open plaza (Pantel et al. 1988:C-5). This structure would be 161 feet long and 65 feet wide and contain at least twelve rooms, with walls two feet thick (See Figure 3). The roof would be covered with Spanish style tiles and the interior decorated with floor tiles and painted wall tiles (de Hostos 1938:108-113). Juan Ponce de León moved his wife and children into this structure in 1510 (Wahenheim 1970:42).

This was apparently the only non-wooden building in Caparra. The church, located along the northern edge of the plaza, was of wood and thatch (See Figure 4). Residences of government officials, priests, and settlers, and the gold foundry were also made of similar materials, copying the Taino native **bohios**, or dwellings.

Twice during the occupation of Caparra the town fell victim to fire. In 1513, the entire town of Caparra, with the exception of Ponce de León's **tapia** and stone house, was destroyed in a Taino and Carib attack. The second conflagration occurred in 1519, when part of Caparra's wood and thatch structures were consumed in an accidental fire. Even the gold foundry was a wooden structure with a brick chimney and floor, so fire may have been a major threat (Pantel et al. 1988:C-11-C-12).

The town of Caparra, during the second decade of the sixteenth-century, was centered around a central open plaza. On the plaza were the most important structures in the community; the Governor's **tapia** and stone residence, the wooden church, and gold foundry (See Figure 4). Wooden Taino style **bohios**, that served as the residences of colony officials, artisans, and settlers, would have been clustered around the plaza.

Previous Archeological Investigations: In 1936, the Subcomisionado de Agricultura y Comercio instituted a program of developing tourist facilities in Puerto Rico. This agency located the collapsed ruins of a large stone structure in the vicinity of the traditional area of Caparra, on the south side of San Juan Harbor. The ruins constituted a sizeable mound made up of building and cultural debris that had been bisected by Highway #2, then a two lane street, in 1915. In 1936, members of this agency initially excavated the front exterior of this large stone structure and recovered Spanish colonial material culture before it was decided to seek professional assistance in the complete excavation of the ruin (Pantel et al. 1988:B-7).

In conjunction with the Puerto Rican Department of the Interior, a Comité de Acción de las Investigaciones de Caparra was formed and Don Adolfo de Hostos was charged with conducting the excavations at the site (Pantel et al. 1988:B-7). Throughout 1937, de Hostos mapped this house site and excavated 417 half meter square units in arbitrary 4" and 6" levels, exposing the northern and southern portions of a structure bisected by Highway #2 (See Figure 3). Topographic and photographic documentation of all phases of the excavation were produced. All excavated material was screened in order to recover Spanish colonial material culture. All foundations, walls, and floors of the house were exposed and mapped (See Figure 3) (de Hostos 1938:37-42).

The preliminary excavations of 1936 had located the ruins of a **tapia** structure on the north side of Highway #2. De Hostos's work on the south side of Highway #2 uncovered the other portion of this structure, but the building material was of local stone (See Figure 3). Upon complete excavation, de Hostos had uncovered the ruins of a structure 161 feet long and 65 feet wide with at least twelve rooms defined, separated by two foot thick walls. De Hostos concluded that this structure of **tapia** and stone fit Juan Ponce de León's own description of his structure at Caparra, in which the oldest section was built of **tapia**, with a later addition of quarried stone (de Hostos 1938:108-113).

De Hostos described and reproduced photographs of the artifacts he recovered from the house site which included bricks, glazed and painted tiles, unglazed roof tiles, early styles of Spanish majolica (Isabela Polychrome, c. 1490 to 1530), Spanish copper coins of the last decade of the fifteenth-century and the first two decades of the sixteenth-century, iron nails, horseshoes, and other metalwork (de Hostos 1938:52, 54, 70, 79-98; Goggin 1968:40, 128; Deagan 1987:7). The dates on the coins cover the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabela up through the beginning of Charles V's reign (1519), which provided a clear dating technique for de Hostos to identify this ruin as the residence of Juan Ponce de León, that was situated within the townsite of Caparra.

In his report of archeological investigations, de Hostos presented sixteenth-century accounts of Caparra, which describe Juan Ponce de León's house as a **tapia** and stone structure, and placed it along the eastern edge of Caparra's plaza (de Hostos

1938:22-24; Pantel et al. 1988:C-5). This was the only non-wooden building in Caparra. In addition, to the Governor's residence, and central plaza, the Caparra Site contained a church, bishop's residence, and cemetery, along the northern edge of the plaza (Pantel et al. 1988:C-8). At least 30 residences of government officials, priests, and settlers, a gold smelting foundry, warehouses, and blacksmith shop, were reported at Caparra in 1513 (Pantel et al. 1988:C-12) around the west and south sides of the plaza (Pantel et al. 1988:C-6-C-9). Most of these structures were made of native materials, copying the native **bohios**, or dwellings (See Figures 4 and 5) (Pantel et al. 1988:B-1). It has been estimated that some 600 permanent residents lived at Caparra, so the numbers of actual dwellings, offices, shops, warehouses, and activity areas were probably substantial (Pantel et al. 1988:C-14).

In 1948, a parcel of land, which included the northern half of the stone and **tapia** house ruin, a large portion of the central plaza, the area historically identified as containing the church site, bishop's residence, cemetery, and residential areas, on the north and west sides of the central plaza, respectively, was acquired by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and was later given to the Institute for Puerto Rican Culture for custodianship. In 1958, Don Ricardo Alegría, then Executive Director of the Institute, conducted limited excavations north of the house ruins in an area proposed for a small site interpretative museum. This work located the brick floor of a sixteenth-century structure along with early Spanish colonial artifacts, indicating that intact archeological remains associated with Caparra were located on Institute land (Pantel el al. 1988:B-11).

In 1987, the Puerto Rican State Historic Preservation Office gave a Historic Preservation Fund Grant to the Foundation for Archeology, Anthropology and History of Puerto Rico. The objectives of this grant were to compile all existing historical, documentary, and archeological data pertaining to Caparra, and to undertake limited archeological testing to determine the boundaries of the sixteenth-century townsite of Caparra. Under the direction of Dr. A. Gus Pantel, archeologists used soil augers and post-hole diggers to excavate forty-seven test units in and around the Institute property and neighboring areas (See Figure 6) (Pantel et al. 1988:F-1-F-4).

The soil removed in this testing project was screened to look for early sixteenth-century Spanish colonial artifacts in order to construct a boundary for the Caparra Site based on the distribution of these artifacts. This work uncovered examples of sixteenth-century Spanish colonial tiles, ceramics, and other material culture. From this investigation, a boundary for the townsite of Caparra was established which defined the remaining intact archeological area of Caparra (See Figure 7).

Site Integrity: In 1915, Highway #2, a two-lane paved road, was constructed through the middle of the Caparra Site, cutting in half the ruin, that de Hostos would excavate in 1937, and the

Caparra Site (See Figure 6) (Pantel et al. 1988:B-3).

The significance of the 1937 excavations (de Hostos 1938) caused the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to acquire 3 acres of the northern half of the Caparra Site in 1948, on the north side of Highway #2. In 1948, the Commonwealth expanded the width of Highway #2 from two to four lanes, to the north. At this time the northern section of the house ruin uncovered by de Hostos was moved (Pantel et al. 1988:B-3) (See Figure 6).

In 1958, the 3 acres of land acquired by the Commonwealth in 1948, was conveyed to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. In the same year (1958), the Institute constructed a museum on the site of Caparra to interpret the Caparra Site to the public (See Figure 10). Excavations by Alegría, uncovered a sixteenth-century brick floor and numerous Spanish colonial artifacts associated with the Caparra Site, in the area of the museum site (Pantel et al. 1988).

In 1963, the Commonwealth again widened Highway #2, this time to the south, destroying the southern portion of the house ruin found by de Hostos, in 1937 (See Figure 6) (Pantel et al. 1988:B-4). Based upon the 1987 archeological testing program (Pantel et al. 1988), the 1963 highway work and the construction of residences, in the 1950s, destroyed all archeological remains of the Caparra Site, south of Highway #2.

The 1937 de Hostos excavations identified the Caparra Site location through his investigation and identification of the house ruin site as the house site of Juan Ponce de León, which according to historical accounts was situated on the east side of the central plaza of Caparra. The 1958 Alegría investigations demonstrated that other areas of the Caparra Site contained intact archeological remains of the early sixteenth century. The 1987 archeological testing project (Pantel et al. 1988) demonstrated that intact sixteenth-century Spanish colonial archeological artifacts and cultural deposits only existed within 3 acres on the north side of Highway #2. The boundary of the Caparra Site was established by the limits of surface and subsurface sixteenth-century Spanish colonial artifacts and features in the 1987 investigations. The southern boundary is defined by the northern edge of Highway #2. The west, north, and east boundaries are defined by the property line of the land owned by the Institute for Puerto Rican culture. This property coincides with the maximum known extent of sixteenth-century Spanish colonial artifacts and features.

The historic extent of the Caparra Site is presently unknown. De Hostos' 1937 excavations identified the location of Juan Ponce de León's house, that occupied a central location within Caparra. Historical information noted that this structure fronted on an open central plaza and occupied the east side of the plaza (See Figure 6).

Using the original location of this structure it is possible to determine that most of the open central plaza, and much of the

west side of the plaza, where several residences existed; and the north side of the plaza, where the church, bishop's house and cemetery were located; are within the 3 acres, north of Highway #2. This is the area proposed as a boundary for the Caparra Site.

This same area was identified in the 1987 archeological testing project as containing the maximum known extent of early sixteenth-century Spanish colonial artifacts and cultural deposits (Pantel et al. 1988). Past highway and urban construction has destroyed the southern half of the Caparra Site, and the house ruin uncovered by de Hostos, leaving only the northern half of the site intact.

According to Dr. A. Gus Pantel, the southern two-thirds of the house ruin, excavated by de Hostos, in 1937, were destroyed by the initial construction (1915) and later expansion of Highway #2 (1963). The northern one-third of the ruins were disassembled and moved about twenty feet northward to their present location in conjunction with the 1948 highway expansion (Pantel et al. 1988:E-8). The evidence for the movement of the remaining portion of the ruins is demonstrated in historic aerial photographs which display differing alignments for the ruins, before and after the widening of the highway, in 1948 (See Figures 8 and 9).

According to National Register Bulletin Number 15 "a moved **portion** of a building, structure, or object is not eligible because, as a fragment of a larger resource, it has lost integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, and location." A site visit to the Caparra Site, conducted in February 1991, by Dr. Mark R. Barnes, Senior Archeologist, National Register Programs Division, with Mr. Armando Marti, Archeologist, Puerto Rican Preservation Office, confirmed that the moved ruins did not possess integrity as defined by Bulletin Number 15. Therefore, it was determined that the moved ruins should be considered a noncontributing resource.

The noncontributing properties within the 3 acre boundaries of the Caparra Site consist of a museum building, a small parking lot, and the moved house ruins. Only that portion of the Caparra Site, identified in 1987 as defined by the maximum known extent of surface and subsurface sixteenth-century Spanish colonial deposits and artifacts of the Caparra Site is considered a contributing resource.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B X C ___ D X

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

NHL Criteria: **Criteria 1, 2, and 6**

NHL Theme(s):

NHL Thematic Framework

II. European Colonial Exploration and Settlement

A. Spanish Exploration and Settlement - Caribbean

Areas of Significance: **Exploration/Settlement**

Period(s) of Significance: **Spanish Colonial**

Significant Dates: **A.D. 1508-1521**

Significant Person(s): **Juan Ponce de León**

Cultural Affiliation: **Spanish Colonial**

Architect/Builder: **N/A**

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The Caparra Site, or Ciudad de Puerto Rico, is the earliest known European settlement under United States authority. During the period of occupation of Caparra (1508-1521), the Spanish colonists spread throughout the Caribbean in the earliest period of Old World conquest and colonization of the New World. Caparra is an excellent example of this period of colonization, from which the Spanish developed the experience to initiate the conquest of most of the western hemisphere. The site of Caparra is associated with a significant early Spanish colonial historical figure, Juan Ponce de León, the founder of Caparra, the first governor of Puerto Rico, and the European discoverer of Florida.

The Caparra Site is considered nationally significant under the National Historic Landmark Criteria 1, 2, and 6 for being an outstanding example of the earliest Old World colonization in the New World; for its association with Juan Ponce de León, a significant Spanish explorer and historical figure; and, for its demonstrated and potential archeological significance, respectively. The Caparra Site falls under the National Historic Landmark Theme of European Colonial Exploration and Settlement and the Subtheme of Spanish Exploration and Settlement.

NHL Thematic Framework

II. European Colonial Exploration and Settlement

A. Spanish Exploration and Settlement - Caribbean

Early Spanish Colonization in the Caribbean

Prior to the colonization of the Caribbean, few European countries had any experience in the administration of overseas possessions, with the exception of Portugal and Castile. During the fifteenth-century, both countries had expanded their influence into the Atlantic Ocean and were in active competition with each other for the Cape Verde, Azores, and Canary Islands, off the west coast of Africa. Each kingdom developed its own colonization strategy.

The Portuguese occupied Cape Verde and the Azores as refitting stations for ships to their trading posts, or **factorias**, that were spread along the west coast of Africa, eventually reaching around the continent to the Indian Ocean, as a means of tapping the riches of the Orient. Although the Orient was the main goal of several decades of exploration and discovery, the **factorias** of west Africa were designed to produce a profit for the Portuguese through the trade of European manufactured goods for gold, slaves, and ivory. Each of these **factorias** existed as isolated pockets of Europeans who took advantage of local trade and supported the long-distance voyages of the Portuguese trading ships to the Orient.

The Spanish rulers, on the other hand, were mainly engaged in the **Reconquista**, or reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Moors. This effort, beginning in the eighth-century, would culminate with the surrender of Granada, in 1492, to the combined military might of Queen Isabela of Castile-León, and her husband King Ferdinand of Aragón, whose marriage in 1469 had united the two main ruling dynasties of Christian Spain.

For centuries, the Spanish had gradually worn down the Moors through the establishment of **presidios**, or fortified towns, that had extended piecemeal the Christian rulers' authority into the territory of the Moslem Moors. Such fortified towns were under the immediate control of a feudal lord whose loyalty and military skill had justified the rulers giving them the **presidio** and surrounding lands and peoples as their hereditary fief. Such a social process, developed over the centuries of the late Middle Ages, created a Spanish military elite that gained power and wealth through conquest of new lands at the behest of the Spanish Crown.

In a foreshadowing of events to transpire in the Caribbean, Queen Isabela of Castile-León took formal possession of the Canary Islands in 1477 and quickly brought in military commanders and soldiers to control the local natives called Guanches. Within just a few years, most of the aboriginal population of the Canaries had been killed off, and the land was parceled out as fiefs to the successful military commanders. The land was resettled by families from Castile who became vintners and sugar cane farmers (Lister & Lister 1987:189-191).

Both of these forms of Iberian colonization, Portuguese **factorias** for trade, and the more feudal establishment of fiefs or grants of land by the Spanish rulers, were familiar to Christopher Columbus. Columbus was married to a woman of a minor noble Portuguese family from the Cape Verde Islands and often visited the **factorias** of the Portuguese along the west African coast. For him the lands he hoped to find would be set up along the lines of the Portuguese **factorias** that had proven so profitable to the rulers of Portugal (Floyd 1971:17). According to Alistair Hennessy, author of The Frontier in Latin American History:

> Antecedents for the early expeditions to the Indies may be found in those which had been mounted a few years earlier against the Canary Islands and the Barbary coast of North Africa. The small scale of the operations in the Indies did not require substantial modification of these precedents.
>
> Privileges were embodied in **capitulaciones**, granting to Columbus, for example, a percentage of the royal profits gained by commerce, as well as jurisdictional and administrative privileges. The initial purpose of the expeditions was not to settle but to probe for the sources of immediately realizable commercial profit and to establish monopoly trading posts as in Portugal's trading empire [Hennessy 1978:30].

The Spaniards who accompanied Columbus to the Caribbean islands he discovered in 1492 were culturally conditioned to assume that the Spanish colonization model of individual military prowess to win wealth, land, and titles from the crown was the appropriate manner for colonization of the New World. In addition, unlike the Africans, who regularly mined and traded gold for European goods, the aboriginal peoples of the Caribbean had little to trade except the gold that they occasionally found in the placers on the islands, and that was quickly acquired by the Spanish. For these reasons, the **factoria** system was quickly transformed into a tribute system where the natives were required to mine and recover for Columbus a certain measure of gold each month.

The 1492 patent between Columbus and the King and Queen of Spain made the mariner the Viceroy, Governor, and Admiral over all lands that he discovered and this patent extended "from successor to successor forever and always" (Sauer 1969:16). This meant that having discovered Puerto Rico, Columbus's **asiento**, or contract, with the rulers of Spain gave Columbus and his heirs sole exclusive rights to any future revenues from the island.

Columbus's contract with the Spanish Crown for the division of wealth in the Caribbean islands excluded the individual Spaniards from access to the two main assets in the New World: the placers of gold and the Tainos to provide the labor to recover the gold. From his arrival in Hispaniola on his second voyage to the New World in 1493 until his removal by a crown-appointed investigator in 1500, Columbus and his family were engaged in a constant struggle to control rebellious Spaniards who attempted to carve out their own fiefs on the island of Hispaniola. Ultimately, because "Columbus placed the capitalistic **factoria** system in conflict with the older **Reconquista** tradition in which would-be **caballeros** won wealth and fame by their efforts" (Floyd 1971:20), the Spanish rulers replaced him with Francisco de Bobadilla who began granting **repartimientos** and **encomiendas** of land and Tainos to loyal Spanish commanders. Prominent among these commanders was Juan Ponce de León, who had shown great skill and daring in reducing the Higüey province of southeast Hispaniola, which a new governor Nicolás de Ovando granted to him as his fief.

This medieval tradition, which had served the Spanish so well in the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula and the subjugation of the Canary Islands, was now fully in place in Hispaniola. As the gold placers and native population of this island declined, this cycle of conquest of the other islands of the Greater Antilles would be repeated by individual commanders on Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. According to James Lockhart and Stuart Schwartz, the authors of Early Latin America, A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil

> Significant placer deposits, quickly located, produced enough wealth to sustain the overall Spanish venture [in the Caribbean islands], but they were becoming exhausted by around 1515. Through the **encomienda**, the Spaniards acquired sufficient labor to work the mines for a time, but so precipitous was the decline of the

> Indian population that exhaustion of the labor supply antedated that of the deposits. Slaving expeditions into surrounding areas were one Spanish response. There followed the full-scale occupation, in 1508-1511, of Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Cuba, where similar, though quicker cycles immediately got underway. By the time of the conquest of Mexico, 1519-1521, the original demographic and mineral basis for a strong European presence had practically disappeared from the large Caribbean islands [1983:64].

The main feature of Spanish colonial settlement of the Caribbean was the emphasis on the creation of urban centers, or towns, such as Caparra, which were a throwback to the **Reconquista** days in Spain. Urban centers not only provided military security for the new colony, but also served to validate the Spanish occupation of an area, and create a distinctly Christian European setting in the New World from which the colony could be governed. However, many of these urban centers in the Caribbean were so small as to only be known from historical accounts of their existence. According to Alistair Hennessy

> A feature of early Spanish American urban history is the number of false starts in town-building, begun on arbitrarily chosen sites and then moved for commercial, strategic, or administrative convenience to a more favored site . . . The "filling-in" process which might have occurred as a result of settlement by homesteaders did not occur because of the pre-emption of land by big landowners who, through their domination of town councils controlled the distribution of land [Hennessy 1978:48].

In the case of Caparra, the inhabitants wished to move the capital to San Juan Island several times. It was only with the death of Juan Ponce de León, following his second expedition to Florida, that the citizens of Caparra could move the capital to a more favorable site. What ultimately ended the life of this early Spanish colonial urban town was a combination of local economic and general Caribbean depopulation factors. Although the site of Caparra was located near San Juan Harbor, the roads from the harbor to the town were little more than muddy tracks through a mangrove swamp. According to one authority, the "transportation of goods from the ships [in San Juan Harbor] to Caparra cost more than bringing them from Castile" to the Caribbean (Morales Carrión 1974:9). Movement of the town to San Juan Island afforded better access of the population to seagoing traffic. At the same time, by 1521, the gold placers were nearly exhausted in Puerto Rico and the entire Caribbean, so the majority of the population decamped to more productive areas of conquest, such as Mexico and Peru.

The townsite of Caparra represents the earliest known urban occupation under United States authority (1508). Caparra can trace its origin to cultural traditions developed on the Iberian peninsula during the seven hundred-year-long conflict between the

Christians and the Moors for the control of Spain. During this conflict, the granting of fiefs by Spanish kings to skillful military commanders proved to be one of the most successful measures in the **Reconquista**.

Although opposed by Columbus and his heirs, this feudal Spanish tradition was utilized by the earliest New World Governors of Hispaniola in the successful conquests of the West Indian islands of Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. The early **conquistadors** undertook the conquest of these islands, often at their own expense, under exclusive patents issued by the Governor. Military leaders, like Juan Ponce de León, were the means used by the Spanish government to subdue the Indies, and produce revenue for the Spanish crown. The creation of urban centers, like Caparra, facilitated these activities during the earliest European conquests in the New World.

Juan Ponce de León in the Conquest of the Caribbean

Juan Ponce de León (See Figure 11) is recognized as one of a select group of professional Spanish soldiers who participated in the first encounter between the inhabitants of the New and Old Worlds. The actions of these **conquistadors** during the first decades of the sixteenth century were to a large extent predetermined by their experiences in Spain. For over seven hundred years, the Spanish rulers of Medieval Christian Spain were engaged in a military and religious struggle with Moorish Moslems for the control of the Iberian peninsula.

The victory of Christian Spain over the Moors was based on a feudal order of knights whose loyalty was governed by the patronage extended to them by the crown. This symbiotic relationship allowed individual military leaders the opportunity to secure wealth, land, and titles from the Spanish kings for heroic military deeds against the Moors. As the Moslems were slowly forced southward by Spanish conquests, a patchwork of feudal fiefs, or land grants governed by hereditary nobles with allegiance to the crown, emerged on the Spanish landscape.

The marriage of Isabela of the Castile-León kingdom to Ferdinand of Aragón created the military strength to subdue the Moors, but it also brought to an end the conquests on the Iberian peninsula that provided the opportunities for a well-trained body of professional soldiers to advance both socially and economically. With the discovery of the Caribbean Islands, 1500 of these men decamped with Columbus on his second voyage to the New World that they viewed as simply an extension of the Medieval process of conquest to achieve the of kind hereditary rights others had secured in Spain.

Juan Ponce de León was born about 1460 in San Servás de Campos in what was then the Kingdom of León. He shared the name of the kingdom because "one of his ancestors had acquired the name of León by marrying Doña Aldonza de León, a daughter of Alfonzo IX and sister of that Ferdinand who was canonized for wresting

Seville from the Moors" in 1248 (Caruso 1963:12). The ancestors of Juan Ponce de León continued to serve the kings of Castile-León in their wars with the Moslem Moors to reconquer the Iberian peninsula over the next two hundred and fifty years as a minor noble family. In the latter part of the fifteenth century, the marriage of Queen Isabela of Castile-León to King Ferdinand of Aragón united the two major kingdoms of Christian Spain and provided the means for the final conquest of Moorish Granada in 1492. Juan Ponce de León participated in the campaigns against the Moors so that by the time he joined the second voyage of Columbus to the New World in 1493, he was already an experienced soldier and campaigner (Caruso 1963:12).

On his second voyage to the New World (1493), Christopher Columbus elected to take advantage of westerly winds and currents in crossing the Atlantic by taking a route that made landfall near the southern end of the Lesser Antilles, instead of making for the more northerly located Bahamian Islands, which would require fighting contrary winds and currents, as he did on his first voyage. This allowed for a quicker transit of the Atlantic, and once on the Caribbean side of the Lesser Antilles, Columbus could coast northward to the Greater Antilles island of Hispaniola (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) where he had established a small colony (La Natividad) on the north side of that island during his first voyage.

It was on Columbus's second voyage that he discovered the southern and western coasts of the island of Puerto Rico, which he named San Juan de Boriquén. Columbus stopped along the west coast to take on water, before heading west across the Mona Passage to his colony. This second expedition to the New World consisted of seventeen ships and 1500 men (Floyd 1971:17), among whom was Juan Ponce de León who would explore and govern Puerto Rico fifteen years later.

Complaints by the Spanish settlers regarding Columbus's monopoly led the Spanish rulers to appoint Francisco Bobadilla as Governor and Judge of the Indies to conduct an investigation of Columbus's administration of the Indies. Arriving in Santo Domingo in August of 1500, Bobadilla imprisoned Columbus and his brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, and returned them to Spain. Although Columbus would regain much of his patent in 1502, he was specifically excluded from Hispaniola, which was the main producer of gold for the crown at that time. Also on Hispaniola to win the cooperation of the Spanish settlers, Bobadilla began to award to individuals **encomiendas** (grants of lands and Taino slaves), and organize **repartimientos** (labor drafts of Tainos to recover gold from the placer deposits on Hispaniola). During Bobadilla's tenure (1500-1502), Ponce de León assisted the Governor by quelling native uprisings on Hispaniola that were a response to the forced drafting of Tainos for gold mining (Caruso 1963:12).

In early 1502, Bobadilla was replaced by a crown appointed governor for Hispaniola, Nicolás de Ovando. Ovando enforced strict rules of conduct and increased the tribute payments for

the Tainos in terms of gold to be washed from the gold placers and labor drafts. This led to another series of rebellions against the Spanish by the Tainos. According to Carl Sauer, author of The Early Spanish Main, the last area of Hispaniola to be conquered by the Spanish was the area of Higüey:

> The southeast peninsula was wholly overrun in 1504 in the so-called war of Higüey. In it the last major cacique [native chief] of the island was eliminated. The operation was led by Juan de Esquivel and Juan Ponce de León, who were both veterans of Columbus. Esquivel later took Jamaica and destroyed it. Ponce de León did the same for Puerto Rico [1969:149].

Using the mechanisms of **repartimiento** and **encomienda**, the strongest of the Spanish who secured land grants were able to utilize the labor of the native aboriginal Tainos to make themselves very wealthy. This scenario was played out first in Hispaniola, and later in Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Juan Ponce de León was awarded the **encomienda** of the Higüey province of extreme southeastern Hispaniola for his service to Governor Ovando during the Higüey War. Juan Ponce de León established a village called Salvaleón de Higüey (See Figure 12) and began a profitable business by raising cattle and horses and growing cassava for provisions on homeward bound ships to Spain (Caruso 1963:12).

The location of his **encomienda** would prove most fortunate for Ponce de León, because it was from Tainos in his province of Higüey that he first learned of the potential wealth of the island of Puerto Rico. Later, with the blessing of his patron, Governor Ovando, Juan Ponce de León and a company of fifty men established the town of Caparra in 1508 to validate his control of Puerto Rico.

With the increasing Spanish commitment to their New World colonies in the Caribbean, Archdeacon of the cathedral of Seville, Juan Rodríquez de Fonseca, was appointed by King Ferdinand to organize and oversee the administration of the Indies to ensure the crown received its share of the wealth being returned from the Caribbean (Sauer 1969:106-107). This required that Fonseca bring all areas of the Caribbean under the control of the crown which included the lands claimed by the heirs of the Columbus family and new lands discovered by the Hispaniola Governor Ovando (Sauer 1969:157).

To accomplish this, Fonseca and Ferdinand began to issue governorships to loyal individuals in Spain who would travel to the Indies and establish island governments with ties to the crown rather than other island governors. One of the first grants was given to Vicente Yáñez Pinzón, who commanded the **Niña** on the first Columbus expedition, to take charge of Puerto Rico (called at that time San Juan) (Sauer 1969:157-158). Pinzón's 1505 grant appears to have been the result of services to the king in developing new navigation guidance. It appears that Pinzón also had some idea of the value of Puerto Rico, having

obtained samples of gold from the island in 1500, on his return voyage to Spain after discovering Brazil (Wahenheim 1970:41). According to Sauer, King Ferdinand named Pinzón:

> Mi Capitain y Corregidor de isla Sanct Xoan [My Captain and Administrator of the Island of San Juan]. Pinzón was obligated to pay his respects to Ovando, but was not under the latter's orders. Ferdinand had called a conference of experts on the Indies, the Junta de Toro, in which [Amerigo] Vespucci and Pinzón proposed a new and desirable navigation. This may be the link to the grant to Pinzón . . . Pinzón was to settle the island of San Juan; the concession was to run for his lifetime and that of his heir. He went briefly to the island, perhaps built a stockade, and left some livestock. It would seem, therefore, that the King and Fonseca were contemplating a base in Puerto Rico that would be independent of Española [Sauer 1969:157-158].

Pinzón, however, never followed up on his work due to lack of funding. Therefore, Governor Ovando considered the grant lapsed and passed it over to Juan Ponce de León. Ponce de León, in control of the Higüey peninsula since 1504, had profited "by the sale of foodstuffs and by leasing Tainos to work in the mines" (Sauer 1969:158). From his Tainos, Ponce de León had heard rumors of gold mines on Puerto Rico, and in 1506 he established a temporary base near the Bay of Anasco on the western side of the island upon the receipt of Pinzón's grant from Ovando (Solís 1988:8). It was during this reconnaissance that Juan Ponce de León travelled inland to the north side of the island where the local Tainos showed the Spanish "the rich placer deposits flowing down from the tributaries into Mavilla, Cibuco, Guayanes, and Toa rivers" (Pantel et al. 1988:C-1).

In early 1508, Juan Ponce de León returned to establish Caparra on the south side of San Juan harbor. Juan Ponce de León's patron, Ovando, named the new settlement Caparra, but the King of Spain referred to it as Ciudad de Puerto Rico (Floyd 1971:99). The Anasco camp was abandoned in favor of Caparra with its better harbor and location nearer the gold placers. Caparra was originally established by Juan Ponce de León as a mining community with no thought to colonization, as he believed that the Puerto Rican Taino natives and the foodstuffs they grew could only support a small party of Spanish miners (Pantel et al. 1988:C-2).

With the experience he gained from fifteen years on Hispaniola dealing with aboriginal Tainos, as administrator and founder of a Spanish settlement in Higüey province, and as a loyal supporter of the crown appointed Governor Ovando, Juan Ponce de León was a logical choice to head the conquest of Puerto Rico. Using the fief granted to him by the Governor, in the name of the Crown, Juan Ponce de León undertook the conquest and settlement of Puerto Rico, which he governed from the town of Caparra.

> In contrast to Columbus's experience on Española, Ponce, aided by experienced miners, found gold quickly. He enjoyed good relations with his followers because his contract with the King was not a monopoly: he preempted certain [gold bearing] placers, and **conucos** [fields where the island staple of cassava was grown] in the King's name and operated them with salaried miners and Indians at first worked voluntarily for barter goods. The remainder of the Spaniards, the great majority, worked other placers on their own, paying only the **quinto** [royal fifth or tax] to the King [Floyd 1971:107-108].

Within a year, Juan Ponce de León was so successful in organizing a substantially peaceful conquest of Puerto Rico that his patron on Hispaniola, Ovando, "rewarded Ponce by appointing him governor and chief justice of the island" (Caruso 1963:13). Equally important to the new colony was the backing it received from the Spanish King, whose annual share of the gold mined in Puerto Rico amounted to 80,000 pesos. To ensure the continued well-being of Puerto Rico, regulations were enacted to support the island's economy.

> On June 5, 1510, soon after Caparra was founded by Ponce de León, the King ordered that all vessels going to Española [from Spain] could stop at San Juan and supply the settlers. Before the end of the year, the Casa [de las Indies] was instructed to see that all vessels going to the Indies made Puerto Rico their first port of call so as to intimidate the Caribs . . . The island's position as a trading center was further assured by the encouragement given to inter-colonial commercial contacts. As early as February 26, 1511, the Crown granted freedom of trade between Española and San Juan, and a year later, the settlers of both islands were allowed to go to the pearl fisheries off Terre Firme [South America] [Morales Carrión 1974:9].

Juan Ponce de León's success soon bred competition, and the fluid nature of the Caribbean frontier did not always ensure that one's conquest would be supported by the King of Spain. When Governor Ovando was recalled to Spain in 1509, his replacement was Diego Columbus (Christopher Columbus's brother) who soon installed his own men to administer the island of Puerto Rico at San Germán on the western side of the island to support his family's rights to the island by virtue of discovery. Meanwhile, the crown granted a license to Cristóbal de Sotomayor to establish a colony on the southern coast of Puerto Rico (Pantel et al. 1988:C-2-C-3). Such an appointment affected Diego Columbus's hopes of controlling Puerto Rico, and threatened to upset the organization Juan Ponce de León had worked to establish at Caparra. Realizing that he could not hold the island with just a small mining camp at Caparra, Juan Ponce de León began issuing colonization permits to Spaniards to come to Caparra in 1510.

This year (1510) was a particularly troublesome year for Juan Ponce de León. Diego Columbus joined with Cristóbal de Sotomayor and sent him with two loyal followers, Miguel Díaz and Juan Cerón, to challenge Juan Ponce de León's control of Puerto Rico. When King Ferdinand learned that Ovando had been making appointments of island administrators in contradiction to the rights of Diego Columbus, Juan Ponce de León's titles were transferred to Cerón (Floyd 1971:99). But very shortly afterwards, Ovando, who had returned to Spain, had convinced the king to restore Juan Ponce de León's rights to Puerto Rico (Caruso 1963:13). A secret message arrived in May of 1510 from the king to Juan Ponce de León reappointing him Governor of Puerto Rico (Floyd 1971:100).

Upon learning of his reinstatement, Juan Ponce de León seized Diego Columbus's representatives on Puerto Rico, Juan Cerón and Miguel Díaz, and sent them to Spain in chains to answer charges of malfeasance while in office. Sotomayor switched his alliance to Juan Ponce de León and cooperated with him from his settlement at the mouth of the Anasco River. Unfortunately, Sotomayor was killed and his settlement destroyed in January of 1511 by a rebellion of Tainos aided by Caribs from St. Croix Island. Juan Ponce de León quickly subdued the rebellious Tainos and incorporated the survivors of Sotomayor's colony into Caparra (Pantel et al. 1988:C-3; Floyd 1971:103). Shortly after restoring order, Juan Ponce de León learned that the Spanish courts had exonerated Cerón and Díaz of his charges.

However, by late 1510, the gold placers of Puerto Rico were producing more ore than Hispaniola, and by decree of the King, Caparra was established as the capital of Puerto Rico and the site of the royal gold foundry. On October 25, 1510, the first gold was smelted at Caparra. This produced 100,000 pesos of gold (Wahenheim 1970:42). These activities finally secured Juan Ponce de León's claims to the riches of the island against other Spanish competitors, if not the governorship. Cerón and Díaz returned to Hispaniola in October of 1511, and during the same month, Juan Ponce de León was again forced to turn over to Cerón administrative powers (Floyd 1971:105).

Despite the best efforts of Diego Columbus to diminish the importance of Juan Ponce de León and the town Caparra, the settlement continued as the urban settlement and capital of Puerto Rico. The major effect of this political struggle between Juan Ponce de León and Columbus was that the former's carefully

> . . . controlled situation [on Puerto Rico] broke down as hundreds flocked to the island, a movement that coincided with Diego Colon's [Columbus's] successful assertion of his right to name the governing official and led to the establishment of the **repartimiento**. This institution, in turn, prompted Indian revolts and withdrawal from the island as partly Caribized Tainos resisted the incursions [Floyd 1971:108].

What occurred on Puerto Rico was a repeat of the problem on other Caribbean Islands: too many Spaniards and too few resources--gold and Taino slaves. In order to acquire more gold to make more Spaniards wealthy, more Tainos had to be enslaved to wash gold from the placer deposits or grow food to support the Spanish and the Taino miners. European diseases, overwork, and abuse reduced the numbers of Tainos, as did warfare between the Spanish and the Tainos and their Carib allies from the Virgin Islands, requiring Juan Ponce de León to undertake slave raiding expeditions to new areas of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamian Islands, and finally in 1513, the Florida peninsula.

During the next ten years of Caparra's existence, Juan Ponce de León concentrated on developing the town into the capital of the island and the recovery of as much gold as possible. Having experience in founding settlements in Hispaniola, Juan Ponce de León first constructed a wooden fortress which he later expanded into a **tapia** and stone structure along the eastern edge of an open plaza (Pantel et al. 1988:C-5). He moved his wife and children into this structure in 1510 (Wahenheim 1970:42). This was apparently the only non-wooden building in Caparra. Even the church, along the northern edge of the plaza, was of wood and thatch (See Figure 4). Residences of government officials, settlers, and the gold foundry would also have been made of similar materials, copying the **bohios**, of the local Taino (See Figure 5).

Twice during its occupation, Caparra fell victim to fire. In 1513, the entire town of Caparra, with the exception of Juan Ponce de León's **tapia** and stone house, was destroyed in a Carib and Taino attack. With the change in administration from Juan Ponce de León to Cerón, hundreds of Spaniards flocked to Puerto Rico demanding **encomiendas** of Tainos and access to the gold placers. To satisfy this demand, the government encouraged slaving raids into the Daguao area of northeastern coastal Puerto Rico. A combined Taino-Carib force attacked Caparra in retaliation and burned the town and church, and killed a number of inhabitants (Floyd 1971:106). In response, the Spanish raided the Taino in the Daguao area and drove the Caribs off Vieques Island, capturing many slaves (Floyd 1971:107). The second conflagration occurred in 1519, when a number of the **bohio** dwellings were consumed in an accidental fire (Pantel et al. 1988:C-11-C-12).

During the second decade of the sixteenth century, the gold production of Puerto Rico quadrupled, making Juan Ponce de León one of the richest men in the New World, but at an appalling loss of life. When Caparra was founded in 1508, the Taino population of Puerto Rico was believed to number six hundred thousand, without counting women and children. Within eight years, the Indians had practically disappeared and the island was turned into a vast range for livestock (Sauer 1969:159). A 1514 census showed only 4,000 Taino were left in Puerto Rico (Wahenheim 1970:44).

To supplement the work force in the mines of Puerto Rico, Spanish ships began to remove large numbers of Tainos from the Lucayas (Bahamian) Islands beginning in 1509. By 1513, the Bahamas were wholly depopulated, and in sailing through these islands in that year looking for slaves, Juan Ponce de León discovered the eastern coast of Florida and circumnavigated the peninsula of Florida (Sauer 1969:178).

By 1520, news reached the Spanish settlers of the gold discoveries of Hernán Cortés in Mexico, and most of the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean were quickly abandoned to join the rush. Only the mining centers of Santo Domingo and La Concepción de la Vega, in Hispaniola, and Caparra, in Puerto Rico retained their population throughout the entire Caribbean. However, the placer deposits of Puerto Rico were to the point of being exhausted, as were the supply of Tainos to mine the ore. The urge to seek newer and richer lands probably prompted the sixty-year-old Juan Ponce de León to secure a patent from the king for his 1513 discovery in an attempt to found a colony in Florida, in 1521.

Juan Ponce de León was under the mistaken notion that Florida was an island, as his patent called for him to "discover and settle the island of Bimini" (Sauer 1971:26). According to the sixteenth-century scholar Peter Martyr, Bimini was alleged to contain a spring that restored the youth of men who drank from it, but according to Bartholomé de las Casas, who had soldiered with Juan Ponce de León during the Higüey War, his real purpose in going to Florida was to take slaves (Sauer 1971:27).

The second expedition to Florida in 1521 was outfitted in Caparra and made up primarily of settlers from Puerto Rico. Juan Ponce de León was accompanied by two hundred men, fifty horses, friars, and a priest. Shortly after landing along the southwest coast of Florida, they were attacked and forced to take to their ships. The Spanish suffered several wounded, including Juan Ponce de León, who died of his wounds in Cuba, where his expedition landed. The survivors of this aborted expedition joined ships for Mexico rather than return to Puerto Rico, and shortly thereafter the town of Caparra was abandoned for the present day site of San Juan (Sauer 1971:35).

Archeological Significance of Caparra

The archeological significance of the early sixteenth-century Spanish colonial townsite of Caparra was immediately recognized by the excavator, Adolfo de Hostos, in the 1930s because of its demonstrated association with some of the earliest Spanish colonization efforts in the Caribbean, and in particular, its association with a prominent historical figure -- Juan Ponce de León (1938). The material culture recovered in these excavations was used in the development of a cultural chronology for the earliest Spanish colonial period of occupation of the New World, useful in the dating of early sixteenth-century archeological sites throughout the Caribbean area and the Southeastern United States (Goggin 1968:40, 134-135; Deagan 1987:7).

The above aspects are important contributions to the development of the study of the earliest Spanish colonization in the New World. However, recent archeological investigations on sixteenth-century colonial sites in the Caribbean and Florida have emphasized how the Spanish "colonists adapted themselves and their society to the social and environmental conditions encountered in the New World" (Ewen 1991:38).

The first effort to investigate the processes of acculturation from the study of Spanish colonial sites was undertaken by Dr. Kathleen Deagan, Historical Archeologist at the University of Florida, at eigtheenth-century house sites in St. Augustine, Florida (1983). Deagan's investigations demonstrated that:

> **Criollos** - people of Spanish descent born in the New World - embodied the Hispanic-American cultural tradition throughout the New World. **Criollos** for the most part retained the political, religious and social institutions of their mother country but implemented them in a radically different social and physical environment. The adaptive measures that this required resulted in what George Foster has called "cultural crystallization". This crystallized **criollo** tradition which included Old World European elements, New World aboriginal elements, and new forms combining Old and New World elements, was a major social and adaptive manifestation in colonial St. Augustine [1983:65].

Deagan believed that a Hispanic-American, or **criollo**, society would produce material culture remains that reflected both the Spanish and Native American cultures. This "crystallized **criollo**" tradition would be most evident in artifacts representing food-preparation activities, status-related items, the architectural styles of structures and their physical layout, and the diet of the colonist represented by faunal remains, all of which combine to form a Hispanic-American colonial pattern (Deagan 1983:264-271; Ewen 1991:102-114).

Archeological investigations at the sixteenth-century Spanish colonial sites of Santa Elena, South Carolina (South et al. 1988); Puerto Real, Haiti (Ewen 1991), and the sixteenth-century archeological components of St. Augustine, Florida (Deagan 1985), all exhibit a consistent patterning of material culture which support the model proposed by Deagan.

Within this patterning of material culture from sixteenth-century Spanish colonial Caribbean and Floridian sites, Native American ceramics used in food preparation and faunal remains of locally available foods are the key elements in demonstrating that the Spanish acculturated themselves to a New World environment, resulting in a distinct **criollo** society. At the same time, material culture imported from Spain would represent an attempt by the Spanish to maintain their European identity. As the dominant society, European artifacts would be represented in status-related items of individuals, eg., imported jewelry, ceramic tablewares, clothing accessories, and religious

paraphernalia (Ewen 1991:105-106). In addition, although local materials might be employed in the construction of structures, "the architecture style of the buildings and physical layout of the town should be Hispanic in nature" (Ewen 1991:106).

De Hostos's excavations at Juan Ponce de León's house site, within the townsite of Caparra, however, produced different sets of material culture from the sixteenth-century Spanish colonial sites noted above, indicative of a variation on the Deagan acculturation model. First, no Taino ceramics were recovered from the excavations. Instead, all of the food preparation ceramics consisted of European imported wares (1938:78-85). De Hostos did not describe any faunal remains as being recovered during the 1930s excavations, so this aspect cannot be checked.

Second, numerous high-status items of European origin were recovered from Caparra including large numbers of imported Spanish tablewares and utilitarian or cooking wares (1938:79-85); numerous copper coins dating from the 1490s-1519 (1938:86-90); glassware (either Spanish or Venetian) consisting of small green glass vials or **lagrimarios**, for pharmaceuticals, and clear glass wine drinking glasses (1938:90-91); and, iron artifacts displaying heraldic symbols, hinges or clasps for books, and artistic cast iron objects (1938:93-98).

Third, the house structure excavated by de Hostos, although constructed with locally available stone, shell, and sand, reflected a strong Spanish architectural style. The excavation recovered over 6,000 Spanish-style clay roofing tiles, hundreds of hand made bricks, and numerous hand carved stone drain fragments, possibly made on site; plus over 3,000 imported European iron nails and several Spanish glazed tiles, for interior decoration, that went into the construction of this structure (de Hostos 1938). Lastly, this structure fronted on an open plaza that was surrounded by public and administrative structures, including the gold foundry and church. In short, the townsite of Caparra, from the available documentation, was laid out in a European grid like fashion with the most important structures grouped around the central plaza.

The differences in the material culture from Caparra versus that found in other sixteenth-century Spanish colonial Caribbean and Spanish townsites should not be considered evidence to disprove the Hispanic-American, or **criollo**, acculturation model developed by Deagan. In his assessment of the artifacts found at Caparra, de Hostos noted an important fact that could account for such differences.

> The nature of the ornamentation on the small objects would be more indicative of someone possessing an elevated social and economic position than we would reasonably attribute to persons in the town of humble origin and condition [1938:98].

When the archeological evidence is combined with the known historical documentation regarding Caparra and Juan Ponce de

León, a clearer picture of the house site and its occupants and the townsite emerges. First, as Governor of Puerto Rico, Juan Ponce de León's gold mining operations and royal foundry served to make him among the wealthiest individual Spaniards in the Caribbean during the first decades of the sixteenth century. Second, the royal decree requiring all outbound shipping from Spain to the Caribbean to first stop at Caparra would have provided Juan Ponce de León great accessibility to imported European goods. Third, Juan Ponce de León was married to a Spanish woman of high status, so the food preparation artifacts, crucial to identifying acculturation processes, would reflect a Spanish household with little evidence of New World (Taino) influences.

The only sixteenth-century Spanish colonial site that comes close to matching the material culture assemblage recovered from the Juan Ponce de León house site at Caparra is the Nueva Cadiz townsite on the island of Cubagua just off the Venezuelan coast (Willis 1980:27). Both sites selected by the Spanish were on unfavorable terrain in order to be near the source of exploitable wealth, and both sites were immediately abandoned once their specialized extractive economies had exhausted that wealth (B. McEwen, personal communication 1991). While Caparra was responsible for the mining and smelting of gold from the largest placer deposits in the West Indies, Nueva Cadiz annually exported 800,000 pesos worth of pearls to Spain (Willis 1980:38).

Like the Juan Ponce de León house site within Caparra, excavations at Nueva Cadiz, in 1954 and 1955, produced a rich and large assemblage of European imported glass, ceramics, and metal goods that the Spanish inhabitants obtained in trade for pearls (Willis 1980:31-38). Raymond Willis, who studied the collection of artifacts, did note that "some intrusive aboriginal pottery was found, indicating a movement of various Caribbean Indians to Nueva Cadiz's pearl fishery;" however, these ceramics constituted the minority of the ceramics found at the site (Willis 1980:36).

In addition to differences observed in the material culture assemblages of Caparra and other sixteenth-century Spanish colonial sites, due to the economic and social status of Juan Ponce de León, another important factor--the function of the community--must be taken into account. The townsite of Caparra was not just the residence of Juan Ponce de León, but the capital of the island of Puerto Rico, the location of the royal gold foundry, and the first church. Therefore, numerous government officials, artisans, tradesmen, soldiers, and religious persons would have settled in Caparra, adding to wealth and social position of the community.

When Caparra is viewed within the context of other early sixteenth-century Spanish colonial townsites within Florida and the Caribbean, some interesting implications for determining the extent of acculturation of the Spanish in the New World may be observed. The townsite of Caparra was occupied by the first generation of Spanish settlers to come to the New World. They would have entered the New World with specific ideas regarding

what constituted appropriate Spanish foodways, status, and housing. From the archeological and historical record available on the Caparra townsite there would appear to be little evidence of acculturation or acceptance of New World innovations with the exception of the utilization of Taino **bohio** dwellings. This view, at variance with the material culture assemblages of other sixteenth-century Spanish colonial townsites, which produce large numbers of locally produced Native American ceramics and New World faunal remains, may be accounted for by the wealth derived from the gold placers and the fact that Caparra was the first port of call for ships bringing European goods from Spain.

One other factor that must be considered is that only one area of the Caparra townsite, the residence of the Governor, one of the wealthiest individuals in the Caribbean, has been investigated to date. Recent archeological testing demonstrated that much of the townsite of Caparra is intact below ground. Investigations of these areas may modify or support the observations presented above regarding the acculturation of the early Spanish colonists on Puerto Rico. Considering the productive results of the past archeological investigations from Caparra it is likely that future investigations at this site could provide information on research questions such as "foodways adaptations, ethnicity, and economic status in the archeological record, the formation of Euro-American cultures, and cross-cultural ideology" (Deagan 1987:1).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Caruso, John A.
1963 The Southern Frontier. Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York.

Deagan, Kathleen
1983 Spanish St. Augustine: The Archeology of a Colonial Creole Community. Academic Press, New York.

1985 The Archeology of Sixteenth Century St. Augustine. The Florida Anthropologist, Volume 38, Numbers 1-2, Part 1, March-June, pp. 6-33.

1987 Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500-1800, Volume 1. Smithsonian Press, Washington, DC.

de Hostos, Adolfo
1938 Investigaciones Históricas. Officina del Historiador. San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Ewen, Charles R.
1991 From Spaniard to Creole, The Archeology of Cultural Formation at Puerto Real, Haiti. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Floyd, Troy S.
1971 The Columbus Dynasty in the Caribbean, 1492-1526. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Goggin, John M.
1968 Spanish Majolica in the New World, Types of the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries. Yale University Publication in Anthropology, No. 72. Department of Anthropology. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Hennessy, Alistair
1978 The Frontier in Latin American History. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Lister, Florence C., and Robert H. Lister
1987 Andalusian Ceramics in Spain and the New World. University of Arizona Press. Tucson, Arizona.

Lockhart, James and Stuart B. Schwartz
1983 Early Latin America, A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil. Cambridge Latin American Studies. Cambridge University Press. London.

Morales Carrión, Arturo
1974 Puerto Rico and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean, A Study in the Decline of Spanish Exclusivism. University of Puerto Rico, San Juan.

Pantel, A. Gus, Jalil Sued Badillo, Anibal Sepúlveda and Beatriz del Cueto de Pantel
1988 Archeological, Architectural, and Historical Investigations of the First Spanish Settlement in Puerto Rico, Caparra. The Foundation of Archeology, Anthropology and History of Puerto Rico. San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Sauer, Carl O.
1969 The Early Spanish Main. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.

1971 Sixteenth Century North America. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.

Solís, Carlos Magaña
1988 Colonial Archeology of San Juan de Puerto Rico: Excavations at the Casa Rosa Scarp Wall, San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico. Office of Archeological Research, Alabama State Museum of Natural History, The University of Alabama. Report of Investigations No. 52.

South, Stanley; Russell K. Skowronek and Richard E. Johnson
1988 Spanish Artifacts from Santa Elena. Anthropological Studies No. 7. Occasional Papers of the South Carolina Institute of Archeology and Anthropology. University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Wahenheim, Kal
1970 Puerto Rico: A Profile. Praeger Publishers, New York.

Willis, Raymond F.
1980 Nueva Cadiz. In: Spanish Colonial Frontier Research, Edited by Henry F. Dobyns. Spanish Borderlands Research, No. 1. Center for Anthropological Studies, Albuquerque.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **1984**
___ 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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office **Puerto Rican**
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other(Specify Repository): **Institute of Puerto Rican Culture**

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: **3 acres**

UTM References:

	Zone	Northing	Easting		Zone	Northing	Easting
A	19	804900	2037600	**B**	__	_____	_____
C	__	_____	_____	**D**	__	_____	_____
E	__	_____	_____	**F**	__	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices ar marked by the following cordinates: UTM reference 19 804900 2037600.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the Caparra Site, enclosing 3 acres contains the maximum known extent of cultural resources at this site. The boundary was developed in a 1987 archeological testing project that identified the maximum known extent of surface and subsurface sixteenth-century Spanish colonial deposits and artifacts of the Caparra Site as being restricted to just these 3 acres.

Archeological investigations failed to define any sixteenth-century Spanish colonial deposits and artifacts outside the 3 acres due to modern construction which appears to have destroyed resources outside the proposed boundaries.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Mark R. Barnes, Ph.D., Senior Archeologist, National Register Programs Division

Org.: National Park Service, SERO

Street/#: 75 Spring Street, SW

City/Town: Atlanta

State: Georgia

ZIP: 30303

Telephone: (404) 331-2638

Date: July 16, 1992