

The image shows the interior of a historic room. The walls are covered in horizontal wooden planks with significant peeling paint, revealing the wood underneath. A doorway on the right is open, showing a glimpse of the outside world with a blue sky and a window with a decorative glass pattern. The floor is made of dark wooden planks. The overall atmosphere is one of historical decay and preservation.

Mapa de Historia: A Sample of Endangered Historic Sites in Puerto Rico

August 2018

America's 11 Most Endangered Sites

- The National Trust for Historic Preservation included de Historic Sites of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands in its 2018 national list of Endangered Sites.
- The following is a sample of some of Puerto Rico's endangered historic sites:
 - Hacienda Los Torres, Lares
 - Aguirre Historic Distric, Salinas
 - Morse Warehouse, Arroyo
 - San Geronimo Fort, San Juan (pending information)



Hacienda Los Torres Historic Site, Lares

- A coffee hacienda built in **1846**, possibly the oldest residence still standing in Lares
- Included in the **National Register of Historic Places** for architectural and historic significance:
 - Served as a refuge to two of the organizers of the 1868 insurrection against the Spanish Crown known as *El Grito de Lares*
 - Uniquely significant for its type, craftsmanship and use of materials
 - Built using native woods cut at the site, including Puerto Rican royal palm (*Roystonea borinquena*), a construction material rarely found or documented in Puerto Rico
- Also included in the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture's historic properties register
- Property of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, managed by a non profit group
- Politics threaten the recovery of this historic property, since the 1868 Grito de Lares has been used by the current independence movement as a symbol for struggle
- **Post hurricane status:** No repairs have been conducted, and the roof still lacks tarps (although tarps are available, locating a willing installer proved difficult). As of August, Para la Naturaleza has identified a contractor that will conduct emergency repairs to the roof. The work will be funded with a previous donation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation



Aguirre Historic District, Salinas

- The Aguirre Central Sugar Mill, located in the southern municipality of Salinas, was one of the largest and most productive Puerto Rican sugar industry complexes. This mill, maintained a settlement of workers on its grounds. This community had its own schools, stores, hospital, common areas, and more.
- Aguirre is the only remaining example in Puerto Rico of a company town.
- These so-called “company towns” arose during the second half of the 19th century when many countries, including the United States, began to industrialize. The huge factories established communities around their facilities to ensure availability of labor. By supplying jobs to the workers and fulfilling their basic needs, they promoted loyalty to the company among the laborers.
- In 1899, a group of investors from the United States acquired the Aguirre Plantation, along with other adjacent plantations, to create a mechanized central mill. El Batey Central Aguirre, the name of the town, was developed around 1900. The layout of the town had certain peculiarities, as it combined elements of U.S. urban design from the early 20th century with elements from the Caribbean. The complex of buildings was much more than a factory producing sugar. It was a semi-autonomous world, created by the dominant business consortium.
- The town was divided into two residential areas: one for the people from the United States and another for the Puerto Ricans. The houses were also arranged based on the position held by the worker in the organization. The children from the United States and the children of the Puerto Rican workers also studied in separate buildings.
- The houses the residential zone reserved for the administrative and technical personnel, separated from each other, were built in the colonial bungalow style. They were made of wood with roofs of corrugated galvanized metal sheets. In the southeastern part of the town was Montesoria, a residential zone for the factory workers, who were mostly Puerto Ricans. Houses consisted mostly of huts made of thatch. They were later replaced by wooden houses in the typical island style, covered with corrugated sheets of galvanized metal.

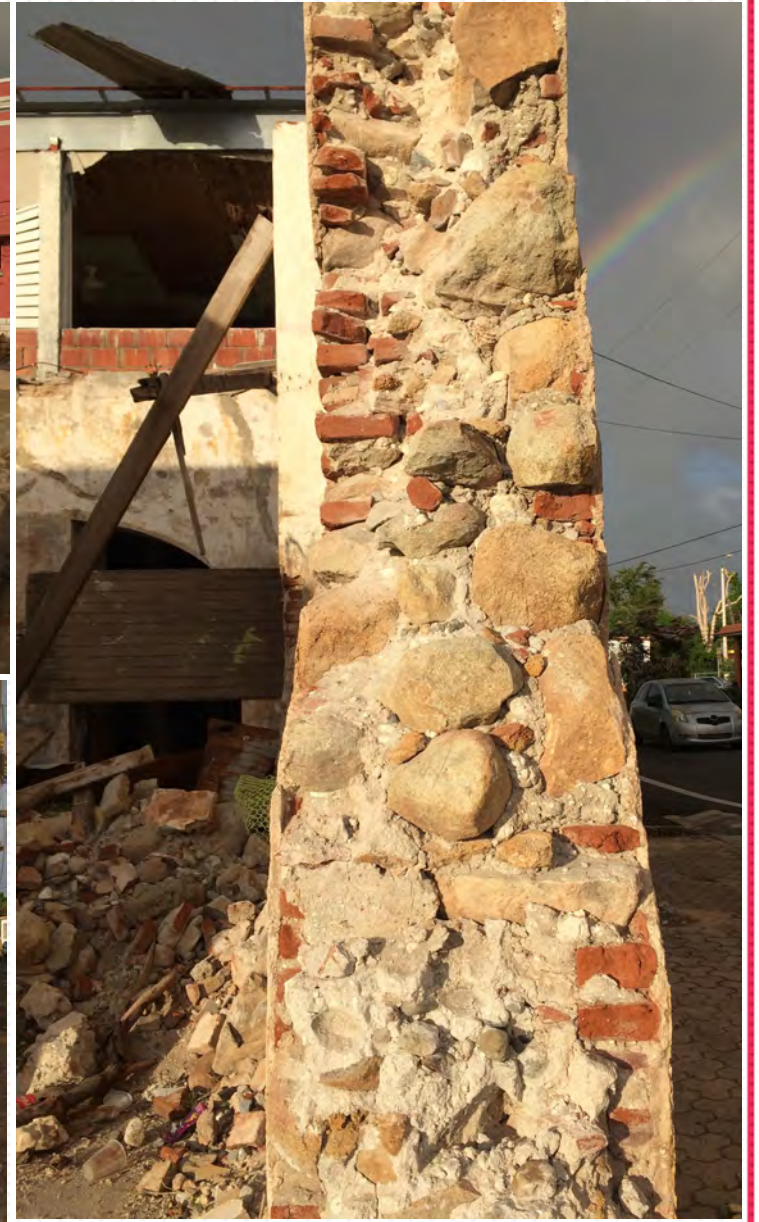
- The Aguirre Central Sugar Mill town had cultural, social, recreational and administrative facilities. The community eventually had a main residential plaza, a golf course, a clubhouse, a Catholic Church, a Methodist Church, a public school, a private school, a clinic, a hotel with a restaurant for United States residents, a swimming pool for visitors and administrators, a hotel for visiting Puerto Rican personnel, a theater, a passive recreation park, a central store and an ice factory.
- It also had a police station, a market plaza, two restaurants, two clubs and two administrative buildings, as well as the structures that made up Batey Industrial, where most of the machinery (vats, centrifuges, rail transportation, etc.) was located.
- In 1990, after several decades of financial losses, the mill ceased operations. In 2002, the United States Department of the Interior included a large part of the Aguirre mill on the **National Register of Historic Places**. The site consists of the production areas of the mill, the port zone, the rail transportation infrastructure, the Aguirre and Montesoria residential zones and the golf course.
- **Post hurricane status:** The hurricane caused serious damage to many of the wooden structures, including the Administrators house, the property's largest. Many of the homes were abandoned after the hurricane. Although the State Historic Preservation Office has placed Aguirre in its priority list for funding, damaged structures have yet to be preserved and renovated. The construction of residential complexes nearby, as well as the abandonment and vandalism suffered by the structures of Batey Industrial and Batey Central, threaten this historic site.
- *Original Source: "Central Aguirre," Juan Llanes Santos, Conserva, State Office of Historic Conservation magazine, v. 2, 2006.*





Morse Warehouse, Arroyo Site of Latin America's first telegraph line





- In 1858, Samuel Morse himself setup the first telegraph line in Latin America from this site in Arroyo, Puerto Rico, then a Spanish Colony.
- Morse's oldest daughter, Susan Walker Morse and her husband Edward Lind owned Hacienda La Henriqueta in the southeastern town of Arroyo.
- Morse, who often spent his winters at the Hacienda, set a two-mile telegraph line connecting a Hacienda warehouse located at the port in Arroyo to their house inland.
- The line was inaugurated on March 1, 1859, in a ceremony flanked by the Spanish and American flags.
- The first words transmitted by Samuel Morse that day in Puerto Rico were: *"Puerto Rico, beautiful jewel! When you are linked with the other jewels of the Antilles in the necklace of the world's telegraph, yours will not shine less brilliantly in the crown of your Queen!"*
- The Morse Warehouse is part of the Arroyo Historic Zone
- **Post hurricane status:** Damages to the structure were extensive, with partial collapse of three walls. The structure is owned by a contractor, who recovered and saved the historic building materials for future rebuilding. As of June 2018, no work has been conducted.

- The following day, March 2, he wrote:
- *"I have just completed with success the construction and organization of the short telegraph line, the first on this island, initiating the great enterprise of the Southern Telegraph route to Europe from our shores, so far as to interest the Porto Ricans in the value of the invention. Yesterday was a day of great excitement here for this small place. The principal inhabitants of this place and Guayama determined to celebrate the completion of this little line, in which they take a great pride as being the first in the island, and so they complimented me with a public breakfast which was presided over by the lieutenant-colonel commandant of Guayama. The commandant and alcalde, the collector and captain of the port, with all the officials of the place, and the clergy of Guayama and Arroyo, and gentlemen planters and merchants of the two towns, numbering in all about forty, were present... My portrait was behind me upon the wall draped with the Spanish and American flags. I gave them a short address of thanks, and took the opportunity to interest them in the great Telegraph line which will give them communication with the whole world. I presume accounts will be published in the United States from the Porto Rico papers. Thus step by step (shall I not rather say _stride by stride_) the Telegraph is compassing the world."*
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