

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Historic Quarter of the City of Colonia del Sacramento
<i>Location</i>	Department of Colonia
<i>State Party</i>	Uruguay
<i>Date</i>	20 September 1994

Justification by State Party

By virtue of its urban plan and its buildings, the nominated area is unique in the region. It also exercised an unquestioned influence on architectural development in colonial style on either side of the Rio de la Plata, where there are examples of the well known Portuguese influence. A number of distinguished Portuguese architects served the Portuguese state in the former Colonia del Sacramento, such as José Custodio de Sá e Faria, designer of Montevideo Cathedral, or João Bartolomeu Howell or Havelle, who built the Santa Teresa Fortress in the extreme east on the frontier with Brazil, the Dragon Barracks of Maldonado, and the old Alameda of Buenos Aires.

Criterion ii

It is also a typical example of the architectural processes which give rise to a syncretism between Portuguese and Spanish traditions. This original fusion was enriched in an especially harmonious way in the latter half of the 19th century, within the modest village-type framework which characterizes and gives its individual flavour to the Quarter by the presence of Italian and French building workers.

Criterion v

The old town of Colonia del Sacramento was directly involved in the most important historical events in the region from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the republican period, in the 1820s. Its foundation was in fact a somewhat delayed consequence of the famous Treaty of Tordesillas and of the legal claims of the two great colonial powers, Portugal and Spain, in what was one of the most important strategic and most coveted regions of South America, an estuarine region from which the riches of the mines in Peru could be exported and the cradle of a major stock-rearing enterprise, as well as one which was contiguous with the agricultural areas of Brazil. For this reason its people became on the one hand the core or epicentre of the cultural crossroads of the last economic, geopolitical, and cultural frontier that survived between these two opposing powers and on the other the original source of the new nations.

It should also be noted that a number of important figures of both regional and universal history were linked by major events with the Colonia del Sacramento and its own rich and varied historical trajectory, such as the Portuguese governors Antonio Pedro de Vasconcellos and Gomes Freire de Andrade, the Spanish governors Bruno Mauricio de Zabala and Pedro de Cevallos (first Viceroy of Río de la Plata), the Portuguese kings Pedro II, João V, and José V, along with their counsellors the Duke of Cadaval and the Marquis of Pombal, and the Spanish kings Carlos II, Felipe V, Fernando VII, and Charles III.

Criterion vi**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the historical quarter of the City of Colonia del Sacramento is a *group of buildings*.

History and Description*History*

On 8 October 1678 Don Pedro, Prince Regent of Portugal, commissioned his chief minister Manuel Lobo, named Governor of Rio de Janeiro, with founding a settlement on the Río de la Plata, on the island of St Gabriel. Work

began in 1680, to the alarm of the Spaniards in Buenos Aires, who attacked and sacked the new town before the year was out. The so-called Provisional Treaty, signed in Lisbon in 1681, restored the town to Portugal, but prohibited any constructions beyond those already in place. The Portuguese returned in 1683, but the town did not begin to develop until the 1690s, which saw the erection of the Master Church and the Franciscan convent church.

In 1704-05, during the War of the Spanish Succession, the growing town was besieged by the Spanish, to be razed to the ground after it was taken. The two powers signed in 1715 a Treaty of Friendship and Peace at Utrecht under the terms of which Portuguese sovereignty was not only recognized over Sacramento but also over the land surrounding it. Reconstruction began immediately, and by 1718 there were over a thousand inhabitants. From the time that Antonio Pedro de Vasconcellos took over as Governor in 1722 Sacramento became the powerhouse of material, commercial, and cultural development in the colony. It was, for example, the starting point in the 1730s for the remarkable journeys of Cristovão Pereira de Abreu that opened up the routes to São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The success of Sacramento as a commercial entrepot had a decisive influence on the development of Buenos Aires and its region, and played a role in the creation of the Viceroyalty of Buenos Aires. The town successfully withstood another Spanish siege in 1735-37, and when Vasconcellos retired after 27 years as Governor he saw it transformed into a strongly defended and prosperous community.

The town changed hands again in 1762, when it was taken over by the Spanish, but returned to Portugal the following year, after yet another treaty was signed by the two rival powers. The successful siege of 1777 saw Sacramento definitively incorporated in the Spanish empire under the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso; part of the fortifications were dismantled and a few houses demolished, but the urban fabric for the most part survived. Spanish settlers moved into the town, mainly from Galicia, Asturias, Castille, and León.

Sacramento was the scene of a number of the events that took place when revolutionary fervour led to the wars of independence, led by José Artigas from 1810 onwards. Full independence was achieved in 1828, but not before grievous damage had been wrought on the Main Church by an explosion during a short period of Portuguese occupation. Between 1839 and 1851 the new nation was engaged in the "Great War" against its neighbour, Argentina, and Sacramento suffered from yet another bitter siege. What remained of its defences were finally demolished in 1859, and a period of judicious reconstruction and expansion began. However, much influence had passed to the national capital, Montevideo.

The historical importance of Sacramento was first recognized in 1924, when there was an unsuccessful attempt to have part of the town designated a National Monument, with substantial controls over development and a generous allocation from the national budget. Subsequent attempts to protect the historic quality of the town failed again in 1929, 1938, and 1947.

Description

The area proposed for the World Heritage List corresponds with the old Portuguese town, Nova Colonia do Santissimo Sacramento, lying on the extreme west part of a peninsula orientated east-west which flanks to the south a bay situated on the north-west coast of the Río de la Plata. The town itself was bounded by water on its north, west, and south sides and to the east by the former lines of defensive walls and bastions, which extended right across the peninsula from north to south. The land rises slightly towards the centre, with gentle slopes running down to the coast. Nowadays the historic town is continuous on its eastern side with the newer parts of the town of Colonia del Sacramento: the historical area is defined by the axis of Calle Ituzaingó. It covers c 16 ha, divided into thirty three blocks, with five squares, four small squares, twenty-six streets, and five passages and pedestrian streets, making a total of 282 urban plots.

Despite the frequent destruction and incursions that it has suffered during its history, the town has preserved its urban layout and a remarkable collection of structures bearing witness to its more than three centuries of Portuguese, Spanish, and Uruguayan history. The basic checkerboard layout that is common elsewhere in the Spanish and Portuguese colonial settlements of Latin America is lacking in Sacramento. Its form is an organic one, adapted to the topography of the site, and also influenced by features such as the citadel and the governor's palace, both of which have been demolished but which have left their mark on the urban plan.

The range of buildings is wide in both time and style. There are excellent examples of 17th, 18th, and 19th century buildings in Portuguese, Spanish, and post-colonial styles, and they range from the extensive town houses of patricians or rich merchants to the humbler dwellings of artisans and shopkeeper. Excavations have brought

to light well preserved foundations of the Portuguese Governor's residence and of sections of the demolished defences of the 18th century, which have been preserved and are on display to the public.

The main feature of Sacramento is, however, its overall townscape, with its mix of wide main thoroughfares and large squares with smaller cobbled streets and intimate squares. The vertical scale is perfectly preserved, only the church tower and lighthouse rising above the mainly single- or two-storeyed early buildings.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Ownership of properties in the historic quarter of Sacramento is divided between the State, the Municipality of Colonia, and private individuals and entities. The State holding has been augmented steadily by a positive acquisition policy since 1968. Several of the historic buildings have been converted, after conservation, for public use as museums, libraries, library etc.

A number of statutory instruments at national and municipal provide protection to the nominated area. It is protected principally under the provisions of Law No 14040: 1970 on the Historical, Artistic, and Cultural Heritage of the Nation. This is strengthened by municipal laws that regulate the heights of buildings, signage, and other physical planning elements in the historic quarter.

Management

Overall management and supervision of the historic quarter is exercised for the Central Government by the Commission on the Historic, Artistic, and Cultural Heritage of the Nation, whose local representative is the Honorary Executive Council for Works of Preservation and Reconstruction of the Ancient Colonia del Sacramento (established by Government Decree in 1968 and reconfirmed in 1986). The Ministries of Education and Culture, of Tourism, of Transport and Public Works, and of Housing, Land Planning and Environment are associated with this work, as is the Municipal Administration of Colonia del Sacramento.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Immediately after its foundation, the Honorary Executive Council began work, and it has been responsible for the initiation of a continuing series of conservation and restoration interventions in the town since February 1969. The following selection of these projects in the first five years gives an indication of the dynamic and successes achieved:

- 1969 Promotional exhibition; aerial survey; collection of early plans and photographs; establishment of area of concern; acquisition of basic resources; survey of inhabitants, dwellings, shops, etc; evaluation of priorities and creation of Basic Work Plan (approved by the Government); starting archaeological excavations; survey and assistance by international experts; signature of agreement with Ministry of Public Works for restoration of elements of the defences.
- 1970 Approval by State Sanitary Works Authority of project for restoration of area near ruins of Franciscan convent; first purchase of historic house; request to Executive Power for expropriation of certain parcels to enable work of restoration of defences to continue; inauguration of interpretation centre; agreement with Bishop of Mercedes for restoration of the Church of the Most Holy Sacrament; project for restoration of early street names and replacement of name plates.
- 1971 Donations of houses and movable heritage materials; complete rehabilitation of 18th century Casa de Palacios as museum completed; inauguration of work in Plaza 1811; organization of historic archives.
- 1972- Work completed on restoration of town gate, Plaza 1811, etc.; further archaeological excavations;
73 restoration of facades in Calle del Comercio; further expropriations and donations.

Since that time there have been many more restoration projects, expropriations, acquisitions, donations, and excavations. Of particular importance has been the meticulous scientific recording of every structure within the historic quarter, whether specifically designated as an historical monument or not. The *Inventario Básico del Patrimonio Arquitectónico y Urbanístico del Departamento de Colonia* is an archive that is of immense value for both planning and scientific purposes. Other projects of interest and value in re-creating the urban fabric have been the repaving in the original materials of certain streets and open spaces, a successful campaign to persuade statutory bodies to bury services such as telephone cables, preparation of a revised and updated work plan, and installation of harmonious street lighting.

Authenticity

The work of the Honorary Executive Council has been dedicated and highly effective. It has evolved a philosophy of conservation that has been designed to exercise the minimum level of intervention consistent with the needs of the individual structure. No project has been undertaken without extensive prior research on the historical materials, and techniques and, most important, the values involved. Over the past quarter-century a level of authenticity has been developed on the urban scale that is wholly acceptable to the international community.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

ICOMOS consulted its International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages. An expert mission visited Colonia del Sacramento in February 1995.

Qualities

Sacramento is an outstanding example of urban settlement in a strategically important frontier zone which highlights in its history and its form the struggle between the two colonial powers, Portugal and Spain, whose cultural traditions are combined in a unique form in the buildings and layout of the town.

Comparative analysis

There are few frontier settlements of this kind in South America, and none so well preserves the evidence of its particular historical trajectory.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List, on the basis of *critterion iv*:

The Historic Quarter of the City of Colonia del Sacramento bears remarkable testimony in its layout and its buildings to the nature and objectives of European colonial settlement, in particular during the seminal period at the end of the 17th century.

ICOMOS, September 1995