

WELCOME TO PUERTO RICO

MARCH 6-13, 1949

ETCH ON PUERTO RICO

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The Island of Puerto Rico is the smallest and easternmost of the Greater Antilles which also include Cuba, Jamaica, and Santo Domingo. Area is approximately 3,400 square miles; population in 1945 is 2,060,000. The population density is greater than that of any of the West Indian Islands with the single exception of Barbados.

Of the total land area, some 1,100,000 acres are under some kind of cultivation; 900,000 acres are in pasture or woodland. As the Island is volcanic in origin and very mountainous, this is one of the highest land-use percentages in the world. If the United States produced as much from its soil, per square mile, as Puerto Rico produces, the value of the product of United States agriculture would be 40 times as great as it is today.

Puerto Rico lies entirely within the tropics. Average summer temperature is 78 degrees. Average winter temperature is 73 degrees. There is no well-defined rainy season. Bulk of the Island's rainfall comes in quick showers, which can be expected any time of the day, any day of the year. Average rainfall on the North Coast is about 60 inches per annum; on the South Coast about half that and, in the mountains, rainfall figures rise to 160 inches per year. It is for this reason that Puerto Rico's hydro-electric development is far ahead of that of any area south of the Tropic of Cancer. For about a decade, an average of 40% of the total consumption of electricity has been generated by waterpower, and there are more electrified homes per square mile in Puerto Rico than in any country in the tropics anywhere.

Puerto Rico has three dependencies; Mona Island (20 sq. mi.), off the West Coast, Vieques (57 sq. mi.), off the East Coast, and Culebra (11 sq. mi.), an important naval outpost, off the East Coast. The Island's forest reserves are very small, totalling only 92,000 acres altogether.

THE PEOPLE

The Island of Puerto Rico was discovered by Columbus, whose fleet took on fresh water at Guayanilla Bay, on the South Coast, on November 19, 1493, on the second voyage. The Indian name of the Island was Borinquen, a name which still persists in the names of societies, business firms and other enterprises. The Island was well populated by Indian tribes when it was discovered, but the Spanish method of enslavement in the mines so decimated the Indian population, that only a few traces of the original Indian blood remains in the population today. The population is of Spanish and African negro stock; Spanish stock predominating. The people of Puerto Rico have been American citizens since 1917 and are thus distinguished from the inhabitants of the Philippines, Samoa, Guam, etc.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory within the U. S. Commonwealth, has its own bi-cameral legislature, and approximately the same control over its internal affairs as is exercised by the governments of the 48 States, the Governor is elected by the P. R. people, who are exercising this privilege for the first time in 1948. Voting in Insular elections, which coincide in point of time with the National elections, is by universal adult suffrage, male and female. Puerto Rico is represented in the United States by a Resident Commissioner who has a seat in the House of Representatives, but no vote.

The principal spectator sport in Puerto Rico is baseball, with horseracing a close second. Basketball and track teams furnish the bulk of inter-scholastic competition. Football is not played; either American or English. A majority of the Island's people play the Insular Lottery, which provides weekly drawings and occasional prizes as high as \$90,000. Profit from the Lottery is used to support some of the Island's hospitals and sanitariums.

CITIES

There are 77 municipalities altogether in Puerto Rico; they are the only political subdivisions, there being no counties or states. Largest is the capital and principal port, San Juan, with a population of 208,055 and a property valuation of some \$78,000,000. Only one city in the Caribbean, Havana, is larger than San Juan and the port of San Juan, in 1944, actually handled more tonnage than did the port of Havana. Second largest city is Ponce, on the South Coast, with some 114,007 inhabitants. Third city is Mayaguez, on the West Coast, with 84,766.

BRIEF ECONOMICS

The principal occupation of the people of Puerto Rico is agriculture, and agriculture provides about 90% of the Island's wealth, directly and indirectly. Nearly 75% of Puerto Rico's total annual income is derived from the sugar crop, with its byproducts; rum, alcohol and chemical solvents. The sugar crop has ranged between 750,000 and 1,250,000 tons of raw sugar per annum through the last decade. The crop was worth \$75,000,000 in 1944 and the principal byproduct, rum, was worth even more (nearly \$100,000,000 including taxes.)

Second most important agricultural crop is tobacco which, in 1944, was worth, in all forms, some \$18,000,000. Coffee, formerly more important to the Island's economy than sugar, still covers most of the slopes of the Island's mountains, and the average annual crop is still in excess of 22,500,000 pounds but, relatively speaking, the crop is not productive of much of the total national income today. In fact, in 1944, the product of the Island's dairies was worth more, in terms of dollars, than the coffee crop. Virtually all of the coffee crop is now consumed locally.

AGRICULTURE

Sugar is the most important industry in Puerto Rico. During the fiscal year 1939-40, (normal years) sugar alone accounted for \$57,328,790 of exports, in addition to its by-products. About 300,951 acres of land are planted in sugar cane. There are 41 modern grinding mills on the Island, of which 11 were in the northern district, 5 in the eastern, 12 in the southern, 4 in the western, and 9 in the interior. These mills operate more than 1,000 miles of railways, several hundreds miles of privately owned highways, and over 9,000 farms.

Puerto Rican climate is ideal for all tropical vegetation. There is little change in the seasons, hence, it is possible to ripen vegetables several weeks before any section of the mainland. This advantage forms the basis for a rapidly growing trade in fresh vegetables. Similarly fresh fruits are available earlier than on the mainland.

Two of the most important fruits exported (in volume) are pineapples and grapefruit. They are exported both fresh and canned. Puerto Rican citrus fruit is excellent both in

quality and appearance, being comparable with the product of any other citrus sections of the United States. Favored by climatic conditions, Puerto Rico is also able to supply overseas markets at seasons when prices are highest.

GRAPEFRUIT

In 1929-30, the citrus industry shipped close to 1,000,000 boxes of grapefruit to the United States. A hurricane caused heavy losses in the citrus sections in 1932 and shipments fell off. The Island has never recovered fully. Low prices have continued, and, as a result, the industry has become less important.

PINEAPPLES

Puerto Rico is also an important pineapple-producing section. Cuba is the only other important east coast competitor. Puerto Rico has around 6,000 acres devoted to the production of pineapples, representing a total investment in land of more than \$1,000,000.

COCOANUTS

The production of Puerto Rican cocoanuts (of both the green and yellow varieties) is estimated at 16,500,000 a year, 20 per cent of which are sold as culls at reduced prices. They are grown in scattered areas along the literal, occupying some 10,000 acres. Nuts shipped to the mainland are sold chiefly to the consumer in the fresh state. No copra is produced in the Island.

OTHER TROPICAL FRUITS

In addition to the major fruits, Puerto Rico also grows oranges, mangoes, bananas, lemons, sour oranges, quenepas, tamarinds, almonds, mameyes, guamá, guayabas, jobos, pruns, cherries, tropical grapes (uvas-playas), and many other.

INDUSTRY

The most important industrial enterprise in Puerto Rico is not a single industry in the strict sense of that word, but a group of handicrafts whose product, known in the trade by the generic term "needlework", includes such articles as garments, lingerie, handkerchiefs, table linen, art embroidery, tapestries, hooked, woven and string rugs, gloves, leather goods, etc. Over 90% of the workers in this industry are women and, in 1944, total employment in the needlework industry exceeded 61,000 persons. The total product of the industry in 1944 was worth \$22,000,000, including articles produced for local consumption.

Puerto Rico manufactures most of the portland cement that is used at the present time, has two large breweries in addition to a group of some twenty five distilleries which, annually, produce more rum than any other single country in the world.

Some other Puerto Rican products; dried coconut, vanilla, citron, guava jelly, pineapples, limes, oranges, grapefruit, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, hardwood furniture and woodworking specialties, straw hats, tile and glass bottles.

HISTORICAL NOTES

The original name given to the Island of Puerto Rico by Columbus was San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist). Original name given to the city of San Juan was Puerto Rico (Rich Port). During the 16th Century, however, raids by the French and the Indians wiped out the population of the southern half of the Island and, as the northern part of

the Island was in the jurisdiction of the capital city, the name of the capital city was, for nearly a century, applied to the only well developed part of the Island. By the middle of the 17th Century the Spanish Crown had become accustomed to speak of the Island as Puerto Rico and the city of San Juan adopted the original Colombian name.

The original settlement in Puerto Rico, by a group of colonists under Juan Ponce de León, was at a site now in the suburbs of San Juan, Caparra, in 1509. The site of the capital was moved to the present location of San Juan, on an Island which forms the northern shore of the Bay of San Juan, in 1519. The expedition commanded by Ponce de León which discovered Florida sailed from San Juan in 1512. The Cathedral of San Juan, which is still standing and in a state of excellent preservation, was finished in 1529, when the city of San Juan consisted of 120 buildings altogether. There is one older church in Puerto Rico; that of Porta Coeli in the city of San Germán, which dates back to 1515 and is the oldest church building in the Western Hemisphere.

The French raided Puerto Rico several times between 1529 and 1554, landing on the South and West Coasts. As a result of the French wars and the frequent Indian raids, the Spanish government began the construction of a major fortress at San Juan in 1533. This is the building which, with many additions since that time, is called La Fortaleza and serves as the official residence of the Governor. Another San Juan building which dates back to the same period is the Chapel of San José, which faces the plaza where stands the statue of Ponce de León. Shortly after the original building at La Fortaleza was finished, a nephew and one of the direct heirs of Ponce de León began construction of the residence now known as Casa Blanca (the White House) which serves as the official residence of the Commanding Officer of the Puerto Rico Department. Due to the fact that Spain was at war with the British, French and Dutch during most of the 16th Century, most homes were built with a view to defense, as were all public buildings except churches.

Construction of the principal fortress of San Juan, El Morro, began in 1540 and continued intermittently over more than a century. The City Wall of San Juan, most of which is still preserved, was not begun until 1630 and the newest of the heavy fortifications at San Juan, San Cristóbal Fortress, was built in 1771.

In 1595 Sir Frances Drake and Sir John Hawkins tried to force the entrance to the harbor of San Juan. A part of the fleet was grounded on the shallows opposite El Morro fortress and the ships were pounded to pieces by the guns of the fort. Sir John Hawkins was killed and the raid was beaten off. In 1598 George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, with a fleet of 20 ships, forced a landing at the present location of Escambrón Beach Club, attacked the main works at San Juan from the land side, and forced the surrender of the garrison. Typhoid and malaria, however, so severely decimated his troops that he was forced to withdraw.

A Dutch squadron, under the command of Bowdein Hendrick, in the employ of the Dutch Indies Company, accomplished the near impossible in 1625, and forced a landing at San Juan from the Bay. The Dutch, after the Spaniards had refused to surrender, burned the city to the ground but were eventually driven off by the El Morro garrison with the loss of 400 dead.

No serious attempts were made to storm the works at San Juan after the completion of San Cristóbal fortress in 1771. The addition of San Cristóbal to the defense system made the works impregnable until the advent of the steel armored battleship.

The San Juan forts surrendered without a fight in 1898, during the Spanish American War, after a short and ineffectual bombardment by units of Admiral Sampson's squadron. General Nelson A. Miles had, previously, put troops ashore in an unopposed landing on the unprotected South Coast and the Spanish garrisons in Puerto Rico did not have the support of even 10% of the population. The U. S. military campaign in Puerto Rico in 1898 was a parade. The entire population, with the exception of a handful of Spaniards, welcomed the U. S. troops. A movement to declare the Island independent of Spain had become well advanced some time before the Spanish American War. During both the first World War and the present war, men in Puerto Rico have been drafted into the U. S. Army under the same conditions as have continental Americans.

HANDCRAFTS

Puerto Rico produces many articles of handcraftsmanship that are well known in trade circles outside the Island. The Island's exports of finished consumer goods are greater than those of all the other Caribbean Islands combined. In July 1945, there is a genuine shortage of many kinds of consumer goods in Puerto Rico, as elsewhere. This applies as well to products of the Island itself as to imported goods. The Island's factories have suffered severely from manpower and materials shortages and the products offered for sale at the present time in Puerto Rico are both fewer and higher priced than in normal years.

Some of Puerto Rico's specialties may still be bought, however, in San Juan stores. The following list is a partial one; ladies and men's handkerchiefs, embroidered or initialled; lingerie, hand embroidered and hand sewn; - ladies nightgowns, hand embroidered; - bridge, tea and table sets, hardwood novelties, (cigarette boxes, bookends, lamp stands, etc.), strawware and basket ware; straw beach hats and sandals; cotton string rugs and rag rugs; cigars; liquors; furniture; lampshades; purses and many locally made clothing items.

HEALTHFUL CLIMATE

Few areas of the United States afford such a delightful climate as Puerto Rico which is suitable throughout the year for tourists. The location of the Island within the trade wind belt and its mountainous surface make it one of the most favorable regions in the Tropics. The climate is warm, but excessive temperatures do not occur. There is a slight annual range of temperature and the Island is spared the extreme heat common to continental areas of the same latitude. The average winter temperature is 73.7 degrees F. and the summer average is 78.8 degrees F.

There is no clearly defined rainy season in Puerto Rico. Rainfall is fairly well distributed throughout the twelve months of the year, with the heaviest downfall taking place from May to December. Rainfall varies in different localities. The heaviest rainfall is in the mountainous areas of the northeastern and southwestern parts of the Island, where recording of 100 to 200 inches are made. The rainfall decreases toward the north and south coasts, from 55 to 75 inches per year occurring on the north coast, and from 29 to 52 inches per year on the south coast. Puerto Rico is one of the most healthful areas in the hemisphere.

HOUSING

Bungalows or low Spanish-type houses with two, three or four bedrooms predominate. Their rents range between \$90.00 and \$125.00 per month, unfurnished, and between \$90.00 and \$150.00 furnished. There are few furnished houses to be

had, however, except in summer, when for two and three months many of their owners or tenants are in the States. More pretentious residences, or those with specially attractive locations as, for example, those facing the ocean, rent for from \$125.00 to \$150.00 unfurnished and up to \$200.00 and more furnished.

Most of the residences in and around San Juan are built of reinforced concrete, the smaller houses have prepared roofings or galvanized iron; and the larger, tile roofs. Many have garages and detached quarters for one or two servants; and all have running water, with bathtubs and showers. Many houses have tile floors in kitchens, dining rooms, bath and porches and some have them throughout. This type of floor is greatly to be desired since it is cool in hot weather, easily cleaned, and insect proof. There are numerous new and up-to-date apartment houses at moderate prices. In the smaller towns, conveniences are fewer but Ponce and Mayaguez reach almost the same standard as San Juan.

Practically all houses in San Juan and its vicinity are wired for electricity usually with electric or gas cooking. All communities of more than 1,000 inhabitants are served by power lines. There are approximately 1,500 miles of rural lines in service and 100 miles under construction. Electric power is available in all sections of the Island through an interconnected system of approximately 70,000 HP installed capacity. The system of production consists of eleven hydro-electric plants and three steam plants.

Gas is supplied.

THE COST OF LIVING

Puerto Rico imports most of its essential commodities. Notwithstanding this, the volume of purchases brings about somewhat reduced prices. The cost of living is not higher than in the eastern section of the United States.

Clothing for both sexes is retailed in Puerto Rico for about the same price as on the mainland, and in many cases the cost is slightly lower. The tropical climate makes heavy winter clothing unnecessary, but at the same time calls for an ample supply of washable apparel.

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