

*Report to my book*  
*in writing*

THE  
POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
OF PORTO RICO

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Report of the President  
April 14th, 1921

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS  
156 Fifth Avenue . . . . . New York

THE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF PORTO RICO

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In this, my first report to the Board of Trustees, I shall give a brief history of events leading up to the founding of the school and to its transfer to the Home Mission Board; a general statement of the present status, closing with a look into the immediate future.

HISTORY

The inception of the Polytechnic Institute was an inspiration that came to me in November 1906—after a meeting held one night on the shores of the Caribbean Sea. Seventy-five children who had never seen a school house stood up and asked me to secure a school for them. The eager, hungry expectation sparkled in seventy-five pairs of little eyes, and the radiance of hope gleamed from parents' faces, as I promised that I would do all I could for them. As I rode home that midnight over the mountain trail, thinking of whom I could find to teach these children, a voice said: "You, yourself, must do it." I replied that I did not want to, for I knew some of the difficulties and was not sure of my own fitness. But I accepted my commission and the idea of the Institute began to take shape in my mind.

I wrote to the Woman's Board for assistance and a grant was made of \$25 monthly for the salary of a teacher. A small primary day school was opened at San German. In 1908 I bought an acre of land adjoining our church property with the intention of building a school thereon. Presbytery commissioned me its delegate to the General Assembly in 1909. While North I secured pledges amounting to \$700 yearly for a period of three years.

Upon my return to San German, the Mayor offered me the old Spanish barracks in which to open the school. But this offer was withdrawn when the priests raised

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a cry of protest, giving as their main point of objection that public property should not be given to any religious sect. The barracks have since become a complete ruin. Mr. Cancio Ortiz, a wealthy farmer living in the neighboring town of Lajas, had established an industrial school in his town for street waifs and incorrigible children. The government had assisted him in the erection of four frame buildings, also in the current expenses of the school, but later withdrew its support, and his school had to close. Mr. Ortiz came over to see me when he heard what he termed "the cowardly act of San German" in withdrawing their offer of the barracks. He offered me the buildings of his defunct school. I accepted his offer and went over in September, 1910, and worked in cooperation with the public school board of Lajas. After four months of trial it was evident that nothing permanent could be accomplished there, so I withdrew.

In January of 1911 I secured an option on 100 acres of land in San German, and organized a board of trustees under the laws of Porto Rico. The members of this Board represented unofficially all the churches at work in Porto Rico. The 100 acres were held at \$8,000. I made two trips to the States before securing the amount needed to make the purchase. I brought with me two postal cards. One pictured the crooked stick plow in use in Porto Rico and pointed the need of industrial training; the other pictured a grass shack, and clearly indicated the need of developing the homes of Porto Rico. I showed these pictures to Mr. John E. Berwind and told him my plan for helping the Island. He started me off with a subscription of \$1,000. When I returned for the money he handed me a check for \$2,500, on the promise that I would make the thing go. This was the first contribution to the Polytechnic Institute. As I left his office I scarcely touched the floor. Mr. Berwind's office has had an air of holiness to me ever since.

Others contributing to this \$8,000 land fund where

Cleveland H. Dodge, James H. Post, F. Kingsbury Curtis, A. H. Hall, and H. P. Freece of New York City; A. F. Estabrook of Boston, W. J. McCahan, J. Milton Colton and George Peake of Philadelphia; E. O. Emerson of Titusville, Pennsylvania, and Rev. E. A. McDonald and Dr. E. R. Hildreth, my fellow workers in the mission in Porto Rico. They all gave in faith. All gifts came after much prayer. One remarkable incident will illustrate. Just before my return to the Island on my second trip north, I saw Mr. Emerson and asked him to give me \$1,500, the amount needed at the time. He promised to consider it. I secured \$1,000 of this by selling two of the houses given me by Mr. Ortiz. I obtained gifts amounting to \$200 more. But the remaining \$300 was not in sight. The owner wished me to cancel the option and offered me \$500 to do so. He said he wanted all pay or none. I had spent on these trips north all personal funds we had been able to save. On the day before the option expired, by the last mail from the States, a letter arrived from Mr. Emerson containing a check for \$300. I almost needed the care of a doctor for the rest of the day. On Monday I signed the deed in the name of the trustees and paid every penny of the \$8,000. We now had the land but no money to go further. I immediately wrote to those who had pledged the sum of \$700 annually and received from them a total of \$400—only that and nothing more. But that was enough to begin with. I had sent to Texas for my brother Clarence who had recently graduated from Park College. He had come and was teaching in the public schools till I needed him.

On March 2, 1912, the first student was admitted. By the end of May we had 8 boys and 4 girls. We began our work in an old abandoned farm house. In September, 1912, brother Clarence and Miss Villanueva came to help me. They are still with the Institute. The Woman's Board paid Miss Villanueva's salary for two years. Guanica Centrale gave us \$1,000 yearly for five years. It was a yearly occurrence for us all to be with-

out salary for two or even four months until I could come North and raise the amount needed. We had very little tuition in those days. Those who were able to pay tuition frowned at us in scorn. That scorn has since turned to a smile. Today the institute enjoys universal praise in Porto Rico. The school grew in favor, in needs and in difficulties.

During the financial crisis of 1914 our trustees offered the school to the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church. The offer was accepted with the understanding that as soon as the Home Mission Board thought it wise the school should again be placed under a separate board. This has now been done. The Porto Rican Board was legally dissolved and the school committed to the Presbyterian Board in May, 1915. The Presbyterian Board has in recent years loyally sustained the current account of the school, and most royally appropriated \$75,000 for a science hall this year. This is a brief account of the struggle through many years in the establishment of the school in San German.

#### SCHEDULE OF SCHOOL LIFE

Our school year extends from the first Tuesday in September to the last Thursday in June—40 weeks divided into two semesters of 20 weeks each. During that time the students follow the daily schedule, five days of each week, as follows:

- 5:30 A. M. Rising bell sounds.
- 6:00 All students must be in dining room for breakfast.
- 6:30 Half hour for morning prayers, at which service the Bible is read through once a year.
- 7:15 5th, 6th, 9th and 10th grades report for three hours' work.
- 7:40 7th, 8th, 11th and 12th grades report for classroom work.
- 12:00 Noon Dinner.
- 12:40 P.M. Morning manual laborers report for classroom work.

- 1:00 Morning classroom section reports for three hours' manual labor.
- 6:00 Supper.
- 7:00-9:15 Study for next day's lessons.
- 9:30 All retire.

#### COURSE OF STUDY

We take students from the rural schools into the fifth grade. The course extends through a first class, accredited high school curriculum. The subjects studied are English, Spanish, Mathematics, Latin, Physics, Botany or Agriculture, History, General Science, Psychology and Pedagogy, Bookkeeping, Commercial Training, Bible and Music, and four years' industrial training. Two high school diplomas are given, one for those who live in town and take only two years' manual training—a simple high school diploma; and the other to those who live in the school and take the four years of 16 hours weekly manual work. To these is given a classical and industrial high school diploma. This is intended to fit the student to go on to college or to take up active work in the commercial, industrial or civic life of the Island.

#### STAFF OF WORKERS

We have been blessed in having excellent teachers. Seven are college graduates, six are high school and normal trained, and seven others are faithful helpers in the industrial and boarding department of the school. Some have been with the school since its beginning. They all have full schedule time ranging from 25 to 30 hours weekly of classroom work.

#### STUDENTS

Enrollment has increased steadily from one student at the beginning to 266 this year. The income from tuition has increased from less than \$100 the first year

to \$12,308.18 for this year, over one-third of the budget for the year. The enrollment for this year is:

	Girls	Boys	Total
Dormitory .....	70	117	187
Town .....	37	42	79
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	107	159	266

Some features in this enrollment are worthy of special note:

1. While the number of advanced students is larger than any year, yet the average age is several years less.
2. At first only students from the poorest families came. Now we have children from the richest families of the Island in the school.
3. The extent of territory served by the Institute is increasingly large:

252 come from 45 of the 76 municipalities of the Island,  
 10 from Santo Domingo,  
 1 from Cuba,  
 1 from Colombia, S. A.,  
 1 from Canada, and this year we have  
 1 from Mexico.

#### OUR GRADUATES

In the ministry or students in theological Seminary.....	9
In further study in the States.....	12
In further study in Porto Rico.....	4
Y. M. C. A. work in Porto Rico.....	2
U. S. Army.....	1
In business and teaching.....	42
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Total.....	70

The high school graduates have carried off the highest grades in all summer normal courses for teachers. The department of education has asked us to begin a full normal training course for teachers, offering to accept our diplomas for teachers' license, without further examination.

#### RELIGIOUS LIFE

All teachers are active Christians and missionaries in spirit. The majority of students are not Christians upon admission, but few go through the year without making a public confession of their faith in Christ. At our communion service, the Sunday before Easter, 39 students united with our church, 38 on confession of faith. The Y. M. C. A., the Christian Endeavor Society for girls, the morning prayers and a rural Sunday school give practical training and instruction to the students in Christian life and work.

#### ATHLETICS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Baseball, volley ball, tennis, basketball, croquet and field sports give vent to the best athletic energy. The Porto Rican is an enthusiastic athlete. A wealthy man has offered to construct our athletic field for us.

Literary entertainments and plays are given at stated intervals. Long moonlight walks, picnics and barbecues in our beautiful woods add to the interest of school life.

#### INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

Eighteen hours of manual labor is required weekly of all boarding students. They build our roads, construct our bridges, and houses and cultivate the farm and gardens. They carry water, cook the meals, wash the dishes, wash and iron the clothes and take care of their own rooms. The students and teachers live a strenuous life.

#### PERMANENT ASSETS

Our permanent assets are: 150 acres of land, the president's home, given by the Misses Tooker and Mrs. Thaw and built by the students, and the Infirmary just being completed as a gift of Mr. E. S. Harkness. The Science Hall, a \$75,000 building, is now being erected by the Board of Home Missions.

### BUDGETS

	For 1920-21	For 1921-22
Salaries .....	\$19,138.54	\$20,190.00
Board .....	8,460.81	9,500.00
School .....	1,496.07	550.00
Incidentals .....	3,249.60	2,300.00
Laundry .....	171.09	200.00
Light .....	304.27	250.00
Agriculture .....	624.79	200.00
Total .....	\$33,445.17	\$33,190.00
Income from Tuition .....	12,308.18	13,000.00
Net total to be raised .....	\$21,136.99	\$20,190.00

### OBSERVATIONS

The present condition of buildings could hardly be worse. The teachers live in small shacks and attics. The students live in three-story buildings in a state of half-ruin, huddled together, six in one room, and sleep on the balconies. Some of the girls have slept on the balcony and have had to take second chance at a mirror in neighboring rooms. They are willing to be crowded in this way in order to make room for a relative or a friend. The buildings are not only insufficient but are actually unsafe. Several students have fallen from the second and third stories and it is only a miracle that none have lost their lives. Rich families will not continue to send their children to us unless we begin work on the new dormitories soon. Many have already left the school because of the buildings. We could fill first class dormitories with students who pay double the present tuition price. They want safe, substantial and sanitary buildings. We should make these buildings possible of erection as fast as the machinery can work.

The waterworks is a necessity. The purest water sparkles from the springs of a mountain stream four and a half miles from the school. The intake is 150 feet higher than the reservoir at the Institute.

The Department of Interior very kindly worked out a detailed estimate without cost to us. The total cost according to their estimate, dated October, 1920, was \$165,000. Both wages and material have depreciated since that date and we can safely estimate the installation of the entire plant for \$100,000. The minimum amount of water-flow is three gallons per second during the course of a year's measurements. This is sufficient to give us abundance of pure, mountain spring water to supply both the Institute and the town. There are 5,000 inhabitants in the town. The return on the water sold to the town should in time not only pay interest on the money invested but pay back the capital. Thus it would be from the first a permanent endowment for the Institute.

### PRESENT DEMANDS

The present urgent needs are:

Four cottages for teachers (Provided by Porto Rican gifts) .....	\$8,500.
Athletic Field (Promised by Mr. A. Franceschi) .....	15,000.
Girls' Residence Hall .....	60,000.
Boys' Residence Hall .....	60,000.
Dining room, Kitchen and Bakery .....	30,000.
Houses and Land .....	15,000.
Waterworks .....	100,000.

\$288,500.

To be given by Porto Rico .....

37,300.

To be secured elsewhere .....

251,200.

We can, during the coming year, erect the teachers' cottages, the athletic field for which provision is made, and also a dormitory for which provision is not made as yet. This is the least that we as trustees ought to plan definitely on doing this year.

### COOPERATING FORCES

Twelve business men in San German are organized into a corporation for the securing of one out of every ten dollars contributed. They mean business.

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A group of noble women in New York City have banded themselves together for service in the advancement of our school for the children of Porto Rico. They have furnished the Infirmary and are planning even greater things for this coming year.

The Home Mission Board has underwritten our operating budget for \$19,000 plus the income from tuition, and is ready to help in every way possible.

#### OUR OPPORTUNITY

One hundred and fifty thousand children of school age in Porto Rico, are deprived of the privileges of a public school training, although as American citizens they are entitled to such training. It is our duty to educate the teachers as far as possible for inculcating Christian citizenship in the hearts and lives of those children. All Latin-America is looking at the marvelous progress of Porto Rico. It is geographically and racially destined to play a most important part in the development of contiguous nations. The plea comes constantly for more advanced study, and a larger enrollment. Our present equipment is a mere contrivance.

(Signed) J. W. HARRIS, *President.*