June 1917.

Sketch of J.W. Harris and the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico.

I was born in southwestern Texas and spent the first 18 years of my life among the chapparele and prickly pear where the rattlesnake taught me to walk cautiously, the fleet-footed deer taught me swiftness, the mocking birds singing their four o'clock anthems taught me to awake early and to begin the day with a song, the red ants with their highly organized colonies throwing up oftentimes mounds a hundred feet in diameter taught me the value of united effort toward one purpose, the ranch life taught me how to endure hard work and to put up with whatever came, the sheep which later became my best friends taught me humility and the Mexicans broadened my love for other races than mine own. At nineteen I went North and received the culture of a Christian education in Park College and Princeton Seminary. In 1906 we came to Porto Rico as missionaries of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions where we have continued as such to the present time. My first recollection of a desire to help intellectually the Spanish-speaking people dates back to my youth. One noon day I sat down by the side of a railroad reservoir. A Mexican boy came along and sat down beside me. From a sack he pulled a book and began to read in English to me. My heart burned from that time to help all his brothers to a like ability for he was the first Mexican boy whom I had seen who could read.

In 1908 Mrs. Harris and I persuaded the Woman's Board of Missions to allow us to open a school for children in San German. The same year we purchased an acre of land adjoining the church property on which we hoped to erect a building for a Girls' Boarding school. We had 25,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel hauled with which to begin the work. By this time the time had come for our first vacation. We spent the vacation in Kansas and Texas. During this time we secured pledges for $3,000.00 toward our proposed school. Mayor Rosa of San German heard of my purpose and offered to donate the old unused barracks to us for the school. Opposition by certain parties made it impossible for him to donate the barracks. I went up to my sand and gravel pile and was thinking what
and how to begin with no capital, when Don Juan Canojo Ortiz, the mayor of Lajas and adjoining municipality and an elder in our church at that place, came up and to him I told my story of victory and defeat and plans for the future. Mr Ortiz was interested because three years before he had started a school with a similar purpose in Lajas, but for lack of leadership and money it had closed not to reopen. He offered me the buildings gratis if I would go over there and build up my school. Mr. Ortiz and I went to San Juan consulted the Attorney General and was informed that Mr. Ortiz had the right to donate his school buildings to me which he did without conditions or reservation. I then proposed that we unite our work (I had nothing but plans, he nothing but empty buildings). It was agreed. But our plans in Palmarejo could not be carried out. Mr. Ortiz could not rally to his former enthusiasm and personal interest in the work. After three months of trial I had to abandon the Lajas proposition and seek elsewhere for a location for the proposed school. Search was made everywhere but no land for sale could be found. A friend sick friend who was supposed to be dying went for me and offered to sell me 100 acres for our school. He expressed to do something for his town before he died. He offered me the 100 acres for $8,000, he himself contributing $500. I was to have three months in which to pay for it. I went to New York and secured sufficient to make half payment, returned to Porto Rico to find my friend recovering his health and wishing to rescind the agreement. He offered me $500.00 to cancel the option. I offered him a similar amount to extend the option one year more. He accepted the offer. Later I went to the States secured more funds for the purchase of the land, returned and sold two of the buildings previously given me by Mr. Ortiz, to Mr. Ortiz himself, for $1,000.00. But still lacked $500.00 to make the full payment of $8,000.00. Remember we had nothing as evidence that such an industrial school could succeed. Every other attempt had failed. We were still under the shadows of the experience of Mr. Ortiz' failure in Lajas. The option was up as I recall on the 3rd of January 1912. The last mail coming on Saturday before the option was due on Monday brought a check from Mr. E.C. Emerson Sr. of Titusville Pa. Just the exact amount that we needed to complete the entire $8,000.00. My bones
melted in gratitude to God for His renewed assurance of our final success. The deliverance was from a most critical situation. The owner of the land Mr. Ladaga, had told me he would not sell unless I could pay cash. No one really believed the project would succeed. Two missionaries had spent some considerable time with me trying to convince me that I should continue in the active missionary work and not go off on a tangent. I am glad that both of these men are to-day our most hearty supporters. One of the two, the Rev. E. A. McDonald, a most consecrated man of ability, is giving all his time as our representative in New York.

On March 1st, 1912, the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico was opened to students as an interdenominational institution with representatives from all denominations on our Board of Trustees. The brethren rendered very invaluable and much appreciated service to the cause from the time of its formal organization as a corporate body, May 1911. Special reference should be made here of Dr. M. J. Greif, Rev. E. A. McDonald, Rev. E. A. Odell, Rev. J. A. McAllister, Dr. Manuel Guzman Rodriguez, Mr. J. J. Siebert, and Don Juan Canio Ortíz.

We started with an old house that had served its days as a home for the farmer. It had been used as a tobacco shed and for housing poenos. The cobwebs hung down two feet and the scum from the wood fires had left a heavy deposit of blackness over every thing. We hauled out several wagon loads of trash and vermin before we could begin to wash the walls. The floors below had broken through and filled up with the deposit of years. After several days work we were able to occupy the house. At first there were 8 boys and 4 girls not a single one able to pay a cent toward their keep. Those able to pay would not consent to work and live as those first were compelled to do. During the forenoon I taught them and during the afternoon we all worked on the farm, for a time. Later I secured the services of a woman to teach them in the classroom. The summer months of 1912 were spent in cutting down trees with which we erected a shed 18 feet wide and 60 feet long for classrooms and dining room. The following year we had 35 students and two real teachers, Mr. Clarence Harris, my brother, and Miss Villanueva.

During the financial crisis of 1913-14 the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions took over the school of property to insure the life of the
School, yet the interdenomination feature has been preserved. The Panama on Christian work Regional Conference, held in San Juan, March 1916, voted unanimously the following: "It is recommended that the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico maintained by the Presbyterians at San German, be selected as the school to be developed into the proposed Christian College."

The school owns free of debt 100 acres of land adjoining the city of San German, a city famous for centuries as the health resort of Porto Rico. How in the mountains and all our land is hilly. The mountains to the North of us gradually rise to an elevation of 3000 feet, and stretch out from our southern entrance to the western skyline like chocolate drops pressed close together. The main automobile road of the island and also the American Railroad circle around our southern entrance. Every step forward from the southern entrance gives us a new picture of nature trying to outdo itself. The gorgeous flamboyant loaded with the reddest of blossoms, the ever changing mango trees, the stately royal palm with white trunks and green tops contribute their share in the panorama of scenery excelled in beauty of tints and shades of the coloring from the carpeted green of earth to the golden and silvery hues of sunset, by no land. The fresh invigorating breezes temper our days and cool our nights to a delightful climate of a temperate zone. The situation is ideal.

The school has demonstrated clearly and positively that the youth of Porto Rico will joyfully work for their education; that they are bright, progressive and alert. They are firm and resolute in their purpose to better themselves and to improve their beautiful island. Work with the hands is found here to be eminently dignified. All students work daily. Thus the days spent in school are not a lost to the world for the student becomes an asset rather than a mere expense. In the year 1915-16 our students contributed in labor for permanent improvements $1,378.10 over and above the cost of current expenses and board for that year. The students contribute muscle and unselfish enthusiasm. This institution is being erected entirely by student labor. Our farm and gardens are tilled by the students. Our driveways are being built thru and around the hills and over the bridges by the students. The students quarry and break the rock, sift the sand, mix the concrete by hand, set the forms and fill them.
They have built two dormitories for students and the Ladies Home Journal
bungalow for teachers. They erected a chapel and manse for the Mission
Board during Summer vacation and saved about $400. to the Board, besides
securing enough money to clothe themselves the following school year. The
girls do the cooking, washing and ironing for the boys. Work is a preventi-
tive of many moral as well as physical ills. The students who work hard
in manual labor never need a tonic to make him sleep. "A good hard day's
work puts feathers in any old bed," as well as developing a strong body.

OUR FIELD. Latin America with nineteen republics and part of the
United States, 60,000,000 people.

OUR PURPOSE. To act forth in a concrete example the kind of education
that will help build up fifteen republics into strong progressive people
christian by a thorough training of the young people in the arts, sciences and the
Bible.

OUR PLANS. To give every youth who will work for it a full course
in his chosen life-work that they may go out and impart this knowledge
and vision to their fellow men, to uphold right, justice and peace.

OUR MEANS. Since about 70 per cent of the youth are penniless, the
most of our money must come from the benevolent people of Porto Rico
and the United States. The students are not asking for a hand out but
for the privilege to work for the receive.

OUR LOCATION. Porto Rico is the most easterly of the greater Antilles.

Taking our school as the centre, a circle marked by a radius of
1200 miles from Northwest to South would touch twelve Republics, represent-
ing 46,000,000 people. Porto Ricans are now American citizens. We can estab-
lish here the demonstration of the best kind of education the United
States can produce for the help of our sister republics in Latin America.

We have accomplished three things, generally considered impossible, viz.-

1. That real hard work is popular among students. They said it
was impossible to make students work in Porto Rico. No one with an 8th
grade diploma would soil his hands. We not only have high school students
but wealthy students working hard, students from the best families on
the island.

2. Co-education as the most practicable kind of education. During
the five years and more we have never had a single moral failure because of
the co-educational feature.

3. That the Bible is the real and true foundation desired by all.
Even missionaries and that it not possible to emphasize the Bible. We have
for four years been the main attractions here for Catholics as well as Prot-

eyentals in the Bible. This today is the lead in "Industrial school of P.A".
WHAT $6,000,000.00 will continue to do year after year for all time for Latin America through the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico U.S.A.

The interest from one million dollars, will maintain the College of Academic Training, the B.A. Course.

The interest from two million dollars, will maintain the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts.

The interest from one million dollars, will maintain the Professional Schools of Law, Theology, Education and Journalism.

The interest from one million dollars, will provide for the development and upkeep of the whole plant and grounds which includes erection of necessary buildings.

The interest from one million dollars, will maintain the Schools of Business, Commerce and Efficiency.

The duty of this Department in addition to classroom instruction is also to keep a field man for the study of the other Latin American countries in order to keep the Institute fully informed as to the real needs and the kind of men and women required to fill that demand; to visit the United States to study the educational institutions of other countries and to keep the Institute abreast of the very best methods employed by other institutions; and to develop an efficiency plan on practical grounds for the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico.

With the above endowment the Institute could maintain beside men in addition to pay students at least 2500 youth who would otherwise be unable to acquire a training for life's struggle.

J.W. Harris/
San German, P.R.

1916.
POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF PORTO RICO

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A Latin-American institution under the Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., organized to give an industrial, mechanical and general education based on the Bible as the life-book for every student.

Rev. J. W. Harliss
President of the Institute
San German, P. R.