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Brief Chronology of the History of Puerto Rico

PART 1 - Pre-Colombian Puerto Rico

The pre-Colombian history of the island called by the *Táinos* “*borikén*” (*Tierra del Altivo Señor* or “The land of the valiant and noble lord”), comes to us through the accounts of the Spaniards (collected through oral history written many years after the colonization¹) and archeological discovery. Therefore, knowledge of the pre-Colombian history and culture, especially of the pre-*taíno* period is limited.

- 40 – 400 AD** The *Arcaico* Indians are the first inhabitants Puerto Rico. The *arcaicos* were hunters and fishermen. They most likely came to the island from the Florida peninsula. The *arcaicos* had not discovered agriculture but had developed primitive pottery.
- 120 – 400 AD** The *Igneri* (or Saladoid) Indians arrive on the island from South America (possibly Venezuela) and settle on the north coast. The *igneri* were much more advanced. They relied mostly on hunting and fishing. They developed sophisticated pottery and pottery art, for which they are best known. Their language was *aruaco*, for which sometimes these Indians are called.
- 4th – 10th Century** The *arcaicos* and *igneri* co-exist (and perhaps clashed) on the island. The *igneri* culture changed over the centuries (perhaps because of contact with other groups from South America into what is called the Ostionoid culture. Their art declined and became more utilitarian. The *Pre-Taíno* culture developed during this period.
- By 1000 AD** The *Taíno* culture had developed and became dominant. They called the island “*borikén*” as well as in what is today Cuba and Hispaniola (the island of the Dominican Republic and Haiti)



¹ The first comprehensive history of Puerto Rico was *Historia Geográfica, Civil y Natural de la Isal de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico* by Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra.

**XIII – XVI
Century
The Taínos**

Characteristics of the *Taíno* Indians:

- Physical: median height, bronze-colored skin, agile, well-proportioned, black eyes and straight black hair.



- Political Organization: The *taínos* were organized in small villages called *yucayeques* governed by a chief or *cacique*. The *yucayeque* surrounded a central plaza or *batey*, where the *areyto* ceremony was performed and ball games played. The *cacique* who lived in a *caney* – a rectangular structure. The rest of the population lived in *bujíos* (where the word *bohío* is derive from) that was a round thatch structure. The *cacique* governed based on law and tradition rather than will. The small warrior class (a kind of nobility or upper class) were called *nitaínos*, and the rest, the larger working class were called the *naborias*. The *bohíques* were the priests. The *cacique* did not own property and his position was hereditary (though under special circumstances it could be assumed by a *nitaíno*). The symbol of his power was the *cacique's guaní* or gold disk that he carried around his neck. Though each *yucayeque* was independent, the *caciques* of the island formed a council to deal with island-wide issues. The *taínos* frequently clashed with the *caribes* a feared warrior people that inhabited the smaller islands east of *borikén*.

dujo

- Economy: The *taíno* economy was collective (private property was not recognized except for personal objects and decorations). The economy was based on small fruit agriculture (in small plots called *conucos*), supplemented by limited fishing and hunting. Their main instrument for agriculture was cane called the *coy*. The *taíno* cultivated the *yuca*, *maisis*(corn), *maní* (peanuts), *tobacco*, *yayama* (pineapple). The *taínos* also had a textile industry. Cotton was cultivated for dress (*naguas* or women's skirts and the *jamacas* for sleeping. *Casabe* was a staple, a bread made from *yucca*. The *taínos* also produced small canoes, used the bow and arrow, produced pottery and instruments of war.



- Religion: The religion of the *taínos* was highly sophisticated. Much like modern religions, they believed in one Supreme God (*Yuquyú*) who was just, invisible and who could not be represented physically. *Yuquiyú's* sacred mother was *Atabey*. The spirit of evil (or the devil) was *Juracán* (from which the



cemí

work hurricane is derived). Other “emissaries” of the deities were represented in stone sculptures called *cemis* that protected the *yucayeque* as well as individual families. The *taínos* believed in the immortality of the soul, as well as in ghosts they called *babuyas*.

**XIII – XVI
Century The
Taínos (cont)**

The *areyto* was a religious ceremony that combined music, religion and in which the history of the town was told. The *areyto* was the “history book” of the *taíno*

Family: The *taínos* were polygamous and their society tended to be matriarchal, in part because of family succession. Children were raised by their mothers and by the community at large. Language, history and culture was transmitted orally through the family.



Ball game in the ceremonial park

Language: Many *taíno* (aruakan) words were incorporated into our language. Some are: *maní, leren, ají, yuca, mamey, guanábana, anon, pajuil, pitajaya, cupey, tabonuco, tabaco, ceiba, hamaca, huracán, Jaiba, guaraguao, batea, iguana, guimo, yagrumo, ausubo, coquí, iguana, cobo, carey, jicotea, guabina, guarapo, manatí, buruquena, juey, güiro, bohío, batey, caney, hamaca, nasa, petate, coy, barbacoa, batea, cabuya, casabe* and *canoa y pitirre*. In addition, many towns in Puerto Rico have names derived from the *taínos*, such as: *Coamo, Caguas, Mayaguez, Humacao, and Utuado*

PART 2: Arrival of the Spaniards

- 1492** Christopher Columbus made the first (of what would be three voyages) to discover an Atlantic route to India. He arrives at San Salvador (in the Bahamas), and explores the coast of what is today Cuba and Hispaniola before returning to Spain.
- 1493** With a much larger fleet of 17 ships, Columbus makes his second voyage, this time to explore the “Indies.” On November 19, 1493, on his way to Hispaniola, his fleet anchored somewhere on the northwest coast of Puerto Rico. He named the island *San Juan Bautista* for St. John the Baptist. There was no further Spanish activity in Puerto Rico until 1508. Captain Juan Ponce de León was on this voyage.
- 1501-1503** To facilitate the search for gold, Spain allows the importation of African slaves and in 1503, the first slaves arrive in Santo Domingo.
- 1508** The colonization of Puerto Rico begins. Ponce de León arrives in Puerto Rico and was received by the main *cacique* on the island, *Agueybaná*. They exchanged names as a symbol of friendship. . He returned to Santo Domingo with samples of gold.

Ponce de León establishes the village of Caparra on the north of the island, on

1508 (cont.) the south side of what is today San Juan bay

1509 Ponce de León is appointed Governor of San Juan Bautista. A year later, he was appointed Captain of the island of San Juan Bautista.

The *repartimiento* or *Encomienda* of the Indians began, a system of distributing Indians among officials and colonists to work, most in search of gold. This system, set up as a “benevolent slavery” required that Indians be paid for their work and be Christianized by the colonists. However, it eventually end up becoming slavery.

The *cacique*, *Urayoán*, orders the drowning of Diego Salcedo, a young Spaniard, to determine whether the Spaniards were immortal.



1511 The *taínos*, led by the successor to *Agueybaná*, also named *Agueybaná*, revolt against the Spaniards. Under *Guarionex*, the *taínos* destroy the village of Sotomayor, in what is now Aguada. Over eleven thousand Indians, including some *caribes*, are led by *Agueybaná*. Ponce de León leads the campaign against the rebellion. Over 600 Indians are killed, including *Agueybaná* himself. What remained of the Indians either fled and joined the *caribes*, dispersed to the center of the Island, or became slaves under the *repartimiento*.

The name of Caparra is changed to “Cuidad de Puerto Rico.”

1512 The village of *San Germán* is founded on the southwest coast of the island. Franciscan monks arrive on the island and build a convent in Caparra.

1513 Alonso Manso is appointed bishop of the island. “Christianization” of the Indians, always a Spanish goal (the King had ordered that Indians be taught to read and write as part of their christianization), begins in earnest. Manso also founded the *Escuela de Gramática* for the settlers.

1515 Ponce de León divides the island in two districts, the *Partido de Puerto Rico*, covering the northeast of the island, and the *Partido de San Germán*, covering the southwest.

1519 What is today the city of San Juan is founded when Ponce de León moves the *villa de Caparra* on the north side of the bay. It was officially installed in 1521. and was renamed “Puerto Rico” (The island’s name remained “San Juan Bautista”)

- 1518** A smallpox epidemic kills one third of the Indian population in 1518.
- By 1520**
“PR: Key to the Indies” Puerto Rico had become the “key to the Indies” because of its strategic location at the entrance to the Caribbean. Most shipping (including gold and other treasures) from what is now Mexico and later South America, passed through Puerto Rico en-route to Spain. Puerto Rico’s strategic importance as a protector of the Indies out shadows its economic importance. Though gold was discovered and mined, it was soon depleted, leaving Puerto Rico with little to contribute to the Spanish Crown.
- 1520 - 29** The *Caribe* Indians carry out several attacks on the Spaniards on the island. A *Casa de Estudios* is founded by the Dominican monks, Puerto Rico’s first higher education center to teach grammar, liberal arts and theology.
- 1521** Ponce de León is wounded in Florida and dies in Cuba. The village of Puerto Rico is officially installed., along with Dominican monks. Construction begins on the *Catedral*.
- 1522** San José Church is founded in what today is San Juan, the oldest in use in America. A wooden structure to defend the city was constructed, known as *Casa Blanca*.
- 1523** Construction of the *Convento de Santo Domingo* was initiated and the convent completed in 1530. The first sugar mill is built in Añasco.
- 1528** The French attack and burn San Germán. It would again be destroyed by the French in 1528. San Germán is moved top several locations before finally being established in its current location.
- 1531** The Spanish population totals 426. There are 2,264 African slaves (1,047 illegally) and 473 Indians (slaves under the *Encomienda*). (Historians don’t agree on the exact numbers)
- 1532-1540** The wooden fortress *Casa Blanca* is substituted by a stone building, *Santa Catalina* or *La Fortaleza*, was built. A year later, building begins on *La Fortaleza*, the oldest residence of an executive still in use in America.
- San Juan Bautísta ranks second in Spanish population in the Americas after Santo Domingo, with 400 “vecinos” or families.
- 1539** Before *La Fortaleza is finished*, Spain begins construction of a massive fortifications in San Juan, beginning with a fortification on a promontory at entrance to the harbor, called *El Morro*.
- 1540** Gold is virtually depleted and gold mining is almost abandoned.
- 1539-91** Work on the fortifications of the city intensifies. *El Morro*, at the entrance to San Juan Bay was expanded based on a design by Field Marshall Juan de Tejada and engineer Bautista Antonelli. Together with the much larger *San Cristóbal*, which overlooks the entrance to San Juan and the smaller *San Gerónimo*, (along with smaller fortifications) constituted the basic defenses of

- 1539-91 (cont.)** the city. *El Morro* and *San Cristóbal* are almost joined by an 18-foot wide wall that virtually surrounds the entire city, one of the few remaining walled cities in America. In 1580, the title of the governor is changed to Captain General reflecting the military importance of the island.
- By 1550, there were 10 sugar mills on the Island, mostly in flat coastal regions. By 1564, output was over a half million pounds of sugar was being produced.
- 1542** The coconut tree was introduced from the Cape Verde islands off the coast of Africa.
- 1559** Ponce de Leon's remains are returned to Puerto Rico from Cuba, where he died after being wounded in his incursion into Florida.
- 1582** A census shows that the capital had only 170 families and 14 clerics. Coamo had 20 families and Arecibo ten. The total Spanish population was less than 2,500.
- 1582** Given the island's strategic importance as a fortress protecting the route from the "New World" to Spain, an annual allocation of funds from the Mexican treasury was approved. The allocation, called the *Situado* (the first of which arrived in 1587) would continue for centuries, creating a "division" between the capital, San Juan, and the rest of the island or *la isla*, a division that had been initiated with the creation of the two *partidos* (Puerto Rico and San Germán).
- 1585-1588** In 1585, Spain and England are at war. 1586 Sir Francis Drake destroys the fort of St. Augustine in Florida, and devastates Santo Domingo and Cartagena (in what today is Columbia). The Spanish Armada is defeated by the English
- 1595** Sir Francis Drake, a hero on the defeat of the Spanish Armada, attacks Puerto Rico on November 22, to plunder a Spanish treasure that had left Mexico in March and was deposited at *La Fortaleza*. 700 Puerto Rican and Spanish soldiers and 800 seamen and 300 on frigates successfully defend the island from the attack.
- 1598** George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, lands 1,000 men east of the city and, after defeating a small Spanish force, set siege to *El Morro* defended by 400 soldiers, which surrendered after several days. An epidemic and local resistance to English rule, force Cumberland to leave the island after 65 days, not before burning and plundering the city.
- 1598-1625** The population begins to grow, though slowly, founding small villages throughout the island. In 1616 the towns of San Felipe de Arecibo and San Blas de (*Illescas*) Coamo are formally recognized. The Indian population had virtually disappeared, many leaving the island, joining the *Caribes*, others decimated by work in the mines and disease, and others concentrating in enclaves in the central mountains and later mixing with white colonists. Physical traits of the *taínos* are present today throughout the island, but are most visible in the interior mountainous region.

1625

On September 24, the Dutch attack the Island. Balduino Enrico and a fleet of 17 vessels boldly enter the bay, land soldiers and place *El Morro* under siege.



Governor Juan de Haro a 330 defenders hold and eventually counterattack. The Dutch left on November 2, not without burning most of the city, including *La Fortaleza*, which was rebuilt by 1643.

1634

The Dutch attack prompts the Spaniards to increase fortifications and construction of the city wall. The bay section was started in 1634, with the eastern and southern flanks completed in 1638. Three doors were built, (San Juan, San Justo, Santiago) one remains –the *Puerta de San Juan* leading to the bay. Another, built to the north of what is today the *Plaza Colón*, was popularly called *Puerta de Tierra*, which gave name to a section south of San Juan.

1600-1700

Political Organization: In 1581 the Island had been divided into two *partidos* (or parts), San Juan and San Germán. Each had a municipal council called *Cabildo*, which annually elected a mayor or *Alcalde Ordinario*. Once elected they became *Alcaldes Gobernadores*. In 1564 the system was changed to having a single governor and from 1564 to 1898, the Island was governed by a military officer, *Capitán General* who reported to the *Audiencia* in Santo Domingo. The *Capitán General* appointed the *Regidores* or council members of the *cabildo*, and acted as judges on the Island. Through *bandos* or legislative actions, he ruled over every aspect of the political and social life of the island, from entertainment to agriculture, price fixing, administration of tax revenue, to currency and the Island's defense. He was also in charge of colonizing the Island (seeking new colonists). And, he was also *Vice Patrón Real* (vice regal patron) of the church and charged with good relations with the church. Citizens did not participate in government.

In the second half of the century the *partidos* of Coamo, Arecibo, Ponce (1692), Aguada, and Loíza were formed. Each was governed (on the *Capitán's* behalf) by a *Teniente de Guerra*, who was also the commander of the urban militia or *milicias urbanas*.

In 1647, the French occupy Vieques. In 1688, a mixed colony of French and English settled in Vieques.

Economy: Puerto Rico remained seriously poor throughout the century. The Papal Bulls (dictums of the Pope) had made the King of Spain sole owners of

**1600-1700
(cont.)**

the land in the “New World”, who had the power to grant land use. In Puerto Rico, the end of the gold rush transformed the island’s economy from a mining to an agricultural one. Land was awarded (but not legally transferred) to colonists by the governor on behalf of the Crown. They were widely distributed which distributed the population. Legal ownership of land in Puerto Rico came in 1778. In the 1500’s, colonists lived on subsistence agriculture and livestock, with land cultivated by colonist’s slaves and *mulattos*. By mid 16th century, sugar cane and sugar production became a new industry, but soon faltered because of fraud over land, lack of labor and lack of transport of sugar to Spain. By 1647, only 7 mills remained. Ginger and cattle replaced sugar cane and the main crops. Cattle became a major product throughout the 17th and 18th century.

Trade was allowed only with Spain and only through the *Casa de Contratación* in Seville (under an economic system called Mercantilism). Trade was limited mainly to San Juan. This, and many economic controls, limited trade. Few ships touched on the island (between 1651 and 1662 not a single ship arrived). This produced a significant increase in illicit trade (smuggling) with the French, Dutch, and English, including trade in slaves. Tobacco (a significant crop) and cocoa were raised. Illegal trade (especially through the Lesser Antilles of San Martin, St., Croix, and Vieques –then uninhabited, and others) became rampant.

Population: The white population remained very small during the century and no reliable data is available on the population outside of San Juan. In 1673, San Juan had only 820 whites, 667 slaves and 304 *pardos libertos* (blacks, freed slaves). Settlers were brought from the Canary Islands and Portugal, but in small numbers. Migration to the richer colonies of Perú and Mexico further lowered the population, along with epidemics, between 1689 and 1690 that killed over 600 whites and slaves. There are many descriptions that distinguish between Spaniards and “Puerto Ricans” indicating growth in the native-born population (*criollos*) vs. colonists from Spain. There are also descriptions of *mulattos*, which indicates a growing mix of whites and blacks. Freed slaves (slaves could buy their freedom) start settling in distinct parts of the island, usually near the coast, as most had been brought to cultivate sugar cane.

Religion: Evangelization of Indians, slaves and taking care of the religious needs of the colonists became a paramount activity of the missionaries in Puerto Rico. Catholicism prospered. The Franciscan arrived and built a church and convent (1642-1670) and the Carmelite order recruited among women of religious vocation. The rest of the Island had few clerics. *Porta Coeli* in San Germán, was completed in 1688. The Church was charged with health care for the poor, setting up hospitals in San Juan (*San Idelfonso*) and San Germán (*La Concepción*).

**18th Century
Puerto Rico**

Political Organization: Puerto Rico’s government, changes little through the 18th century. Marshall Alejandro O’Reilly, sent to the island to report on the situation in Puerto Rico by the Crown, made the first comprehensive study of the island and made a series of recommendations in the areas of trade and defenses, including a major push to further build San Juan’s fortifications.

Military Activity: In 1702, the English raid Arecibo and are turned back by

**18th Century
Puerto
Rico(cont.)**

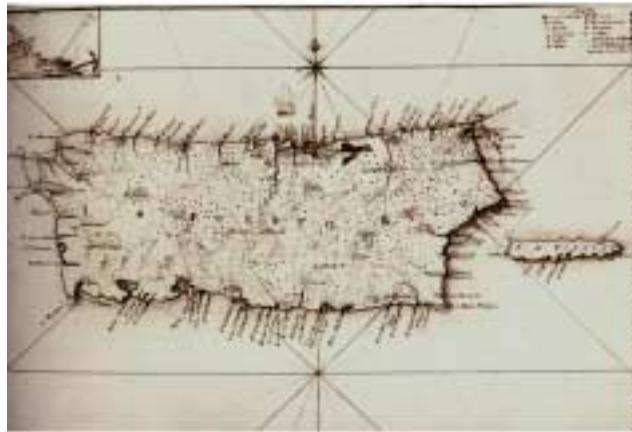
Antonio de los Reyes Correa (*Capitán Correa*), for whom Arecibo gets the name *Villa del Capitán Correa*. In 1718, the Spanish take over Vieques, but the English again settled, along with some Dutch, in 1752. Spain again attacks and secures the island. Under Col. Tomás O'Daly, the San Juan fortifications were completed in 1776, and the streets of San Juan were first paved with stone brought from the Canary Islands. In 1777, two U.S. ships being pursued by the English anchor in Mayaguez, were the local population helped the Americans and raised the Spanish flag on the ship to protect them.

Economy: Puerto Rico becomes increasingly affected by the trade struggle among the European powers. Luis González Vales points out that “the first half of the century was dominated by privateering” and “the differences between San Juan, site of the military *presidio* (or garrison) and the rest of the Island was intensified by the armed struggle (between Spain and England) in the Caribbean. The walled

city, seat of the colonial government, remained a bastion of Spanish might while the rest of the island was left pretty much to its own devices.”

O'Reilly describes the extent of the illegal trade. Other economic activity (other than the *situado*) included raising cattle and some farming. Products included coffee, rice, beans,

plantain, tobacco and corn.



Puerto Rico Map 1784

While the British exported sugar from the Lesser Antilles and trade began to New York, Boston and others, Puerto Rico was still seen as a military outpost. This produced increases in privateering, which came sometimes with the blessing of local authorities, even the governor. A mulatto, names Miguel Henríquez, became so important because of his privateering, that he was named *Capitán de Mar y Tierra*. The abundance of easily obtainable food and lack of trade opportunities, provided little incentive to cultivate the land.

In 1736, coffee was introduced from Santo Domingo, which, by 1765 became a major item of contraband. From 1749 to 1765, alcoholic beverages were prohibited for the first time.

By the end of the century, significant legal trade had developed with the newly independent United States, especially the export of sugar and the importation of flour and food. González Vales indicates that ““In some areas...the island developed a state of semi-dependency on the United States.”

Population: In 1765, O'Reilly conducts a census. There were 44,883 inhabitants, of which 39,846 were free and only 5,037 remained slaves. 77.96%

**18th Century
 Puerto Rico
 (cont.)**



of the population was under 40 years of age. The population was mostly rural. A large portion were soldiers, and a significant number of sailors from ships bordering the island had deserted and taken refuge in the interior. By

1784, there were 91,845 and by the end of the century, there were 153,232.

In 1788 Fray (Brother) Inigo Abbad y Lasierra, publishes the first history of Puerto Rico, called *Historia Geográfica, Civil y Natural de la Ysla de San Juan B. de Puerto Rico*. In a moving account of his travel through the island, he describes the population in various towns and their surroundings, including housing. Towns had few houses centered around a church.

His description shows the dispersion of the population. For example:

Town	Families	Total
San Mateo de Cangrejos (Santurce) mostly		
Loíza	166	1146
Fajardo	243	1202
Vieques	Uninhabited	
Humacao	254	1515
Guayama	531	4589
Salinas	90	
Río Piedras	267	1369
Caguas	131	640
Buaynabo (Guaynabo)	205	1109
Bayamón	341	1462
Toa Alta	385	2777
Toa Baja	414	2203
Vega (single town)	219	1011
Manatí	447	3096
Arecibo	700	4500
Utuado	180	1016
San Carlos de Aguadilla	195	1045
Moca	203	996
Aguada	685	4117
Añasco	577	3061
Mayaguez	419	1791
San Germán	411	1166
Cabo Rojo	315	1215
Yauco	348	2299
Ponce	735	5038

18th Century Puerto Rico (cont.)	Ponce	735	5038
	Cayey	48	302
	Coamo	430	4317

Lasierra describes each town, noting that in most, people of all races (mostly whites, mullatto and free black slaves) live together. This and the number of "Puerto Ricans" indicate a mixture of races on the island. He also sees the disparity between the potential and actual economic growth of the island and like O'Reilly, recommends liberalization of commerce, land distribution, and land ownership.

By the 1770's, cockfighting had become a popular sport.

José Campeche, Puerto Rico's most famous painter of the century, is born in 1752. An accomplished portraitist and painter of religious and historic themes, his work has gained wide acclaim. Among his works are: *El Nacimiento*, *El Angel Caído*, *El Naufragio de Power*, and *El Sitio de San Juan*.

1797 Spain and France declare war on England. On April 60 English vessels under the command of Gen. Ralph Abercromby, anchor off *Cangrejos* (Santurce) with between 8,000 and 10,000 British and German troops, and march toward San Juan, after taking *Cangrejos*. They are stopped by a combined force of 1,000 Spaniards, French who were in port and militia, under Captain General Ramón de Castro, stopped the invaders at Fort *San Gerónimo* at the entrance to the bay. The defeated English leaves on May 2. The English attacked Aguadilla in December and Cabo Rojo in 1799, both of which were rejected. This would be the last major attack on Puerto Rico until 1898.

1800 – 1850 Political Organization: The first part of the 19th century was a time of political upheaval both in the Americas and in Spain, which lasted well into the century. There were several changes of government in Spain and the independence movements in South America had their effect on the island, especially on the cause of governors to "save Puerto Rico for Spain."

In 1809, Spain had been invaded by France. The *Cortes* are created. That year a decree by the *Junta Suprema Gubernativa de España e Indias*, the Spanish government recognizes the equality of the colonies with the Spanish provinces and gave them the right to representation before the *Cortes*. Navy Lieutenant Ramón Power y Giralt (native of Puerto Rico) was elected the first representative to the *Cortes*. The five *Ayuntamientos* (municipalities) gave Power a set of instructions to produce reform in a host of areas, from labor to education. Power was elected first vice president of the *Cortes*. The island was at the time already politically divided between conservatives (Spaniards, the military, businessmen) loyal to Spain and liberals (professionals small farmers, industrialists), loyal to Spain also but demanding reforms. Power gains several concessions, including freer trade, through the "Power Act."

With the 1812 Constitution, Puerto Ricans are granted a series of civil rights, including the right to vote. Each province would have a *Diputación Provincial* or governing council. The King returns in 1814 and dissolves the *Cortes*.

**1800 – 1850
(cont.)**

Puerto Rico suffers the various changes in government in Spain and a result of the revolution in that country.

Corsairs and pirates continued to attack the island during the beginning of the century. In 1824, the Puerto Rican pirate Roberto Cofresí (from Cabo Rojo) attacked eight ships, one American. In 1825, Cofresí was captured near Ponce after a pursuit by the schooner *Grampus*, and executed on the fields of *El Morro*. Also that year, the *Bandos de Policía y Buen Gobierno* were issued by Gov. de la Torre, with 65 articles placing strict control over all social life. In 1849, a system of *libretas* (notebooks) forced anyone who did not own land or have a trade/profession was required to work under a property owner under a strict system that was monitored by owners through notations in the notebook.

The first evidence of rebellion against Spain in Puerto Rico, as well a small slave revolts, emerges. Several small conspiracies and revolts occurred in Bayamón, Yauco and Fajardo. They were inspired by the independence movement in South America, especially with the influx of South American revolutionaries. The island also starts receiving significant numbers of Spanish loyalists exiled from Venezuela and Colombia.

In 1825, the governor receives absolute powers or *Poderes Omnívodos*.

Economy: By 1810, a revolutionary period in Central and South America, the *situado* was no longer arriving. In 1812, Alejandro Ramirez becomes

Intendente to oversee the island's treasury, and made several important reforms, including institutionalizing the use of paper money. He



Paper money used in Puerto Rico in 1812-1847

founded the *Diario Económico de Puerto Rico*. In 1815 he manages to reap a major concession for the island, the *Real Cédula de Gracias*, which further liberalized trade, recognized property, and free movement out of the island. The *Cédula* spurred tremendous growth in the sugar industry, (as well as of its derivatives, molasses and rum). And, it facilitated the introduction of heavy machinery for agriculture. Mulattos and freedmen settling on the island were given three acres of land. Free land was also offered white settlers to attract population to the island. But public services, including roads, improved little and communication was difficult. Coffee production increased, mostly concentrated in the interior and would surpass sugar as the island's main crop by the end of the century. However, by 1830, only 6% of the total area of the island was being farmed.

In 1803, the printing press was introduced to the island, but after the *Bandos*, all press was censored, even prohibiting the use of the words *independence*, *liberty*,

1800 – 1850 (cont.) *tyranny, and despotism.* Importation of certain books was also prohibited.

In 1817, the slave trade was prohibited (though not the ownership of slaves).

Population: The population of the island continued to grow consistently as commerce expanded and migration (some from South America) increased with economic reforms. In 1834, there were 188,869 whites, 126,399 free men of “color”, and 41,818 slaves.

Total Population of Puerto Rico 19th Century

1800	155,426
1815	220,892
1820	230,622
1829	322,699
1834	357,086
1846	443,090
1860	583,181
1877	731,648
1883	810,394
1897	890,820
1899	953,243

Population of Puerto Rico

Year	White	Free “Colored”	Slaves	Total
1834	188,869	126,399	41,818	357,086
1846	216,083	175,791	51,216	443,090
1860	300,430	241,015	41,736	583,181

By 1846, there were 216083. In 1846, there were 51,000 slaves on the island, though this still represented a small proportion (14%) of the population. Cultural life also started to flourish in the cities. In 1839, the *Teatro La Perla* was founded in Ponce. The first Puerto Rican publication, the *Aguinaldo Puertorriqueño* was published that same year, followed the year later by *Album Puertorriqueño*, a collection of poetic essays. In 1846, the *El Cancionero de Borinquen* is published, a collection of poetry.

This is a is time when a very distinct Puerto Rican identity (different from Spanish), was being forged. Education (at least for the well-to-do) was increasing under the church, though most of the population remained illiterate. This increase in education in Puerto Rico, created a professional and intellectual class that would later in the century lead the struggle for reform.

1850 – 1899 Political Organization: The second part of the century was characterized by an increase in liberal thinking among groups of intellectuals, which led to the formation of the first political parties, the *Grito de Lares* and the first *Autonomous* government under Spain. The movement ended with the Spanish-American war and the invasion of Puerto Rico by U.S. forces in 1898.

A group of intellectuals was developing that pushed for reform. These included:

1850 – 1899
(cont.)

José Julián Acosta, Román Baldorioty de Castro, Segundo Ruíz Belvis, Francisco Mariano Quiñones, Julio L. Vizcarrondo, José de Celis Aguilera, Julián Blanco, educator Eugenio María de Hostos, Manuel I. Saldaña, and Ramón Emeterio Betances. One of the main rallying points for these leaders was the abolition of slavery.

In 1866, José Julián Acosta, Francisco Mariano Quiñones and Segundo Ruíz Belvis, who had been elected among others to represent the island (as liberals), in Spain to develop “Special Laws” at the invitation of the foreign minister, drafted a report entitled: *Proyecto para la abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico* (Bill for the Abolition of Slavery in Puerto Rico). This and other promised reforms were never granted. González Vales indicates that liberals started a fight for assimilation (equality with Spain under Spanish rule). Separatists, like Ruíz Belvis and Betances, believed revolution was the only recourse. Both began a campaign for Puerto Rican independence.

The separatist movement begins to grow, both in Puerto Rico and in Cuba. In Puerto Rico, there were secret pro-independence societies, *Capá Prieto* in Mayaguez, *Centro Bravo número 2*, and *Lanzador del Norte*. The work of Betances and Ruíz Belvis, as well as of these secret societies, prompted the *Grito de Lares* in 1868.

1868 Grito de Lares

The *Grito de Lares* revolt, the only serious revolt against Spanish rule took place. Betances and Ruíz Belvis had been exiled in New York. Betances later moved to Santo Domingo and Ruíz Belvis to Chile (where he died soon after). In Santo Domingo, Betances formed the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Committee. Recruitment of men (and women) began, that included Manuel Rojas (Venezuelan), Mariana Bracetti (credited with designing the Lares flag) and Mateo Bruckman, an American who had been in Puerto Rico for years. Betances moved to St. Thomas where he wrote “The Ten Commandments of Free Men.”



On September 23, 1868, 800 men met at Rojas’ farm in Lares (200 brought by Bruckman), occupied the town, declared the “Republic of Puerto Rico” and even set up a provisional government. The army moved on to San Sebastián, where a Spanish force awaited and defeated it. Bruckman was killed, over 600 were imprisoned in Arecibo and many were condemned to death (though later granted amnesty). The revolt failed.

On February 11, 1873, with the advent of the Republic in Spain, slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico. 29,229 slaves were freed, 15,244 men and 13,985 women. (Slave children and elderly had been freed in 1870) The main obstacle

1850-1899 to abolition was not opposition to abolition itself but indemnization to be paid
(cont.) slave owners.

Since 1869 there were two political groups competing for electors in Puerto Rico, the *liberales* and *conservadores*. In 1870, the first political parties are established, the *Partido Liberal Reformista* led by Ramón Baldorioty de Castro and the *Partido Liberal Conservador*. The *liberales* dominated the elections until 1874. This party included both *asimilistas* (those who favored full Spanish rights or assimilation to Spain) and the *autonomistas* (who favored more autonomy). The *Partido Liberal Conservador* became the *Partido Incondicional* that favored the status quo. The *Partido Liberal Reformista* became the *Partido Asimilista* in 1881, leaving the autonomists without a voice in the party. Baldorioty de Castro then organizes the *Partido Autonomista* in 1887.



In 1887, the government initiates a campaign of repression of the *autonomistas*, called the *compointes*. Baldorioty dies. In 1887, Luis Muñoz Rivera, a party member, reaches an accord with the *Partido Liberal Fusionista Español*, a party in Spain, to gain added influence (and eventually autonomy) in Spain for Puerto Rico. The accord is approved by his party that year. He then renamed the party the *Partido Liberal Fusionista* (“Fusionist Liberal Party”). José Celso Barbosa, a leader in the party dissented, and formed the *Partido Liberal Puro u Ortodoxo*, or the “Pure or Orthodox Liberal Party” that sought autonomy from Spain

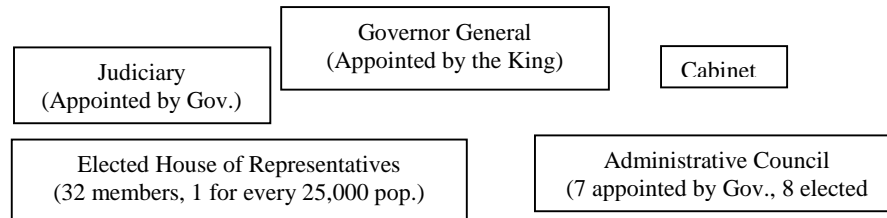
without becoming involved with a Spanish party.

In 1890, Muñoz Rivera had founded the newspaper *La Democracia* in which he ran articles to promote the agreement with a Spanish party.

1897 Autonomic Government: In August 1897, the *Partido Liberal Fusionista* is elected in Spain. Following the accord with Muñoz, the Spanish government approves three decrees. The first guarantees political and civil right to Puerto Ricans, the second extended the 1896 electoral law to Puerto Rico guaranteeing the right to vote.

The third decree granted an autonomous regime to Puerto Rico, the *Carta Autonómica* or Autonomic Charter, which established an autonomous government in Puerto Rico and the first elected legislature. The new government consisted of:

1897 (cont.)



Puerto Rico had 16 deputies and 3 senators in the Spanish Parliament. Municipalities were also organized under a representative system.

**1850-1899
(cont.)**

Economy: The economy of Puerto Rico consistently moved from a small farm, independent peasant economy that produced sugar, tobacco and small fruit, to an *hacienda* economy, with larger plots worked by laborers (and slaves) producing mostly sugar cane. Technology contributed to this transformation with the advent of the large sugar processing mills (*erritor*) where landowners (sugar producers) would bring their cane for processing. The *erritor*, many established with French capital, were organized like corporations. Sugar plantations flourished on the coastal plains (northeast –Bayamón, Loíza, Fajardo), north and northwest (Manatí, Arecibo, Aguadilla), the southeast (Cabo Rojo, San Germán, Guánica) and on the south (Ponce, Guayama, Arroyo), because of good conditions and proximity to ports. Between 1820 and 1860, sugar tonnage grew from 17,000 to 62,000 tons. Production, however, was a function of world prices, which fluctuated greatly throughout this period.

Coffee becomes a major export, planted mainly in small and medium size farms in the interior mountains.

The economy is also characterized by two other factors: a) the enormous amount of



farmland that is not in use, either because of lack of capital or lack of labor (reason for the *libreta* system); and b) the increasing influence of the export and import companies (wholesalers), established in major port cities (San Juan, Ponce, Arecibo and Mayaguez) that controlled trade and credit. Small business grow in the cities around the *plazas*, selling all kinds of imported goods. Small farms and subsistence farming continue, but begin decreasing in importance as small farmers (many of whom did not own the land but lived as “squatters” or *agregados*, on land owned by others) become salaried workers (at very low

1850-1899
(cont.)

wages) in the *Hacienda*.

In 1869, the telegraph was established. Samuel Morse had brought the telegraph to Puerto Rico (Arroyo) in the 1850s, but only as a test. Another major development came with the introduction of the steam train in 1888. The train, built with French capital and inaugurated in 1891, became the main mode of long distance travel on the island as well as a means of bringing sugar cane to

the *erritor* and to ports for export.



Population: Throughout this period, however, the vast majority of the island remained extremely poor and mostly illiterate. The population

grows by 45%. There is significant growth in the cities, but also in the center of the island (Ciales, Adjuntas, Utuado, Las Marías, Maricao, Jayuya and Villalba) as the mountains become the “open frontier” i

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erritorie, palud
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Juan, Quebradilla
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plantains, orange
The new kind
of production



1850-1899
(cont.)

homes without fathers (fathers migrating to work on *haciendas* or abandoning the home), the number of children without a family, the number of children who are servants in rich homes and the increase in *hijos de crianza* (children raised in homes other than their own). There is also a slow migration to the cities, and even to Santo Domingo and Cuba.



Social conflict abounds during this period. These included conflicts between Spaniard wholesalers, who controlled trade and credit, and *Criollo* or

native merchants. In addition, urban press workers, who were literate, begin to participate politically. Artisans, who had a tradition of organizations through trade associations, set the stage for organized labor. But the worst was the conflict between landowners and workers, through a system of indebtedness. Laborers would become indebted to landowners and would have to pay in work, leading to cycle of indebtedness and work for little pay.

In 1867 hurricane *San Narciso* strikes the island and in November, a major earthquake, centered between Saint Croix and Puerto Rico, also strikes. The tsunami that followed entered the town of Yabucoa.

Cultural Life: During this period, Puerto Rico cultural life in Puerto Rico, as authentically Puerto Rican, begins to flourish. In 1849, Manuel Alonso published the first book by a sole Puerto Rican author, *El Gíbaro* (later spelled *El Jíbaro*) Music, both popular and more classical flourish and take on a distinct Puerto Rican character. The *danza* becomes popular among the higher classes, which brings together European as well as Caribbean elements. The *bomba* and *plena* start losing their African lyrics and themes in favor of more Puerto Rican ones. Francisco Oller breaks with the portrait tradition of 17th century painter José Campeche (whose paintings decorated the homes of the rich), and exploits Puerto Rican themes, most evident in his famous *El Velorio* a depiction of the wake of a child in a poor Puerto Rican house. Others include: *Un Mendigo*, *El Almurezo del Pobre*. At the same time, the upper class founded the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño* as a center to promote literature and philosophy.

Manuel Tavárez (1842-82) was one of the best representatives of Puerto Rico's *danza*, composing such *danzas* as *Margarita*, *Violeta nad Hortencia*. Juan Morell Campos (1857-96), the most noted composer of the century, was an

1850-1899
(cont.)

extraordinary composer of *danzas* as well as waltzes. His compositions include: *Maldito Amor*, *Vano Empeño*, *Mis Penas*, *Alma Sublime*. In music also, Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa (1825-1900), composed a variety religious music, as well as zarzuelas (Spanish operettas), and an opera, *Guarionex* with lyrics by Alejandro Tapia y Rivera.

Education: Education grew slowly. In 1865, a decree by the Governor raised the number of schools to 283, with high schools in San Juan, Arecibo, Guayama, Humacao, Mayaguez and Ponce. The lack of a higher education institution to produce teachers (until 1890) seriously limited even elementary education for the poor. By 1878, however, there were 329 schools with little over 10,000 students.. In 1881 through 1898, there were 484 schools, with 24,120 students. Elementary school was free and obligatory for poor children, though many children, especially in the center of the island, did not attend. Moreover, there were not sufficient schools for all children. Professional studies had to be made outside Puerto Rico. Many of the wealthy studied in Spain, France and Germany.

In 1889, Dr. Agustín Stahl, a physician, publishes *Los indios borincanos* (The Indians of Borinquen). He also publishes the first books on Puerto Rico's fauna and flora.

PART 3: Puerto Rico Under U.S. Rule

1898
The Spanish
American
War

On April 19, 1898, the United States declares war on Spain after the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor. At the outset of the war, Puerto Rico's defenses consisted of 18,000 troops, among soldiers, volunteers and guerrillas. The 10th of May, the steamship *Yale* came close to San Cristóbal and the Spanish fired. The ship did not return fire and left.

On May 12th, Rear Admiral William T. Sampson with a fleet of seven ships, arrives at the coast of San Juan and initiates a bombardment of the city. Morales Carrión states: "The clash soon became a show of poor marksmanship. The Spanish fire hardly touched the attacking ships. The American shells did little damage to the forts." Some hit the city and others crossed the city falling in the bay. The action was not very successful. Sampson's fleet soon left. It was probably meant to test the city's defenses.

On July 25, 1898, General Nelson A. Miles, with 3,415 soldiers, invaded the town of Guánica on the south coast. There was no resistance. The Spanish defenders, including many Puerto Ricans, organized several brave attacks on the American troops throughout their march toward San Juan and in the island. On July 31, Gen John R. Brooke (whose namesake would be used for the fort that included *El Morro* for many years), led 15,199 troops in an invasion of Arroyo on the south coast.

**The Spanish
American
War (cont.)**

Gen. Miles then landed in Ponce, where his troops were enthusiastically welcomed by the town. On August 13th, news that the war had ended was received, and the troops suspended hostilities. On October 18, 1898, Puerto Rico was turned over to the United States.

Puerto Rico was not at the center of the war. Cuba and the Philippines were the true prizes for the United States. However, it did have an important trade value



(Puerto Rico ranked tenth in the Americas in exports to the U.S., including Colombia, Chile and Perú) and its strategic position in the Caribbean was important. “Most important...says Morales Carrión... was the belief that... “the time had come to kick Spain out of the hemisphere, to establish American hegemony over the Caribbean...(and

establish itself as) a world power.”

The general reaction of the Puerto Ricans (mostly the autonomists) to the transfer of power ranged from joy to jubilation. José C. Barbosa said “We aspire to be another state within the Union in order to affirm the personality of the Puerto Rican people, accepting in the meanwhile whatever transformations Congress deem necessary in accordance with the civic and cultural state of the country...”

Gen. Brooke takes command of the island and finds it in fiscal disarray. Some Puerto Ricans, organized in bands *partidos* sack Spanish property. The military encountered significant problems in the initial transfer of power as they lacked the public administration expertise.

Luis Muñoz Rivera founds the America Federalist Party known as the *Partido Federal*), that would later be the Unionist Party. The Republican Party is founded and led by José Celso Barbosa, favoring statehood for Puerto Rico.

**1898
Treaty of
Paris**

On December 10, 1898, Spain cedes Puerto Rico to the United States through the Treaty of Paris, a critical document in the legal history of Puerto Rico. In the Treaty, Spain renounced all claim to Cuba, ceded Puerto Rico, Guam and the Marianas and its dependent islands to the U.S. and transferred sovereignty of the Philippines to the U.S. for \$20 million. The treaty includes many safeguards for the island population, but clearly establishes that:

**1898 Treaty
of Paris
(cont.)**

Los derechos civiles y la condición política de los territorios cedidos a los Estados Unidos, se determinarán por el Congreso.

“The civil rights and the political condition of the natural inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States, will be determined by Congress.”

This condition remains to this day. The U.S. Congress has the ultimate authority over Puerto Rico.

1899-1900

U.S. military rule is imposed on the island. The *peso*, valued at about \$.80 was exchanged at an unfavorable rate of \$.60 to the dollar, which angered creditors because this devalued their debts. Spanish civil law was allowed to continue in force until Congress decided otherwise. One act was to change the name of Puerto Rico to “Porto Rico.” Roads were improved, and freedom of speech, press, and religion were established (as guaranteed by the Treaty of Paris). The U.S. Postal Service was established on the island. Cock fighting was prohibited and public health improved. Gen. Henry orders the eight hour work day.

In 1899, Hurricane *San Ciriaco* devastates Puerto Rico, killing over 3,000 and destroying sugar and coffee crops.

In 1899, the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores* (Free Federation of Workers) and the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (Socialist Workers Party) are founded by Santiago Iglesias Pantín

December 6, 1899, Gen. Guy Henry is appointed governor and made a host of changes in the administration, strengthening military rule in all areas.

1900

Foraker Act: Civilian Government for Puerto Rico: A comprehensive report by Gen. Davis to Congress, and many other groups, called for the Congress to enact legislation to provide for a civilian government in Puerto Rico.

The Foraker Act was passed, instituting a civilian government. Under the Act, the Governor and his Cabinet was appointed by the President of the U.S. It created a 35 member (five for each of the seven districts) House of Representatives (*Cámara de Delegados*) and an Executive Council, which included the six Cabinet members (Americans) and five Puerto Ricans, also appointed by the President. All laws in effect at the time that are not in conflict with U.S. laws, remain in effect. The Act also prohibited owning more than 500 acres of land on the island (to prevent monopoly of large sugar cane owners, but this limitation was not enforced for almost 50 years.

The Foraker Act did not change Puerto Rico’s status as a territory, nor was it recognized as a part of the United States. It did not extend U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans, but instead made them “Citizens of Puerto Rico.” Those who want to remain Spanish citizens may do so, but few do. The first elections for the House of Representatives were held on November 6, 1900.

1901
U.S. Supreme
Court Defines
P.R. Status

Insular Tariff Cases (Casos Insulares): Two legal cases were heard together by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1901: *DeLima vs. Bidwell* and *Downs vs. Bidwell*. Both cases, which are critical in Puerto Rico's history, involved tariffs paid by Puerto Rican exporters to U.S. Customs in N.Y. (Bidwell was the Customs collector in New York), and would be the cases that determined the legal status of Puerto Rico that remains today.

The Foraker Act left intact the right of the United States to impose a 15% tariff on goods entering the United States, which would be returned to Puerto Rico. Elías De Lima sued the tax collector in New York to recover duties he had paid under protest on sugar that De Lima had exported to New York in 1899. Similarly, S.B. Downs Co. sued the tax collector to recover duties he had paid under protest in 1900 on oranges exported from Puerto Rico to New York. Both argued that the United States could not charge duties (even if they were turned over to the Puerto Rican treasury) since Puerto Rico was a part of the United States. As with states, Puerto Rico had the same rights, they argued, as other territories had had and that states have (no duties on interstate commerce).

The Supreme Court decided against De Lima and Downes and established a doctrine that remains today. When Congress in the past had organized territories (for example, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma), it had always intended for them to become states of the Union. They were organized as territories to "prepare" them for statehood. In the case of Puerto Rico, Congress had never intended Puerto Rico to become a state of the Union. Then the Supreme Court makes the distinction between an "incorporated territory" (those that Congress intended to become states, and "unincorporated territories", like Puerto Rico, which were not intended to become states. Therefore, Puerto Rico is, and remains legally, an "unincorporated territory" of the United States, under the absolute rule of Congress (as per the Treaty of Paris).

1901-1917

Politics: President McKinley established that Puerto Rico does not have to pay dues on exports to the U.S. (it would later pay dues on rum to protect the price of whiskey, but dues are returned to the island).

Elections are held in 1901. Puerto Rico is granted a non-voting representation in Congress, a Resident Commissioner, through the Foraker Act. Federico Degetau becomes the first Resident Commissioner.

President Roosevelt appoints a series of civilian governors. The first was Charles H. Allen.

In 1902, elections are held. Over 111,000 Puerto Ricans voted. The *Republicanos* won the election. After the election, the *Partido Unión de Puerto Rico* was founded, headed by Muñoz Rivera, José de Diego and Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón.

**1901-1917
(cont.)**

From 1904 to 1910, the unionists were in the majority. Muñoz was elected Resident Commissioner in 1912 and died in 1916 while in this post. The Unionists,



led by Muñoz and José de Diego, struggled for years to gain more autonomy for the island. They condemned the Foraker Act colonial and repressive. Later, a division within the unionist pitted Muñoz against José de Diego, who moved to promote independence for the island (though not an anti-Americanism)

Population: The population grew from 1,118,102 to 1,299,809 in 1920. Major demographic shift occur. Hurricane *San Ciriaco* had wrecked havoc with agriculture, leaving many out of work. A considerable migration began of workers to Hawaii to work in the sugar and pineapple industry. Others migrated to Louisiana and even Ecuador to work in the cane fields. The was an enormous migration from the interior to the cities.

Economy: The American market takes over 85% of Puerto Rico's exports. Sugar is now in the hands of absentee owners (South Porto Rico Sugar



Company in New Jersey, Fajardo Sugar Company in New York, and Central Aguirre Sugar Company of Massachusetts are examples. Sugar becomes king.

Tobacco production grew significantly in the interior, complementing coffee. However, The law mandated that tobacco be processed in urban *talleres* or factories, which attracted more people to the cities and created a salaried urban manufacturing working class.

Roads and harbors are improved considerably, facilitating trade and internal movement and migration. The train is expanded. Eventually, it would run from San Juan, through the north and east all the way to Guayama on the south under the Porto Rico Railroad Company. The train also facilitated migration, and it created a whole industry of small commerce along the route. Telephone and telegraph service was expanded.

**1901-1917
(cont.)**



Under the Porto Rico Telephone Company, telephone service was extended to major cities.

Education and Health: In 1903, the University of Puerto Rico was founded (It was a Normal School for several years). Education, contrary to the U.S. tradition, became centralized so as to better control the system and “Americanize” the Puerto Ricans. Schools are built throughout the island, especially to rural areas. Curricula and schools were organized along American lines, especially the high schools. All instruction is in English. There is, Morales Carrión says “(there is an)...ill-concealed disdain for traditional (Puerto Rican) social values and historical heritage.”

Teachers were in short supply. Elementary education continued to be free and obligatory. Religion was stripped from the curriculum. Several private religious (mostly Catholic) schools were founded, mostly for the well-to-do. The Polytechnic Institute (*Instituto Politécnico*) is founded by a Presbyterian Minister Rev. Harris, in San Germán. The Poly, as it was called is the first private higher education institution on the island, today part of Inter American University.

Health improved considerably, reducing mortality rates, especially with treatment of malaria and anemia, through the discoveries Dr. Bailey K. Ashford.



Labor Movement: Santiago Iglesias Pantín, a socialist who had founded the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores* affiliated the *Federación* with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and became a friend and disciple of then AFL President Samuel Gompers. Labor began following the American model of organization and struggle, more practical than ideological. The *Federación* allied with the Americans. It had the double role of promoting trade-unionism and the Americanization of Puerto Rico. In 1915, Iglesias founds the Socialist Party. In 1914 there was a tobacco workers strike and in 1915 a sugar cane workers strike, were, as Morales Carrión states “landmarks in the trade-union

1901-1917 (cont.) effort.” In 1917, Iglesias is elected to the Senate, increasing the power of labor.

Between 1914 and 1920 there were more labor strikes on the island than at any time in the island’s history.

1917 The Jones Act U.S. Citizenship

On March 4, 1917, with Europe involved in a World War and shortly before the U.S. went to war in Europe, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act. The Jones Act liberalized certain provisions of the Foraker Act, but did not fundamentally change Puerto Rico’s status.

The major change was that Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship. The Act provided for the separation of church and state and the separation of the executive and the legislative branches. Both the Senate (16 seats) and the Assembly (39 seats) were elected by the people. The President still appointed the governor, the auditor, the Attorney General, the Commissioner of Education and the Supreme Court. It established universal suffrage (men over 21). Puerto Ricans who wanted to retain their previous citizenship (citizens of Puerto Rico) could do so, but few did (it was not a very practical citizenship since Puerto Rico was not a country). The Jones Act, says Morales Carrión, “...was no constitution; it was an act of Congress, which Congress could amend at will. Washington is where major decisions were made and the U.S. remained sovereign over Puerto Rico.

The immediate impact of the Jones Act was the military draft. Over 236,000 men were registered and 18,000 were selected. The first Puerto Rican regiment was organized (4,000 men) in May, 1917 and was sent to Panama. The others remained on the island until the end of the war.

1917-1930 Politics: In 1917 a referendum on prohibition of liquor was held, and the people chose overwhelmingly to ban and liquor. Rum could not be produced legally but this act promoted illegal rum-making, *ron cañita*.

In 1918 José de Diego dies in New York after years of promoting independence within the unionist party. The Union Party eliminates independence from its platform, setting the stage for the formation of the Nationalist Party.

In 1921, when President Harding was elected, Governor Arthur Yeager, the longest serving governor and friend of the unionists, is substituted by E. Montgomery Reily (nicknamed *Moncho Reyes* by the Puerto Ricans), a super patriotic, inexperienced merchant, who preached 100% loyalty to the U.S. The Republicans were very supportive of Reily, but his administration was a disaster as he strongly promoted absolute control over the island with little consultation with the Puerto Ricans and a crude American nationalism. Reily rarely visited the island and in 1923, he resigned in the midst of a fraud scandal. His successor, like Reily, formally supported statehood.

1922-1937 The P.R. Nationalist Party (part 1)

In 1922 a group of dissidents from the Unionist Party for the *Partido Nacionalista*, whose first president was José Alegría. They opposed the use of English as the language of instruction in schools and to defend the symbols of Puerto Rico’s national identity. They promoted the values of the Catholic faith,

the traditional Spanish view of the role of women in society and patriotic dignity. The movement's positions and development (especially during the depression after 1929) have led many historians to link the Nationalist Party with the fascist movement in other parts of the world, notably in Spain, Italy and Germany.

In 1930, a young Harvard-educated lawyer named Pedro Albizu Campos, became President of the Nationalist Party. Albizu was born in Ponce in 1893. He had studied at the University of Vermont and at Harvard. In 1918 he was drafted and transferred to Puerto Rico as a lieutenant. In 1923, he completed his law degree. Albizu returned to the island and moved towards the *Alianza* but left the party in 1924.

In 1932 the Nationalist Party registered for the elections. Albizu ran for the senate and received 3% of the vote. After the defeat, the party divided. A group joined the Liberal Party. Albizu became convinced of the futility of using the elections to produce change and opted for a more militant approach. Support for the Nationalist Party came mostly from teachers, students, small business owners, artisans, white collar workers and young farmers. It little support among agricultural or manufacture workers. Its support was mainly in the cities.

The Nationalists became more militant. Historian Fernando Picó states that "Between 1933 and 1936, relationship between the Nationalists became more militant and relations with the police worsened rapidly. In Río Piedras, a confrontation about an arrest led to a shooting that killed five people. Albizu blamed police chief, Francis Riggs. In 1936, Elías Buchamp and Hiram Rosado, shot and killed Riggs. They themselves were killed by police at the police station in San Juan. In 1937, Albizu is found guilty of plotting the assassination of Riggs and is sent to prison in Atlanta for ten years.

In 1937, on Palm Sunday, the Nationalist Party organized a march in Ponce. Permission for the march was revoked at the last minute by the mayor. The Nationalists marched anyway. In a confrontation with police, 21 people were killed, in what is called the *Masacre de Ponce*.

**1917-1930
(cont.)**

In 1923, the idea of establishing a "Free Associated State" like Ireland, began to circulate, as an alternative to both statehood and independence. The Socialist Party grows enormously. The Republicans and the Socialists join under the common goal of statehood, to form the *Partido de la Coalición* or *Coalición*. Antonio R. Barceló and José Tous Soto founded the *Alianza* to promote self government within U.S. sovereignty. The *Alianza* won the elections until 1928. The Union Party, weakened by the split, became the Liberal Party. Horace M. Towner was appointed governor by President Coolidge in 1923. Coolidge was not about to grant any concessions to Puerto Rico, since he believed that the U.S. had done more than enough for the island. He wrote a stinging letter to the *Alianza* leaders, which cause a great deal of commotion on the island.

Another important figure Luis Muñoz Marín emerged. Born in 1898, Muñoz spent much of his first 30 years in the United States as a student and writer. By

**1917-1930
(cont.)**

1920, he had become a socialist and returned briefly to join the Socialist Party. He soon broke with the party over the alliance with the Republicans and returned to the U.S. He returned in 1931 and joined the Liberal Party. No longer a socialist, but a nationalist who believed that independence was the only solution to the island's ills.

Economy: The economy of the island expanded enormously during this period. By 1925, sugar production was at a record high 660,000 tons. (though three corporations owned 43% of the production). Though prices fluctuated, sugar, coffee and tobacco did well. However, in the sugar industry a crisis was emerging. The industry was mechanizing production rapidly. The investment, made on credit, exceeded the value of production, in many cases affected by external factors, such as the value of the dollar and foreign competition. Therefore, the industry was "overvalued" and ripe for implosion. In the meantime, the U.S.-owned *centrals* were making enormous profits.

The vast majority of the island population remained extremely poor. Health and education had improved, but average salaries were extremely low. In 1930, the average income of rural workers was \$150 a year. The 500 acre limitation on land ownership was not enforced. In 1917, 477 individuals, partnerships and corporations possessed more than 500 acres for a total of over 530,000 acres, or 26% of all rural land.

Population: The population continued to grow, especially as mortality rates decreased, and in spite of a first wave of migration. Just before and during the 1920's, the first large migration of Puerto Ricans to New York occurred. Puerto Ricans had lived in New York for years, but these were mostly intellectuals, students and others who returned to the island after a few years. During this period, the migration of workers began, a significant group of fairly well educated Puerto Ricans and some less educated, who sought work in the factories of New York City.

During this period, the notion that one of the major economic problems in Puerto Rico was overpopulation. A small island, the thought goes, with over a million inhabitants, that did not produce much of what it consumed, could not sustain itself. This feeling would have an important impact in the 1940's

Education: Puerto Rico got its first Puerto Rican Commissioner of Education, José Padín, a liberal, who believed in a strong education (as a means of developing the island) as well as in basic Puerto Rican values. He defended the teaching of Spanish (though he believed English should also be taught) and added Puerto Rican themes to the curriculum, recognizing the value of Puerto Rican culture. The school system expanded further especially as more teachers were graduating from the University of Puerto Rico. The University of Puerto Rico progressively expands and becomes a center of cultural, philosophic and political activity.

Two events dominate Puerto Rico's history during this decade: Hurricanes and the Great Depression. *San Felipe* hit the island in 1928 and devastated the economy. It was followed four years later by hurricane *San Ciprián*. The

- 1917 – 1930 (cont.)** Depression hit Puerto Rico particularly hard, given the poverty that already existed.
- 1930 – 1940** Politics: In 1932 (and again in 1936) the *Coalición* (which consisted of the *Unión Republicana*, (the Republicans) and the Socialist parties) which consisted narrowly wins the elections, bringing the Socialists to power. Santiago Iglesias is elected Resident Commissioner.. Women were granted the right to vote.

In 1933, President Hoover (the only President to visit Puerto Rico after Theodore Roosevelt) appoints Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. as governor. Roosevelt Jr. , an intellectual, reversed the unrelenting trend towards Americanization, believing it impossible for the U.S. to control alien populations or change the islands culture, or what he called “the hopeless drive to remodel Puerto Ricans so that they should become similar in language habits and thoughts to continental Americans.” He promoted vocational schools and rural agricultural centers to help small farmers and created the Department of Labor. He relied heavily on Puerto Rican talent in his government.

In 1932, F.D. Roosevelt is elected President and appoints Robert Hayes Gore governor. Gore favored statehood and more liberal trade. His lack of political and administrative skill, and his intention to remove José Padín, however, and to appoint a socialist, Rafael Alonso Torres, to the Board of the University of Puerto Rico created serious problems. Padín remained. The students at the University of Puerto Rico called a strike, forcing the resignation of Alonso. Eventually, Gore resigned.

In 1934, Roosevelt appoints General Blanton Winship Governor. That same year, Puerto Rico affairs are moved from the U.S. War Department (that controlled Puerto Rico since 1898) to the U.S. Department of Interior.

In 1936, as a result of the Riggs assassination, Gov. Winship started a persecution and repression campaign against the Nationalists and others advocating independence. The ultimate result of this stance was the *Masacre de Ponce*. Senator Maynard Tydings introduces a bill in the U.S. Senate to grant Puerto Rico independence on very unfavorable terms. That same year, 1936, the Communist Party of Puerto Rico is founded, though it hardly found support on the island.

Muñoz Marín, who had amassed a host of contacts in Washington, begins to realize that economic reconstruction was more important than independence. In 1938, with a following of a new generation of leaders and intellectuals, Muñoz Marín founds the *Partido Popular Democrático* (Popular Democratic Party) takes to the mountains to preach his program of agrarian reform under the slogan *Pan, Tierra y Libertad*, (bread, land, liberty).

In 1938 in a parade in Ponce, a nationalist student attempting to kill Winship, kills national guard Col. Luis Irizarry.

Iglesias Pantín dies in 1939, just as the Republicans begin to split over close ties that it had established with big business created dissatisfaction with the rank and

1930 – 1940
(cont) file.

Economy: The Roosevelt Administration brings the New Deal to Puerto Rico to reconstruct the economy devastated by hurricanes and the Great Depression. Most workers could not afford the goods mostly imported from the U.S. on meager wages. Unemployment rose rapidly.

In 1933, the first phase of the New Deal became the extension to the island of the Federal Emergency Relief Act, in Puerto Rico called the Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Act or *PRERA*. to provide government jobs. In 1934, a commission under Chancellor Carlos Chardón developed a reconstruction plan, the *Plan Chardón*. In 1936 the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) was established to implement the Chardón Plan. The Plan consisted of agrarian reform (the 500 acre ownership limit, redistribution of land), and a plan for the progressive industrialization of the island, expansion of medical services, alignment of the University of Puerto Rico to the needs of the country, increased public housing and community education. Not all the plan's proposals were implemented, but many became part of the platform of the Popular Democratic Party.

The train remains a major means of transportation. However, automobiles and buses begin to cut

into its business. The ride from San Juan to Ponce could take 12 hours, because of the speed of the train at its many stops. The transport of sugar cane by train increases.

Education: Puerto Rico has a singular achievement; it dedicates the largest portion of its budget to education.

The insistence in the use of English as the language of instruction becomes controversial, if only because of the difficulties of teaching other subjects. Latin is taught with English textbooks. In fact, all textbooks are in English. In spite of this, few people in Puerto Rico actually could speak English. José Gallardo becomes commissioner with the mission of further Americanizing Puerto Ricans through the education system. In 1937, President Roosevelt writes a letter to Gallardo in which he states:



1930 – 1940
(cont)

“It is an indispensable part of American policy that the coming generation of American citizens in Puerto Rico grow up with complete facility in the English tongue.” To achieve this, the teaching of English must proceed “with vigor, purposefulness and devotion and with the understanding that English is the official language of our country.”

The expansion of free public education throughout the decade, however, benefited large numbers of children of workers and *campesinos*.

Population: The population of the island continued to grow. Migration from the countryside to the cities of people in search of jobs created a serious problem, since most were poor and there was no adequate housing. Urban slums start to grow. The largest slums (actually shantytowns) were built, with the most rudimentary materials without sanitary facilities, on the outskirts of San Juan and other major cities. Many remained until well into the 1960's.



THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS INCOMPLETE

- 1941** The U.S. Navy begins operations on the islands of Vieques and Culebra
- 1942** *Operación Manos a la Obra* (Operation Bootstrap) begins, a campaign to industrialize Puerto Rico. Teodoro Moscoso leads the effort through the Government Development Bank and *La Compañía de Fomento Económico* (Economic Development Corporation)
- 1942** Sen. Tydings again introduces legislation to grant independence to Puerto Rico.
- 1945** Under the theory that high population density was a major economic problem, the government begins to promote migration to the U.S. mainland. Thousands to mostly poor Puerto Ricans begin the mass migration to New York City in search of jobs in manufacturing.
- 1946** The first Puerto Rican governor, Jesús T. Piñero, is appointed by President Truman.
- The *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (Puerto Rican Independence Party) is founded. Gilberto Concepción de Gracia becomes president of the party.
- 1948** Puerto Rico is allowed to elect its own governor.
- A speech Pedro Albizu Campos at the University of Puerto Rico ends in violence. The Nationalists attempt to assassinate the governor. Four Nationalists are killed and one seriously wounded.
- Luis Muñoz Marín is elected governor of Puerto Rico.
- The Statehood Republican Party is founded
- Catholic University is founded in Ponce.
- 1950** Nationalists attempt to assassinate President Truman in Washington. One of the Nationalists and a guard die. The Nationalists insurrection takes place in Jayuya and other parts of the country. Hundreds are arrested and sent to La Princesa jail. A period of repression against *independentistas* begins.
- 1951** Law 600 is approved by Congress, which granted Puerto Rico the right to draft its own constitution
- 1952** The Puerto Rican flag was formally adopted.
- The new constitution was approved by voters and the “Commonwealth of Puerto Rico” was proclaimed. Muñoz is reelected governor.
- 1953** Close to 70,000 Puerto Ricans migrate to the United States.

- 1954** Four Nationalists, led by Lolita Lebrón, open fire from the gallery in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington. They are sentenced to 50 years in jail.
- 1956** Hurricane Santa Clara hits Puerto Rico. Muñoz is reelected governor
- 1957** The Pablo Casals Music Festival begins with a series of concerts at the University of Puerto Rico.
- 1960** Luis Muñoz Marín is reelected governor (4th term)
- 1961** President Kennedy visits the island
- Rita Moreno wins an Oscar for her supporting role in *West Side Story*.
- 1964** Roberto Sánchez Vilella is elected governor under the Popular Democratic Party as Muñoz retires
- 1965** Pedro Albizu Campos dies.
- 1967** The first plebiscite on the status issue takes place. The people are asked to choose between statehood, independence and commonwealth as the preferred status of the Island. Both the Independence and Statehood parties boycott the election. A pro-statehood faction under Luis A. Ferré, breaks with the Statehood Party and participates in the plebiscite. This faction became the New Progressive Party. The Commonwealth formula wins the plebiscite handily.
- 1968** With a division in the Popular Democratic Party, the New Progressive Party wins the general election. Luis A. Ferré becomes governor.
- 1972** The *Movimiento Pro Independencia*, (Pro Independence Movement) becomes the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, led by Juan Mari Bras. Rafael Hernández Colón is elected governor under the Popular Democratic Party.
- Roberto Clemente dies in a tragic airplane accident.
- 1973** Luis Aponte Martínez, bishop of San Juan, becomes the island's first Cardinal.
- Roberto Clemente is inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.
- 1975** The Puerto Rican *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* (FALN) claim responsibility for placing a bomb in Faunces Tavern in New York City, which killed four and injured over 50.
- 1976** Carlos Romero Barceló is elected governor under the pro-statehood New Progressive Party.
- 1978** On July 25, two young *independentistas*, Arnaldo Darío Rosado and Carlos Soto Arriví are killed execution style by police at "Cerro Maravilla" in Jayuya. At the July 25th celebrations (Commonwealth Day), Gov. Romero Barceló

declares the police to be “heroes.” Eventually, and after a gripping Legislative investigation, several policemen were convicted in the slaying.

1979 President Carter grants executive clemency to the four nationalists jailed for the attack on Congress in 1954.

Puerto Rico hosts the Pan American Games.

1980 Gov. Romero Barceló is reelected governor. Luis Muñoz Marín dies.

1981 The pro-independence group, *Los Macheteros* blow up eleven Puerto Rico National Guard jet fighters at the San Juan airport.

1984 The Pope visits the island.

Rafael Hernández Hernández Colón is elected governor under the Popular Democratic Party.

1986 A fire, set by a union worker, destroys the Dupont Plaza Hotel, killing 96 people.

1988 Rafael Hernández Colón is reelected governor.

1989 Hurricane Hugo hits the island.

1991 In a plebiscite, Puerto Ricans reject changes to the current status of commonwealth.

1992 Pedro Roselló is elected governor under the New Progressive Party.

1993 English and Spanish are declared official languages in Puerto Rico.

1993 Another plebiscite on the status issue is held. Commonwealth status wins by a 48% to 46% vote over statehood. Independence receives 4% of the vote.

1996 Congress repeals Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code, which had given U.S. corporations on the island a large tax benefit. It had allowed companies to not pay taxes on profits made in Puerto Rico if they agreed to keep the funds on the island for one year. Section 30A, however, the “wage credit” component is retained.

Hurricane Hortense hits the island, killing five.

1997 Congressman Don Young (R-Alaska) introduces a bill in Congress to resolve the status of Puerto Rico.

1998 The Puerto Rico Telephone Company, long owned by the government, is sold to GTE, which later merged with Bell Atlantic to form Verizon Communications.

1998 Hurricane George hits Puerto Rico, devastating the island and killing seven. Puerto Rico is declared a disaster area by President Clinton.

Another referendum on the status is held, which had five status options (remaining a Commonwealth or status quo, “free association”, independence, statehood, and “non of the above.” The Popular Democratic Party objected to the definitions and favored the “none of the above” option. “None of the above” won by a margin of 48.8% to 45.6% for statehood, with independence receiving 5.3% of the vote.

2000

Sila María Calderón is elected the first female governor of Puerto Rico under the Popular Democratic Party.