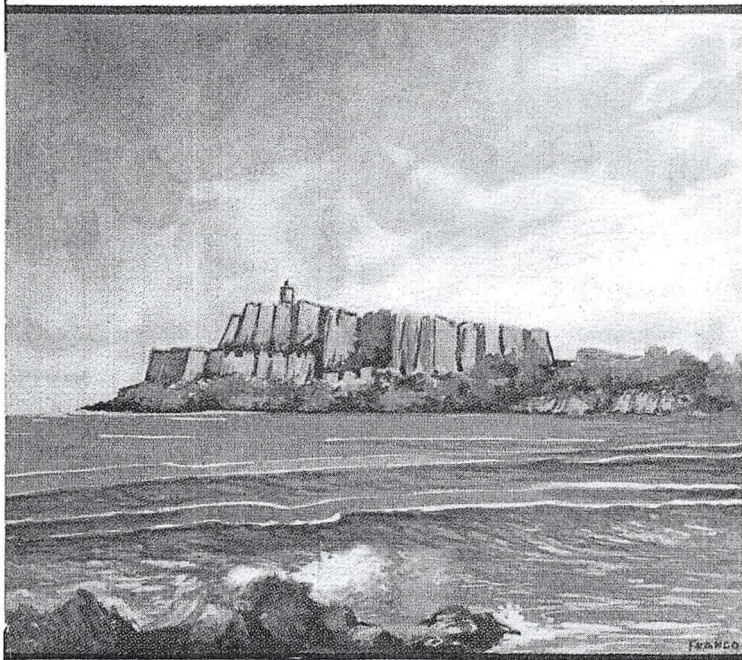
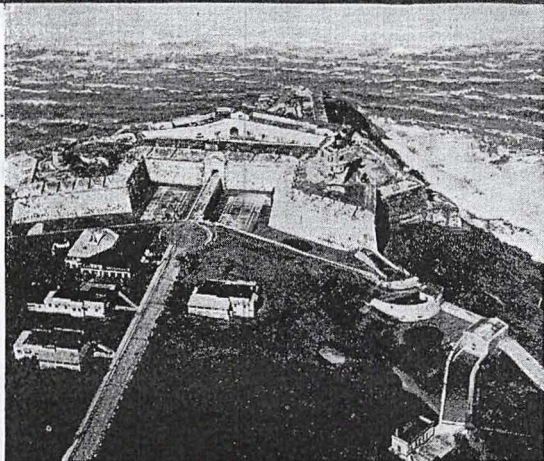


EL MORRO



Puerto Rico

U.S.A.



Stalwart guardian of a peaceful people

SAN JUAN, capital city of Puerto Rico, has not lost the charm of its historical past. This modern, enterprising commercial center in the Caribbean still holds for the visitor the lure of the ancient days of the Conquistadores, in the old city fortifications, staunch bulwarks, many feet thick, which successfully repelled would-be invaders centuries ago.

Of these barriers of defense, none can boast of a richer, more glorious history than *San Felipe del Morro* — commonly known as *El Morro* (The Knoll)—ages-old sentinel and protector of a city, the envy of pirates and coveted object of foreign powers hungry for territorial expansion.

The first settlement in Puerto Rico was established in 1508 by Ponce de León, at a place across the bay from the present location of the capital and which can to-day be seen in the distance from the upper level of *El Morro*. The Great Seeker of Youth called it *Caparra*, and his home there was fortified against possible assaults by marauding *Caribs* and jealous *Borincanos*, the native stock of the island's population.

Twelve years after the capital was moved to its present site in 1521, construction of the first real fortification was begun at *La Fortaleza*, now the Governor's Palace.

One year before same was finished in 1540, construction of *El Morro* was started. The work was slow for lack of hands, and considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining from Spain the right



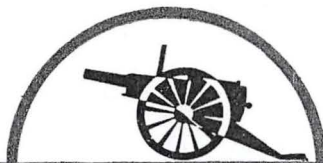
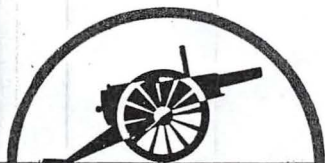
Horizon gazers enjoy a visit to the batteries of El Morro

amount of ordnance for its proper maintenance. The years dragged with little progress till 1584 when foundations for the castle were laid. No great activity, however, was displayed in the work until 1591 when, as a result of the attack on Santo Domingo by Sir Francis Drake, it was deemed necessary to hasten matters. Construction of the fort ended in 1606. Two clay tablets in the walls on the side of it facing the city proclaim the event, as follows:

"Reinando Felipe tercero Felicísimo Rei de las Españas siendo su Gobernador Capitán General de esta Isla Sancho Ochoa de Castro Señor de la Saisolar de los Condes de Salvatierra se acabó este baluarte de Ochoa, asta el puesto de esta piedra. Año 1606."

In the intervening years, however, *El Morro* served well the purpose for which it was intended. The Spanish King had warned the Governor of Puerto Rico in 1595 against a strong force being organized in England to capture the island. In the month of March of that year, a Spanish fleet, en route from Mexico to Spain, was driven by a terrific storm into the harbor of San Juan. Two million pesos in gold and silver, which were being transported to the Mother-country, had to be temporarily deposited in *La Fortaleza* for safe-keeping.

Sir Francis Drake arrived off San Juan on the morning of November 22, 1595, and was fired on by the forts of *El Morro* and *Escambrón*, the latter



a small fortification at the northeastern part of the city. In the afternoon, during the battle, Sir Nicholas Clifford and Captains Brown and Straford were mortally wounded by a shell from shore while seated at supper with Sir Francis Drake. John Hawkins, a famous English mariner, was also killed in action the same day.

On the following one, the English fleet moved to the lee side of Cabras Island beyond the range of the Spanish guns, and Drake personally reconnoitered in a small boat, sounding the waters to find a way into the shore. At ten that night he launched an attack on the Spanish ships in the harbor. He sent in twenty-five boats with fifty to sixty men in each boat. They attempted to burn four Spanish ships and succeeded in burning one. The light from this ship made them a clear target for the Spanish artillery and they were driven back, after an hour's hard fighting, with the loss of nine or ten boats, four hundred men and many wounded. The next morning at eight, he sailed out to sea, but at four

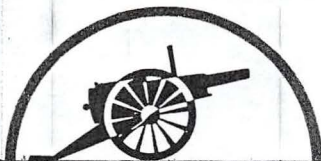
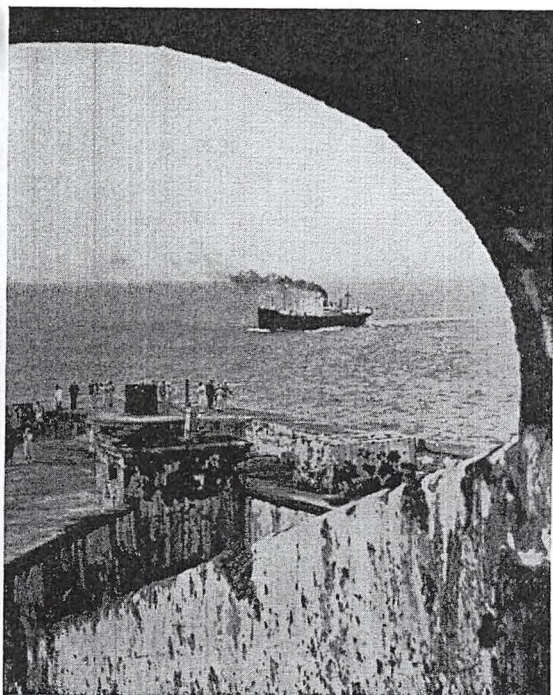
in the afternoon he was again seen approaching directly towards the entrance of the harbor, and the Spaniards sank three ships in the channel to block it. Drake came up off the entrance of the harbor, but left the next day without attacking.

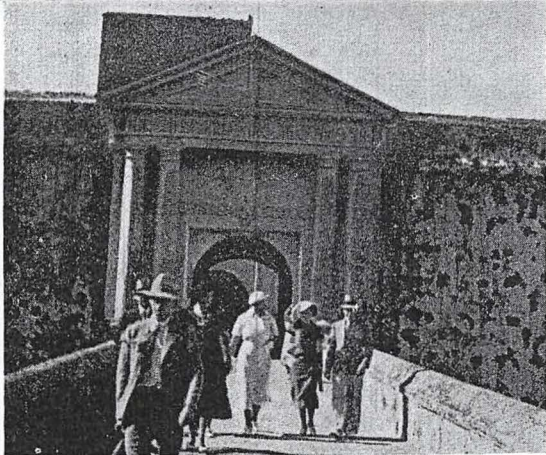
Thus realizing the danger of losing Puerto Rico, the Spanish King consigned an appropriation of 3,000,000 maravedies (approximately \$12,000) for the purchase of ordnance and ordered a special credit of 6,000,000 maravedies (some \$24,000) opened with the treasury of Mexico for the completion of *El Morro*. These funds had not as yet become available when a new Governor arrived to find the garrison reduced to 134 infantrymen and 14 of the artillery.

Three years later, on June 6, 1598, the Earl of Cumberland arrived at San Juan with one of the strongest forces ever organized against the power of Spain. He attempted to force the San Antonio Bridge (then called the Bridge of the Soldiers) with 1,000 men, but failed. He then landed on the

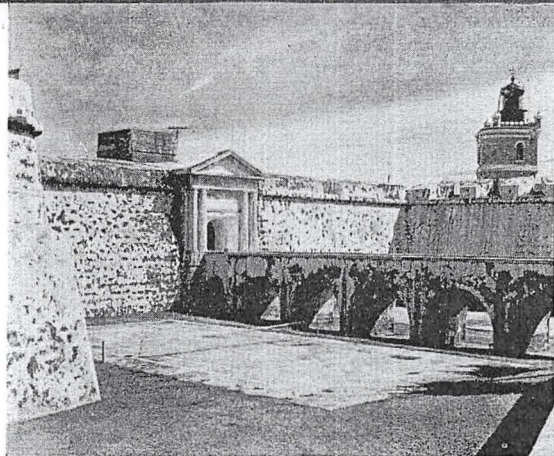
Hospitable shores of great historical lore

"El Faro" (The Lighthouse)





The Entrance Gate to El Morro



Ages old viaduct links the fortifications

beach between *Escambrón* and the city proper, with 200 pike men and 50 musketeers. The Spaniards retired to *El Morro*. Cumberland took possession of the city on the 19th and attacked the fort, opening breeches in its walls and forcing its surrender on the 21st. An epidemic which had reduced the Spanish forces soon broke out among the invaders, who lost 400 men from the 1,000 landed, and Cumberland, notwithstanding his desire to make Puerto Rico a British colony, was forced to sail away, taking with him all the cannons, the bells of churches and all the hides, ginger and sugar that he was able to seize. John Berkley was left in command, but the ravages of the epidemic forced him to also leave the city, on November 23, 1598, after it had been held by the British for 157 days.

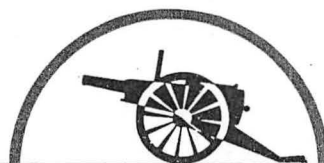
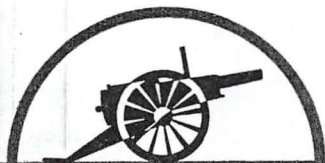
The following year Spain sent 300 men to recover the city, but they found it abandoned by the English.

It was 27 years later, on September 25, 1625, that *El Morro* was again called upon to bear the brunt of enemy fire. On that date, a fleet of Dutch ships, under command of Bouduwijn Hendricksz, landed 2,500 men, occupied the city that had been abandoned by the population, and besieged *El Morro*, where the Spanish forces had concentrated for the defense. Three times during the 38 days that the siege lasted was Governor Don Juan de Haro asked to surrender by the Dutch commander, and as many times he refused through notes that have

become historical in their succinct bitterness and sarcasm. One of the most notable events of the siege—commemorated by the monument now standing on the grounds of the fort—was the gallant and successful sortie led by Captain Juan de Amézquita against the advanced trenches of the invaders, in which encounter Captain Vseel, of the Dutch forces, lost his life. On November 2, Hendricksz gave up the siege and embarked his decimated forces, but not before sacking and burning the city.

Further improvements on the defenses of the city were carried on after repeated threats of attacks from covetous and warring French, English and Dutch forces, but the city seemed to enjoy the respect of all for many years. A century later, in 1765, Carlos III, then the ruling monarch, sent Marshall Alejandro O'Reilly to survey the defenses of the island and his report showed great deficiencies both in the fortifications and in the organization, discipline and maintenance of the troops. Colonel Tomás O'Daly, of the Royal Engineers Corps, was entrusted with the reconstruction of *El Morro*, which work was finished in 1776.

On April 17, 1797, the British again attacked San Juan. At the time, the defenses consisted of 376 cannon, 35 mortars, 4 obuses and 3 pedreros, and a regular regiment of 938 men. The attacking force, consisting of 7,000 men, disembarked on the beach of Cangrejos, a short distance beyond where the Hotel Condado now stands. They bombarded the



forts on the east end, but failed to reduce them and gave up the attempt on April 30, 1797.

A century of peace followed, to be broken on the early morning of May 12, 1898, when, during the Spanish-American War, the United States fleet, under command of Admiral W. T. Sampson, bombarded the city, directing most of its fire over the same and into the harbor where Admiral Cervera's fleet was thought to be anchored. During the three hours' bombardment, several shots hit *El Morro* with its effects still to be noticed on the walls of the fort that face towards the sea.

In a tour of *El Morro*, the visitor to-day is truly amazed at the evident solidity of its construction and the impression is gained of impregnability against even the latest missiles originated by modern warfare. Throughout its spacious quarters for the garrison, the ancient cisterns and powder magazines, and over its ramparts and into its underground passageways, one senses the spirit of prowess that guided those gallant warriors of old into conquests far a seas, their martial steps resounding on pavements of old and reverberating upon moss-covered walls that have seen the years roll into centuries.

Visit Puerto Rico

Any travel agent in your community is fully informed and able to help you plan your trip to Puerto Rico wisely and economically, pleasantly and profitably. Consult him freely at any time, or address your inquiry to

GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
INSTITUTE OF TOURISM

San Juan, Puerto Rico

New York Office: 630 Fifth Avenue

