Trip to Puerto Rico

9 – 19 January 1939
INTERVIEWS:

VISIT TO PUERTO RICO

January 9, 1939

Arrived in San Juan at 7 a.m. and was met by Drs. Washburn, Garrido Morales and Payne, and also Mrs. Payne. Took a room at Miramar Apartments and ate at the Union Club Restaurant. BEW stayed at the same place. Had a long talk with Dr. Garrido at the apartment. He is sending 9 nurses to the Charity Hospital in New Orleans for training and wishes to send 2 to Teachers College, Columbia.

The Laboratory of the Health Department was doing 3,900 specimens a year on the average from 1910 to 1914. Last year the number was 420,000. There is one central laboratory and two branches, and the Director of the Laboratory is Dr. Costa Mandry. There are 10 anti-tuberculosis centers or districts with a specialist in charge of each. Dr. Rodriguez Pastor is at the head. The tuberculosis cases are referred to the tuberculosis centers where large numbers are given pneumothorax as ambulatory cases. There are 4 tuberculosis hospitals with a total capacity of 1,400 beds. There is a rapid turnover and 3,900 cases were admitted last year. When cases are discharged they are sent back to the tuberculosis centers where they are supervised while living at home. Dr. Wells' suggestion that the doctors at the health units do pneumothorax has not worked out well. It requires too much training for the doctors. There are also traveling X-ray units in Caguas, Arecibo, and Fajardo. The rural program for case finding as recommended by Dr. Wells is being given a trial in Caguas and seems to be working. Sub-centers for tuberculosis are being opened where the load is heavy as in Ponce. The advanced cases, it is hoped, will be sent to the present municipal hospitals when the new district general hospitals take over the load of the medical care of the indigent. There are now 150 public health nurses. They are graduates of accredited hospitals. They are given two months' training in a short course in a public health unit. There is also a two months' course in a health unit for medical health officers. 65% of the sanitary inspectors are trained in a school for sanitary inspectors. There are about 150 inspectors. There is a special tax on molasses available for hookworm and malaria work. The venereal disease program is being started with money from the U.S. Government. The share allotted to Puerto Rico is $35,000 for 1939. Dr. Quintero is in charge of this work which is done in the health units. The birth rate for Puerto Rico is 40 per 100,000 and the death rate 20. A birth control law was passed, but was ruled in Washington to be in conflict with the U.S. Federal statutes. Representatives of an unofficial birth control clinic will be tried in a test case and there should soon be a decision. The money from the Government Lottery is divided, 50% to tuberculosis, 25% to Government hospitals, and 25% to municipal medical care. (Copy to HM and PP)
INTERVIEWS:

January 9, 1939 (Continued)

WAS asked regarding Mr. Felix Lamela, whom GKS had mentioned as having had special training in hospital administration. Dr. Carrido and Dr. Payne informed WAS that this man is Dr. Bachman's secretary at the School of Tropical Medicine and has had only a high school education, with an 8-weeks' course on hospital administration in Chicago.

Dr. Payne took BEW and WAS by automobile on a tour of the schools of the central region of Puerto Rico in which part of Dr. Payne's anemia studies are going on. Visited the Hill Top School in Barranquitas. There were still two obvious cases of anemia among the pupils. Had luncheon in town. Visited also Crocviis further to the west where we went through a vocational school.

Had a talk in the evening with BEW. He says that Dr. Crawford has decided not to take Mr. Du Bois for work in Panama. Dr. Flahiff has attacks of severe neuritis of the legs and has been diagnosed by the local doctors as alcoholic neuritis. Dr. Flahiff has asserted that his present taking of alcohol has been necessitated by pain from a bad tooth and BEW has urged him to have the tooth attended to at once. Dr. Flahiff believes that his pain is due to arthritis, but X-rays have been negative. BEW will see EWF after his trip to Central America and will inform WAS if necessary for him to come to N.Y. for a physical examination and diagnosis. BEW stated that he was informed by Mr. Uncles in Costa Rica that Dr. Molloy has one sister in an insane asylum and that another has died in an asylum.

January 10, 1939

Started out at 6:30 a.m. in two cars for Caguas on way to Ponce. In the party were WAS, BEW, GCP, Dr. Chaves (Director of Public Health Units) and Dr. Rodriguez Pastor (Director of Tuberculosis). At Caguas we visited the tuberculosis and health units which are in the same building. Saw Dr. Santiago administer air to a pneumothorax case. The clinic seemed well run, but many patients were waiting their turn. It seemed to WAS unfortunate that the treatment consisted so largely of pneumothorax and was so completely ambulatory. At the health unit Dr. Arbona showed us the various departments. In general the impression was good. (Copy to HM and FP)

Drove on to Cayay, Guayama, and Salinas. At Guayama we saw the health unit from the outside and visited the tuberculosis hospital. At Salinas we called at the health unit to find Mr. Palacio, former I.H.E. engineering fellow, who took us to see the malaria control work in the extensive sugar cane fields along the coast. Dr. Earle and Mr. Woodman had much to do with the development of the underground drainage scheme which has eliminated most of the surface water. The cost of draining, with tile work added, costs about $50 per acre. The tiles were buried 4 feet deep. The control work had finally to be extended up to four miles away from the town. Mr. Palacio is the principal drainage engineer of the State Department of Health of Puerto Rico. (Copy to HM)
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January 10, 1939 (Continued)

The total water flowing through all the tiles is 6,000 gallons per minute. The water draining the lowest land has to be pumped up by electric pumps before being discharged in the ocean. Some of Dr. Earle's mosquito traps are still in use. The average catch per day per trap is 1.5 mosquitoes, but it was formerly thousands. We visited also a small river which was being put into a large buried concrete pipe to eliminate mosquito breeding.

Drove on to Ponce, the second largest city of the island, and stopped at Melia Hotel. Dr. Garrido arrived in the early afternoon with chauffeur and body-guard. A banquet was given us by the local medical school of the Medical Department. Speeches were made by the toast-master, the Mayor, Dr. Garrido, one of the local doctors, BEW, GCP, and WAS. There were 24 persons present.

January 11, 1939

Visited the institutions of Ponce. Saw the "Gota de Leche" or dispensary for distributing modified dried milk for infants of poor parents. Visited the Health Unit which is here in rented quarters. A few nurses were getting their public health training. Most of the new nurses had graduated from high school before entering the nurses' training school. Visited the large tuberculosis center and hospital. As everywhere on the Island, the emphasis was on pneumothorax. We then went to see the malaria sub-soil drainage work in the cane fields between the town and the sea. This work is far from complete. Made a brief visit to Dr. Pila's Hospital, which is private, but takes patients for Government. Dr. Garrido told WAS that he would like to ask a travel grant for Mr. Palacio so he could visit Costa Rica and Panama, but that Mr. Palacio could not be spared until after the middle of the year. GCP would be glad to recommend this, but thinks we should send the chief sanitary inspector to Costa Rica at an early date, to study latrines and concrete drainage work, as Mr. Palacio is exclusively occupied with malaria. Stopped at Aibonita to visit an example of the present type of municipal hospital which is to be displaced by the district hospitals. The place was dirty and neglected and obviously mismanaged. On the way to San Juan we stopped at Coamo Springs for luncheon and saw the hot water flowing from the mountain side. (Copy to HM)

In the evening WAS and BEW discussed future plans. BEW is to decide whether he wishes to have his leave before the end of the year and then retire or to work to the end of the year and take his leave after. He can have his choice.
INTERVIEWS:

January 12, 1939

WAS spent the day with Dr. Garrido visiting the Health Department and its activities. Saw the laboratory with Dr. Costa Mundry, the Director. Much of the better equipment was purchased with money from the I.H.D. during the five-year period of cooperation. Dr. Costa now would like a grant with which to build a cold room. WAS did not encourage him. Dr. Payne thinks we have done enough and should not reopen this plan of assistance. The money should be found elsewhere.

WAS visited the Bayamon District Hospital with Dr. Garrido. It will be the first of the new district hospitals to be completed and should be ready for opening later in the year. It is a handsome, large, two-story building with four wings. It is situated on an elevation overlooking a large valley. Similar buildings will be erected at Pajaro and other points in the island. They are being constructed with P.R.A.A. funds and they will displace the numerous unsatisfactory municipal hospitals. Visited also the orphanage asylum. This institution was formerly housed in the building in San Juan (Santurce District) now occupied by the Health Department. New buildings are being erected for the orphanage and its school and the inmates will have outdoor work.

The large tuberculosis sanatorium at Rio Piedras was next visited. Here the emphasis is on pneumothorax as in the district tuberculosis hospital, but there is also considerable chest surgery. Dr. Smith does the more serious chest operations. The many buildings and the grounds seem well kept. We had luncheon at the Tuberculosis Hospital in the staff dining room. We visited also the nearby insane hospital before luncheon. After luncheon Dr. Payne took BEW and WAS out to his home, west of San Juan. There he and Mrs. Payne showed us the photometer for measuring haemoglobin. The instrument is expensive, but satisfactory. It includes a photo-electric cell and the results can be read from a dial. The blood samples for Dr. Payne's study are diluted when taken in the field and brought to his home for testing. (Copy to HM and PP)

January 13, 1939

Left San Juan in the morning with Dr. and Mrs. Payne and BEW for a visit to the schools in the westward in which anemia studies are being carried on, especially those in Quebradillas and adjacent municipalities. Stopped at a school in Municipio Hatillo. The inspector had just completed the treatments there and had sent the treated children home. The purge of Epsom salts is given at the same time as the vermifuge. Children shown to have hookworm ova in the stools are given 0.1 cc for each year of apparent age, of a mixture of one part oil of chenopodium and two parts carbontetrachloride in capsules. They bring their own cups. If a child has ascariasis only he is given one minim of oil of chenopodium for each year of apparent age.
INTERVIEWS:

January 14, 1939

Visited the Health Department again. WAS interviewed, with Dr. Payne, Miss Gregoria Auffaux, supervisor of nurses of the anti-tuberculosis centers and small tuberculosis hospitals. Dr. Rodriguez Pastor wants a fellowship for her so that she can visit tuberculosis hospitals and clinics and get some experience in them. She is a widow, 34 years old. She had one year of high school, followed by a business course before studying nursing and gave up an opportunity for a fellowship to be married. She wears black and seems rather serious and quiet. Dr. Payne thinks she has ability and occupies an important position. He will probably recommend her. Dr. Payne will probably recommend a travel grant also for Mr. Juan Luis Torregrossa, Director of Rural Sanitation in the Bureau of General Inspection. He is a sanitary inspector of long experience and well informed, but originally of only grammar school education. He would be sent to Costa Rica to study the construction of latrines and also of invert, etc. for drainage work. He would probably pass through Panama and see the similar work there. He was not seen by WAS. (Copy to HM and MET)

WAS attended a meeting of 8 nurse instructors with the Director of the Health Units, Dr. Chavez. There was very free discussion. All but one of the nurses had had training under I.H.D. fellowship. When in a unit the nurses are under the Director of the unit and send their reports through him. They are called instructors rather than supervisors to avoid any idea that they are direct administrative superiors to the local nurses of the unit. They check up on nursing methods and techniques and teach nurses. They have opportunity to discuss local situations freely in person with Dr. Chavez at the monthly conference and during his visits to the field. (Copy to MET)

Visited the School of Tropical Medicine with BEW and GCP. Dr. Bachman, the non-medical Director, took us about and we met members of the faculty. There is apparently no formal instruction. The School is primarily a research institution to which workers may come. The School is putting up large and expensive buildings with money from the PHAA. A hospital for about 60 beds is being built and will form a quadrangle with the present school building. Strangely enough it contains private rooms and elaborate provisions for surgery. There will be an out-patient department. On one side of the school building a library and physiology building with residence rooms for students is going up. There is also an elaborate animal house in which there were a number of gibbons. The school has also an island off Humacao Playa for breeding monkeys. The colony of rhesus already contains many mother monkeys with young.
INTERVIEWS:

January 14, 1939 (Continued)

In the afternoon Dr. Garrido took WAS on a drive to Luquillo National Forest near the eastern end of the island. At Fajardo they saw one of the large hospitals almost complete. A start was being made on the nurses' home. There is also a tuberculosis center and health unit there. The tuberculosis death rate for the island for 1938 was 272 per 100,000. Three years ago it was over 300. The reported mortality from hookworm disease has dropped from 70 to 20 per 100,000. Dr. Garrido had dinner with BEW and WAS at the Union Club. (Copy to HM and FP)

January 15, 1939

Drove with Dr. and Mrs. Payne and BEW to Rio Piedras to a gathering of the medical health officers and nurses from the entire island. The meeting was held at 2 p.m. in an auditorium at the tuberculosis sanitorium. About 200 persons were present. Dr. Garrido was chairman. The first speaker was Dr. Washburn on the value of health units, and the second was WAS on yellow fever. Dr. Costa Mandry gave directions about laboratory specimens. Dr. Rodriguez spoke on the two great dependences on surgery in tuberculosis, and Dr. L. Quintero, Chief of the Division of Venereal Diseases, gave a talk on the local work in syphilis. WAS was invited to address a meeting of the District Medical Association, but declined.

In the evening BEW, and Dr. and Mrs. Payne and WAS were among the guests at a buffet supper in the garden of Dr. and Mrs. Garrido Morales. Among the guests were Governor Winship and his niece, Judge Cooper, Governor Winship's aides, Dr. Soto, Chancellor of the University, and Mrs. Soto, Dr. Van Bleeck of the U.S.P.H.S., Dr. Garrido's brother, and many other persons connected with the Government or its institutions.

January 16, 1939

WAS, GCP and Mrs. GCP saw BEW off on the P.A.A. plane for Trinidad at 8 a.m. From there he will fly to Venezuela. In that country he will remain for a few days and advise on sanitation in place of Dr. Molloy. He will probably meet Mr. Magoon there.

In the afternoon GCP took WAS to the University of Puerto Rico. They visited a number of departments and called on Dr. Soto, the Chancellor.

January 17, 1939

WAS drove to the eastern end of the island with Dr. Payne and Mr. Perez, entomologist and former fellow. Drove through Loiza and visited
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January 17, 1939 (Continued)

Hacienda Grande where Dr. Earle had carried on a screening experiment in a sugar company's labor village. Houses on one side of the street were screened and those on the other side were not. There was little difference between the amount of malaria on the two sides of the street and mosquitoes were found in the screened houses. The screening has been largely destroyed.

Visited Loiza Aldea where Dr. Earle studied the prevalence and progress of malaria in untreated children as shown by blood examination spleen examination and temperature observations. It was in this village that the famous strain of influenza, P.R.8, was obtained.

Passed through Rio Grande, the place where Dr. Payne's present anemia study began. At the beach occurred that extraordinary infection with hookworm, so acute that typhoid was suspected. It was published by Major Ashford and Dr. and Mrs. Payne. Had luncheon at Fajardo after visiting the sugar cane area and the Harbor Village where Dr. Earle did his malaria work. From Humacao Playa we saw nearby the island of Santiago where Columbia University and the School of Tropical Medicine have their monkey breeding colony. Saw a mongoose cross the road and wondered whether this animal had been adequately tested for susceptibility to viruses.

January 18, 1939

GCP arranged with Dr. Juan Arruza to help us collect specimens at the insane hospital in Rio Piedras from influenza patients in the following morning. It was Dr. Arruza who collected the specimen, P.R.8, for Dr. Earle.

Went sightseeing with GCP in San Juan.

At one o'clock GCP and WAS were guests of Governor Blanton Winship at luncheon at La Fortaleza or Government House. He is an army man who had had service in the Philippines and who knew Dr. Heiser. Other guests were Dr. Blossom of the Library of Congress, Colonel Rockwood, a chemical engineer in the U.S. Army, and Mrs. Rockwood, Dr. Blossom's step-daughter, Miss Hindelman, and Dr. and Mrs. Garrido Morales.

January 19, 1939

Before daylight there was a prolonged roaring of airplanes over the apartment house. Large number of Navy planes had come from Quantico, Virginia, for the naval manoeuvres. Went with GCP and Dr. Aruzza to collect throat washings and sputum from the influenza cases at the mental hospital in Rio Piedras. The outbreak in the male wards was already diminishing. Obtained material from two cases and arranged later on the ship to have them kept in the cold room during the trip. The name of the institution is
"Puerto Rico Hospital for the Insane."

Sat in on a staff meeting at the Health Department with Dr. Garrido as chairman. Made a farewell talk to the department heads and Dr. Garrido. Called on Dr. Bachman to say goodbye. Had luncheon as guest of Dr. and Mrs. Payne at Hotel Candado. Boarded the ship COAMO with Dr. and Mrs. Payne and found Mr. C. L. Carpenter of Columbia University waiting for me on board. He gave me a copy of a preliminary study of the supply of rhesus monkeys in India and asked that it be mailed back to him at the School of Tropical Medicine. He is much interested in the colony of rhesus which is on Santiago Island. He says that the colony of cercopithecus monkeys from Africa is on St. Kitts Island and that he hopes to visit it. He says that the residents are trying to kill the monkeys off.

Dr. Garrido and Dr. and Mrs. Payne were at the boat to see WAS off. Dr. Garrido asked WAS to write him criticisms and suggestions of his work. Sailed about 3:30. Before sailing Dr. Garrido introduced WAS to Dr. Carlos M. del Valle, a Puerto Rican who is practicing surgery at 5 East 53rd Street, New York City.

January 23, 1939

Arrived in New York about 2 p.m. The ship was delayed several hours on account of the severe head winds which had been experienced.