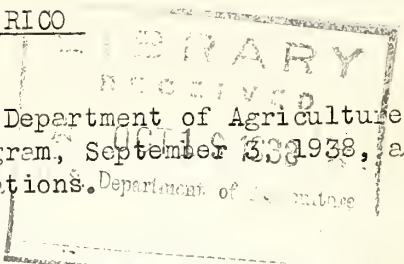


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4-H CLUB WORK IN PUERTO RICO



A radio talk by C. L. Chambers, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program, September 3, 1938, and broadcast by an associated network of NBC stations.

Yes they do, Mr. Baker. Almost everyone in Puerto Rico speaks Spanish for that is the official language of the country. But some of the boys and girls and many of the older people also speak English, so if you were to visit Puerto Rico and could not speak Spanish, you'd be able to get along all right.

But the language is not the only thing about Puerto Rico that is different from most parts of the United States. Puerto Rico is nearly a tropical island. It's warm there the year round. In that respect it's very much like Summer in our Southern States.

If you were to go to Puerto Rico you would see mountains ---yes---real mountains, covered almost to the top with dense tropical forests. Probably you know what orchids look like, and if you've ever asked the price of them in a florist shop, you know that they are one of the most expensive in this country. In some of the forests of Puerto Rico you would find orchids growing wild, so many of them you could gather an arm full in just a short time. You could ride horseback up and down steep trails---surrounded on all sides by coffee trees. You could pick bananas right off the tree, and you could look at the moon through the leaves of beautiful coconut palm trees.

That's just a little description of the country of Puerto Rico. It's a very beautiful country. Now, about 4-H Club Work. There are about two thousand boys and girls in Puerto Rico who belong to 4-H Clubs. They carry enterprises in agriculture and homemaking, just as you boys and girls in the United States do.

One of the things that farmers in Puerto Rico need to learn about is producing more of their food at home, and so most of the 4-H clubs have to do with such things as gardens, pigs, rabbits, milk goats and poultry.

I visited the home of a 4-H club leader who is supervising the activity of a club of 14 girls. She has a guava orchard and a chicken yard, where the girls learn about producing guavas -- a delicious fruit -- and about growing chickens. She has also done a great deal to make the outside of her home more beautiful, by planting some of the lovely flowers, shrubs, and trees which grow so well in Puerto Rico. By seeing what their leader has done, and by helping her, the 14 girls in this club have learned some valuable lessons in more pleasant living.

I saw one house where 14 members of the same family lived in one room, as many Puerto Ricans families do. As a result of Extension Work, the family saw that they could live more happily if they put in some partitions, and made the one big room into several smaller rooms. One of the girls in the family had painted her room and had made some furniture. Most of it was made

from discarded packing boxes, but it had become useful and attractive furniture.

Several of the 4-H clubs have canning equipment so the girls can preserve vegetables and fruits for use the year around. You see, this is another part of the plan of 4-H club work to encourage 4-H members and their families to produce the things that they need.

Many of the 4-H clubs in Puerto Rico have built their own club houses, where boys and girls hold club meetings. The members have built the houses themselves--laying the foundation, building the framework, nailing on siding, and putting on the roof. Probably I don't need to tell you that most of these 4-H club houses are attractive little buildings, often having quaint thatched roofs. One of the most interesting clubs is the Franklin D. Roosevelt 4-H club. This club has an autographed picture of the President on the wall of the club house. It was sent to the president of the club, who was the first boy to be enrolled in 4-H club work on the island. This same boy has done a great deal of work instructing groups of men and women in better methods of farming.

While I was in Puerto Rico I attended a short course for 4-H club boys and girls. Everything was going smoothly when we received word that a hurrican was coming across the sea headed directly toward the island. We hurried to a stronger building -- one that probably would stand a severe storm. The extension workers attending the short course had worried looks, because they had seen hurricanes before. Many of them said farewells to each other, for fear that they might not be together long. But soon we had word that the hurrican had changed its direction and would not hit the island after all. That is as close as I ever want to come to a hurricane.

The real climax of my visit to Puerto Rico came when attending a reception for 4-H club members at the governors Palace. A little boy about 14 years old came up to me. He put his hand in mine and looked into my eyes and said, "I'n going to be a great leader on this Island some day."

4-H club work is rather new in Puerto Rico, but having seen how it puts this sort of ambition into the hearts of boys and girls I can't help being proud of the work that has been done thus far -- and very optimistic about the development of 4-H club work in the future.