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HENRY GANNETT

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UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
CHARLES D. WALCOTT, DIRECTOR

A

GAZETTEER OF PORTO RICO

BY

HENRY GANNETT

WASHINGTON
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1901

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY,
Washington, D. C., June 11, 1901.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for publication as a bulletin, a gazetteer of Porto Rico. The place names here given are derived mainly from the report of the recent census of the island and from the War Department map, on the scale of 1:150,000.

It is my belief that the publication of this bulletin will go far toward preventing conflicts in the spelling of these place names.

Very respectfully,

HENRY GANNETT,
Geographer.

Hon. CHARLES D. WALCOTT,
Director U. S. Geological Survey.

A GAZETTEER OF PORTO RICO.

By HENRY GANNETT.

INTRODUCTION.

Porto Rico is the fourth in size of the West Indian Islands, being exceeded by Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. Its area, as measured from the best map available—that issued in 1899 by the War Department, on a scale of 1:150,000—is 3,600 square miles. There is, however, much uncertainty concerning the accuracy of these figures, as the coast line of the island has never been carefully surveyed. It lies east of Haiti, between latitudes 17° 50′ and 18° 30′ N., and between longitudes 65° 30′ and 67° 15′ W.

Under the jurisdiction of Porto Rico, as a colony of Spain and subsequently as a dependency of the United States, are included, besides the island of Porto Rico, the small islands Vieques and Culebra to the east and Mona to the west, as well as a number of islets adjacent to the coast.

The Indian name of the island was Borinquen. The name Porto Rico is a corruption of the proper name Puerto Rico, and is the form which has been in common use for centuries among English-speaking nations; the form Puerto Rico (rich harbor) being that in use by the residents of the island, by all Spanish-speaking peoples, and generally by other nations. The United States Board on Geographic Names, pursuing its principle of following local usage, adopted this form several years ago. Since the acquisition of the island by the United States, usage, even in the publications of the United States Government, became divided, some of them following the above decision, others using the form Porto Rico. In this condition of affairs, the Board appealed to the President of the United States for a decision, and the President decided in favor of Puerto Rico. Subsequently, however, in the Foraker bill for the government of Porto Rico, a clause was incorporated providing that the name be Porto Rico. This bill, agreed to by both Houses of Congress and signed by the President, became law, and thus established the spelling of the name.

Porto Rico is roughly rectangular in shape, with a length from east