

## HISTORY OF BARRIO COTO NORTE, MANATI.

Fifty years ago, this Barrio, Coto Norte had a population of scarcely 40 or 50 families, who lived on farms rather distant from each other and who had no social or religious relationships. They made their livelihoods by growing tobacco, vegetables; fishing in Tortuguero lagoon, and raising domestic animals. There were large sections given to coconut raising, which at that time was relatively unimportant.

This rural area was connected to the neighboring towns of Vega Baja and Manati by a narrow sandy road, an improved road, and a railroad line. In those days sugar cane, which is the principal product today, was not grown. The agriculture of the area had a boost when American interests bought large tracts of land for the growing and eventual canning of grapefruit and pineapple, as this provided enough work for many of the residents of the barrio.

The population of this area grew when a quarry began to be operated on Km. 52 (Enlugar Highway) and the railroad began to make a stop for passengers there. By that time the Church of the Resurrection and its "New World" School was under way.

It is also worth mentioning in this brief historical outline the impetus felt in this community with the building of the new military express highway during World War II, and the establishing of Camp Tortuguero nearby. (One of the island's largest recruit training centers, still in operation). Fifty years ago there were less than 200 inhabitants; today there are over 2,000 not including the military personnel at Camp Tortuguero.

The people of this barrio have, for several years migrated to New York and Brooklyn, while simultaneously, people from other places in Puerto Rico have settled here, becoming permanent residents.

There are in the near vicinity two factories; a toy or doll factory, and a ceramics industry. There is also the large pineapple and grapefruit plantation and canning business which employs a goodly number of men and women.