Let us turn aside from my school in San Germán. I wish here to recount the historical facts of El Instituto de Agricultura, Artes y Oficios de Lajas, founded by don Juan Cancio Ortiz, and later confused with VIVAM undue of Lajas.

The factual account herein related is based on Catalog No. 1, printed by San Manuel Ramos on his Excelear Press in San Germán of July 15, 1907, prior to the opening of the Instituto de Agricultura, Artes y Oficios on September 1, 1907, and on Catalog No. 2 for the school year of 1908-1909, printed by the "Primavera" press, Alfon St. 28, San Juan, and on first-hand information given me at the time by Paul F. Taylor, who lived on June St. in San Germán near our home.

Taylor was Inspector of Public Schools under E. T. Dexter, the Commissioner of Education of Puerto Rico. Taylor was one of the many men sent to Puerto Rico to help develop the Schools of Puerto Rico after the American occupation. Taylor was one of the Directors of the Instituto de Agricultura, Artes y Oficios of Lajas, appointed by the Lajas City Council on March 21st, 1906, to help organize the Instituto de Agricultura, Artes y Oficios. Taylor was the guiding hand and Benito Contreras of Lajas Public Schools was his aide in the setup of this school, VIVAM of Lajas.

Soon after the occupation of Puerto Rico by the Americans, 20 young men were sent to the States by the Department of Education to be prepared for teaching in the Public Schools of Puerto Rico. One of that number was a brilliant lad whose family lived on one of the Vivam San Ignacio near Palmero, where don Juan Cancio Ortiz lived. The boy's name was Arturo Grant. He was sent to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He wrote a long letter to don Juan Cancio Ortiz about Tuskegee Institute. There also appeared in "El Tiempo", a daily in San Juan, a story of the life of Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee Institute, which he quoted. Mr. Cebé Baroza was the writer of the article and editor of "El Tiempo". Don Cancio later told me that this letter from Arturo Grant and this article in "El Tiempo" impressed him so deeply that
he was led to propose such a school be established in Lajas. [Incidentally, José Cuña was one of the 20. He was sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.]

Don Juan Cencio Ortíz was a farmer and merchant, a man of wealth, and President of the Lajas City Council. I quote from Catalog No. 2, page 7, under General Information:

"On March 21, 1904, Don Juan Cencio Ortíz, President of the City Council of Lajas, presented a very luminous project of an Agriculture, Arts and Trades School to be located in, or near, Lajas; in the realization of this school he asked that the City Council appoint a committee for the organization of this school, which committee later was named as the Board of Directors of the Instituto de Agricultura, Artes y Oficios of Lajas."

The City Council forthwith named the Committee composed of the following:

Chairman: Governor of Puerto Rico, honorary President

N. R. Commissioner of Education, B. O. Dexter, honorary Vice-President.

Rev. Juan Cencio Ortíz, was named President of the Committee.

F. Fernando Calles, was named Vice-President.

The other members were:

Rev. Paul E. Taylor, Inspector of Schools

Rev. Quintin Mercado, President of School Board of Lajas

Rev. Francisco Gallay, an Agriculturist

Rev. Basilio Carpio, Secretary and Professor of Lajas Schools.

The catalog does not state it, but I understand that Juan Cencio Ortíz subscribed $1,000 for the proposed school. It stated in Catalog No. 2, page 7, that a total of $4,000 was raised—including the $1,000 given by the Guánica Central. With this $4,000 there was erected a two-story wooden house, 60 feet long by 30 feet wide, and an adjoining cistern for rain water with a capacity of 75,000 litros. The second floor was used as a boys' dormitory, the first story was used for classrooms, dining room, kitchen and small office.

Don José ("Cacho") Jiménez and the Zapata family each gave two acres of land, a total of four acres. On one acre of this land the four buildings were erected.

An appeal was made for contributions to all municipal governments, to individuals, and to the Legislature. Response was considered good; even women and girls moved

Deseo
the appeal subscribed to the school paper, "El Estudiante," by some prisoners at San Luis; a forerunner of the Boy Scouts decades later.

The Legislature, on motion of Representatives Vincente Trillos Oliva and Santiago Vivaldi, voted a contribution of $2,000 yearly. Luis Sánchez Morales assured the approval of the Executive Council of the Legislature's $2,000 yearly contribution. City Council paid the expenses of homeless and abandoned boys whom they sent to the Instituto de Agricultura Primaria; Sección in Lajas. Thus, some thirty boys came as boarding students. The Rural Public School of Palmero was brought in as day students and others from homes near by were enrolled. The Lajas School Board united the Palmero Rural School with that of San Cicco, making a total of 177 for the first year, under Taylor as Superintendent.

With the additional $2,000 annual gift from the Legislature, three more buildings were erected—a total of four houses, the second building was used for classes which were under the supervision of Teacher Taylor. Teachers were supplied by the Lajas school board with approval of the Commissioner of Education.

Juan Cenci Ortiz attempted to supervise the Mustoos and to introduce agriculture, 1907-1908. Fernando J. Rodil was later sent by the Commissioner of Education to be the principal from 1908-1910. Juan Cenci Ortiz had rapidly increasing responsibilities as owner of three stores, extensive sugar cane plantations and cattle ranch which demanded all his time and thought. Taylor, the only man connected with the Board of Directors with a preconceived knowledge of Tuskegee Institute, had returned to the States in 1908. Juan Cenci Ortiz, not having seen Tuskegee Institute, was a brilliant businessman, a fine Christian gentleman, but even self-educated and could not organize what he had never seen nor attended, an industrial school, or any school the most difficult to plan and direct.

The school building was furnished with desks, books, wall maps, etc. by the government. The courses of study there followed were the courses of the Department of Education for the first eight grades, or school. The school had two typewriters, and a proposed business course, purchased an anvil and a bellows, but had no one who could teach...
On page 17 of catalog No. 2, it is stated: 'To have religión oficial. Cada alumno estará en libertad de asistir al culto que estime conveniente de acuerdo con sus padres y sus propias creencias. En los ejercicios de deporte los profesores alternando desarrollarán un curso de moral.'

The ideal of don Juan Cancel Ortiz was to adapt the needs of Puerto Rican boys, especially for those whose fathers had no interest in their betterment and had never recognized them as legal children; boys who could be trained how to support a family as worthy citizens. This was the urge in the soul of Juan Cancel Ortiz and what he wished to see done in this school, but did not know how to do it. His directors modeled the school after the public schools under supposedly private direction. That is what Juan Cancel Ortiz saw develop in his school, a forerunner of RONJOS of today. "The industrial training of boys to work would never work in Puerto Rico, if these boys reached the 8th grade," was the opinion Juan Cancel became convinced of as his school got into operation.

Student life in the boarding department left much to be desired. The straw that broke the camel's back was when one of the students was killed in a fight; along with other things that caused the Legislature in 1909 to advise the Director that the $3,000 would not be allowed after the scholastic year of 1909-1910. Automatically this prohibited gifts from City Council. So, 1909-1910 was conducted without classes in June 1910.

President Juan Cancel Ortiz offered the property to the Presbyterian Home Mission Board as a site for the Theological Training School in Mayaguez. The Presbytery of Puerto Rico met in April 1910 in Ponce to consider President Juan Cancel Ortiz's offer. It was there discovered that the buildings were good, but had been erected on land the title of which was held by the different owners, both of whom wished to have the buildings removed. The other three acres originally devoted to the Instituto Agricola (Agriculture, Artes y Oficios) had been repossessed and planted in sugar cane. Presbytery
I then turned to my acre adjoining the property of the Presbyterian Church in San Germán and, I perfected the plans for a building, established the foundation lines for digging the ditches the next day, was checking on the exact positions of the corners when Don Juan Cencio Ortiz rode up on his horse from Lajas. His pony ate some trotting along behind him to take the horse back to Lajas after Don Juan Cencio caught the 5:30 P.M. train at the lever station for Mayagüez, his new home.

Don Juan Cencio sat on his horse, looked at the cords and asked what I was doing. I told him that I had failed to get the barracks for my school. Don Isidro Palmer had hauled the gravel and sand and I was going to start building at once. The "Hoja Ogila" of the San Germán opposition had reached Lajas. He had read it and that was why he rode by to see me. He said: "San Germán de Germece, I am not afraid of all the priests in the Island—not even of the Pope at Rome." He urged me not to spend my money in
building and offered to give on the buildings and site in Lajas for my school. "Take your school away from this unworthly town."

I asked him if he had the right and power legally to give us his buildings and also if I could buy more land adjoining his buildings. I knew that the land on which the buildings stood belonged to José (Cheo) Ramirez and to the Zapata family. Don Cheo had forty-two acres on which two of the buildings stood and don Juan Cancio thought that I could buy the forty-two acres from don Cheo whose wife and family were members of the Presbyterian Church there. This was very encouraging to me and it looked like the Lord had opened a real way for me to get a site big enough for the beginning of my college, which I had dreamed of as a student in Park College. I felt quite certain that if don Cheo refused to sell his forty acres that don Juan Cancio would let me have all I needed out of his extensive holdings in Lajas.

Don Juan Cancio and I went over to see the Attorney General, Hon. Foster V. Brown, concerning don Cancio’s power to transfer the property of his defunct I. A. A. O. in Lajas to me for my school in San Germán. The Attorney General said there were no conditions attached to the legislature’s act which was voted to encourage don Juan Cancio in his attempt to help the needy fatherless boys of Puerto Rico and don Juan Cancio could do what he pleased with the buildings.

Returning to Lajas don Juan Cancio tore a leaf out of his ledger and wrote a simple short transfer from himself as the President of the I. A. A. O. of Lajas to Rev. J. Will Harris, not to the Presbyterian Church or Presbytery of Puerto Rico, but to Rev. J. Will Harris for his school in San Germán. Mr. Breif, Director of American Schools, the largest contributor to the I. A. A. O. of Lajas, approved the transfer.

Prof. Fernando J. Rodil was head of the I. A. A. O. of Lajas during the two last years, 1909-1910, and was still in the Palmaréjo Public School principal of Lajas, Puerto Rico. He was an elder when I ordained in the Palmaréjo Presbyterian Church as was also don Juan Cancio. Rodil proposed to me that we try to enlist don Juan Cancio in the revival of his old school, reorganized with a definite religious program. Rodil sent out circulars to families of needy boys who could pay all their boys’ expenses. Eleven boys enrolled when the public school opened in September with Rodil as principal. Dona
Gusse (elderly lady from Holland) continued as NUNA OF THE BOYS. Rodil also solicited funds from individuals for what was proposed to be the "Palmarogo Institute" so as to distinguish it from the I. A. A. O. Four of his eleven boys were born there. Don Juan Canicio refused to have anything whatsoever to do with the revival of the I. A. A. O., even under the new name of "Palmarogo Institute".

While Rodil was making this effort to enlist don Juan Canicio's interest, I was trying to buy more land than the acre on which the buildings stood. Otherwise, I would not transfer my school to Lajus from San Germán. Don Canicio agreed to sell the forty-two acres, then postponed all decision of the sale of his property. I offered him $50.00 per acre. He raised it to $150.00 per acre. I accepted the $100 figure. When the deed of contract was presented to him he said he would not sell his property. I then asked don Juan Canicio for a site. Don Canicio hesitated, but finally took me to see a sixty-acre tract nearby. After walking over it with me he decided it was not a proper site for my school. I called on don José Ortiz, don Canicio's brother, but he did not want to sell. I saw several others in Lajus, to no avail. In fact Lajus, like don Juan Canicio, did not want to revive the I. A. A. O. or anything alike it.

Prof. Fernando J. Rodil decided his endeavor to revive the I. A. A. O. of Lajus was impossible and resigned at the end of October, 1910 as teacher under the Department of Education, entering private business. Professor Rosado remained in charge. I am glad to have had the pleasure of marrying Rodil to an attractive and winsome young lady teaching in Hormigueros.

Both Rodil and I gave up Palmarogo, November 1st, 1910, as impossible. I was left holding four buildings in my hands and no place to put them down. Lajus Public School Board continued to use two of the buildings for two years while erecting the present Rural School Building in Palmarogo.
near Sabana Grande. It belonged to two very spinstered. I went with don Pyi to see them. My ears had become irritated with "We do not want to sell our land." I hoped these ladies would be tender-hearted. But they too, like the others, looked at me—a penniless missionary preacher—and gently said: their decision "We do not care to sell". They were all afraid I would get on their land and never pay for it.

(All this took place over forty years ago.) The I. A. A. O. of Lajas had been commonly called "El Instituto". Unfortunately my school only three miles away was also called "El Instituto", following closely on the I. A. A. O.'s death. Few people outside of San Germán ever knew that I had a school of 150 students in San Germán since November, 1907 with Guillermina Rueda as its Director and Eva Sepúlveda as assistant.

In articles of Incorporation of April, 1911, I proposed "College of Puerto Rico" as the corporate name for my school on the hills of Santa Marta. Drew Carroll, the Executive Secretary of Puerto Rico, refused to incorporate my school under the name of "College of Puerto Rico", because it might be confused with the proposed University of Puerto Rico, and also because a private girl's school in San Juan was called "College of Puerto Rico". The Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico had been founded by Rev. E. A. Meadon. Rev. E. A. Odell suggested that I present that as the name instead of "College of Puerto Rico". Carroll accepted the name and incorporated my school "Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico".

The popular mind outside of San Germán confused the names of the Lajas School and mine in San Germán because of the popular allusion to both as "El Instituto". Few of the Lajas people ever heard the name of I. A. A. O. de Lajas for it was referred to always as "El Instituto". When the I. A. A. O. de Lajas was closed down and the following year my school in San Germán had been incorporated as The Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico, it soon became known as "El Instituto" for short. The people of Lajas thought "El Instituto de Lajas" had been transferred to San Germán and that the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico was simply a continuation of the I. A. A. O. de Lajas—were they not still hearing "El Instituto" applied to the P. I. of P. Rico? No one investigated the origin of the two schools. Many of the next generation in Lajas really
believed the two schools were one and the same. And Don Juan Canio fixed the difference. All the older generation of San Germán knew the difference, for they had offered me a site in 1902, the Barracks, for my then school which had outgrown its clothing.

Let me restate the origin, history and purpose of the two I. A. A. O. de Lajas and the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico, hereinafter referred to as Ortín and Harria.
those expenses were paid by the thirty municipalities. The classrooms were furnished with desks, maps, books, etc. and teachers by the Lajve School Board with the consent of the Commissioner of Education. The definite plans were to bring in the abandoned boys off the streets who had approved the 3rd Grade work, as boarding students. No provision was made for girls. When so few came the Palmaraje Rural Public School was brought in as a part of the classroom group in order to have sufficient students to begin a school like Tuskegee Institute, after which Ortiz tried so nobly to copy, but found no qualified cooperation to help him realize. During the first year the boarding students gradually decreased.

The course of classroom work was that of the Public School System of the grades 1-8th, the Inspector of Schools appointed by the Commissioner, at the time Paul E. Taylor, officially visited the classrooms and reported to the government. Lajve School Board appointed the teachers.

Ortiz school permitted no religious instruction of students, and no religious services were held on the grounds. Don Juan Cencio Ortiz was ordained by me as an Elder in the Palmaraje Presbyterian Church and built a chapel near by, but not on the campus of his school. To this chapel students were welcome but few ever attended from the Chaplain of the U.S. Army, paid don Cencio the cost of it.

The Ortiz Institute prospered so long as the Legislature voted its yearly $3,000.00 to help in the maintenance. When that was withdrawn in June, 1910, the Ortiz School closed down.

I had never been connected in any way with the Ortiz school and had nothing to do with its founding or operation. Don Juana Cencio Ortiz had nothing to do directly with the founding or operation of the Harris Institute of San Germain. I can only recall two visits made by don Juana Cencio Ortiz to the Polytechnic Institute. One was shortly after I contracted to buy the 100 acres from Lagarde when he remarked as he rode down to the entrance: "It is no good for agriculture. It will not grow weeds." The other time was when I tried to get the eighteen members of the Board of Trustees to a meeting which was the first and only time the board met, in June, 1912.
dear friend, Mrs. Adah DeWitt Kellett, wife of J. E. Kellett, Secretary of the Home Mission Board in New York, and sent us monthly the $25.00 salary of Guillermo Bazaro. I advanced the money for the concrete building which was repaid to me by the Women's Mission Board in the way of rent by the month.

This concrete building could not hold comfortably over 100 enrolment and it was necessary to run a double header—one section in the A. M. and another section in the P. M.—hard on the teachers but never a complaint for they taught to serve and to advance the children, not merely for their monthly $25.00 check.

I then bought an acre of land adjoining the property of the Presbyterian Church in San Germán from José N. Acosta, on which I proposed to begin to provide for imminent demands for higher education. San Germán offered the Barracks for my proposed enlargement into a more advanced school and that failed, Juan García Ortiz offered me the I. A. A. O. de Lajas which had blossomed and died. That too failed. Then came the 100 acres from Francisco Lagos on the Santa Marta Hills, which had been reserved for four centuries by the Lord for the coming of what is now wrongly named the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico. The objective all the way from the first was to secure students from the best though poor families, to advance new standards within the needs and demands of the development of youth in Puerto Rico for a way of life to be lived for man and God and centering around the Christian home as the greatest institution in the world. I always had both sexes enrolled.

Ortiz’s school—I. A. A. O. de Lajas—was proposed by Juan García Ortiz to the City Council of Lajas, a civic corporation, on March 21, 1906, which council immediately appointed a committee to raise money first from the Legislature of Puerto Rico, second from other City Councils of the Island’s municipalities, from other corporations and individuals. Generous response provided the Ortiz school with even more money than the Directors knew how to use to rightful ends in the development of a school with the objective of educating abandoned boys (no girls) for worthy citizenship of La Patria. A large two story building was erected and the proposed school was opened September 1, 1907 with an enrolment of 130 students the first year. Of that number were 30 of the 75 municipalities had selected and sent to the Ortiz school around thirty abandoned boys
Harris opened his school in San Germain, without a name, in November, 1907 in a very small house of a poor family with a handful of little tots who could not find a seat in the San Germain Public Schools, with Miss Guillermina Nazario of La Placita as teacher. Benches made of boards served in the absence of anything better. There were no books, only a small homemade blackboard, on which Guillermina wrote words and the children learned to read and to write and to cipher on cheap paper tablets with pencils. They memorized Bible texts, studied the Sunday School lessons for the following Sunday in the Church...learned to sing the hymns and "America"...also learned to pray for their parents, brothers and sisters, neighbors and the children of heathen lands who had not heard of Christ. It soon outgrew the small room. I bought a lot from Don Pancho Riveria by the side of Don Juan Ortiz Forsich's house, on Luna Street. He did not want the school so near, so traded me a much better location at the top of the hill near where Luna St. turns left and the Javilla street begins to the right within a couple of blocks of Porta Cosli. There I built on North side of Javilla Street a concrete one room school, reinforced with barbed wires, which was used on Sundays for Sunday School and Church services. Miss Eva Espada was added to the teaching staff and the school gradually grew in numbers of enrollment and finally to the Sixth grade as the lower grades found admission to the Public Schools and were discontinued. Doña Pepita Nazario, Rev. José A. Martínez was our Bible reader who visited the children's mothers in their homes regularly for prayer and Bible instruction.

We started out with no financial backing, depending on the Lord's leading and on small weekly fees of 5, 10 and 15 cents, or nothing from those who could not pay. The fees increased with the years. The Presbyterian Women's Board heard of us through our
Don Juan Concío Ortiz, with all sincerity and frankness, said at the time he gave me the paper of transfer of buildings from I. A. A. O. de Lajas to me for my school in San Germán, that he would never give any financial aid in my schools' development. He never did give a dime to the Polytechnic up to the time I left March 2, 1937.

If Lajas had been willing to sell me sufficient land for my (San Germán) School, the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico might have been today in Ponce...that...in which ancient God stood and turned me to the Santa Marta Hills of San Germán.

The only thing in the I. A. A. O. de Lajas that I learned was how not to do it.

¡Qué acrónomas en paz descansen!

He dicho

J. Will Harris, 1952.