

THE 39TH ANNUAL MEETING of the VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO MAY 4 – MAY 8, 2005



Join us on the first venture of the VSA to Latin America! This will also be the first comprehensive trip by a US-based cultural organization of which we are aware to cover the art and architecture of Puerto Rico. And Puerto Rico is welcoming us with open arms!

Why Puerto Rico? The island is a treasure trove of important 19th and early 20th century buildings and artwork. And much of it has been beautifully and professionally conserved, restored, and interpreted by scholars and writers eager to give us privileged access.

But is it “American”? The island’s fortunes have been firmly tied to those of the United States since even before the *norteamericano* takeover of the former Spanish colony in 1898. Its currency is the US dollar, it uses US postage, and Puerto Ricans are US citizens. No passport needed; no customs to clear. Most everyone you meet will speak English as well as Spanish.

OK, but is it “Victorian”? The same forces that fueled “Victorian” art, architecture and culture in Britain and the United States – rapid industrialization, increasingly international markets, the rise of the middle class, improvements in education and artistic training – were also in action in Puerto Rico. From these came a transformation in architecture, art, literature, and mindset that parallel those we consider “Victorian.” It is endlessly interesting to study and compare – and contrast – our related cultures.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2005

PRE-CONFERENCE TOUR

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Juice and pastry on the bus

Lunch

San Germán

Tour leader: **Enrique Vivoni Farage**, Director of Architectural Archives, University of Puerto Rico

A picturesque town in the southwestern hills of Puerto Rico, San Germán prides itself on its central historic district (National Register), composed of not one but two plazas surrounded by noteworthy buildings. The eastern square is presided over by the ancient **Porta Coeli** (“Heaven’s Gate”) church – built in the early 1500s and thus older than any European building in the continental United States – now a museum of religious artifacts. The western plaza is the site of the 18th century **Cathedral of San Germán de Auxerre**, the city’s patron saint. In between is the 19th century **Vieja Alcaldía**, or Old City Hall.

The oldest continually occupied house in the town is the **Casa Ponce de León** (1600s), but it was in the 19th century and the early 20th that San Germán experienced its greatest prosperity, and this is magnificently reflected in some of the private residences constructed there. Among these are the **Casa Morales** (c.1900), a distinctively Puerto Rican interpretation of the American Queen Anne style; the **Casa Acosta y Forés** (1917), which boasts elaborate exterior and interior decoration based on European art nouveau and secessionist motifs; and the **Casa Vivoni** (c.1925), a large bungalow-style villa.

We will break our tour for a delightful and authentic Spanish *tapas luncheon buffet*, at an excellent new restaurant called (appropriately enough) **Tapas**, and will leave in time to return across the island to San Juan for the evening’s festivities.

7:00 PM

OPENING RECEPTION

Hearty hors d'oeuvres

The **Puntilla Room** of our host hotel, the Sheraton Old San Juan, will be the site of our opening reception.

Hearty hors d'oeuvres and a **cash bar** will whet or sate your appetite, as you choose. (Directions to nearby restaurants will be provided for those who wish to indulge themselves further.) From the room's open balcony you will have an opportunity to survey busy San Juan Bay, the docking place for the many cruise ships that visit the island.

Our special guest this evening will be architectural historian **Jorge Rigau**, author of *Puerto Rico 1900*, who will give a **keynote talk** in preparation for our days to follow.

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2005

OLD SAN JUAN AND THE PUERTA DE TIERRA DISTRICT

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Breakfast on your own

Lunch is included

Dinner on your own

Tour organizer: Jorge Rigau, Dean, New School of Architecture, Puerto Rico Polytechnic University

Today our feet will be our sole means of transportation – so wear your most comfortable walking shoes.

The fortified city of **Old San Juan**, founded by Columbus over five hundred years ago, is one of the oldest permanent European settlements in the Americas. The city walls, erected then and later strengthened and elaborated, survive to enclose some 80% of the *vieja ciudad*. Our **walking tour** will be structured to follow the award-winning publication *The Rooms of a City*, a project of Puerto Rico Polytechnic University, and participants in the project will serve as our guides and interpreters. Among the sites featured will be **La Fortaleza**, the huge neoclassical governor's residence; **Casa Blanca**, home of the Ponce de Leon family; the **Cathedral of San Juan** and **San José church**; numerous **19th century residences and government buildings**; and the imposing **Alcaldía**, or city hall, on the central **Plaza de Armas**. Many of the buildings you will see have been converted into small museums on specific subjects, and you may well want to return later to the ones that interest you most. Time will be left at the end of the afternoon for this purpose.

We will gather for a **buffet lunch** at the **Restaurant Barrachina**, famous as “the birthplace of the piña colada.” (No, piña coladas are not on our selected menu, but you can buy them at the outdoor bar if you wish.)

After lunch we will walk through the **Plaza Colón**, with its pigeon-topped statue of Christopher Columbus, to the district called the **Puerta de Tierra**, or “Land Gate,” named for the portion of the city wall that was torn down to make way for the expansion of the town. In the early years of the 20th century, influenced by the City Beautiful Movement then in vogue in the United States, the US

governing regime undertook an impressive urban improvement project of civic and government buildings facing Constitution Avenue. These include the **Antiguo Casino**, an imposing social club in the French Second Empire style; the Moorish revival **Ateneo Puertorriqueño**; several buildings, including the romantic **Casa de España**, in a Spanish Revival style; and finally the island's newly restored seat of government, the **Capitolio**, in a classical mode influenced by the architecture of the United States Capitol.

After we finish in the mid-afternoon, you will be on your own for the remainder of the day and evening – to rest your feet, visit the various shops and museums that you will have passed and will have piqued your interest. Or perhaps you would like to take the ferry across the bay to the Bacardi Distillery (samples!) or test your luck at the Sheraton's casino. In the evening, try out one or more of Old San Juan's many excellent restaurants, bars, and clubs, all within easy walking distance – also readily available by taxi if you prefer.

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2005

PONCE

8:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Juice and pastry on the bus

Lunch

Hearty hors d'oeuvres reception

Tour leader: Jorge Rigau

Our day in and around Ponce will be a long one, jam-packed with historic sites, museums, and events.

This city on the south coast is **Puerto Rico's 19th century crown jewel**. On your ride across the island's central mountains, you will notice a dramatic change, from the “jungly” vegetation of the north to the arid semi-desert of the south. Also, there are fewer people than in the north – but this was not always so, for in the late 19th century Ponce was the largest and busiest city on the island, overshadowing then-sleepy San Juan. Where did the money come from? From agriculture (coffee, cacao, sugar cane), ranching, industry (especially rum production) – and, some say, from smuggling and black-market operations as well, especially during Prohibition.

After our arrival, we will be taken on a tour of the town's architectural gems, some of which will be opened especially for us. The city's most famous building is the dramatic red-and-black-striped **Parque de Bombas**, which served for many years as the central firehouse after being converted from an 1882 exhibition building; this shares the central **Plaza de las Delicias** (“Plaza of Delights”) with the **Cathedral of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe** (1835, rebuilt early 20th century). But it is probably the block after block of elegant **19th and early 20th century townhouses**, especially those on **Isabel and Reina Streets**, that will interest VSA members most. Many of these have been converted into museums or civic buildings which we will visit – the **Casa Calderoni**, **Casa Armstrong-Poventud**, **Casa Villaronga**, **Casa Salazar**,



and **Casa Serrallés** among them – but others have been restored privately and are used as residences. The owner of one of the finest of these, the **Casa Monsanto** (featured on the cover of the most recent *19th Century* magazine), has invited us for an inside tour.

A quick **box lunch** will be available in the pavilion of the **Ponce History Museum** (Casa Salazar), whose fascinating exhibitions and architecture you will also want to peruse. Our afternoon will continue with a visit to the **Hacienda Buena Vista**, in the foothills north of the city – a former coffee plantation (founded 1833) whose buildings have been meticulously restored – including the main house, outbuildings, and two mills returned to working order. We will then continue to the sprawling romantic hilltop **Castillo Serrallés**, the “castle” from which the head of the country’s largest rum company presided over “his” town.

The highlight of the day for many will be our time at the **Ponce Art Museum**, which houses a **world-class collection of European art** – unequivocally the best in Latin America. Among its hundreds of treasures are an incomparable collection of **British Pre-Raphaelite works and other 19th century paintings**, including Lord Leighton’s *Flaming June* (see above) and signature works by Rossetti, Burne-Jones and others. We will be greeted by the museum’s director and, health permitting, by the museum’s board chair, Doña Rosario Ferré, the well-known author (*The House on the Lagoon*) and daughter of the museum’s founder. Docents will be on hand to comment on the works in the collection.

A **reception** with hearty hors d’oeuvres and cash bar will follow in the museum courtyard, after which we will head back to our home base in Old San Juan, and to our beds or out on the town.

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2005

SAN JUAN METROPOLITAN AREA

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Breakfast on your own

Lunch

Today we will tour several fascinating sites in outer areas of metropolitan San Juan.

First we will visit the main campus of the **University of Puerto Rico** at Río Piedras. The university’s flamboyant main tower and flanking buildings in **Spanish baroque revival** style were designed not by a Spaniard or Latin American but by Texas architect William Schimmelpfennig in the 1930s. These wrap around the pre-existing, and contrastingly classical, Faculty Senate building (1912). Artworks, including vivid **murals**, adorn the walls of several buildings. Over the years, the university has commissioned contemporary architects to add other buildings to the campus scheme, among them Henry Klumb, featured in a recent well-received exhibition and publication.

While at the university we will also visit the **Archives of Architecture and Building**, which contains the island’s largest collection of historical **architectural models and drawings, manuscripts, and other works** relating to architecture and the building trades. Our host will be **Enrique Vivoni Farage**, the archives’ founder and director, who is also leading the Pre- and Post-Conference tours (May 4 and May 8).

The New School of Architecture at **Puerto Rico Polytechnic University**, in nearby Hato Rey, and its dean, **Jorge Rigau** – whom all of you will have met as keynote speaker and tour leader – will host the VSA’s **Annual Business Meeting**, following a **box lunch** and a tour of the state-of-the-art **architectural conservation laboratories** led by Beatriz del Cueto, head conservator, who has been one of the leaders in conserving and restoring the island’s historic buildings.

Afterward, we will enjoy a **lecture on Puerto Rican art** – from carved wooden *santos* and other religious art through the distinctive Puerto Rican “protest” art of the mid-20th century. This will be followed by a tour of the **Art Museum of Puerto Rico**, in Santurce, with an impressive collection installed in an interesting new building within an old hospital structure, surrounded by extensive gardens.

The remainder of the afternoon is free time for shopping, further sightseeing – or resting up for the evening.

7:00 PM **CLOSING BANQUET**

Dinner

The **Puntilla Room** at the Sheraton will house the final festive occasion of the annual meeting proper, a dinner complemented by *danzas*, Puerto Rico’s distinctive gentle and melodic 19th century musical form.



The Victorian Society in America

205 South Camac Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107



*The 39th Annual Meeting
of the Victorian Society
in America*

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

MAY 4 - MAY 8, 2005



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REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Pre-Conference Tour: Wednesday, May 4, 2005

Annual Meeting Package: Wednesday, May 4, through Saturday, May 7, 2005

Post-Conference Tour: Sunday, May 8, 2005

HOTEL

Our conference hotel is the Sheraton Old San Juan, on San Juan Bay across from the cruise ship marina, 100 Brumbaugh Street at Marina Street, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901. You can contact the hotel at 787-721-5100 or visit its web site at www.SheratonOldSanJuan.com. The hotel is easily accessible from the San Juan International Airport by "Tourist Taxi" vans, usually a ten- to fifteen-minute ride.

Special room rates are \$120 per night for single or double occupancy; additional charges for more occupants or for suites. **ROOMS MUST BE RESERVED BY APRIL 1, 2005.** After this date, the discounted rate will no longer be available and the rooms will be subject to availability. To make reservations, call 787-721-5100 or toll-free at 866-376-7577. When making your reservation you must mention the Victorian Society in America to receive the discounted rate. **MAKING RESERVATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE HOTEL ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND AT YOUR EXPENSE; THE VSA'S ONLY ROLE IS TO SECURE THE DISCOUNTED GROUP RATE.**

TRAVEL

San Juan is the commercial, banking, and cultural hub of the Caribbean and its Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport is the largest and busiest in the region. Consequently, it is served by a number of airlines from North America, including:

Air Canada

American Airlines / American Eagle

Continental Airlines

Delta Airlines

JetBlue*

Northwest Airlines

PanAm

USAirways

United Airlines

Important note: JetBlue runs frequent bargain-priced flights (three times a day, some under \$100 each way) from JFK Airport, New York, with connections to many other US cities; these are NOT listed on web sites such as Travelocity and Orbitz. Contact www.jetblue.com.

For more information on travel to Puerto Rico, visit www.welcome.topuertorico.org. For weather reports and forecasts, contact www.weather.com. If you need assistance making your travel arrangements to Puerto Rico you may call Fran at Custom Travel toll-free at 888-810-7240.

Registration can be made via check, money order, or credit card (VISA, MASTERCARD, or DISCOVER only). Checks should be made payable to the Victorian Society in America.

You may also reserve through the VSA website at www.victoriansociety.org using your PayPal account.

The Victorian Society in America is not responsible for accidents, injury or loss of personal items during this program.

The Victorian Society in America reserves the right to alter the schedule of events or featured participants or to cancel events should it become necessary.

Reservations are made on a first-come-first-served basis. Phone or fax reservations will be taken ONLY with a credit card payment at the time of reservations. Phone: 215-545-8340; Fax: 215-545-8379.

Refunds will be given only until April 1, 2005. A \$75 administrative fee will be deducted from each refund.

The **PRE-CONFERENCE TOUR** to San Germán includes tour, site admission fees, bus transportation, and buffet lunch. **Due to limited seating, this portion of our event will fill up especially quickly, so reserve early to avoid disappointment.** Hotel accommodations are NOT included in the pre-tour.

The **ANNUAL MEETING PACKAGE** includes tours; site admission fees, bus transportation; Thursday buffet lunch, Friday and Saturday box lunches; Wednesday and Friday receptions; and Saturday dinner. Hotel accommodations are NOT included in the annual meeting package.

The **POST-CONFERENCE TOUR** of Puerto Rico's Southeast Coast towns includes tour, site admission fees, bus transportation, box lunch, and supper. **Due to limited seating, this portion of our event will fill up especially quickly, so reserve early to avoid disappointment.** Hotel accommodations are NOT included in the post-tour.

FOR FULL DETAILS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.victoriansociety.org