

Central Puerto Real
Vieques Island, Puerto Rico
(later referred to as "Central Esperanza")
Sociedad Mourraile y Martineau
Sucn. de Gustavo Mourraile
36" Gauge
By
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Second only in the size of property owned, kilometers of railway and daily grinding capacity to Central Playa Grande, this mill was located on the south-central coast of the island of Vieques, giving this factory access to the nearby port. It had its own private pier, connected by railroad. Originally, it did not have a deepwater harbor, this having been done by the next owner. So product shipped and merchandise received had to be lightered to and from the pier.

The properties, originally owned by Sociedad Mourraile-Martineau and on the death of the Martineau partner passed to Sucn. de Gustavo Mourraile, were sold in 1915 to Sucn. de Enrique Bird Arias, who owned it until sale of these properties to the the United Porto Rican Sugar Co. In 1927. The mill had ground the 1926 harvest as its last. The mill was a small capacity, steam-powered, fairly modern plant, with a daily grinding capacity of 600 tons. There is mention in histories of Vieques, of the cane from Puerto Real properties being ground at times at Central Playa Grande, when the Pueto Real mill was not operating.

In 1932, all properties of the UPRSugar Co. were sold to Eastern Sugar Associates. From 1927 on, the mill's railway continued to operate, hauling the harvest from company and colono fields to the port, where it was loaded on barges to be transported to Playa Humacao's large docks served by the railroad of (first) the UPR Sugar Co. and (later) Eastern Sugar Associates, etc.. The bundled cane was unloaded into 15 ton capacity cars for movement to nearby Central Pasto Viejo for grinding. This operation continued into the 1960s, when under Fajardo-Eastern Sugar Associates (or CBrewerPR), it was phased out. Maritime operations using tugs and barges were under the corporate umbrella of Oriente Co., a wholly-owned subsidiary of all the listed successor companies.

This mill and the sugar cane fields supplying it were not directly effected by the U S Navy's land expropriations during the start of WWII, since they were located in the central zone of the island.

By 1930, Baldwin # 1 had been scrapped, and # 3 was used primarily to switch the yard and the dock, occasionally travelling to the closest loading stations as required, to pick up loaded cars. The United Porto Rican Sugar Co. purchased Plymouth # 5 to relieve #3, but it was sold via its purchasing agent (Sucrs. Abarca) to Central Plata (owned by Abarca) by 1934, due to insufficient power to assume the duties of the heavier steam locomotive # 2. The resale to Central Plata required a gauge change from 36" to 24", that work performed at Abarca's shops in Miramar.

As the growing of cane diminished on Vieques, Baldwin # 2 was retired, but kept for parts until 1958, when it was scrapped.

When all operations ended, the two last Baldwins (#3 and #4) were parked near the dock, remaining there for many years, slowly rusting away. Near the site of the former central, the two Brookville units were stored in a small shed during the 1960s, until it was torn down and the units scrapped.

Roster:

- # 1 Baldwin #32991// 9/1908 // 0-4-2 Saddletank /18 tons, 28" drivers, 8x12" / cylinders, coal-fired; via E. / Weiner & Co., agents,
- # 2 Baldwin #33180// 1/1909// 0-4-4 Tank / 18 tons, 33" drivers, 9x16" / cylinders, soft coal-fired; via E. Weiner & Co., agents
- # 3 Baldwin #34846// 6/1910// 0-6-0 Tank / 21 tons, 33" drivers, //11x16" cylinders; via Ernst Weiner Co. for Gustavo Mourraile
- # 4 Baldwin #52435// 10/1919// 0-6-2 Tank/ 26 tons, 33" drivers, // 11x16" cylinders, oil-fired; converted to tender locomotive by ESA with 8 wheel tender
- # 5 Plymouth #3493 // 6/11/1930// 4-wheel gas-mechanical/4 tons, Model CL-2, Buda KTU 4 cylinder engine; via Sucrs.de Abarca, agents; locomotive sold by 1934 to Central Plata, via Sucrs. de Abarca*
- # 1(2nd)Brookville #311 //1923 // 4-wheel gas-mechanical //4 ½ tons, Fordson engine; via A.J. Alsdorf Corp., Chicago, agents
- Brookville #818 // 1926 // 4-wheel workman's Assumed to have been a car** "Teresina"-type vehicle, Fordson engine; via N.Y. & Bermudez Co., Trinidad, agents

**Brookville's records only show this as a 4-wheel workman's car and included a Fordson engine and a transmission in the sale. Any other components such as a body would have been annotated, so it is presumed to have been the chassis on which the railroad added the necessary components to complete it as a "carro de brigada" or "teresina" (gang car or motorized speeder). Due to the inclusion of the more substantial Fordson engine, the likelihood of its ultimate use leans to a heavier vehicle, like a gang car similar to the ones at the Fajardo Development Co. railroad under F-ESA, CBrewerPR and the ATdePR. Brookville records do not include a weight for this chassis and motor.

210 sugar cane cars, 8 ton capacity***, 36" gauge
(The mill railroad originally owned about 160 cars, but the rolling stock was beefed up by the new owners to this reported level per documents and publications)
Unknown quantity of smaller capacity cars for portable track use

15 kms. of fixed railroad, 36" gauge
5 kms. of portable track, partially (if not totally) 36" gauge

*** According to Don Domingo Cruz, who spent time under ESA and F-ESA on Vieques involved in some repairs to locomotives, the railroad did include some smaller railroad cars for field operations on portable track. No reports by publications mention these cars, only indicating the existence of portable track and its use. (The use of 8 ton capacity cars on portable track would not be prudent for safety reasons, as well as causing damage to the sections of lightweight, portable track).