

= Román Baldorioty de Castro =

Román Baldorioty de Castro ( February 23 , 1822 ? September 30 , 1889 ) is noted as one of Puerto Rico 's foremost abolitionists and spokesman for the island 's right to self @-@ determination . He received his primary and secondary education in San Juan . He received a scholarship and moved to Spain , where he continued his studies at the University of Madrid . In 1853 , he returned to Puerto Rico and began working as a professor at the island 's School of Commerce and the Seminario Conciliar . Baldorioty de Castro was selected to represent Puerto Rico at the 1867 Universal Fair , which was organized in Paris , France .

In 1870 , he was elected as a deputy in the Cortes Generales , the Spanish parliament , where he promoted abolition of slavery . Baldorioty de Castro founded the Partido Autonomista in 1887 , but he was only able to work within it for a few months . He was tried and imprisoned in Fort San Felipe del Morro , after being accused of publishing propaganda that affected the Spanish government 's image . He was released after a brief period in jail , but his time in prison affected his health , which contributed to his death on September 30 , 1889 .

= = Early years = =

Baldorioty de Castro was born in Guaynabo to a poor family . His family moved to San Juan when he was young , where he received his primary education as a student of the noted educator , Rafael Cordero . After completing his elementary education , he enrolled in El Seminario Conciliar de Idelfonso , which at that time was the most organized institution in Puerto Rico . He spent most of his adolescent years studying , and finished with one of the best averages in his class .

Baldorioty de Castro was granted a scholarship , which he used for further study in Spain . He collected the money necessary to travel and departed to Spain in the company of three fellow Puerto Ricans , two students and a professor . Before establishing a permanent residence in Madrid , the group traveled to several Spanish provinces , where they visited some of the country 's tourist sites . Among the places visited were locations in Cordoba , Seville , Andújar and Bailén where they met Alberto Lista , an educator from Spain .

The three other students ( who traveled with Baldorioty de Castro ) contracted smallpox shortly after beginning their academic studies in the Central University of Madrid . Baldorioty de Castro cared for them , but two of the youths died from complications of the disease . Baldorioty de Castro was offered a chance to return to Puerto Rico but he declined . He continued his studies along with the only survivor and graduated with a degree in physics and mathematical sciences from the university . Dr. José Gualberto Padilla together with Román Baldorioty de Castro , founded the Puerto Rican chapter of the Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País and called it " La Sociedad de Amigos del País de Puerto Rico " ( the Economic Friends of Puerto Rico ) . In 1847 the Sociedad de Amigos del País de Puerto Rico named Baldorioty de Castro the organization 's correspondent in Spain . On March 21 , 1851 he was granted permission to transfer to France to continue his studies . Baldorioty de Castro moved to Paris , where he attended the Central School of Arts .

= = Political and professional careers = =

In 1853 , after seven years of study , Baldorioty de Castro returned to Puerto Rico and married Isabel Matilde Díaz y Ruiz , the granddaughter of Lieutenant Francisco Díaz , hero of the Battle of San Juan of 1797 . Upon his return , he noticed that there was political tension , because of the differences between the governor in office and the political and educational groups in Puerto Rico .

Baldorioty de Castro began promoting the restructuring of the social , political and educational establishments . These contributions led Fernando Norzagaray , the colony 's incumbent governor to offer him the position of mayor of one of the island 's municipalities ( towns ) . Baldorioty de Castro declined the offer , based on his ideals . At the time , the government displayed no interest in promoting education among the Criollos of the island . Two years earlier , the governor had imposed the Reglamento del Jornalero , which promoted a more ample labor base by reducing the amount of

unemployed citizens . However , this measure was criticized for its elements that were used to increase the wealth of employers . As a consequence , the merits of said law were reconsidered and a group led by Baldorioty de Castro was selected to decide its validity . In 1853 , he became a member of the Liberal Reform Party of Puerto Rico .

Besides politics , Baldorioty de Castro also loved teaching . He taught Botany and Maritime Sciences at the School of Commerce , Agriculture and Maritime Studies in San Juan . In January 1854 , the Councilor Seminary selected Baldorioty de Castro as its botany professor . On November of that year , Puerto Rico 's Commerce and Foment Joint selected him to work as a professor in a Nautical School , where he taught Maritime Studies .

The colonial government discovered that there was fertile terrain in the islands of Mona and Monito in 1856 . After the discovery , they selected Baldorioty de Castro as the supervisor of a series of experiments to determine the terrain 's components .

In 1857 , the cattle industry in Puerto Rico began having difficulties , when the number of animals diminished significantly . To resolve this problem , the island 's Economic Society formed a commission composed of Baldorioty de Castro , José Julián Acosta and Juan Hernández Arbizu .

Baldorioty de Castro proposed that geometry classes be included in the curriculum of elementary schools in Puerto Rico , which was accepted by the pertinent authority . On January 2 , 1858 , the Economic Society unanimously named him the Secretary of the Studies Commission . On June 4 , 1860 , the organization named him spokesman of a commission to promote conservation of the island 's natural resources . Later that year , Baldorioty de Castro represented Puerto Rico as a delegate in the Spanish Parliament , serving for five years until 1865 . On September 17 , 1864 , he was certified as an applied mechanics professor and worked for a salary of thirty @-@ five dollars a month .

While working in the Spanish Parliament , he made the most of his position and encouraged the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba , and drafting a constitution to guarantee Puerto Ricans more political rights . On November 4 , 1866 , he was named Puerto Rico 's representative to Paris ' 1867 Universal Exposition . He served as a critic and subsequently wrote a review titled *Exposición Universal de París en 1867 . Memoria presentada a la Comisión Provincial de Puerto Rico* . After completing his participation in Paris , Baldorioty de Castro returned to Puerto Rico .

There were rising tensions between groups that supported the abolition of slavery in the island and the Spanish colonial government . This led to protests and demands by the local Criollo population and influenced several revolutionaries , which led to the Grito de Lares . Baldorioty de Castro did not promote the armed revolution ; instead he choose to debate the several conflicts and issues on diplomatic venues . After the revolution attempts , a new superior provisional government was established in the island . This government promoted a union between the conflicting parties in order to establish reforms in the government 's structure . In line with the proposed solution , Baldorioty de Castro proposed a conciliation of these groups , but the efforts to unify the opposing views was unsuccessful . After this , he traveled to Madrid , under political pressure , and presented the island 's status situation to the respective authorities .

He began writing several documents that strongly criticized the colonial government and wrote a report listing the elements that he felt were being used by the administration that were affecting the island 's social and economic aspects . In January 1867 , Baldorioty de Castro received a communication from Puerto Rico 's Superior Instruction Juncture , notifying him that he was selected as a member of the Test Commission , where he was in charge of monitoring tests being issued in physics and the natural sciences .

In 1870 , he was named deputy to the Spanish Parliament , after the governor in office had revoked his accreditation as an educator . There he continued to speak about his cause . Baldorioty de Castro became known as " The Father of Puerto Rican Autonomy " . On November 19 , 1872 , Ramon Baldorioty de Castro together with Luis Padial , Julio Vizcarrondo and the Spanish Minister of Overseas Affairs , Segismundo Moret , presented a proposal for the abolition of slavery . On March 22 , 1873 , the Spanish Government approved the proposal , which became known as the Moret Law .

= = Final years and legacy = =

Baldorioty de Castro returned to Puerto Rico in 1873 and went to live in the City of Ponce . There , he founded the newspaper El Derecho ( The Law ) . He was also the founder of a weekly paper called La Crónica , in which he expressed his ideas on autonomy for the island .

In 1887 , Baldorioty de Castro co -@-@ founded , along with José de Diego , the Autonomist Party of Puerto Rico . He named a young and upcoming politician , Antonio R. Barceló , the position of party Secretary . The Autonomist Party of Puerto Rico became one of Puerto Rico 's first political parties . Its credo was that Puerto Rico should pick its own government and should have a representative in the Spanish Parliament .

The Spanish government , however , considered Baldorioty de Castro a dangerous person and a dissenter and had him jailed in Fort San Felipe del Morro in San Juan . Although he was not in jail for long and was soon released , his health suffered greatly during this imprisonment . Román Baldorioty de Castro died September 30 , 1889 in Ponce . He is buried in Ponce 's Cementerio Viejo cemetery which was renamed " Panteón Nacional Román Baldorioty de Castro " .

The cities of Bayamón , Juana Díaz and San Germán have honored the memory of Baldorioty de Castro by naming plazas after him . Puerto Rico Highway 26 , called the Román Baldorioty de Castro Expressway , is the main highway to the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport . In Puerto Rico ? s capital city , where the Baldorioty de Castro Expressway meets the Condado Lagoon in the Miramar neighborhood of Santurce , an obelisk was constructed in the center of the city park surrounding the lagoon . The obelisk is in honor of Baldorioty de Castro . A bronze statue of Baldorioty de Castro stands at the base of the statue as a gift of the people of Puerto Rico . There are schools named after him in other areas of Puerto Rico . The province of Azua de Compostela , Dominican Republic , honored him by naming one of the capital city 's secondary education institutions after him : Liceo de Estudios Secundarios Román Baldorioty de Castro .