Prehistoric

Spanish Colonization Era (1493-1823)

c. 1000

This thousand-year-old large stone celt (prehistoric axe) found in the lower forest was probably being used by a Taíno Indian to fell a tree, possibly to fashion a canoe or use as a house post. In addition to exploiting this lower Tabonuco Forest Type for its wood, the Taíno Indians and their predecessors visited the rain forest to cut vines and palm fronds which they used to make baskets and roofing thatch, to collect fruits and roots, and to gather medicinal plants.

Found close-by on private forest by Ronald Garrison Robertson.

1493

Christopher Columbus and crew become the first Europeans to set foot in Puerto Rico during 2nd voyage of discovery.

1493

One million estimated population

1500s – Taíno slaves mining gold.

1513

Escaped Taíno Slaves who are opposed to outsiders invading the forest destroy Santiago de Daguao, a settlement near present day Naguabo founded by Christopher Columbus' son Diego, to exploit gold in the nearby rivers.

1776

Spanish Crown grants Luis Balboa Bertone, a French privateer, four "leguas" of land in the Luquillo Mountains (about 76 square km or 48 square miles). Balboa helped Spain capture the Balearic Islands, for which the King awarded him with the title "Duque de Mahón-Crillón." Bilbao retains the land until 1829, but part of Naguabo keeps the name "EL Duque" to modern times.

1800
Population of Puerto Rico
136,000

1815 – The "Cédula de Gracia" cedes Crown lands to the public for agricultural purposes. Each grant of 200 cuerdas (roughly 80 hectares or 198 acres) mandates that trees be planted on the boundaries. Some of these plots are on the Luquillo forest.

1816 – Puerto Rico's Governor Brigadier Salvador Meléndez Bruna limits cutting of wood for use in Spanish ship and building construction.

c. 1500

This Spanish olive jar was made between 1490 and 1570, the time of initial European exploration and colonization of the Americas. In this jar a Spaniard exploring the mountains, may have carried food, or possibly mercury to process and validate the gold he hoped to find.

Found by Dr. John Thomlinson of the Institute for Tropical Ecosystem Studies, University of Puerto Rico, while conducting research in the Cloud Forest Type.

1530

Farmer Cristóbal de Guzmán is killed by Taíno Indians, who also destroy his farm on the banks of the Mameyes River, in opposition to settlement of that forested area.

JOSÉ CAMPECHE, Gobernador D. Miguel Antonio de Ustáriz, ca. 1792

Hectare - unit of land measure equal to 2,471 acres or 10,000 square meters

Meter - unit of length equal to 39.37 inches

1582

Taíno Indians still surviving in the Luquillo Mountains delay deforestation of the valleys of the Espíritu Santo, Fajardo, Sabana and Río Grande rivers.

1582-1788

During this time period, four separate explorers describe the island of Puerto Rico as entirely covered by forest especially in the uplands including the Luquillo forest.