



Three men in a boat transporting bananas to the city market in Panama, ca. 1905. Library of Congress.

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NARROW NECK OF LAND:  
PANAMA AND COSTA RICA, FEBRUARY 1923

### “Jenson’s Travels,” February 18, 1923<sup>1</sup>

#### REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

**Thursday, February 15.** About noon, the good steamer *Colombia* sailed from Corinto, Nicaragua, and after passing the lighthouse on an island, which protects the Bay of Corinto, a southeasterly course was again taken; and all afternoon we sailed in sight of the mountainous shore of Nicaragua.

**Friday, February 16.** As we arose this morning, the mountainous coast of Costa Rica was in plain sight, and at noon we were in latitude 9°10′ N and longitude 95°10′ W; we had sailed 232 miles since we left Corinto. The day was quite warm, but a pleasant breeze, which was blowing most of the day, minimized the heat. I regret that the steamer did not call at any of the Costa Rica ports, as I would like to have become better acquainted with that interesting little republic.

Costa Rica is bounded on the north by Nicaragua, on the northeast by the Caribbean Sea, on the south and southeast by Panama, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The area of Costa Rica is estimated at eighteen thousand square miles, and the population less than half a million. The coastline on the Atlantic, or Caribbean, side is about 181 miles and on the Pacific side about 360 miles in length. The country is traversed by a chain of mountains (the Cordilleras) running from northwest to southeast. There are numerous fertile valleys and several high peaks, including the volcanoes of Poás (8,885 feet), Irazú (11,500 feet), and Turrialba (11,350 feet).

1. Jenson, “Jenson’s Travels,” *Deseret News*, May 5, 1923, 8.

In the main, the climate is very healthful. On the coast and up to the foothills to a height of three thousand feet, the heat is torrid. In the mountain regions from three thousand to six thousand feet, the mean temperature ranges from fifty-five to sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit. The extreme heights, 7,500 feet and above, are cool, and frosts are frequent. The wealth of Costa Rica is chiefly dependent upon agriculture. Bananas, coffee, and sugar are the three most important products of the country. Cacao, rubber, corn, beans, and a few other products are also grown. There is also considerable business in rosewood, cedar, mahogany, hides, and skins. Most of the inhabitants in Costa Rica are of European descent, the pure Spanish type being marked. The Limón district has also quite a number of blacks. Spanish, English, and French are spoken by many of the educated classes. Costa Rica’s money system has a gold standard, the unit being the colón, with a value of about fifty cents in US money. The metric system is the official system for weights and measures and is in general use for commercial purposes.

#### *Known to Nephites*

There can be no doubt that the Republic of Costa Rica covers ground which was well known to the Nephites and Lamanites of old, it being so close to the narrow neck of land<sup>2</sup> (in fact a

2. See Ether 10:20: “And they built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.” The narrow neck of land described in the Book of Mormon is one of the most important geographic features for those studying the lands of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. For many years, scholars before and after Jenson’s 1923 trip to Central and

part of it) near which so many battles, according to the history recorded in the Book of Mormon, took place among the descendants of Father Lehi.<sup>3</sup> But it is indeed a difficult task to conduct the history of the Nephites with the present geography of the Americas.<sup>4</sup>

**Saturday, February 17.** About 7:00 this morning the *Colombia* was sailing abreast of the island of Coiba, which belongs to the Republic of Panama, and at 10:00 a.m., we rounded the southernmost point of the Azuero Peninsula (belonging to Panama). After that, our course was changed from a northeasterly to an easterly, and later in the day to a northeasterly, direction, headed for the Pacific mouth of the Panama Canal. Like the day before, an invigorating breeze modified the atmosphere to such an extent that we could scarcely realize that

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South America had identified the Isthmus of Panama as the narrow neck of land; however, this traditional theory has been less popular since the 1980s, when John L. Sorenson (1924–present), a former professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University (1963–86), set a benchmark with his publication *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. The book places the narrow neck of land at the present-day region of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and many scholars believe this to be the location. See Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 16–17, 29–41.

3. Lehi was a Hebrew prophet who preached repentance among the people of Jerusalem around 600 BC, until God commanded him to move his family away from the Holy Land and to a “land of promise.” After sailing overseas to the Americas, Lehi’s posterity divided into two rival groups—the Nephites and the Lamanites. An account of their wars and civilizations was preserved on gold plates, which Joseph Smith translated periodically from 1827 to 1829 and published as the Book of Mormon. See Reynolds, *Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*, 213–17.
4. Jenson “spent part of the day writing and playing checkers with other passengers and spent the evening reading.” See Jenson diary, February 16, 1923, 285.



Coffee hacienda, Costa Rica, ca. 1905. Library of Congress.



we were within seven degrees of the equator, for the ship's log at noon advised us that we were in latitude 7°9' N and longitude 81°32' W. Our run since noon the day before was 255 miles. Toward evening we were sailing close to the mountainous shores of Panama, the slopes of the hills being covered with a rich growth of tropical vegetation. The prospects of seeing the great Panama Canal on the morrow caused considerable animation among the passengers, many of whom retired early in order to be in good physical condition to enjoy the sights after a good night's rest.

The following items on the Republic of Panama are culled from different sources:<sup>5</sup>

Many visitors to Panama are puzzled as to what is Panama and what is the Canal Zone. Many have an idea that the Americans control the entire isthmus, but the facts are that Panama is a sovereign state with its own government, divided into provinces, or states, known as Panamá, Colón, Coclé, Los Santos, Herrera, Veraguas, Chiriquí, and Bocas del Toro,<sup>6</sup> each having its own governor and provincial officials, and the whole being governed by the president and his cabinet and the National Assembly (composed of delegates from the various provinces) in Panama City, the capital of the republic. The American territory consists only of the Canal Zone, a strip of land on either side of the canal (five miles on either side) across the isthmus and passing through the provinces of Panamá and Colón. Normally this area would include the cities of

Panama and Colón, but special provisions were made in the treaty between the United States and the republic of Panama excepting these cities and a narrow strip of land from the zone in order that the cities might remain on Panamanian territory and that the inhabitants might have ingress and egress without the necessity of passing through zone territory. Moreover, the Canal Zone does not belong to the United States but is merely leased and under American control, being governed by a military governor appointed by the president of the United States.

#### *Panama Interesting*

Although the youngest and one of the smallest American republics, Panama is extremely interesting and a tremendously rich country; and, moreover, it has the distinction of possessing many unique features. It is the narrowest barrier between the great oceans. It is the connecting link between the two Americas, and it is the only spot in the world where one may see the sun rise from the Pacific and set in the Atlantic.

Geography teaches us that the isthmus does not extend north and south, and while we are informed that the canal does not run east and west, and even though one knows that Colón on the Atlantic coast is farther west than Panama on the Pacific, yet the visitor to Panama invariably finds his sense of direction at a loss and becomes terribly twisted and confused as to the points of the compass. Somehow north and east never seem to be in the right place. One looks out from Colón upon the Caribbean Sea and expects to see the sun rise there in the morning, but instead he sees it set there at night. One sees ships bound for New York headed in a direction which should carry them to the coast of Colombia, and it

5. See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 8, 53–60, 223–26.

6. There was a ninth province that Jenson did not list: Darién. See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 175.



San José, Costa Rica, ca. 1916. Library of Congress.

comes as a distinct shock to discover that Isthmian time and New York time are the same and that Panama is as far east as Buffalo or Toronto. It is even worse in the interior, and the traveler feels that he must be taking leave of his senses when he sees the sun rising in gorgeous splendor above the serrated tops of the Cordilleras, and when a little later he gains the coast and gazes at the moon lifting slowly from the Pacific, he feels that he is indeed in topsy-turvy land.

Panama is truly a cosmopolitan country. Nearly every color, creed, and race is represented: turbaned Hindoos, Chinese, Japanese, Negroes, Slavs, Spaniards, Greeks, Italians, Arabs, Germans, Danes, Swedes, Dutch, French, English, Egyptians, Turks, Armenians, Syrians, stolid Indians, and Americans by thousands are there, and many others of every

imaginable mixture of all. So numerous are the sons and daughters of other lands in Panama that the visitor wonders if there are any real Panamanians; he is perhaps not aware that the term *Panamanian* covers a multitude of skins and that he may be white, black, yellow, or brown; he may be from the Orient or the Occident; he may be a slant-eyed Celestial or a kinky-haired Negro, a silky voiced Hindu or oblong-faced Hebrew, for here on the Bridge of the World have gathered men from the uttermost ends of the earth to settle down, marry, and rear their families and to become citizens of Panama. But in speaking of Panamanians as such, it is understood that one refers to the natives of Spanish or mixed blood. And just as it is a veritable melting pot of nations, so, too, it is a true democracy and a really free country. As long as the stranger within the bounds



Workers cutting bananas from trees in Costa Rica, ca. 1915. Library of Congress.

of Panama obeys its laws, minds his own business, and does not disturb the peace, he is at liberty to ply his trade, go his way, live his life, and manage his affairs as he sees fit without interference, molestation, or discrimination. The lowliest peon may become president of the republic (as has been done); the humblest tradesman may rise to the highest position, for no line is drawn at creed, color, or station in life in the Republic of Panama.

### *Half Size of Utah*

The area of the Republic of Panama is thirty-two thousand square miles, or four times the size of Vermont and New

Hampshire combined, or less than half the size of Utah.<sup>7</sup> Only about four hundred square miles are under cultivation. The population, exclusive of the Canal Zone, is about four hundred and fifty thousand—namely, sixty-nine thousand<sup>8</sup> whites; two hundred thousand of mixed Indian and white blood; one hundred thousand Negroes and colored; fifty thousand Indians; and five thousand Mongolians. Of the population, seventy-five thousand are foreigners, and there are about ten thousand more men than women. The monetary system of Panama is the gold standard. The unit is the balboa of one hundred centésimos, equal to one dollar in US gold. The metric system is adopted for weights and measures, but American yards, quarts, gallons, pounds, ounces, acres, tons, etc., are widely used in Panama City and Colón. The official language is Spanish, but nearly all the businessmen and educated people speak English. Panama City is the capital of the republic.

Physically and geologically Panama is a part of South America or Central America, whichever way be preferred, for the northern<sup>9</sup> or eastern portion has a typically South American fauna, while the fauna of the north or west is as thoroughly Central American, the two meeting at or near

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7. Verrill actually wrote that Panama is four times the size of Belgium, or two times as large as Vermont and New Hampshire together. See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 223.
  8. According to the figures in Verrill's appendix, the white population in Panama was sixty thousand. See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 223.
  9. Verrill actually wrote "southern" whereas Jenson wrote "northern." See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 8.

the narrowest part of the isthmus where the canal is situated. There is, of course, no distinct line between these two faunal zones, but it is a well-established fact that certain species are never found west of the Canal Zone and that other forms are never found east of it. The Republic of Panama is modeled in form after the United States.

### “Jenson’s Travels,” February 20, 1923<sup>10</sup>

#### BALBOA, PANAMA

**Sunday, February 18.** At 8:00 a.m. this morning the steamer *Colombia* cast anchor near the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal and also close to the Tobago Islands. We had passed the renowned Pearl Islands (situated in the Panama Bay) in the night. Five US warships were lying at anchor in the bay on our arrival; they were a part of the Atlantic fleet, which had passed through the canal to join the Pacific fleet in some naval demonstrations.

From our place of anchorage we could see some of the modern buildings of Balboa (the American town at the Pacific end of the Canal Zone), and a short distance to the right the white houses of Panama City were visible. The landscape in general was also interesting. I could not help contrasting the wooded and grass-covered hills of the Panama country with the sandy desert bordering Suez Canal as I saw it in 1896. The Suez Canal is a sea-level cut through the sands, while the Panama

Canal is built part of the way through hills covered everywhere with green tropical vegetation and has locks. About 11:00 a.m. the *Colombia* lifted anchor, and an hour later she was in the dock at Pier No. 18 in Balboa, side by side with the US warship *Maryland*. The passengers lost no time in going on shore to spend the remainder of the day sightseeing.<sup>11</sup>

**Monday, February 19.** This will always be a red-letter day in my life’s experience and will be remembered as the time when a long-cherished desire on my part at last was gratified, namely, the seeing of one of the greatest achievements of men in modern times—the Panama Canal. The ship on which I had been a passenger for eighteen days left her moorings at Balboa at 6:30 a.m., and every minute of the next 7½ hours was a moment of intense interest as we passed through the locks, the Culebra Cut, and the Gatun Lake. We arrived at Cristóbal on the Caribbean, or Atlantic, end of the canal at 2:00 p.m. Here Elder Page and I took a hurried leave of some of our fellow passengers on the *Colombia*, hastened to the railway station, and returned to Panama City late in the afternoon. The distance between Cristóbal or Colón and Panama City is about forty-eight miles. Then we enjoyed the privilege of sailing from the Pacific to the Atlantic by steamer and traveling from the Atlantic to the Pacific by rail all in one day. On our railway journey we passed through all the modern American

10. Jenson, “Jenson’s Travels,” *Deseret News*, May 12, 1923, 6.

11. Jenson and Page tried securing passage from Panama to South America, but with businesses being closed on Sundays, they were unable to do so. Instead they reserved a hotel room for the following night, as they were likely to remain in Panama for a week. They returned and spent their last night on the ship *Colombia*. See Jenson diary, February 18, 1923, 286.



towns which have sprung up along the canal and also saw the tops of thousands of dead trees rising out of the waters of the Gatun Lake—a reminder of the forest which was destroyed when the waters of the Chagres River were banked up to form the lake, which now constitutes a very important section of the great canal.

### *Line of the Canal*

The Panama Canal, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, crosses the narrow Isthmus of Panama, where the long Continental Divide<sup>12</sup> (extending from Alaska in the far north to the Strait of Magellan in the extreme south of South America) dips to its lowest point. According to the theories of geologists, there was, in ancient periods, a natural channel between North and South America, but later the land is supposed to arise to form the isthmus as a barrier between the two oceans. After centuries of erosion with formation of valleys on either side of the central ridge, the distance between shores at the place selected for the canal was thirty-four miles, and the low point in the Continental Divide through which the Culebra Cut has been driven was some 305 feet above the level of the sea when the French began their excavating. The highest point on the center line of the canal was 312 feet above the level of the sea. The line of the canal goes up the valley of the Chagres River on the Atlantic slope, passes through the ridge of the Continental Divide in Culebra Cut, and descends

to the Pacific down the Rio Grande. By following this route of minimum excavation, the canal is forty-two miles in length between shorelines, or eight miles more than the air line distance. It is fifty miles long from deep water in one ocean to deep water in the other.

By building the Gatun Dam across the valley of the Chagres, Gatun Lake was formed. It floods a great part of the valley and backs up against the Continental Divide. Its surface is eighty-five feet above sea level, which makes it possible to reduce by eighty-five feet the depth of the cutting necessary to make the channel between Gatún and Pedro Miguel. The passage between the Atlantic Ocean and Gatun Lake is made by three steps of Gatun Locks. On the Pacific side, the passage between the summit level (Gatun Lake level) and the Pacific is made by means of one lock at Pedro Miguel, Miraflores Lake, and two locks at Miraflores. Gatun Locks, including the approach walls, are 1½ mile long. The Pedro Miguel Lock is ⅓ of a mile; the Miraflores Locks are slightly over a mile. Each of the twin chambers in every flight of locks has a usable length of one thousand feet and a width of 110 feet and is about seventy feet deep. The Miraflores Locks have extra depth on account of the tidal variations in the Pacific. The flights are duplicate, or double barreled, so that ships may be passed in opposite directions simultaneously. The sections between the Atlantic and Gatun Locks and the Pacific and the Miraflores Locks are at sea level. The Atlantic sea level section is 6⅔ miles long. The length of channel within Gatun Lake from Gatun Locks to the north, or Atlantic, end of Culebra Cut is twenty-four miles. The cut is eight miles long, extending from Gamboa to Pedro Miguel. The channel

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12. The Continental Divide, also known as the Great Divide, is a notable watershed of North America that separates the river systems that drain into the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic oceans. See *Geographical Dictionary*, 278.

through Miraflores Lake is a mile and the length of the Pacific sea level section is eight miles.

### *On the Big Dam*

Gatun is a long, low, broad ridge built across the valley of the Chagres where it passed through a gap about seven miles above the mouth of the river. It was built in two wings, extending from either side of an intermediate hill, which rose near the center of a swampy stretch across the valley. As completed, the two wings of Gatun Dam and the spillway have an aggregate length of 3,400 feet. Gatun Dam is half a mile wide at the base, sloping gently to a width of one hundred feet at the top. The top of the dam is 105 feet above sea level, or twenty feet above the normal surface of the lake. The surface of the dam has been planted with grass and shrubbery, and the east wing is the site of a nine-hole golf links.

To control the rise of the lake, Gatun Dam is provided with a spillway through which excess water in the lake is wasted, flowing into the Atlantic through the old channel of the Chagres. The spillway dam, a structure of concrete on which the fourteen regulating gates are mounted, was built in the form of an arc of a circle and is 808 feet in length. The spillway discharge channel is 286 feet wide.

A hydroelectric station of 13,140 kilowatt capacity, erected on the east bank of the spillway discharge channel, uses water from Gatun Lake to generate electricity for the operations of the locks and shops and various industrious and domestic uses on the Canal Zone. Gatun Lake has an area of 163 square miles when its surface is at its normal elevation of eighty-five feet above sea level. It is the largest artificially formed lake in

the world. The area of the watershed tributary to the lake is 1,320 square miles. The normal surface elevation of Miraflores Lake, which extends from Pedro Miguel Lock and Miraflores Locks, is fifty-four feet above sea level, or thirty-one feet below the level of Gatun Lake and the cut; its area is about 1½ square miles. Miraflores Lake has a spillway of eight gates, similar to sixteen gates on the spillway of Gatun Lake.

### *Canal Dimensions*

The width of the canal channel is five hundred feet in the sea-level sections, from five hundred to one thousand feet in Gatun Lake, and not fewer than three hundred feet in the cut. It is forty-three feet deep in the Atlantic sea-level section; from eighty-five to forty-five feet deep in the lake section, including the cut; and forty-five feet deep at mean tide in the Pacific sea-level section. The normal variation between high and low tide on the Atlantic side is about one foot; on the Pacific side it is about 12½ feet. The total area of the Canal Zone is 436 square miles; the length of the west breakwater is 11,700 feet; it is fifteen feet wide at the top and one hundred feet above mean sea level. It contains 2,840 cubic yards and cost \$3.5 million. In building the canal, 242 million cubic yards of dirt were moved away—namely, thirty million by the French and 212,504,000 by the Americans, or enough to excavate a tunnel thirteen feet wide through the globe.

Concrete was used in the construction of locks and works to the amount of five million cubic yards, or enough to construct a wall twelve feet high, eight feet wide, and 266 miles long. Where the canal is built the axis of the isthmus runs from southwest to northeast. The canal was built northwest



Golf club, Panama. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 35931.

to southeast, almost at right angles to the strip of land, and the Pacific end of it is about twenty-seven miles east of the Atlantic end. Both entrances of the canal are protected by breakwaters. A thorough system of lights and buoys makes the canal as safe to use at night as by day.

The canal is capable of handling the largest ships in existence. It could handle about forty-eight ships of usual size in a day, or about seventeen thousand in a year.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Panama Railroad*

The Panama Railroad extends between Colón and Panama City on the eastern side of the canal and is about forty-eight miles long. The railroad, as built in 1850–55, followed the course of the Chagres from Gatún to Gamboa and was for the most part on the west side of the route of the canal. With the building of the canal it was necessary to relocate the railroad throughout practically its whole length. The railroad was an essential factor in the construction of the canal and is an important adjunct to its operation. It uses modern American rolling stock, including oil-burning locomotives. There are three regular daytime passenger trains each way every day, and it takes two hours to cross the isthmus.

From the time of opening the canal in 1913 to the end of the 1921 fiscal year, 13,099 commercial ships had passed through the canal. Of these ships, 4,766 were of United States register; 4,637, British; 901, Norwegian; 498, Chilean;

13. Jenson wrote, "I had heard and read much about the Panama Canal, but I never could appreciate or understand the grandeur of the work until I saw it." See Jenson diary, February 19, 1923, 287.

497, Japanese; and 402, Peruvian; the other 1,398 ships were of twenty-five different nationalities.

A. Hyatt Verrill in his *Panama, Past and Present* writes:

"First, in the old Spanish days there was the famous Gold Road which led from Portobelo, on the Caribbean, to Old Panama, on the Pacific. Over this roughly paved way flowed all the traffic from Old Spain to the western lands of the New Worlds; over it passed all the loot from the Incas; all the vast wealth from the mines of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and western Mexico. Across the isthmus, via this ancient way, rode the armor-clad soldiery, the proud Hidalgos, the sandaled monks and friars, and the hardy conquistadores, who sailed forth from Spain for the fabulously rich pickings to be had in the lands of the Incas<sup>14</sup> and Aztecs.<sup>15</sup> And, ever flowing in the opposite direction was the stream of heavily laden mules, of fettered slaves, of returning dons, carrying the treasures of New Spain to fill the coffers of

14. Incas were a tribe of South American Indians that flourished in the region of the Andean highlands, including parts of modern-day Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Cuzco, a mountain city in the interior of Peru and surrounded by impressive stone fortresses, was the capital of the Incan Empire. The ability of the Incas to adapt to the ecologically challenging mountainous terrain is one of their notable characteristics. They were conquered by Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro in 1532–33. See MacLeod, "Inca Empire," in Buisseret, *Oxford Companion*, 1:408.

15. Aztecs were a Nahuatl-speaking tribe of American Indians that flourished in central and southern Mexico from the fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. Their island-capital, Tenochtitlán, was located at the center of present-day Mexico City. The Aztecs were considered a warring people, and they would slay captives and offer human sacrifices to their chief god, Huitzilopochtli. See Wright, *Dictionary of World History*, 50.



the Spanish Crown.<sup>16</sup> Over the Gold Road, too, passed [Henry] Morgan<sup>17</sup> and his ruffians, red-handed from the pillage of Old Panama and dragging with them the captive women and girls from that ill-fated city.

### *Doom of the Gold Road*

“Indeed, it was Morgan’s raid which spelled the doom of the Gold Road, for with the destruction of Old Panama and the rebuilding of the city on its present site, the Gold Road soon became a thing of the past. But once again the isthmus was to become a golden highway, for with the discovery of gold in California in 1849, thousands of the Argonauts took the Panama route and crossed the isthmus via the Chagres River. And with the

rich toll culled from these adventures, the Panamanians once more waxed prosperous and happy. Then came the railway connecting Aspinwall<sup>18</sup> and Panama, and constant traffic was assured. But all that had gone before was as nothing compared to the boom which fell to the lot of Panama when the French made that ill-fated attempt to connect the two oceans with a canal. Then, after a few years of semi-somnambulance, the Americans stepped in, dug the canal, and helped Panama to become an independent republic, with its millions received for the zone safely invested in the United States. There is no question that the canal and the advent of the Americans have benefited Panama beyond all calculation in certain ways. The cities have been sanitized and transformed from pestholes to healthful, modern towns; many diseases have been eliminated; up-to-the minute improvements have been introduced, and the cities of Colón and Panama City have prospered amazingly.”<sup>19</sup>

One hurried visit to Cristóbal and Colón only permitted us to take a hasty peep at the places.

### *Making a City Site*

The most interesting sights at Colón<sup>20</sup> are the enormous piers of iron and concrete—nine in number—which line the eastern side of the harbor and beside which are moored

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16. The Aztecs were eventually conquered and their gold plundered by the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés (1485–1547), whom the Aztecs confused as the feathered-serpent deity, Quetzalcóatl. Quetzalcóatl has been described and depicted as a white-bearded god, and some Latter-day Saints have made connections between the story of Quetzalcóatl and the story of Jesus Christ appearing to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. President John Taylor (1808–87) even wrote the following: “The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcóatl, closely resembles that of the Savior; so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcóatl and Christ are the same being. But the history of the former has been handed down to us through an impure Lamanitish source, which has sadly disfigured and perverted the original incidents and teachings of the Savior’s life and ministry.” Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, 201–3.

17. Henry Morgan (ca. 1635–88) was a British pirate, privateer, and colonial administrator. His most successful attacks came at Granada (1665), Portobello (1668), and Panama City (1671). He was known as a ruthless man and often used torture on Native Central Americans to obtain gold and riches. In 1674 he was knighted and became the lieutenant governor of Jamaica. He died as a wealthy landowner. See Van Der Meij, “Morgan Henry,” in Hattendorf, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, 2:583–84.

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18. Colón, Panama, was formerly called Aspinwall, named after William H. Aspinwall (1807–75), a builder of the Panama Railroad. See *Geographical Dictionary*, 268.

19. Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 4–6.

20. Jenson and Page stayed in a four-story hotel at 97 Avenida Central. See Jenson diary, February 19, 1923, 289.

steamers flying a score of different flags. A decade ago this was a mud flat, unspeakably filthy and odorous; but at the touch of the magic wand of the United States gold and American engineers, it has been transformed into a waterfront with few equals in the world as regards modern docking facilities. Beyond the docks palm trees rustle in the trade wind; rows of flimsy wooden buildings—with here and there a concrete structure—mark the city of Colón, while nearer at hand are the tightly screened quarters of the imposing concrete buildings of Cristóbal. Cristóbal is the Canal Zone town and the Atlantic terminus of the canal, and all ships stopping here must of necessity tie up at the Cristóbal docks. Strictly speaking, the boundary line between Cristóbal and Colón (the Panamanian town) is the railway, and when one crosses the railway track one passes from American into Panamanian territory or vice versa. Colón was founded in 1850 when the Panama Railway was built, and its existence is wholly due to the railway and to the Americans. When the railway was first projected, the only port on the Atlantic side, of importance, was Portobelo, and as the railway engineers decided to begin the road at Limon Bay and as there was no town there for a terminus, a city had to be built to suit the railway. Then the engineers decided to build Colón; the site selected was a small island—a mere swampy jungle of dense mangroves, thorny brush, and tangled vines—and during the work of clearing and building, the engineers and their laborers were compelled to dwell in vessels moored in the shallow water nearby. It was a tremendous undertaking to transform this swampy islet into a town. Upon the muddy shores great alligators basked in the sun; herons, egrets, and

waterfowl flocked about its stagnant pools and nested in the mangroves; moccasins and other serpents lurked amid the gnarled and twisted tree trunks, and everywhere the malarial and yellow-fever-carrying mosquitoes swarmed in countless millions. No one but a “crazy Yankee,” as the natives call the Americans sometimes, would have conceived the idea, and yet, almost in a night, the little, worthless bit of mud became a busy town. Colón of the present day has about thirty-five thousand inhabitants.

### “Jenson’s Travels,” February 21, 1923<sup>21</sup>

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

**Tuesday, February 20.** We spent part of the day reading and perusing authorities on Panama and also in making actual observations of the habits and customs of the tropical Panama City. The heat here is very oppressive from about 11:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m.<sup>22</sup> During the noon hours most of the business houses are closed, and many of the inhabitants seek rest and repose in sleep. The more we see of the place, the more interested we naturally become regarding its people and history.

The following notes on the history of Panama are partly culled from A. Hyatt Verrill’s *Panama, Past and Present*, and other sources of information.

21. Jenson, “Jenson’s Travels,” *Deseret News*, May 19, 1923, 6.

22. Jenson wrote: “We got overheated during one of our walks, but we found relief after returning to our hotel by taking a shower bath. We spent another night in splendid rest.” See Jenson diary, February 21, 1923, 289.

Christopher Columbus, on his fourth and last voyage to America, first sighted the shores of Panama, and in May 1502, he anchored in the bay, which is now called Almirante in his honor. Here, and about the border of the Laguna de Chiriquí, the Spaniard found many Indians who were adorned with numerous golden ornaments, which they readily traded for the beads and gewgaws of the Europeans. The gold, according to the statements of the Indians, came from a neighboring region known as Veragua,<sup>23</sup> and Columbus at once set sail for the new Eldorado. Cruising along the coasts towards the east, the little fleet arrived at a beautiful bay whose shores were covered with the fruit trees and gardens of an Indian town nestling under the palms. So charming did the spot appear that Columbus called it Puerto Bello.

#### *Temporary Settlement*

But the great navigator was not searching for beauty, and so he set sail for the Belén River and arrived at its mouth after a stormy passage. Here he found friendly Indians with whom he made a treaty and then proceeded to establish a town and colony on the spot to which he gave the name of Santa María de Belén. Through the unwise conduct of the Europeans, trouble arose with the Indians, and the Spanish dons were compelled to abandon the settlement and the coast of Veragua in April 1503—but not until they had secured great quantities of gold.

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23. *Veraguas*, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, refers to a province in central Panama. *Veragua*, as mentioned above, refers to a region in Central America explored by Christopher Columbus. See *Geographical Dictionary*, 1258.

In 1509 another unsuccessful attempt was made to establish a European settlement on the isthmus. Later, Martín Fernández de Enciso, with Spanish reinforcements, arrived on the isthmus. With him was the adventurous Vasco Nuñez de Balboa,<sup>24</sup> who at once got into trouble with the Indians, rebelled against the authority of Enciso, and declared himself *alcalde*. He defeated the Cimaco Indians and captured their village, which contained a vast amount of gold, and renamed the place Santa María la Antigua del Darién. He then started to capture the country, slaughter the Indians, and loot their villages at every turn.

In September 1513, Balboa, accompanied by 190 men and a number of bloodhounds, set out on his historic journey across the isthmus. Forcing their way through a country inhabited by the most hostile tribes, undergoing hardships and privations innumerable, weighted down with armor, and decimated by fever and the bites of poisonous insects, the Spaniards pressed on until, ascending the last range of hills, Balboa, who had gone ahead, saw the sparkling Pacific Ocean stretching to the horizon.

#### *First to Navigate Pacific*

Three days later the Spaniard arrived at the shores of the gulf, the first man to reach the water being Alonso Martín, who,

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24. Vasco Núñez de Balboa (ca. 1475–1517) was a Spanish explorer noted for having discovered the point at which the Isthmus of Panama meets South America. In 1513 he caught sight of the Pacific Ocean, the first Old World explorer to do so. See Schwaller, “de Balboa, Vasco Núñez,” in Buisseret, *Oxford Companion to World Exploration*, 1:87–88.

finding a canoe on the beach, at once leaped in and paddled from shore in order to be the first white man to navigate the new ocean. A few moments later Balboa arrived, and, having drunk of the salt water, he waded into the gulf and took possession of the ocean in the name of the king and queen of Spain and christened the gulf San Miguel.

The Spaniards robbed the Indians of gold and pearls and returned with booty valued at more than one hundred thousand castellanos of gold, much of which Balboa sent to the sovereigns of Spain with a request that he (Balboa) should be rewarded by being commissioned commander-in-chief of the Castilla de Oro. But instead of being thus rewarded, Balboa was arrested and forced to pay indemnity to Enciso (against whom he had rebelled) and others. Pedrarias,<sup>25</sup> who was appointed governor of the province, reached Darién in June 1514. He was accompanied by several Catholic priests and a bishop, as well as the governor's wife and several other women, these being the first clergymen and first women to arrive on the isthmus.

Santa María was then a settlement of about two hundred thatched houses and was raised to the dignity of a city, but

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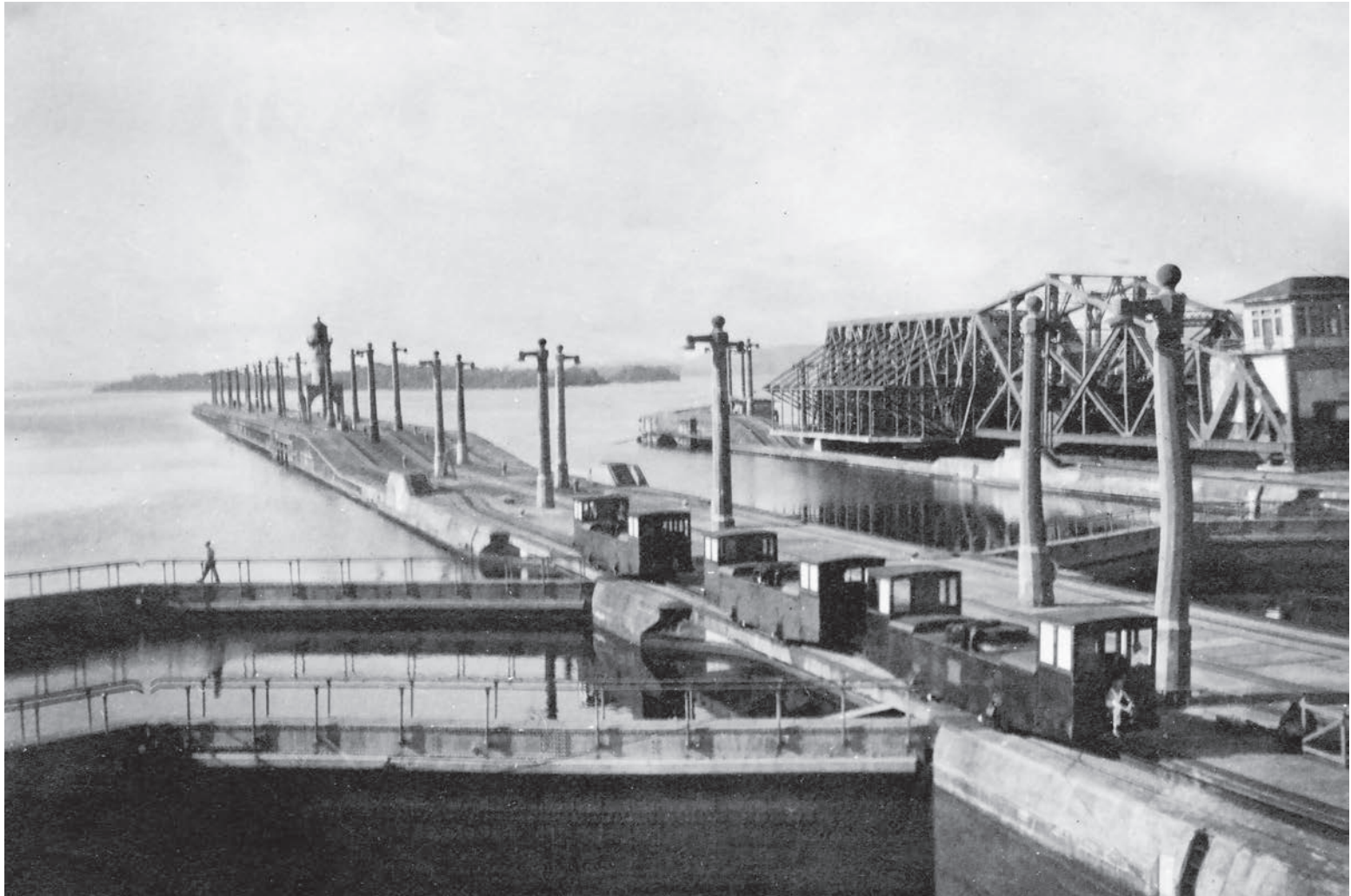
25. Pedrarias Dávila, or Pedro Arias de Ávila (ca. 1440–1530), was a Spanish conquistador of present-day Costa Rica and Nicaragua. In 1514 he succeeded Balboa and became governor of Darién, a province of Panama. He later executed Balboa on charges of treason and moved his settlement in Antigua, in present-day Guatemala, to Panama City, which is the oldest surviving European town in the Americas. See Campbell, *Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance*, 212.

so little attention was given to cultivating the fertile land that there was insufficient food, and as a result the Spaniards died off in great numbers until barely seven hundred of them remained. Homesick, frightened, and sick, the people clamored to be taken back to Spain or Santa Domingo, but Pedrarias, who was commonly known as Pedrarias the Cruel, ordered his men to scatter and establish colonies among the friendly Indians. Thus, he dispatched four hundred men to found the town of Santa Cruz on the shores of the bay and to establish the colony of Los Andes in the mountains, but the plans failed, owing to outrages committed by the Spaniards on the Indians, by whom Los Andes was finally destroyed.

#### *Coast Explored*

Governor Pedrarias sent a force under Captain Antonia Tello de Guzman to reinforce the garrison at Los Andes, but upon his arrival he found it merely a heap of ashes and thereupon decided to proceed to the Pacific, and he eventually reached an Indian fishing village known as Panama. Finding that the Pacific slopes were far richer and offered greater advantages than the Atlantic, numerous expeditions set forth from Santa María, and in their insatiable thirst for gold, the dons explored the coast for many miles. Governor Pedrarias moved his effects to Panama, where he met an expedition which had come overland; and joining forces, the town of Panama was founded August 15, 1519, and Espinosa, a military commander, was commissioned to explore the western coast. On this expedition he founded several towns in the interior of Veraguas, several of which still exist, such as Nata, founded





Double lock and emergency lock, Panama Canal. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 35933.

in 1520, which is the oldest inhabited town in continental America. But the Indian wars continued for nine years.

In the meantime, Pedrarias had all the inhabitants transferred from Santa María to Panama, where Pedrarias ruled as governor until 1536, and during his administration the colony prospered. It was from Panama that Francisco Pizarro embarked for the conquest of Peru, and for many years the isthmus became the most important of Spain's colonies in the New World.

#### *Canal Prepared*

In 1534, the king of Spain dispatched Pascual de Andagoya to make a survey with the idea of constructing a canal to connect the two oceans, the plan being to use the Chagres River as far as Cruces and then connect with the Rio Grande. Andagoya reported the scheme as practical but thought it would cost more than Spain could afford, so the plan was abandoned. In 1539 the conquest of the isthmus was completed, and approximately as much land was under Spanish rule and as many towns were in existence as at the present time.

Of the half million Indians who originally dwelt within the boundaries of Castilla de Oro, only a handful remained, for those not killed in warfare had been made slaves and had been worked, beaten, and starved to death on the mines which, at that time, were the richest in the world.

In order to secure labor, the Spaniards imported Moorish and Negro slaves from Africa, and the ill treatment of these brought a just retribution on the dons, for the slaves, running away or revolting, took to the bush and aided the French and

British pirates and buccaneers who cruised off the coasts and frequently landed to attack the Spanish settlements.

So rich had Panama now become that the cupidity of the pirates was aroused, and their attacks became so frequent and so bold that it was decided to fortify Portobelo and the mouth of the Chagres, and work on these fortifications was commenced in 1597. They were completed in 1602 and were considered impregnable, but the very year that the forts were finished William Parker with two hundred pirates captured Portobelo, burned a part of the town, and carried off an immense amount of booty. Soon after this and during the regime of Diego Fernandez de Velasco as governor, the subject of a canal across the isthmus again came up, and in 1616 King Philip III ordered a survey of the Darién country to see if it were possible to connect the two oceans by way of the Tuira River and the Gulf of San Miguel. Hardly had the matter been broached, however, when the dons realized that such a waterway would aid the pirates and other enemies in attacks on Panama, and the work was promptly abandoned.

#### *Wealth Incalculable*

For a number of years thereafter Panama prospered; vast amounts of gold flowed from the mines of Veragua and Darién to the coffers of Spain; wealth incalculable came from Peru, from Mexico, and from the rich cities of western South America and was transported across the isthmus via the famous Gold Road; great fleets of plate ships and of galleons rode at anchor in the ports of Panama, of Nombre de Dios, and of Portobelo; the prairies furnished grazing land for thousands of head of

cattle, and throughout the world Panama became famed as the richest colony of New Spain and the key to all the untold riches of the western coasts of South and North America.

Then, in June 1668—like a bolt from a clear sky—Sir Henry Morgan swept down on Portobelo, defeated the Spaniards, captured the town, and sailed away with booty to the value of a quarter of a million dollars.

With this departure, the dons once more breathed freely but not for long, for two years later, in December 1670, Morgan's squadron appeared at the mouth of the Chagres, and with 2,500 men the famous buccaneer took the castle of San Lorenzo by strategy and continued up the Chagres bent on sacking Panama. Landing at Las Cruces, Morgan and his freebooters marched overland, but word of their approach had already been sent to Panama, and when they arrived in front of the city, they found 1,500 Spaniards awaiting them.

Knowing the ferocity and fighting abilities of the pirates, the Spaniards had gathered together a great herd of wild bulls which they drove towards the oncoming buccaneers; but the British scattered and, throwing themselves on the ground, hamstrung the cattle as they passed and then rushed on the Spaniards.

#### *Freebooters Victorious*

With their morale shaken by tales of the pirates' reckless daring and cruelty, and being greatly outnumbered, the Spaniards gave way after a short but bloody engagement, and the victorious freebooters swarmed into the city. However, the warning given to the city and the delay caused by the

battle had enabled the residents to carry the greater portion of their riches, as well as most of the plate and golden fittings of the churches, aboard ships in the harbor which then put to sea.

Furious at this, Morgan inflicted every imaginable punishment, torture, and reprisal upon the Spaniards, and when, that night, the town was burned, his rage knew no bounds, for he had given strict orders that the city should be spared, thinking no doubt to return at some future date, and as no one knew whether the conflagration had been started by some patriotic Spaniard or by some roistering, drunken pirate, Morgan spared neither friend nor foe until his terrific temper had worn itself out. Then, as there was nothing else to be gained by remaining, he left the ruins of Panama on February 24, carrying with him 194 mule loads of gold, silver, and precious stones, as well as scores of women and girls, a number of priests, and many nuns.

To the Spaniards, Morgan was a fiend incarnate, and realizing the defenseless position of their ruined city, they moved farther north and founded the present city of Panama on January 1, 1673. After that, the pirates left Panama in peace and confined their operations to the Atlantic coast. Other enemies besides the buccaneers caused the dons hard-fought and bloody battles in the years to follow. Thus, on October 30, 1698, William Patterson<sup>26</sup> (the same man who founded

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26. William Paterson (1658–1719) was a Scottish banker and founded the Bank of England. In 1698 he traveled to Darién with his family and co-workers of the Company of Scotland in order to establish a colony and a

the Bank of England), a hardheaded Scotchman, arrived on the coast of Darién with a squadron of ships and 1,200 men. Their object was to establish a British colony on the coast, exploit the riches of Darién, and “steal a bit of Spanish territory under the very noses of the dons.”

### *Doomed to Failure*

The Indians, who hated the Spaniards, made a treaty of peace with Patterson, and a town was established, which they called New Edinburgh, while the land—which they took possession of in the name of the King of England and which they claimed from Portobelo to the Gulf of Urabá—was christened Caledonia. Patterson’s expedition, however, was doomed to failure through ignorance and shortsightedness, and so many of the colonists were taken sick and such a large number died that the colony was abandoned in June 1699.

However, a second British expedition arrived November 30, 1699, with 1,300 men, but the Spaniards, now thoroughly alive to Britain’s determination to secure a foothold on the isthmus, harassed the Scotch and carried on a relentless guerrilla warfare until the British surrendered on April 24, 1700, and were gallantly permitted to abandon their settlement with full military honors.

By this time, conditions in Panama had become very bad. The constant raids of the buccaneers on the Atlantic coast and

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trade network. His wife and only son died along the way, the venture was unsuccessful, and Paterson returned to Europe thereafter. See Cannon, “Paterson, William,” in Cannon, *Oxford Companion to British History*, 732.



Panama Canal. Library of Congress.

the destruction of life and property by the cimaroons<sup>27</sup> and native Indians almost destroyed the country. The vast herds of cattle which grazed upon the open prairies were driven off or killed by revolting slaves and Indians, or were scattered far and wide when their ranches were burned and their owners massacred. The mines, formerly so rich, were abandoned, either owing to the impossibility of retaining slave labor or through the attacks of Indians who murdered all within reach and destroyed shafts and works. Outlying farms and plantations could not be worked, and Spain, grown decadent, could

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27. Cimaroons, or Maroons, were groups of runaway slaves from Spanish and Portuguese captors in Central America, South America, and the West Indies. See Towers, “Maroons,” in Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of African American History*, 2:325–27.



offer no help or encouragement, and the overbearing Spanish officials became tyrannical despots.

#### *United with Colombia*

In 1809 ideas of freedom and independence surged through Panama, yet the isthmus remained faithful to Spain for several years after that; but in 1821 the civil and military authorities of the isthmus met and decided that Panama should be freed of Spanish rule and should join Colombia. Panama was the only one of Spain's American colonies to secure independence without serious bloodshed. Owing to the anarchistic and unsettled condition of Colombia, the Panamanians came near to separating from Colombia in 1831, but the union with Colombia was renewed December 11, 1831.

At the close of the Mexican War in 1847, Panama suddenly sprang into worldwide prominence and reaped such a harvest of gold and prosperity as it had not seen since the famous days of the old Gold Road and the plate-laden galleons.

With the discovery of gold in California, hundreds of gold seekers made their way up the Chagres to Cruces and thence by mule or afoot to Panama. Panama was then a veritable pesthole of disease; the towns on the Chagres and the rough camps and settlements which sprang up were reeking with filth, and the deadly Chagres fever was carried everywhere by the swarming mosquitoes. Vile liquor and viler women added their quota to the hellhole of the isthmus, and Panama became a synonym for all that was deadly, disease ridden—a place to be shunned. The wonder is that any of the gold seekers en route for California ever lived to reach their destination, and the irony of it was that in their one blind endeavor to reach

the new El Dorado of California they passed all unheeding through a land where every stream carries gold and which once was the greatest gold-producing country in the world.

#### *Railroad Built*

But to Panama the gold seekers brought great prosperity. Immense stocks of merchandise filled the shops and stores; prices soared to unheard-of heights; money flowed like water; commerce once more flowed back and forth across the isthmus; ships once more filled its harbors, and then, to accommodate the fast-increasing traffic, the Panama Railway was begun in May 1850 and was completed January 27, 1855, at a cost of nearly eight million dollars. In the construction of the Panama Railway the toll of human life was so great, because of malarial diseases which raged on the isthmus, that it has been said with little exaggeration that a life was sacrificed for every tie laid. [The?] project of a canal across the isthmus was again broached in 1838, when a concession was granted to a French company and Napoleon Garella was sent to make a report; and although he reported favorably, the concession was allowed to lapse, owing to lack of capital. In 1878, the Universal Interoceanic Canal Company was organized and incorporated by Ferdinand de Lesseps, who convened a congress called the International Congress of Surveys for an Interoceanic Canal. This committee met in Paris, France, in 1879, decided upon a sea-level canal to be completed in twelve years at a cost of \$240 million. Almost immediately a large slice of the limited capital stock was used in purchasing a controlling interest in the stock of the Panama Railway for the excessive sum of \$18 million. During the next two years,

more than \$60 million was used in surveys and preliminary work, and little was accomplished, for De Lesseps, who had successfully built the Suez Canal, would listen to nothing but a sea-level canal for the isthmus. By 1887, not a stroke of actual construction work had been done, and by that time the French had been convinced that it was impossible to complete their original plans with the funds at their disposal. As a result, the sea-level idea was abandoned in favor of a canal with locks which would raise the summit level above the flood level of the Chagres and which would be supplied with water by pumping. With this new plan in view, actual excavation work was commenced in 1888, but a year later the company went into bankruptcy.

#### *French Abandon Canal*

Although over \$260 million had been expended and only 66.7 million cubic yards had been excavated, a new company was formed in 1894 and work was resumed in 1895; but through mismanagement, waste, inefficiency, lack of adequate funds, and, most of all, owing to the enormous fatality among the men from fever and other diseases, the French gave up in despair, leaving vast amounts of supplies, machinery, and equipment to rust and corrode and be overgrown with the jungle.

It was then that negotiations were begun with the United States and Colombia with the view to disposing of the French concessions to the United States, and the so-called Herrán-Hay Treaty was drawn up by which Colombia was to authorize the French company to dispose of its rights and properties to the United States, and giving the latter the sole right to construct

and operate the canal for a term of one hundred years—which might be renewed—and at the same time ceding a zone three miles wide on each side of the canal, but excluding the cities of Panama and Colón.

Although satisfactory to both the French and the Americans, yet this treaty still met with great opposition in Colombia and was rejected by the Colombian Congress August 12, 1903, despite declarations by the Panamanian representatives Jose Domingo de Obaldia and Dr. Louis de Roux, who stated that if the treaty were thrown out Panama might revolt and establish an independent government in order to make the canal possible.

#### *Negotiations with US*

A few days after the rejection of the treaty, Obaldia, who had been appointed governor of Panama, returned to his native land and with his friends of the Independent Party at once proceeded to open negotiations with Washington, with the idea of obtaining assurance that in case the independence of Panama was declared the United States would recognize it. As an inducement, the Panamanians pledged themselves to sign a treaty similar to the Herrán-Hay Treaty, and to carry out these negotiations, Dr. Manuel Amador Guerrero was dispatched to the United States. Accomplishing his mission with the greatest success, and being assured that Uncle Sam would stand behind their secession, the Panamanians appointed a Committee of Independence, with Guerrero at its head and at once obtained the cooperation of the Liberal Party and the services of General Esteban Huertas, who was then chief of the Colombian troops in Panama.

Headed by the liberal leader, General Domingo Díaz, the leading citizens met at Santa Ana Plaza, Panama City, on the afternoon of November 3, 1903, and marched to the Chiriquí barracks where General Huertas had already imprisoned two Colombian generals—Juan B. Tobar and Ramon C. Ameaya—who had been dispatched from Colombia at the head of a battalion with orders to replace General Huertas. Unfortunately for them, they had traveled across from Colón alone, leaving troops behind owing to the difficulty of transportations, and had thus fallen easily into the hands of the revolutionists. On the evening of the same day (November 3, 1903), the council issued an Act of Independence and appointed José Agustín Arango, Federico Boyd, and Tomás Arias as a governing committee to provisionally rule the new republic. Thus, it was practically a bloodless revolution, though there was some fighting in the outlying districts, and on January 15, 1904, Dr. Guerrero was appointed president of the republic and assumed his duties on February 23, 1904.

#### *Work on Canal Begun*

Meanwhile, on November 13, 1903, the canal treaty between Panama and the United States had been signed, and on May 4, 1904, active work commenced on this greatest of engineering feats. For centuries, the Isthmus of Panama had been a pesthole of death and disease, a hotbed of pernicious malaria, and a veritable white man's grave, and the cause of all this was the poison of a microscopic protozoan parasite of a certain species of mosquito. During the French efforts to build the canal, the death rate, owing to this poisonous insect, was appalling; a

startling illustration of the mortality of those days can be seen at the Mount Hope Cemetery, where, in endless rows stretching far into the distance, closely packed together and covering acres of ground, are the tiny white crosses marking the resting places of those thousands sacrificed to the relentless greed of commerce.

But when the Americans took charge, all this was changed. Scientists had learned of the source of malaria and yellow fever; their microscopic studies of the protozoan parasite of the mosquito had reached the stage where practical measures could be employed to destroy the insect germ-carrier and stamp out the fevers. The first things done were to clean up Panama and Colón, drain swamps and bogs, and cover the stagnant waters with oil to destroy mosquito larvae and prevent the insect from breeding. And so successful were these methods, so thoroughly was sanitation carried out, that the isthmian towns and the zone were transformed, as if by magic, from pestholes into the most healthful spots in the tropics.<sup>28</sup>

#### **“Jenson’s Travels,” February 28, 1923<sup>29</sup>**

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

**Wednesday, February 21.** Accompanied by Elder Page, I made a trip by automobile to the site of Old Panama, situated

28. See Verrill, *Panama, Past and Present*, 14–32, 35–48, 51–52.

29. Jenson, “Jenson’s Travels,” *Deseret News*, May 26, 1923, 8.

on the Pacific Coast, about six miles from Panama City of the present day.

Nearly every visitor to Panama makes a trip to "Old Panama." Old Panama was founded in 1515. For more than one hundred years it flourished to such an extent that it became Spain's richest possession in the New World, and when it was captured and destroyed by the buccaneer Henry Morgan and his bandits in 1671, it was a city of refinement and culture, having a population of about ten thousand. History records that practically all the houses were built of cedar and were richly adorned, though churches and other buildings were constructed of rock, bricks, and mortar. Many of the houses were curious and magnificent structures. In the days of its prosperity there were in the city, according to certain written authorities, eight monasteries, two churches, and a hospital, besides a thousand or more private residences, stores, large warehouses, and a number of smaller buildings of various kinds.

Old Panama was the port where all the gold, silver, silk, and other merchandise from Peru and the South American coast was received and stored to be transported across the isthmus by way of the paved Cruces Trail to Portobelo on the Atlantic side and from there to be shipped to Spain.

History states that Morgan's men, after having destroyed the city, carried away with them 175 beasts of burden laden with silver, gold, and other precious things, besides six hundred prisoners, more or less, "consisting of men, women, children, and slaves." As the Spanish Crown soon decided to remove the city to its present location, Old Panama was not

rebuilt. Today, over two and a half centuries since its destruction, little remains to evidence its former glory. An old tower, the remains of the Cathedral of San Jerome, is still standing. In one of its upper apertures, a crosspiece of hardwood, from which one of the bells hung, is still in place, apparently little affected by the passing centuries. Though partly obscured by tropical growth, a part of the catacombs, the walls of one of the large churches, now used as a burying ground by the natives living in the vicinity; a few of the walls and cisterns into which the inhabitants threw their money and jewels when the pirates entered the city; parts of the paved streets; and an arched bridge upon the road leading to Portobelo, on the Atlantic side of the isthmus, include about all that is visible today of one of the first European settlements built upon the American continent.

#### *An Old Landmark*

During our short visit to Old Panama, we noticed several massive ruins concealed in the brush, with others scattered through the tangle of weeds and bushes. The old church tower, which rises like a monument marking the grave of the city and its dead, stands but a few yards from the sea, and here, just above the high watermark, is the last remnant of the old wall and fort built of cobbles and mortar and the oldest bit of the old city. Impressive and historically interesting are the ruins of what was once the richest and most important city of the New World; yet the spot is ruined by a noisy, objectionable cantina, or drinking place, erected opposite the old church tower. As a usual thing, a crowd of obscene, loud-voiced, intoxicated rois-





Cathedral Ruins, Panama. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 35929.

terers make the place hideous with ribald songs, discordant music, and licentious dancing.

**Thursday, February 22.** This being [George] Washington's birthday, Panama City, as well as the towns in the Canal Zone (Balboa and Ancón), showed signs of a holiday, a number of the stores and business offices being closed.

Panama City, despite its motorcars, its trolleys, its well-paved streets, its Americanized store windows, and many other details, is still essentially and typically a Spanish city. Everywhere Spanish signs are seen; everywhere the Spanish language is spoken; everywhere are Spanish faces, Spanish types, Spanish customs, Spanish music, and Spanish architecture. Perhaps, however, it would be more proper to say Spanish-American, for there is little in it that savors of Old Spain. Avenida Central, the main street of the city, is so broad and well paved; so over strung with trolley wires; so filled with automobiles; so crowded by Americans and other nationalities; so lined with modern shops, department stores, motion-picture theatres, and cabarets that its foreign atmosphere has been almost lost. But in the out-of-the-way sections and less frequented thoroughfares, it is different. For example, there is Santa Ana Plaza, with its graceful royal palms rising like concrete shafts above the tessellated tiled walks; with its mellow-toned old Church of Santa Ana in the background; with its dusky gamins and swarthy loungers on its ornate benches; with its quaint kiosk where lottery tickets, sweets, cigarettes, bullfight tickets, postcards, stamps, etc., are sold by

a dark-skinned *señorita*<sup>30</sup> whose cheeks are ghastly with powder and whose eyes are veritable midnight pools.

#### *Favorite Lounging Place*

Famed as the spot where Panama's Declaration of Independence was declared, the Plaza Central is the favorite lounging place, the favorite breathing spot, the favorite promenade, and the center of all celebrations, parades, and out-of-door functions of the city. Fronting the plaza on one side is the cathedral, an imposing but modern edifice, with its towers studded with pearl shell. Opposite the cathedral and also facing the plaza is the old Central Hotel, a famous hostelry in the California gold excitement days of 1849, and on the third side of the plaza are the Municipal Palace (a beautiful building containing a remarkably fine piece of sculpture in marble in its entrance) and the old Canal Administration Building of the French, which is now used for the post office, telegraph office, offices of public instruction, and other government offices. On the fourth side of the plaza is the Bishop's Palace and the American Foreign Bank.

From the Central Plaza all the most important buildings and most historic spots in Panama City are within easy reach. Panama City was, until the Americans came, one of the dirtiest and most unhealthy places in tropical America, but now,

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30. *Señorita* is the Spanish term for "young lady." See Gooch and Paredes, *Cassell's Spanish Dictionary*, 537.

through the strict enforcement of American sanitation rules, it is claimed to be as healthful as any city in America.

**Friday, February 23.** We spent the day in Panama and Balboa endeavoring to secure passage on a Peruvian steamer; but the agent seemed more favorable to the Chilean steamers than those of his own company, so we concluded to have nothing to do with either of these two lines.<sup>31</sup>

#### *View from a Hilltop*

**Saturday, February 24.** There is a steep hill back of Panama called Ancon Hill, rising from the sea level to an elevation of 625 feet. I climbed to the top and was rewarded for my effort by witnessing the sun rise in the Pacific Ocean—seemingly in the west but in reality in the east—and, furthermore, before I left the hill (where I had a fine unobstructed view of Panama, Balboa, Ancón, Old Panama, part of the great canal, and some islands in Panama Bay), I had the satisfaction of being set right as to the points of the compass. A company of US soldiers were encamped on the top of the hill, and one of them, Corporal Young, took great pains in giving me information and in directing me to the best path by which to reach Balboa, down the steep and, in places, almost perpendicular sides of the hill. We spent the afternoon at the library in the Canal Administration Building in Balboa.

**Sunday, February 25.** I took a long walk along the seashore from Panama to La Boca, the Negro town of Balboa. Here very comfortable two-story buildings (erected on posts which elevate the houses about six feet from the ground) have been erected by the US government for the occupancy of the colored employees in the Canal Zone. La Boca, containing several thousand inhabitants, is situated on the canal, below Balboa proper. In the Canal Zone a unique expression is used to distinguish between whites and blacks. The former are called gold employees and the latter silver employees, and at the several commissary buildings in the Canal Zone there are separate entries for each class. Also on the Panama Railroad there are first- and second-class cars, the fare being only half the regular fare in second class.

While there is no law regulating the way people shall travel in Panama, yet it would be considered improper for a white man to travel second-class and very unusual for a Negro to travel first class. However, it would be impossible for anyone to draw a distinct line between whites and blacks in the Republic of Panama, where there is no race distinction fixed by law and where marriages occur between whites, blacks, yellows, browns, etc., without interference by law.

In the afternoon, the towns of Balboa and Panama were visited by thousands of marines from the warships anchored in the bay. A special bullfight and other “varieties” were arranged in honor of “Uncle Sam’s boys,” and a number of marines carrying a label with the inscription “S. P.” on the left arm were seen on the streets, having been delegated to keep

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31. Jenson and Page were eventually able to secure passage on a Grace Steamship Line, but it was not going to sail until the following Thursday. See Jenson diary, February 23, 1923, 289.



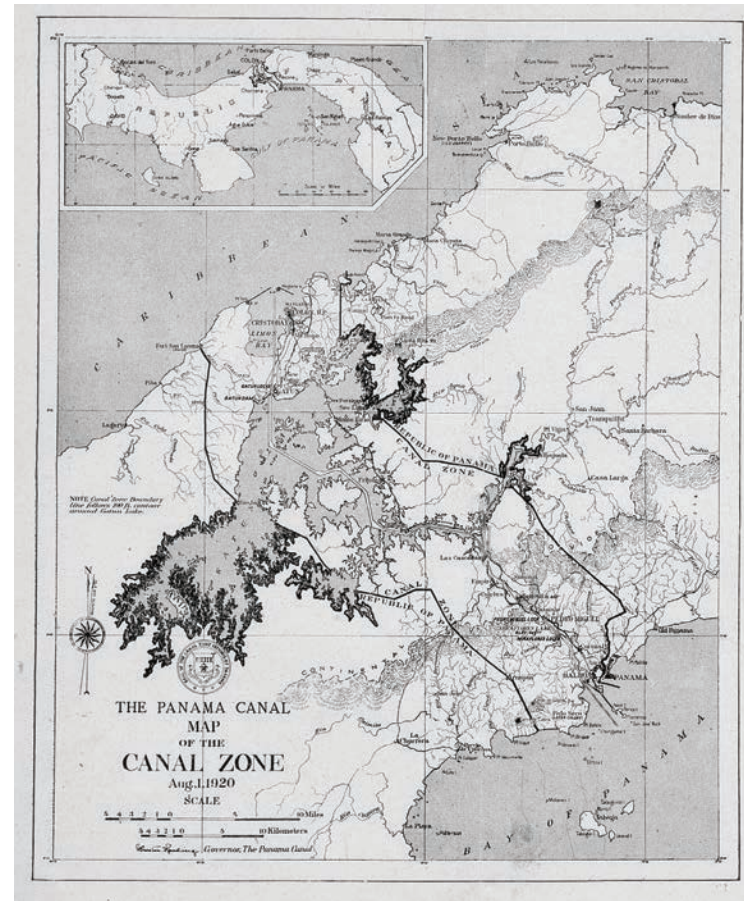
a keen lookout for their comrades, who otherwise might get into trouble in a town full of drinking places, bad whisky, and worse women. The “S. P.” referred to may mean “Shore Police,” “Special Police,” or “Sailor Police,” just as one chooses.

### *The Sabbath Day*

As Page and I did not think that bullfighting on the Sabbath was exactly the thing for Mormon elders to participate in, we attended Church of England services in the evening in a large new church, where just twenty-one worshipers were in attendance, Elder Page and I included.

In meeting so many US soldiers and marines in Panama and Balboa, we were particularly impressed with the many fine specimens of American manhood. If these young men are as good morally and otherwise as they are good-looking, the United States may be very proud of these young defenders of our country.<sup>32</sup>

**Monday, February 26.** We boarded a Panama Railroad train at 7:00 a.m. and crossed the isthmus once more to Colón on the Caribbean, or Atlantic, shore. On our return in the afternoon, we visited the Gatun Dam and locks and other places of interest in and about Colón and Cristóbal. About sixty whites and 160 blacks are employed around the Gatun



Map taken from Andrew Jenson's brochure of the Panama Canal. Church History Library.

32. Jenson wrote the following: "I retired and rested the remainder of the day. Since coming to the tropics I have become quite lazy and could spend a great deal of my time in sleep and yet the heat is not, as a rule, oppressive, except in the middle of the day when everybody seeks shade and shelter." See Jenson diary, February 25, 1923, 290.



works alone. At Fort Davis, near Gatún, about two thousand US soldiers are stationed.<sup>33</sup>

**Tuesday, February 27.** We secured passage with the Grace Steamship Line people to sail from Panama on the SS *Santa Luisa*<sup>34</sup> on March 1. On our rambles today a middle-aged man stepped up to me, apologized, and said that my personal appearance reminded him of one Andrew Jenson whom he had met in Salt Lake City ten years ago. How pleased he was

to find out that I was the identical man, and on the other hand I was pleased to be reminded that I had done him a small personal favor, which he had always remembered.<sup>35</sup> “Bread cast upon the waters may return after many days.”<sup>36</sup>

**Wednesday, February 28.** I wrote and studied all day and made preparations for our departure for South America tomorrow. We have had our fill of Panama and shall be delighted to enjoy a change of scenery.

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33. Jenson and Page enjoyed a thorough tour and explanation of the inside operations of the Panama Canal. Afterward, Page watched a picture show while Jenson spent most of the evening writing for the *Deseret News*. See Jenson diary, February 26, 1923, 291–92.

34. The SS *Santa Luisa* was an American steamship built in 1918 for use in World War I. In 1919 the Grace Steamship Line bought the vessel and turned it into a passenger ship to regularly sail between California and Panama, 1919–28. See Smith, *Passenger Ships of the World*, 469.

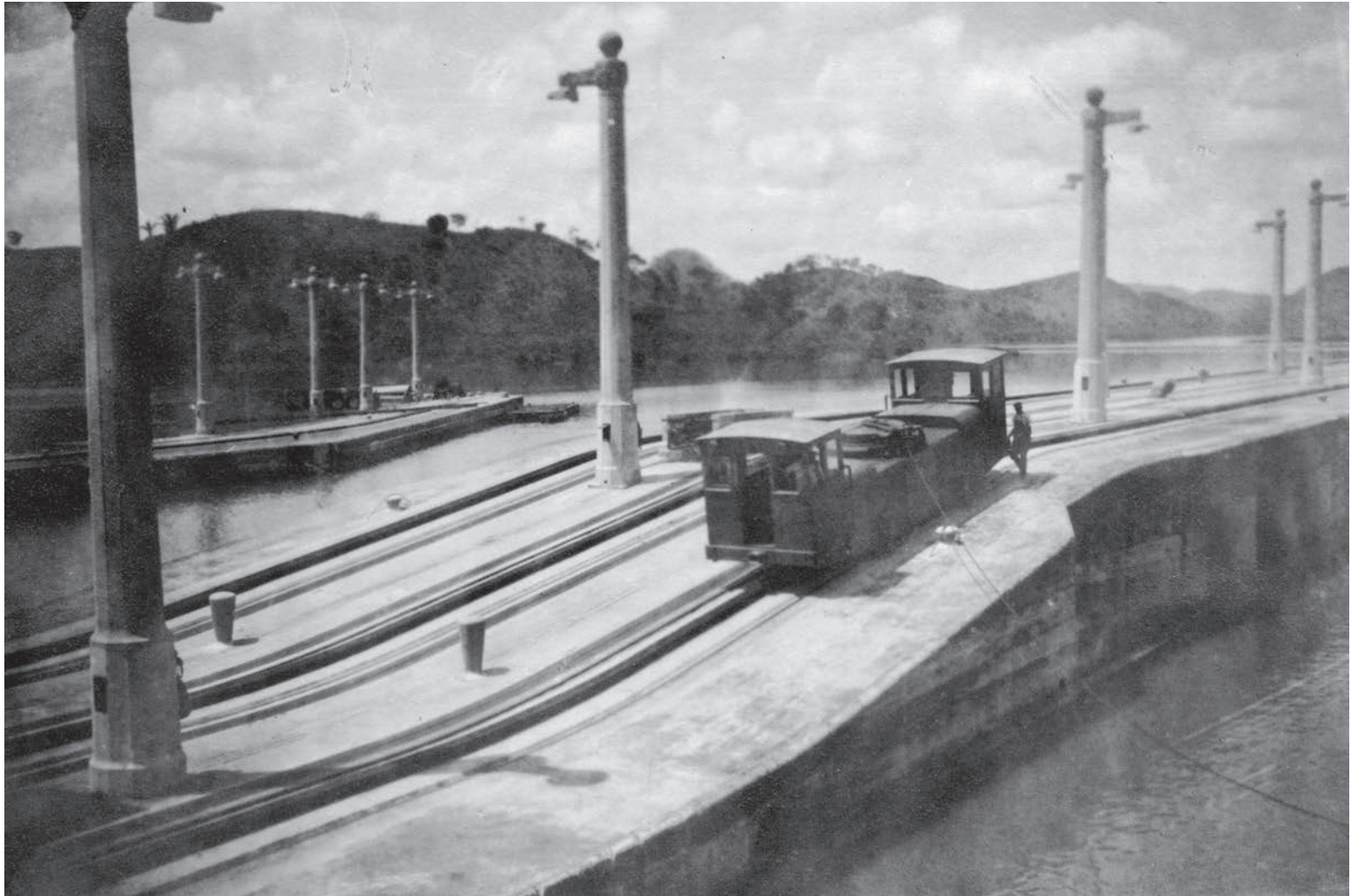
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35. In his diary, Jenson wrote that the man was a middle-aged artist by the name of Campbell, likely referring to Orson Dewsnap Campbell (1876–1933), a notable artist and painter of rural Utah landscapes. See Jenson diary, February 27, 1923, 292. See also Poulton and Swanson, *Painters of Utah's Canyons and Deserts*, 78–80.

36. See Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”



Gatun lock, Panama Canal. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 35930.



Mule descending incline, Panama Canal. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 35932.