

The best developer of a community is a progressive and representative newspaper. Send the "Press" to friends whom you wish to welcome to this country.

Supplement. Forest Grove Press

Your suggestion, criticism and cooperation is solicited to help make the "Press" a true representative of all the people of Forest Grove and of Washington County.

VOL. 5

FOREST GROVE, WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1913

NUMBER 19

The Americans In Panama

Story of the Panama Canal From Start to Finish

By Wm. R. Scott

Chapter VI.

(Continued from last week)

The value of the French engineering records and surveys and especially of the records kept of the flow of the Chagres river is incalculable because they could not be duplicated. It was on French records that the estimate of the amount of water to expect from the isthmian rivers for use in the Gatun lake was based.

Congress on April 2, 1904, appropriated the \$10,000,000 which had been promised in the treaty to the republic of Panama for the canal zone. This, with the consummation of the sale by the French company, cleared the title to the canal zone, and at 7:30 o'clock in the morning of May 4 Lieutenant Mark Brooke of the United States army formally took over the property and the territory in the name of his government.

The day following President Roosevelt announced the appointment of John F. Wallace, general manager of the Illinois Central railroad, as chief engineer of the Panama canal, effective on June 1. He had acknowledged the national disbelief in governmental efficiency by going into private industrial life for a canal builder. Mr. Wallace's salary was to be \$25,000 annually, and the country recognized the selection as a good one.

Upon its return to the United States the commission began organizing surveying and engineering parties for pioneer work in the canal zone. The first ship to arrive with such a party was on May 17, the party having at its head Major General Davis of the commission and including Colonel W. C. Gorgas, chief sanitary officer, and George R. Shanton, who personally was selected by President Roosevelt to officiate as head of police of the canal zone.

CHAPTER VII.

The Canal Under Wallace.

ANXIETY to dig dirt, the usual American desire to get things done right off, was the dominating idea in 1904. So, while Mr. Wallace kept up the surveying which would aid in determining the center line of the canal as well as the choice of a type, he also pushed excavation operations in the Culebra cut, rehabilitating old French excavators and increasing the working force.

He had found 746 men at work with hand tools in the Culebra cut. His first inspection convinced him that the French machinery should be abandoned as fast as modern American equipment could be secured, and he expressed the opinion that two years would be required for preparations.

It required stout hearts not to quail before the isthmus of 1904. Not only the traditional unhealthfulness, but the wretched condition of the railroad after fifty years of noncompetition, the long distance from the base of supplies, the miserable living accommodations in Colon and Panama, where there were no sewers, no water and unpaved streets, into which were thrown all refuse and garbage, and the vexatious red tape that surrounded all government enterprises, made a situation that weaklings no sooner touched than they returned precipitately to the United States.

To take care of the increasing number of workers that every ship was bringing to the canal zone was the most pressing problem. The interest of the whole world had been stimulated by the rejuvenation of the canal project by the Americans, with the result that restless spirits everywhere began bending their steps toward Panama. Men of excellent character in the United States also came, attracted by the pay and the romantic nature of the undertaking.

The houses left by the French were inhabited by natives or buried in the jungle growth. They necessarily were run down, but could be made habitable once the carpenters and lumber to do

the work were at hand. These, however, like everything else, were 2,000 miles away with a spider web of red tape over them that paralyzed speedy movement. In his year of service Mr. Wallace repaired 357 of these houses and built forty-eight new ones, still leaving the problem of housing employees unsolved. During that time more than 9,000 workers came to the canal zone, but the migration back to the United States or adjacent islands and countries was heavy.

Colonel Gorgas had urged the prompt sanitation of Colon and Panama, and early in the American occupation the construction of sewers, waterworks and paved streets was begun. The Americans advanced the money for these improvements on a plan of taxes that at the end of fifty years from their completion will repay the United States and turn them over to the respective cities.

One of the dredges left by the French was found to be, after twenty years, in excellent condition and was put to work in Colon harbor. The twenty miles of track in the Culebra cut occasioned derailments and wrecks with exasperating frequency until relaid with heavier rails, and this mileage was increased by an addition of fifteen miles during the first year. Machine shops existed at Colon, Matachin and Gorgona, where, when the jungle had been cut away, facilities were found for repairing machinery and rolling stock.

Mr. Wallace made his headquarters in Panama in a building that formerly had been occupied by the French director general. The disbursing officer, sanitary officer, engineering parties and clerical forces were centered in Panama, but a site for an American administrative town was selected at the foot of Ancon hill, just outside of Panama.

French towns at Culebra, Empire and Gorgona were rehabilitated and systems of sewers and waterworks begun. There were settlements at Matachin, Bas Obispo and Colon. Accommodations were of the crudest description.

Powder boxes served for Morris chairs, furniture was scanty and of ancient design, tropical insects made life a misery, servants were worse than indifferent, there were no baths, no running water in the houses, and that which was used sometimes was caught from roofs on which the buzzards roosted, the native foods had to be eaten, and ice was a luxury that only occasionally could be obtained from the railroad ice factory at Colon.

Each ship that brought workers to the canal zone invariably carried the same or others back. Yet a percentage stuck and accepted the undesirable conditions gracefully. A few had vision enough to see that our great government would rectify everything if only given time. Others realized that the canal never would be built if the workers expected soft conditions right at the start, and they accepted their sacrifices of comfort as a national necessity.

Mr. Wallace came from a highly organized railroad system to an absolutely unorganized enterprise 2,000 miles from the base of supplies. Government red tape to such a man was exasperating to the last degree. It was necessary for the government to advertise for bids, and this constituted the principal delay in securing orders; but, barring that procedure, it has not been shown that a private contractor could have placed machinery and supplies on the ground with much greater celerity than the government.

The overriding idea was to make a showing. President Roosevelt himself had set the pace for quick results. Congressmen who were expected to vote for canal appropriations frequently could not be impressed that the project was worth while if the dirt was not flying. Mr. Wallace therefore concentrated energies on excavation work that more profitably could have been spent on preparations. He got out 741,644 yards in his year, a creditable showing with the equipment at hand. The first steam shovel was installed on Nov. 11, 1904, and was No. 101, of the seventy ton class. It is still in use in the canal. On Dec. 2, 1904, the second steam shovel was erected, No. 201, of the ninety-five ton class. By June, 1905, there were nine steam shovels at work, and the last French excavator was abandoned on June 16, 1905, the day Mr. Wallace left the canal zone as chief engineer.

All engines, cars, steam shovels and other large equipment had to be

brought to the isthmus "knocked down." This work, with the repair work and original steel and iron construction work, required boiler makers, mechanics, blacksmiths and machine shop workers of all kinds. Recruiting offices were opened in the principal American cities to engage them, and



A Dynamite Explosion in Culebra Cut.

sometimes conditions in the canal zone were pictured a little rosier than the facts warranted.

As secretary of war William Howard Taft had the immediate direction of Panama canal affairs. Every time he touched the project he manifested the high order of ability that made him so admirably equipped for the presidency later on.

Almost coincidental with the beginning of American operations Panama began to feel how absolutely sovereign it had made the Americans right in the heart of the republic. The canal zone was being managed with complete independence from the republic, as much so as the republic of Costa Rica to the north.

Governor Davis had corresponded at length with the officials of Panama over the question of sovereignty, the jurisdiction of the courts, the issues of the tariff, postage, customs and currency, until it was deemed advisable for Secretary Taft in person to visit the isthmus to arrange a working agreement on these differences.

Secretary Taft arrived on Nov. 27, 1904, and remained until Dec. 7. On the question of sovereignty, which seemed to be especially delicate to the republic, the treaty was peculiar in that it did not cede the canal zone finally to the United States, but gave the

Americans all the powers they would exercise "if they were sovereign."

Panama contended that final sovereignty was vested in it, and Secretary Taft, being after the substance rather than the form, did not quibble over this distinction without a difference, but later expressed the opinion that Panama sovereignty over the canal zone was a "barren idealism." Certainly it has proved so to be. The issue passed off in talk.

An agreement was reached on the currency question whereby the United States would accept the money of Panama at one-half the value of American currency—that is, the peso, worth intrinsically only 40 cents, would be exchanged with United States money at 50 cents, although it was in size and face value the same as our dollar. The same system was in vogue in the Philippines. To meet the needs of the canal paymaster the circulation of pesos was increased from 3,000,000 to 4,000,000. Out of this grew the custom in the canal zone of referring to United States currency as "gold" and to Panama currency as "silver," and in the stores articles are priced in both currencies.

Stamps were selling in the canal zone for slightly less than in the postoffices of the republic, with the result that the republic was losing revenue. Secretary Taft settled this just complaint by arranging for the canal zone to buy its stamps from the republic for 60 per centum of their value, the 40 per centum remaining to the profit of the canal zone offices.

On June 24, 1904, President Roosevelt had made the Dingley tariff applicable to the canal zone. This worked badly, and Secretary Taft agreed to have the order revoked, so that the canal zone ever since has enjoyed the freest of free trade. All other issues were cleared up without the United States yielding any freedom of action as to importing materials, executing justice, operating ship terminals and supplying canal employees with the necessities of life through commissaries and hotels.

While Secretary Taft and Chief Engineer Wallace were working in their spheres, Governor Davis was instituting the various departments of civil government which today are noted with admiration by the tourist. Chief of Police Shanton was engaged in ridding the canal zone of its bad men and bringing a population long without

(Continued next week)