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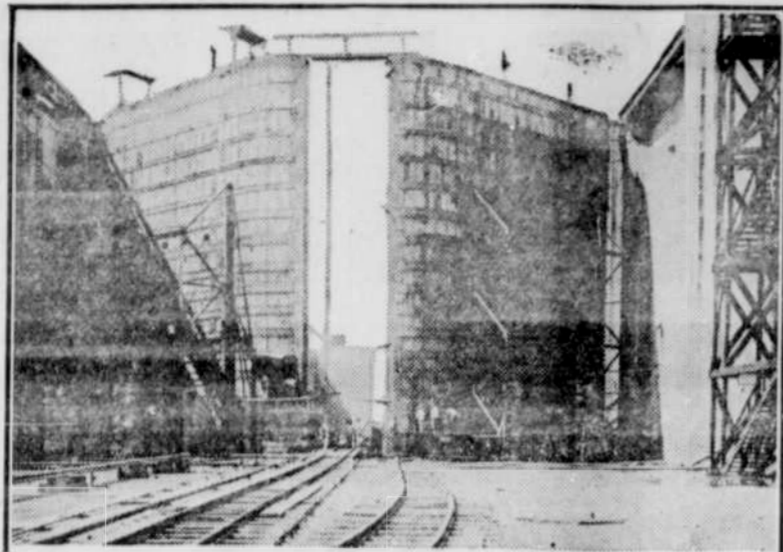
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The Americans In Panama

Story of the Panama Canal From Start to Finish.



Gatun Locks

By Wm. R. Scott.

(Continued from last week.)

superintendents, \$175 to \$583.33; supervisors, \$200 to \$250; teachers, \$60 to \$110; trainmaster, \$200 to \$275; yardmaster, \$190 to \$210; nurses, \$60 to \$150; policemen, \$80 to \$107.50; master car builder, \$225; fire department privates, \$100; traveling engineer, \$250; accountants, \$175 to \$250; musical director, \$100.67; mates, \$100 to \$175; postmasters, \$50 to \$137.50. The canal was estimated to cost \$375,000,000. Out of that amount the part which had gone into wages and salaries to June 30, 1913, was approximately \$135,000,000. By the time the canal is finished and opened for permanent use, in 1914, this item will reach the startling total of \$150,000,000. From 20 to 25 per cent of it has gone into salaries of officers and supervisory employees and from 75 to 80 per cent into wages to skilled and unskilled labor.

CHAPTER XIV.

Commissary — Quarters — Subsistence.

URING the first year of American operations in Panama the problem of food and merchandise supply for the army of workers was not worked out.

Chief Engineer Stevens in 1905 turned his attention to this problem as one upon the proper solution of which would depend satisfactory conditions of living for the canal workers. By April, 1907, when he resigned, the present commissary and hotel systems, as well as the system of housing the employees, which challenge the admiration of the tourist, had been created, and all that was left to Colonel Goethals to do in this phase of the task was to enlarge the systems as the organization expanded.

Owing in part to the immense quantities in which all articles are bought and the absence of a grasping policy as to profits, the canal employees customarily buy almost everything more cheaply than the same merchandise sells for in the United States.

For one reason there is no tariff in the canal zone. Foreign made goods are imported without the expense to the consumer that the high protective duties at home necessitate. Irish linens, English and Scotch cloth, French perfumery, Swiss and Scandinavian dairy products and a wide variety of other European manufactures make the commissary, with the American merchandise in stock, a great department store, which in the fiscal year 1912 did a business amounting to \$4,702,355.68.

General headquarters are at Cristobal, on the Atlantic side. The steamships of the Panama Railroad line every week replenish the food supplies with reasonable offerings from the American markets. The scope of the operations includes a laundry, bakery, ice cream plant, ice factory, cold storage, coffee roasting plant and laboratory for making extracts.

The year 1913 is typical of the scale on which the commissary has been operated since 1906. Importations of principal commodities were as follows:

Groceries	\$1,278,094.71
Hardware	86,758.86
Dry goods	69,480.18
Boots and shoes	164,168.85
Cold storage supplies	1,523,292.97
Furniture	9,030.48
Tobacco	182,990.96
Raw materials	215,775.22
Paper, stationery, etc.	54,579.06
Total	\$4,387,792.06

These importations do not represent the total transactions of the commissary for that year, as the stock on hand and bought on the isthmus ran the volume of business to \$5,754,955.69.

Of this amount the commissary paid \$1,025,348.77 for supplies used in the hotels, messes, kitchens and elsewhere, and \$3,609,358.01 represents the amount of the total which was paid by employees using coupon books. Nineteen stores were operated in as many settlements and towns, and the average monthly business was \$479,579.69.

No cash sales are made at the com-

missary. Employees are issued coupon books in value from \$2.50 to \$15 and containing coupons ranging in face value from 1 cent to 25 cents. Enough coupons are torn out by the clerks to cover each purchase. At the end of each month the value of the coupon books is deducted from the employee's salary.

The quantities of various articles handled by the commissary in the year being reviewed were as follows: Eggs, 492,000 dozen; butter, 423,205 pounds; meat, 9,241,858 pounds; poultry, 554,928 pounds; milk and cream, 84,493 gallons; coffee, 329,491 pounds; flour, 16,428 barrels; ice, 33,297 tons; ice cream, 119,298 gallons.

One central laundry is operated for the white or gold employees. In 1911 there were 7,290 patrons and 3,581,323 pieces were laundered. Patrons deposit their bundles at the branch commissaries in the respective towns, and they are collected for shipment over the railroad to Cristobal. By this centralization of work the cost is from 30 to 50 per cent lower than for similar work in American cities. Cleaning and pressing are done for both men and women's clothes at low rates.

Early in 1905 the commission advertised free quarters to both married and bachelor employees as a special inducement to come to the canal zone. Thus in addition to high pay the employees have no house or room rent to pay. This alone constitutes a sharp increase in an employee's income over what he could earn in the United States for similar work, but this is not all he receives gratis.

It has been figured that in six years the commission grants to each married employee gratuities that cost it \$3,000 and to a bachelor employee gratuities that cost \$750. The monthly service, such as commissary, fuel and distilled water deliveries, removal of garbage, etc., to a married employee costs \$12 and janitor service and other service to a bachelor employee cost \$2.25 monthly. In six years an average force of 5,000 employees has been entitled to these gratuities, and it is figured that the total investment by the commission in that period for all free service and gratuities runs between \$10,000,000 and \$20,000,000.

To a married employee the free allowance is as follows: An individual house or an apartment in a building with two or four families, a range, a double bed, two pillows, six dining chairs, two kitchen chairs, one chair, two center tables, a mosquito net, a refrigerator, a double dresser, a double mattress, a kitchen table, a dining table, sideboard, bedroom mat and three wicker porch chairs.

Married quarters were assigned in 1905 and 1906 on the basis of one square foot for each dollar of salary, with extra allowances for the wife and children. This method was abandoned and quarters are assigned without regard to salary, except that officials receive first consideration. There are no two and four family houses, merely screened on the outside. Every house or apartment has its shower bath, tubs not being used, and each own has a complete sewer system.

Bachelors, whether men or women, are treated correspondingly well. Quarters with two, three or four in a room and janitor service are free. In the early days there was unpleasant crowding because of the scarcity of buildings, but only occasionally has there been congestion in late years. These buildings shelter from a dozen to sixty men and, like the married quarters, are screened on the outside.

Hotels operated by the commission are the boarding places for the bachelor employees. The wide verandas are screened, and tables here are reserved for the bachelor girls and for the men who wear coats at mealtime. Inside the employees may eat in their shirt sleeves. The meals cost 30 cents each and are paid for by coupons that come fifty to the book. These books cost \$15, and the amount is deducted from the employee's salary at the end of the month, so that no cash is handled at the hotels, except from nonemployees, who must pay 50 cents for a meal.

The fare could not be duplicated in the United States for 75 cents a meal.

A typical thirty cent meal includes soup, two kinds of meat, four kinds of vegetables, hot rolls or light bread, a salad, tea, coffee or cocoa, and for desert ice cream or pie. On every table are fruit, olives, preserves, condiments, and for several years in the early stages an open bowl of quinine as a malarial antidote.

The hotels for the gold employees usually have been operated at a slight loss, while the European laborers' messes and the colored laborers' kitchens have shown a profit. At the messes for the Europeans, principally Spaniards and Italians, the cost of three meals is 40 cents, while at the kitchens where the West Indian laborers get their food cooked to take away and eat the cost is 30 cents for three meals. The food is always wholesome and plentiful, and the tastes of the various nationalities are studied to give them that to which they are accustomed. The West Indians consume more than 100 tons of rice monthly, the Italians want macaroni, and the Spaniards eat vast quantities of bread.

Stewards at the hotels for the gold employees found that each man averaged only two meals a day. The saving to an employee by cutting out one meal is \$9 a month. They substitute fruit or a sandwich from the clubhouse for the third meal and in the two they do eat stow away enough to satisfy their needs. Three meals a day at 30 cents each would cost \$27 a month. Two meals a day, or sixty for the month, cost \$18. Some of the employees cut out breakfast and some lunch, so the stewards prepare food for an average of two meals per employee.

The Tivoli hotel at Ancon, on the Pacific side, is the tourist hotel operated by the commission. Its rates, American plan, are \$5.50 a day and up. There are 218 rooms and a dining room that will seat 750 persons. At Colon, on the Atlantic side, the commission operates the Washington hotel for the use of visitors to the canal zone.

Still another factor that makes living in the canal zone cheaper than in the United States is the result of the climate. With a uniformly warm temperature the quality of clothes does not vary the year round for the women, light, summer goods, largely white; for the men, duck or linen suits or light staple cloths. The saving from not having to buy new clothes with the change of seasons is important, and the employees generally try to arrange their vacations so as to be in the United States in mild weather.

A bride starts out life there on a basis that means a rude jolt to her when the canal is finished and she returns to the United States. Young couples who have been treading the easy path of high salary, free rent, free water, light and fuel, cheaper food, clothes and furniture, elastic class distinctions and plentiful though not efficient servants must ever look back upon their canal zone experience as the particularly bright period in their careers. The withering blasts of social competition, high cost of living and salaries from one to two thirds lower in the United States will make the easy going, overgenerous life at Panama seem the "temps de crise" in their lives.

(Concluded this week)

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