

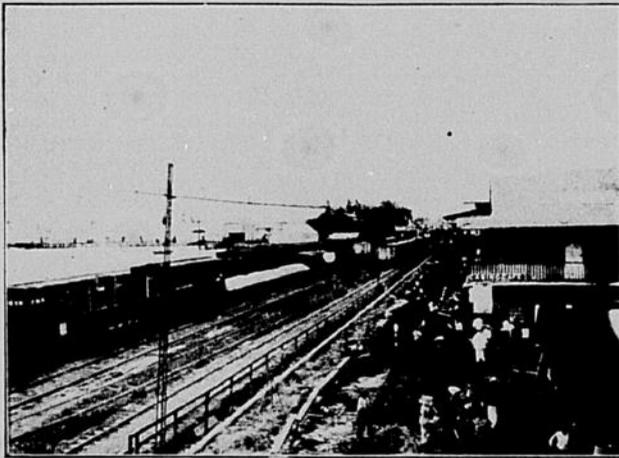
THE PANAMA CANAL.

By HOWARD N. HOWLAND.

WHEN once the United States government had acquired a satisfactory title to the property of the French company and the Canal Zone and had made a satisfactory treaty with the Panamanian government, there arose the question of policy regarding the government of the Zone and the appointment of a man or men who should direct affairs and become responsible for conditions and operations upon the Canal

There has been and still is a good deal of caustic criticism of the present management, because of the large amount of money that is being spent and the small amount of actual work that is being done upon the canal. It would seem that the critics have little conception of the difficulties of the situation and of the vast amount of work that must be done in order to get the Canal Zone

One type of critics who have helped to give conditions a bad name are those who have left the employ of the Canal Commission having some real or fancied grievance. A good example of this type was a young locomotive engineer who was leaving the Canal Zone about a year ago to seek employment with the United Fruit Co. He had left a position in New Hampshire where he



Front Stand, Panama R. R. Yards, Colon.



Bolevar Street, Colon, as it Now Appears.

Zone. Probably all are familiar with the facts regarding the appointment of the Canal Commission. We are principally interested in three of these, Mr. Shontz, the president of the Commission, Charles E. Magoon, governor of the Canal Zone, and Mr. Wallace, chief engineer. Colonel Gorgas, who had made himself famous the world over by cleaning up the city of Havana and making a healthful city of that once yellow fever ridden place, was made chief of the sanitary department.

The first thing that we are interested in perhaps is the summing up of the assets acquired by the purchase from the French company. First there was the great mass of machinery sent to the Isthmus by the French and which was and is still scattered in an almost unbroken line from ocean to ocean. This is all out of date and most of it has rusted and disintegrated till it would be useless in any case.

Second and much more valuable is the work



Palm Avenue, Cristobal Point and New Quarters for Married Employees.

done by the French. They left about sixteen miles of, at least partially navigable, waterway, on the Atlantic side and had done more or less excavating throughout the entire length of the canal. The greatest amount of work had been done at the great Culebra Cut where at the present time the cut is about one hundred sixty feet deep.

Third, and by far the most important, is the fund of valuable experience left to us by the French, and the problem was to make the most of this experience.

in a condition to receive the large number of men necessary to do the work and to have them properly housed and cared for. Hundreds of old houses had to be refitted and made habitable and these houses were in a fearful state of decay, new quarters were to be built and hospitals built and equipped so that the sick could be properly cared for and the awful death rate of former years avoided. The sanitary conditions of the larger towns must be made as nearly perfect as possible and to that end a water works system was installed in Panama which drew its supply from a reservoir in the hills some miles away, a modern sewer system was installed and put in working order about a year ago. Since that time the principal streets have been paved with vitrified brick so that today the city of Panama has a vastly different appearance from that which it presented when I was here a year ago. There has been some criticism of the quality of the work but of that I am not in a position to judge.

Colon presented a somewhat more difficult problem on account of its location upon swampy ground but very little above the sea level. However there is a waterworks system which furnishes a good supply of water such as it is, but as I have not yet seen the reservoir I do not care to make any statement as to its source or quality.

The sewer system was completed about a year ago and the paving of the streets was to follow immediately and it was surely needed, for it was raining every day and the coaches were being drawn through a sea of mud.

The accompanying illustrations will perhaps give some idea of the condition of Colon streets before paving.

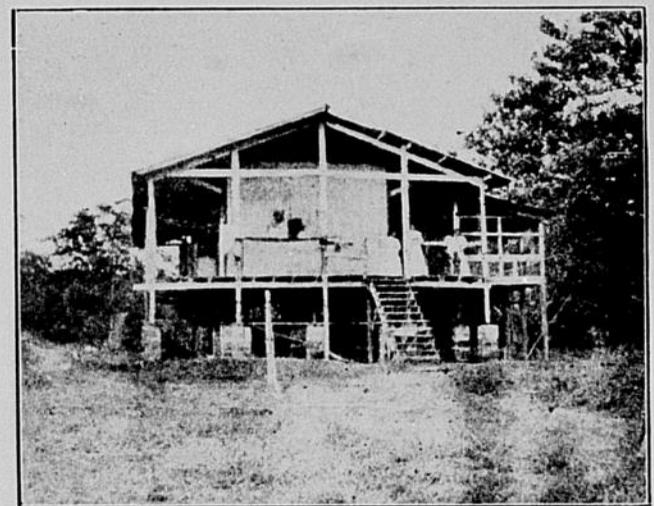
Two years ago the Colon hospital consisted of one large building and perhaps one smaller one while today there are, I believe, eighteen buildings completed and more in prospect, so it seems that with the fine equipment at Ancon and Culebra besides the smaller hospitals scattered throughout the length of the Canal Zone, there need be no trouble in caring for the sick. I did not get the exact numbers but believe that there are about four hundred fifty negroes and about one-fourth that number of whites in the Colon hospital. The white man who takes care of himself, contrary to general belief, is less subject to sickness than are the negroes.

During 1906 a large number of new buildings were erected at Culebra where the headquarters of the engineering force is now stationed. These buildings include the home of the chief engineer, the new offices, hotel, hospital buildings and quarters for the men.

The work done in these places is simply typical of the activity along the whole route, so although the amount of excavating has been insignificant, there has been a vast change during the past year.

was earning from eighty to one hundred dollars a month, to take a job at Culebra at a salary of one hundred twenty-five and quarters. He found the old refitted French engines anything but to his liking. Most of the "breaking" he said had to be done by "chucking," that is placing blocks in front of the wheels and this, he said, no self respecting engineer would do. The quarters assigned were unspeakably bad, sixteen or eighteen men being herded together in one large room which was very ill kept. The other men would some of them be out late at night, come home drunk, throw their wet clothing under their bunks where it would lie and get musty so that between the noise and the noisome odors there was no rest nor comfort either night or day.

He had no use for the canal officials, the system in force nor the United States government and could not say enough in condemnation of the whole thing. Of course such an uncongenial set



Old French House at Tabernilla.

of men should not have been compelled to live together nor in fact that number of men no matter how congenial, but the fact was that most of the hardship and discomfort was of the men's own making.

I had several interviews with Gov. Magoon in regard to conditions and plans of work and he assured me that the sanitary conditions and comfort of the men were the first consideration and that he should use all his influence to make these conditions as perfect as possible before a