

# OPENING UP HISTORIC SPOTS ON THE ISTHMUS

In the Footsteps of Morgan and the Buccaneers—How a City Was Looted—Fighting With Wild Bulls—Where Columbus Landed.

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Panama City, Panama.

The Panamanian government is rebuilding the road to old Panama. This road runs over the way picked out by the Spaniards centuries ago, and much of the new pavement is laid with the cobblestones over which the Indians and mules carried their cargoes of gold from the Atlantic to the Pacific. All the treasures of the Incas which Pizarro stole passed over this highway. They amounted to millions and were enough to have almost paved it with gold. The road went from here over the old Cruces trail. It was originally covered with field rock, and our government is now planning to reopen it, and it will macadamize the highway as far as Cruces on the Chagres river, a distance of about eighteen miles. It was over that road that Henry Morgan, the buccaneer, came to capture old Panama, and it remained the chief highway across the isthmus until 1738, when the Spanish treasure ships stopped calling at Porto Bello.

## In Old Panama.

I drove out over this road today to visit old Panama. Gov. Maurice H. Thatcher, who will have charge of the repairs on the Cruces road, was with me, and together we examined the work now being done on the road to old Panama.

Leaving Ancon, we skirted the savannas or open grazing country outside, crossed the limits of the Canal Zone and after a ride of about seven or eight miles came to the old Spanish bridge beyond which are the ruins of what was once the most important town on our hemisphere.

Old Panama was founded just about 100 years before our Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock. It was fed by the riches of Peru, which were brought for shipment across the isthmus and rapidly grew. As time went on the city increased in importance and mighty buildings were erected. One of these was a cathedral, the tower and some of the walls of which are still standing. I have climbed into the tower and had myself photographed in one of the second-story windows. The town is, I judge, 100 feet high, and at one side of it is a great well containing the stairway which led to the bell on its summit.

These ruins are now overgrown with vegetation. They are half buried in the earth, and in places trees have sprouted and now shade the ruins. Inside the walls of the cathedral is one tree more than 100 feet high. Others have spread their roots about the walls as though to protect them, and some have raised parts of the walls and carried them up with them. The whole country about is covered with the debris of the old masonry, including bricks and pieces of pottery and carved stone. All were a part of the Panama of three centuries ago. In making the new roadway a great deal of the old site has been dug over and the land reminds one of the plowed fields about Carthage in northern Africa.

## Panama in 1600.

It is said by the best authorities that old Panama was considerably larger than the Panama of today. When destroyed by the pirates it had over fifty thousand inhabitants. It had 200 warehouses, 2,000 fine dwellings and 5,000 houses of ordinary build. Many of its buildings were of brick. The bricks were made square and were about two inches thick. They were burnt red. Many of these bricks lie about the ruins today.

I am told that it is the intention of the Panama government to make excavations all over the site of the old city and to open the past as far as possible to the light of the present. Already there is a great tourist travel out to old Panama, and with the completion of the canal this will be one of the sights of the country. A concession has already been given to build an electric railway, and this will probably be constructed in time.

**In the Footsteps of the Buccaneers.** This country fairly teems with history. All the wealth of the Pacific coast of our continent was brought here, and the pirates and buccaneers hovered about these waters, hoping to catch and rob the Spanish galleons. Now and then the cities were besieged, and one of the most graphic stories of our hemisphere is that of Capt. Henry Morgan and his band in the capture of Panama. The story was noted down by one of the pirates, who kept a record of everything. It was published about seven years after the events occurred, and it describes the expedition as a whole and in detail.

The pirate writer's name was John Esquemeling, and he published his narrative in 1678. It was first printed in Dutch, but it has been done over into Spanish and English, and copies of it may now be bought.

Esquemeling tells first of the capture of Porto Bello by Morgan. The forts which he took are still in exist-

ence, and they lie across the harbor near the great quarries, from where we have been getting the stone for the concrete work of the Gatun locks.

Porto Bello is practically nothing today, but in 1668 it was one of the chief landmarks of the new world, and was noted everywhere for its wealth and importance. It was then the strongest fortified town that the King of Spain had in the West Indies, with the exceptions only of Cartagena and Havana. Esquemeling says that its castles were almost impregnable, and that the garrison consisted of 300 soldiers. It had a population of about 3,000 people, and among its buildings were some great warehouses, where the silver and gold were brought upon mules, and where the ships landed the negroes brought here to be used as slaves.

When Morgan took Porto Bello he slipped in and embarked some distance up the coast. He then marched with his buccaneers down to the forts and put the Spaniards to the sword. He blew up one of the castles and set fire to another. The battle was a terrible one, and the Spaniards fought bravely. The governor of the town refused to surrender, saying, "I would rather die as a soldier than be hanged as a coward."

After taking the town the pirates looted it. They tortured the citizens to make them give up their wealth and this with such cruelties that many died on the rack.

## Besieging Old Panama.

Morgan now sent word across the isthmus to the citizens of old Panama, demanding a ransom. This was refused and the pirate went with his crew back to Cuba and thence to Jamaica to prepare for its capture. They had then in ready money 250,000 pieces of eight, as well as a great stock of linens, silks and other goods.

The fall of old Panama occurred in 1671, and the fleet which started out to take it was perhaps the largest pirate gang ever gotten together. It had thirty-seven ships, and 2,000 men. Morgan was admiral and he divided the fleet into two squadrons and made a fixed scheme of division as to what share every man should have of the booty. When the pirates engaged with Morgan they did not know just GALLY TWO—CARPENTER

where they were going and had the hope of plundering either Cartagena, Panama or Vera Cruz. They selected the place by lot, and the lot fell upon Panama.

## The Trip Across the Isthmus.

Coming to the isthmus they made their way up the River Chagres to what was then known as the Castle of the Chagres. This was San Lorenzo, a picnicking place for the canal employes of today. There was a fort there and some sort of a structure called a castle, which I suppose was only a blockhouse.

At any rate, they took the castle and fort after a strong defense on the part of the Spaniards, who cried out, "Come on, ye English dogs, enemies to God and our king! Ye shall not go to Panama this bout!"

The pirates used fireballs and finally burned down the fort. They lost about one hundred men during this battle.

One can follow the road from San Lorenzo to old Panama now. It goes right through the jungle, but is plainly marked. The pirates-cut their way through it and almost starved on the way. At one time they were in such straits that they cooked some leather bags which they had found in the fort, but this food fermented in their stomachs and gnawed their very bowels.

They had other hardships, and at last came to Las Cruces, where the new road is to go. As they neared the town they saw smoke, and supposed that the Spaniards were cooking their dinner. They found that the smoke came from the ruins. The Spaniards had fired Las Cruces and fled. The pirates greedily drank some Peru wine that was left, but the wine was poisoned, and it made them sick almost unto death.

## A Battle With Wild Bulls.

Leaving Las Cruces, the pirate army went on over the line of the road which we are now about to macadamize, and at last they came to a mountain, from where they could see the Pacific ocean. Going down this, they entered the savannas which are just outside the present city of Panama and not more than a mile from the Tivoli Hotel at Ancon. Here they found some cattle which they killed. They ate the meat half raw. They camped on the savannas for a day, and thence went on to attack the city of old Panama. The Spaniards thought to defend themselves by using wild bulls, a drove of which they sent in front of them, but the bulls turned and ran back on their owners, and thus aided in their defeat.

It did not take Morgan long to capture the city and loot it, and, accord-

ing to Esquemeling's story, it contained a vast treasure. The churches and monasteries were full of gold and silver, and in the fire which took place much gold plate was melted by the flames. Some of this may be found in the excavations now making.

After destroying the city and spending some time in a great drunken spree, the pirates took the treasure and their captives and started back to the Atlantic. They tortured the Spaniards to make them confess where they had hidden their money. They twisted cords about their foreheads so tightly that the eyes of the victims "popped out as big as eggs and as though like to fall from the skull." They put even the women and priests on the rack and committed all sorts of barbarities. The number of prisoners carried away was 600, and it took 175 beasts of burden to transport the silver and gold. The prisoners were held for ransom under threats that they would be sold into slavery, and every cruelty imaginable was used to make them confess where they had hidden their treasures.

## The New Panama.

For a year after this raid there was no city of any size on the Pacific coast of the isthmus. Then the Queen of Spain decreed that Panama should be rebuilt, and a plan was made which placed the city where it is now. The old site was much worse than the present one, although the latter is not good. The landing at old Panama was such that ships could not come in at low tide, and even today the large steamers anchor at Balboa.

The building of the present Panama was begun about 237 years ago. The work was slow and the cost enormous. It was estimated that ten million dollars were spent upon the fortifications. A great deal of this went into the walls which surrounded the city, some of which are still standing. These walls were long buildings, and a story is told which states that the King of Spain was once observed looking out toward the west with a frown on his brow. Hereupon, one of the knights asked him what he saw. The frown changed to a grim smile, and the king said:

"I am looking for the golden walls of Panama. They are costing so much that we ought to see them even here in Madrid."

## Some Old Buildings of Panama.

There are but few of those old buildings now left in Panama. You can trace the walls and you will find the people living in and near them today. The cathedral in the plaza in the center of the city is one of the best specimens of the past. It is about the oldest church on the continent. It was built by a Panama bishop whose father was a freed negro slave. This man got his start by selling charcoal, and he left so much money that his son, the bishop, was able to build the cathedral.

Another old church here which is now fast falling to ruins is that which has the wonderful arch, proving that there is little danger from earthquakes. This arch is almost straight, and any great shock would seem to be able to throw it to the ground. Nevertheless it has stood for centuries, and it still stands, although the rest of the church is in ruins.

## In the Footsteps of Columbus.

It is interesting to wander over the historic grounds of the isthmus. I have visited the Chiriqui lagoon, where Columbus is said to have first set foot on what is now the Republic of Panama. He came in 1502 and sailed along the shores of Costa Rica. He stopped at Colon in 1503, when he named the broken mountain range there visible San Cristobal. It is after Columbus that we have called the part of Colon which now belongs to Uncle Sam Cristobal.

## Balboa and His Search For Gold.

Another old historic point at Panama is where Balboa stood when he discovered the Pacific. Some of the authorities have picked out the spot.

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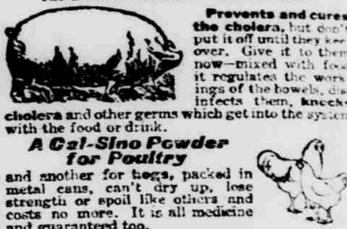
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Balboa had been at Port Darien, on the Caribbean sea at the southern end of the isthmus, and had there made a settlement, including a church which is said to be the first church built on the American continent. While there the Indians told him many stories of the gold to be found farther on. One of the chiefs, named Comagre, gave him about eighty thousand dollars' worth of gold, and told him that over the mountains was a nation so rich in this metal that they ate out of gold dishes. He described a temple of solid gold and offered to conduct Balboa to where it lay.

This was the beginning of Balboa's search for the South sea. He had sent the word home to Spain, and in return was given the title of Captain General, de la Antigua and told to make an expedition to find the gold. It was on the first of September, 1513, that he started out with 190 white men and a party of Indians. Farther on he got other Indian guides, and on the 8th of September he was told by an Indian chief that he would see the great sea when he had passed over certain mountains which were then in sight. This man gave Balboa some gold ornaments, which he said came from the ocean.

## The Discovery of the Pacific.

Going onward, Balboa had to fight his way through the country, and it was not until the 26th of September at about 10 o'clock in the morning that he reached the heights from which he saw the Pacific. On this spot he put up a cross made of the trunk of a tree and wrote upon it the name of the ruler of Spain. He then made his way with his men down to the beach and waded out into the water, where he waved the banner of Spain over the ocean and proclaimed that it and all the lands on and about it belonged to his king.

Balboa got a great deal of gold and pearls on this expedition. He was given one pearl which weighed twenty-five carats and which sold for \$9,000, and in his papers he says that pearls were so plentiful that some of the Indian canoes had their oars set with them. He did not find the temple of gold and an expedition was sent out later to search for it.

Still later Balboa headed an expedition which carried boats over the isthmus and there put them together to explore the South seas. They went out past the islands in Panama bay and visited the Pearl Archipelago, which is still farther out in the Pacific. The expedition, however, resulted in no finds of great value, and when Balboa came back the Governor of Darien, who was jealous of him and his fame, accused him of treason and cut off his head.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

## SPENCER LADY GOES TO MEXICAN MISSION POST

Spencer, N. C., Aug. 17.—Miss Mary Lillie McNeill, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. McNeill, of Spencer, has been appointed by the foreign mission board of the Methodist Church, as manager of a Methodist Hospital in Montorey, Mexico, where the denomination has established a mission post. Miss McNeill, who is now in Spencer with her parents, has recently completed a special course in the James Walker Memorial Hospital at Wilmington, and on account of a special fitness for the work received the Mexican appointment. She is enthusiastic in her work and expects to leave August 28th, for Mexico. She will work under the direction of the mission board at Nashville. She is a graduate of the Lillington Female College and formerly from the graded schools in Fayetteville.