

FROM ST. LOUIS TO THE CAPITAL OF GUATEMALA

Connecting Railways Soon to be Completed—The Pan-American and Its Route to Panama—New Lines to Salvador and Costa Rica—How the Guatemala Railway, Owned by Americans, Was Built

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GUATEMALA CITY.

The Pan-American railway will soon be connected with the Guatemala system. It already comes to the boundary of the republic and only twenty-five or thirty miles of track are yet to be laid to connect it with the Guatemala Central, which comprises the lines running from here to the port of San Jose, on the Pacific, and those which cover the western slope of this country. Indeed, travelers can now go to Mexico City by rail, piecing out the short break of a day's ride on mules. Moreover, extensive plans are under way to extend the Guatemalan railways into Salvador and Costa Rica, and within a comparatively short time we shall be able to reach the Panama canal by railway.

By Train to Guatemala.

In this way Guatemala City is only within about four days from Mexico City. When the break is completed it will be only three days, and the time to St. Louis will be less than six days, while that to New York will be just about one week. From Guatemala City to St. Louis the distance is 2,824 miles. To New York it is 3,884 miles, or only about 700 miles less than from New York to San Francisco. It needs only an extension of a little more than fifty miles to connect the roads here with those of Salvador, and the day seems to be fast coming when the Pan-American railway from New York to Buenos Aires will be in operation. The distance between these two points by rail will be only a little over ten thousand miles, and of this between six and seven thousand miles have already been built. Add to that an extension equal to the distance between here and New York, and we shall have this great intercontinental railway with several hundred miles to spare.

New Railroads of Central America.

Everywhere I go in Central America I hear the people talking of new railroads. One of the projects of Panama is to build a line from Panama City to the town of David, the largest place in the northern part of that republic. Costa Rica will eventually be connected with Panama, Nicaragua and Honduras, and the concessions for the extension of the roads here have already been granted. Both the old and new lines are practically owned by Americans, and from New York to Panama the indications are that the lines will be under American control. The president of the Pan-American extension to Guatemala is Mr. D. D. The person who was formerly our minister to Mexico. The railroads of Costa Rica are owned by the Keith syndicate, and the same is true of the railroads of Guatemala. All of the lines have been planned by Americans and built by Americans, and there will probably be one American company operating the whole.

From Ocean to Ocean.

Guatemala has now an intercontinental line from the Caribbean sea to the Pacific. This is, with the exception of the Panama railroad which is about forty miles long, and the Tehuantepec line, which is 186 miles long, the shortest of all the roads which connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Its total mileage is less than 270, and it runs from Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean sea to Guatemala City on the top of the pass, thence on over the mountains and thence to San Jose de Guatemala, the port on the Pacific. The distance from Barrios to the capital is 195 miles, and from here to San Jose it is just under seventy-five miles.

Regular trains are running over both these roads, and when Secretary Knox was here he crossed the continent that way. He was taken from one ocean to the other on special cars with pilot engines running along in front to forestall any danger of accident, and—the unkind say—to be sure that no dynamite mines had been planted to blow up the train. The road was decorated for the occasion and was lined with palm branches, flags and school children processions from one end to the other. There were bands at all of the stations, and when the cars passed along the shores of Lake Amatitlan a fleet of canoes manned by Indians went through certain maneuvers in his honor.

The Guatemala Railway.

The road from Guatemala City to the Atlantic is now largely owned by Minor C. Keith and other capitalists, supposed to be associated with the United Fruit Company, and I am told that they have made arrangements to acquire the other roads of Guatemala. This is the Guatemala road, which was formerly called the Northern railway. Its first section was laid out and built by an American engineer named Miller. It was begun in 1884 as a government project, and

it was then provided that every Guatemalan should pay \$4 a year to aid in its building. The work was started, but a war broke out and the funds for the railroad had to be used to support the president.

The year following another contract was made, and along in 1892 the work was again under way. At that time 10 per cent of the salaries of the public officials, and 5 per cent of all the town revenues were ordered to be set aside for railroad construction. The contracts were let, and along about 1896 or 1897 five sections had been built, extending from the seacoast 130 miles up the mountains.

At that place the road stopped. It began at the ocean and its terminus was a jungle. Many of the ties rotted and the rails rusted, until 1904, when Sir William Van Horne, Minor C. Keith and Gen. Tom Hubbard got a new concession for it and pushed it on to its completion.

It was finished in January, 1905, and it is now one of the best roads in Central America.

This Northern railway is well built. The gauge is three feet, and, with the exception of one place, the greatest grade is 3 per cent. For a short distance it is more than 4 per cent. The road has over 300 steel bridges, one of which is more than 600 feet long, and another 743 feet long. The latter bridge is 229 feet high.

This road has a guaranteed income of \$200,000 a year, the concession providing that the government will insure the 5 per cent dividend on the \$4,000,000 invested in it. In addition to this, last year it made more than \$100,000, and the traffic is steadily growing.

Port Barrios to Guatemala City.

It was over this road that I came into Guatemala. I landed at Port Barrios on one of the regular steamers which call there on their way from Panama to New Orleans. The port has a wide and deep harbor and vessels of the heaviest draft can come to its docks. The railroads pass for thirty or forty miles through the rich banana plantations of the United Fruit Company and carry their freight to the steamers. While I stayed at Port Barrios about 10,000,000 bananas were loaded, and on my way over the road we were some hours passing through the plantations.

Leaving Port Barrios, the cars go right into the jungle. They wind their way through the Motagua valley, where the soil is a rich sandy loam about fifteen feet deep. The rainfall is abundant, and there is on her seven-league boots. Palm trees a hundred feet high wall the railway, and the vegetation is the most luxuriant to be found in the tropics. After a few miles of such scenery you enter the great banana estates, and the cars fan the leaves of banana plants from thirty to forty feet high, many of them loaded with fruit. There is perhaps forty miles of such riding, and then you come to the mountains, where the vegetation is dryer and with many herds of cattle are feeding upon it.

Like Arizona.

The scenery now suddenly changes. It is almost like crossing from the valley of the Nile into the desert. In the valley the rainfall is over 100 inches per year. On the highlands there is almost no rain, and as you ascend the mountains you pass through a region like the desert lands of New Mexico or Arizona. The ground is dry and cacti abound. The trees are silver gray. There does not seem to be enough moisture to color the leaves. The only green spots are along the beds of the streams. We can still see the Motagua river, but beyond its banks is the desert. In its upper course the river looks not unlike the Jordan, and the vegetation is no more luxuriant than that which lines the famed river of Palestine.

Still farther inland the mountains make one think of the Rockies. They are bare, ragged and torn by ravines and canyons. There are thirsty trees upon which hang thirsty air plants, the orchids of the desert. Now and then you pass a little valley with irrigated patches along the stream running through it. Here are thatched huts, the homes of the Indians. Such valleys are but a few hundred feet wide and the population is scanty.

A Ten-Dollar Breakfast.

My train stopped for breakfast at Zacapa, and my meal cost me \$10. When I left I took a bottle of apollonaris with me, for which I was charged \$4, and also a package of cigarettes which cost me \$5. I gave a five-dollar fee to the parlor car porter at the close of the trip, and once paid a boy a dollar to bring me a drink. All of these figures, however, represent Guatemalan money, of which it takes seventeen dollars to make one of ours, so that a five-dollar bill equals just about 30 cents.

Zacapa is the biggest city between the Caribbean and the capital. It is

100 miles inland, lying at the foot of the mountains and only 600 feet above the sea. During the next ninety miles we went upward over 4,000 feet, and here at Guatemala City we are just about a mile high.

Railroad Scenes.

The scenes on the Guatemalan railroad are interesting. The passengers consist of Indians, half-breeds, or ladinos, and whites, who are few and far between. The cars are first and second class, and we had at the end of the train a little parlor car, the extra charge for which was about \$68 per day. I spent a part of the journey in the second-class car. The seats were much like those of a street car, consisting of long benches running under the windows and a back-to-back bench in the center. Here most of the passengers were Indians or negroes. They were dressed in cotton, and the Indians had high straw hats with crowns shaped like a sugar loaf. There were many bareheaded Indian women. Both men and women were smoking cigars or cigarettes. Their baggage was hung up on hooks over their heads. An Indian newsboy in his shirt sleeves passed through the car, selling candy and beer.

At one of the stations a company of soldiers came in. They were barefooted and their uniform was of calico, while their hats were of straw. Each man carried a gun, but this was the only sign of warfare about him. I am told they receive from 10 to 15 cents daily, and that the government is always behind in its pay. The most of the soldiers are Indians, who are forced into the army.

American Railway Men.

This train had an American engineer and an American conductor, and this is the case with the other railways of Guatemala. The natives have no experience and they cannot be trusted to handle the trains. The conductors receive \$100 gold per month, and the engineers have similar salaries. The conductors tell me that the Guatemalans are great travelers and that both the first and second class passenger traffic is good. First-class fares are in the neighborhood of 3 cents gold per mile, and the second-class are about half the first-class. The Indians patronize the roads and the conductors say that they have to watch them carefully to collect all the fares. They are smart and will try to cheat their way from station to station. A man will buy a ticket for a short distance and then change his ticket while en route, taking that of a passenger who has a ticket for a longer ride, slipping the tickets back and forth so that he gets a good part of his ride without pay. Many men buy tickets short of the station where they expect to get off, trusting that the conductor will forget them. I wonder if this is not sometimes the same in our country.

The Guatemala Central Railway.

The railroad from Guatemala City to the Pacific ocean is known as the Guatemala Central, and connected with it are the extensions which run northward almost to the boundary of Mexico. This system has three or four ports on the Pacific, the most of which are open roadsteads, so that passengers have to be frequently landed in baskets. It was at San Jose that Secretary Knox was let down out of our war vessel, as St. Paul was let down from the walls of Damascus, in a basket. This is the only similarity I have ever observed between St. Paul and the secretary.

The Guatemala Central was the first railroad built in Guatemala. It was begun about 1877, when an American, Mr. William Nanne, who had been general manager of the Costa Rican railway, came here and built the line from the seacoast as far as the town of Esquintla. This was completed about 1880 and a little later he received a concession to extend it to the capital. This road is well built and well ballasted. I took a run down over it a few days ago. Its steepest grade is about 3 1-2 per cent but the average grade is not more than 1 1-2. Nevertheless, in going from here to Esquintla, a distance of twenty-seven miles, the fall is nearly 4,000 feet.

The ride down to the coast abounds in fine scenery. There are numerous horseshoe curves which equal those of the Pennsylvania railroad, and you are always in sight of volcanic mountains. You wind your way out of one valley into another, through hills covered with cattle, now and then seeing coffee plantations and in the lowlands great fields of sugar.

About an hour or so from Guatemala City you reach Lake Amatitlan, above which the towering volcanoes of Agua and Fuego look down and the scene reminds you of Switzerland. Lake Amatitlan is five miles in length and not more than two miles in width. Its water is beautifully clear and here and there are hot springs which bubble up and breathe forth steam from the surface. The railroad runs in and out along the shores of this lake, and in one place it crosses it. At the time this section was built C. P. Huntington was furnishing the capital and he was surprised at the money it took. The story is that he sent word that if the engineers could not find enough rock, they had better wire New York and he would send down silver dollars enough to make the fill.

The West Coast.

The western coast is by far the richest part of Guatemala. It has many large coffee plantations and the coffee traffic forms a big item of freight. This will be increased when the Panama canal is completed. Recently many cacao orchards have been set out and this industry is reviving. About fifty years ago the

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cacao was carried northward to Mexico on mules, and in some years the amount sent was millions of pounds. Another export was cochineal, a dye made from a bug which covered the cactus about Lake Amatitlan. That dye brought in something like a million dollars a year.

During my stay here in Guatemala I have talked with the chief railroad men of the country, including Mr. F. G. Williamson, manager of the Guatemala roads; Mr. D. B. Hodgson, manager of the Central, and Mr. W. E. Jessup, the superintendent of the Central lines. They all speak enthusiastically of the prospects of Guatemalan development. Mr. Jessup estimates that there are 2,000 square leagues of land in this country which will grow sugar cane, and that the coffee plantations might be enormously increased. He tells me that there are large forests in the mountains and extensive tracts which will grow grain. There are also cotton lands and tobacco lands and large tracts fitted for the grazing of cattle. There is a great deal of land belonging to the railroads, and the government has much wild land which may be acquired by concession.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

SECRETARY HESTER'S REPORT.

New Orleans, La., Jan. 3.—Secretary Hester's statement of the world's visible supply of cotton, issued today, shows the total visible to be 6,275,681 bales, against 6,293,004 last week and 5,641,256 last year. Of this the total of American cotton is 5,076,681, against 5,129,004 last week and 4,854,256 last year, and of all other kinds, including Egypt, Brazil, India, etc., 1,199,000, against 1,164,000 last week and 787,000 last year.

Of the world's visible supply of cotton there is now afloat and held in Great Britain and Continental Europe 1,895,000 bales, against 2,702,000 last year; in Egypt, 327,000, against 250,000 last year; in India, 480,000, against 280,000 last year, and in the United States, 3,484,000, against 2,409,000 last year.

MORE FOR CATTLE TICK.

(By the Associated Press.)

Washington, D. C., Jan. 4.—A larger appropriation for the eradication of the cattle tick in the southern states than the \$250,000 appropriated last year was urged upon the Senate committee on agriculture today by state veterinarians and others from Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, Arkansas and Mississippi.

You find people ready enough to do the Samaritan, without the oil and the twopenny.—Sydney Smith.

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