

OLD PANAMA

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C.L.G. ANDERSON



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VASCO NUÑEZ DE BALBOA TAKES POSSESSION OF THE SOUTH SEA.

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OLD PANAMA AND CASTILLA DEL ORO



NARRATIVE history of the discovery, conquest, and settlement by the Spaniards of Panama, Darien, Veragua, Santo Domingo, Santa Marta, Cartagena, Nicaragua, and Peru: Including the four voyages of Columbus to America, the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, a description of the Aborigines of the Isthmus, accounts of the search for a Strait through the New World and early efforts for a Canal, the daring raids of Sir Francis Drake, the Buccaneers in the Caribbean and South Seas, the sack of the city of Old Panama by Henry Morgan, and the story of the Scots colony on Caledonia Bay

WITH MAPS AND RARE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

DR. C. L. G. ANDERSON

Medical Reserve Corps, United States Army;

Late Physician Isthmian Canal Commission; Formerly 1st Lieut. and Asst. Surgeon, U. S. Army, and Major and Surgeon U. S. Vols.; Member of the American Medical Association; of the Medical Society, District of Columbia; of the Anthropological Society of Washington, etc.



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DEDICATED
TO
THE BUILDERS
OF THE
PANAMA CANAL

“La mayor cosa, después de la creación del mundo, sacando la encarnacion y muerte del que lo crió, es el descubrimiento de las Indias.”

Francisco Lopez de Gomara, 1552.

“Il n’y point eu d’événement aussi intéressant pour l’espece humaine en général, & pour les peuples de l’Europe en particulier, que la découverte du Nouveau-Monde & le passage aux Indes par le cap de Bonne-Esperance. Alors a commencé une révolution dans le commerce, dans la puissance des nations, dans les moeurs, l’industrie & le gouvernement de tous les peuples. C’est a ce moment que les hommes des contrées le plus éloignées se sont rapprochés par de nouveaux rapports & de nouveaux besoins. Les productions des climats placés sous l’équateur, se consomment dans les climats voisins du pole; l’industrie du Nord est transportés au Sud; les étoffes de l’Orient sont devenues le luxe des Occidentaux; & par-tout les hommes ont fait un échange mutuel de leurs opinions, de leurs loix, de leurs usages, de leurs maladies, de leurs remedes, de leurs vertus & de leurs vices.”

L’abbé Raynal, 1781.

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GLOSSARY

Adelantado—He who goes in advance; the leader of an expedition, or governor of a frontier province; sometimes translated as meaning lieutenant-governor. The verb is *adelantar*, to advance.

Alcalde—Justice of the peace; from the Arabic *al cadi*, the judge, or governor. Besides the *alcaldes ordinarios*, there were *alcaldes mayores*, or district judges.

Alguacil mayor—High sheriff.

Audiencia—From the Latin, *audire*, to hear; a court of oyer and terminer; the highest court of appeal and jurisdiction in the Spanish colonies. The chief judge was known as the *presidente*; the other members of the tribunal were called *oidores*, or hearers. There were eleven Royal Audiences established in Spanish America.

Ayuntamiento—Spanish town-council.

Bachiller—Bachelor of law.

Cabildo—Corporation of a town; chapter of a cathedral.

Casa de Contratacion de las Indias—India House of Trade, established at Sevilla, in 1503, to promote and regulate traffic with Spain's colonies beyond the seas. In time, it became also a court of judicature.

Conquistador—Conqueror.

Consejo Supremo de Indias—Supreme Council of the Indies; a permanent body of learned men finally established at Madrid, in 1524, to deal with affairs relating to the Indies.

Contador—Auditor, accountant.

Corregidor—Magistrate, mayor, councilman.

Corregimiento—Mayoralty, city government.

Encomienda—A charge, or commandery; from *encomendar*, to recommend, or give in charge; an allotment of Indian vassals given in charge to a Spaniard, as a *repartimiento* became vacant. The custom was of ancient usage by the four military

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orders of Spain in the vassalage of the Moors, and other infidels. An *encomendero* was a Spaniard who held an *encomienda*.

Escribano publico—Notary public.

Escudero—Shield-bearer, squire.

Factor—Agent.

Gobernador—Governor.

Grumetes—Ships' apprentices, or cabin-boys.

Hidalgo—From *hijodalgo*, son of something; nobleman.

Licenciado—Licentiate in law, a degree higher than *bachiller*.

Regidor—Alderman, prefect.

Regimiento—Administration, municipality.

Repartimiento—A distribution; *repartir*, to distribute. First division of the Indians in serfdom to the Spanish conquerors, after the failure of the *per capita* tax system instituted by Columbus on Hispaniola. The term *repartimiento* was later applied to the allotment of lands, the Indians residing thereon being given in *encomienda*.

Residencia—The examination and accounting taken of an executive or judicial officer while in residence within his jurisdiction. This was always done at the expiration of the term of office of a Spanish governor, judge, or other high official; but could be ordered at any time. The inquiry was conducted by a *juez de residencia*, judge of residence, appointed by the King, or in the New World by the Council of the Indies, or by a Viceroy. The *residencia* was intended to encourage good officials and to check mal-administration in office, but the system had its defects and evils. Said Solórzano, in his *Politica Indiana*, "the Prince will not cure his commonwealth with this medicine, if the medicine brings with it greater evils than those which it is intended to remedy." The *residencia* was sometimes called a *visita*, or visit.

Veedor—Inspector, overseer.

FOREWORD

The finding of America was the greatest event in history; the cruel conquest and almost complete annihilation of its people the greatest wrong known to mankind. Human intercommunication and interrelation were never affected so powerfully as when Columbus, suddenly and within a few years, enlarged the known world by the addition of a new continent and another great ocean, together comprising about two-fifths of the surface of the globe. So new and strange to Europe was this half of the earth, that it seemed, indeed, to be another world; and so recent, historically speaking, has been its discovery, that we still refer to the Western Hemisphere as the New World.

The Old World has expended her best efforts in exploiting the shores of the Atlantic, and in founding and trying to maintain and hold distant colonies and protectorates. In a sense, she is finished. Europe fructified, conquered and peopled America. The strife is now on between America and Asia, and future activities pertain to the Pacific where West clashes with East.

The Isthmus of Panama, formerly a part of Castilla del Oro, is the gateway to the Pacific, and the front door of the Three Americas, to which the Antilles lead up as stepping-stones. Here the first white invaders made their "entry" into the new continent, founded their first settlements, penetrated to the South Sea, and roamed in conquering bands up and down the Pacific coast.

For migration, commerce, or war, the Isthmus of America (with or without a canal) is the most important strategic point in the world. Ever since its conquest by Spain, other nations have recognized the value of the Isthmus, and sought to possess this narrow strip of land between the two great oceans.

This part of Central America presents three well-defined historic periods:

1. The early period of Spanish activity, conquest, possession, and exploitation; ending about the year 1700.

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2. *An era of apathy, oppression, seclusion, and repose; lasting one hundred years.*

3. *The modern period, beginning with the nineteenth century, during the first quarter of which all the Spanish provinces on the continent of America declared for independence, and threw off the yoke of the mother country. The pure air of freedom soon inspired the people of the Isthmus to revive the old efforts for better interoceanic communication, and, about 1850, we find active plans for the construction of railroads and canals from sea to sea.*

We know less of our sister republics on the south than we do of remote parts of Europe. Had our forefathers as little appreciation as we of the relation of Latin America to the United States of the North, the magnificent Monroe Doctrine never would have been promulgated. We have arrived at a time, today, when everyone cognizant of the trend of current events realizes the great revival of interest in everything pertaining to Spanish America, particularly to the Isthmian region. The prominence to which Panama is now approaching is hers by right of geographic situation and historic interest.

The acquisition of the Canal Zone by the United States, in 1903, and the successful prosecution of the work of constructing a canal, marks the culmination of what I have designated the third period in the history of the Isthmus. For this time there is no dearth of books, dealing mainly with the Panama railroad, and the French and American canals. The middle period—the Dark Ages of Spanish America—has little to offer to English readers. But the first period, when Spain wrote “plus ultra” on the Pillars of Hercules, and later, “non sufficit orbis” on the globe of the earth, is the time most replete with human interest and activity, and the least known to mankind. Where we now are expending such magnificent efforts upon a work to which, in the language of the poet, both heaven and earth have put hand—“al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra”—the Homeric achievements of the Spanish conquerors, and the fierce struggles of those who strove to wrest that wondrous gateway from its holders, cannot fail to excite our interest if

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not our admiration or approval. The Panama Canal will unify our Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coastlines, and the short road to India, by the west, will at last lie open.

Barring the monumental work by Bancroft, not in reach of the general reader, there is no book in English dealing fitly with the early history of the Panama region, nor in any language is this information given in a single volume. From many sources, most of them original, in Spanish, French, and English, the writer has garnered accounts of the events narrated in the following pages. They all seem to center in, or radiate from, Old Panama or Castilla del Oro.

About all the average intelligent person knows of Christopher Columbus is that he found America, and made an egg stand on end. Columbus, on his fourth voyage, discovered practically all of the coastline of Castilla del Oro, extending from Cape Gracias á Dios south and eastward to the Gulf of Urabá; and in Veragua, on the Isthmus of Panama, the Admiral made the second, if not the first, attempt at settlement on the continent of America. Panama, too, is so closely related to Santo Domingo, or Española, that the writer believed a brief review of the earlier voyages of Columbus essential to a proper understanding of the history of this portion of Tierra Firme. From Santo Domingo went forth two lines of discovery and conquest of the mainland, one by way of Darien and Panama to Nicaragua and Peru, the other through Cuba to Mexico and Guatemala. With the first, and earlier, of these it is the province of this book to deal.

There is nothing more unjust than the partial way in which much history is written; and there is no more appropriate place than in a book dealing with the beginnings of American history to protest against the habitual application of the term "savages" to the American Race (Amerinds). Ethnologically, only a few insignificant and remote tribes—as the Macus of the Rio Negro, and the Botocudos of Brazil—exhibited what can properly be called a savage stage of culture. As to conduct, the reader is left to form his own judgment as to which displayed the most savagery, the White Man or the Red Man. It will be noted that

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I refrain from calling the Indians "bloodthirsty savages" simply because they defended their homes and attempted to drive out the white invaders. Neither do I designate every petty chief a king, nor his band a nation. When the Spaniards wantonly slew the natives and fed them to their dogs, I fail to see anything heroic in their conduct, and do not hesitate to call them butchers, even though they possessed white skins and professed to be followers of Christ.

I have endeavored to present the facts as they are told to us, and the characters in their true colors. Thus, Vasco Nuñez, Pedrarias, Francis Drake, and Henry Morgan, all were robbers; but Nuñez and Drake were generous, manly fellows, Pedrarias a cunning old monster, and Morgan a tricky and unscrupulous thief. All these actors, destroying people entitled to the same liberty and right of development which they claimed for themselves, and justifying their conduct with the usual cant, were but the pioneers of the enforced expansion of European states in America, and the puppets of kings and princelings. These men must not be judged by our standards, but according to the times in which they performed their parts.

The most senseless and impolitic feature of the Spanish invasion of America was the treachery and cruelty of the Conquistadores to each other, due to the want of a national sentiment among the different provinces of Spain, suspicion and jealousy between the commanders, and the ceaseless rivalry to win the royal favor.

The writer quotes freely, believing the exact words and forms of expression used by the old historians, often participants in or eyewitnesses of the events, would the better transmit the story, and be the more appreciated by the reader. For the same reason, and at the sacrifice of consistency, the names of persons and places are spelled in different ways, indicating the accent or not, according to the fashion of the chronicler whose narrative the author follows at the time. So far as practicable, chapters follow each other in chronological order.

Most of the material for this work, including the old illustrations, was obtained from the Library of Congress, and the

FOREWORD

author takes pleasure in thanking the librarian, Mr. Herbert Putnam, and his capable assistants in that great storhouse of learning, for their uniform courtesy, and willingness to give access to rare books and documents. Like acknowledgments are due the librarians and other officials of the libraries of the War Department, of the Navy Department, of the State Department, of the Bureau of Ethnology, and of the Columbus Memorial Library of the Pan American Union.

Especial thanks are tendered the Isthmian Canal Commission, and Señor I. L. Maduro Jnr, of Panama, for permission to reproduce their photographs; and to the Pan American Union, and the Bureau of Ethnology, for the loan of cuts. The half-tones and etchings, such as are not borrowed, were made for this book by the Maurice Joyce Engraving Co. of this city.

To Dr. John M. Gitterman are due the thanks of the writer for his painstaking efforts at proofreading.

And finally, the author fulfills a pleasant duty in expressing his appreciation of the hearty co-operation of the Sudarth Printing Company in its efforts to present the product of his labor in a becoming garb.

C. L. G. ANDERSON.

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