

1569

247

INFORMATION ON LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE CANAL ZONE.

I. ATLANTIC SIDE.

QUARTERS.

There are available at the submarine base, Coco Solo, Government quarters for 23 married officers, 52 bachelor officers, and 10 married petty officers.

The naval air station, Coco Solo, has accommodations for 3 married officers and 14 bachelor officers.

All quarters are frame structures, built according to one of three standard designs. That of the commanding officer is an eight-room dwelling. Eight are two-story buildings, having three bedrooms and a bath upstairs, with a living room, dining room, kitchen, butler's pantry, servants' room, with shower bath, downstairs. Two are two-story 6-room double houses. The only difference between these and the other six-room 2-story houses is a slight difference in the arrangement of the rooms on each floor. There are six one-story quarters, each having two bedrooms, bath, dining room, living room, and kitchen, and a servants' room, with shower bath. The three officers' quarters at the naval air station are of this latter type. All quarters are built especially for the tropics and are spacious, well ventilated, and having wide screened-in verandas, extending around three sides of each floor of the two-story houses and across the front of each one-story house.

Each house is furnished with two Crex druggets, dining-room table and chairs, wicker upholstered chairs, and plain wicker chairs for the veranda. Each bedroom is equipped with white enameled iron bed, two chairs, and a bureau. The kitchen is equipped with a coal stove and two chairs.

Pillows, mattresses, sheets, pillowcases, and bedspreads may be drawn by individual officers on the usual custody receipts.

There is, in addition, one apartment containing four 2-room suites. Each suite has a living room, bedroom, bath, and a large screened-in veranda. All families occupying these apartments eat at one mess and in one large dining room.

The 10 petty officers' quarters contain four rooms and bath and are furnished with necessary chairs, beds, and tables.

In addition to the above enumerated quarters, the district radio material officer has a 6-room cottage in the city of New Cristobal at the Colon radio station. There are also two 4-room apartments for the chief radio electrician and one married operator stationed there. Both of these houses are furnished like corresponding houses at Coco Solo.

The total Navy quarters built are far from being adequate to accommodate all officers and leading petty officers assigned to duty

F1567
C227

with the base and the vessels attached. However, it has been possible to accommodate five submarine officers' families and two chief petty officers' families at Fort Randolph and two chief petty officers' families at the Army air station, France Field, both forts being distant only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Coco Solo. The naval air station has been able to obtain quarters for four officers and four chief petty officers at Fort Sherman, across the harbor. Quite naturally, all Army quarters are occupied with the understanding that they must be vacated whenever desired or needed by the Army. Indications are that all Army posts will be more fully up to complement in the future than they have in the recent past, which means that these quarters will not be available for use by the Navy.

Officers and petty officers sent to the Canal Zone for duty should not bring their families on the word of an employee of the Panama Canal to the effect that "vacated quarters are easily obtainable from employees going to the States for four months." At least 50 or 70 families employed by the canal are without quarters and either occupy vacation quarters or rent in the city of Colon.

Unless quarters can be obtained in some of the above-mentioned posts or stations, it is practically impossible for a naval officer to house his family, especially if he is entirely dependent upon his salary for a living. Desirable houses in the city of Colon are unobtainable.

Very desirable accommodations can be had at the Hotel Washington, in Cristobal, at from \$6 to \$7.50 a day for two persons, American plan. It is readily seen that a naval officer can not spend an extended stay at the hotel unless he has an income in addition to his salary.

Any officer ordered to the Canal Zone should, if possible, leave his family in the States until he has himself investigated the situation above outlined.

PROVISIONS.

Provisions are obtained both through the base supply officer and the Panama Canal commissaries. The base supply officer's facilities are limited. However, a district commissary store at the naval air station for the use of all naval persons in the district has been authorized. The building is completed and the store will soon be in operation. It is expected then to be able to purchase all meats, fresh provisions, and dry stores from the district commissary.

The canal commissaries carry practically everything needed by the average housewife—dry goods, hardware, shoes, fresh meats and vegetables, and dry stores. Although the variety carried in any one article is not wide, the assortment is ample for the average person, and the prices correspond very closely to those obtaining in the States.

There is also in Colon a native public market, where native fresh vegetables can be purchased in season at a very reasonable price.

Fresh milk can be had only under the doctor's order, and then only for infants, invalids, or sick requiring such diet. It retails at 24 cents a quart. Occasionally throughout the year the amount of fresh milk for sale exceeds that required for the above class of orders.

At such times the excess is sold over the counter at the canal commis-

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

RECEIVED

MAR 9 1921

DOCUMENTS DIVISION

24-14341

saries or served at the canal restaurants on order. Frozen fresh milk shipped from New York can be had at 29 cents a quart. This milk does not give very good satisfaction, as it sours readily and must be consumed as soon as opened.

Fresh eggs can be purchased on doctor's prescription in same manner as the milk.

Ice is purchased from the Panama Canal commissary and retails at 40 cents a hundred pounds. It is delivered every morning at each individual quarters by the base force after arrival from town on the train.

CLOTHING.

Summer clothing is worn at all times. Officers wear khaki during working hours. An officer should bring at least nine suits of white service when reporting for duty here. White uniforms are made by the base tailor for about \$9 a suit, using Navy drill as material. If linen suits are desired, same may be had from tailors in Colon for from \$16 to \$20 per suit made to order. Khaki suits can be made by tailors at any of the Army posts for \$14 a suit or for \$20 a suit from tailors in Colon. Jamaican seamstresses may be had at \$1.25 a day plus transportation to and from the base. They do very good work and have given very excellent satisfaction to all families employing them.

Caps, shoulder marks, buttons, etc., must be ordered from the States.

There are numerous shops, both in Colon and Panama City, where ladies can procure wearing apparel of the latest style. However, all goods subject to deterioration with moisture, especially unwashable silks and leather articles, have a very short life in this climate. Such articles purchased here as a rule give poorer satisfaction than when purchased direct from the States.

EYEGGLASSES.

During the dry season (December to April) the glare of the sun makes it desirable for one to wear colored glasses, especially if he wears glasses ordinarily. Amber is generally worn, although green gives better satisfaction to weak eyes. These glasses can be purchased at most any jewelry shop in Colon or Panama City at about \$2 a pair. If one habitually wears glasses and desires to have colored lenses, it is advisable to have same ground to prescription in the States before leaving.

SERVANTS.

Only female servants are employed. Most of these are Jamaicans and speak the English language. Good cooks can be had at from \$16 to \$20 a month, maids at from \$15 to \$18, and nurse girls at from \$12 to \$16 a month.

Laundresses come to the respective quarters and charge a dollar a day and transportation to and from Colon (11 cents each way).

All servant help is more or less experienced and quite dependable. Although they are not what one would call first-class servants in the States, with a little instruction from and patience on the part of the employer they soon become accustomed to the American manner of living and give good satisfaction.

SCHOOLS.

The Canal Zone schools give good instruction. All grades, including four years in high school, are taught. All teachers are Americans. The zone schools stand a little above the average obtained in the States in the 1919-20 public-school census.

Although there is none at the present, it is hoped to have a kindergarten class on the base in the near future for the instruction of those children too young to attend a public school in Cristobal.

Arrangements can be made to enter children in Spanish classes in Colon either in the kindergarten or public schools. The standard of these schools is not high and their use is only suggested as a means for teaching children the Spanish language.

LOCATION OF THE STATION.

The submarine base and the naval air station join each other and the two reservations occupy the whole of Coco Solo Point. The station is 5 miles by rail and 7 by road from the cities of Colon and Cristobal.

There are eight trains to and from town each day—three in the morning and five in the afternoon and evening. Transportation for all persons in the Navy is free. Officers' wives, families, and servants ride at a special rate of practically 11 cents a trip. Full fare is 15 cents.

A market bus makes two trips daily, excepting Sundays, from the base to the Panama Canal commissary at Cristobal. The morning trip is for officers' families and the afternoon trip for chief petty officers' families. Due to the large number of officers and chief petty officers' families attached to the base, one representative only from each family is allowed one trip every other day.

There are at the present attached to the submarine base 13 submarines, two Eagle boats, one seagoing tug, one subchaser, and an oil barge. Attached to the naval air station is one Eagle boat and one subchaser, besides a total of nine airplanes, one dirigible, and one kite balloon.

A dredged channel with 24 feet of water extends up alongside the sea wall, thereby allowing large vessels to secure at the base when necessary.

The base is located at the eastern end of the Colon harbor or Limon Bay breakwater. All two-story officers' quarters face the sea and have close, unobstructed view of all ships entering or leaving port.

Although the complement of the base includes one company of Marines and a band, neither are at the present attached to the base. A band is now being assembled at Newport and is expected at the base by January, 1921.

CLIMATE.

The climate is excellent. The dry season extends from about the middle of December to the middle of April. During this season there is usually a good northeast breeze, which keeps the temperature down during the day. The temperature range is about 8°, rang-

ing from 84° F. to 92° F., with an average of about 89° F. It rains but once or twice a month during this season.

The other eight months of the year comprise the wet season, during which time it rains on an average of four days a week, but usually during the night. To some persons this season is more enjoyable than the dry season. There are no prevailing winds, and often a calm prevails for several days. During these calms the sand fly bites unmercifully, especially the newcomer. However, one soon becomes used to these pests, and their bites are not serious unless infected by scratching.

The Panama Canal hospitals in Colon and Ancon are large institutions, built along the most modern lines and equipped with the most modern apparatus known to the medical profession. These hospitals can handle the most delicate of cases.

AUTOMOBILES.

There is at the present a total of about 20 miles of excellent automobile roads on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus. The main road runs from Colon to Gatun, is made of cement, and is 7 miles in length. A branch of this runs to the Army air station, Coco Solo, and Fort Randolph. This branch is 4 miles in length. Aside from the streets in Colon and Cristobal these are the only roads where an auto can be used to advantage. Automobiles here are strictly a luxury for naval officers, inasmuch as the train schedules are especially arranged to accommodate all ordinary demands which may require an officer going to and from the base. Gasoline can be obtained from the canal commissary in Cristobal for 39 cents a gallon. Automobile accessories can be purchased from the Panama Canal at fairly reasonable prices and for most standard make cars. If at any time an officer desires a taxicab, same can be obtained by telephoning any one of several garages in Colon. The fare to and from Coco Solo is \$3 and a car can be had within half an hour after telephoning.

An officer desiring to bring his own car to the zone may do so via Army transport from New York. Cars may be shipped via Panama Railroad Steamship Line from New York at reduced rates, which at present range from \$16 to \$31.50, depending on the size of the car. There are no garage facilities for storage or repair of private cars on the base.

MAILS AND TRANSPORTATION.

There are two regular steamship lines running between the Canal Zone and the States. The United Fruit Co. maintains a weekly schedule between New York, Havana, Kingston, and the zone. Also a weekly schedule between New Orleans, Havana, and the zone. Both of these lines carry United States mail.

The Panama Railroad Steamship Co. maintains a weekly schedule between New York and the zone. These vessels also carry United States mail.

In addition to these two lines, the Army runs a transport from New York to the zone via San Juan, P. R., once a month and sometimes oftener. Transports also carry United States mail.

The average time to make the trip via any of these lines is six days.

Passage on the United Fruit steamers costs \$135 for first-class passage. This includes Navy rates, which can be obtained only for the members of one's immediate family.

The Panama Railroad steamers give a rate of \$30 for first-class passage to Navy persons and members of their immediate families. It is more or less difficult to obtain passage on these ships as Panama Canal employees get first choice and it is only at certain times of the year that passage can be booked by Navy personnel.

The Army transports charge from \$1.25 to \$1.75 a day, depending upon the individual transport and the excellence of the meals served. Army personnel always receive the preference in the assignment of rooms, and this condition sometimes forces the Navy into more or less undesirable accommodations. This situation is oftentimes bettered if the Navy person concerned will make his condition known to the commanding officer or to the Army quartermaster on board. Especially is this true if it is known there are better rooms on board that are unoccupied. Passage can be obtained through the Navy Department, subject to existing regulations.

Every precaution should be exercised to prevent the loss of one's valuables by thieves on board ship. This has been the source of considerable worry in the past.

In addition to the three above-mentioned steamship lines running between the Canal Zone and the States, there are a total of 50 other lines touching at Colon or passing through the canal. These lines run to all parts of the world. Most of the steamers carry cargo only, but a sufficient number carry passengers to maintain an adequate schedule over all principal trade routes.

CABLE.

The American Cable Co. has direct lines to the United States as well as to all principal cities in Central and South America and the larger islands of the West Indies. The rate is 32 cents a word (Government employees) from Colon to any east or Gulf coast city in the United States. Interior cities have a slightly greater rate.

If an officer anticipates much need for cabling to the States it is advisable to register a cable address there before leaving for the zone.

ATHLETICS AND AMUSEMENTS.

Practically all forms of outdoor summer athletics are indulged in. There are excellent swimming facilities of the base for everybody, and this sport extends throughout the entire year. There are four excellent tennis courts on the base and four at the naval air station. All rackets should be strung with tropical gut. However, this can be done after arrival, as there is generally some one on the base who specializes in this kind of work.

There is a very good nine-hole golf course at Gatun, which is about 10 miles by road and 6 miles by water from Coco Solo. This is the only course available on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus at present. One can reach Gatun by automobile, by boat, or by rail.

Sailing, fishing, and sight-seeing parties are quite numerous. The harbor is extremely large and offers a fine, well-protected sailing area for small boats. Mackerel are caught at certain seasons, while tarpon fishing in the Chagres River is the best sport that a lover of rod and line could hope to get.

A trap-shooting range has recently been established and is used by all.

In addition to seven reels of motion-pictures every evening in the amusement hall, there is an enlisted men's dance in the same hall once or twice a month. Officers and wives generally attend these dances.

A complete modern ice cream soda fountain has recently been installed in the Y. M. C. A. This has proven a source of much pleasure and enjoyment for all officers and their families as well as for the men.

For those who enjoy riding, horses can be borrowed at times from the near-by Army posts. Numerous trails through the jungle as well as the public roads afford a good riding turf.

During the rainy season basket ball is the principal form of athletics. A Service League, composed of eight teams from the Army posts, the naval air station, and the submarine base, has presented an excellent exhibition of this game, and enthusiasm runs high.

In the dry season baseball is the foremost sport. A Panama Canal League, a Service League, and a Dungaree League affords ample opportunity for all lovers of the sport to either witness or indulge in the greatest of American pastimes.

An amusement hall, capacity about 500, is one of the base buildings. Herein are held moving pictures, dances, smokers, church service, etc.

A welfare building, constructed by the Y. M. C. A., provides a spacious reading room, library, billard and pool parlor, and gymnasium. This building is managed jointly by the Y. M. C. A and base organization.

A third building, containing bowling alleys and five pool tables, is built on the base; bowling alleys are used by the officers' wives as well as by the officers and men.

In addition to the Dungaree League, composed of teams from the various boats and departments of the base, there is an officers' team which plays similar teams from all the surrounding posts and stations.

Boxing is prohibited by act of Congress.

CLUBS.

The Strangers' Club, in Colon, Republic of Panama, can be joined by commissioned officers. Dues are \$5 monthly. This club holds frequent dances and smokers for the amusement of its members and their guests. Practically all officers belong to this club.

The Washington Cotillion Club, monthly dues \$3, holds biweekly dances at the Hotel Washington. Membership is open to all officers.

Frequent subscription dances are held by other organizations.

II. PACIFIC SIDE.

The headquarters of the Army, Navy, and Panama Canal are located at Balboa, on the Pacific side of the Isthmus. The adjacent city of Panama, a fairly modern city, is the capital of the Republic of Panama.

The naval activities at the Pacific terminal consist of the fifteenth naval district headquarters and the near-by Balboa radio station.

District headquarters are at Balboa. At the present time the only officers attached to headquarters are the commandant and assistant commandant. There are no Navy quarters available for them, and the commandant is living in the city of Panama, Republic of Panama, while the assistant commandant is occupying temporary Army quarters at Fort Amador, Canal Zone. Desirable apartments in the city of Panama are very hard to obtain and the rents are beyond all reason. All Army quarters on this side of the Isthmus are at all times practically filled and at any time even the one set of quarters now occupied by the assistant commandant may have to be vacated.

The district communication superintendent has excellent quarters at the Balboa radio station and there is also a set of quarters for the officer in charge. Darien radio station has also quarters for the officer in charge. Darien is situated practically halfway between the two terminals of the Isthmus. There are three daily trains from Colon to Panama and three from Panama to Colon which stop at this station. The time required for the trip between these two cities is about an hour and a half. There are three outlying radio stations in the Republic of Panama, but no officers have ever been assigned to these stations; since being placed in commission they have been under the supervision of chief petty officers. Supplies to these outlying stations are transported by district craft.

Excellent accommodations may be had at the Hotel Tivoli, at Ancon, Canal Zone, at from \$6 to \$7.50 a day for two persons, meals not included. At the Panama Canal restaurants meals average about \$2 a day.

Living conditions on the Pacific side of the Canal Zone are practically identical with those described for the Atlantic side, with the following minor exceptions:

PROVISIONS.

There is no Navy commissary at this side of the zone. All necessary provisions may be obtained from the Panama Canal commissaries, and the privilege of buying from the Army commissary at Balboa is also granted to naval personnel. In the city of Panama there is a native market, where meats, fowl, fruit, and fresh vegetables may be bought at very reasonable prices.

AUTOMOBILES.

On the Canal Zone at the Pacific end there are about 50 miles of excellent automobile roads. The longest stretch is from Balboa to Gamboa, a distance of about 20 miles along the canal. In the city of Panama and its outskirts there are about 50 miles of automobile

roads, the longest stretch embracing Old Panama and outlying villages, a distance of about 20 miles.

Good automobiles can be hired at any time from the garages in Panama City at a rate of \$2.50 per hour or at the same rate from individual drivers.

AMUSEMENTS.

The amusements and sports on both sides of the Isthmus are similar. In the Republic of Panama, about 5 miles from Panama City, there is a golf course. There is a large swimming pool at Balboa, and also four excellent concrete tennis courts, which come under the supervision of the Panama Canal Bureau of Clubs and Playgrounds, and a tennis court at the Balboa radio station. There are several good beaches, one of which is easily accessible. Fishing and boating parties are arranged very frequently, and the fishing is unexcelled. At the various amusement places there are both indoor and outdoor motion pictures every evening and frequent diversions, such as musicals, etc.

CLUBS.

The Union Club in Panama City, Republic of Panama, which is frequented a great deal by both Army and Navy officers, may be joined by officers without initiation fee, with dues at \$5 per month. Frequent dances and receptions are given for the entertainment of its members.

The Century Club, also in Panama City, may be joined by officers for the initiation fee of \$12.50 and dues at \$3 per month.

Membership in the Tivoli Club is open to all officers, the entrance fee being \$5 and the monthly dues \$3, except for officers living on the Atlantic side, for whom the dues are \$1 per year, plus \$2 for each dance. Dances are held bimonthly at the Hotel Tivoli.

DECEMBER, 1920.





LIBRARY OF CONGRES



0 015 817 545 9