



Digital Resources on the Internet For Research of Canal Zone Postal History

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Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

INTRODUCTION

The Postal Service of the Canal Zone was established by the Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, in an order published in Washington, DC, on June 25, 1904, as Circular No. 1, Isthmian Canal Commission.¹ It was subsequently revised and expanded by a second order published by the Secretary of War on December 30, 1904 as Circular No. 4, in Sec. 7 of that Circular.² Both of these Circulars are attached as Appendix A to this article.

There are a number of primary sources which deal with the construction of the Panama Canal, and to a lesser degree the development of the Postal System in the Canal Zone. The two primary sources are **The Annual Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission**, which were published on an annual basis between 1905 and 1914, on a fiscal year basis ending on June 30th. Once the work on the canal was completed, the control of the Canal Zone shifted from the military government to a civilian government, and a new governor was appointed. Once this was done, the Isthmian Canal Commission was dissolved. The new governor, however continued to prepare and submit a report on activities in the Canal Zone, this now under the title **Annual Report of the Governor of the Panama Canal**. This particular report was printed at least until 1951, and perhaps even longer.

Access to these reports is difficult. Relatively small numbers of these reports were printed initially, and few copies survived outside of institutional libraries. Many, if not all, of the early volumes were published both as individual reports in paper wrappers, and as a House or Senate document in the Congressional Serial Set (CSS), which were bound in sheepskin bindings, and which unfortunately, tended to disintegrate over time. The United States Congress authorized that a number of federal repositories be identified, and copies of volumes of the CSS were to be deposited there and thus would be made available to the public.

In reality, many libraries do not have a complete set of the CSS, primarily as a result of being named as a federal depository at some later date, and often not the complete set of the documents of interest on the Panama Canal and the Canal Zone. And when the researcher is able to locate a few copies, it is often difficult or inconvenient to visit that library, and the condition of many of these volumes are now such they are so fragile and difficult to handle and photocopy for research purposes that libraries chose not to make them available for Interlibrary Loan.

¹ **Proceedings Isthmian Canal Commission, March to Sept, 1904, Meetings Nos. 1 to 49**, GPO, No date., p 449. Also in **Executive Orders relating to the Isthmian Canal Commission, March 4, 1904 to June 12, 1911, Inclusive**, GPO, 1911, p. 14.

² *ibid.*, p. 459. Also in **Executive Orders relating to the Isthmian Canal Commission, March 4, 1904 to June 12, 1911, Inclusive**, GPO, 1911, p. 17

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

There is a bright spot in this story, and that is the emergence of several digital libraries currently being created and stored on-line on the Internet, where access is available to anyone with a home computer. The two best known are the **Google Books Project** and **Internet Archive**, and these provide access to many government reports and publications, as well as other published works which are no longer protected by copyright. There are a number of other similar digital library projects with which I have less experience, so I will not attempt to discuss them here.

Each of these resources has a different group of publications available, and each resource offers its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Some of the more important of these will be discussed in the following sections, with an emphasis on references appropriate to the study of Canal Zone postal history.

GOOGLE BOOKS PROJECT

The Google Books Project began as early as 2002 with some preliminary investigations into the difficulties that would be encountered in scanning a single book, and the effort that would be required to scan entire libraries. Starting with just a few books, the project has grown to where by 2012 it is claimed that over 20 million books have been digitized and are available for access by anyone interested. When the project started, Google partnered with a number of major libraries, including the Harvard University Library, University of Michigan Library, New York Public Library, University of Oxford Bodleian Library at Oxford, England, and the Stanford University Library. For a brief overview of the Google Books projects, see the Wikipedia entry.³

Of particular interest to anyone interested in historical research, a significant number of the books digitized were government publications, but since each library had different holdings, not every volume in a series was available to be digitized, and in some instances, multiple copies of the same book were digitized when they were encountered in different libraries.

There are some difficulties with Google Books. The digitization process is primarily performed using the Elphel 323 scanner, which can digitize pages at the rate of 1000 pages per hour. Those books which have been digitized and which are available on-line, can suffer from missed pages, incompletely scanned pages, and in particular, pages which were placed into books as fold outs, usually illustrations, maps, or large tables, are not processed in a proper manner.

The cataloging of books following the digitization process is sometimes not accurate. Searching books by the usual cataloging points: title, author, subject, publishers, dates, etc., especially in long series of publications, is often difficult, and the information or metadata associated with the book is

³ Wikipedia, "Google Books", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Books, (accessed Aug. 9, 2012).

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

often incomplete, or inaccurate. The focus of the effort seems to be more on the number of books digitized, and not the quality of the record associated with the books.

Google Books also provides books to its users in three different viewing formats: full, snippet, and preview modes. In the **full view** mode, the entire book is available, and the contents can be read, searched, and even downloaded in its entirety. This mode is available for nearly all books which are not still under copyright protection. In the **snippet view** mode, which is used for books which are under copyright protection, but for which the authors have given Google Books permission to display selected pages (generally in the hopes that once viewed, the reader will be interested in purchasing the book), there are usually 20% of the pages available for viewing. The **preview** mode offers the typically catalog information about the book, e.g., title, author, publisher, date, but does not allow for viewing of any of the pages. This mode is used for books which have already been digitized but are presently under full copyright protection or copyright review.

Google Books allows for the downloading of all books which are present in the full view mode. There is one limitation, in that when a book is downloaded as a PDF file, the underlying OCR database for that title is not downloaded, so that one can no longer search the book automatically. This is inconvenient, as it makes it less desirable to simply download books to one's own computer to create a personal library of all volumes of current interest since they cannot be readily searched.

The ability to download is important for another reason, though. There are limited abilities to print or extract information from a page from the book while viewing it on Google Books. One can "snip" a short segment from a page using the Windows **Snipping Tool**, and then save that image, but there is no way to print a page or group of pages from the on-line view. As a result, when I have the requirement to extract one or more pages from a book, I have found it necessary to download the book as a PDF file, and then I can use either a PDF manipulation program to extract out from the complete file just those pages which I want to save as a separate file using a PDF manipulation tool (I use a freeware program called **PDFRider** for this purpose), or I will simply print a selected set of pages to another PDF file rather than to a printer (I use another freeware program called **CutePDF Writer** for this purpose). Both of these alternatives have worked well for me, but I am certain that there are many others that perform these functions as well. One thing to keep in mind when using these tools is that the page numbers in a book will typically not correspond to the page numbers on a printed page, so it is advisable to view the downloaded file in a PDF viewer (Adobe Reader or an equivalent), and manually identify the internal page numbers which are to be printed or extracted.

Many of the books in full view mode can be downloaded as a free **eBook** as well, but I have no experience with the formats that are available, or how well this process works.

Google Books also has some interesting views on copyright protection. They tend to consider every book published after 1922 (and soon to be 1923) to be still under copyright protection, including most US government publications. Thus many reports that by law would not be under copyright

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

protection because of their origin with the United States government are not available in full view mode.

Google Books can be accessed from the main Google home page, go to the **More** tab, click, and then select **Books** from the drop down list. There is also an **Advanced Book Search**, which allowed one to qualify his search by title, author, publisher, dates of publications, and keywords in various combinations, but it does not appear on every search screen, and can often be difficult to locate. A direct link to their **Advanced Book Search** is here:

http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search

Google books also offers a feature called **My Library**, by which one can create a series of **Bookshelves**, and then flag individual books on a subject to be positioned on those shelves. This is useful for grouping books on a particular subject in such a way that one can find them again, perhaps more quickly than would be possible by performing a new search. For example, I have been able to locate and place on bookshelves in **My Library** over 200 different digitized versions of the USPOD Annual Reports of the Postmaster General, for most years between the years of 1823 and 1922, which is a useful resource for researching activities with the USPOD. Unfortunately, this feature has undergone some changes in recent months, and is not as reliable as it once was. My recent efforts to place the books found for this present project on the Canal Zone was successful in terms of placing the books on bookshelves, but several of the facilities for retrieval now have incorrect links. This has been reported, but there is no telling how long it might take to correct.

The Google Books site has the digitized volumes of the **Annual Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission** for all years between 1904 and 1914, except for the volume for FY 1909. Also present were the volumes of the **Annual Report of the Governor of the Panama Canal** for all years between 1915 and 1923. There were also a number of miscellaneous volumes relating to the Panama Canal governmental activities, and a number of books on the history of the Panama Canal.

INTERNET ARCHIVE

The Internet Archive is one of the competitors to Google Books, although “companion” might be a better descriptor than “competitor”.⁴ It both digitizes books in its own right, although on a smaller scale, and also works with partner libraries to digitize the library holdings, and allows the public to upload and download digital material to its data cluster. As a result of this latter feature, some people have downloaded books from Google Books and then uploaded them. In many cases, an entry located at the Internet Archive will simple re-direct the link to Google Books when the user requests a file download.

⁴ Wikipedia, “Internet Archive”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_archive , (accessed Aug. 9, 2012)

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

The primary difference in the types of material found on Internet Archive that is not present in Google Books is found in the materials digitized as part of their partnerships with individual University Libraries. One example of importance to the present audience is the many volumes on the Panama Canal and Canal Zone which have been digitized in conjunction with the Panama Canal Museum and the University of Florida Library Digital Collections project. These will be discussed in the next section following this one.

The Internet Archive home page can be found at the following link:

<http://archive.org/>

There is a **Search** box on this page, and there is an **Advanced Search** function which can be accessed from the same page.

Books on Internet Archive have the ability to be searched for keywords or phrases, just like on Google Books. The Books found at Internet Archive are all full text view (they don't appear to do the snippet of preview modes). They can be read on-line, and can also be downloaded in a PDF file format, and as several different eBook formats for Kindle and Daisy readers.

There are also some errors in the cataloging information of the volumes in the Internet Archive. For example, multiple volumes of the **Annual Report of the Department of Sanitation of the Isthmian Canal Commission**, are incorrectly listed under the title **Annual Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission**.

The Internet Archive holdings include four different **Annual Reports of the Isthmian Canal Commission**, for years 1910, 1912, 1913, and 1914, but it also was missing the report for FY 1909. However, it did have in digital format copies of the **Annual Report of the Governor of the Panama Canal** for all years between 1915 and 1951, and many volumes of similar reports with different titles after 1951.

THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

The University of Florida has partnered with the Panama Canal Museum and the Internet Archive to digitize many of the holding of the Panama Canal Museum, including many copies of the **Annual Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission** and the **Annual Reports of the Governor of the Panama**. Most of these reports were actually digitized by the Internet Archive, with the University of Florida taking responsibility for digitizing the oversized materials, and those in fragile condition.

The **Panama and the Canal (University of Florida Digital Collection)** link can be found at:

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/pcm>

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

The volumes found in this collection can be viewed, and they have a much neater facility for accessing the different annual editions of the many reports. For example, a single page which links to all the editions of the **Annual Report of the Governor of Panama** can be viewed at:

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00097365>

There does not appear to be a facility to download these files unless you have a University of Florida account, and the facility to print files or individual pages did not work properly when I experimented with their procedure. However, since virtually all of these documents are also available on the Internet Archive site, once a particular report of interest has been located and reviewed, it can then easily be located on the Internet Archive site and downloaded from there.

This site also has a larger number of miscellaneous files and series of publications than was found on Google Books.

Another interesting site with some information about the Panama Canal is the Panama Canal Museum site.

The Panama Canal Museum link can be found at:

<http://panamacanalmuseum.org/>

THE PORTAL

Just the knowledge that all of these digital files are available is really not sufficient for researching subject on a casual basis, since they are not always straightforward to access, and when one does not access the resources of an extended period of time, it's easy to forget the techniques. To help alleviate this, and to make it simpler for the casual users and other individuals who are not as skilled as they would like in using the Internet and various search engines, I have developed a methodology that not only provides me with a straightforward way to access all of the digital files that have been located, but to share that capability with others. Using an Excel spreadsheet with the names of many (certainly not all) of the more useful publications relating to the Canal Zone, and which includes a direct link to each publication, I save these in a PDF file which I call a "Portal". This "Porta", (my own name), can be placed on any computer, and by opening the Portal file, the user can quickly locate the reference of interest, and simply click on the desired link. The desired file will then open in the browser on the users computer..

It should be noted that when I was able to locate multiple copies of any one publication, I often included two and even three links to three different digitized volumes. This was done because of the likely possibility of missing or improperly scanned pages, so that if one version was missing a page of

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

importance, there was an alternate volume to look at. The selection of particular publications was based more on what materials I located than what I considered to be important.

The accompanying **CZ_Portal** is in a PDF file format, and should be viewed using a standard PDF file reader such as Adobe Reader, Foxit, or any other reader convenient to the user. For my own use, I made a copy of this file, and put it on my Desktop, so that when I want to access a resource document, I can simply double-click on the Icon, then select the link to the document I want to view, and it is loaded into my browser.

The present **CZ_Portal.PDF** should be considered a preliminary or beta **test** version, and may have errors, etc., so users are invited to provide me with feedback in terms of

- (1) Other publications which should be added to this Link Table.
- (2) Broken Links
- (3) Incorrect Links or errors in Titles, etc.

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Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

Appendix A

A.1 Circular No. 1. Creation of the Canal Zone Postal Service.

Proceedings of the Isthmian Canal Commission, March 22, 1904, to March 29, 1911,
p. 449

OFFICE
OF
THE ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION.

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 25, 1904.

CIRCULAR NO. 1. }
ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION. }

The following order of the Secretary of War is published for the information and guidance of all concerned:

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, June 24, 1904.

TO THE CHAIRMAN

OF THE ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION.

SIR:

The necessities of the inhabitants and the due administration of the affairs of government in the Canal Zone at Panama require the establishment of post-offices and postal service in that territory.

It is therefore ordered: That a Post-Office be established in each of the following named towns of the Canal Zone, to wit: Cristobal, Gatun, Bohea, Gorgona, Bas Obispo, Empire, Culebra, La Boca and Ancon.

The post-offices at Cristobal and Ancon shall be money order offices.

The Governor of the Canal Zone is hereby authorized to appoint postmasters for the post-offices herein established and fix the compensation therefor, subject to the approval of the Isthmian Canal Commission.

The Governor of the Canal Zone is directed to formulate a plan for a practical and efficient postal service in said Canal Zone, and including such measures and provisions of the postal service of the United States as are not inapplicable to the conditions of law and fact existing in the Canal Zone, and to report said plan to the Chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission for such action as the discretion of the Commission shall approve.

Pending the establishment of the postal service by act of the Commission or other competent authority, the Governor of the Canal Zone is hereby authorized to establish post offices at such

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

additional places in the Canal Zone as in his judgment the interests of the public require, and to appoint postmasters therefor and fix their compensation, subject to the approval or other action thereon by the Isthmian Canal Commission.

The Governor of the Canal Zone is also authorized to adopt and enforce such temporary rules, regulations, provisions and requirements as may be necessary to secure a practical and efficient postal service in said Canal Zone; and to employ such temporary assistants and employees as the exigencies of the service require.

By direction of the President:

(Signed) WM. H. TAFT,
Secretary of War.

This order will be duly published and enforced.

(Signed) J. G. WALKER,
Chairman Isthmian Canal Commission.

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

A.2 Circular No. 1, Sec. 7. Revision of the Canal Zone Postal Service.

Proceedings of the Isthmian Canal Commission, March 22, 1904, to March 29, 1911, p. 449

OFFICE
OF
THE ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *December 30, 1904.*

CIRCULAR NO. 4,
ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION.

The following order of the Secretary of War is published for the information and guidance of all concerned:

PANAMA, December 3, 1904.

By direction of the President, it is ordered that, subject to the action of the 58th Congress as contemplated by the act of Congress, approved April 28, 1904:

Sections 1 to 6 omitted

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

SEC. 7. The Executive Order of June 24, 1904, concerning the establishment of post-offices and postal service in the Canal Zone is modified and supplemented by the following provisions:

All mail matter carried in the territory of the Canal Zone to or through the Republic of Panama to the United States and to foreign countries shall bear the stamps of the Republic of Panama properly crossed by a printed mark of the Canal Zone Government, and at rates the same as those imposed by the Government of the United States upon its domestic and foreign mail matter, exactly as if the United States and the Republic of Panama for this purpose were common territory. The authorities of the Canal Zone shall purchase from the Republic of Panama such stamps as the authorities of the Canal Zone desire to use in the Canal Zone at forty per centum of their face value; but this order shall be inoperative unless the proper authorities of the Republic of Panama shall by suitable arrangement with the postal authorities of the United States provide for the transportation of mail matter between post-offices on the Isthmus of Panama and post-offices in the United States at the same rates as are now charged for domestic postage in the United States, except all mail matter lawfully franked and inclosed in the so-called penalty envelopes of the United States Government concerning the public business of the United States, which shall be carried free, both by the governments of Panama and of the Canal Zone: *Provided, however,* That the Zone authorities may for the purpose of facilitating the transportation of through mail between the Zone and the United States in either direction inclose such through mail properly stamped or lawfully franked in sealed mail pouches, which shall not be opened by the authorities of the Republic of Panama in transit, on condition that the cost of transportation of such mail pouches shall be paid by the Zone Government.

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

A.3 Act No. 8, Sec. 42 to 44. An Act to provide for the organization of the executive branch of the government of the Canal Zone.

Laws of the Canal Zone, Isthmus of Panama, enacted by the Isthmian Canal Commission, p52ff

EXECUTIVE BRANCH, CANAL ZONE GOVERNMENT.

ACT No. 8.

An Act to provide for the organization of the executive branch of the government of the Canal Zone. Isthmus of Panama.

By authority of the President of the United States, be it enacted by the Isthmian Canal Commission:

SECTION 1. The powers of the executive branch of the Government of the Canal Zone, Isthmus of Panama, shall be distributed among and vested in the following offices, departments, services and governmental organizations:

Governor, Executive Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor, Department of Public Health, Department of Revenues, Department of Police and Prisons, Department of Justice, Bureau of Education, and such other

Balance of Section 1 through Section 41 omitted.

SEC. 42. By Executive Order dated June 24, 1904, provision was made as follows:

“That a post office be established in each of the following named towns of the Canal Zone, to-wit: Cristobal, Gatun, Bohio, Gorgona, Bas Obispo, Empire, Culebra, La Boca and Ancon. The post offices at Cristobal and Ancon shall be money-order offices.”

The post office at Bas Obispo is discontinued, and post offices are hereby established at San Pablo and Matachin.

There is hereby created and established a postal service for the Canal Zone, Isthmus of Panama.

It shall be the duty of the Postal Service to administer the affairs of the post offices and the postal affairs of the Zone.

The Postal Service of the Canal Zone shall be conducted, regulated and controlled by such of the laws, rules and regulations of the

Digital Resources for Canal Zone Postal History

postal service of the United States as are not inapplicable to the conditions of law and fact existing in the Canal Zone, and the laws enacted and the rules and regulations adopted by the Isthmian Canal Commission.

The postmasters of the Canal Zone shall be appointed by the Governor, and shall give bond for the faithful performance of the duties of their office in such sum and with such surety or sureties as shall be approved by the Governor.

The Governor of the Zone is hereby authorized to establish new post offices or discontinue those already established at such places and at such times as, in his judgment, the public service requires.

The annual salaries of the postmasters, payable monthly, shall be as follows: San Pablo, ninety dollars; Gatun, ninety dollars; La Boca, one hundred and twenty dollars; Culebra, one hundred and twenty dollars; Empire, one hundred and twenty dollars; Matachin, one hundred and twenty dollars; Bohio, one hundred and twenty dollars; Gorgona, ninety dollars; Cristobal, twelve hundred dollars, and Ancon, nine hundred dollars.

SEC. 43. There is hereby created and established the office of Director of Posts of the Canal Zone, Isthmus of Panama.

The Director of Posts is charged with direct conduct and control of the affairs of the Postal Service, inspection of post offices and accounts of postmasters, the approval of requisitions for supplies for post offices and postmasters and the distribution of such supplies.

Postage stamps for the payment of postage in the Canal Zone shall be the postage stamps of the United States, surcharged with the words "Canal Zone—Panama." Requisitions for said stamps shall be drawn by the Director of Posts, approved by the Governor of the Zone and delivered to the Treasurer of the Zone, who shall forward the same to the Treasurer of the Isthmian Canal Commission; the stamps, when received, shall be deposited with the Treasurer of the Canal Zone for distribution to the postmasters of the Zone, who shall make requisition therefor as required by the necessities of their offices and forward such requisitions to the Director of Posts for his approval, and upon approval by him, the Treasurer of the Zone is authorized to honor the same.

SEC. 44. All moneys collected or received by the Director of Posts by virtue of his office shall be deposited forthwith with the Treasurer of the Canal Zone, and a receipt in duplicate therefor issued by the Treasurer to the Director of Posts, who shall attach the original thereof to his monthly account.

Between the first and fifth day of each calendar month the Director of Posts shall forward his accounts and the accounts of the Postal Service to the Auditor of the Canal Zone for audit.

End of Section 44.

Section 45 to end omitted.