

PANAMA AND THE CANAL

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Panama and the canal by Alfred B. Hall & Clarence L. Chester

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**PANAMA AND
THE CANAL**



"SANTA MARIA."—ONE OF THE SHIPS OF COLUMBUS.
(From an exact reproduction built in 1892.)

PANAMA AND THE CANAL

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INTRODUCTION

“Castilla del Oro”—Golden Castile—was the name given by Columbus to the Isthmus of Panama, in honor of Isabella, good queen of the old Spanish kingdom of Castile. Golden, indeed, it was to be, a land of treasure far beyond the dreams of the Great Discoverer. “Grave of the Spaniards”—the pioneers called it, who fought to win the treasure from savage Indians, cruel pirates, and a deadly climate. “Key to the Pacific”—some, too, have named it. As if, when Nature raised the broad continents of North and South America between the Atlantic and the Pacific, she originally planned a waterway at this convenient spot to connect the two oceans. And then, as an after-thought, threw in this bit of land, at its narrowest point scarcely thirty miles wide, and with its hills at one place only three hundred feet above the sea, as a challenge to the strength and skill of mankind.

Four hundred years ago men accepted the challenge. First Spain, then Scotland, England, and France poured out money and life in a vain effort to build a waterway and to defeat the powers of Nature. Last of all, the United States, led by a dauntless President, took up the fight.

"This is the greatest engineering work the world has yet seen," said President Roosevelt, "but the Canal shall be built!"

These names tell in short the story of the Isthmus. In all the Western Hemisphere no spot has had so romantic a history as this small strip of land that joins the two continents but separates the two greatest oceans of the world.

PREFACE

In this little book the authors have attempted to present the history of Panama and of the Panama Canal in a manner which will be interesting and intelligible to younger readers. As a possession of the United States the Canal Zone deserves attention from teachers of geography and history. The state of Panama itself has had a most dramatic and thrilling history. And the Canal is not only a wonder of modern engineering but is also an American achievement of first importance. The story is full of important facts in history and geography and presents a fund of information of a distinctly educational character.

For the early historical matter the authors have drawn freely upon such material as is found in Fiske's *Discovery of America* and in a large number of books of a similar character. Through the courtesy of the Isthmian Canal Commission, many records and pictures have been secured. These have been supplemented by photographs taken on the Isthmus and by personal observation and study in the Canal Zone.

DECEMBER, 1909.

