



CANAL GATOR TALES

May 2019

Recent Research Trends



130-B. A view in the Hospital Grounds, Colon.

In the past few months, we have had a significant increase in the number of research questions relating to the buildings, geography, and the overall built environment of the Canal Zone. Multiple researchers have asked us for assistance identifying particular buildings and sites. Some of these requests have involved buildings from the construction era at the beginning of the 20th Century, but many have pertained to buildings in the 1940s-1980s. Fortunately, we have many resources available to us when answering these questions, including photos, directories, townsite maps, and we have even reached out to members of our Friends group for assistance. In the future, we hope to create an online resource that identifies buildings and sites for researchers.

Genealogy research is always one of our most popular topics, with family members looking for information about their ancestors who were Canal Zone employees, Roosevelt Medal holders, West Indian workers, etc. Over the past year, there has been an increase in the number of researchers inquiring about women in the Canal Zone, particularly the women who worked in health care, in the military, and for the Canal Zone Government. While some researchers are looking for employee records (which are preserved by the National Archives and the federal

government), many are looking for photos, letters, diaries, or any personal accounts by or about their female ancestors.

Defending the Canal

In addition to the research trends described above, we also have seen an increase in the number of researchers interested in the defense of the Canal during wartime, particularly during World War II. Coincidentally, this will be the subject of our 2020 exhibition in the Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery here on the UF campus. The exhibition coincides with the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in 1945. In the Spring 2019 semester that just ended, a team of graduate students in the UF Museum Studies program researched and designed an exhibition focusing on propaganda and the Canal. In developing the exhibits, the group were able to select compelling objects from the collection in order to tell their stories.

To support the increased researcher demand and the upcoming exhibition, we are soliciting donations relating to defense and operations during World War II. We have had recent donations pertaining to the USO and volunteering efforts in support of the war effort, but we are looking to expand the collection. We always are interested in photographs, personal letters, diaries, and other unique historical materials. Additionally, we are interested in depictions of the Canal in comic books, comic strips, pulp fiction, and popular magazines during the war. In addition to the topics mentioned already, we are interested in anything relating to anti-spy measures, the lives of people serving in the military in the Canal Zone and region during the war, effects on Canal operations, and improvements made to roads and facilities in the CZ and in Panama, among other topics. Please contact John Nemmers at jnemmers@ufl.edu or 352-273-2766 if you are interested in donating any materials or contributing any stories.

The Panama Canal Society Reunion

We will be focusing on the 30th Anniversary of Operation Just Cause at the Panama Canal Society Reunion this year in Orlando, July 3-7, 2019. The PCMC exhibition will feature photos, film footage, artifacts and documents relating to Operation Just Cause, Manuel Noriega, and the experiences of Zonians before and during the military operation.

We are working with the PCS to plan the Cultural Seminar, which will feature a panel of experts to discuss the invasion from a variety of perspectives. Panelists include Joe Wood, Dick Morgan, Kurt Muse, and Bob Rupp. Kurt Muse also will make a special presentation about Operation Just Cause at the Annual Luncheon. Please see the [flyer](#) for more information about these activities.

We hope to see everyone in Orlando!

Save These Dates

July 3-7, 2019

Exhibit, Auction and Cultural Seminar at the Panama Canal Society Reunion at the Orlando Marriott World Center. Please contact Kathy Egolf (pankee@aol.com) or Joan Ohman (johman1@tampabay.rr.com) if you have items to donate or wish to volunteer.

FRIENDS OF THE
PANAMA CANAL
Museum Collection
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

