

The Panama Canal

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The history of the Panama Canal goes back almost to the earliest explorers of the Americas. It started as a hope for a waterway through Panama. There was a narrow land bridge between North and South America houses the Panama Canal, a water passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, but as I said before, it was narrow. The earliest colonists of Central America recognized this potential, and they dreamt of schemes for such a canal and was floated several times in the subsequent years (not really, but that little bit back there just makes it interesting). By the late 19th century, technological advances advanced to the point where construction started in earnest.

An attempt by France was made to build a sea-level canal failed, but only after a great amount of work was carried out. Along the way, the state of Panama was created through its separation from Colombia in 1903, thanks to a U.S backed revolt, so the U.S could then get control of the canal project area. Philippe-Jean Bunaua-Varilla (PJ, BV, or PJBV) changed people's opinion on the location to build a canal. The United States wished to build a canal in Nicaragua (country in South America), however, PJ convinced them to build it in Panama. Towards the end of the 1890s, he convinced the American lawmakers to buy the rights to build the French canal in Panama because Nicaragua was unsafe due to dangerous volcanoes everywhere. He then sent Nicaragua postage stamps with a smoking volcano on them to each senator to persuade their vote (which was very persuading, as you see, and very smart). Although in 1903 Colombia (which Panama was a part of), refused to agree to allow the United States to build the canal (they should've known better. Uh, hellooo? Now the canal is like, a natural monument!). The people of Panama, with help from PJBV, overthrew Colombia (yippee! FINALLY!) and ruled Panama as an independent country, which made the production of the canal possible.

The canal took 33 years to dig and reinforce. For only being 48 miles long, it should've taken much shorter. The Erie Canal, built in 1823 (the difference is 91 years), was 425 miles long, it only took 2 years to dig. 425 miles? In 2 years? Instead of 48 miles in 33 years? Wow. What a difference. And the Erie Canal was dug way before the Panama Canal. Almost a century! Why did the Panama Canal take so long? Well, construction of the canal began in 1881 by France, but there were engineering problems and too many people were dying due to diseases like Yellow Fever and Malaria. By 1906, more than 85% of the canal workers had been hospitalized due to a disease. Frightened, the workers started to quit their jobs rapidly. Construction stopped until the US took over in 1904. Then they took 10 more years to complete the canal.

The canal proved to be useful, as it saved 7,872 miles if you had to go around Cape Horn. The canal also allows ships to travel between the two oceans more safely and

in half, or less the time. In 1999, the Panamanian government took control of the canal. The Panama Canal was named one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World. Approximately 7,300 or nearly 92 percent of the workforce of the Panama Canal is Panamanian. The first boat to go through it was the S.S. Ancon, who was carrying a cargo of cement on August 15, 1914.

To sum it up, the Panama Canal will be remembered throughout history as a historical lesson. And some might ask, "What lesson is that?" Well, it's quite simple, actually. Always get professionals to do all the work for canals (otherwise, you can have like, a really big mess in history. But who knows. Maybe people did that on purpose)!

Bibliography

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