

CANAL GATOR TALES

September 2023

Fall Fundraising Campaign Kicks Off

Last year, we held a Fall fundraising campaign which was an amazing success because we doubled our goal of raising \$10,000 in ten weeks as part of our celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the PCMC at UF. This year, we're celebrating another significant anniversary and we're also hoping to repeat our success by holding another Fall campaign.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Panama Canal Museum in 1998. The museum successfully operated for 14 years in Seminole, Florida, before closing in July 2012 and transferring its collection to UF. The successes achieved by the museum over those 14 years paved the way for the PCMC to develop as a preeminent research collection for the study of the American era of the Canal. For more information on the history of the Museum, please visit go.ufl.edu/pcm.

As we have reported in past issues, we had another reason to celebrate this year because the Friends of the PCMC raised a record amount with the Silent Auction at the Annual Panama Canal Society Reunion in July. The Friends group raised over \$13,000 during the auction, and these proceeds have been donated to our [Oral History Fundraising Campaign](#). Inspired by this terrific success, we decided that it would be a fitting tribute to the legacy of the museum during this 25th anniversary year to raise an additional \$12,000 to bring the combined grand total to \$25,000. Beginning in October, we are kicking off a 12-week campaign and we hope to raise the \$12,000 by the end of year.

All funds raised during this Fall campaign will be contributed towards our Oral History Campaign so that we can continue to conduct interviews and share them globally in our digital collection. Your contribution of any amount will directly support our oral history program. In addition, a donation of \$26 or more automatically renews your membership in the Friends of the PCMC; and, with a gift of \$100 or more to the Oral History campaign, you can request a Panama Canal Centennial Medal while supplies last. If you have questions about your membership or renewal date, please contact Susan Harris at susanharris@ufl.edu or call (352) 273-2505.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting the collection!



Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery Features *Cutting Edge* Exhibition

We hope that you have already visited our current *Cutting Edge* exhibition in the Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery, but if not there is plenty of time because the exhibition will be on display through March 2024. As we have done in the past, we want to share a few photos of the exhibit cases so that you can get a sense of how the exhibition is displayed. In addition to the images below, you can also visit an online version of the exhibition which is available via the PCMC Exhibits webpage: <https://pcmc.uflib.ufl.edu/exhibits/>.

The exhibition examines the engineering of the Panama Canal's construction, including the innovations in materials and technology that enabled the U.S. to complete a project of monumental scale in a time frame that many thought impossible. The exhibition also explores the engineering aspects of alternative and new canals across Panama that were proposed throughout the 20th century, as well as the new locks and expansion completed in 2016. If you are interested in visiting the UF campus to view the exhibition in person, please contact John Nemmers at jnemmers@ufl.edu.



This case focuses on early efforts of U.S. engineers to survey what remained of the French effort to dig the canal and to gather data for the monumental undertaking ahead.



This case highlights the dredges that were so crucial to the digging of the Canal, including the *Sandpiper* suction dredge, which was equipped to run 24 hours a day with the crew living onboard.



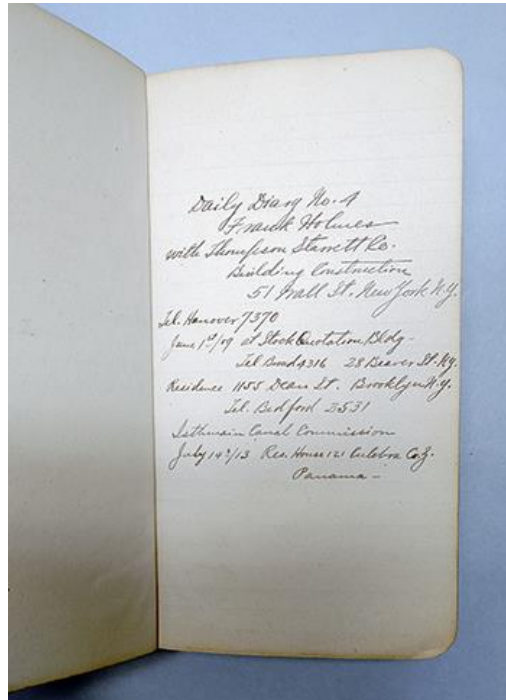
This case focuses on the use of reinforced concrete for the locks, which was a relatively new construction method at the time. No concrete structure of comparable scale had ever been built, and core samples were taken of the lock walls and floors during construction so the integrity of the concrete could be tested.



This case includes objects relating to electricity in the construction and operations of the Canal. The case features a blowtorch and soldering iron used to connect wires during the installation of the electrical system.

A Firsthand Account from 1913-1914

We recently received a gift from a new UF faculty member that is a welcome addition to the collection. Professor Karl Gunther presented us with a copy of a diary that belonged to Frank Holmes, a building construction engineer who worked in the Canal Zone in 1913-1914. Prof. Gunther is distantly related to Frank Holmes via marriage, and he told us that he inherited the diary, which he believes is his family's only connection to the Canal.



On the title page, Mr. Holmes wrote, “Daily Diary No. 4 Frank Holmes... Isthmian Canal Commission... Res. House 121 Culebra, C.Z., Panama.” The entries cover various activities between 1909 and 1921 unrelated to the Canal, primarily in New York. When Holmes began his employment with the ICC in 1913, the diary entries describe travel by boat and train, meetings with architects, his assignment to the Quartermasters department, and daily work activities. Upon his arrival on Sunday, July 20, 1913, at Cristobal, he stayed at Washington Hotel before traveling by train to Culebra to meet with Col. Goethals. His diary entry for that meeting reads:
Wednesday July 23rd 1913

At Culebra R.R. Station at 6:42 a.m. and meet Col. Goethals and proceed with him to Corozal Sta and to the office of the Engineer of the Western Division Mr. Cole. Thence in Mr. Cole’s motor car to Balboa and up to the new Administration Bldg - and meet Mr. Parsons Supt. for U.S. Steel Corp. and talk over with him the necessity of increasing his forces at once as the progress was very slow - he promised he would. Thence to Miraflores Locks and thence back to Corozal and board train for Culebra. Thence to Architects Office and remain all afternoon.
Mr. Holmes did not record his thoughts or impressions about Col. Goethals or the other people he works with, but he does record his daily activities and provides good details about his workplace, various projects, what it was like to travel around the Canal Zone, and so on.

Cruise to Hawaii in 2024!

Since 2004, the Panama Canal Museum and the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection have arranged exciting fundraising cruises each year to support the collection. In 2024, join us on a cruise to Hawaii on Norwegian Cruise Line's Pride of America. The 7-day inter-island cruise starts at Honolulu with stops at Kahului, Hilo, Kona, and Nawiliwili. For every cabin booked our travel agent, Condor Tours & Travels, will make a donation to UF in the name of the PCMC Friends. We are indeed grateful to Lori Snow and Condor Tours & Travels for their generous support of the collection! Contact Lori Snow via email at lori@condortt.com or call 770-339-9961 for more information.

Friends Memberships

If you haven't done so already, now is a good time to renew your membership in the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection at UF. If you are not a member already, please consider joining!

The funds collected are used to support education and research through the preservation, conservation, digitization, and processing of the collection. Funds also support the creation and development of local, traveling, and online exhibits that increase awareness about the collection, the Panama Canal, and the people of Panama and the Canal Zone.

We maintain these efforts through the support of friends like you when you join or renew your membership. Dues and donations qualify for tax deductions. Thank you for your continued support of the PCMC at UF. To join or renew membership in the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection visit <https://apps.uflib.ufl.edu/pcmmembership/> or call 352-273-2505 for more information.



SAVE THESE DATES

October-December, 2023

Fall campaign to raise \$12,000 for the Oral History Campaign.

Ongoing thru March 2024

Cutting Edge exhibition in the Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery at UF, which examines the engineering of the Panama Canal. Visit

<https://pcmc.uflib.ufl.edu/exhibits/>.

September 14-21, 2024

Join the Friends of the PCMC for a 7-day inter-island NCL cruise from Honolulu, September 14-21. Prices start at \$1,647 per person. Contact: Lori Snow (lori@condortt.com or via phone at 770-339-9961).