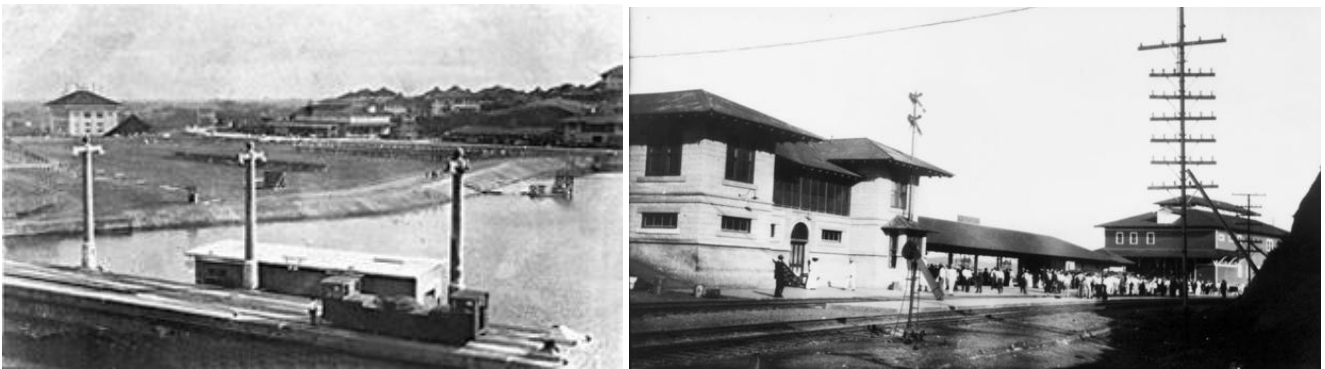


Three Generations And The Canal

Grandpere Butcher

In 1907, with the construction of the Panama Canal in full swing, Adrien M. Butcher (he had Americanized his name from Bouche) brought his family to the Isthmus and went to work for the Isthmian Canal Commission (ICC). The Gatun Dam and its Hydroelectric Plant were in construction and Mr. Butcher was assigned to that project. Upon its completion, he remained at the site as part of the crew in charge of its operation. This hydroelectric plant was, for many years, the sole source of electric power for the operation of the Canal.

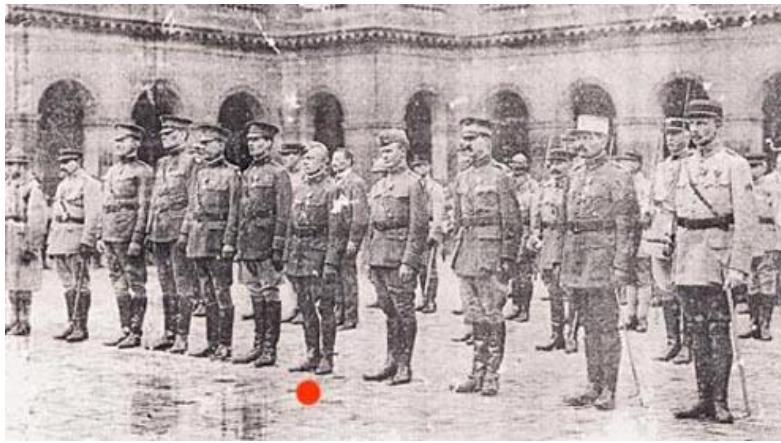


Left: Gatun around 1916 as seen from the locks. Right: Gatun train station around 1920 (1)



Gatun housing about 1916-18 (1)

During his initial work for the ICC, Butcher lived at Bohio, a part of the Gorgona work area. Both Bohio and Gorgona, along with many other little towns and villages well known in the history of the Isthmus, disappeared when Gatun Lake was formed and the canal was dug to its maximum width. Butcher, along with most of the residents of Bohio and Gorgona, probably moved to Gatun at this time. The start of World War I in Europe overshadowed the official opening of the canal on August 15, 1914. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, Adrien took a leave of absence and joined the U.S. Army Air Corps shipping out to France. Known there as Captain A. M. “Bouche” Butcher, he served as part of the ground support personnel to the “Hat In The Ring” Squadron of Eddie Rickenbacker. While



Adrien M. "Bouche" Butcher (red dot) receiving decoration in France during World War I (2)



General Pershing stops to greet Butcher (Pete's grandfather) during his visit to the Canal Zone in 1920. Seen between the two are his wife Martha holding their daughter Jeanne Pershing Butcher.(2)



In this view we can see the news cameras and the Gatun Locks Control House. From the left are Marguerite Hess Bouche, wife of Butcher's son, Adrien, Jr., and future mother of "Pete", followed by grandfather Butcher, with his back to us, General Pershing and Butcher's wife Martha holding baby Jeanne Pershing Butcher. (2)

in France he and the Squadron were awarded medals by both the French and U.S. governments. Returning to the ICC after the war, he continued working at the Gatun Dam site. His last child, a daughter, was born in 1919 and was named Jeanne Pershing in honor of General Pershing under whom Adrien had served in France. When General Pershing visited the Canal Zone in April 1920, he made it a point to stop and chat with Butcher, his wife Martha and daughter Jeanne Pershing. A. M. "Bouche" Butcher retired in 1934 and moved with his wife and daughter to the United States.

Adrien Bouche Jr.

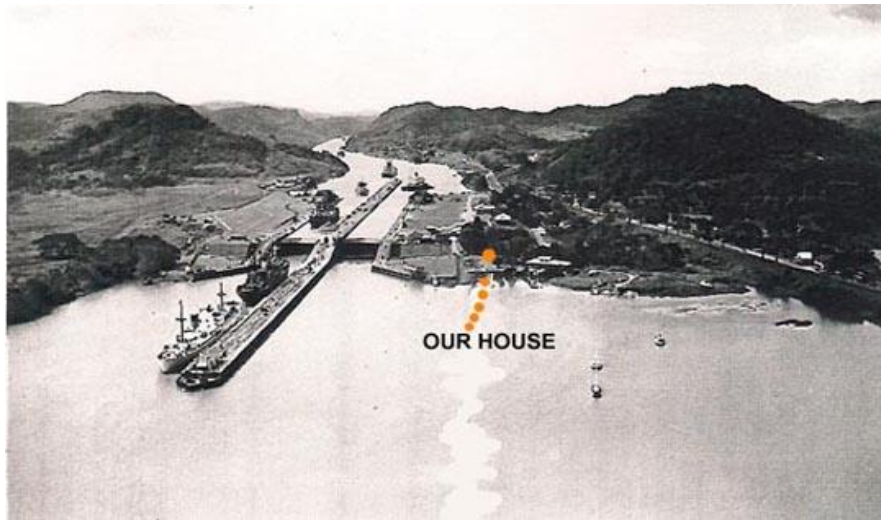
Meanwhile, his son and namesake, Adrien M. Bouche, Jr., (he changed the name back to its original form) followed his father's footsteps and was only 11 years old when he began working for the ICC during school summer vacation in 1911 (See NOTE 1. below). His first job was running errands for the Gatun Office of Maj. William L. Sibert, Chief of the Atlantic Division.

He continued working for the ICC during summer vacations and, in 1912, he became a regular employee beginning as a messenger. During this time he began to study electrical systems and was shortly promoted to wireman in the Electrical Division. In 1916 he transferred to the Marine Division as a motorboat operator returning in 1918 to the Electrical Division as a wireman after a brief stay in the United States. Then, in 1923, he went permanently into the Locks Division as a wireman at the Pedro Miguel Locks. Subsequently, he held the positions of locks locomotive operator, junior control house operator and then senior control house operator. It was some time during this period that he was assigned housing right by the southern entrance of the Pedro Miguel Locks with a clear view of every ship that transited the canal.

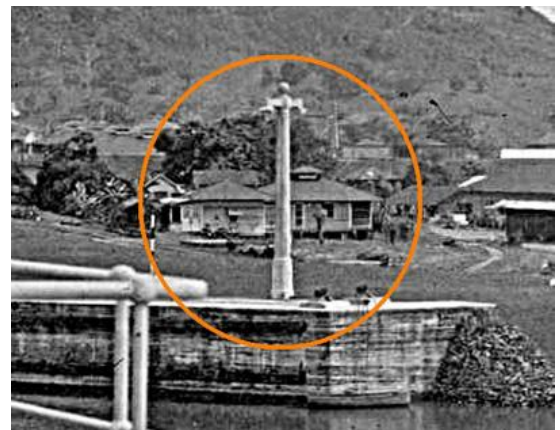
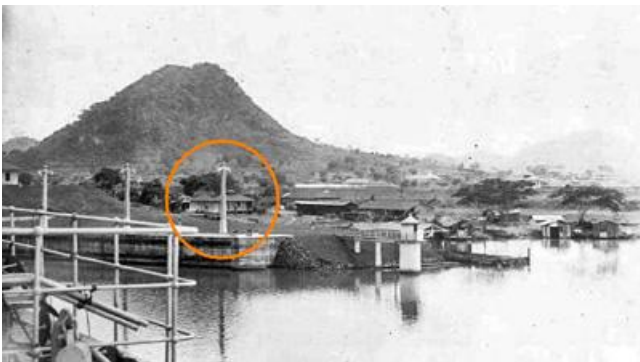


The plaque commemorating Lt. Col. Gaillard and where it rests today at the base of the Administration Building. (1)

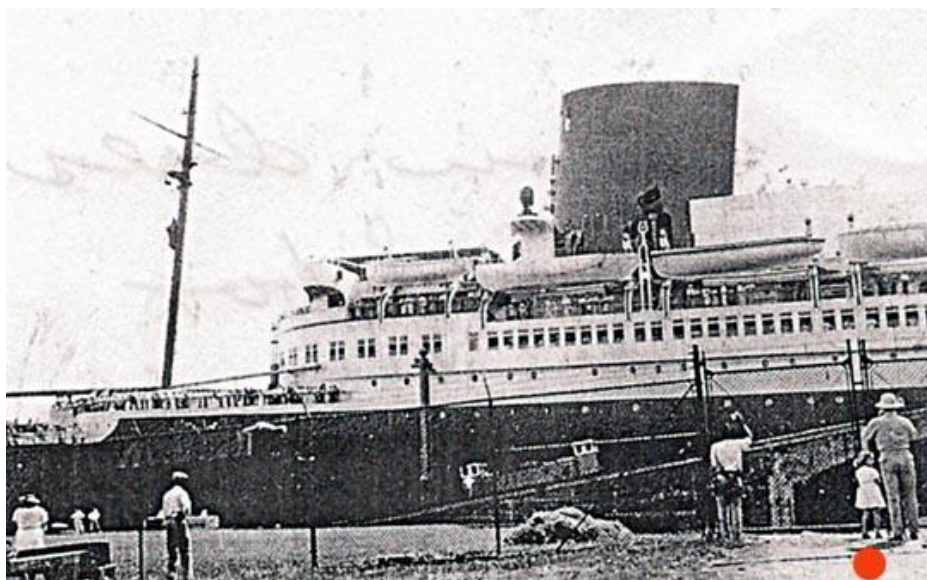
Sunday, July 31, 1960, was the last time Bouche passed a ship through the locks bringing to an end another era in the history of the Panama Canal. By then Adrien M. Bouche was the only man left in the Canal Organization who held the [Theodore] Roosevelt Medal, an award presented to those who had two or more years of construction day service. At his retirement ceremonies, Canal Zone Governor W. A. Carter presented him with a certificate and commended him for the longest service record ever attained by any employee [at that time]: 44 years, 3 months and 23 days.



Adrien Bouche, Jr., lived by the Pedro Miguel Locks giving "Pete" a great view of all ships passing by. (2)



The Bouche home as seen from the Pedro Miguel Locks.



"Pete" (red dot) and a neighbor watch the German liner "Bremen" pass through the Pedro Miguel Locks in 1938 or 1939. (2)

Born in Mount Carbon, West Virginia, Adrien M. Bouche, Jr., spent his earlier years in France with his French-born father and attended grade school there. Fluent in French as well as English, he mastered Spanish and Italian as well as several local dialects while living in Panama. From time to time during his Canal service, Bouche would take advantage of his vacations to travel through Panama, Central and South America as a botanist researching local plants and passing on the information he gathered to pharmaceutical companies, research laboratories and other scientific institutions. For over 40 years he contributed therapeutic drug plant data to the Smithsonian Institution, the Field Museum of Chicago, Missouri Botanical Gardens in St. Louis and other research agencies. Bouche also devoted many years to collecting and studying flowering plants and parasites and has several varieties of orchids named after him. Upon retirement, Bouche and his wife, Marguerite, moved to Virginia.



Left: L-R: Panama Canal Zone Governor W.A. Carter poses with Adrien M. Bouche, Jr., after the ceremony during which he received a retirement certificate after more than 44 years of continuous service. Next to Mr. Bouche are his wife Marguerite and his daughter Marguerite Y. "Pete" Bouche Budreau.(2) Right: Balboa High School 1951 graduating class photo of "Pete".(3)

James A. Hess

Bouche married Marguerite Hess in 1919. The Hess name is also prominent in the Canal Zone. Marguerite's father, James A. Hess, was the driving force behind the procurement of the huge bronze plaque commemorating the work of Lt. Col. David D. Gaillard of the Corps of Engineers (See NOTE 2. below). He had the plaque made in the U.S., transported to the Canal Zone and planned its installation at Culebra Cut. All this at no cost to the government of the Canal Zone as he had a way of talking people into donating to worthwhile causes. James Hess was also the founder of the Observatory at Miraflores. He talked the U.S. Naval Observatory in the United States into donating a telescope that was in storage and found a way to build the facilities for it adjacent to the Water Filtration Plant above the Miraflores Locks in 1933.

The Bouche Children

Adrien and Marguerite Bouche had three children: Georges, Adrien "Kibby", Jr., and Marguerite Y. "Pete". Georges began working as an engineer with the Electrical Division in the Canal Zone and, after a brief period with Texas Instruments in Dallas, returned to the Division where he was selected the first Ombudsman of the newly reorganized Panama Canal Company/Canal Zone Government organization in the early 1950s. Georges had a great interest in aviation and wrote several articles about aviation in the Canal Zone including one on the Boeing XB-15 "Grandpappy" bomber and its service in the Canal Zone with its unhappy ending in the Diablo Dump. He retired with 21 years of service.

Adrien "Kibby", Jr., worked for the Canal organization first as a signalman and conductor for the Panama Railroad and then as a Marine Traffic Controller until his retirement after 30 years of service.

Kibby followed his father's footsteps as a great collector of all things dealing with the canal. He salvaged some 16,000 glass negatives of the early days of the Canal construction going as far back as the French construction days. Before his death, he donated the bulk of this collection of negatives, photos and artifacts to the University of California at Riverside.

"Pete" worked in the Administration Building as Statistical Assistant in the Executive Planning Staff until her retirement in October 1979 with 27 years and 7 month of service to her credit. After graduating from Balboa high School in 1951, where she was my classmate and friend, she married Robert "Bob" Budreau, a Firefighter at Balboa. Pete was also a collector of PanCanal artifacts and memorabilia. She has been a priceless source of information providing me with back issues of the Balboa High School "Parakeet", The Panama Canal "REVIEW" and other data (See NOTE 3 below).

The retirements of Georges Bouche "Kibby" Bouche and "Pete" Budreau, brought to an end three generations of service to the Panama Canal by the Bouche family. Beginning with grandfather Butcher, the time each individual served, added together, totaled more than 145 years of dedicated service with the Panama Canal Government.

Louie Celerier with Marguerite "Pete" Bouche Budreau
Rev. August 10, 2014
Longview, Texas

NOTES

- 1. Mr. Butcher had another son named Henry P. Butcher who may have also worked on the Canal during its construction days. He and his son, Henry, Jr., both worked in the Locks Division. This article does not include their service time as we are concerned only with one part of the family.*
- 2. The Gaillard Plaque was the work of the famous American artist James Earl Frazer. The plaque was manufactured by the Kunz Foundry of New York in 1927. On February 1928, it was placed on top of Contractor Hill at the Gaillard Cut of the Canal. Because of slides and/or expansion of the cut, the plaque was removed and reinstalled in 1954-56 and in 1959-60. Finally, in 1998, it was removed for the last time and re-located at the base of the steps leading up to the Administration Building. It faces the El Prado and the Goethals Monument.*
- 3. Marguerite "Pete" Bouche Budreau and I graduated from Balboa High School in 1951. Our friendship began during our sophomore year when we both took Mechanical Drawing under Mr. Harold J. Zierten. Being too bashful, I think she was probably the first girl I actually had a conversation with. She was already going "steady" and that probably took away my fear of rejection. She was also the one who encouraged me to ask the only other girl in our drawing class to the first ROTC Military Ball. This, my first date ever, was Phyllis McLaren, a junior. I remember my cousin Frank A. Baldwin drove us to the Quarry Heights Officer Club. Pete and I, as with most other classmates, lost contact until my retirement. It was then when I started looking up all my former classmates. Since then we have stayed in touch and, as I mentioned before, she has been a great source of information for me.*

PHOTOS

- 1. www.czimages.com*
- 2. "Pete" Budreau*
- 3. Louie Celerier*