

**JOSEPH PENNELL'S PICTURES OF THE
PANAMA CANAL. REPRODUCTIONS OF A
SERIES OF LITHOGRAPHS MADE BY
HIM ON THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA,
JANUARY-MARCH, 1912, TOGETHER WITH
IMPRESSIONS AND NOTES BY THE ARTIST**

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Joseph Pennell's Pictures of the Panama Canal. Reproductions of a Series of Lithographs Made by Him on the Isthmus of Panama, January-March, 1912, Together with Impressions and Notes by the Artist by Joseph Pennell

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JOSEPH PENNELL

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OF THE PANAMA CANAL**

THIRD EDITION

JOSEPH PENNELL'S PICTURES OF THE PANAMA CANAL

REPRODUCTIONS OF A SERIES OF
LITHOGRAPHS MADE BY HIM ON THE
ISTHMUS OF PANAMA, JANUARY—MARCH,
1912, TOGETHER WITH IMPRESSIONS
AND NOTES BY THE ARTIST



PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

1912

TO
J. B. BISHOP
SECRETARY OF THE ISTHMIAN
CANAL COMMISSION

WHO
MADE IT POSSIBLE
FOR ME TO DRAW
THESE LITHOGRAPHS

AND
WHO WAS ALSO GOOD
ENOUGH TO ACCEDE
TO MY REQUEST AND
READ AND CORRECT
THE PROOFS FOR ME

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INTRODUCTION—MY LITHOGRAPHS OF THE PANAMA CANAL

THE idea of going to Panama to make lithographs of the Canal was mine. I suggested it, and the *Century Magazine* and *Illustrated London News* offered to print some of the drawings I might make.

Though I suggested the scheme a couple of years ago, it was not until January, 1912, that I was able to go—and then I was afraid it was too late—afraid the work was finished and that there would be nothing to see, for photographs taken a year or eighteen months before, showed some of the locks built and their gates partly in place.

Still I started, and after nearly three weeks of voyaging found, one January morning, the Isthmus of Panama ahead of the steamer, a mountainous country, showing deep valleys filled with mist, like snow fields, as I have often seen them from Montepulciano looking over Lake Thrasymene, in Italy. Beyond were higher peaks, strange yet familiar, Japanese prints, and as we came into the harbor the near hills and distant mountains were silhouetted with Japanese trees and even the houses were Japanese, and when we at length landed, the town was full of character reminiscent of Spain, yet the local character came out in the Cathedral, the tower of which—a pyramid—was covered with a shimmering, glittering mosaic of pearl oyster shells. The people, not Americans, were primitive, and the children, mostly as in Spain, were not bothered with clothes.

I followed my instinct, which took me at once to the great swamp near the town of Mount Hope, where so many of De Lesseps' plans lie buried. Here are locomotives, dredges, lock-gates, huge bulks of iron, great wheels, nameless, shapeless masses—half under water, half covered with vines—the end of a great work. I came back to Colon by the side of the French Canal, completed and working up to, I believe, Gatun Lock and Dam, and spent the afternoon in the American town, every house Japanese in feeling, French or American in construction, screened with black wire gauze, divided by white wood lines—most decorative—and all shaded by a forest of palms. Through these wandered well-made roads, and on them were walking and driving well-made Americans. There were no mosqui-

toes, no flies, no smells, none of the usual adjuncts of a tropical town.

At the end of the town was a monument, a nondescript Columbus, facing nowhere, at his feet an Indian; but it seemed to me, if any monument was wanted at Colon, it should be a great light-house or a great statue towering aloft in the harbor, a memorial to the men who, French and American, have made the Canal.

Next day I started across the Continent to Panama, for I learned the Government headquarters were there, and, until I had seen the officials, I did not know if I should be allowed to work or even stay on the Isthmus. But at Gatun I got off the train, determining to do all I could before I was stopped—as I was quite sure I should be. I saw the tops of the locks only a few hundred yards away, and, turning my back on the stunning town piled up on the hillside, walked over to them; from a bridge bearing a sign that all who used it did so at their own risk I looked down into a yawning gulf stretching to right and left, the bottom filled with crowds of tiny men and tiny trains—all in a maze of work; to the right the gulf reached to a lake, to the left to mighty gates which mounted from the bottom to my feet. Overhead, huge iron buckets flew to and fro, great cranes raised or lowered huge masses of material. As I looked, a bell rang, the men dropped their tools, and lines of little figures marched away, or climbed wooden stairs and iron ladders to the surface. The engines whistled, the buckets paused, everything stopped instantly, save that from the depths a long chain came quickly up, and clinging to the end of it, as Cellini would have grouped them, were a dozen men—a living design—the most decorative motive I have ever seen in the Wonder of Work. I could not have imagined it, and in all the time I was on the Isthmus I never saw it but once again. For a second only they were posed, and then the huge crane swung the group to ground and the design fell to pieces as they dropped off.

Across the bridge was a telephone station and beyond and below it the great approaches to the locks along which electric locomotives will draw the ships that pass through. There was a subject, and I tackled it at once. In the distance the already filling lake—among islands, but the highland still above the water, dotting it, crowned with palms and strange trees; dredgers slowly moved, native

canoes paddled rapidly, over all hovered great birds. To the right was the long line of the French Canal, almost submerged, stretching to the distance, against which, blue and misty and flat, were strange-shaped mountains, outlined with strange-shaped trees. Bridges like those of Hiroshigi connected island with island or with the mainland. It was perfect, the apotheosis of the Wonder of Work, and as I looked the whole rocked as with an earthquake--and then another. I was dragged into the hut as showers of stones rattled on the roof as blast after blast went off near by. Soon people in authority came up—I supposed to stop me; instead it was only to show pleasure that I found their work worth drawing. These men were all Americans, all so proud of their part in the Canal, and so strong and healthy—most of them trained and educated, I knew as soon as they opened their mouths—the greatest contrast to the crowd on the steamer, who now were all tamely following a guide and listening to what they could neither understand nor see during their only day ashore. These engineers and workmen are the sort of Americans worth knowing, and yet I did not see any golf links at Gatun. The day was spent in that telephone box and on the Spillway of the Dam—a semicircle of cyclopean concrete, backed by a bridge finer than Hokusai ever imagined, yet built to carry the huge engines that drag the long trains of dirt and rock across it, to make the dam. The dam, to me, was too big and too vague to draw. And all this is the work of my countrymen, and they are so proud of their work. Yet the men who have done this great work will tell you that we owe much to the French, and that if the engineers and the Commission at Panama had not the Government, with unlimited men and money, behind them, and the discoveries in sanitary science of which the French were ignorant, we, too, would have failed. They tell you, and show you how, the French worked on the Canal right across the Isthmus, and we are carrying out the great project they were unable to complete. And we have won the admiration of the world.

The sanitary problem is solved, but they tell you under the French, fever carried off a man for every tie that was laid on the Panama Railroad. This is a legend, but a true story is, that the French cared so little for their lives that with every shipload of