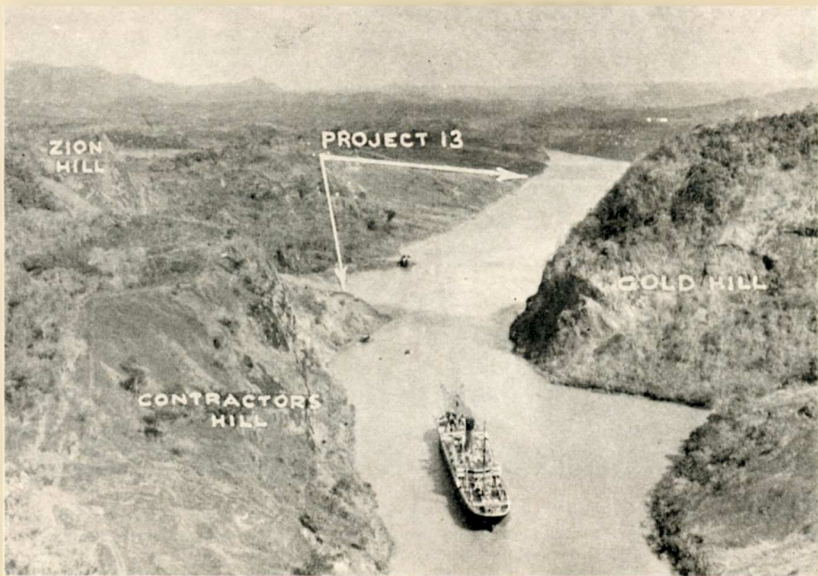


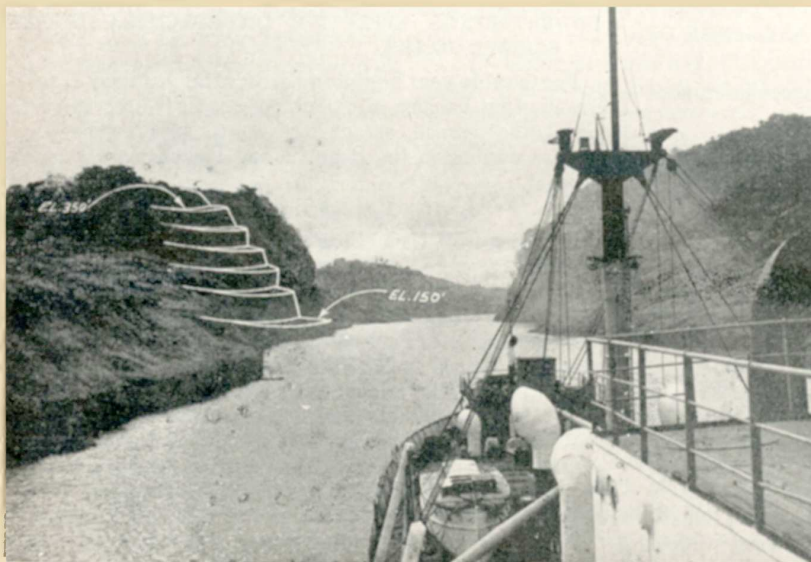
Contractors Hill Profile—



THE PLACE—the narrowest stretch of the Canal



THE CRACK—a threat to the precipitous hill



THE PLAN—a series of terraced setbacks

The Contractors Hill project, except for some minor clean-up work and the removal of machinery and temporary structures, last month became a part of the Panama Canal history.

Because of the potential danger from the rock fissure which ran across the rocky mass parallel to the Canal channel, the project attracted worldwide attention, particularly during the early phases.

The contract for the work was awarded May 25, 1954, to the Tecon Corporation of Dallas, Tex. While the original contract called for the removal of 1,700,000 cubic yards of rock and 150,000 of Cucaracha formation, this was later extended and the total excavated up to the end of August was approximately 1,820,000 cubic yards of rock and 605,000 cubic yards of Cucaracha, or shale.

In addition to the principal contract for the removal of a big part of Contractors Hill, the Tecon agreement was extended early this year for the removal of 250,000 cubic yards of Cucaracha from Project 13. This project has been in progress on an intermittent basis for about 20 years. It provides for the widening of Culebra Reach to a bottom depth of 500 feet.

Under the supplemental agreement, the Tecon Corporation removed all of the remaining Cucaracha formation near the water level. While a two-month extension was granted because of this work, the entire project was practically completed by the end of the original time-limit of the contract.

Except for the contracts awarded for the Third Locks project, the Contractors Hill work, officially designated as Project 13-A, was the largest ever awarded in the history of the Canal. The total excavation nearly equalled that required in the construction of Miraflores Locks.

Tecon subcontracted with the local firm of Bildon, Inc., for the construction of a drainage tunnel, five by nine feet, from the Canal side of the hill to intersect with the rock fissure, and the removal of the bronze tablet on the face of Contractors Hill erected to the memory of Col. David DuBose Gaillard. This subcontract was completed in July and August of last year.

Machine Job

Most of the equipment required on the job was brought new by the Tecon Corporation and arrived in July 1954. Excavation work was begun in August of last year and for a period of about six weeks one ten-hour shift a day was used. A second shift was added in the middle of September and the excavation was continued on this basis until early last month when one shift was discontinued.

The excavation reached its height during the last dry season; during the latter part of the work an average of about 8,000 cubic yards of material was being handled daily. The highest one-day record was set on May 20, 1955, when 10,070 cubic yards of rock were removed.

The Contractors Hill work was largely a machine job because of the nature of the job and the limited area involved. The maximum force employed by the contracting firm was 84 employees in skilled and supervisory work, and 73 in semiskilled and unskilled work; this was last June.

In addition to these, the Canal organ-

Before And After Tecon

ization had a maximum force of 13 men engaged on inspection and project management. By the end of last month the contractor's force had been cut to less than 50 skilled and about 30 unskilled workers, while the number of Canal employees assigned to the job had been reduced to six.

Most of the Canal employees were transferred from other units to Project 13-A and in most instances they have returned to their former positions.

The principal items of equipment used on the job included three 2½-yd. shovels, 15 large trucks, four bulldozers, two wagon drills, and two rotary drills.

Precision Blasting

One of the principal aspects of the Contractors Hill project was the necessity of blasting and removing the rocky mass without creating a hazard for Canal traffic or interfering with the movement of vessels. This was accomplished by precision drilling and blasting procedure.

The strict safety measures adopted at the outset of the work resulted in no interference to Canal traffic. The number of accidents to personnel on the job was remarkably low for a project of that nature and only one serious injury was reported in the 15-month period. One workman was gravely injured by a falling rock boulder.

With the conclusion of the Contractors Hill work, the town of Pedro Miguel will become practically deserted. The townsite had been slated for abandonment before the work was started but a number of family and bachelor quarters were made available to the contractor's force.

Deserted Village

The maximum number of quarters in use by these employees was last March when 26 family quarters and nine bachelors apartments were occupied. This number has now been reduced to 16 families and nine bachelors. When the quarters are vacated, all buildings in Pedro Miguel, with the exception of some 12-apartment buildings erected during World War II, are to be demolished.

Most of the public services at Pedro Miguel were discontinued several months ago. After the closing of the commissary last March the building was occupied by the Service Center Division which operated a luncheonette and carried a few food items, household necessities, and sundries. This was closed at the end of August.

Clean-Up Work

The clean-up work remaining to be done at Contractors Hill includes chiefly the removal of a relatively small amount of rock along the Canal banks which fell during blasting operations, and the removal of an access road on the slope of Project 13. Several temporary buildings used by the Canal and contracting forces will be demolished and removed.

The clean-up work will involve the removal of material at the opening of the drainage tunnel, but no further work on this is planned. It was sunk into the hill to the fissure to permit drainage of surface water and reduce the hydrostatic pressure.

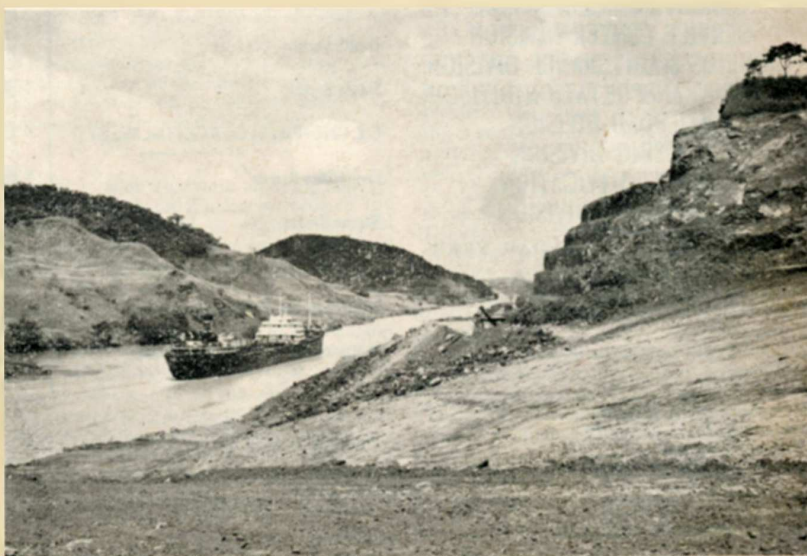
The Gaillard plaque was stored when it was removed from the face of Contractors Hill. This is to be reerected at some suitable site after the completion of all work.



THE JOB—men and machines at work in August 1954



THE TERRACES—as seen from the opposite bank last June



THE PROFILE—looking toward the Pacific in August 1955