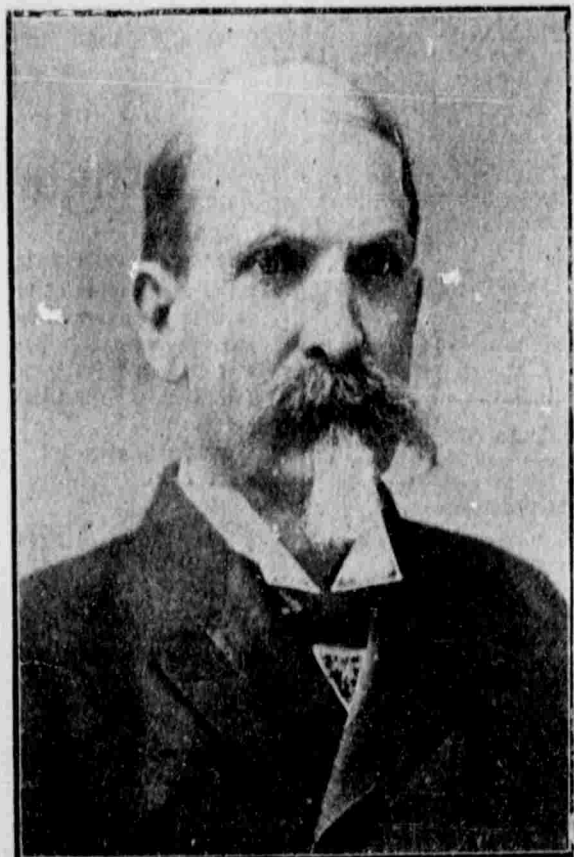


MEXICO IN 1904.

A Land Without Strikes, Where Wages are Twenty-five Cents a Day. Americans in Mexico and What They are Doing.

Mines Which Have Produced Four Billion Dollars in Gold and Silver—Farms Fifty Miles Long—President Diaz not to Retire—Roosevelt and the Panama Canal—Cleveland and the Third-term Sentiment—What our Ambassador to Mexico Says About that Country and its Prospects.



GENERAL POWELL CLAYTON,
United States Ambassador to Mexico.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

WASHINGTON, D. C.—I met Gen. Powell Clayton, our ambassador to Mexico, when he was in Washington a short time ago. Gen. Clayton is now 50 years of age, but he does not look 60, and bears no signs of the wear and tear of public life. Still, he has been in the thick of things for more than half a century. He comes from a family of statesmen. The Claytons began to do things in the United States more than 150 years ago, and they have kept pretty well to the front ever since. Joshua Clayton came to America with William Penn, and John M. Clayton, the secretary of state, who made the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, was his grandson.

Powell Clayton comes from the same branch of the family. He was born in Pennsylvania, went to school at Wilmington, Del., and, like George Washington, started life as a civil engineer.

Washington got \$5 a day for surveying the wilds of Virginia for Lord Fairfax. Powell Clayton got \$5 a mile for surveying public lands in Kansas in the days just preceding the war. It was his job as a surveyor that took him to the west. He was there when the war broke out. He entered the Union army and remained in the service until its close. He started in as a captain and came out a brigadier general.

After the war he bought a plantation in Arkansas, settled there and was elected governor of the state. He held this position during the exciting period of reconstruction, when he fought a battle royal against the Ku Klux Klan. He was elected to the United States senate from Arkansas and after that devoted himself to building the Eureka Springs railroad.

For the past seven years Gen. Clayton has been ambassador from the United States to Mexico. He was appointed by President McKinley, and says that he will close his term at the end of the present administration.

During our conversation I asked him

how he liked the position of ambassador. He replied:

"The office is a pleasant one, although it carries many responsibilities, and also the possibility of doing some good. I feel, however, that I have had it quite long enough, and I am ready to retire. It was my intention to have closed my public life at 70, but I shall remain until the end of this administration and retire at 72."

"What will you do then, general?" I asked.

"I don't know, but I suppose I will do what most old men do, that is, lead a quiet life enjoying my friends. My children want me to write my memoirs for them. I have been saving material all my life, and it is possible I may do that."

MEXICO IN 1904.

"What is the condition of Mexico today, general?"

"It is in an excellent condition. The people are prosperous and the country is on a good substantial basis. Times are good, although not so good, perhaps, as here."

"Does the country grow much from year to year?"

"Mexico has a steady natural growth," replied Gen. Clayton. "The population is now about 14,000,000, and it is increasing at the rate of a million every five years. A great majority of the people are native Mexicans, including those descended from the Spanish and Indians. There is no such immigration from Europe as to the United States. The labor conditions there are different, and the people who come in have other things to sell than pure muscle. Many come to invest capital in mining or to engage in trade."

PEONS WHO WORK FOR 25 CENTS A DAY.

"How about the labor conditions, Gen. Clayton? Do the capitalists have much trouble with organized labor?"

"Not at all," was the reply. "The only organized labor in Mexico is that employed on the different branches of the railways. Such men belong to unions, but their organizations are usually branches of the trades unions of the United States. The chief labor of Mexico is made up of peons, the descendants of the native Indians. They are not like our Indians, being far more industrious and more quiet and easily handled. They do not know what the walking delegate is and as yet strikes and lockouts are comparatively unknown."

"Give me some idea of wages, general."

"Wages are low," replied our ambassador to Mexico. "Twenty-five cents a day is paid for ordinary farm labor in most parts of the country, and in the factories the wages are proportionately small. The hours are long and on the farms the men work from sunrise to sunset, with a siesta at noon."

CHINESE CHEAP LABOR.

"I see by a recent dispatch that the Chinese are coming into Mexico by the thousands."

"Such statements are probably exaggerated," was the reply. "There are not many Chinese in Mexico, and they are admitted at only one or two ports in order that the character of those coming in may be carefully investigated."

"What are the 'Mormons' doing in Mexico?"

"They have three colonies," replied the ambassador, "two in the Bravos district of the state of Chihuahua, and one in the district of Arizpe in Sonora. 600 are in an American colony, not 'Mormons' in the state of Tamaulipas, which has been established within the past six months. All of these colonies are in a flourishing condition, and the 'Mormons' especially are industrious and thrifty."

"About how many foreigners are there in Mexico?"

"Comparatively few. Less than 100,000, I should say."

AMERICANS IN MEXICO.

"Are there many Americans?"

"Yes, more than those of any foreign nationality excepting the Spanish. There are 15,000 or 16,000 of our people there. All so far as I know, retain their American citizenship and most come intending to stay only long enough to make their fortunes and then return to the United States."

"What are the Americans doing?"

"They are interested in all sorts of enterprises. Some are opening up gold, silver and copper mines. Others have franchises for street railroads and waterworks in the cities. Some are engaged in farming and many are employed in connection with the railroads, which belong largely to the United States."

"Have many made fortunes?"

"Some have done well, but none have made the enormous sums which are now called fortunes in the United States. There is one man, Mr. Braniff, who is said to be worth about \$15,000,000 or \$16,000,000 in Mexican money. He built the Mexican National railroad, which runs from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, and has been interested in other enterprises of large size. Gen. Frisbie is said to be worth \$1,000,000 or \$2,000,000 in Mexican money, but we have no other multi-millionaires that I know of."

"Is capital invested in Mexico safe?"

"I don't think what you mean by safe," said General Clayton. "If danger from revolution or from confiscation by the government is concerned, it is perfectly safe. It is just like property in the United States. One must investigate his titles before purchasing, and the man who intends to invest should go to Mexico and examine things for himself."

"How about the coffee and rubber plantations?"

"Such things should be carefully inquired into. Everything depends upon the locality. Mexico has a variety of soils, some very rich and some not worth a cent an acre."

MEXICAN MINES.

"How about the mines?"

"Mexico is very rich in minerals, but it has been mined for centuries. It is estimated that more than four billion dollars' worth of gold and silver have been taken out of the earth there. The mining has gone on steadily since the days of Cortez. Alexander Humboldt, who, among his other scientific attainments, had those of a mining engineer, said that there were three thousand mines in operation in Mexico when he went through that country about 100 years ago. The Mexicans are good miners. They know the value of their own product, and they are shrewd dealers. Americans going there should investigate carefully. If they do so

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they may make their fortunes, for the country is undoubtedly rich."

"Is much American money going into Mexican mines?"

"Quite a good deal, I should say," replied General Clayton.

"Into what kinds?" I asked.

"Can you tell me something as to the extent of the mines?"

"Yes, I have a list of the principal ones which was made last year. The country has altogether more than 15,000 mines which produce gold, silver and copper. There are 74 copper mines and some very large ones. There are other mines which produce copper and lead, and copper and iron. There are more than 1,500 gold mines, and almost 4,000 which produce both gold and silver. Altogether there are 5,000 mines which turn out more or less gold, either pure or in connection with other metals. There are more than 8,000 silver mines which are producing, and the output of various kinds all told yield an output of about 40,000,000 gold dollars per year."

FARMS FIFTY MILES LONG.

"How about farming, general? I understand it pays well in Mexico?"

"The most profitable farming there is stock raising," replied the ambassador. "There are enormous ranches in Mexico. Some are so large that you have to ride more than fifty miles to cross them. A few years ago I went down to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and took a trip through the cattle country there. I rode through one farm which had twenty-five thousand head upon it and through another which had over thirteen thousand. This was in February in the midst of our winter. The prairies were then covered with grass which reached to my knees. The cattle industry is one of the great ones of Mexico. The total value of the ranches is more than half a billion gold dollars and the cattle are numbered by millions."

"Where are the chief markets for the stock?" I asked.

"The United States takes most of the surplus from northern Mexico," said Ambassador Clayton. "The cattle are taken across the border and fattened in Texas or the territories, and thence shipped to the great packing centers. In the south the chief markets are Cuba and South America."

"What is Mexico doing in manufacturing?" I asked.

"It is increasing its cotton factories," replied the ambassador. "It has now considerable over a hundred factories, which use something like sixty million pounds of raw cotton a year. The factories make different kinds of goods, including calicoes. They made over 11,000,000 pieces of cloth last year, chiefly

for home consumption. The industry is protected by a high tariff."

PRESIDENT DIAZ.

"Tell me something about President Diaz, Gen. Clayton," said I. "What kind of a man is he?"

"He is one of the ablest executives of his time," was the reply. "He has been president of Mexico for about a quarter of a century, and the prosperity of the country is largely due to him."

"Where does he come from, General?"

"He is a native Mexican," replied Gen. Clayton. "He was born in Oaxaca, which is about a day's ride by train from Mexico City, and he is old enough now to have served in the Mexican army during the Mexican war. He was, however, not much more than a boy at the time. Shortly after the war was over he left the army to study law, but he entered it again from time to time, taking part in many of the civil commotions which preceded his own election as president. He became president in 1876 and then began to bring order out of chaos. Since then Mexico has been quiet, and Gen. Diaz has managed its affairs so well that, with the exception of one intervening term, he has held the office of president from that time to this."

"I see it is stated that he is about to retire from the presidency," said I.

"I think not," said our ambassador to Mexico. "He may give the duties of his office over to the vice president while he takes a trip to Europe, but I do not think he expects to retire."

THE DAY OF REVOLUTIONS GONE BY.

"Suppose President Diaz should retire, what would be the effect upon the government? Would there be another revolution?"

"No," replied Gen. Clayton. "The day of revolutions has passed, as far as Mexico is concerned. The people have had the blessings of peace for almost a generation, and they would not submit to a change of that kind. Besides, the revolutionary element has died off in the interim, and a substantial business element of conservative people has taken its place."

"As an evidence of my faith in the stability of Mexico I have been investing in government bonds. They pay a little more than similar securities in the United States, and I regard them as equally safe."

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT AND THE PANAMA CANAL.

The conversation here turned to political matters, and I asked Gen. Clayton if he thought President Roosevelt would be nominated.

"I don't think anything can prevent it," replied Gen. Clayton. "He will re-

ceive the nomination, and his election is certain."

"President Roosevelt has made a wonderful administration," continued Gen. Clayton. "He has insured the fact that the Panama canal will be built, and in that he has done the greatest thing for the United States since our organization as a government, with the one exception of the Louisiana purchase. The canal will be of enormous benefit to all parts of the country."

"You were one of the few who voted for Grant in 1868, were you not?"

"Yes, I was," replied Gen. Clayton. "And I am proud of it. I still have my medal which was cast in honor of the occasion."

"I would like to ask you, general, as to the anti-third term sentiment of that of the people or was it a higher raised by the politicians to help Grant?"

"The anti-third term sentiment," replied Gen. Clayton, "was a creature of the politicians not of the people. Our citizens have no objections to a president holding a third term provided other presidents have come in between. The only reason against a third term is that the president might use his power to be charged against Grant. This could not be charged against Grant, for he was then out of office and had been so for four years."

"Would the third term argument have any effect as to President Cleveland, suppose he should be nominated?"

"I think not," replied Gen. Clayton. "There are many good arguments against his re-election, but that is not one of them."

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