ANNUAL REPORT OF ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA

1947

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ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA
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INTRODUCTION

On Saturday, 1 March, the Class of 1947 - forty students from eleven Spanish-speaking tropical American republics- received diplomas certifying that they had satisfactorily completed three years of field practice and classroom work; and on Monday, 2 June, the new school year commenced with an enrollment of 157 students from twelve countries. This number was increased to 160 by three boys who came late.

The popularity of the school continues to increase throughout tropical America, as indicated by articles in the press and by the visits of distinguished agriculturists and educators. A clearer understanding of our aims and purposes is gradually reducing the number of applications we receive from boys who are not serious in their desire to learn and practice agriculture, many of whom viewed the institution, in its earlier days, as a place where one could get a free education along more or less conventional lines. The result is that the total number of applications received annually (250 to 350) has not increased during the past three years, but the type of applicant seems definitely to be better.

We are gradually developing the kind of staff we have visualised from the start, and improving the classroom program on the basis of experience. Due to the nature of this school, we could not take over bodily the program of any other institution, but have had to feel our way, aiming to fit the level of our instruction to the previous preparation of our students and to practical aims outlined from time to time by our Board of Directors.

THE SELECTION OF STUDENTS

During the year under review, we greatly increased the attention given to this important point. A major improvement (we believe) was the adoption of the following policy: Instead of bringing in new students at the last minute, we commenced to get them on the campus at the beginning of the vacation period in March. All "recruits" (as the students now call them), were put to work in the horticultural department and were plainly told that they were on trial. If we were not satisfied with their seriousness, or if they themselves found that this was not the sort of school they thought it was, they would go home before the commencement of the new school year on 1 June. Some half dozen boys were thus "weeded out" and we commenced the school year with a full complement of students who had good prospects of continuing.

One reason for adopting this policy is that we have not found the personal interview, on which we depended largely at the start, altogether satisfactory. A bright boy may make an excellent impression when interviewed for half an hour in Guatemala, or Nicaragua, or elsewhere; but we may find, when he gets on the campus, that agriculture is not his vocation. Naturally, we can weed out a good many on the basis of a personal interview but the old policy of trial and error is in the last analysis the real test.

At the end of 1947, we had 157 students on the rolls. These were distributed as follows, by countries and by class years:

Country	1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	Total
Colombia	6	2	2	10
Costa Rica	9	7	3	19
Cuba	3	0	1	4
Dominican Republic	5	3	2	10
El Salvador.....	11	4	5	20
Ecuador.....	0	1	0	1
Guatemala.....	9	6	7	22
Honduras.....	18	15	11	44
Nicaragua.....	4	5	3	12
Panamá.....	5	3	4	12
Perú.....	0	1	0	1
Venezuela.....	0	2	0	2
	70	49	38	157

THE SECOND GRADUATION

This year's graduating class was made up as follows:

México	2
Guatemala	5
El Salvador	5
Honduras	1
Nicaragua	4
Costa Rica	10
Panamá	5
Colombia	2
Ecuador	2
Perú	1
Dominican Republic	3
	40

Commencement exercises in Zemurray Hall on Saturday morning, the first of March, were attended by about 400 visitors. The principal address of the day was made by Ing. Pompilio Ortega, Director General of Agriculture for the Republic of Honduras, following which came a brief address by the Hon. John D. Erwin,

Ambassador to Honduras of the United States of America. We were fortunate in having with us on this occasion Dr. Elmer D. Merril of Harvard University, distinguished botanist and member of our Board of Directors, who delivered an address, following which Mrs Doris Stone spoke on behalf of our Board of Regents. Certificates were then presented to 16 boys who had completed a post-graduate year of specialised training in one of the departments of the school, and diplomas to the members of the Class of 1947. Gabriel Camacho of Colombia, member of this class, delivered the Valedictory address, after which Prof. Luis Landa, Consul of the Republic of Chile, announced that a trip to that country, with a month's tour of agricultural regions, which had been offered by the Corporación de Ventas de Salitre y Yodo de Chile to the best student of the year, was awarded to Gabriel Camacho.

A barbecue luncheon was served at the Dairy building, after which the students entertained visitors with a dance in Zemurray Hall.

WHAT BECOMES OF OUR GRADUATES?

We are making an effort to keep in touch with our graduates, for two reasons: First, to have them feel that we are interested in their futures and ready to help them at all times, and second, to know how successful we are in developing a love of the land and a devotion to agriculture which will deter graduates from drifting into other channels. During the year we circularised all members of the Classes of 1946 and 1947. We were unable to reach some of them through not having correct addresses; but out of 67 who replied to our questionnaire, 50 were definitely engaged

in agricultural pursuits; two reported that they were engaged in work not agricultural in character; and 15 reported that they were not gainfully employed, which meant in most cases they were at their homes doing agricultural work but desired to work elsewhere.

Contrary to our expectations when we started the school, very few of the boys wish to strike out on their own when they leave here. As a rule they have no capital with which to work, and more important still, they desire to commence earning money right away and they want to gain more experience before setting up on their own. Many of them have told us that they prefer to start out working on a salary; they will save money, and when they have a little capital and more experience, they will buy some land for themselves.

We have aimed to get as many students as possible from farms and farming communities, with the idea that they would go home upon graduation and do a better job than they could have done, had they not come here. Several graduates who attempted this have written to us, rather bitterly disillusioned, because they have not had the support of their parents in trying to farm along the lines they learned to follow here.

To discourage the idea that boys who graduate here will have jobs in the United Fruit Company, we this year incorporated in the circular letter which we send to all inquirers, a statement to the effect that no one who is granted a scholarship should come here with any hope of eventual employment in that Company, On the other hand, we were able to help many graduates during the year by telling them where we knew jobs were available. The government of Panama has expressed a desire to take all of our best Panamanian graduates in "Fomento Agrícola" as extensión workers among small

farmers. In Colombia and Costa Rica, where the local schools of Agriculture turn out professionals with the title of Ingeniero Agrónomo, there has been some opposition to our graduates, who as yet have not been allowed to get good posts in the government service. This in the long run may be for the best, as we do not wish to see our graduates take white collar jobs though we do approve strongly of their being used as extension workers among small farmers, since we feel that this multiplies their usefulness to their respective countries.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

There have been few changes in the training program as set forth in our Annual Report for 1946. We feel that the addition of orientation courses in agronomy and animal husbandry, which were added to the first-year classroom work in 1946, has been a distinct advance. The fact that there is some repetition in what the boys get later in the courses on agriculture and animal husbandry, is an advantage rather than otherwise. We are fully convinced that it is better to learn a few things well, than to get too wide a smattering on many lines.

A third year of English was added to the program. This was deemed desirable in view of the keen interest in this subject, and the hesitation to speak the language which is characteristic of many students. This course is called Conversational English, It was given by several members of the staff, principally Mr. Hogaboom. We shall continue the principle of changing teachers several times during the year, in order to give the boys practice in understanding different accents and modes of speech. A point is made of discussing in class topics of agricultural interest.

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT

There was little activity in this field during the year. A shed for storing implements and feed was constructed in the Livestock Department, and facilities for hog raising were expanded. Minor alterations were carried out in the mess hall kitchen. Equipment for making panela (crude sugar) was put in shape for the 1947 crop, but we are still lacking a satisfactory cane mill. A shed was built for storage of gasoline and other inflammables - something we have needed for a long time. The general utility building behind the mess hall kitchen, part of which was originally planned for use as garage, was altered to provide four living rooms for single members of the staff, since we have found that the garage served no useful purpose and were short of housing for employees. A new silo was built to make it possible for us to provide enough ensilage to carry us through the dry season on a satisfactory basis.

METEOROLOGY

The rains set in late, but the rainfall year was very satisfactory otherwise. For the first time we have been able to get maximum and minimum temperatures daily throughout the year; they are shown below as a matter of interest. Relative humidity and miles of wind per 24 hours were also recorded.

Month	Rainfall in inches	Lowest Temp. F.	Highest Temp. F.
January	0.84	50.5	85.5
February	0.51	45.5	91.0
March	0.29	52.0	93.5
April	0.10	58.5	91.5
May	1.12	58.5	94.0
June	6.40	49.0	93.0
July	8.69	63.0	86.0
August	6.97	59.0	88.0
September	5.85	59.0	89,0
October	7.66	58.0	88.0
November	4.65	55.0	86.5
December	1.36	55.0	83.0
TOTAL RAINFALL.....	44.44 in.		

PERSONNEL

In February Miss Helen Flanagan left to become Matron of the hospital of the Cía Agrícola de Guatemala at Tiquisate. Her duties were assumed by Mrs. Alice Louise Dunn, who had previously acted as Miss Flanagan's assistant. In September the horticultural department was strengthened by the arrival of Mr. Don Fiester of California.

Mr. A. C. Chable of Florida was employed at the beginning of the school year in June, as Instructor of Mathematics. Mr. Héctor Murga, a graduate of the Escuela Nacional de Agricultura in Guatemala, who came here as Assistant in Horticulture shortly after we opened the school, returned from the University of Florida in July, where he had been studying for one year under the Burpee Scholarship in Horticultre. Shortly after his arrival he was offered the position of Assistant Director of the school in Guatemala, which we

were glad to see him accept because it meant not only a better salary than we could pay him here, but also a splendid opportunity for useful service in his native country.

On November 3, Sr Manuel Sandoval of Costa Rica, a graduate of the Medical School of the University of Honduras, who is required to do a year's internship before being licensed to practice, was employed in the Medical Department, and a few weeks later was placed in charge of our Infirmary.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

This Department continues to take first place in popularity, both with students and visitors. We estimate that fully two-thirds of our students intend to devote themselves to some branch of animal husbandry after they graduate.

We continued during the year to develop our dairy herd along the lines laid down in our Annual Report for 1946, i. e. breeding the best native cows to our imported bulls, with the ultimate objective of a dairy herd of grade cows, possessing one-half to three-fourths Jersey, Guernsey or Holstein blood.

Twenty-five of our half-breed animals freshened during the year, and have been producing about one-third more milk than their dams. This increase we attribute about 50% to good care and feeding from birth to first calving, and 50% to the blood of their Jersey or Guernsey sires. During the year six grade bull calves were distributed for the improvement of livestock in Honduras, while dairymen in the neighborhood of the school brought 218 cows to be serviced, free of charge, by our registered bulls.

Our class in veterinary medicine treated 125 calves belonging to neighboring dairymen for lung worms, vaccinated 225 against

Blackleg, and castrated 60. In September our two silos were filled with approximately 70 tons of corn fodder, 120 tons of sweet sorghum, and 10 tons of Napier and Guatemala grass, to be used during the dry season.

We continue to have excellent results in the field of hog breeding and raising. Thirty-eight pure-bred Hampshire pigs were distributed for breeding purposes, and more than a thousand pounds of ham and bacon were made by the students, as well as large quantities of lard.

In January we received from the United States a shipment of registered Toggenburg goats, consisting of one buck and ten does. Several does were subsequently lost, probably through having been shipped when too far advanced in pregnancy; but with the kids which have been born here, and the Nubian goats which we obtained locally in 1946, we now have an excellent herd and believe it worth while to devote considerable attention to the subject of milk goats, which may prove extremely useful to small farmers in certain tropical American climates. Some of the Toggenburg does are giving as much milk as the average native cow.

Our work in poultry has been handicapped by delay in obtaining an incubator from the States. When one finally arrived in May it was only half the size of the one we had ordered, with the result that our flocks of White Leghorns and Rhode Island Reds, at the end of theyear, are considerably smaller than we expect to have them later.

During the year a course in Beekeeping was added to the curriculum. From a modest beginning with one colony of bees a year ago we have increased our apiary to 14 colonies. This promises to be a

popular and worthwhile course as the potential production of honey in Latin America is enormous and many of the boys take to this subject with enthusiasm.

FIELD CROPS

Our cane was harvested by the students in March and April, and about 10,000 pounds of panela (crude sugar) manufactured, which should meet the needs of our mess hall until next season. One of the most interesting events of the year in this department was the harvesting of 1.16 acres of Venezuela No. 1 corn, which yielded at the rate of 46 bushels per acre. This may not sound high by Iowa standards but it is far above the average yield in Central America, and was obtained on land not exceptionally fertile, without fertilizer except a leguminous crop which had been grown and turned under the previous season.

From 8.6 acres planted to native rice we obtained a yield of 170 hundredweight of rice in the hull, which roughly speaking is 100 bags of hulled rice of 100 lbs each. We shall probably increase our planting of rice next year, as the mess hall consumes this product in large quantities.

Experiments with the varieties of yuca or sweet cassava introduced from Colombia have shown much promise, and the six varieties which have done best were propagated on a much larger scale. Sweet potatoes continued to be an important crop with us, both for the mess hall and for stock feed. The cultivation of pigeon peas as green manure and as stock feed was expanded very considerably. The use of Guatemala grass as a soilage crop (fodder to be cut green and fed in the stall) has proved so satisfactory that