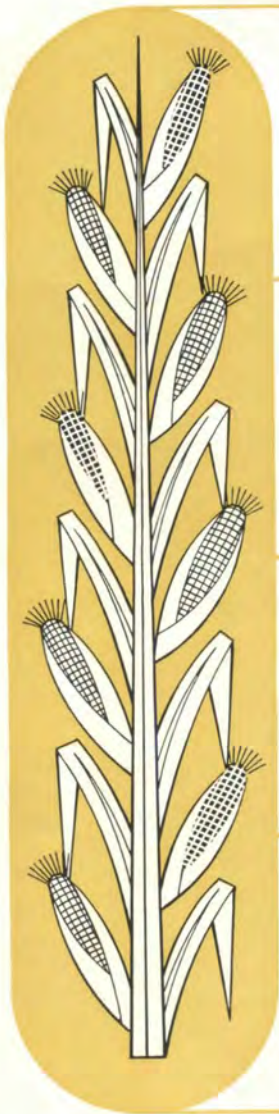




THE STORY OF THE  
ESCUELA  
AGRICOLA  
PANAMERICANA

(PAN AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE)





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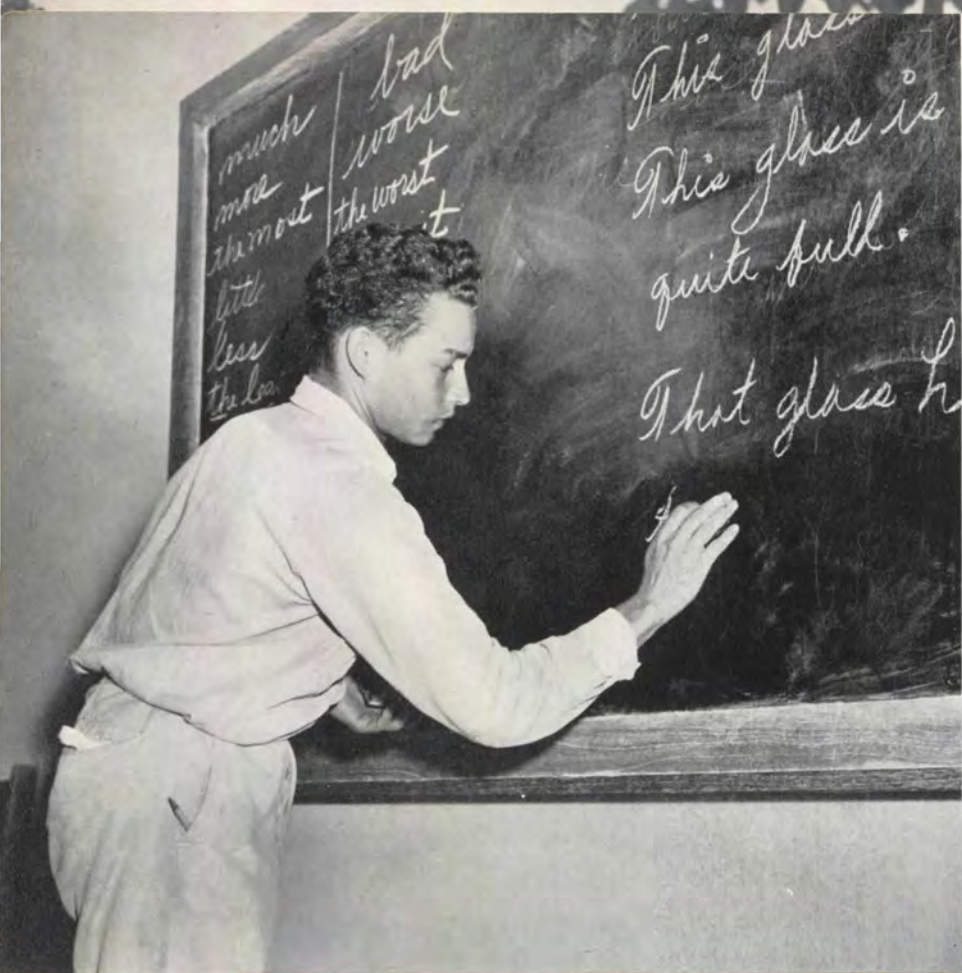
This was one way in which the United Fruit Company undertook to discharge its obligation of social responsibility to those countries in which it operates—and even to help others. An agricultural school seemed a logical corollary. In such a school would be trained, without cost to themselves, some of the young men in whose hands lies the destiny of a vast region where rational use of the land constitutes the hope of a prosperous future.

In the following pages Wilson Popenoe answers the questions which are most frequently asked by visitors. Thus is told the story of what we are trying to do and what has been accomplished at this school.

*W. J. Fennell*

President, United Fruit Company

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA, Inc.



The English language is one of the most popular classroom subjects.

Two students—one from Guatemala and the other from Panama, proudly exhibit to Samuel Zemurray and Walter E. Turnbull, officials of United Fruit Company, a head of Great Lakes lettuce which they have grown.



vocational training which would prepare them to assist in the agricultural development of a vast region, the future of which lies principally in rational and efficient use of the land.

Obviously, one small school could not possibly improve the agricultural practices of a large area in a short time. But it would be a beginning. It would help. And from the outset it was hoped that not only would such a school annually turn out a group of young men equipped to do a better job of farming; it was hoped also that the vocational type of training envisioned would encourage the establishment of similar schools elsewhere in tropical America.



From farmsteads such as this one, in the uplands of Honduras, come many of our students.

## *Why was the school established in this particular location?*

Since the primary objective was to help the small farmer, it seemed logical to go to the place where the small farmer lives. So far as Central America is concerned, the small farmer has lived since time immemorial mainly in the cool, relatively dry uplands or on the Pacific littoral.

Through the courtesy of the Honduran government a site was offered in the valley of the Rio Yeguaré, 25 miles southeast of Tegucigalpa, capital of the republic. This valley has a rather romantic background. Tradition holds that it was farmed by the Franciscan monks during the colonial period. In later days it came into the hands of a stalwart Honduran who had made his money out of the silver mines at near-by Yuscaran. Eventually it was divided among his heirs, and a portion of it, known as the Hacienda El Zamorano, came into the possession of the government. General Tiburcio Carías, President of Honduras at the time that it was decided to establish the school, recommended it to us.

After extensive investigation of other possible sites in Central America, it was decided that this hacienda possessed more desirable features than any other.

1. In soil and climate it is representative of large areas possessed by small farmers in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua; and to a lesser extent in Costa Rica and several other countries.

2. The elevation of the arable portion (about 1000 acres on the valley floor) is between 2400 and 2700 feet, which means that the climate is sufficiently cool so that students can work out of doors throughout the year without discomfort, but at the same time most of the important tropical crops can be cultivated successfully.

3. An excellent supply of pure water for domestic use was available from springs on the mountainside in the upper part of the property.

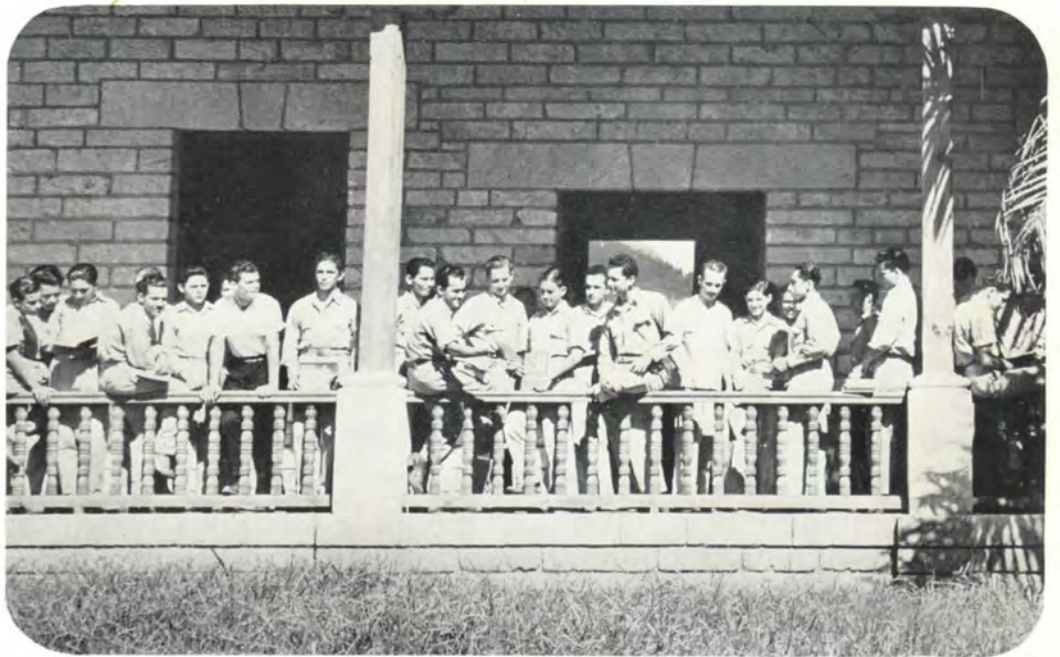
4. A stream which comes down from the mountains offered sufficient hydroelectric power to meet most of our needs, as well as water to irrigate about 200 acres. Since we feel that irrigation will play an important part in the future development of tropical American agriculture this was a major consideration.

5. The site is not close to any large city, hence students would lead the normal life of farmers anywhere.

The property of some 3500 acres was therefore purchased from the Honduran government, and later increased through the acquisition of a number of small parcels on the upper slopes of an old volcanic peak, Uyuca, which overlooks the valley. These served to protect our watershed and to give us a small tract of seven acres in what may have been at one time a crater, where, because of the elevation of nearly 6000 feet, we are able to grow such



The Escuela Agricola Panamericana is located in the very heart of Middle America.



temperate-zone crops as wheat, potatoes, peaches, and plums, thereby giving our students who come from similar elevations training in the care and handling of these crops.

If we were to start all over again, we would choose the same site. Not only do we have ample valley land to supply us with the dairy products, the vegetables, and many of the staples which the school consumes; we also have a large area in pine forest where students can be taught rational methods of timber conservation and utilization. Tegucigalpa is one hour away, over an excellent mountain road. This leaves the city at 3100 feet, climbs through picturesque country typical of the interior of Honduras, and then from an altitude of 5200 feet drops down a canyon into the valley of the Rio Yeguaré.



Graduates of the school often take home a pair of Hampshire pigs to improve their own breeding stock.

be impressive; it had to be right. Before the building finally emerged, our engineer suggested that we build a wooden dummy of certain sections for visual effect. We did and as a result of this foresightedness made our final changes at that point and thereafter went ahead with the stone masonry.

When we built the pig barn—a structure rather new to Honduras—one of our neighbors viewed it with interest and critical judgment. "It is beautiful," he said, "but all the pigs will die." We asked him why. "They have no mud," he replied. Another neighbor, old don Procopio, was less critical. Looking at it he breathed a sigh and remarked with feeling "How I wish I were a pig!"

The cost of operating the school is at present about \$225,000 per year. When divided by the total number of students, about 160, this works out at more than \$1,400 per student.

Escuela Agrícola Panamericana was built and equipped entirely with funds donated by the United Fruit Company. The operating expenses are also defrayed by the Company, whose total contribution as of 1950 is approximately \$5,000,000, including a restricted Endowment Fund of \$3,000,000, income from which goes toward the operation of the school.

All students attending the school are on full scholarships which include transportation from their home countries if they cannot pay their own fares; all necessary clothing, lodging, board, laundry service, text books and other equipment, medical and dental attention—even hair-cuts. Some of the boys receive spending money in small amounts from their families. Others have graduated without ever having received a cent from home.







The creamery and cold storage plant, where students pasteurize the milk produced on the farm, make butter, cheese, ice cream, and prepare meat for use in the mess hall.

Five residences like this are occupied by members of the faculty. These houses were copied from Spanish colonial residences in Honduras and Guatemala.



*Where do the students come from  
and how are they selected?*

The school was opened in 1943. Even before that, boys in Central America had heard that there was to be an opportunity for them to study agriculture at no cost to themselves and were beginning to inquire. Before a single building had been completed a clean-cut lad showed up in Tegucigalpa, where the first members of our staff had temporary quarters, and announced: "I have heard there is going to be an agricultural school out at Zamorano and I want to go to it." He was told that it was yet too early to take action, but he could fill out an application, and when the time came he would be considered. He had walked from a town on the south coast of Honduras, and he seemed very much in earnest.

He came back the next day with his application. "Now you can go home," he was told, "and we will let you know, when the time comes, if you are accepted."

This was not a satisfactory situation. "No," he replied, "I shall stay right here until I get into that school."

"All right, you come back here at five o'clock tomorrow morning and we will take you out to Zamorano and you can work until school opens; and if we think you look promising we will give you a scholarship." At four the next morning he was on the doorstep; he was taken to Zamorano; and he was one of the best members of our first graduating class.

Although the original idea was to train Central Americans only, it gradually dawned upon us that it might make for a real spirit of Pan Americanism if we broadened our field. We had to consider, of course, geographical limitations and those of language. We had decided to call the school *Escuela Agrícola Panamericana* which meant a great deal. Our teaching would be mainly in Spanish, with good training in English so that our graduates could take advantage of the abundant literature on agriculture which exists in that language. It would be a difficult job to include students speaking Portuguese or French.

So we worked out a formula. To qualify for a scholarship, the applicant must be a *native born citizen of a Spanish-speaking tropical American republic*. This formula has solved many problems—especially in recent years, problems connected with the numerous applications which have come from North Americans who, laudably enough, wish to study tropical agriculture, and who have inquired if they can come to this school under the GI Bill of Rights.

In keeping with the original objective most of our scholarships go to Central Americans,



but we think the decision to include a wider range of countries, primarily for the purpose of developing the spirit of Pan Americanism, was a wise one. Students fully agree in this. When he goes home, a student from Costa Rica (for example) is likely to say: "Oh, I know the Venezuelans. They are good people. My roommate at the Escuela Agricola Panamericana in Honduras was a Venezuelan and he was a swell guy." In addition, of course, we are helping a wider area.

We do not look for applicants. Agriculture is the patrimony of most tropical American countries, and there are plenty of youths eager for an opportunity to prepare themselves to practice this profession—and we like to call it a profession, for it should be such. In the purest sense of the word it is a vocation, but unless the modern agriculturist has a sound background of scientific knowledge he is not going to make the most of his opportunities.

Every year we receive from 300 to 500 applications for scholarships. These come from boys whose parents are in widely different walks of life: humble farmers, small-town businessmen, wealthy land owners, government officials. We give preference, other things being equal, to boys who are above average in intelligence, who have an agricultural background, and who for financial reasons have not much hope of obtaining an agricultural education if we do not help them. In other words, the bright lads who have their roots in the soil.

Since we can only accept 60 to 70 applicants per year, there is plenty of material from which to select. At the start, many applications must be discarded or shelved because of the age limits—the applicant must be at least 18 years old and not more than 21. Others cannot be considered because of nationality—we have had applications from Germany, Palestine, India, South



High up on the mountainside overlooking the school, modern techniques of protecting the land from destructive erosion are taught.

Africa and elsewhere. Qualified inquirers are sent a circular letter, requesting detailed information and a photograph.

As far as previous education is concerned, we require only that the applicant has passed satisfactorily through the primary school of his country; but we like it better if he has had at least a year or two of secondary education. About 15% of our students have graduated from high school before coming here. It does not matter a great deal; more depends upon a lad's ability, his industry, and his enthusiasm for agriculture than upon his previous education.

If our correspondence with the applicant has been satisfactory we try to obtain more information through friends in the country where he lives, or, in some cases, a member of our staff may have a personal interview. Finally, the promising candidate is given a thorough medical examination by a physician appointed by the school. If he passes this he is told to come to Tegucigalpa.

Upon arrival at the school he is given an intelligence test and an aptitude test. He is not sent home if he fails in either of these, but the intelligence test, particularly, helps us to form an idea of his capacity and to guide him during his stay here.

Sometimes a student is not a "straight A" but convinces us that he is going to be an honest, hard-working farmer whom it is worth while to help. We try to help him. Sometimes a student is highly intelligent but convinces us that he is not going to be a farmer. We do not feel that we ought to invest \$4000 in him when there are several hundred boys waiting for scholarships, many of whom will pay better dividends on the investment.



On Arbor Day, students parade their national flags and plant a tree on the campus.



