

Uncle Sam's Big Department Store Supplies 100,000 Consumers

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CRISTOBAL, Canal Zone, Panama.—I want to tell you how Uncle Sam feeds and clothes his canal employees. When the old patriarch undertook this big job at Panama, he found the stores here very poor. The native merchants did not understand the wants of the Americans, and they tried to sell us poor stuff at high prices. It was absolutely necessary in the management of the canal to have the men well fed and well clothed, and so Uncle Sam became merchant, and he has established here one of the biggest department stores of the world. He does not insist that any one buy of him, but his prices are so low and his goods are so good that no one thinks of purchasing anywhere else.

The business began at the start of our work on the canal, and it has now grown until it amounts to almost \$4,000,000 per year. The number of consumers is now about 100,000, and this includes the families of both the silver and gold employees upon the canal and the railroad. All are practically dependent upon the government for their food and clothing, which Uncle Sam sells almost at cost. The government brings fresh bread to their front doors every morning. It puts away the ice in their refrigerators and even supplies them with their fuel, which it stores away under the porch.

Uncle Sam's Big Mercantile Business
Before I take you through the immense warehouses and other government plants of the mercantile establishment here at Cristobal, let me give you a few items as to the extent of the business. The sales last year embraced more than 4,000,000 pounds of fresh beef, and 250,000 pounds of mutton and lamb. The chickens handled in Uncle Sam's grocery store numbered 400,000, and the turkeys and ducks one-fourth as many. He sold 500,000 pounds of bacon, 8,000,000 eggs and altogether over \$5,000 tons of food supplies of one kind or another. Some of the groceries ran into the millions of pounds. This was so of the flour, which weighed 2,000,000, and of evaporated and condensed milk, which footed up a gross of 3,000,000 pounds.

Uncle Sam sold last year a million pounds of peas and beans, 700,000 cans of tomatoes, 200,000 of fish and 58,000 of pork and beans. His sales of potatoes aggregated 7,000,000 pounds, and of onions more than a million. He sold 225,000 dozen oranges, 56,000 cantaloupes, 120,000 grape fruit and about 10,000 watermelons.

A little further on I will take you through his bakery here at Cristobal, where last year he made over 5,000,000 loaves of bread, sending out from 20,000 to 25,000 every day. We shall visit his laundry where 3,500,000 pieces of clothing were washed last year, and go into plants where 200,000 pounds of coffee were roasted, \$200,000 worth of ice made and from where more than 100,000 gallons of ice cream were shipped out to canal employees.

Indeed, our patriarchal uncle has institutions here big enough to supply almost every want of the Americans and foreigners who are employed upon the canal, and notwithstanding the fact that we are 2,000 miles from the base of supplies, he is satisfying these wants at prices as low as at home, and in some cases lower. Moreover, his business is not only self-supporting, but it pays a small profit. It is, in fact, one of the big little wonders of our great work at Panama.

How Uncle Sam Buys His Supplies.
This great department store is under the commissary of the canal. Its head is Colonel Eugene T. Wilson, the chief commissary officer, and his business is carefully done as that of any great factory or trust. The purchases are in bulk and the prices are cut to the minimum. Competitive bids are gotten as to everything and the government buys where it can get the best and the cheapest.

California products, for instance, are shipped down by sea to save the cost of railroad transportation over the continent. Some goods are bought in Europe and shipped direct to Panama. Tropical fruits come from Jamaica and the other islands of the West Indies, contracts for fresh meat are made annually at Chicago on the basis of a percentage above or below the sale of live animals in the stock yards as reported in the *Drovers' Journal*, and by the specifications only the highest class of meat can be sold. The meat is so carefully packed and shipped that it is delivered as fresh as though it came from a first-class butcher shop in Chicago.

The greatest care is taken as to the shipment of goods, all perishable stuff coming in cold storage chambers, and that in such a way that the loss is borne by the shipper. Many of the supplies are bought in bulk and put up in packages here. Some are manufactured on the ground, and in fact, a mighty business is carried on at the lowest possible cost.

The government has a chemical laboratory to test its purchases, that it may know whether they are up to sample. It weighs everything, and it has weights and measures sent down by the Bureau of Standards at Washington. Some of the scales are so fine that they will weigh a pencil mark or a hair. In fact, I pulled out an eye-winker and laid it upon one of them. The test was made inside glass, and the needle indicated that it weighed one-tenth-thousandth of a gram.

The Government Cold Storage Plant.
But we can see something of this feature of Uncle Sam's business here at Cristobal. Let us first enter the cold storage plant. This is made of cement and it covers acres. The building is one of the largest in the world, and it is so arranged that the goods can be taken from the ships to the cold storage chambers and from them direct to the cars which carry them to the retail stores and the consumers. There is one train which goes out every morning.



IN ONE OF UNCLE SAM'S BAKERIES

ask what the grape fruit is worth and the cold storage man replied:
"We are now selling them for 4 cents apiece, although the price quoted at home is 8 cents and upward."

Further on they are sorting lettuce and lemons. The lettuce comes from New Orleans, the lemons from Jamaica.

Eggs, Butter and Cheese.
Passing through rooms kept cool by the dry air system, we enter storage halls devoted to eggs, butter and cheese. The cheeses are kept by themselves. They are of all sorts, from some as big as a wagon wheel to others no larger around than the palm of your hand. This room is kept cool by the brine system and the pipes which line it are covered with snow.

A little farther on is the egg cooler, which is also lined with brine pipes. It is filled with crates of fresh eggs, which are now being sold at the rate of 40,000 a day. Every egg has to be tested before it leaves this cold room, and over there at the right you may see the process of testing. It is done by means of a box in which an electric light shines. The box is closed except for a hole the size of an egg in one side. The man takes an egg and places it over this hole. If it is good the light shines right through and makes it look like an egg of real gold. If it is bad the egg will not be transparent. It will look streaked and spotted, and if rotten almost black.

All but the best eggs are rejected, and a record is kept of every egg handled. We look over the reports and find that in the last batch of 21,000 only forty-four eggs were bad. That is only about two bad eggs to the thousand. The eggs are all candied before they leave New Orleans, and only the good ones are paid for. Those which come cracked are saved and used in the bakery.

The same care is employed as to the butter. Uncle Sam buys the best creameries can furnish, and that only in bulk. It used to be that butter was sent down in prints, but it was found that it cost 3 cents more per pound to bring it that way, and that it did not keep as well. For this reason the government has its own butter-cutting machines and it cuts and packs its own prints. The butter now sells at 42 cents a pound, and it is of the grade which costs 6 cents more than that in the states.

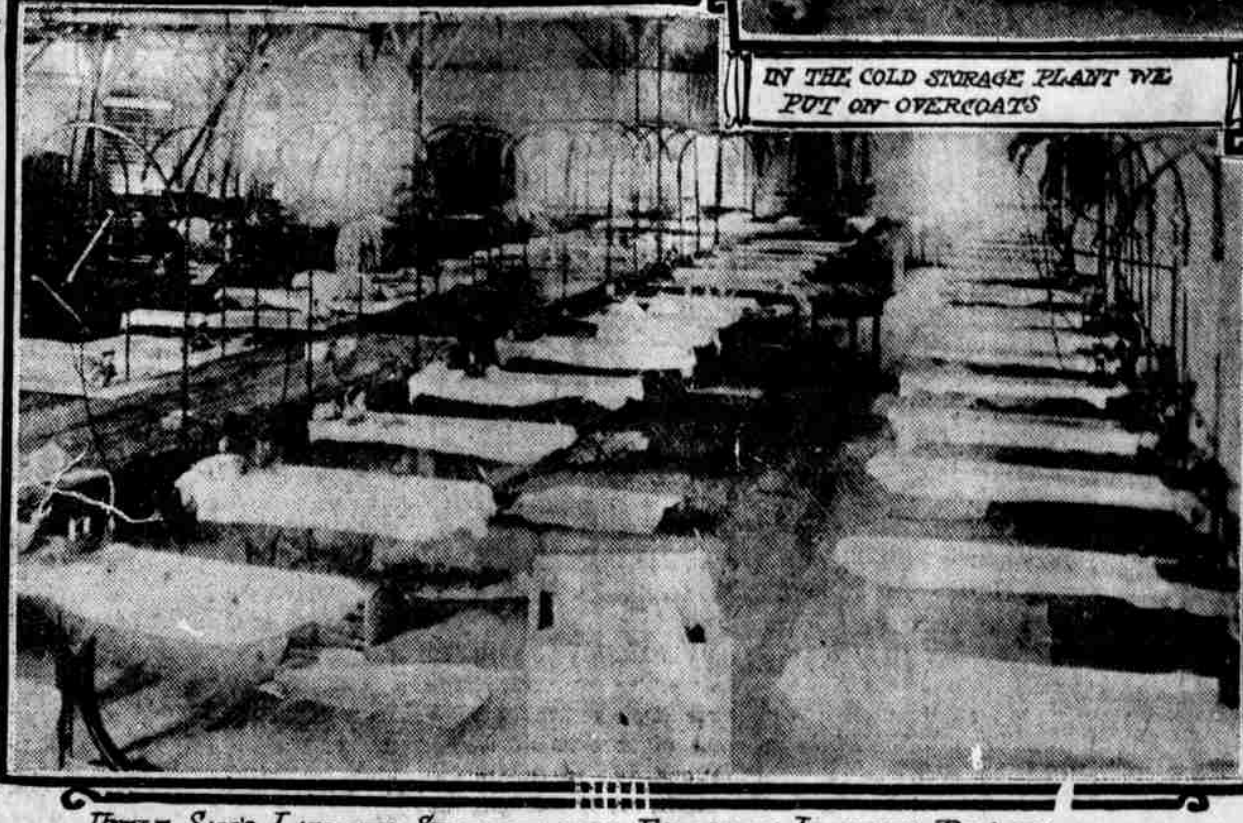
Fresh Beef for Panama.
We find the chambers colder and colder as we go on with our journey. Those in which the turkeys, ducks, squabs and milk-fed chickens are kept is only 12 degrees above zero, and the fowls are frozen stiff. Here there are fresh fish, oysters, canvas back and teal ducks, as well as sweetbreads and other such things. I take one of the chickens in my hand and pound a box with it. It is as solid as ice, and I have little difficulty in breaking the boards.

A little further on is the meat cooler, the temperature of which keeps the flesh as hard as a glacier. Immense quarters of beef hang from the racks. There are 700 quarters in this single room, and this will last only five days. The beef comes in by the thousand at a shipment, and they go out almost as fast. It takes more than 6,000 cattle a year to supply the canal employees, and about a ton of pork chops are consumed every day. As to corned beef, the government makes its own. It has vats connected with the cold storage department which have a capacity of 20,000 pounds. It takes about 2,000 pounds of such meat every day to supply the demand.

100,000 Gallons of Ice Cream.
Uncle Sam makes his own ice cream, and he sells his employees \$50,000 worth every year. This is sent out in tubs to the hotels and retail stores. The flavors are changed five or six times a week, and there is a special arrangement for supplying ice cream on Sundays. As to the ice itself, that is made in the cold storage plant. The amount manufactured is 50 tons a day, and the ice receipts for one year are more than \$200,000.

Uncle Sam's Bakery.
But suppose we fly from the poles to the tropics. We can do so by walking from the cold storage plant to the bakery and laundry, which are not far away. The bakery is one of the largest on earth, and everything there is done upon a big scale. The dough is kneaded by machinery in a big iron trough. It comes out in loaves, being cut by a dough divider which makes seventy-two loaves every minute. One batch of dough will make 1,800 loaves. The ovens are great chambers walled with porcelain, each of which will bake 500 one-pound loaves at a time. Altogether they can make 25,000 loaves in one day, and from 20,000 to 25,000 loaves are now being consumed every twenty-four hours. The employees of the bakery are both white and colored, with a white man at the head.

Uncle Sam's laundry is another big feature of this mercantile establishment. It consists of several large halls which are filled with Jamaica negroes, washing and ironing. The clothes are passed through five waters from cold to hot, while the machinery scours out the dirt. The wringing is done by centrifugal force in machines like those used for sugar making, and the ironing has the aid of electricity. The latter work is performed by negro girls who receive from 7 to 10 cents an hour. Each has an electric iron



UNCLE SAM'S LAUNDRY SHOWING THE ELECTRIC IRONING BOARDS

fastened to a tube over her head, and she uses an ironing board covered with white cotton which is so supported that it is level with her waist. As to the white shirts, they pass through pressing machines, and the collars have special machines of their own. About 4,000,000 pieces are washed and ironed every year, and the annual income of the institution is almost \$100,000.

Nevertheless the prices are low. Linen coats cost 11 cents each; collars, 1 1/2 cents; drawers, 5 cents, and cuffs, 5 cents per pair. The charge for washing a silk shirt is 10 cents; for a dress shirt, 10 cents; a suit of pajamas, 10 cents, and for a union suit, only 8 cents. The family laundry work is also cheap. A bedspread costs 10 cents; a blanket, 20 cents, and a napkin, 1 cent. You can have a sheet washed and ironed for 3 cents and a towel for 1 cent. Connected with the establishment is a pressing department, where men's coats, trousers and vests and women's

skirts and waists are cleaned and shaped at fixed prices.

What we have seen, so far, might be called Uncle Sam's wholesale mercantile establishment. It is the warehouse and the factory and the central station from which all the goods are distributed. The work of selling the merchandise is done largely in retail stores, and for this purpose the government has twenty-two branches, one at each canal center. They

cover the principal settlements along the Canal Zone, and are found also at Porto Bello and Toro Point. In these stores goods are sold in exchange for coupons, which can be procured by employees from their timekeepers or from the officers of the government and Panama railway on invoices. You can buy nothing in the stores except with coupons. A twenty-dollar gold piece would not buy a paper of pins, nor a ten-dollar bill a lead pencil. The system is all arranged on the coupon basis, and one must carry his coupon book to the store and let the clerk take out the checks which represent the amount of your purchase. These checks range in denomination from \$1 to 1 cent, so that anything can be exactly paid for. The business is done after a rigid accounting system. Cash registers are employed, and the salesman makes out a sales slip for each purchase.

The goods are taken to the stores on the cars from Cristobal, and there is a special refrigerator train every morning which has eleven cars filled with meats, ice and perishable goods, and ten other cars loaded with other goods. This train starts at 4:30 every morning, and it is the one train which is always on time.

In addition to the goods sold in the stores, there is a big mail order business. Messengers go around every day to the homes of the employees and take their orders, receiving coupons therefor. These are sent into the central office, and the goods are brought back the next day. All the bread is delivered at the houses, and it is so of the ice, meats and groceries. The wagons of the quartermaster come to the chief storage train, and the housekeeper has her supplies even more regularly and more quickly than in the states. No charge is made for delivery.

In the Cristobal Commissary.
You may be interested in seeing one of the local stores. Take that here at Cristobal. It is situated on a corner in the heart of the town. It is about 100 feet front by 200 feet deep, covering all told almost half an acre. Entering, you find yourself in an establishment much like a department store. The room is filled with shelves and counters, divided up into departments, and each is devoted to one kind of goods. Here there is nothing but hardware, over there are glassware and china, and farther on are shelves filled with dry goods and notions. There is one department for cigars and tobacco, another for drugs, and a third for meats and groceries. The meat branch has a cold storage room in which three or four butchers are kept busy cutting roasts, chops and steaks for the customers. Here everything is sanitary. The meat is wrapped up in the cold storage chamber and handed out through a slot.

The stores are thoroughly organized. Each has its white manager and its white assistant storekeeper. The other clerks are mostly West Indians, because they are cheaper than whites, receiving only from \$25 to \$45 per month.

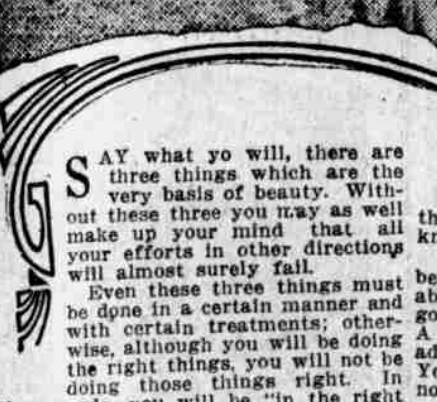
I would say that I have patronized these stores a great deal during my stay on the isthmus. Through the commissary I have been able to buy one of the books and have made my purchases with the coupons. I find the prices much lower than those of the local Panama establishments, and in many cases they are as cheap or cheaper than at home. There is no question as to the prices, for the government publishes a full price list every week or so, and one can tell just what anything and everything costs.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

A Trio of Beauty Secrets That Made Valeska Suratt Famous

Graciously Revealed By Valeska Suratt, the World's Most Famous Self-Made Beauty

Wrinkles Will Surely Go, A Pearly Skin Will Surely Come, and the Form Will Take on a Glorious Contour of Unrivalled Beauty



SAY what you will, there are three things which are the very basis of beauty. With these three you may as well make up your mind that all your efforts in other directions will almost surely fail. Even these three things must be done in a certain manner and with certain treatments; otherwise, although you will be doing the right things, you will not be doing those things right. In other words, you will be "in the right church but the wrong pew."

The following three things constitute the very essence of the line of beauty culture became marvelously easy. I had something to build up on. Every woman will do it. Dieting and sleeping won't do it. But you can do it in spite of late suppers, late hours and omission of heavy, bothersome exercise. This trio consists of first, complete eradication of wrinkles; second, making the skin free of blemishes; and third, the skin free of blemishes like the petals of a rose; third, the development of the form and the beautiful lines of contour and luxurious fulness.

There are other things, of course, besides these three, but I mention them as absolutely basic, right at the start. Begin on these now. Follow the instructions which I give you below and I can assure you that you will marvel at the change in yourself when you look in the mirror in a few short weeks thereafter. The treatment I give you is absolutely different from anything I have ever seen or heard of, and I have for a long time been importuned by my friends to reveal the secret to them. I did so to those whom I thought would follow my instructions, and invariably the result has been glorious—yes, beyond their expectations. The results upon myself

fastened to a tube over her head, and she uses an ironing board covered with white cotton which is so supported that it is level with her waist. As to the white shirts, they pass through pressing machines, and the collars have special machines of their own. About 4,000,000 pieces are washed and ironed every year, and the annual income of the institution is almost \$100,000.

were, I will say, truly marvellous. No other word will express it.

I want each one of you to begin today by using the following secret. By a liberal and faithful application of it you will soon find that all the creams you have been previously using are cast in the shade. I myself used almost everything sold for

to get epol at any good drug store and it should not cost you more than fifty cents. This will last quite a while. Apply this cream every morning with the tips of the fingers, after washing your face with very warm water and soap on the forehead, on either side of the mouth, everywhere. After you have applied it take up the flesh in your fingers, pinch it and roll it for a few minutes until the cream disappears. Then apply your complexion powder. This will mean the end of wrinkles. This cream will not grow hair.

CELESTINE—The condition of your hair is certainly deplorable. Next Sunday I will reveal the hair secret which my friends have found excels anything ever before used. Hope you can wait until next Sunday. Space forbids here.

O. S. L.—Get from your druggist two or three ounces of a 3 per cent solution of boric acid. Wash the eyes night and morning with this formula and they will fairly glisten after a time. It is entirely safe.

KIMONO—Your crow's feet must certainly be very pronounced. It is too bad at your age. But don't worry. Use the epol treatment I have given in these columns and your soul will be filled with gladness when you see the result after a time. Just keep at it. It has proved highly successful in worse cases than yours. I have seen these results with my own eyes.

Valeska Suratt and Her Tiger

vacuum electricity, vacuum instruments, etc., all to no purpose. If in a half pint of hot water you dissolve two ounces of rutone and a half cup of sugar, all well mixed together, you will have one of the most surprising treatments you have ever used for this purpose. Of this, take 2 tea-spoonfuls three or four times a day in a wine glass of water, after your results in a few weeks' time. The rutone you can get at the drug store for one dollar. It is, of course, more than twice as much as you have ever used for this purpose. The development of a great deal of the bust with the epol cream mentioned above.

HARRIETTE L.—No, washing the face with warm milk will not whiten the skin, as you see from your own experience. You cannot do better than use the skinone treatment I mention above. Your freckles will also quickly disappear.

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