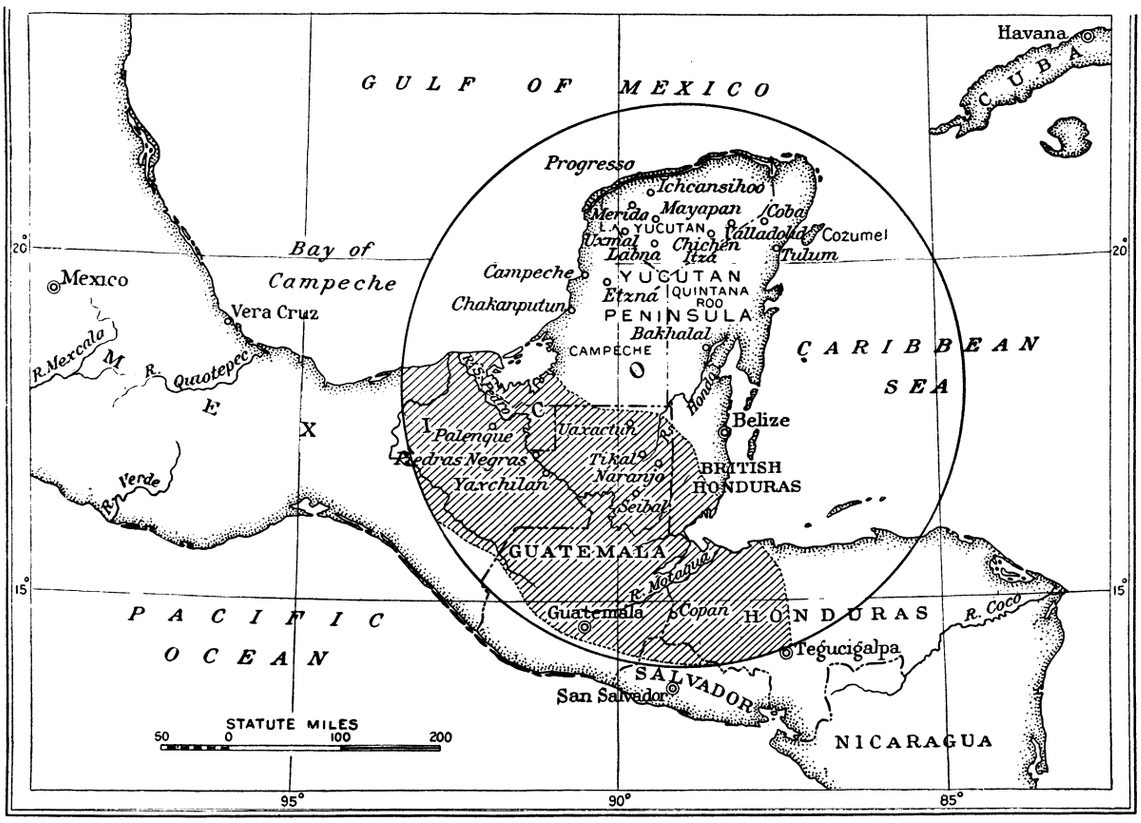
Lindbergh Flights to Discover Lost Cities



WHERE COL. LINDBERGH will fly to discover the lost Maya cities. The circle encloses the area occupied by the Mayas during the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era. The shaded portion indicates the Old Empire Region, where they lived for a thousand years. This map, which was prepared by the Carnegie Institution, shows only the principal Maya cities.

When Lindbergh and Carnegie Institution archaeologists fly over the jungles of northern Central America and Mexico in search of lost Maya cities, they will be adding a new method to the scientific exploration of ruins of one of the world's most interesting civilizations.

Buried beneath almost impenetrable tropical forests in the Yucatan peninsula, Guatemala, Honduras, and British Honduras, there are the remains of populous cities that flourished long before the time of Columbus. Many of these abandoned cities, rich with artistic temples and monuments, lie hidden, unseen by modern eyes. On foot, tediously hacking a path through the tangled growth, an explorer might pass within a few hundred yards and yet not find the ruins. From the air, a few hours' flying may reveal not one, but several, hitherto unmapped and possibly totally unknown Maya cities.

Such is the expectation of Col. Charles A. Lindbergh and Dr. Oliver Ricketson, the Carnegie Institution archaeologist, who will fly with him in a Pan-American Airways airplane. Their base at Belize, British Honduras, is nearly in the center of the region that the Maya inhabited from before the time of Christ until about the year 1500. Today the descendants of the race that showed such accomplishment live in the same area in a primitive state, unmindful of their glorious past.

Col. Lindbergh's aerial photographic experience obtained on recent flights over the southwest will prove useful on the projected flying over the Maya country. It is expected that he will act as photographer as well as pilot and that Dr. Ricketson will do the mapping that will allow land parties to reach and excavate the cities that are discovered.

The cooperation between the Pan American Airways and the Carnegie Institution of Washington links two organizations that are pioneering in the rediscovery of Central America. The projected airlines of the Pan American Airways pass near such cities as Chichen Itza, Copan and Etzna, which archaeologists of the Carnegie Institution have excavated and studied.

The airplane in Middle America can duplicate the remarkable feats achieved in England, where O. G. S. Crawford, air corps observer, has discovered Roman towns and trenches by means of air photography. These trenches and streets were long since plowed over by British farmers and were presumably lost forever to the knowledge of historians, but where the ground was once disturbed, the texture of the soil has been altered, and the crops planted there are apt to be greener and more luxuriant. The air camera or the keen eye of the airplane observer can often trace the exact plan of the vanished town or fortress. By some such method the stone highways which the Maya built to connect their important cities can probably be traced.

It is only a few years ago that the existence of these smooth stone roads, 30 to 60 feet (*Turn to next page*)

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wide, was discovered. Dr. Thomas Gann, who found sections of the roads in the forest near Coba, concluded that the Mayas could not have needed such highways for traffic, since they had no wagons or beasts of burden and since they would have found dirt roads suitable for their long journeys. The roads, he believes, must have been laboriously constructed over long distances between religious centers for use by the religious processions of priests, votaries and sacrificial victims.

One highway which airplane observers may search for is the road which Dr. Gann believes must have stretched from Coba to Cozumel Island to which the Maya made religious pilgrimages. Another may have led from Coba to Chichen Itza, famed religious city, sacred to the deity known as the Plumed Serpent.

The airplane archaeologist today has an opportunity to "discover" Middle America in pioneer fashion. The sixteenth century Spaniards who discovered Yucatan and the Aztec cities wrote excited, glittering accounts of gold and jewels and beautiful women and marble palaces. But their tales were considerably discounted by sober stay-at-homes who reflected that the Spaniards were not calm scientific observers and were merely trying to prove the importance and worth of their voyage of conquest.

Ninety years ago, an adventurous American, John L. Stephens, went into the Yucatan jungle and proceeded to discover the Indian cities again for the world at large. His verdict on the bas-reliefs and paintings which adorned the official buildings of the ruined cities was that "in justice of proportion and symmetry they have approached the Greek models."

After Stephens came a long series of archaeologists, all of whom have been kept busy discovering the Mayas and the Aztecs. There are 1,200 sites in Mexico alone which are pronounced of archaeological importance, and no one can guess how many more lie buried in inaccessible corners of the region.

The airplane offers a rapid method of discovering this much-discovered country. More than that, it offers the possibility of revealing plans and explaining mysteries which the groundling scientist could not solve