

Institute for Geography and History

The task of publishing a geography and history of all the Americas is to be one of the first undertakings of the new Pan-American Institute of Geography and History. This ambitious and important work is expected to be completed by 1935.

The institute, which recently held its first meeting in Mexico City, has elected as its active president Dr. Salvador Massip, professor of geography at the University of Cuba. Its honorary presidents are to be Dr. William Bowie, of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, and Dr. J. Toribio Medina, historian, of Chile.

The institute will study the prehistory of the Americas, the archæology, the history of the Colonial epoch, and events in recent centuries. The geographic studies will include topography, geodesy, cartography, geomorphology, human geography, ethnography, and historic, biologic and economic geography. A library of maps, books, and other data will be created in the institute's headquarters.

The new institution is to be of international usefulness in providing data on meteorological conditions for Pan-American air routes and in studying disputed boundary problems.

Dr. Bowie outlined the significance of the new organization:

"We have heard so much of the application of science to agriculture, industry, commerce, and communication, but science can only go so far in bettering conditions of humanity without geographical knowledge. The geographer must aid the chemist, the physicist, and the engineer, in efficiently utilizing the resources of nature.

"Civilization will greatly advance by an early mapping of the world. Maps are still very imperfect. Although much mapping has been done in the United States, only 43 per cent. of the area has been topographically surveyed, and many of these map sheets were inadequately made and do not serve the purposes of agriculture, mining, the development of hydro-electric projects, systems of

communication, and transmission of power today.

"The Western Hemisphere is new to civilized man, and we must develop and utilize its natural resources as our present needs demand, but without impoverishing the generations to come. In this discreet development and utilization of natural resources, the geographer must play an important part, and the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History can exert a great influence in outlining general geographical problems to be solved, and in disseminating geographical data already existing but not widely known."

Science News-Letter, October 12, 1929

Peace Rangefinders

Peaceful passenger ships and fast cargo vessels now mount on their decks rangefinders such as heretofore have been seen only on ships of war. At the Shipping, Engineering and Machinery Exhibition in England there were exhibited these new additions to navigation equipment capable of accurately determining the range of objects 500 to 25,000 yards distant. Modelled after the same type of instrument that has been used for army and navy purposes for the past forty years, the rangefinder on shipboard allows the navigator to locate immediately any ship, lighthouse or other object. An instrument with a base of 4 feet 9 inches will measure distance to within 76 feet at 2 sea miles and 608 feet at 6 sea miles.

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Personality Defined

Our personality is not so much how we act but how others act toward us. When Prof. Mark A. May of Yale took issue with behavioristic definitions of character or personality that describe this valuable human trait in terms of the individual's own reactions he caused his auditors at the International Psychology Congress to recall Bobby Burns' wish "to see ourselves as others see us".

"Personality is the individual's social stimulus value", Prof. May said. "Responses by others to dress, physique, manners, voice, language, social actions, define his personality. If a person assumes an air of superiority and impresses others as refusing to associate with them, he is said to be snobbish. Snobbishness is not something he possesses but rather something that is inferred from the way he carries his cane, wears his necktie or speaks to others."

Newspapers, biographers, cartoonists, and press agents and sometimes public characters themselves often give great public figures personalities that they actually do not possess, Dr. June E. Downey of the University of Wyoming told the psychologists. What is called personality in these cases is, she said, aesthetic rather than scientific, a product of the creative imagination. Cartoons of Roosevelt for example inaccurately gave him a square head and square jaw, typifying the common impression of his virility whereas in his early political portraits he was actually drawn as a "dude" instead of a rough rider.

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Wheels of Power

In the lull between creation and the fulfillment of its destiny, a great turbine undergoes the exacting scrutiny of its makers. Such is the subject of this week's cover photograph, taken in the shops of the General Electric Company where so many great power wheels are made.

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