

# Mexico Diary, 1937

## by Emil Witschi

### Edited by Thomas F. Potter

[Don't miss the photographs! See <http://www.daisyfield.com/1937/> ]

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
PURPOSE OF TRIP, WHO WAS INVOLVED?.....	2
TRIP SUMMARY .....	3
RELATIONS WITH MEXICAN PEOPLE .....	4
THE PHOTOGRAPHS .....	4
THE MANUSCRIPT .....	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	6
<b>THE DIARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
AUG 06, FRI:    IOWA CITY .....	7
AUG 07, SAT:    TRAVELING .....	7
AUG 08, SUN:    BATON ROUGE .....	7
AUG 09, MON:    BATON ROUGE (AND NEW ORLEANS) .....	7
AUG 10, TUE:    BATON ROUGE – ALICE, TEXAS .....	7
AUG 11, WED:    ALICE, TEXAS – LAREDO – MONTEREY.....	8
AUG 12, THU:    MONTEREY – TROPIC OF CANCER – TAMAZUNCHALE.....	8
AUG 13, FRI:    TAMAZUNCHALE – MEXICO CITY .....	9
AUG 14, SAT:    MEXICO CITY (INSTITUTO BIOLOGICA CHAPULTEPEC).....	10
AUG 15, SUN:    MEXICO CITY (MUSEUMS, BULLFIGHT) .....	10
AUG 16, MON:    MEXICO CITY – PUEBLA .....	11
AUG 17, TUE:    PUEBLA (AND CHOLULA) .....	12
AUG 18, WED:    PUEBLA – ORIZABA – TEHUACÁN –OAXACA .....	12
AUG 19, THU:    OAXACA (AND MONTE ALBAN) .....	13
AUG 20, FRI:    OAXACA – TLACOLULA – MITLA – TOTOLAPAN .....	14
AUG 21, SAT:    TOTOLAPAN – SAN CARLOS YAUTEPEC .....	14
AUG 22, SUN:    SAN CARLOS YAUTEPEC – SAN BARTOLO.....	15
AUG 23, MON:    SAN BARTOLO (FIESTA OF TEACHERS).....	16
AUG 24, TUE:    SAN BARTOLO (FIESTA CONTINUES).....	16
AUG 25, WED:    SAN BARTOLO – TEQUISISTLAN .....	17
AUG 26, THU:    TEQUISISTLAN – MIXTEQUILLA.....	18
AUG 27, FRI:    MIXTEQUILLA AND TEHUANTEPEC.....	19
AUG 28, SAT:    TEHUANTEPEC (MOUNTAINS, FIRST RAIN) .....	20
AUG 29, SUN:    TEHUANTEPEC (VISIT TO RUINS).....	20
AUG 30, MON:    TEHUANTEPEC – SALINA CRUZ .....	21
AUG 31, TUE:    SALINA CRUZ .....	22
SEP 01, WED:    TEHUANTEPEC.....	22
SEP 02, THU:    TEHUANTEPEC – COATZACOALCOS .....	23
SEP 03, FRI:    COATZACOALCOS .....	24
SEP 04, SAT:    COATZACOALCOS (SIDE TRIPS TO MINATITLAN, CHINAMECA) .....	24
SEP 05, SUN:    COATZACOALCOS.....	25
SEP 06, MON:    COATZACOALCOS.....	26
SEP 07, TUE:    COATZACOALCOS.....	26
SEP 08, WED:    [COATZACOALCOS: CITY AND RIVER].....	26
SEP 09, THU:    COATZACOALCOS RIVER.....	27

SEP 10, FRI:	AT SEA (GULF OF MEXICO) .....	27
SEP 11, SAT:	AT SEA (GULF OF MEXICO).....	28
SEP 12, SUN:	ARRIVE AT NEW ORLEANS.....	28
SEP 13, MON:	NEW ORLEANS – CAIRO, ILLINOIS.....	29
SEP 14, TUE:	CAIRO, ILLINOIS – IOWA CITY.....	29
<b>APPENDIX: MEMORANDA.....</b>		<b>29</b>
<i>p. 1.</i>	<i>Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz notes.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>p. 2.</i>	<i>Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz notes (cont.) .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>p. 3</i>	<i>A book recommendation?.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>p. 4</i>	<i>Puerto Mexico notes .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>p.259</i>	<i>Newspaper article about Cardenas.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>p. 360</i>	<i>Copy of restaurant bill .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>p. 361</i>	<i>Address of Captain Wetta.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>p. 363</i>	<i>Puerto Mexico jottings .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>p. 364</i>	<i>Miscellaneous notes .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>p. 367</i>	<i>Unidentified notes .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>p. 368</i>	<i>San Bartolo notes .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>p. 369 (endpiece)</i>	<i>San Bartolo (cont.) .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>p. 370 (endpiece)</i>	<i>Miscellaneous.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<b>INDEX .....</b>		<b>33</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>		<b>37</b>

## Introduction

### ***Purpose of trip, Who was involved?***

My grandfather, Emil Witschi (1890-1971), was a zoologist and professor at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1927[?]-1961[?]. In the summer of 1937, he and his student Allan J. Stanley made a trip of about one month to southern Mexico. During this trip Witschi kept a diary that is transcribed here.

The trip was difficult and at times dangerous. An especially adventurous part of the trip consisted of traveling for 12 days on horseback through remote portions of Oaxaca State, from Oaxaca City southeast to Salina Cruz on the Pacific coast. Why would a successful university professor in mid-career undertake such a challenging trip during his summer vacation? One goal of the journey certainly was scientific: to collect biological specimens, mainly iguanas. Another was a personal interest in visiting pre-Columbian archeological sites. However, the manuscript reveals that a thirst for adventure was a key factor.

Part of Witschi's plan was to make photographs of people, places, plants and animals. To a large extent, the diary is simply a key to the photos. Witschi brought with him his Zeiss camera, and carried both black-and-white print film and Kodachrome slide film (first released for sale in 1936). About 500 black and white photos from the trip have survived as photographic prints and are identified in the diary and in notations on the prints and in

photo albums. Most or all of the original film strips also exist (see below). The manuscript shows that Witschi took many more black-and-white photos than color, in a ratio of roughly 10 to 1.

Accompanying Witschi throughout the journey was a fellow zoologist and former Witschi student Dr. Allan J. Stanley (1899-1990), professor at the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. For the first part of the trip Witschi and Stanley also had the company of a young couple, George Hines Lowery (1913-1978) and his recent bride Jean Tiebout Lowery. Like Stanley, George Lowery was a zoologist at LSU<sup>1</sup>.

### **Trip Summary**

For Witschi, the journey began in Iowa City on August 6, 1937. On that day he and his wife Martha Witschi (1890-1974) left their home and traveled (probably by train) to Louisiana. They arrived on August 7 or 8 in Baton Rouge, where they stayed with the Allan Stanley and his wife Ruth. The plan did not call for Martha Witschi to accompany her husband to Mexico; she probably returned to Iowa City after visiting for a few days in Louisiana.

On August 10, four people set out from Baton Rouge in the Stanleys' car: Emil Witschi, Allan Stanley, and Mr. and Mrs. George Lowery. They drove to Laredo, Monterey, Tamazunchale, and Mexico City. After two days of meeting scientists and visiting tourist sites in Mexico City, they drove on to Puebla and then to Tehuacán. Here on August 18, Witschi and Stanley parted with the Lowerys. Witschi and Stanley boarded a train to Oaxaca, while the Lowerys began the drive back to Baton Rouge in the Stanleys' car.

The most interesting part of the diary begins at this point. For the next 16 days, Witschi and Stanley proceeded on horseback, by bus (*camion*), and on foot through Oaxaca State from Oaxaca City to the port of Salina Cruz on the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Much of the area they traversed was wild and primitive, and is so even today. Witschi and Stanley spent (unwillingly) three days in the little village of San Bartolo Yautepec, where they observed and participated in a *fiesta* in honor of teachers. Here Witschi was forced to treat the wounds of two men seriously wounded in a knife fight, and he saw the body of a man killed by gunfire.

At Salina Cruz, the travelers boarded a train and rode the trans-Tehuantepec railroad to Puerto Mexico (Coatzacoalcos). There they boarded a banana boat which returned them to New Orleans, after an interesting trip up the Coatzacoalcos River to pick up bananas. In New Orleans, Witschi's son Hans met him and helped drive back to Iowa City. They reached their home on the evening of September 14.

---

<sup>1</sup> [15, p. 1301]

## ***Relations with Mexican People***

Emil Witschi was fascinated by Mexico's diversity of plant and animal life, by her contrasting geographical regions, and by her ruins of ancient civilizations. But more than anything else, he was interested in the people he saw on the trip, and in their food, homes, animals, vehicles, etc.. In communicating with Mexicans, it helped that Witschi could understand Spanish quite well, although he was less skilled at speaking and writing that language. Most of the people he and Stanley met in Mexico were friendly and helpful. Nevertheless, negotiations for securing food, lodging, guides, and pack animals often were difficult. When several Mexicans were chatting among themselves during such a business negotiation, Witschi would sometimes feign total ignorance of Spanish in order to eavesdrop and learn their real intentions.

Lack of punctuality drove him wild. Witschi was a professor in the Germanic tradition for whom strict adherence to an agreed-upon schedule was a central cultural value. (I remember this well from my childhood times with him.) On this trip, punctuality seemed all the more important because he faced some strict deadlines. He had to be at Coatzacoalcos (Puerto Mexico) by a specific date for the sailing of his ship back to New Orleans, and he had to be back in Iowa City in time to resume teaching duties for the fall term. Near the end of the three days that Witschi and Stanley spent unwillingly in San Bartolo Yauatepec because of difficulties in securing a guide, my grandfather lost his temper and complained to Alfonso Cuellar, a man who had befriended and helped him, that "Mexico is a fine country, but people can not keep their promises. They shake hands and do not comply." Cuellar was obviously hurt, but Witschi continued by stating, "Teachers ought to teach honesty." I hope that my grandfather subsequently apologized for these unkind remarks, but I am afraid he did not.

The problem of securing guides and horses was a special irritation. Apparently, in each village, the *presidente* (mayor) assumed the responsibility for helping the American professors get honest guides and good horses to take them to their next stop. If sometimes, the right persons or animals were not immediately available, then perhaps the *presidente* thought it would be impolite to say "no" to the impatient professors. Instead, I can imagine that the answer sounded like "maybe", which Witschi and Stanley interpreted as "yes". However, in all cases, the guides and horses that did finally appear were satisfactory, even if late.

## ***The photographs***

Nearly 300 photographs taken by Witschi on the trip may be viewed on the diary's website, [www.daisyfield.com/1937/](http://www.daisyfield.com/1937/)

I have found some or all of Witschi's original processed film strips. He used three types of film:

<i>Film type</i>	<i>Manufacturer</i>	<i>Description</i>
Panatomic	Kodak	Black and white negative film
Super X Pan	Kodak	Black and white negative film
Kodachrome	Kodak	Positive color slide film

About 500 black and white prints were made by Witschi from some of his photographs, and he placed these prints in 4 photo albums. From these, I have selected 230 images for inclusion in this edition of the diary. I rejected photographs for any of the following reasons: (a) poor lighting or focus, (b) duplication or near-duplication of other photographs, or (c) unidentifiable subject. I created all black-and-white images reproduced here by scanning prints from the photo albums. One might obtain better results by scanning the original film strips, but that is a project for the future. I have also included about 50 of Witschi's Kodachrome photographs, which were among the first ever made in Mexico, since Kodachrome had only been introduced in the year before Witschi's trip.

In the first 2 of the 4 photo albums, Witschi provided hand-written captions for most of the photographs. Unfortunately, he abandoned this practice in the final 2 albums; therefore, the identification of the subjects of these later images is problematic. However, in most cases, the diary provides sufficient clues.

### ***The manuscript***

Witschi wrote the diary in a bound book containing 370 pages (only about 60 of which were used, the rest being left blank), 5 inches wide, 8 inches high, and 1 inch thick. Each entry in the diary appears on a single page having the day's date printed at the top of the page. Almost everything in the book appears to have been written by Witschi during the trip. However, 3 or 4 pages contain notes that apparently were added later. Witschi inserted some of these interpolations in the 1970, about a year before his death. It may be that all later interpolations date from that year.

The diary is in English, although Witschi's early writings were all in German. Most entries are terse, incomplete sentences, often containing abbreviations. Witschi's handwriting is idiosyncratic and hard to read, probably reflecting the fact that he often wrote in a hurry or in poor light. While working on this project I became proficient at reading his script; nevertheless, a few of my transcriptions are little more than guesses.

All text and punctuation appearing between square brackets “[ ]” are comments that I have inserted as editor to describe something about nearby actual text. Question marks

enclosed inside square brackets indicate that the preceding word or words are either guesses or indecipherable. The footnotes are all mine.

While transcribing the text, I have felt free to make the following types of changes:

- Changes in punctuation to improve readability
- Expansion of abbreviations to the unabbreviated form, as in expanding “Teh” to Tehuantepec
- Addition of a title to each day’s entry, as in “Wed, August 11: Alice, Texas – Laredo – Monterey”
- Occasional minor changes to spelling or grammar when it seemed necessary for understandability.

### ***Acknowledgements***

I am grateful to my friend Jerry Harder, a historian, for helping to identify several persons, places, and historical events. I also thank Maria Pilar Barreto for her wonderful translation of this diary from English into Spanish. And finally, I thank my mother, Marianne Potter, for preserving the diary and photos.

.—Thomas F. Potter, March, 2007

## The Diary

### **Aug 06, Fri: Iowa City**

Leave Iowa City with Martha.

### **Aug 07, Sat: Traveling**

(No diary entry)

### **Aug 08, Sun: Baton Rouge**

With the Stanleys (and Gladys, their colored maid) at Baton Rouge. Sightseeing on campus and around Capitol. Visit by Dr. Harry Bennet [Bennett?] and Mr. and Mrs. Lowery. Decide to go by car and return by boat. Stanley's car will be driven back by the Lowerys.

In the evening visit by Dr. and Mrs. Bradbury. Dr. Bradbury grew up at Mexico City, his parents still living there. –Outline of trip to Mexico City. Bradbury is a sociologist, for 2 years leave, studying social security plans of the governments (State of Louisiana. and federal).

### **Aug 09, Mon: Baton Rouge (and New Orleans)**

Bring Martha and Ruth to New Orleans, St. Charles Street. Go to Mexican council, letters of recommendation, to General Weinberger, Mr. Arrginaya?, gives letter, 2 passengers fee from Puerto Mexico<sup>2</sup> – New Orleans.

Lunch with Martha and Allan at Arnaud's. Trout *à la meunière*, good bottle of wine, (*Nostiano*) for little money.

### **Aug 10, Tue: Baton Rouge – Alice, Texas**

Leave Baton Rouge, Mr. George Lowery, Mrs. George Lowery, about 7 A.M.

Myself and Allan Stanley cross Mississippi by ferry. Through Louisiana with beautiful forests, Spanish moss, many birds, 2 species of aigrets<sup>3</sup>. Highway always near coast but one sees the sea but seldom. One night at Plaza Court Tourist Camps at Alice, Texas.

---

<sup>2</sup> Puerto Mexico is the old name of the city of Coatzacoalcos, in Veracruz state.

<sup>3</sup> Aigrettes, or herons.

**Aug 11, Wed: Alice, Texas – Laredo – Monterey**

Leave Alice, Tex. About 8:00. Plaza Courts Tourist Camps??? V (Clean, \$1, with Stanley).

- Phot. II, 10/13
  - Cactus and Locust shrub
  - Chocolate plants
  - “Chaparral” landscape
- 14 Laredo<sup>4</sup>, the Funkes<sup>5</sup>. Shy cat[??] Muriel. Guns had to be left with Mexican Customs; Zeiss, registered with U.S.A. customs. No good eating place. Were kept from 11 AM to 3PM.
- 15/19
  - *Dracaena*<sup>6</sup> and mountains on the way to Monterey.
  - Monterey before sundown,
  - Eat at elegant restaurant Sandborn<sup>7</sup>.
  - Waitresses *mestizo* in costume.
  - Afterward Hotel Monterey \$am 1.40 (food). Mint Julep – Serenade: 2 violins, 1 guitar (large like cello, with 5 pegs, plucked only).

**Aug 12, Thu: Monterey – Tropic of Cancer – Tamazunchale**

Leave Monterey at 8. Road runs on plateau between two sierras. White clouds over western chain.

**Tropico de Cancer.**


---

<sup>4</sup> Nuevo Laredo, on the south side of the Rio Grande, in Tamaulipas State, Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. and Mrs. Erich Funke, friends of the Witschis. Funke was a professor of German at the University of Iowa. Apparently they vacationed in Nuevo Laredo.

<sup>6</sup> Leafy tropical plant.

<sup>7</sup> The famous Sanborn’s chain of restaurants in Mexico had been founded in 1903.

Beautifully wooded sierras.

Different types of tropical landscape, many flowers, especially acacia and red *scrophularia*<sup>8</sup>.

Tamazunchale – house of the frogs. First *anopheles*<sup>9</sup> on hand of George Lowery. Evening at sun down near Camp El Sol, km 371, 2 miles before Tamazunchale. Manager Jose Parrera tells of alligator hunting circa 4 miles down on the river. First bananas eaten that fully ripened on trees. Papaya not fully ripe. Squirrels.

### **Aug 13, Fri: Tamazunchale – Mexico City**

Most beautiful drive circa 2 hours up from Tamazunchale. Change to tropical landscape. Mountain, innumerable large morning glories, flowering shrubs and trees. Mountains mostly with woods, some cultivation; corn, many goats. Few turkeys. Higher up, more arid, Joshua trees (*Dracena*), *Opuntia*<sup>10</sup> and cactus.

Zimapán Cathedral

Afterwards beautiful **cactus**: hedges and fields.

Colonia<sup>11</sup>, Market scenes

Afterwards, more and more cultivated; circa 30 km. from Mexico City meet German engineer from Hannover, works since 8 years for Siemens-Schubert Werke<sup>12</sup> in Mexico.

**Mexico City.** City limits police check, give us hitch hiker, man from Dept. de Salubriedad.

Hotel Reforma, no rooms (min. 18 Pesos single room.) Hotel de la Borda 28 pesos daily, apartment for 4 (7 [Pesos] per person).

---

<sup>8</sup> Wildflower related to snapdragon.

<sup>9</sup> Mosquito capable of carrying malaria.

<sup>10</sup> Prickly pear.

<sup>11</sup> Probably Colonia de Venado in Hidalgo State, between Zimapán and Mexico City.

<sup>12</sup> Siemens-Schubert Werke manufactured electric motors.

**Aug 14, Sat: Mexico City (Instituto Biologica Chapultepec)**

Morning 10 am, visit with Juan Zuiger<sup>13</sup>, Department of Fish and Game—circa 50 years old, studied 6 years in Germany, speaks English, German, French, Spanish—on my Fish and Game permit[???]. Fisheries congress will meet here (esp. Canada, USA). Has sent collection permits to Baton Rouge. Will make duplicates for Monday.

Drive to Instituto Biologico Chapultepec, where we meet Prof. I. Ochoterena (speaks Spanish and French) and his associate and student in neurology (histology of neurological cytology [???]): Miss Amelia Samano Bishop.

Very beautiful situation, flowers, palms, paintings, library, good and large old laboratories, very clean, excellent techniques.

- Lunch at Sanborn's; crowded;
- Interlude of Muriel with Haciennero[?] from West coast; M. Blackburn;
- Banditi [?]

Afternoon:

- Exterior of la residencia de Augustin Iturbide, 1832.
- 29: Cathedral: Through[?], with Miss Templeton, French guide, Flemish painter Pereins<sup>14</sup>, Zapotec *caldera*[?] etc.—Aztec ruins uncovered under where new building supposed to build (last Phot. III) Old Jesuit School with modern paintings [in] auditorium by Diego Rivera.

Evening: Rossignol (injai[?]).

**Aug 15, Sun: Mexico City (Museums, Bullfight)**

Morning in National Museum. Cathedral entrance[?], Old Indian, Mexican.

Natural History Museum (Museo de la Historia Natural)

Calle de Chopin[?].

*Hormiguero* = anteater

*Tapir*

---

<sup>13</sup> Or Zuiser?

<sup>14</sup> Simón Pereins (1540-1589); lived in Mexico from 1566 onwards. [See [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com)]

*Armadillo*

*Ardilla* = squirrel

*Coyote*

*Jabali* = peccary

*Figrillo*[?]= pandas[?]

*Gato* = *felis*

*Saraguato*<sup>15</sup> = *ciluetta*[?]

*Machin o Mono Arania*[???] = *ateles*<sup>16</sup>

*Tortuga* = turtle

*Iguana*

*Lagarto* = Kaiman

*Tiburón* = shark

Afternoon: Bullfight in arena.

Eat first mango fruit. Yellow, flavor of strawberry, plum. Supper with Stanley in College Club.

### **Aug 16, Mon: Mexico City – Puebla**

Morning: eat first slice of papaya. Tastes like buttered cantaloupe. Served with half lime fruit.

Try to buy guns, without success. Lost much time because of siesta 12:30/3:30.

Buy 2 liters acetone, 100cc glacial acetic acid, 500 cc formaldehyde at German Druggist across from Cathedral.

Carlo Zuiger (son of Juan) tells of death of Mussauer<sup>17</sup> at Acapulco, two days ago. Assumes malaria. Had permit to collect reptiles.

Evening 5:30 pm: Drive out of Mexico City toward Puebla *Camino Natural*.

On the way beautiful sunset with White Lady<sup>18</sup> and Popocatépetl partly uncovered in splendid sight. Winding road up into prime forest. Near Puebla heavy rain, then blowout. Mexican helpers.

---

<sup>15</sup> Saraguato monkey.

<sup>16</sup> Spider monkey

<sup>17</sup> Or Massauer. Not traced.

<sup>18</sup> The volcano Iztaccíhuatl

Puebla circa 10:00 pm: Hotel Arronte<sup>19</sup>. Apartment 12\$ (3 per person). Fiesta San Roccha[?]; shouting.

1<sup>st</sup> Mex “friend” offers pulque, entertainment,

2<sup>nd</sup> Mex “friend” salvages[?] us, people of distinction. “Gringos”

### **Aug 17, Tue: Puebla (and Cholula)**

Stay all day at Puebla, mostly. Much of time for replacement of blown tire and lock repair of trunk. Mr. Cernowits – wife Sunja.

In morning good view of Mt. Orizaba from hotel. Mt. Malinche.

15 min. drive to Cholula, city of churches, with Aztec pyramid. (Tunnels showing older pyramids beneath, with steps of former surface). Grave with 2 skeletons (broken) and pottery, under glass.. Popocatépetl never free of clouds.

- Hotel patio of the Arronte
- Street with cathedral tower
- Old fort Guadalupe, near prisons (penitentiary[?])
- Churches and sites of Toluca<sup>20</sup> (last ones: landscape toward Popocatépetl and Iztaccihuatl. Cholula foreground. Cholula is all ruins, poorly built houses; “guides” “racket.”

Puebla well built, was Spanish stronghold, fortified bridges toward Mexico City and Cholula. Heavy rain in afternoon. Meals in hotel are Spanish type, good and clean. Very high rooms, plenty of tile work!

### **Aug 18, Wed: Puebla – Orizaba – Tehuacán –Oaxaca**

Leave Puebla 7:00 morning. Drive to Garci-Crespo & Tehuacán (2 m apart).

- Popocatépetl and Iztaccihuatl, no clouds; south Puebla in foreground, Cathedral towers visible & church.
- Mt. Malinche

---

<sup>19</sup> A 50-room hotel with a beautiful glassed-over patio, originally built as a private residence in 1672. See [6, pp. 79-80] for a contemporary description of the hotel and its owner.

<sup>20</sup> I think he meant Cholula.

- Orizaba on street, circa 50 miles out of Puebla.
- Tehuacán, where we separate from the Lowerys!

Take train 1<sup>st</sup> class \$12.50 [pesos] to Oaxaca. Narrow gauge, very shaky, little space. First in Atlantic region, up to 1923 m, then over continental divide to the Pacific (Ejutla<sup>21</sup>). Leave Tehuacán 10:30, arrive Oaxaca circa 6:00; more than 1 hour late. First through sandy plains, cactus etc. Large river [space left for name of river<sup>22</sup>], then up along confluent [space left for name of river<sup>23</sup>] into very pretty mountain valleys. Mango trees, Cacao pralius, Papaya tree, green oranges. Mameya<sup>24</sup> fruit.

Heavy rain when we arrive at Oaxaca. Hotel Modelo. 12.00 for two, meals included. Zócalo with many strange trees, esp. fern-like tree, and mango and Ash.

### **Aug 19, Thu: Oaxaca (and Monte Alban)**

- Spanish furnace, abandoned. Monte Alban, then ruins (Zapotec) of Monte Alban.
- Market scenes at Oaxaca.

Trip to ruins with Prof. Zink - DeBary[?] and Mr. Walton, electrical engineer of Mexico City. Some ruins uncovered, others still buried under plants and earth.

Preparations for the trip of tomorrow: fish and game department asking for iguanas: *Totolapan Coolornis y Chucaluca, aver give acos tumbrar criar los meiljenas de esti region junto con les gallinas. [???*

Bought map of Oaxaca.

Evening with Prof. Zink, who leaves tomorrow morning by plane to go to Guatemala.

---

<sup>21</sup> It seems unlikely that they went to Ejutla this day, since it is past their destination city of Oaxaca. They might have seen a sign for Ejutla, which I believe was the southern terminus of this railroad.

<sup>22</sup> Rio Grande?

<sup>23</sup> Rio San Antonio?

<sup>24</sup> Mammea

**Aug 20, Fri: Oaxaca – Tlacolula – Mitla – Totolapan**

Hotel Tubillo, Puerto Mexico, Vera Cruz.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Newmark – Salina Cruz, recommended by Mr. A. Walton at Oaxaca.

Juan Ortiz – Totolapan<sup>26</sup> Municipal Presidente.

Leave Hotel Modelo 6:30[AM]. Prof. Zink gives [me] flash meter. Mr. Kenedy from aviation field gives letter to grocer in Tlacolula. Taxi driver from Chicago. Visit to Mitla, many pictures, church and chapel (*fortezza*) built old temple and on pyramid. 2 pesos for clay head.<sup>27</sup>

Mr. Ruiz, grocer speaks well English, gives letter of introduction to former presidenté Ortiz (Juan), now his nephew of same name [is] presidenté. Very prominent around here.

*Camion* ride with Indian driver, first over good roads, later in picturesque pretty and dry river bottom. Wonderful scenery and highly interesting villages. On the way halt in Ristorante! Two young men with guns. Blowout on steep incline. Last picture entering Totolapan.

Ceremonial reception by the ex and the presidente, which gave us letter to the next place. Arrange for quarters in an old-fashioned *Trattoria* and for horses for [Aug 21].

**Aug 21, Sat: Totolapan – San Carlos Yautepec**

- 1& 2. Start on horseback 7:30 [AM], 1 horse, 1 mule, & 1 pack mule with the “*Mozo*” Niccolo Ortiz. Cross Rio Grande de Tehuantepec about a dozen times, fording. Poor Indian pony, not good walker, iron loose. Bananas in river valley, not in mountains. Endless chains of mountains. Very poor passes. Beautiful flowers, butterflies, grasshoppers. Rancho Escondido.
- 3-4 Indian women making coffee (good!). Tortillas frijoles. Hammock with insects!

---

<sup>25</sup> This is a note about a hotel recommended to him. Witschi is still in Oaxaca, and nowhere near Puerto Mexico.

<sup>26</sup> Totolapan, Oax. is today called **San PedroTotolapa**. It is 29 mi. SSE of Tlacolula on Inter-American Highway 190. Elevation 3,983 ft.

<sup>27</sup> On this day they also visited the village of Santa María del Tule, 7 miles east of Oaxaca, famous for the “Great Tree of Tule”, a very large and very old cypress. See photographs.

On again. Through hot country down in more pleasant valleys<sup>28</sup>. Get tired but finally arrive in San Carlos. Though Ortiz letter of introduction to him, Don [space left for name] asks English-speaking Sanitaria<sup>29</sup>:

Héctor S. Gonzalez =  
Oficino Sanitorio  
San Carlos Yautepec  
Oaxaca

### **Aug 22, Sun: San Carlos Yautepec – San Bartolo**

Departure from San Carlos. Señor Héctor wishes picture on horse. 3 nice horses; Stanley on stallion with martingale. Very strenuous ride over high mountain chains, old Indian trail, uncomfortable large slabs for horses broken often into small pieces, to prevent sliding. Difficult pictures on the way, *mozo* with large machete. Always following telegraph line.

Arriving picture of San Bartolo<sup>30</sup> from distance. Crossing river with girls bathing and washing, laundry.

2:00 afternoon: credentials to Presidente, Zapotec. Reception in front of *Municipio*. Nice building. Talk about 3 horses for Tequisistlan; asks 20 pesos, offer 12 – 16 – 17. No *mozos* willing to leave town because of fiesta tomorrow. Announce first possibility on Wednesday morning.

Teachers' Convention, all from neighbor pueblos, Secretario General big fat Zapotec from San Bartolo. Many speakers, and parade. Speech by woman "*profesoresa*"<sup>31</sup>.

Pictures of many teachers, mostly Zapotec. Women mostly shy. Music and dance with *profesoresa*. Stayed for night in Municipio. /Cardenas home Tarascon[??]

---

<sup>28</sup> On this day they are descending from elevation 3983 ft. (Totolapan) to 3281 ft. (San Carlos Yautepec).

<sup>29</sup> Indecipherable sentence. Apparently the person to whom the letter of introduction was addressed, probably the Presidente, delegated the responsibility of helping the travelers to an English-speaking colleague, Héctor Gonzalez.

<sup>30</sup> The naturalist Hans Gadow passed through San Bartolo 35 years earlier. The village is at an elevation of about 2500 feet, tends to be very hot, and according to Gadow, "the people, perhaps a mixture of Chontal and Misteca[sic], do not like strangers.." See [5, p. 214 ff.]

<sup>31</sup> There is a photo of the *profesoresa*, a beautiful woman. Unfortunately we don't know her name.

**Aug 23, Mon: San Bartolo (Fiesta of Teachers)**

Circa 1500 meters above sea level.

Delay in the fiesta.

In spite of late promises of 30 pesos, no *mozos* available. “Not even for 10 [100?] pesos would a man leave”.

Morning bath with teachers in brook under a small waterfall. Swim and dive. All kinds of people drop in for the fiesta. 4 bands: Tequisistlan, San Carlos, San Bartolo, San Juan La Garcia. *Pyrotechnico* from Tlacolula. Receives 100 pesos.

Stanley very angry and distrusting. Finally 2 *mozos* that came from Tequisistlan offer to take us tomorrow at 1:00 afternoon to Las Vacas and next day on to Mixtequilla terminal for bus (*camion*) to Tehuantepec. Price not fixed yet. There will be much mescal drinking. Possibly not feasible to leave tomorrow.

Teachers are mostly federal, paid 3 pesos a day. Some are paid by the *estado* (Oaxaca); government corrupted? Pays teachers irregularly. Federal government very regular. Cardenas very popular.

Two *mozos* want to be paid for horses, trip to start tomorrow—will be drunk! Not given.

Photos: *Madrinas* del “basy ball game”<sup>32</sup>. Segredario & 2 boys. Fiesta. The Calle Principal.

Last 3: *Pyrotechnico*, and inside of our room next morning.

**Aug 24, Tue: San Bartolo (Fiesta Continues)**

Candle lights – 5 *centavos* – all night. 3 very loud bands all night. Mescal booths around Sypch[?].<sup>33</sup> Men with handkerchiefs.<sup>34</sup> (8pm, - 8am).

Café from Segredario, bread, boiled eggs, green oranges.

Calle de Berriozabal No. 2.  
Oaxaca, Oax.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>The *madrinas* were young women watching a basketball game in the square. Nice photo.

<sup>33</sup> Indecipherable sentence.

<sup>34</sup> Another indecipherable sentence.

Señor Felipe Figueroa (dark)  
Carlos Morás (blond)

Photos: River, bath, *Zopilote*<sup>36</sup>, basket ball tournament with *madrinas*. Waiting<sup>37</sup> one other day.

At midnight one man from neighbor village killed by above 6 shots, lies in village until morning behind baking oven. Too late for picture.

At daybreak came two men from San Carlos, that had seen us there, one with a deep slash of knife *puñial*<sup>38</sup> in the left wrist, all bloody, hand white and stiff and wrapped in dirty cloth, the other with a deep oblong stab in abdomen, ventral muscle. [A diagram of this wound appears here on the page] I am asked to dress them both. Great danger of permanent damage. Dress with merthiolate of mercury, clean and wash, gauze, tampon, adhesive tape.

Héctor with Lawyer arrives. All San Carlos men afraid. Lawyer always exposes his large hide whip. In evening, they leave town. Later fist fights. Héctor comes bruised, falls asleep.[??]

Fiesta dead, almost no dancing. Want us to dance. Stanley bird voices[??] — Zapotec dances! Women singing, Vasconcelos<sup>39</sup>, everybody laughing.

All were afraid something would happen, shouting, feud; cling to terrace of Municipio, our room—only two bands – now singing and very happy with us.

### **Aug 25, Wed: San Bartolo – Tequisistlan**

Wonderful sunrise, with red sky in east, red mountains in west. Héctor, Lawyer, still here, waited somewhere in hiding. Horses of Antonio Garcia not here at 6:30. Everybody turns out to see us leave.

Stanley wants to bet we shall not be allowed to leave. I tell Alfonso<sup>40</sup> that Mexico is a fine country, but people can not keep their promises, shake hands and do not comply. He is obviously hurt; tell him that teachers ought to teach honesty.

---

<sup>35</sup> This may be the address of one of the men mentioned in the next paragraph (Figueroa or Morás).

<sup>36</sup> Black vulture.

<sup>37</sup> Underlined in manuscript.

<sup>38</sup> A dagger.

<sup>39</sup> Eliazar Vasconcelos, head teacher in San Bartolo.

In this moment comes Garcia and wants to make new bargain. \$55 to Mixtequilla. Decline; \$35 to Tequisistlan – remind of the 25\$ agreement. Alfonso talks to Vasconcelos and they go in a huddle with Garcia. 25\$ to Tequisistlan;

Start 10:00 in morning. Little *mozo*, good man, very quiet. No photography this day. 3 mules. I on an applewhite, with white shanks[?] in bands, good walker; Stanley on dark small animal; cargo mule from time to time goes wild. Top of bag tears, key lost. Books too large. Change.

Very hot and dry, acacias wilted, for hours not a drop of water. Café at Las Vacas<sup>41</sup>, 5:00 in evening. Good natured man and a few women. Lemons free.

Dark. *Mozo* with lantern. Pass many *campos* of Tequisistlan men and women, very colorful. Train of Indians blocks way. I walk through with mule. Few horses or mules, the fiesta dancers on foot. Young boy and girl barefoot, go with us.

17 boys[??] on bare foot constantly talking and laughing, having good time. On approach of Rio Tequisistlan hear frogs cry. Ford river in moonlight, enter the village. Many *Jacals*<sup>42</sup>, Zocalo and sleep on benches, under petrol lamp in front of Municipio.

### **Aug 26, Thu: Tequisistlan – Mixtequilla**

(Yes, pictures: *Mozo*, *Presidente XI*)

All day in Tequisistlan. Eve. 8.00 [pesos?] per horse to [space left for name]. Air mattress has great interest. Resting all day. Mules had 30 cents worth of Maya straw.

In morning *mozo* asks whether he could take us to Mixtequilla (15\$) or Tehuantepec (20\$). Goes to water mules. Handshake, solemn agreement, never comes back. Another man with 3 horses offers to take us—later many more, even one with oxcart (10\$, twice the time).

---

<sup>40</sup> Alfonso R. Cuellar was a resident of Oaxaca City, and was in San Bartolo to attend the fiesta. He probably was a teacher. Apparently he was friendly to Witschi, who took a picture of him with members of his family.

<sup>41</sup> Village near Tequisistlan. Gadow visited Las Vacas in 1903 and described it as, “.. a little place called Las Vacas. It consists of only a few scattered houses in a prettily situated valley with plenty of cattle, whence its name..” Gadow found the people friendly and very poor. See [5, p. 212]. I don’t find the town on modern maps.

<sup>42</sup> A *jacal* is a house with thick adobe walls and thatched roof.

Very energetic and apparently intelligent Presidente, makes us present of a coconut, which he opens for us quickly with a large knife; *con agua*. My first taste of it, quite good.

*Mozos* gather and discuss the wealthy Americans. I behave as if I could not understand, have Stanley go to stores. In this way I hear how they work on our new man, to put the price higher. I refer to Presidente and respectability.

Horrible sanitary conditions; no *excusados*<sup>43</sup>. Dogs and pigs eat feces. (Little boy).

People laugh about our paper cups and chlorine—However bury one girl of 6, died of cholera, and beg for medicine for a baby suffering from *disentaria*.

Here coffee made in store. Bananas, boiled eggs, oranges.

Departure postponed from 6 to 8.. At 8, no *mozo*. Our man gets no cooperation from others. Boy tries to extract money. Presidente helps, we leave 8:45. 3 horses, trotting. Clear sky, later clouds. After midnight, ford [Rio] Tehuantepec 5 times. My red grey horse very suspicious of Stanley's tin can.

### **Aug 27, Fri:      *Mixtequilla and Tehuantepec***

My cups, which without my knowledge, were strapped on rear of horse. Gallops into overhanging trees. A lot crushed. Rearrange bucket.

At 5:00 gets light. We dismount for a short rest. Ants and flies. On toward Mixtequilla, where we arrive after daybreak. Work on irrigation dam. Many *camions* (trucks). Horses shy frightfully, bucket wobbles, horse goes crazy. I jump off, fall, kick horse off.

Arrive at Indian hut café. Soon arrives truck which carries us to Tehuantepec (15. for horses, 50. for truck, 85. for porter.)

No regular hotel. Boarding house of Doña Josefa G. Salinas Vda. de Romero<sup>44</sup>, Avenida del Ferrocarril 34. Find there Mr. Dwight C. Paul (American, once commander of submarine in war before Cattaro and Durazzo) now for unknown reasons here<sup>45</sup>. And

---

<sup>43</sup> Toilets.

<sup>44</sup> This home had the best tourist accommodations in Tehuantepec at the time. The house had electricity and bathrooms with bathtubs and running water. See "La Casa de Dona Josefa", [6, p. 129].

<sup>45</sup> Cattaro is the port now called Kotor, in Montenegro, and was an Austro-Hungarian naval base during World War I. Durazzo is the port in Albania now called Durrës. Durazzo became a submarine base for the Austro-Hungarian navy in 1916 after Albania was occupied by Austro-Hungary. Paul was probably in a

Mexican engineer Jose S. Noriega of the irrigation dam project. Put up in 1 room, 2 beds, 3 meals per day, 3 pesos per day each. Older house, the most spectacular one in town. Stepmother of the present lady was interesting to Porfirio Diaz; many visits and parties. Interesting furniture, glasses, beautiful garden, many old shrubs in full bloom.

Visit at home of Mr Baker, nice home, patio with pots, plants, tame caravan[?]. Baker is a banker for Central Mexican Bank. Letting system telegraph to Rush to relay to Martha.

### **Aug 28, Sat: Tehuantepec (Mountains, First Rain)**

Walk up hill behind Tehuantepec with view on river, south to Laguna Superior. Pictures of market couple[?].

XI Phot. XII – Dark, rainy season breaks, first rain in this month. Takes the enormous amounts of dust. Rains most of the night.

Rest part of day. Engineer [first name omitted] Field of Purdue invites for a trip on Sunday. Get some *Habanero*, Mexican whiskey. Cocktail with D.C. Paul. Meet *mozo* of Tequisistlan, still in town.

Indians of this region very dark. Women wear *huipil* (blouse) and [space left to fill in Spanish word<sup>46</sup>] (skirt), very colorful.

### **Aug 29, Sun: Tehuantepec (Visit to Ruins)**

Leave morning 6:00 with truck for Mixtequilla. From there, wade through Rio Tehuantepec and begin climbing mountain with many Zapotec ruins, covered by woods. These ruins are forts put up in a hurry circa 170 years before arrival of Spanish to defend against Aztecs. Rather in bad condition.

Find a few human bones, pieces of pottery (feet). Pyramids, tombs, houses, defense lines, walls, all strung along [and] around the slope of the mountains at several levels.

On return, shoot<sup>47</sup> 3 birds: goshawk[?], oriole, and green magpie (?)<sup>48</sup>.

sub chaser rather than a submarine. 36 U.S. sub chasers participated in a major attack on Durazzo on Oct. 9, 1918. (See [10]) Paul's address, written on p. 1 of Witschi's diary book, is intriguing: "Yacht Swastika, Miami Beach, Florida."

<sup>46</sup> *Corte? Traja? Enagua?*

<sup>47</sup> "Shoot" may mean "make a photo of", or may be literal. At least one person in the group had a rifle or shotgun.

At supper, meet the writer Miss Edith Makay (**Through Mexico**)<sup>49</sup>, who speaks Zapotec. Lives here with family, in which there is syphilis; has contracted disinteria. [I] treat with cocktails whole group. Go together and with the “*Bombero*”<sup>50</sup> Coleman to the “*Velo*”<sup>51</sup> dance.

Coleman says that he does not care for the too-colorful Indian girls; dances only with Mexican girls in modern dress. Explains

- prima classa* (girls with modern dress, Mexicans, often hairy legs),
- secunda classa* (girls with “traja”, mostly Indian)
- Girl in black dress, not dancing, in mourning, tears[?]

Many costumes gorgeous, chains of American gold coins. Mexican girls in mourning can not dance. Engineer treats me with *cerveza* (beer). Two Marimba *danse musicas*[?]. One boy with gourd![?] Good dancing, boy and girl, but always the same figure. Philosophical talk with engineer on progress, religion.

### **Aug 30, Mon: Tehuantepec – Salina Cruz**

Photos: interior (with Josefa) exterior house, market, oxcart.

Photos: Tehuantepec – iguanas, - Station; about last 10 Salina Cruz at sundown.

Bolz, Mexico City – Pennsylvania Dutch – sits with me. Has sold over 1 ton of soldering material to Pacific Company. Pays rounds of beer. *Muchachas*.

Professor from Minnesota! ----- Kinitsky, Wegener, Fritz, Faidine[?] Johaniger, Fouraler, and many others. Captain Kerr, the living gossip of town – port of Queenstown

<sup>48</sup> The question mark (“?”) is Witschi’s. In modern nomenclature, a “green magpie” would be a bird from Souteast Asia, but Witschi’s term is descriptive.

<sup>49</sup> Miss Makay and her book have not been traced.

<sup>50</sup> Fireman

<sup>51</sup> Veil

(Cobh)<sup>52</sup> during war. Claims to have lost ½ million pounds sterling during war. Gardiner recites – Lean red Scotch<sup>53</sup> with small irises.

### **Aug 31, Tue: Salina Cruz**

(Filtered water at Salina Cruz, unfiltered at Tehuantepec).

Port of Salina Cruz only[?] built 1900-1907 by Pierson, Englo. Neglected after Panama, Revolution, Diaz. Full of sand. Since 1 year Pacific Company removes sand, *Draga Minnesota*<sup>54</sup>; project under Colonel E. K. Smoote (Mexico City) (old book collector). 1,700,000 pesos, expect 1 million profit.

Here Kuntzy is Chief. Three Mexican wives; 72 years old, 28-year-old wife. Left Germany when 25 years old. 8 children. Engineer Wegener, related to explorer.

Photo: Lighthouse Salina Cruz. All others<sup>55</sup> in Tehuantepec garden Sept. 1.

Gritz, with hobo boat for 4 at Mississippi City, was on Cocos Island, 15 years Panama Canal. Wants to take me to Galapagos. Endless conversation; kidney stones. Together on *Draga*, end up to Lighthouse. Chief Mechanic Johannsen and son; Gardiner, Edinburgh. Captain Kerr—5,000 tons of salt from Salinas. Many sharks.

Evening supper[?], then with Wegener, General Figueroa<sup>56</sup>. Pay 6.00 hotel (2 nights) 3.00 beer, 1.50 rail.

### **Sep 01, Wed: Tehuantepec**

Morning: back to Tehuantepec. Miss Edith Makay leaves on same train as I arrive – *Dysentaria* – Mr. Crawley, American, leaves[?].

41 Iguanas were bought, all of the black type. Stanley preserved 17 yesterday, probably without acetone bath [??] which is in very tough capsule of *duza*[?]. Today full heads,

---

<sup>52</sup> Cobh is a seaport in Cork harbor, Ireland, formerly a British naval base, and formerly named Queenstown.

<sup>53</sup> *i.e.*, a redheaded Scotsman.

<sup>54</sup> Dredge Minnesota, *i.e.*, a dredge whose name is “Minnesota”.

<sup>55</sup> *i.e.*, all other photos

<sup>56</sup> “Figuerreroa” in manuscript. I have not traced General Figueroa.

brains, and new collection of hyp.<sup>57</sup> in acetone. Paid 60 cents (:3.5) a piece. In evening try meat, which is white like fish. Peculiar taste.

Earthquake 11:30, 10 seconds, lamp, Indian school[?], market

Afternoon poor light in evening try some color pictures of girls<sup>58</sup>.

Signorita Aurelia Martinez  
Signorita Alfonsa Marga (Lista de Correo)

In morning also:

Signora Julia Curioa  
Signora Enedina Garfias  
Signora Josepha Romero

Pay \$16.00 (pesos), Stanley \$18.00.

## **Sep 02, Thu: Tehuantepec – Coatzacoalcos**

Leave with the 6:30 [train], Noriega and Paul up to bid goodbye. Tehuantepec to Puerto Mexico<sup>59</sup> (Coatzacoalcos!) \$15.30 (pesos).

Color picture: Cocoanut palms and hut across Tehuantepec Station. Rear of car.

Mountains near San Jerónimo Ixtepec<sup>60</sup>.

People at station (girl with shawl, green, and flowers). Stall, necklace for 10 centavos. Matias Romero. Cocoanut palm tops toward sky

Rio Mogoñe (Sarabia). River – Station same name. (close ups, forgot filter!)  
Headwaters of Coatzacoalcos River.

<sup>57</sup> Most likely hypophyses, that is, pituitary glands, a major interest of Witschi's.

<sup>58</sup> The *Tehuanas* (women of Tehuantepec) were known for extraordinary beauty and gracefulness. See [5, pp. 149-150] and [6, pp. 120-122].

<sup>59</sup> Puerto Mexico is another name for the port city of Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz state. This city is on the north (Gulf of Mexico) side of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and is at the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos River. A railroad (*Ferrocarril Nacional de Tehuantepec*) running across the Isthmus from Salina Cruz to Coatzacoalcos was opened in 1907 by President Porfirio Diaz. From 1911 to 1936 the city was officially named Puerto Mexico. EW usually refers to the city by that name.

<sup>60</sup> City in Oaxaca now called Ciudad Ixtepec., on railroad. 18 miles NE of Tehuantepec.

Plenty of military men, one funeral! In *prima classa*<sup>61</sup>.

*Plotavélla*[?], orange flowers

Santa Lucretia River (from Oaxaca), at Jesus Carranza, very broad, with banana boats.

All day accompanied by M.H. Rosas, Inspector Confidential of the Ferromex<sup>62</sup> Salina Cruz. Arriving 6:15 at Hotel Tubillo. Hear that Dr. Zink checked out at noon. Evening we meet E.G. Martins of the Lillie Company, Veracruz. Much interest here for hormones, especially testosterone.

### **Sep 03, Fri: Coatzacoalcos**

Photos in Puerto Mexico.

*Zopilotes*<sup>63</sup> – arrested on market. Presidente – Mayor of the Municipia, General Diaz.

Across the Coatzacoalcos [River], build on railway to Yucatan; erecting bridge over Coatzacoalcos [River].

### **Sep 04, Sat: Coatzacoalcos (Side trips to Minatitlan, Chinameca)**

*Almendro* – (almonds)

*Teucho* – (orange and red blossoms acacia)

Trip with Rosas., Stanley stays home.

Minatitlán<sup>64</sup> – Cosoleacaque – Oteapan – Chinameca<sup>65</sup>

Minatitlán, big oil fields and refineries, especially Aguila Company. Stock partly foreign<sup>66</sup>. Laborers get 8 pesos daily (for teachers, 3 or 5!); want 20. Difficulties with

---

<sup>61</sup> That is, the military men rode in First Class on the train.

<sup>62</sup> I think Ferromex is an abbreviation for *Ferrocarril Mexicana*, the Mexican Railroad.

<sup>63</sup> *Zopilotes* means “vultures”. I don’t understand what “*Zopilotes* - arrested on market” may mean.

<sup>64</sup> Port on Coatzacoalcos River 20 miles south of Coatzacoalcos. Major oil industry site.

<sup>65</sup> Cosoleacaque, Oteapan, and Chinameca are towns near Minatitlán. Cosoleacaque was the site of a battle against the French in 1863.

Mexican government, threat to leave the country. Cardenas socialization calls for much opposition. – Flowers.

In grocery. – Cosoleacaque and Oteapan villages, women – like South Sea. Railroad to build school.

At home of presidente. – Luncheon with water from Chinameca, tough meat of cow, no tools. Nice family, grandmother wants not to be photographed because her husband dead!!

### **Sep 05, Sun: Coatzacoalcos**

Admiral Obermeier  
c/o Compania Iltanera Weinberger de Mexico  
Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz

Day of rest. Finger is swollen from thorns under skin: Male mifer[?] plant. In the evening, Obermeier leaves for his plantation in banana tug boat. Had sent message for speed boat to take me up to his plantation. Would take three days up, 8 days stay, [space left for number] days down. Too long!

Many wild animals—monkeys, boars, armadillo, peccaries—in his plantation. Indians from Chiapas. Count Bernstorff (?)<sup>67</sup> had visited. 3 children in Europe. Jewish[?]. At 16, wife suicide. *Sole Dios*<sup>68</sup>.

Allan<sup>69</sup> dreams of Mrs. Miller (Dorothea Starb.- in '70)<sup>70</sup>. Is constantly haunted by her. Talks often about lost friendship and arguments. He has intestinal troubles.

<sup>66</sup> El Aguila was the major British oil company in Mexico. The dispute between the Mexican government and foreign oil companies was intense during this period, and led in 1938 to the nationalization of the oil industry by the Mexican government.

<sup>67</sup> The question mark (“?”) is Witschi’s, and may indicate uncertainty about the spelling. The person mentioned here is almost certainly Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff (1862-1939), German Ambassador to the United States until 1917.

<sup>68</sup> Or possibly, *Sabe Dios* (God knows).

<sup>69</sup> Allan Stanley

<sup>70</sup> The fragment inside parentheses is an interpolation inserted by Witschi in 1970. Mrs. Miller was Witschi student Dorothea Starbuck Miller (1908-?). In 1937 she was a zoology graduate student and assistant at the University of Iowa. Mrs. Miller received her Ph.D. in 1938. She had married in 1931, possibly during the time that Stanley was a student at Iowa. Her specialties were audiogenic seizures and mammalian genetics. See [1] Many years later, after the death of his second wife, Allan Stanley married Mrs. Miller [16]!

**Sep 06, Mon: Coatzacoalcos**

Preparation for sailing. Tickets with Ruiz. Tourist cards extension days, etc. Official of immigration very pleasing. My thumb (right) swells rapidly. Sugar and soap “poultice”.

Afternoon swim on nice sandy beach, west of river mouth. Water covered with film of petroleum.

Evening: thumb opens, much pus.

**Sep 07, Tue: Coatzacoalcos**

Mostly at home; rainy day. Few photos: water hyacinths. Thumb somewhat better. Toothache. Allan believes he has dysentery.

Joseph Peyré  
*Sang et Lumières*<sup>71</sup>  
 (Gruesset, Paris)[??]  
 Toreadore in Madrid 1934.

**Sep 08, Wed: [Coatzacoalcos: City and River]**

Customs house; packing; 2 boys \$3.00<sup>72</sup>. Rooms 6 days \$30 / 1.50, 15.00<sup>73</sup>

Mr. Kaminer to boat. Taxi \$2.00. Leave up river at 3:00 [??], picture of fruit and flower of Zagrota[?] tree.

Cananova<sup>74</sup> entering river. Pictures from boat. At 4:00: many rain bursts. Welcomed at boat by Stewart Johansen (Swedish) and Lundberg.

Captain Wetta. Nice stateroom with screen.

5:00 at Concepción. Colorful loading of bananas during night. Barges hold up to 3000 bunches! Shouting all night.

---

<sup>71</sup> An appropriate name for a company promoting bullfights!

<sup>72</sup> To help with the “packing”?

<sup>73</sup> Possibly these scribbled numbers indicate that each of the two men had his own room costing 2.50 pesos per day for six days. 1.50 may be a misprint for 2.50.

<sup>74</sup> SS Cananova, banana boat, captain Wetta.

**Sep 09, Thu: Coatzacoalcos River**

Early morning, raining.

Not good light, river scenes.

Early morning, Alvarado<sup>75</sup> arrives with banana train from Coatzacoalcos. Before daybreak, Captain calls me out to sew up Kelly, Irish sailor who had been knifed by another crew member. No anti-tetanus serum (later given 5 cc at Puerto Mexico). Deep gash in calf, 4 inches long, nearly 1 inch deep. Deep suture with cat gut surface (Stanley), with silk. Antiseptic: *sublimat tableta*<sup>76</sup>, some Lysol for instruments. Fight started over 1 case of liquor and money.

We are now going down river, Uxpanapa<sup>77</sup>, and later Coatzacoalcos, 80 km trip among primeval forests, swamps with flowering hyacinths, big black monkeys in trees, many white aigrets. Prevalent palm is an oil palm. *Zapote*<sup>78</sup> tree often seen. Indian villages, canoes cut out of 1 tree.

Back at Puerto Mexico. 2:30: start walk. Dr. ----- approves of our treatment of Kelly. Sail 4:00. Mexican destroyer in port<sup>79</sup>. Aguila company has made new arrangement with Mexican government.

Puerto Mexico, last 2 photos on Sept. 10, open sea.

**Sep 10, Fri: At Sea (Gulf of Mexico)**

(Morning 2 last color photos. Color film on ice.)

Stanley gets better; his "dysentery" on which he was ready to bet is improving rapidly.

Mainly reading, and talking with captain Wetta. He has worked up from a mule cart driver (11 years old) to the present position. 40 years old. Husky, humorous fellow. Seems to know how to handle his crew.

---

<sup>75</sup> Manuel Alvarado, with the Weinberger company, Puerto Mexico.

<sup>76</sup> Indecipherable. This is probably mercuric chloride, or sublimate of mercury.

<sup>77</sup> The Uxpanapa is a tributary of the Coatzacoalcos River.

<sup>78</sup> Produces a plum-sized edible yellow fruit also called the *white sapote*. See [3]

<sup>79</sup> A show of force during the oil crisis.

Most of the crew are married, but see their families seldom and only for very short times. Mostly South Americans, Dutch, Irish, Americans. Boat under Nicaraguan flag [diagram of white horizontal strip on blue background] because [of] labor problems both on American and Mexican boats.

Radio news: Japan-China war, U.S. boats in Mediterranean<sup>80</sup>. High luminescence of sea, especially breakwaters on boat.

### **Sep 11, Sat: At Sea (Gulf of Mexico)**

No photos. Beautiful sunrise shortly before 6, with rainbow in western clouds. Many flying fish go faster than boat and on long distances, often pick up again. Must be true flying, not only gliding. Beautiful blue water, easy sea.

Watch navigation, work with sextant.

Wind stronger in evening.

### **Sep 12, Sun: Arrive at New Orleans**

Photos XXII, Mississippi and crew.

Go on deck 2:30am. Dark, strong cold wind, lightning, clouds traveling fast, stars sometimes visible. 3:30: out on the right of front appears the reflection of light from first lighthouse. Soon the light itself comes over the rim. Ship changes from 23° east to 40° east to steer into Mississippi, South-West<sup>81</sup>.

Go to sleep again, until 7:00. We are in the river with grass lands and swamps and *lagunas*. Soon shrubs become prevalent, aigrets and seagulls. More and more houses. Natives in boats beg for bananas. Pilots tell of good soil, bad mosquitoes and occasional hurricanes with salty floods that ruin crops (oranges, rice; pasture). No malaria.

About 3:00 afternoon, dock at New Orleans. Hans is here with our car; not much gas, no money. We give him a late luncheon at New Orleans and drive to Baton Rouge, where we meet the Bennets at the Stanley home.

---

<sup>80</sup> The news of the day included disturbing incidents in the intensifying war between Japan and China, and an announcement by Cordell Hull, U.S. Secretary of State, that American shipping in the Mediterranean faced threats from “unidentified craft” and “pirate submarines.” (See [11]) Italian submarines were probably suspected to be the threat. Italy was chafing under international condemnation and sanctions for her war against Ethiopia. At the same time, the Spanish Civil War was raging. Threats to shipping might seem especially pertinent to Witschi at this moment, since he was himself in a small ship on the open sea.

<sup>81</sup> That is, the ship is heading northeast so as to enter the Southwest Pass, the main shipping entrance to the Mississippi River.

**Sep 13, Mon: New Orleans – Cairo, Illinois**

About 8 in the morning, Hans and I leave. Have not seen the Lowerys, whom we could not locate yesterday. Drive up to Memphis, where in the evening we meet Dr. Slater and Dr. Smith with wife.

Drive on to Cairo, where we sleep a few hours in car.

**Sep 14, Tue: Cairo, Illinois – Iowa City**

Sunrise and ferry across the Ohio. Color pictures: bridge over Mississippi, levees.

Drive on and arrive at Springfield at noon. Illinois state capitol. Cemetery and tomb of Abraham Lincoln. On to Keokuk; flats<sup>82</sup>. Arrive at Iowa City about 7:00 pm.

**Appendix: Memoranda**

[The diary contains several pages of memoranda, mainly addresses of persons met along the way.]

**p. 1. Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz notes**

José S. Noriega  
Comisión Nacional de Irrigación  
Tehuantepec, Oaxaca

Or  
Reforma 940  
Lomas de Chapultepec  
Mexico D. F.

Dwight C. Paul  
Yacht Swastika  
Miami Beach, Florida

**p. 2. Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz notes (cont.)**

August 31, 1937

Dredge Minnesota / Salina Cruz

---

<sup>82</sup> I think they had some flat tires.

George Kuntzy  
c/o Draga "Minnesota"  
(Mississippi City, Mississippi, Teagarden Road [?])

Juice

A[?]. J. Gritz  
Chief Med. Dept. Top[?] St. ifo[??]

Elsardiner[?]. Salina Cruz 31/Aug/37

Charles Johansen  
Dredge Minnesota  
Salina Cruz, Oax

Carlos Johansen

### **p. 3 A book recommendation?**

A. H. Savage Landor, **The Gems of the East**, 2 vols., 1904, Macmillan and Co.

### **p. 4 Puerto Mexico notes**

Hotel Tubillo, Puerto Mexico

Restaurant: Colon

Sr. Blanco  
Miguel Lerdo St. # 2  
Veracruz, Ver.

### **p.259 Newspaper article about Cardenas**

20 Oct 1970: Returning from visit at Iowa City, find this in the Des Moines Register that was given on TWA flight to Chicago (see p 248, 253):

#### **CARDENAS DIES; HEADED MEXICO**

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO (AP) – Gen. Lazaro Cardenas, former Mexican president who launched sweeping industrial and agrarian reforms in his country, died Monday. He was 75.

President of Mexico from 1934 to 1940, Cardenas broke up large estates and expropriated foreign-owned properties. He nationalized the oil industry in 1938. Under Cardenas' land redistribution program, about 40 million acres were placed in the hands of peasants.

Cardenas was extremely popular among Mexico's poor. He refused to live in Chapultepec Castle, the traditional home of Mexican chief executives since the days of

Maximilian, and turned it into a museum. He often appeared unannounced in villages to listen to the complaints of peasants.

In a far-reaching modernization program, Cardenas had water piped into many hamlets, built bridges and established hospitals subsidized by municipal movie theaters.

Born in poverty on May 30, 1895, in the western central state of Michoacan, Cardenas stopped his formal education at the age of 11 because his native town of Jiquilpan de Juarez had no secondary school. But he kept up his reading and worked as a printer's devil for the local news-paper until he joined the army at the age of 17. – **Des Moines Register**, October 19, 1970.

### **p. 360 Copy of restaurant bill**

Pasted into the diary book is a restaurant bill for \$2.05 (pesos) with the printed heading: "HOTEL COLON" RESTAURANT Y CANTINA, PUERTA MEXICO, VER.

### **p. 361 Address of Captain Wetta**

Maurice J. Wetta  
2524 Ursuline Ave  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Captain of S/S Cananova

### **p. 363 Puerto Mexico jottings**

Manuel Alvarado  
c/o Cia. Platanera Weinberger de Mexico  
Puerto Mexico, Ver.

Mr. Charles Weinberger  
201 Decatur Street  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Uxpanapa  
You went up till Concepción, about 80 km.

Average export per ship during a year is about 22,000 stems.

The CHIAPAS [banana] is more heavy as the River fruit. In other words 22,000 stems of the river fruit is more or less 450 tons, as the same quantity of the Chiapas would be 600 tons.

### **p. 364 Miscellaneous notes**

Huipil = Enagua (Best), Traje, Enrredo[?]

Zandunoa – Ball – Baile.

**p. 367 Unidentified notes**

Alfonso R. Cuellar  
 Carlos M. Bustamante # 13  
 Oaxaca, Oax.

(reh ep[??], Teh.[?], (San Bartólo)

Jicalpextlei [diagram of cylindrical slice of fruit?] marro fruit. Chialpas[?]

**p. 368 San Bartolo notes**

Del[?] Café[?] y del fram[?] de allez en la Montana es 60. centalios[centavos?] y el de  
 frotoc[?] es 20 centalios[centavos?].

Senor Ubaldo Diaz<sup>83</sup>  
 San Bartolo Yautepec, Oax.

Prof. Eliazar M. Vasconcelos  
 Sn. Bartolo Yautepec.,  
 Yaut. Oax.

Fotografiás madrinas y jugadores. –[indecipherable signature]

**p. 369 (endpiece) San Bartolo (cont.)**

Panfilo Mendez  
 Ave. 2 Abril #48 ½  
 Flacolula[Tlacolula?], Oax.  
 Photographs of fireworks  
 (falsely “bambucco” not so good)

Carrizo  
 Chaza  
 C Froza o – [???], facal [?] PCr Canira[????]

El Frito[?] – El cantaro de Goyotepec – Fostolita. Janabe – Elpalosser 61 palom.  
 Zapotec dance and song.<sup>84</sup>

**p. 370 (endpiece) Miscellaneous**

J.A. Gay<sup>85</sup>, *Historia de Oaxaca* I & II Edit. Dep. De Educacion publica del Estado  
 Oaxaca.

---

<sup>83</sup> Segredario, San Bartolo

<sup>84</sup> This page is jumbled and largely indecipherable.

[This page also contains a rough free-hand diagram of a saddle and stirrup. The saddle is labeled “*silla o mouhura*”. The strap (saddle tree) connecting the saddle to the stirrup is labeled “*arzión*” (misspelling of *arzón*), and the stirrup is labeled “*estribo*”.]

[The page also contains a list of numbers and letters whose meaning is obscure. Possibly something about the photos on one of the rolls of film.]

## Index

---

<sup>85</sup> Gay, José Antonio, *Historia de Oaxaca*, 2 v., México, 1882. Reprinted in 1982 by Porrúa (México), in one volume (ISBN/ISSN: 9684327668).

- acacia, 9, 24
- Acapulco, Guerrero, 11
- aigret, 7, 27, 28
- Alfonso, 17, 18, 32
- Alice, TX, 6, 7, 8
- alligators, 9
- anopheles*, 9
- bananas, 3, 9, 26, 28
- Bananas, 14, 19
- Baton Rouge, LA, 3, 7, 10, 28
- Bennet, Dr. Harry, Baton Rouge, 7, 28
- Bishop, Amelia Samano, biologist,  
Mexico City, 10
- Blackburn, M., 10
- Bradbury, Dr., Sociologist, Baton  
Rouge, parents live in Mexico City, 7
- Bullfight, 10, 11
- cactus, 9, 13
- Cairo, IL, 29
- Cholula, Puebla, 12
- Coatzacoalcos River, Veracruz State, 3
- Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, 3, 7, 23, 24,  
25, 26, 27
- corn, 9
- Dracena*, 9
- Ejutla, Oaxaca, 13
- fiesta*, 3, 15, 16, 18
- frogs, 9, 18
- Funke, Dr. and Mrs., 8
- Garci-Crespo, Puebla, 12
- goats, 9
- Gonzalez, Héctor S., official in San  
Carlos Yautepec, 15, 17
- Iowa City, IA, 2, 3, 7, 29, 30
- Iztaccihuatl (volcano), 12
- Joshua trees, 9
- Kenedy, Mr., 14
- Keokuk, IA, 29
- knife fights, 3, 17
- Lowery, Mr. George Hines and wife  
Jean Tiebout Lowery, Baton Rouge, 3,  
7, 9, 13, 29
- malaria, 9, 11, 28
- Malinche, Mt., 12
- mango, 11, 13
- Memphis, TN, 29
- Mexico City, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21,  
22
- Miller, Mrs. Dorothea Starbuck, student  
of E. Witschi, 25
- Mitla, Oaxaca, 14

- monkeys, 25, 27
- Monte Alban, Oaxaca, 13
- Monterey, Nuevo Leon, 3, 6, 8
- morning glories, 9
- Mossaner, zoologist, 11
- Muriel, 8, 10
- New Orleans, LA, 3, 7, 28, 29, 31
- Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, 3, 8
- Oaxaca, Oaxaca, 3, 12, 13, 14, 16, 24, 29, 32
- Ochoterena, Prof. I., Instituto Biologico Chapultepec, Mexico City, 10
- Opuntia*, 9
- Orizaba, Mt., 12
- Orizaba, Veracruz, 12, 13
- Ortiz., Niccolo, *mozo* from Totolopan, 14
- papaya, 9, 11
- Parrera, Jose, restaurant manager, Tamazunchale, 9
- Paul, Dwight C., Miami, FL, 19, 20, 23, 29
- Popocatepetl (volcano), 11, 12
- Ortiz, Juan, 14, 15
- profesoresa*, San Bartolo, 15
- Puebla, Puebla, 3, 11, 12, 13
- Puerto Mexico (Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz), 3, 7, 14, 23, 24, 27, 30, 31
- Rio Grande de Tehuantepec, 14
- Romero, Josefa, boarding house proprietor, Tehuantepec, 19
- Rosas, M. H., railroad inspector, Salina Cruz, 24
- Ruiz, grocer in Tlacolula, Oaxaca, 14, 26
- Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, 3, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30
- San Bartolo, Oaxaca, 3, 15, 16, 17, 32
- Sandburn's Restaurant, Mexico City, 10
- Sandburn's Restaurant, Monterey, 8
- scrophularia*, 9
- seagull, 28
- Slater, Dr., 29
- Smith, Dr. and Mrs., 29
- Springfield, IL, 29
- squirrels, 9
- Stanley, Dr. Allan J., Baton Rouge, 3, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28
- Tamazunchale, San Luis Potosí, 3, 8, 9
- Tehuacán, Puebla, 3, 12, 13
- Tehuantepec, Isthmus of, 3, 23
- Templeton, Miss, 10
- Tlacolula, Oaxaca, 14, 32

*Totolapan, Oaxaca*, 13, 14

Tropic of Cancer, 8

Tule, Oaxaca, 14

turkeys, 9

Vasconcelos, Eliazar, teacher, San  
Bartolo Yautepec, 17, 18, 32

Walton, Mr. A., electrical engineer from  
Mexico City, 13, 14

Witschi, Hans, son of Emil Witschi, 3,  
28, 29

Witschi, Martha, wife of Emil Witschi,  
3, 7, 20

Zapote tree, 27

Zimapán, Hidalgo, 9

Zink, Prof., 13, 14, 24

Zuiger, Carlo, son of Juan Zuiger, 11

Zuiger, Juan, Dept. of Fish and Game,  
Mexico City, 10

## Bibliography

1. *American Men & Women of Science 1998-99 20<sup>th</sup> Edition*, Reed Elsevier, New Providence, New Jersey, 1998.
2. *Columbia Gazetteer of North America*,, edited by Saul B. Cohen. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. <http://www.bartleby.com/69/>. [7/16/2007]. (A fine online resource and the main authority in this document for spelling of Mexican place names, and for Mexican cities' elevation, population, and location.)
3. *Epicurious / Food Dictionary* web site, Barron's Educational Services, Inc., based on THE FOOD LOVER'S COMPANION, 2nd edition, by Sharon Tyler Herbst, 1995, <http://eat.epicurios.com/dictionary/food/>
4. *Free Translation* web site, SDL International, Plano, TX, <http://www.freetranslation.com/> (Translating between English and Spanish, etc.)
5. Gadow, Hans, *Through Southern Mexico, The Travels of a Naturalist*, Witherby & Co., London, 1908 [F 1215 .G12]. (Interesting book, 527 pages, about trips to Mexico in 1902-1904. Chapters V through XII describe the same areas in Oaxaca and Veracruz states that Witschi visited. Perhaps Witschi read this book.)
6. Garner, Bess Adams, *Mexico, Notes in the Margin*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1937. [F1215 .G26] (Unorganized collection of short travel notes about many Mexican cities. Descriptions and photos here of Puebla, Puerto Mexico, and Tehuantepec are especially interesting to the reader of the Witschi diary.)
7. *Google* (search engine), <http://www.google.com>.
8. *Grove Dictionary of Art*, on the *Art Net* web site, <http://www.artnet.com/library/06/0663/T066300.asp>
9. *Maps of Mexico* web site, Fotos y Mapas Virtuales, (S.A. de C.V.) in Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. <http://www.maps-of-mexico.com/>. (Excellent source for detailed online maps of Mexico.)
10. *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1918, p. 3: "Fleet at Durazzo Led by Americans."
11. *New York Times*, Sep. 9, 1937, p. 1: "Hull is Concerned; Tells Press Conference Shipping Conditions in Sea are Perilous."
12. *Rand McNally Comprehensive World Atlas*, Longmeadow Press, Stamford, CT, 1991.

13. *University of Chicago Spanish Dictionary*, Compiled by Carlos Castillo & Otto F. Bond, rev. D. Lincoln Canfield, U. of. Chicago Press, 1972
14. *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, Merriam, Springfield, MA, 1960.
15. *Who's Who in America*, v. 34, 1966-67, Marquis, Chicago, 1966.
16. "Allan John Stanley" (*death notice*), **The Daily Oklahoman**, (Oklahoma City, OK), June 17, 1990.