

4-1-1953

Albert Franklin Banta: Arizona Pioneer

Frank D. Reeve

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr>

Recommended Citation

Reeve, Frank D.. "Albert Franklin Banta: Arizona Pioneer." *New Mexico Historical Review* 28, 2 (1953).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol28/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Historical Review* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, lsloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.

ALBERT FRANKLIN BANTA: ARIZONA PIONEER

Edited by FRANK D. REEVE

(Concluded)

Along in the summer of '96 I sold the *Argus*. The "Cross of Gold" [speech] gave Bryan the democratic nomination, and from that day to this the "God of Gold" has been Mr. Bryan's most adored Deity. "Bucky" O'Neill,²⁰² a personal friend, was a candidate for Congress on the Populist ticket. He came to Holbrook on his campaign itinerary and put up with me. At this time I had about made up my mind to try Alaska; reports had just come in of rich gold discoveries on the Yukon river. This I mentioned to "Bucky" and he said, "Cut that out, you are too old and never can stand that climate; go down to Phoenix and after the close of the present election buy the *Arizona Populist*." He gave me a long talk about that paper and said I think it would be a good investment, and much more to the same effect. I went to Phoenix in October same year. John Q. White was editor of the *Populist*; as soon as I had reached Phoenix, White wanted me to take the *Arizona Populist* off his hands. I refused to do so at that and told White I was not a Populist although a warm friend of "Bucky" O'Neil.

President McKinley appointed Myron H. McCord²⁰³ to be Governor of Arizona. In the meantime I had purchased the *Arizona Populist*²⁰⁴ and at "Bucky's" suggestion re-

202. Captain William Owen O'Neill was born in St. Louis, Mo., February 2, 1860. He came to Arizona in 1879 with a law degree from the National University, Washington. When the Spanish-American war broke out, he was Mayor of Prescott, but joined the Rough Riders in command of Troop A. He was killed in action and lies buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He was "Without question one of the most popular citizens of Arizona. . . ." *Portrait and Biographical Record of Arizona*. His death is described in Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, p. 123 (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1919). The 23rd Legislative Assembly appropriated \$10,000 to erect a monument of Captain O'Neill which now stands in the courthouse square at Prescott. Kelly, *Arizona*, p. 245.

203. Myron H. McCord was commissioned Governor on July 29, 1897. Fish, *Manuscript*, 2:366. But he resigned August 1, 1898, to become Colonel of the 1st Arizona Regiment for service in the Spanish-American war. Kelly, *Arizona*.

204. The *Arizona Populist* (Phoenix) is listed for the years 1894-1896 and the *Pick and Drill* for 1897 to 1899 in Gregory, *American Newspapers*.

named the paper *The Pick and Drill* and moved it to Prescott. Governor McCord appointed me a Lieutenant-Colonel²⁰⁵ of Cavalry on his staff. The Spanish war came on and everybody went wild over that matter. O'Neill and McCord hated each other as bad as the devil hates holy water. One day I dropt into the office of the *Prescott Courier*, and meeting O'Neil there I said, "'Bucky' why don't you raise a company, all the boys are ready and anxious to go with you as their Captain." He replied, "That s--n of a b--h McCord would see me in h--l before he would give me a commission as Captain or anything else." Telling him I thought I could fix the matter for him, he said I wish you would Charly, I want to go awfully bad.

I immediately took the train for Phoenix where I called upon the Governor and stated my mission. The Governor flared up at once and said he'd be d---d first. However, I reasoned with Mc., giving some good reasons why it would be a good policy to appoint O'Neil Captain. The Governor mused for a few minutes and then said, "I believe you are right Colonel, go back and tell O'Neil to raise his company, send the roll down to me and he shall have the appointment as Captain of the company." Returning to Prescott I gave O'Neil the result of my mission. He was highly elated and said, "You are the only man in Arizona that could have accomplished that *coup d'etat*, and I shall always remember it and if I return from the war I shall make it my study to reciprocate to the best of my ability." He never returned. "Bucky" said to me one day, "If the war lasts long enough, I will return with a star." Meaning the rank of a Brigadier-General.

Oakes Murphy went on to Washington; soon afterwards Governor McCord was authorized to raise a regiment of volunteers; this he did and was made Colonel of the regiment; Oakes secured the appointment as Governor to succeed McCord. My good friend Oakes was a smooth worker and politician. The war was of short duration; I picked on Aleck

205. The story of this appointment and the story concerning O'Neill is retold in the *Prescott Courier*, June 21, 1924.

O. Brodie²⁰⁶ as a candidate for Congress, hoping to elect him on his war record. Brodie had gone to the war as the senior Major of the Rough Rider Regiment, and came out a Lieutenant-Colonel. I had Brodie's name at the head of my paper; some of the wise Republican politicians were opposed to Brodie being a candidate. Mark A. Smith²⁰⁷ flatly refused to accept the Democratic nomination; he feared Brodie would defeat him and did not want to lose prestige in the Territory, so Colonel J. F. Wilson received that nomination. Although the weakest man the Democrats had, he nevertheless won [won] out against Brodie.

I attended the Territorial convention at Phoenix as a member of the Yavapai county delegation, at which we were to elect Delegates to the Republican National convention of 1900. Ike T. Stoddard was our candidate—he got left.

The big fire²⁰⁸ that burnt up the business part of Prescott cleaned me out root and branch. Without a dollar I went down to Naco; out to the Cananea mines owned by Bill Green.²⁰⁹ Returning from the Cananeas I went to the new town of Douglas. Being certain that here was soon to be a big town I started the *Douglas Dispatch*,²¹⁰ the first paper in

206. Alexander Oswald Brodie graduated from West Point and was commissioned 2nd Lieut. in the Cavalry on June 15, 1870. He resigned, September 30, 1877. He entered the Spanish-American war with the rank of Major, 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, May 4, 1898. Heitman, *Register*. He arrived in Arizona in 1870, was the Republican candidate for Delegate in 1898, and became Governor by appointment in July, 1902, resigning, February 15, 1905, to re-enter the regular army. Kelly, *Arizona*, pp. 221, 234.

207. Banta might be mixed up on this matter. John F. Wilson withdrew from the race in 1900 in favor of Marcus A. Smith in order to maintain party harmony. Fish, *Manuscript*, 3:706. Smith was Territorial Delegate at the time of the bid for statehood in 1902 when the Beveridge Committee visited the Southwest. He also served as one of the two first Senators when Arizona entered the Union in 1912. Wyllys, *Arizona*, pp. 298, 315.

John F. Wilson, political rival of Smith, served in the Confederate army. A lawyer by training, he arrived in Arizona in 1887; served as Attorney General in 1896, Territorial Delegate in 1898, and again in 1902. Fish, *Manuscript*, 3:705.

208. The story of this disaster was described recently in J. S. Allen, "Yavapai Inferno: The Story of the Great Prescott Fire." *Arizona Highways*, vol. 17, no. 5 (May, 1941). It is also reported in *The Arizona Republican*, July 16, 1900, and *Holbrook Argus*, July 21, 1900.

209. Bill Greene is reported as having killed Jim Burnett at Tombstone on July 5, 1897. *Arizona Journal Miner*, July 6, 1897.

210. The *Douglas Dispatch* was started by Banta on March 15, 1902. *Arizona Journal-Miner*, March 20, 1902. Charlie Banta's new paper, the *Douglas Dispatch*,

the new town. Having no means to keep up my lick I sold it to Dorr. Leaving Douglas I went to Yuma to join "Arizona" Charly's expedition to subjugate the Indians and take possession of the Tiburon Island in the Gulf of California. The scheme fell through. Remaining all winter at Yuma, I determined on going out prospecting, as the only alternative to recuperate my "fallen fortunes." Going back to Tucson I prospected in the Santa Catalinas for a time without any success. I then went to work for Bartlett of the Legal Tender until Tucson closed; then to Phoenix until that place closed. In Phoenix I worked in the Casino. After Phoenix closed I went directly to Yuma where I worked in the Exchange without missing a shift until midnight March 31, 1907. April 1st I boarded the S[outhern] P[acific] for Phoenix. Here I remained about seventeen days playing panguingia²¹¹ at which I made my expenses and fare to Ash Fork. From Ash Fork I went to Albuquerque and thence to El Paso. After a time I reached New Orleans where I remained for some time. From New Orleans I took ship for Colon and thence across the Isthmus by rail to the city of Panama.

The city of Colon is situate on a low swampy island; the mean tide of the Caribbean sea at this place is twelve inches; hence the island is never overflowed by the tides. Panama is located upon a rock pininsula extending into the Gulf of Panama. It is surrounded by water except on the north side. By survey the isthmus is a fraction over thirty-one miles across from salt water to salt water. Panama is twenty-one miles east of Colon,²¹² and the sun rises out of the Gulf of Panama. This seems strange but is owing to the configuration of the isthmus. It was very puzzling to see the sun come up out of the Pacific waters and go down behind Ancon hill, towards Colon and the Caribbean sea. The mean tides at

was established on March 19, 1902. He sold it October 8, 1902. *Arizona Sentinel*, October 8, 1902. The beginning date is given as March 15 in Gregory, *American Newspapers*.

211. Panguingui: A Tagalog gambling game. *Websters International Dictionary* (Unabridged, 2nd edition). Tagalogs are Filipinos. This game, played in Arizona, may illustrate the influence of the Islands on Spanish America from the days of Spanish imperial control.

212. Banta means that Panama lies twenty-one miles east of Colón on a north-south line. In other words, Panama is southeast of Colón.

Panama are eighteen feet, the highest tides being twenty-three feet. The rainy season begins about the middle of May and ends about the middle of December. During the five months of the dry season the rain-fall is not so heavy. The rain-fall for the year will average about twelve feet. A line drawn from Panama to San Francisco would cut thru the Caribbean sea, the Gulf of Mexico and thru Arizona to San Francisco. Panama has no deep water for shipping and all vessels must anchor about two miles out; passengers and freight are then transferred to shore by boats. At the *boca del toro* is a wharf, but only light draught boats can reach it. The Pacific outlet of the Canal is at this place, but the Government will have to do plenty of dredging here before our battleships can reach the deep water of the Gulf. The native population of Panama is 90 per cent negro, and the other ten per cent run the country. The 90 per cent class have kinky hair, the other ten have black or other colored hair. Since our Government took the matter in hand, the city of Panama is one of the cleanest and is as healthy as any of the Gulf cities of our country. The climate is delightful and it would [be] a veritable paradise if one could have health.

While at Panama I thought to do some prospecting and tried the jungle, but it was useless, I could not go anywhere without cutting [a] way with a *macheta* and at that rate could not make a mile in a month—gave it up. The temperature of Panama seldom rises above 82 degrees, or below 69 degrees, making an average variation of 10 degrees the year round. Considering the rainfall of the isthmus one would naturally suppose the mosquitos to be very much in evidence. But such is not the case and no mosquitos are met with in the jungle. Much ado has been made by the press of the States over "our poor boys suffering with the heat in Panama." The truth is, the heat down there is never so bad as it is in the States. The heat of the Salt River valley in Arizona makes the heat of Panama look like thirty cents. All the time I was there I had to sleep under an extra blanket. The soil is exceedingly rich and grass grows from two to three feet high in a month. I am of the opinion that the two oceans were connected by a strait at the isthmus; or, the

country had been slightly elevated at some time. I made an examination of the formations between the two oceans and found it all to be sedimentary, composed principally of sea-shells. The apparently solid rock, on breaking, was simply a rotten mass of shells. Even Culebre cut, the hardest of all, and the highest point along the Canal, resembles pudding stone, having shells scattered thru it. In fact the Government could not find any stone on the isthmus with which to construct the great dams, but was obliged to bring the stone from Porto Bello.

There is no such thing as a "Panama hat." Being curious to see how such hats were made, and the material used, I looked all over the city to find a hat factory and failed. Going to the office of the *Star & Herald*, the oldest paper in Panama, founded in 1849, I asked Mr. Duque, the proprietor, about the matter. He laughed and said, "Most foreigners call the hat 'Panama' but it is not made here, and there never was a hat factory in this city. The so called 'Panama' hats are made in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and are really an Ecuadorian hat." So much for another myth of my youth.

The jungle is so interlaced with vines that it is impossible to penetrate it without cutting your way thru with a *macheta*. One specie of vine is used by the natives for ropes. It is about the size of bed-cord and cannot be broken; it may be tied into a hard knot but will not break. How long it grows I do not know, but I have seen it fully sixty feet long, without a leaf or other growth on it. This vine is used by the natives in the construction of their houses, in which not a nail or other piece [of] iron is used. Owing to the humidity of the atmosphere iron is absolutely worthless. All iron or steel tools must be kept covered with thick grease when not in use. All tropical fruits grow wild and in abundance; I have seen places in the jungle that the ground was litterally covered with big fine lemons. Four kinds of bananas grow wild; pine apples, mangoes, papayas, mameis [mammee], and other kinds of fruits grow wild. Every cove along the beach is full of cocoa trees; a cocoanut tree will bear a nut for each day in the year or from three to four hundred per year; there are millions of cocoanuts no bigger than a wal-

nut, each one a perfect nut. The first calabash-tree I saw, I supposed the calabash[e]s were gourds and looked for the vine but no vine could I find; the calabash were the fruit of the tree. Not a spear of grass grows in the jungle, the surface of the ground is black, damp and bare; but clear away the jungle and up comes the grass and young banana sprouts, as thick as they can be—grass and bananas require sunlight, in the jungle the sun's rays never reach the ground.

All farming is done upon the high grounds and the hills, too much water on the low parts. It takes from five to seven years to get entirely rid of the jungle growth, roots, etc. etc. In nature the banana plant is like our mescal plant, its seedling ends its life. The banana has one bunch of bananas and then dies. The one great mystery to me is where the banana comes from. For instance, take the jungle where the sun's rays has not touch[ed] since the tropics began, perhaps thousands of years and more—the banana never grows in the jungle, it must have sunlight—cut away the jungle and the banana shoots up at once. Whence the seed or germ? As soon as the sun's rays touch the ground up springs the grass and bananas. However, the wise guys can tell about it.

In the matter of the papaw that grows all over Missouri, my Webster's Universal Dictionary says the papaw and the papaya are one and the same fruit. It says the papaw grows to the height of twenty-feet "with a soft herbaceous stem naked nearly to the top, where the leaves issue on every side, on long footstalks." How is that Mr. Missourian for a discription of a papaw tree? Its discription of the fruit is even worse. Now here is my discription of the papaya fruit that grows only in the tropics: In appearance it resembles a green squash, is six or eight inches long and four to five inches in diameter; cut open it is a rich yellow meat, and is eaten as a breakfast food like the cantaloup; in the center of the fruit is a small cavity containing a few seeds. Here is what the "wise guy" says about the Papaya: "The juice is acrid and milky, but the fruit when boiled is eaten with meat, like other vegetables." It is safe to say that the fellow writing the above never saw either a papaw or a papaya. So much for the "wise knowalls." However, the above is on

a par with the "Panama hat" matter; when a boy the book said, "The principal industry of Panama was the manufacture and exportation of Panama hats." I have also found from experience that our "wise" naturalists are away off in many things; and as great a chump as myself can tell them many things in nature that they are wholly ignorant of. But like the preachers, they can tell a lot about things they are ignorant of.

The natives make their *cayucas* [cayucos] (canoes) out of mahogany trees; so do the San Blas Indians. The country of the San Blas Indians is up the South American coast; it is called "up" either way from the isthmus. These Indians have their own government and they justly pride themselves as being "pure blood," unmixed with any other blood. The stranger passing thru is welcome but must not tarry more than three days in any village, or longer in any part of their domain; he or they must move on. I have seen these Indians out in the bay or on the Caribbean sea with their *cayucas*, and if one should get filled with water, all jump out, some on one side and some on the other, and catching hold of the sides of the canoe, they shake it back and forth thus throwing out a quantity of water; this done they climb into the canoe and bail out the remainder and go along as tho nothing had happened. Seeing this I determined to take a trip in a *cayuca* on the Caribbean sea.

Accompanied by a boy about sixteen years old, I took the train from Panama to Colon. At Colon I found a sloop rigged small boat that plied between Colon and Porto Bello, owned and Captained by a negro. On this we took passage for Porto Bello, the fare was two dollars each in Panamenia money. The weather was so fine, the atmosphere so balmy, that without thinking everything was put under hatch. Along in the night rain set in and being without a coat or other covering, I really suffered with the cold. That night a huge shark cut across our stern about twenty feet away; his dorsal fins just above the water, made a hissing noise as the brute shot past the boat. The following morning we put in to the pretty little bay of Porto Bello, but had to lay to until the custom-house official gave us permission to go

ashore. This seemed ridiculous to me, for a custom-house officer to examine coast-wise traders. But it is the law. At Porto Bello I found but one white man, that is a person whose hair is not kinky. There being no such thing as a stove or even a fireplace in the country, I was obliged to dry myself in the sun. No matter how well seasoned wood may be it will not burn in that country, and brasiers must be used for all purposes.

At this place I hired a *cayuca* (canoe) made of mahogany and eighteen feet long, for a trip up the coast on the Caribbean sea. We used paddles and sat in the stern and the boy in front. Out in the big rollers, on the crest of one, we had a good view around, but when we descended into the trough of the sea, nothing but a wall of water was to be seen in any direction. With the bow of the canoe pointed downward, and a big roller coming head on, it looked like we were to be buried under an hundred thousand tons of water. But I had observed the manner of ducks and geese riding the waves, so I steered the canoe to conform to the same manner. Going up the south coast I put in at every cove, at those large enough I found a little village, but never an individual without kinky hair. All coves were filled with coconut trees, with fruit at every stage of ripeness. In some no sweet water was to be found and in such cases we used coconut milk to make our coffee, and to drink.

Numerous small islands were seen enroute, some were occupied and others not. At Isla Grande (large island) on which is a light-house at the entrance of the Golfo del Nombre de Dios (what a ridiculous name—the Gulf of the name of God) we put ashore. Here was a little store owned by a Spaniard—the only white man on the island—where I purchased a few edibles. The strait between the island and mainland was about two miles wide, this we paddled across the next morning and found another pretty cove in which was a native hut. This hut like all others had a palm-leaf thatch roof, but was more pretentious than many or all others, it had a floor in it. We put our plunder in the house in case of rain, there being no one occupying the house. That afternoon a big burly negro came along; he was a Jamaica

negro and an English subject, and spoke fairly good English. Finding we had gone into the house he said it was his property, but "it was all right as we know how to treat our people when they come along." He had bought the plat of ground for \$50, and was then cutting ties for the Railroad for which he received forty cents each in Panamenia money. Here I undertook to cook a pot of beans. I set up three rocks and with a little coal oil started a fire out of the driest shavings I could find, but to keep the fire going was obliged to fan it with my hat until the beans were cooked; to stop a second was to see the fire go out of business.

I had decided to turn back from this place, but looking out to sea I saw too many white caps to venture out that day so lay over a day here. These warm southern seas abound in sharks, but the animal is cowardly and will flee if you strike the water with a paddle or even with your hand; did they have no fear and exercised their power a little canoe would be no protection at all. Our canoe had only four or five inches above the water, besides it leaked some and needed more or less bailing out. The whole coast is lined with a dirty white coral; this coral is built up to within a few inches of the surface of the water and this causes the water to show white, from its shallowness above the coral. In order to reach the beach it is necessary to get thru the reef of coral; this is done by passing in between two beds of coral; the space between is sometimes wide enough to admit a canoe, and sometimes wide enough to admit a small ship. When outside and desiring to run in, it is necessary to watch the coast for a black space showing between white water on both sides. The black looking space indicates deep water free of coral, and the canoe would be headed straight for the black looking space. At times it became necessary to get inside the reef in a hurry, as our little frail canoe could not stand much of a storm on the outside. On two or three occasions after passing the outside reef our canoe would strike some obstruction which caused a delay of a few seconds, and in each instance the canoe would be filled with water from the oncoming roller. But we did not mind this much as we were merely met with salt water instead of rain.

To give an idea of the rainfall in these tropical countries, once we had gotten inside the coral reef and a storm suddenly came up; we jumped out of the canoe, made for a native hut nearby; the storm lasted perhaps ten minutes—they are never of any length—and going to the canoe it was found to be full of water. The rains here do not fall in drops but comes down in solid sheets of water. At such times it is necessary to have some sort of covering for the head else one cannot breath; comparatively speaking it is like a tub of water being poured over the head. We encountered the roughest seas when rounding a promontory, and were always obliged to keep well out at sea for obvious reasons.

In time we returned to Porto Bello. This place was well fortified by the early Spaniards, there being no less than seven old forts here. The largest fort being at the terminus of the Royal paved trail, from old Panama to Porto Bello. It was over this trail all the gold, silver and other stuff, the Spaniards plundered of the Peruvians and others of South America, was brought by pack trains to Porto Bello and stored in the vaults beneath this fort to await the ships from Spain. This particular fort was surrounded by a solid wall of masonry; the main entrance led into a small court. In this court is now a tree five feet in diameter; another door led from the court thru another thick wall of masonry, and beneath the main fort into a corridor. Here was found the "gold room," and upon either side of the gold room were the "silver" galleries, extending back perhaps seventy feet. The corridor was five feet wide; the gold room was about fifteen feet deep and eight feet wide, the roof was oval and seven feet high. The two galleries were about six feet wide and oval roofs seven feet in height. These treasury vaults were under the fort and above them was solid masonry.

In and about these old forts I counted forty-one old fashioned cannon, which were fired with a torch. In one of the under-ground dungeons, where not a ray of light had ever penetrated, we found an old fashioned firelock, perhaps one of the first made; it was bell-mouth and also fired by a torch. It had perhaps lain there for two or three hundred years; the natives—all negroes—never daring to enter those old hidden

recesses of those old forts. I wanted to bring the thing away with me for a curiosity, but the official said it was government property, and he took possession of my precious relic.

The harbor of Porto Bello is not very large, but is a safe one as it is completely landlocked; it is about two miles long and a mile and a quarter wide, with a sufficient depth of water for large ships. Colon has no harbor, simply an open roadstead, and in a very severe storm all shipping at Colon must seek refuge in the harbor of Porto Bello, or else put out to sea for safety. The Caribbean waters are so warm the fish are not fit to eat, and in order to get good solid fish it is necessary to go out twenty miles or more, and then fish for deep-water fish at a depth of two or three hundred feet. The fishing is done with wire traps with bate inside of them. This fish is sold to the ocean steamers at a good figure.

Leaving the Government stone-quarry, opposite to Porto Bello, on a Government tugboat, we went back to Colon, or rather to Cristobal, the name of that part claimed by the U.S. The following day took the train for Panama, completing the sixteen day trip on the ocean in an eighteen foot canoe, and in which we were thoroughly drenched every day by daily rains and sea water.

Old Panama is five or six miles northeast of the present Panama; it was destroyed by the English buccaneer Henry Morgan in 1680. Morgan fortified the island of Taboga [Tabago] and made that island his rendezvous for a considerable length of time; this island is fourteen miles from the present city of Panama, and is now used by the U. S. hospital service as a convalescent; it is the healthiest place in that section and has less rainfall. Old Panama is the oldest city in the New World, and was founded in 1518, by edict of the King of Spain declared a City in 1521. Here was the resort of pirates of all nationalities; but the English pirate—Drake and Morgan—were the terror of the Spaniard, and both these gentlemen were Knighted for successful piracies against the Spaniard. However, 'tis a pity Drake had not intercepted and wiped out the plundering and murdering Cortez, and the equally infamous Pizarro. Had Drake did this for humanity his piracies would have been gladly for-

given, and the fanatical priests prevented from destroying the historical records of these interesting peoples.

A large volume could be written about the big ditch of the Isthmus, and if the truth was told would disclose the greatest graft and steal the world ever witnessed; in fact, nine-tenths of the many millions spent by the Government upon this project was stolen or grafted.

There are only two points of egress and ingress to Panama—one by way of Colon and the other by way of Panama. No roads nor wagons in the whole country; only trails and these must be cut out with *machetas* almost daily, or all evidence of a trail would soon be obliterated, the growth of vegetation is so rapid in that wet and warm climate. To the northeast of the city of Panama are a low range of mountains, of an average altitude of 3,500 feet, with some elevations of perhaps 5,000 feet. They are over in the Darien country, and the source of the river Chagres, the largest and only river in the Republic. I attempted to reach these mountains but failed owing to the dense intervening jungle. I tried the old Royal paved trail, but this simply led me to the crossing of the Chagres, and not to the mountains, and I was forced to give up the project. Still I think these mountains contain mineral, but it is hard and then some to reach them from either Colon or Panama.

Panama streets are so crooked, they lead everywhere and nowhere in particular; all are narrow, and the one crossing the peninsular upon which the city is built, and in front of the Cathedral—8th street—is only four feet wide between the side-walks which are two feet wide. In some places a side-walk may begin with a width of fifteen feet, but as one follows it the walk gradually narrows until [it] ends in a sharp point, and thence on it is the street. All in all Panama is a quaint and curious city, and worth the trouble of going to see. Having been here almost a year, and seen "Paris" to my entire satisfaction, I returned to the States.

At Cristoval I took steamer for New York, where I remained a month looking over Gotham, but soon had enough of its box canyons. The steamer *Concho* carried me to Galveston; at Key West a stop was made for twelve hours, giv-

ing me opportunity to see that very interesting and most southern point of territory within the United States. The Key is a coral island about sixty miles from the mainland of Florida (Florida is Spanish, meaning "flowery"). There are numerous keys, more or less sandy, and the breeding places for sea-turtle, many of which were to be seen floating about feeding upon "Portuguese men-of-war." From Key West to Havana is ninety miles, and I think the place was first used by pirates and smugglers in the early days. From Key West our course lay northwest for Galveston, but why Galveston? If the whole Gulf Coast had been searched for a town-site, no worse place could have been found than the site of Galveston, Texas. It is built upon a sandbar and surrounded by water—a dune in fact. It has no harbor nor deep water for ships of deep draught, it has simply an open roadstead and nothing more. A breakwater has been built to form some sort of harbor, yet ordinary ships entering usually stir up the mud from off the bottom. To prevent the city from being washed away by the sea-water, a large sea-wall had to be built for that purpose; and again I say, "Why Galveston?"

From here I went to Pueblo, Colorado, thence by the D. and R. G., to Durango—from strawberries to snow. After two months of cold and snow in Colorado I made the trip across country to Gallup, New Mexico. September 23, 1908, I started for a prospecting trip which carried me over a major portion of Arizona, and finally settled at Wickenburg in 1914. I can truthfully say without boasting that I know more of the topography of Arizona than any living man, not even excepting the Apaches themselves.

I am now a member of the Home for Pioneers, entering January 19, 1916. But the everlasting lure of the hills still possesses my soul, and I cannot shake off that feeling. Am liable to make another hike this Spring and next summer, *quien sabe* [who knows?] ²¹³

A perusal of the *History of Arizona* will give much in-

213. I have seen a newspaper clipping without name or date which reads: "Charlie Banta will spend the next few months prospecting the Catalinas, having secured a vacation from the Pioneers Home where he has been a guest for some time."

formation of and about the writer, particularly in vol. 8, by Colonel TOM E. FARISH, STATE HISTORIAN.

(The End)

My dear Miss Hall:

i have put down some of my "pastimes" but not all x it would take pages to record my doings the past 47-50 years x i have had a most strenuous and eventful career, and it cannot be put down in a few words x i have been raised on the frontiers, in log cabins, with no opportunities for education, and the little i do know, which of course is not much, has been gathered from observation and a voracious appetite for reading any and everything obtainable x i have jotted down some of my "occupations" but only a few, as there is not room for more x Have done almost everything under the sun excepting, of course, holding up stages—all else however has been my "occupation."²¹⁴

A. F. Banta

214. This letter was written on an official printed form of enquiry mailed from the office of the Arizona Historian, Phoenix, April 2, 1911. The printed form was only four pages long, so there was not much room for Banta to write on. The addressee was probably Sharlot Hall for whom the Sharlott Hall Museum at Prescott is named. Banta, *Papers*, State Department of Archives and Library, Phoenix, Arizona.

The letter represents an early attempt to collect the story of Banta's life, a task which he later carried out himself.