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Conditioning Tourism and Trade: Designs for Travel Aboard the Great White Fleet in the “American Tropics,” 1899–1930

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Abstract

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the United Fruit Company (UFC) convinced tens of thousands of passengers a year to tour the Caribbean aboard its Great White Fleet. Many were awed by the ships’ pristine white hulls, lush interiors, surprisingly cool cabins, and on-deck swimming pools—each a means of both enjoying and mitigating the effects of the tropics. The fleet, along with the company’s two hotels in Jamaica, augured a new era of leisurely travel in the Americas, but few grasped the extent to which their stays and the environments they experienced were shaped and conditioned by the preceding infrastructures of imperialist enterprise. Using literature published by the UFC and its subsidiary, Fruit Dispatch, along with travelogues and technical publications, this article looks at the distribution networks used by the United Fruit Company to ferry tourists to the Caribbean and “exotic” produce back to the US. It traces the movements of people and goods on- and offshore and reveals the technologies that connected the comfort of passengers above deck to the health of freight below, as well as the company’s architectures of leisure to the infrastructures and violence of extractive industry.

Keywords: United Fruit Company; Caribbean; tourism; refrigeration; acclimatisation

On January 11, 1904, three doctors set out on a tourist trip aboard the *Beverly*—a steamship owned and operated by the United Fruit Company—from Philadelphia to Port Antonio, Jamaica. As soon as they boarded, the images the doctors had conjured of luxury travel were quickly dashed by the reality they were plying the seas aboard a working banana boat. Before boarding, “Dickie,” also known as Dr S. F. Jones, had “filled [their] minds with the glorious accommodations to be enjoyed on the *Beverly*.” Likely assuming they would be travelling aboard one of the company’s new Admiral-class steamships, Dickie spoke of “spacious Palm Rooms with huge platters groaning with the delicacies of the season, where fountains tinkled and the band played” and of “beautiful maidens playing rings and shuffle-board on the broad white decks, while immaculate Ethiopians plied the blasé traveler with smokes and cooling drinks.” Leisure, race, and climate were thus central to the imperial fantasy in which the doctors believed they were about to take part. But all was not as advertised. Instead of the delights and wonders promised by one of the Raymond & Whitcomb Company’s travel agents, the doctors had tripped over expiring bananas on the way in and now sat in the *Beverly*’s cramped smoking



Figure 1. Cover of a United Fruit Company publication advertising travel to Jamaica. *Jamaica: The Summer Land* (Boston, MA: United Fruit Co.'s Steamship Lines and C.B. Webster, 1904), cover.

room, which “resembled the funeral parlor of a Third Avenue undertaker’s establishment.”¹

Housed within the Special and Area Studies Collections at the George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida, Dr A. S. Arnold’s annotated photo album of his two-week trip to Jamaica, with Dr S. F. Jones and Dr S. Van Ingen, should not necessarily be taken at face value—the account is littered with hyperbole. But this travelogue does seem to capture, if unintentionally, the challenges of travelling at sea on board one of the banana industry’s steamers prior to the full-scale implementation of a key technological innovation: refrigeration. That is, the rotting fruit the doctors stepped on while boarding was not merely evidence of a working pier and unkempt deck but a fundamental reality of the challenges associated with transporting tropical fruit to temperate climes without refrigeration. The expired fruit was thus a casualty of temperature and time.

Arnold and his colleagues represented a new and somewhat apprehensive class of US tourists travelling south to escape the winter weather in the north.² With a voyage to Europe out of the question due to rough seas and chilling winds, a trip to the Caribbean, with its summer-like weather, was an appealing and marketable proposition (Figure 1). As an article in *The Golden Caribbean*, a promotional pamphlet and magazine published by the United Fruit Company’s Passenger Department and Steamship Service, asked: “What more delightful break in the monotony of a winter can be imagined?”³

¹ “A. S. Arnold’s Photo Album and Diary of a Trip to Jamaica,” 1904, 6, MS Group 272, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

² Joseph Floyd, “Seeing the Southland: Travelers on United Fruit’s Great White Fleet,” *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* 22, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015): 100–16.

³ “Jamaica, The New Winter Resort,” *The Golden Caribbean* 2, no. 3 (March 1904): 103.

This represented a shift, as the historians Mark Carey and Catherine Cocks, among others, have shown, in the meaning and image of the tropics in Anglo-American culture and society that took place throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴ Transformed in the eyes of would-be travellers from a so-called “white man’s grave” to the “white man’s sanatorium,” the tropics shed their perilous associations with death and disease and became attractive as a temporary respite for physically and mentally overworked white Americans.⁵

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, especially after the First World War, tourism in the Caribbean boomed despite the writings and warnings of figures associated with scientific racism, particularly those who tried to draw explicit connections between climate, race, and degree of “civilisation.”⁶ In a sense, this was related to a weakened belief in environmental determinism—that similar natural zones produced similar kinds of people—but also to a steadfast commitment to the environment’s potential to be temporarily transformative, if not determinative.⁷ Cocks attributes this shift to a new conception of race anchored in culture that helped alleviate white peoples’ fears of going “native” to the point of no return.⁸ “If human differences sprang from histories rather than geographies,” Cocks writes, “then travel to new places could not remake those differences.”⁹ But guarding against these fears of degeneration was also a technical armature that worked to protect and preserve Northerners’ constitutions while travelling for their eventual return to cooler climes. This armature, which operated both infrastructurally and architecturally, I call the *heat line*. By this, I intend to capture the white body’s penetration into tropical climates, as well as the large-scale transportation and commercialisation of tropical produce north of the Tropic of Cancer. Just as the constant supply of bananas to markets as far away as Minneapolis or Montreal relied upon a vast, if somewhat hidden, infrastructure of climate-controlled spaces, the growth of tourism in the tropics required an equal set of carefully designed architectural measures. Only then could climate become a commodity of its own.

Passengers travelling south and tropical fruit shipped north moved along shared lines and spaces, but none of these spaces was more important or iconic than the steamship. By the late 1920s, the United Fruit Company (UFC) owned and operated more than a hundred refrigerated steamships that carried hundreds of thousands of bananas to the US, Great Britain, and Canada (via rail) and ferried tourists, as well as mail and freight, to the Caribbean. In this, UFC followed the example set by the transcontinental railroads’ earlier expansion southward and westward, and their subsequent construction of tourist destinations to further generate traffic. Approaching UFC as one might the Union Pacific Railroad—that is, as a transportation provider seeking freight and passengers, rather than, or in addition to, a multinational agribusiness—renders the company’s expansion

⁴ Mark Carey, “Inventing Caribbean Climates: How Science, Medicine, and Tourism Changed Tropical Weather from Deadly to Healthy,” *Osiris* 26, no. 1 (2011): 129–41, <https://doi.org/10.1086/661268>; Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵ Frank Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry*, Pitt Latin American Series (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); Ian G. Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*, New World Studies (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002); Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003); Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁶ For example, Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, 3rd rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924).

⁷ As Carey writes, “Theories of climatic determinism . . . continued well into the twentieth century and led to stereotypically negative depictions of tropical inhabitants.” Carey, “Inventing Caribbean Climates,” 130.

⁸ Cocks, *Tropical Whites*, 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

into the tourism business somewhat more comprehensible. For example, the rebuilt Titchfield Hotel in Port Antonio, the first stop on the doctors' trip to Jamaica, was owned and operated by a UFC affiliate. To ask why UFC invested so heavily in bananas is to put the cart before the horse. Traffic is the end; bananas, and to a lesser extent tourism, are the means. What UFC sold was *access* to the tropics, whether consumed at home or experienced abroad, through the implementation and maintenance of infrastructures of transportation and systems of environmental control.¹⁰ Such access to the peripheries of US empire also helped, as others have argued, consolidate the place of an "American" tropics within a continental imaginary.¹¹

UFC's imperial practices have been studied by labour, environmental, and business historians, as well as a number of scholars of US foreign relations.¹² The construction of the company's extensive railroad infrastructure cost potentially thousands of West Indian workers' lives; company-sponsored militias violently suppressed strikes in Central and South America, including the murder of as many as three thousand workers in Colombia in 1928; and the company supported the CIA-led overthrow of the democratically elected Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in 1954.¹³ Throughout these years the company also prevented land reforms by amassing, and often not developing, vast tracts of land around the Caribbean, while abandoning others devastated by plant pathogens and soil degradation.¹⁴ The company offers a prominent case study of the United States' particular brand of imperialism pursued by private interests with tacit, at times explicit, state support to often disastrous ends. But relatively little has been written about UFC's "Great White Fleet" and related tourist trade, and even less about the company's stateside distribution networks operated by a subsidiary, the Fruit Dispatch Company.¹⁵ Building off this existing scholarship, what I attempt to capture with the heat line is the company's specific use of portable climates as part of a process of what media studies scholar Nicole Starosielski calls "thermal colonization" or the "use of a sense of temperature to justify colonial expansion and inhabitation."¹⁶

¹⁰ Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*.

¹¹ Christine Skwiot, *The Purposes of Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

¹² See, among others, Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg, eds., *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); James Wiley, *The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Jason M. Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); and James W. Martin, *Banana Cowboys: The United Fruit Company and the Culture of Corporate Colonialism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018).

¹³ Stephen Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 120-78.

¹⁵ Exceptions include John H. Melville, *The Great White Fleet* (New York: Vantage Press, 1976); Mark H. Goldberg, "Going Bananas": 100 Years of American Fruit Ships in the Caribbean (Kings Point, NY: American Merchant Marine Museum Foundation, 1993); James W. Martin, "Mapping an Empire: Tourist Cartographies of the Caribbean in the Early Twentieth Century," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9, no. 1 (February 2011): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2011.544110>; Floyd, "Seeing the Southland"; and James W. Martin, "The United Fruit Company's Tourist Business and the Creation of the 'Golden Caribbean,' 1899-1940," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 8, no. 2 (2016): 238-62.

¹⁶ Nicole Starosielski, *Media Hot and Cold, Elements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 5; see also, Hi'ilei Julia Hobart, *Cooling the Tropics: Ice, Indigeneity, and Hawaiian Refreshment*, Elements (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

Within architectural history, analysis of such turn-of-the-century corporations' extensive footprint has typically been limited to monumental expressions of corporate identity. Instead, to convey the wider scale and scope of UFC's physical output and operations—from its plantations, tramways, wharves, steamships, piers, railways, icing stations, “banana rooms,” and hotels—I adopt an *infrastructural* approach that follows UFC's supply lines to the Caribbean and back, with particular attention to claims and instances of its architecture's mediation of time and temperature.¹⁷ As the editors of a recent volume note, “Once we conceptualize infrastructures not just in terms of the different places that they connect, but as spatiotemporal projects—as chronotopes—then we can open up new ways of thinking about the temporality and spatiality of infrastructure.”¹⁸ This approach focuses on the infrastructural—connection and disconnection, or “the slowness of the process of speeding up”—in addition to the design and construction of the actual infrastructure.¹⁹ In UFC's case, this infrastructure bridged and mediated the encounter of two Americas: the cluster of tropical, banana-producing nations, promoted as “Middle America” by the company's own postwar Middle America Information Bureau; and the “Middle America” of temperate, midwestern consumer markets that lay outside the company's reach prior to the extension of transcontinental refrigerated supply chains.

In what follows, I show how the United Fruit Company's corporate infrastructure mitigated the effects of the tropics on a new class of US tourists it brought to the Caribbean while also insulating its most valuable product, the banana, from the temperature extremes of its Northern market's seasonal weather.²⁰ That is, I seek to understand how UFC's infrastructure conditioned both tourism and trade. To do so, I begin by discussing the turn-of-century expansion of cold storage technology; then trace the extension of the United Fruit Company's transportation infrastructure inland, beyond the US port cities of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts by following the work of its subsidiary, the Fruit Dispatch Company; and then conclude by discussing how UFC's transportation infrastructure reinscribed a colour line that distinguished white from Black, manager from worker, tourist from local, but also a heat line, which isolated hot from cold, uncontrolled abundance from calculated profitability.

Cold Stores

On January 13, 1904, only two days after the *Beverly* had left Philadelphia, Arnold's midday nap was interrupted when spattering and gurgling were heard near the bow (Figure 2). As he would later write:

A rich butyric odor was wafted aft. A small donkey engine on the forward deck was hoisting sloughing and necrotic fruit in baskets dripping iridescent slime from the murky, nauseating hold. Two cadaverous seamen were dumping the bunches into the sea. They splattered and disintegrated like toadstools in the sunshine, leaving

¹⁷ See, for instance, G. Alex Bremner, “Tides That Bind: Waterborne Trade and the Network Infrastructure of Jardine, Matheson & Co.,” *Perspecta* 52 (2019): 31–47.

¹⁸ Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta, “Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure,” in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, ed. Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1–38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁰ This approach is influenced by recent work on “elemental,” “environmental,” and “climatic” media. See, for instance, John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Nick Axel et al., eds., *Accumulation: The Art, Architecture, and Media of Climate Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); and Yuriko Furuhashi, *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control, Elements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).



Figure 2. Photographs of “necrotic fruit” being hoisted out of the *Beverly’s* hold and being dumped into the sea while travelling to Jamaica. A.S. Arnold’s Photo Album and Diary of a Trip to Jamaica. Latin American and Caribbean Collections, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

long gray-green oily streaks on the pure blue of the ocean. We did not witness the disinterment long, preferring breakfast, but the gangrenous maw was belched forth for several hours.²¹

Arnold’s recollection captures, if floridly, the challenges of shipping perishable produce without the technology required to delay its putrefaction—that is, without means of conditioning the banana’s natural ripening process and mitigating its risk of bruising. Though initially intended to support the shipment of dressed meat and later produce, the artificial manufacture of ice and installation of shipboard refrigeration plants would play an essential role in fostering the growth of the Caribbean tourist trade.

In the United States, railroad cars refrigerated with natural ice had been in use since the 1850s, but they only became common once adopted by the Chicago-based packer Gustavus Swift in the late 1870s. These allowed Swift and others to transport dressed meat rather than live hogs and cattle, eliminating the time required for feeding in transit and the need for terminal slaughterhouse facilities.²² Cold storage warehouses, as architectural historian Michael Osman, among others, has shown, similarly served to preserve perishable things—fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy—for prolonged periods of time and, in doing so, helped insulate, metaphorically, these same perishables from the effects of

²¹ “A. S. Arnold’s Photo Album,” 12.

²² Mary Yeager Kujovich, “The Refrigerator Car and the Growth of the American Dressed Beef Industry,” *The Business History Review* 44, no. 4 (1970): 460–82, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3112669>.

unstable economic demand.²³ At the cornerstone laying ceremony of Chicago's Cold Storage Exchange, slated to become the "Biggest in the World," the address by civil engineer William Sooy Smith captured the sense of wonder at the warehouse engineers' perceived triumph over nature:

The active agents of decay are heat and moisture. Control these and you can convert the perishable into the almost imperishable. The temperature in these storerooms is controlled so that it can be made either that of the polar regions or of the burning tropics. The perishable products of the whole earth can be brought together and placed in rooms the temperature of which is reduced below the point at which fermentation and decay can take place, and they can be preserved until needed.²⁴

As Osman writes, "Regulating the interaction of buyers and sellers through a reserve of perishables would allow merchants to shield the price of their commodities from the irregular fluctuations of both seasonal weather and market demand."²⁵ But what Osman's account of the creation of a national market in refrigerated goods overlooks are the inter- and intra-imperial dimensions opened up by the installation of a series of refrigerated spaces in ports across the world, as evidenced by the history of the Australasian frozen meat trade, as well as related designs for the prophylactic refrigeration of white people.²⁶

Some of the earliest designs on the artificial manufacture of ice had been intended for the protection of human health, rather than the preservation of food. Artificial ice promised a ready-made prophylactic against the heat that did not rely on the seasonality of Northern climes for its manufacture and hence could be based, unlike natural ice, where it was believed to be needed most: the tropics. In the US, Floridian physician Dr John Gorrie filed a patent for the "artificial production of ice" in 1851 *not* with the preservation of food in mind but rather the preservation of white bodies exposed to the degenerative effects of tropical heat.²⁷ "The indisposition to, and, indeed, incapacity for, continuous muscular exertion, in the white race, during the existence of tropical heat is one of the best-established truths in human physiology," Gorrie claimed. If the white race was to prosper in the tropics and build cities to rival those of the North, capable of "nourishing the manufacturing and mechanic arts," Gorrie argued, then summer

²³ Michael Osman, "Cold Storage and the Speculative Market of Preserved Assets," in *Modernism's Visible Hand: Architecture and Regulation in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 45–80; Susanne Friedberg, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009); Jonathan Rees, *Refrigeration Nation: A History of Ice, Appliances, and Enterprise in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

²⁴ "Biggest in the World: Laying of the Corner-Stone of the Cold Storage Exchange," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 14, 1890.

²⁵ Michael Osman, *Modernism's Visible Hand: Architecture and Regulation in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 51.

²⁶ On the history of the frozen meat trade, see Ian Arthur, "Shipboard Refrigeration and the Beginnings of the Frozen Meat Trade," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 92, no. 1 (2006): 63–83; Chris Otter, "Meat," in *Diet for a Large Planet: Industrial Britain, Food Systems, and World Ecology* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 21–47; Rebecca J. H. Woods, "Nature and the Refrigerating Machine: The Politics and Production of Cold in the Nineteenth Century," in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, ed. Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017), 89–116.

²⁷ J. Gorrie, Improved Process for the Artificial Production of Ice, US Patent 8080, issued May 6, 1851, <https://patents.google.com/patent/US8080A/en>; for more on Gorrie, see Ruth E. Mier, "More about Dr. John Gorrie and Refrigeration," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1947): 167–73; V. M. Sherlock, *The Fever Man: A Biography of Dr. John Gorrie* (Tallahassee: Medallion Press, 1982); and Bernard A. Nagengast, "Was Ice Making John Gorrie's Greatest Legacy?," *ASHRAE Transactions* 115 (2009): 122–9.

temperatures needed to be artificially lowered.²⁸ Consequently, the artificial production of ice was not simply a prophylactic against tropical heat but a way to remedy the economic backwardness nineteenth-century thinkers ascribed to regions within the tropical zone.²⁹

Gorrie's machine did not ever achieve widespread commercial viability, but later designs, using the absorption of ammonia to drive the cooling process, did. Some of these machines, like those built by Ferdinand Carré, found a ready market in the South during the American Civil War, when access to the North's natural ice was cut off. In the following decades, artificial ice plants went up throughout the South at an astounding pace: four were in regular operation by 1869, twenty-nine by 1879, and one hundred and sixty-five by 1889.³⁰ The quality of manufactured ice similarly improved over time, and systems were adapted to the needs of specific industries, first breweries and then packing houses, where a lower, more intense cold helped quickly chill hogs and cattle. By 1890, artificial ice even competed with natural ice in the North. Two successively short winters in 1888–1889 and 1889–1890, when the natural ice crop was twenty per cent lower than normal, showcased the benefits of artificial production over the unpredictability of natural cycles. Uptake in the Caribbean, however, was much slower.

In 1924, the U.S. Department of State published a Trade Information Bulletin cataloguing the "Ice-Making and Cold-Storage Plants in Mexico, Central America, and West Indies." As the bulletin's introduction makes clear, the document was meant to serve as an incitement for the further expansion and introduction of US ice-manufacturing concerns throughout the region. The situation in Jamaica, for example, was found to be wanting. Seven ice plants served the island, but these, US Consul Samuel W. Honaker reported, "are not capable of meeting the demand for ice" even though "a large percentage of the people have not been educated to feel the need of ice and do not consume any part of the existing supply."³¹ What capacity did exist was concentrated in the coastal towns of Kingston, Port Antonio, and Saint Ann's Bay, and served, in part, the export trade. "The distribution of ice from the coastal towns is greatly handicapped," Honaker notes, "by the lack of refrigerator cars and of railways radiating in such directions as to serve the entire country." That is, unlike the US in the wake of Swift and others, Jamaica lacked a proper *cold chain*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the seven ice plants in the British colony listed in the bulletin was owned and operated by the Myrtle Bank Hotel, by then one of US tourists' favoured destinations, "solely for its own use." The few plants on the island did, however, operate US-made compressors, and in the case of the Kingston Ice Making Co., the island's largest purveyor, source the coal used to fire its boilers from the US, specifically Newport News, Virginia.³²

To support the growth of its hemispheric banana trade, UFC promoted the use of ship-board refrigerating plants, emulating the British Empire's frozen meat trade, and built its cold chain across the Americas through the creation of an extensive network of refrigerated ships and ice plants in the Caribbean, the US, and Canada. That is, unlike Chicago's Cold Storage Exchange, UFC controlled, to a large extent, the entirety of their product's distribution, allowing them to regulate, or rather condition, the market in bananas themselves. As historian Aviva Chomsky has argued, the company's control over marketing, transportation, and land—that is, distribution—made, for the most part, "direct control

²⁸ "Refrigeration and Ventilation of Cities," *The Southern Quarterly Review* 1, no. 2 (April 1842): 414–5.

²⁹ Friedberg, *Fresh*, 24.

³⁰ Oscar E. Anderson, *Refrigeration in America: A History of a New Technology and Its Impact* (Princeton: Published for the University of Cincinnati by Princeton University Press, 1953), 87.

³¹ "Ice-Making and Cold Storage Plants in Mexico, Central America and West Indies; Reports of Consular Offices of the Department of State," Trade Information Bulletin (Washington: Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, May 19, 1924), 63.

³² "Ice-Making and Cold Storage Plants," 63, 64.

of production unnecessary.”³³ Control of the chain led to control of the market. This conditioning took on a few dimensions, beginning with the creation of the Fruit Dispatch Company, whose primary function—through its fifty-two branch houses—was to forecast the consumption and ensure the distribution of the approximately forty-five million bunches of bananas that entered the US every year.

Fruit Dispatch & the Great White Fleet

By 1930, UFC owned and operated some seventeen hundred miles of railways and tramways, as well as nearly one hundred ships, two sugar mills, one refinery, and a plane service that regularly ferried passengers and cargo between Tela and Honduras’s capital, Tegucigalpa, as well as two hotels in Jamaica. The steamships, in and of themselves, were a considerable improvement over the sailing vessels that had initially plied the Caribbean Sea. They were not only faster than their wind-powered counterparts, but also more reliable, allowing the company to tailor US-based consumption to its plantations’ production. As an early student of UFC’s transportation system noted, “Speed and dependability of sailings, prime essentials in banana transport, furnished the basis on which the passenger traffic was built up.”³⁴ Relatively early on, as evidenced by the doctors’ own voyage, ships regularly left Atlantic ports on a pre-determined schedule and dropped passengers off in Jamaica before continuing on to ports nearer to the company’s largest plantations in Central America. Passengers would then be picked up on a pre-determined date as the ships made their way back to the US. Additional stops in the Caribbean were added if, for whatever reason, there remained room in the ships’ hulls to fill.

The prototypical banana plantation was designed to extend no more than twenty-four hundred feet on either side of a company railroad, to ensure rapid delivery after a cutting order had been placed. Despite the fact the banana came in its own natural protective packaging or peel, to avoid premature ripening, bananas typically had to be in the cool hull of a company ship within twenty-four hours of cutting.³⁵ As a steamship neared port, a call was placed through the company’s radio infrastructure maintained by another subsidiary, the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company, which was then relayed to individual plantations.³⁶

For shorter routes, such as trips between the Port of New Orleans and the Caribbean, UFC experimented with naturally ventilated ships—such as the *Castilla*, *Tela*, and *Iriona*—but by 1930, fully three-quarters of their steamships were equipped with refrigerating plants. The *Talamanca*, for instance, was equipped with three separate and entirely independent refrigerating plants: one for air-cooled cargo, one for special cargo, and a third for the ship’s stores.³⁷ The failure of these cold storage technologies led to rather eventful breakdowns. For instance, in 1917, a UFC steamship’s refrigerating equipment failed on its return trip from the Caribbean, allowing its cargo of twenty-seven thousand bunches of bananas to begin ripening *en route*. Once docked, workers struggled to lift bunches out of the hold, many disintegrated under their own weight before they could reach the pier, eventually covering the area with a layer of “thick soup.”³⁸

³³ Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–1940*, 61.

³⁴ Leona Frances English, “The Transportation System of the United Fruit Company” (MSc, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 1932), 17.

³⁵ Figures cited vary from twenty-four to sixty hours.

³⁶ For more on the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company, see Christina S. Drale, “The United Fruit Company and Early Radio Development,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 17 (2010): 195–210.

³⁷ “Refrigerating Plants on New United Fruit Company Steamers,” *Marine Engineering*, 1 May 1905, 201–4.

³⁸ “United Fruit Company Gives Away Over Four Million Bananas,” *Fruit Dispatch* 3, no. 6 (October 1917): 164–5.

Ships only carried bananas as cargo on northbound trips. Southbound, their hulls were variously filled with mail, steel, and other manufactured goods, including materials used in the construction of the Panama Canal. In 1930, the company's Great White Fleet ferried 751,944 tons of commercial freight to the Caribbean, as well as 239,933 bags of mail and nearly seventy thousand passengers. Most of the tourists, white men and women belonging to the growing professional and managerial class clustered in metropolitan centres, travelled to the Caribbean on two- to three-week cruises. As historian James W. Martin writes, the company's Passenger Department "attributed a huge increase in traffic in the late 1920s to its ability to attract . . . business groups by offering on-board meeting spaces."³⁹ Contemporaries characterised this trade in explicitly geographic, if not exactly climatic, terms as an exchange between "low-latitude and middle-latitude products"—a kind of exchange between the warm bounty of the tropics and the cold logic of North America—the volume of which gave "body and substance to the new feeling of nearness" between the temperate North and "Caribbean America."⁴⁰

At tropical ports, loading would commence immediately upon arrival. Bananas were transferred mainly by hand into the pre-cooled holds of the vessels. At New Orleans—which, with its companion ports, Mobile, Alabama, and Galveston, Texas, supplied fully two-thirds of the US market—banana piers were equipped with specialised unloading machines that reduced the need for human labour and expedited transshipment onto railcars. The machines' adjustable booms could be extended outward and then gently lowered into the hull of ships of any size. Designs varied but typically were of the endless conveyor or belt arrangement with a flexible sheeting material strung across a series of horizontal bars. "Owing to this particular construction," an article in *Marine Engineering* noted, "the fruit sustains no violent shock at any point of its transit."⁴¹

During the summer months, the Fruit Dispatch Company was charged with cooling the cars in advance (Figure 3). These refrigerated cars were equipped with slatted floor racks, ice bunkers, and adjustable ventilators that would keep the bananas cool for most of their journey. But the company also operated a series of re-icing stations at key railroad junctions: Rouses Point, New York; Mounds, Illinois; and Dubuque, Iowa. During winter months, when unusually cold weather risked damaging the cargo, cars would be switched into heating sheds and warmed using either a blower system or steam radiators. Collectively, this infrastructure—from mechanical conveyors to steam radiators—helped make the banana the perishable item with the least average loss carried by the railroads.⁴²

During cold weather, particularly in Northern ports and inland terminals, windshields were used to minimise the temperature differentials when moving between cars or different modes of transportation. Hay, deployed as an insulator, was used to protect bunches during the final leg of their delivery.⁴³ When the bananas finally arrived at one of the Fruit Dispatch Company's branch offices, these would then be transferred to local distributors' so-called banana rooms, which worked like the ships' hulls, only on land.⁴⁴ Charles E. Moore, the engineer responsible for developing the patented "Moore System of Refrigeration" for use in banana-ripening rooms, would later equip his own Spanish

³⁹ Martin, "The United Fruit Company's Tourist Business and the Creation of the 'Golden Caribbean,' 1899–1940," 241.

⁴⁰ English, "The Transportation System of the United Fruit Company," 23, 27.

⁴¹ "Refrigerating Plants on New United Fruit Company Steamers," 204.

⁴² "Loss and Damage Per Car... \$2.40: That's All the Railroads Had to Pay in 1929 on Banana Claims Covering 102,047 Cars," *Fruit Dispatch*, July 1930, 10.

⁴³ W. E. Mosher, "The Distribution of Bananas in Winter," *Fruit Dispatch* 3, no. 7 (November 1917): 212–5; W. E. Mosher, "The Distribution of Bananas in Winter," *Fruit Dispatch* 3, no. 8 (December 1917): 244–7; W. E. Mosher, "The Distribution of Bananas in Winter," *Fruit Dispatch* 3, no. 9 (January 1918): 268–71.

⁴⁴ "Loss and Damage Per Car... \$2.40."



Figure 3. View of ice blocks and employees on so-called icing platforms in New Orleans. Each of these platforms could accommodate eighteen banana cars at once. “Icing Banana Cars at New Orleans, La.—An Important and Extensive Operation,” *Fruit Dispatch* 3, no. 4 (August 1917): 98.

colonial home with a similar air-conditioning system. Cooling technologies designed for bananas were hence applied to humans (Figures 4 and 5).

Conditioning the Tropics

In 1904, the doctors’ trip aboard the *Beverly* was an intimate affair—they knew each of the other passengers by name and even assigned them nicknames that they jotted down on the ship’s “Passenger List.” Twenty-one in all, they neatly fit into the ship’s eighteen staterooms. The Admiral-class steamships, which the doctors assumed they would travel aboard, were only slightly larger, featuring twenty rooms across the main and promenade decks. Roundtrip fare from either Boston, New York, or Philadelphia to Port Antonio, Jamaica, cost \$75, including meals and a berth in a stateroom.⁴⁵ By the late 1920s, as the scale of UFC’s operation grew, so did the ships. A new class of vessels launched before WWI could carry up to one hundred “first-class” passengers lodged in thirty-five cabins and four suites arrayed across three decks.⁴⁶ Many passengers were awed by the ships’ reflective white hulls, lush interiors, surprisingly cool cabins, and on-deck swimming pools—each a means of both enjoying and mitigating the effects of the tropics. The fleet, along with the company’s two hotels in Jamaica, augured a new era of leisurely travel in the Americas, further spurred after the war by the passing of the National Prohibition or Volstead Act. But few grasped the extent to which their stays and the environments they experienced were shaped and conditioned by the preceding infrastructures of imperialist enterprise.

As historians Frank Taylor and James W. Martin have shown, UFC played a central role in creating Jamaica’s reputation as a health resort at the turn of the twentieth

⁴⁵ This would be roughly \$2,500 today. *Jamaica: The Land of Summer* (Boston: United Fruit Co.’s Steamship Lines and C.B. Wester & Co., 1903), 19.

⁴⁶ Goldberg, *Going Bananas*, 319.

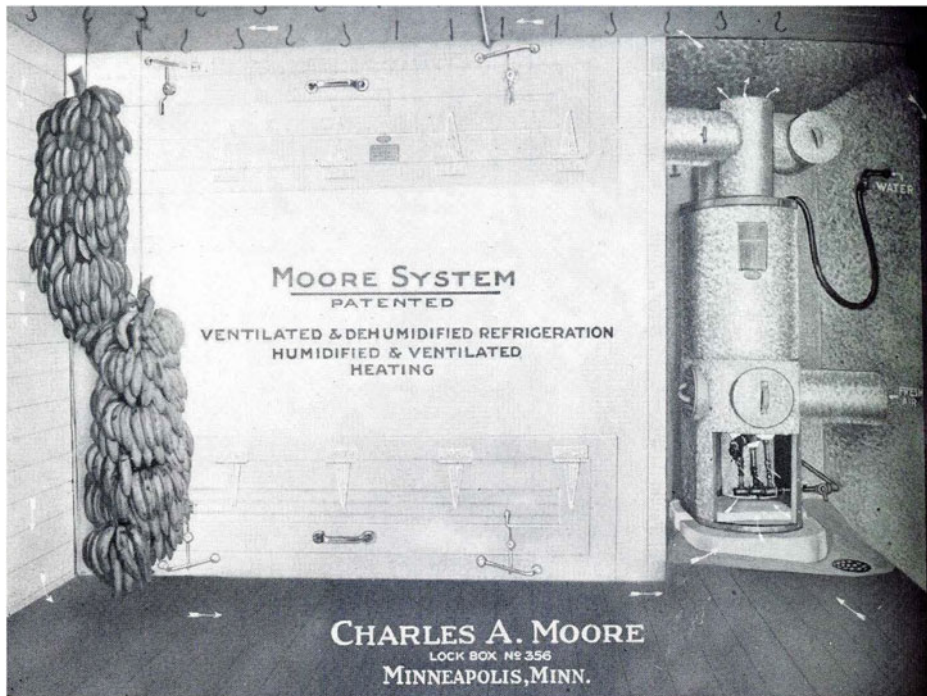


Figure 4. Interior view of a banana-ripening room equipped with a refrigeration system designed by Charles A. Moore. Charles A. Moore, "The Moore System of Refrigeration," *Fruit Dispatch* 4, no. 12 (April 1919): 402.

century.⁴⁷ Owing to the staggeringly high death rate among soldiers stationed on the island throughout the nineteenth century, Jamaica had been initially referred to by its European colonisers as the "white man's grave." This led British officers to seek refuge in the mountains' cooler climes, above the plains where the air was believed to be foul. Over time, these hill stations became destinations in and of themselves. As Taylor writes, initially "it was the cool, bracing air of the mountains, rather than the island's white sand beaches, that was advertised abroad as the key attraction for the visitor."⁴⁸ Coupled with access to mineral springs that were believed to cure gout and rheumatism, the island's healthful atmospheres were what drew late-nineteenth-century tourists, many seeking remedy or escape from afflictions associated with winter weather.

This reprieve from the North's temperature extremes was also sold as a kind of corrective to the increasingly cold nature of urban life in late-nineteenth-century US cities. Early on, the company publicised Jamaica as providing relief from the distress associated with "overcivilization," a diagnosis rooted in increasingly sedentary, consumerist lifestyles of the middle and upper classes.⁴⁹ As Martin writes, "tropical climates surrounded their inhabitants with abundance and dulled their energies, inducing them to passivity."⁵⁰ The pace of "modern life" was believed to slow in the tropics, allowing tourists to slowly replenish their energies. As Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman offered in a testimonial published in

⁴⁷ Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise*; Martin, "The United Fruit Company's Tourist Business."

⁴⁸ Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise*, 27.

⁴⁹ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁵⁰ Martin, "The United Fruit Company's Tourist Business," 247.



Figure 5. Exterior view of engineer Charles A. Moore's own home, equipped with a similar refrigeration system. "A Beautiful Home That Contains Many Novel Features," *Fruit Dispatch* 11, no. 5 (September 1925): 205.

the November 1903 issue of *The Golden Caribbean*, "To anyone seeking simply pleasure I would say by all means take this winter journey, but to anyone suffering from nervous exhaustion, I would say with emphasis, that there is no climate that I have ever found in the world that could equal the climate of the West Indies, to restore such a one to perfect health."⁵¹ The prescription of Chapman's trip by his doctor illustrates how the relative ease of travel to and from the Caribbean offered by the Great White Fleet was both cause and consequence of a new set of travellers seeking out temporary climate cures in the region.⁵²

Such therapeutic considerations also dovetailed with promoters' depictions of Jamaica's Black inhabitants, whose perceived primitivism was itself an attraction. The only Black "passenger" aboard the *Beverly* during the doctors' trip appears to have been one of the ship's crew members, an elderly stewardess who likely roomed on the lower deck opposite the pantry. Touring the Caribbean thus entailed travelling South to warmer climes, but also travelling, if not *back* in time, then at least somewhere where time was supposedly lived and felt differently.⁵³ Like the technologically mediated arrest of the banana's natural ripening process in the steamship's hold, the tourist's pace of life was hence believed to be suspended while touring the Caribbean.

⁵¹ "Testimonials," *The Golden Caribbean* 1, no. 1 (November 1903): 17.

⁵² Simon M. Kevan, "Quests for Cures: A History of Tourism for Climate and Health," *International Journal of Biometeorology* 37, no. 3 (1993): 113–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01212620>.

⁵³ Catherine Cocks, "The Pleasures of Degeneration: Climate, Race, and the Origins of the Global Tourist South in the Americas," *Discourse* 29, nos. 2/3 (2007): 223.

This mediation was premised on a range of practices that allowed Arnold and his colleagues, like other tourists, to avoid exposure to the full force of the island's heat. For instance, after dropping off their bags at the Titchfield, the doctors rushed to Smith's Emporium in Port Antonio to purchase what they called "yippayappas," better known as Panama or jipajapa hats, to shield their heads and faces from the sun and to complete their culturally and climatically appropriate head-to-toe, tropical attire.⁵⁴ Suggestions for proper clothing featured prominently in the pages of United Fruit Company Steamship Lines brochures. Such "practical information" called upon future travellers to pack "lighter clothing"—a "few light skirts" for women and "light summer suits" for men—while also indicating that "all the light summer goods can be bought and made up at either Kingston or Port Antonio at remarkably low prices."⁵⁵ This emphasis on the need for ventilation and shade at the scale of the body also applied to the architecture of the Titchfield Hotel, which would be rebuilt, following designs by Boston-based architect Thomas M. Sargent, shortly after the doctors' stay.

Built before the start of the 1905 winter season, the hotel that emerged from Sargent's design applied the logic of "the cool veranda of the bungalow [*sic*]" to which the doctors were assigned—likely a small, one-storey structure on the hotel's grounds facing the harbour—to the entirety of the new, five-storey building.⁵⁶ Articles announcing the new hotel, which would be operated by Ainslie & Grabow, the proprietors of UFC's summer retreat in Swampscott, Massachusetts, promised an interior arrangement "admirably suited to tropical heat" with "large and light halls and rooms, spacious piazzas, ample ventilation and an abundance of windows," as well as a "complete system of gravity drains to carry off all moisture and dampness." As seen in a ground-floor plan published in *The Golden Caribbean*, the hotel's common spaces—the billiard room, music room, ladies' reception room, palm garden, promenade hall, and dining hall—were arranged along a central spine that connected to the hotel's extensive covered veranda, which was open to the outdoors to allow for ventilation (Figures 6 and 7). Guest rooms on the upper floors featured shutters above the interior hall-facing doors that were similarly intended to promote cross-ventilation. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, designs for the new hotel included "the installation of a ten-ton plant for refrigerating and other purposes."⁵⁷ From sources currently available, it is unclear when, if ever, this plant was modified or expanded to support comfort cooling, but it was certainly used for food preservation and the manufacture of artificial ice.

Over the course of the doctors' trip in 1904, Arnold shared multiple instances of them requiring and seeking out a "cooling drink." On multiple occasions, they visited Mrs Thomas in Port Antonio for "one of her far-famed Planter's Punches."⁵⁸ In Kingston, after inspecting their rooms at the Myrtle Bank Hotel, which the doctors found attractive on the outside but wanting within, "Even a cooling drink," Arnold wrote, "failed to cheer up the dismal party."⁵⁹ Throughout the trip, the doctors' encounters with the island and its inhabitants were mediated by technologies that reinforced distance and separation—for example, the use of their cameras when they spotted a school from the road, stopped, and demanded that the teacher and students stand for a photograph. Distanced collapsed when their photographic subjects occasionally shooed and chased them away. Such

⁵⁴ Tom Miller, *The Panama Hat Trail: A Journey from South America* (New York: Morrow, 1986); Martine Buchet, *Panama: A Legendary Hat* (Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones Libri Mundi, 1995).

⁵⁵ *Jamaica: The Land of Summer*, 23.

⁵⁶ Near the end of their trip, the doctors discuss the possibility of building a bungalow of their own in Jamaica. "The Bungalow will resemble," one of them suggests, "a Mexican hat." "A. S. Arnold's Photo Album," 41.

⁵⁷ "The New Hotel Titchfield," *The Golden Caribbean* 3, no. 3 (January 1905): 3–5.

⁵⁸ "A. S. Arnold's Photo Album," 41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

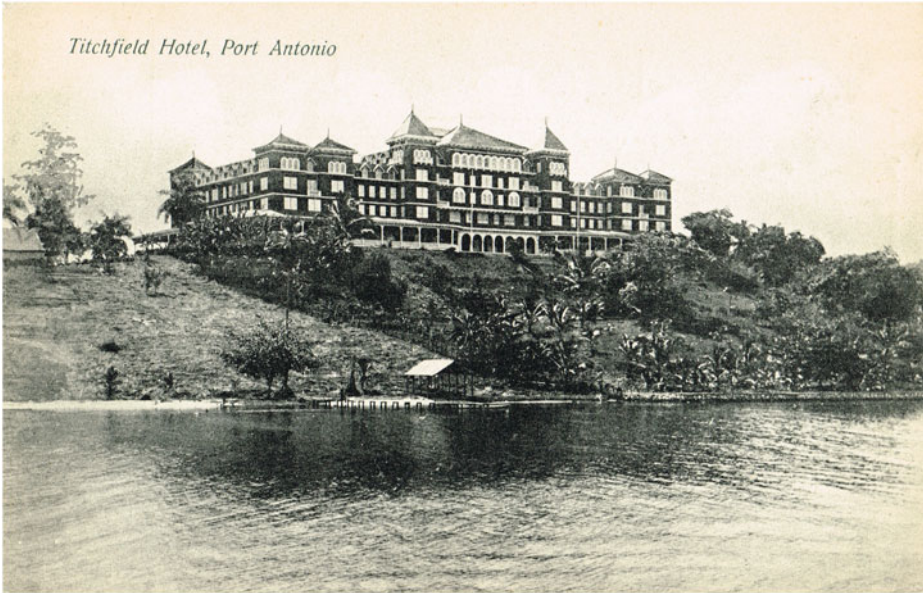


Figure 6. Postcard of the new Titchfield Hotel, Port Antonio, Jamaica.

encounters, however, were also often mediated by modes of transportation, food and drink, attire, and architecture that helped the doctors acclimatise, that is, allow their bodies to temporarily adapt to the local climate. They rarely travelled on foot, preferring horse-drawn carriages and the train, and they quickly retired back to the comforts and libations of their exclusive, US-styled accommodations after short outings or simply as soon as the breeze died down. On a day trip to Spanish Town, the doctors contemplated

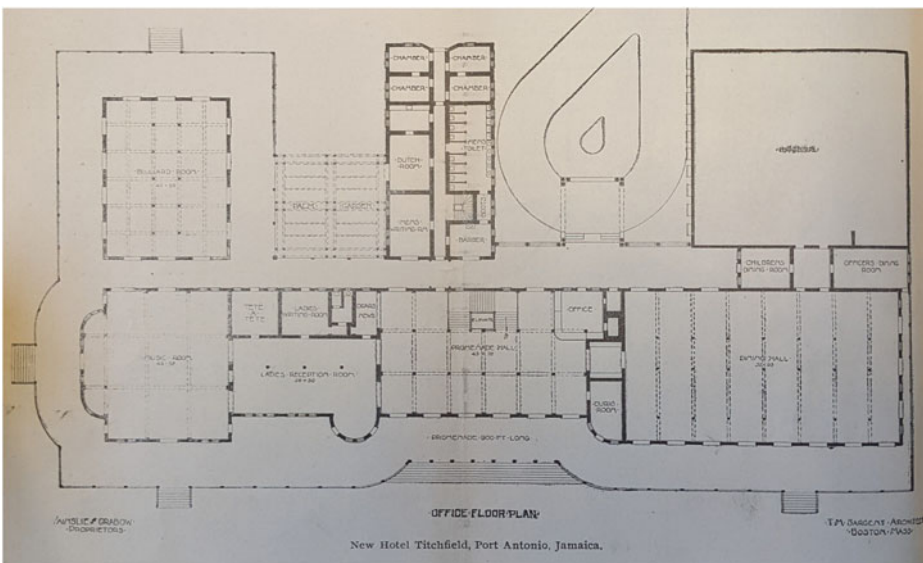


Figure 7. Ground-floor plan of the new Titchfield Hotel, designed by Boston-based architect Thomas A. Sargent. “The New Hotel Titchfield,” *The Golden Caribbean* 3, no. 3 (January 1905): 4.



Figure 8. Photograph of a waiter at the Myrtle Bank Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica, c. 1937. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida. “Jamaica jaunt or the Rover Boys and how they conquered old demon rum” scrapbook, Caribbean Collection.

extending their stay but admitted, somewhat coyly, that “separation from toothbrushes and pajamas was the only thing that kept [them] from remaining overnight.”⁶⁰ The exotic, it seems, was best consumed in small doses, often in the vicinity of the comforts of home.

Many of these may be well-known tropes of nineteenth-century travel literature, but it is important to stress how both tourism and trade relied upon the heat line’s manipulation of temperature and time. In 1937, when four well-heeled couples travelled from Chicago to New York, to Cuba, Jamaica, and Bermuda, and back, stopping at the Myrtle Bank Hotel along the way, they made a point of photographing their waiter as he approached in a crisp, white uniform with a round of ice-cold drinks on a tray (Figure 8).⁶¹ We may not

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶¹ The hotel had been owned and operated by UFC since 1918. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 220.



Figure 9. Photograph of one of the staterooms aboard the Peter. Note the “punkah louver” adjacent to the ceiling-mounted light fixture. *Photographs of S.S. Peter, S.S. Quirigua, S.S. Veragua* (New York: United Fruit Company, 1936).

be accustomed to thinking of ice cubes as the product of imperial enterprise, but the machines used to produce them were likely similar to the ones operating on the company’s plantations and aboard their ships. Likewise, refrigeration of the Great White Fleet’s stores radically altered the variety and quality of food available to passengers on deck, just as it did the fare available to tourists staying at the Titchfield or Myrtle Bank Hotel.

In 1904, Arnold’s assessment of the *Beverly*’s menu was dire:

We will say but little about the meals on the *Beverly*. They served a purpose by keeping soul and body together and by giving some excuse for the execrable odors. Lunch was easily the worst. Pallid pickles, malignant cold slaw, and curling films of meat in sparse array decorate the board.⁶²

After a particularly uninspiring dinner, a fellow passenger was the first, but certainly not the last, to empty his stomach and “assail the sea from the rail.”⁶³ Three decades later, a banana-bunch-shaped menu for a “Tropical Dinner” on board UFC’s twin-screw steamer *Toloo* listed items such as “iced celery,” “fresh asparagus,” and “banana form ice cream”—evidence of the ship’s working refrigeration plant.⁶⁴

⁶² “A. S. Arnold’s Photo Album,” 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 11.

⁶⁴ Menu, “Tropical Dinner on Board the T.S.S. Toloo: At Sea, September 7th, 1935” (United Fruit Company, 1935). The Wolfsonian-FIU.

In addition to cooling ships' stores, these plants were also used, beginning in the 1910s, to cool passengers' cabins. The plants kept the bananas at a steady fifty-three to fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit, but ducts also led from these refrigerating machines to all the staterooms. If passengers found it too warm, they could slide open a flap in the register overhead, visible in a photograph directly adjacent to the ceiling-mounted light fixture (Figure 9). In 1909, an announcement of the company's three new five-thousand-ton vessels—the *Cartago*, *Parismina*, and *Heredia*—built for service between New Orleans and Colón, Panama, directed readers' attention to features that made the ships specifically suited to cruising in tropical waters:

Attention is particularly called to the refrigerating plant by means of which not only is fruit and other cargo of a perishable nature carried in an artificially cooled atmosphere, which greatly contributes to the safety of its transportation, but the private suites, staterooms, social room, dining saloon and smoking room are artificially cooled, the temperature being regulated to suit the taste of passengers.⁶⁵

As Frederick Upham Adams asked in his 1914 company-sponsored history of the firm's operations, *Conquest of the Tropics*, "What terror is there to tropical heat or humidity when a touch of the hand can 'turn on the cold' as easily as a child can turn the valve of a steam radiator?"⁶⁶ Tapping into a much longer history of the thermal colonisation of the tropics before the introduction of refrigeration, the apertures through which this cold air passed were named "punkah louvers" after the punkah or pankha ceiling-mounted fan found in the homes of British colonials and Southern planters.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Many scholars have studied how Western conceptions and depictions of peoples and places between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn led to contradictory views of the tropics as paradisaical, with fertile soils and soothing climes, but equally pestilential and morbid, and thus exclusively inhabited by backward peoples lacking in civilisation.⁶⁸ This twofold framing opened the door to colonial powers' so-called civilising missions and justified the subsequent installation of extractive industries intent on the commodification of tropical resources.⁶⁹ That said, much of the scholarship on "tropicality," as the architectural historians Jiat-Hwee Chang and Anthony D. King note, has focused on medical and environmental discourses and pictorial and literary representations, and not on the built environment.⁷⁰ But acclimatisation, what historian Michael A. Osborne has argued to be "*the* paradigmatic colonial science," often relied on architectural details and devices—larger windows and thinner roofs, porticos and verandas—that colonial officers noted helped adapt temperate styles and ways of building to warmer climates.⁷¹

⁶⁵ "Beautiful Jamaica," February 1909, 17.

⁶⁶ Frederick Upham Adams, *Conquest of the Tropics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1914), 126.

⁶⁷ Dana E. Byrd, "Motive Power: Fans, Punkahs, and Fly Brushes in the Antebellum South," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 23, no. 1 (2016): 29–51, <https://doi.org/10.5749/buildland.23.1.0029>.

⁶⁸ Nancy Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature*, *Picturing History* (London: Reaktion, 2001); Felix Driver and Luciana de Lima Martins, eds., *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁶⁹ David Arnold, "Inventing Tropicality," in *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 141–68.

⁷⁰ Jiat-Hwee Chang and Anthony D. King, "Towards a Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Historical Fragments of Power-Knowledge, Built Environment and Climate in the British Colonial Territories," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 32, no. 3 (2011): 284, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9493.2011.00434.x>.

⁷¹ Michael A. Osborne, "Acclimatizing the World: A History of the Paradigmatic Colonial Science," *Osiris* 15, no. 1 (2001): 135–51, <https://doi.org/10.1086/649323>.

Acclimatisation differs from climatic determinism, or theories that essentially see societies as determined by their climatic origins, in that it presupposes the mediation of the impact of climate on humans through culture, for instance, a cult of work that opposes the perceived weakening force of heat in hot regions, or technology, as in the technical production of shade, or, here, refrigeration.⁷²

From a certain, Euro-American perspective, media theorist Eva Horn argues, heat “melts boundaries of man and nature, between the inside and the outside of the body, between perception and imagination, between the subject and the object of cognition.”⁷³ The tropics thus threatened to dissolve boundaries embedded within so-called temperate societies. In this way, the colour line that separated Black and white was reinscribed, through refrigerating and ventilating technologies, onto a heat line that separated hot from cold, illness from health, and abundance from profit. In a way, the mechanical introduction of cold into tropical locales offered a kind of counterpoint to what environmental determinist S. Colum Gilfillan termed “The Coldward Course of Progress” in 1920.⁷⁴ According to Gilfillan, the “path of civilization” had followed a northward course out of Sumeria, through Constantinople, Rome, and Peking, and then triumphed in the cities of London, New York, and Berlin, migrating northward, over time, to increasingly cooler climates. The heat line, along with tropical hygiene and medicine, promised to end this northward migration, allowing the white race to not only temporarily enjoy, but permanently inhabit the tropics. As one source quoted in the UFC-sponsored *Proceedings of the International Conference on Health Problems in Tropical America* claimed, “If [the white man] cannot be made fit for the climate [technical skill and industry backed by science] make the climate fit for him.”⁷⁵ Unlearning the legacies of such colonial thought and related action, while accounting for the unevenly experienced reality of climate change, remains one of our most pressing challenges. That is, the challenge is not to redirect “The Coldward Course of Progress” southward by extending Western societies’ reliance on year-round air-conditioning and temperature-controlled work environments, but to learn to live elsewhere, where possible, free of one’s need to master the cold.

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⁷² Eva Horn, “The Aesthetics of Heat: For a Cultural History of Climate in the Age of Global Warming,” *Metaphora: Journal for Literature Theory and Media* 2 (2017): 1–16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁴ S. Colum Gilfillan, “The Coldward Course of Progress,” *Political Science Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1920): 393–410, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2142583>.

⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the International Conference on Health Problems in Tropical America* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1924), 676.

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