

THE VACAS BRIDGE AND THE NORTHERN RAILWAY

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The viaduct was built during the government of President Manuel Estrada Cabrera. It was given that name because it is located by the river of the same name in Guatemala City. The construction began in 1906 and was completed on January 9, 1908. Its importance was mainly that it would allow the passage of the railroad and facilitate the transportation of cargo between Puerto Barrios in the Atlantic and Guatemala City. Despite the years, the structure still stands, although it is not currently being used.



Postal Stationery Card, Guatemala to Londres, England, October 5, 1925.

Las Vacas bridge was built from iron and has a length of 226.4 meters, a width of 4.26 meters, and a height of 72.5 meters. Its structure was designed to support the weight of the locomotives. It was manufactured by the Baltimore Bridge Company and was erected under the direction of bridge engineer J.H. Pope. The weight of the structure is approximately 1000 tons. This allowed the passage of the first train from Puerto Barrios to Guatemala City.



Souvenir sheet

The Northern Railway of Guatemala was a railway system that operated between Guatemala City and Puerto Barrios between 1908 and 1990. It was originally undertaken by the government of General Justo Rufino Barrios who left it unfinished when he died in 1885. His nephew, President José María Reina Barrios, took up the project and managed to reach from Puerto Barrios to El Rancho, just ninety miles from Guatemala City following a route parallel to the banks of the Motagua River. When construction seemed about to be completed, Reina Barrios organized the Central American Exposition for 1897, mainly to show potential foreign investors Guatemala's railway infrastructure, which - had it been completed - would have competed with an interoceanic canal that had not yet been built.

After the assassination of Reina Barrios, his successor - Manuel Estrada Cabrera - granted the concession for the construction of the railway to a North American company, which completed it in 1908. By then, the railway was no longer strategic, since the Canal de Panama was already almost completed, and the Guatemalan government granted its operation in concession to the United Fruit Company and its subsidiary International Railways of Central America.



1981 stamp of 10 cents of quetzal, showing the steam locomotive crossing the Puente de las Vacas.



Invitation to lunch for the inauguration ceremony of the northern railway, in honor of President Manuel Estrada Cabrera, January 1908.

Steam locomotive No. 34 of Ferrocarriles de Guatemala (FEGUA), manufactured in 1897 by Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, they called it “La Negrita”.



Q20 Ladatel Guatemala phone card.