

## Son of Blue Grass Region Famous in Davao

J. L. BURCHFIELD—Pioneer Border man



Captain J. L. Burchfield, One of the Leading Davao Planters and True American Pioneer.

Captain "Jim" (James L.) Burchfield, of Davao, hails from Kentucky and has a sturdiness of character not much below that of a man from the same region a few generations before him, Davie Crockett of Alamo fame. In Congress from his home state, Tennessee, the redoubtable Crockett strenuously opposed Jackson's debasing of the currency. When defeated by the Jackson forces for reelection, he sold out his Tennessee holdings and moved away. His neighbors inquiring, he replied to their queries, "I am goin' to Texas and you can go to hell!" He was a good border man; so is Captain Jim Burchfield; he is the mentor of men of the quality to build territories. While no personal pique drove him away from Kentucky, where he still occasionally pays a visit, he prefers Davao above all places in the world.

Today Davao is the western American border: men succeed there by tackling primal problems successfully. It suits Captain Jim down to the ground.

Captain Jim Burchfield of Davao is an old soldier. No news in that, particularly: the men who have created the American Philippines are old soldiers almost without exception. Burchfield dates, however; from 1876 to 1881 he was a trooper in the 8th United States Cavalry and scouted on more than one occasion 150 miles into old Mexico. His stations were Fort Clark, Del Rio Post

and Fort Duncan. Then he got out of the service: places like El Paso, Fort Worth and Dodge City had become as peaceful as an Ohio county-seat: there was no use for a young man to waste his time in the Cavalry.

During fifteen years the ennui throughout the west and southwest was such that Kansas and Nebraska and goodly sections of Texas welcomed flamboyant populism as a relief from the monotony of eastern mortgage houses foreclosing on the country. The big pastures had been turned into corn fields. Without a market and without firewood, the bankrupt farmers burned their corn and harkened unto "Sockless" Jerry Simpson, the young hope of Medicine Lodge. Young Burchfield escaped this, having gone back to Kentucky, where he believed men were saner and maidens prettier. Kentucky horses were at least superior: he rode and did considerable courting, as a young blade in Kentucky will.

Then came the flare-up in Cuba, the sinking of the Main and McKingley's call to the colors. Trooper Burchfield became Captain Burchfield of "A" Company, 3rd Kentucky Volunteers, that served in Cuba. This over, and there being still something to do in the Philippines, Captain Burchfield joined the 31st United States Volunteers as commander of "I" Company. The 2nd Battalion of the 31st U. S. Volunteers came out to the Philippines on the chartered transport s. s. Manuence, landing at Manila November 28, 1899. Fifteen years later, Burchfield paid another visit to Kentucky—as a wealthy planter of the Davao gulf region of the Philippines.

Kismet? Perhaps, and also the tempered-steel will of the border man.

Lieutenant Colonel Webb C. Hayes was in command of the transport that brought to the Philippines the 2nd Battalion of the 31st U. S. Volunteers, which was immediately sent to station in Davao: "L" Company to Mati, "M" Company to Baganga, "K" Company to Parang-Parang, "I" Company under Captain Burchfield to the town of Davao itself. Once assigned to station, command of the Battalion devolved upon Captain Hunter Liggett, at that time enjoying the rank of a "Mex." major.

In Davao there was little for the Army to do from the outset. The Moros of the region were of a different stamp from the Moros of Sulu, Lanao and Cotabato, as they are today.

"Our work was not with rifles, but with picks and shovels," Captain Jim recalls. "We had to build roads: there were none. We had to clean up the town and make a fit place for human beings to live in. We saw soil ten feet deep, rich volcanic ash land that would grow anything that could be grown in the tropics. We saw a land well watered, a big region all round the gulf with streams frequent as deer paths. There were no habitations on this land; the Treaty of Paris ceded it as Crown lands to the people of the United States—from one sovereign to another; and so we resolved to settle upon the land and develop plantations.

"In Davao I separated from the service. Prior to action upon my resignation even, I had acquired Davao farm lands—raw jungle out of which to make a plantation." ✓He made it, too. Leaving the service officially July 3, 1901, he devoted his pioneer ability to developing his property, Daliao Plantation, nine miles from the town of Davao. It was only 110 hectares, 242

acres, but in 1914 he sold it to Japanese investors for ₱200,000. The purchasers received a clear title to a thoroughly improved property. It was the first transaction of the kind the Japanese made in the Davao district.

At this time Captain Burchfield might have made his first visit to Kentucky since leaving there to come to the Philippines. Life had quickened in America; towns had taken on an urban aspect; the friends of old were not the friends of the present; each had only a moment's time and then went scurrying off in pursuit of a bargain where he coveted a profit.

It was all quite bewildering to Captain Burchfield. His habitat was the open border, where men had time to indulge real friendship and help one another. He had not disposed of all his Davao property, so he didn't go to Kentucky. Instead he turned back to Davao and developed another plantation, 30 miles eastward across the gulf from the town. He incorporated under the name of the Piso Coconut and Cattle Ranch, Inc., and went steadily about developing—pouring back into extensions the profits from sales of crops and cattle. Moros again assisted him; they were his workmen, and as at Daliao so at Piso, he taught them how to manage yokes of steers, which he worked four to the American plow to put the fields into proper tilth for seeding to Manila hemp and coconuts.

✓The Japanese did well in Davao, as they are doing today. Captain Burchfield's new place was soon envied him. New-coming Japanese made him an offer for all his holdings, his home in Davao, his plantation at Piso, his store in town and his cattle herds. It was a tempting offer, and Captain Burchfield was no longer a young man; so the offer of the Japanese was accepted. Captain Burchfield brought the money with him to Manila and bought the Luneta Hotel which he struggled with for two years. It is a good hotel, but the venerable Captain Jim cut a somewhat incongruous figure behind the desk. The hotel was large, but too confining for him; it would have been no more than a blur on the gigantic shoulders of Mount Apo.

Things didn't fit Captain Jim in Manila and he didn't fit into things. One morning at the hotel a woman came down to breakfast complaining about her room. It was rather the last straw for Captain Jim.

"Lady," he said, "no one asked you to take that room and no one asked you to keep it. You are out of it now. You've got as far as the office: keep right on going and please both of us!"

He himself did not keep going long in Manila, not that he lost much money. But he honed for Davao and something practical to do. In 1920 he went back and bought from the estate of P. C. Libby the plantation he converted into the Taloma Plantation Co., Inc., which he still owns and which is without question one of the most flourishing plantations in the orient. It comprises 367 hectares; it has 1200 coconuts on it and the remainder of the land is in Manila hemp, good old *Musila textiles*, the classic commodity that first enticed New England clippers into far eastern trade, and nearly a century of American business in the Philippines prior to the occupation in 1898.

The plantation is within twenty minutes automobile ride from Davao, lying along the lower slopes of Mount Apo. Captain Burchfield has established an irrigation system for the entire tract. ✓Waterpower installations here and there, at convenient points, strip the fiber from the hemp stalks, the work of preparing the petioles and

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stripping and baling the fiber being done by Japanese. All the hemp leaves the plantation through Captain Burchfield's warehouse; the volume averages 600 piculs a month; Captain Burchfield's income is quite satisfactory, very satisfactory if it comes to that.

That courting on horseback back yonder in Kentucky won for the gallant trooper of those days the girl who could and did make him happy. The border man could go no distance she was not willing to go also; so early as 1900 she came out to Davao and made a home for her husband. But years have passed, five years more than a score, in fact, and a cottage in Palo Alto suits her better now. It is not far, only 20 days or so across the Pacific, and Captain Jim can travel when he will. Their son, David, returned from education in a business course in the United States, lives in Davao and is beginning his career by running a general store. There is another store on the plantation: there is plenty for father and son to do both in town and on the farm. But not too much, nor with any particular hurry: life is not dreadfully exacting in the Philippines.

Captain Jim advises young Americans of today to do as he did twenty-five years ago, go to Davao and work out their fortune. Each can get a homestead of 24 hectares. Each can purchase 100 hectares. In short, each can acquire either by purchase or lease all the land he requires for a sizable plantation, the cost by purchase being about two dollars an acre. With determination and a little money, any healthy young American may do for himself in Davao what Captain James L. Burchfield has done. "It is," says Captain Jim, "only the application

of common sense to a perfectly obvious problem. For example, cattle. I was the first breeder to import Indian bulls and cross them with native cows. My neighbors lifted their eyebrows, for the bulls cost me \$300 apiece. Two years later the neighbors were swaping me three heifers for one two-year-old grade bull. The fellow going into a proposition like Davao must use his own judgment. He can listen to the talk, but his final decisions must be his own."

Captain Jim is now 69 years old. He says he would have no success dodging automobiles in American cities, where he gets homesick, while out in the towns and the country districts, as well as in the cities, no one sees far enough to find subjects for conversation interesting to him. Davao suits him, so back he goes to Davao with the expectation of rounding out a century.

**Pittsburgher Finds Davao Bonanza Country—Volunteer Soldiering Means to Competence**

David Jacobson of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, made no mistake in responding to the call of his country and enlisting in the 44th United States Volunteers to come to the Philippines in 1901, when the question of the insurrection against America was to be settled. When he came to the islands he was a high private in the rear ranks, as the boys say; and now he is one of the more substantial planters of Davao, the owner of a plantation of 300 hectares, 750 acres, and the master of his destiny. As a soldier he was a member of Company L, 44th Infantry, U. S. V., commanded by Captain (now Judge) A. S. Crossfield, who himself has plantation interests in Davao—an avocational activity aside from his career as a judge after leaving the Army and his subsequent position as a member of the Manila bar.

Jacobson owns Tagdangua Plantation Company, Inc., capital, P35,000. Eighty hectares of the plantation are in hemp; there are 3000 coconuts palms, 1000 of which are in bearing and producing 200

piculs of copra annually. Coconuts are planted about 120 to the hectare; on Tagdangua 25 hectares are in coconuts. It is seen that nearly two-thirds of the place is still to be planted up, which can easily be financed from present earnings. In other words, the turning point has been passed. Jacobson has a competence now, while his place is the equivalent of a fortune.

The monthly yield of Tagdangua averages 120 piculs of high-grade hemp and 15 piculs of first class copra. It is not all profit; the labor payroll is around P3000 a month, a tidy sum distributed regularly to a small community, with wages per man from P1.20 to P2.50 per day. Managing a plantation is strictly business, the question is to make, one year with another, a reasonable percentage above cost of operation. Jacobson does this, although put to the expense of bringing in workmen from Cebu and other provinces, which costs about P35 per man. Jacobson has less advantage from the services of indigenous labor than do some of the other planters, though




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