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The Panama Canal cost $350 million and took 11 years to finish the 50-mile waterway of lakes, locks and dams.

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**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**


**Transcript**

Remembering the First Panama Canal Treaty

JOHN HART: This Panama Canal has been a fountainhead of American emotions since it was begun over 70 years ago. Actually, the French were there before us, trying to build a canal in what was then the Provence of Panama in the country of Colombia. But they ran into all kinds of trouble and abandoned the idea. So then President Teddy Roosevelt tried to make the same arrangement with the country of Colombia, but they dragged their feet. The United States became impatient, and Roosevelt encouraged the Province of Panama to secede from Colombia. And when it did, he signed the original Panama Treaty, the Canal Treaty, which is being replaced, or will be replaced if it is indeed ratified by the two countries, the one that’s being signed tonight. And he signed it incidentally, not with the leaders of the new republic, but with a Frenchman who was appointed to represent them in Washington, and the Frenchman signed that treaty before the new leaders of the new republic even got off the train and before they saw it. So, the revolution in this Province of Panama is what got us control in the first place of the canal. The revolution succeeded immediately, protected by the American Navy offshore. President Theodore Roosevelt recognized the new Republic of Panama three days later. Roosevelt had a signed treaty when Panama was two weeks old. Where the French had already tried and failed to build a canal, defeated by mismanagement, the jungle and disease, the Americans were determined to succeed. The fight against malaria and yellow fever became an American legend. So did the construction of the canal. Americans considered it part of their manifest destiny, for their ingenuity and engineering to succeed. It did, even though it cost over 5,000 lives to accidents and disease, $350 million, and 11 years to finish the 50-mile waterway of lakes, locks and dams. In 1914, President Wilson pushed the button to remove the last land barrier between the two oceans. What Teddy Roosevelt called the highway of civilization was open.