

Wrigley's Will Ship Yucatan Chicle Direct To Santa Cruz

From the Yucatan peninsula to Santa Cruz.

That's the direct route planned by the William Wrigley Jr. company to ship raw chicle direct from the sapodilla trees on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico and Central America to their gum manufacturing plant in Santa Cruz.

Under the proposed schedule, the chicle will be flown from the jungle forests to San Jose, Guatemala, and then transported by ship to the World Trade center in San Francisco and by truck to the Santa Cruz plant.

In the past, chicle has been shipped from the Yucatan to New Orleans and then to Chicago, where it was condensed into bricks before being shipped to Santa Cruz.

The chicle was condensed in order to reduce the surface size and retard oxidation.

The raw chicle can be handled with the present chicle grinding equipment at the new Wrigley plant.

Vice President R. R. Holcomb of the Wrigley company, who is making the arrangements to provide for the direct chicle freight transportation to Santa Cruz said that the program will make the Wrigley western production plant more independent and reduce transportation time and costs in getting chicle to the local plant.

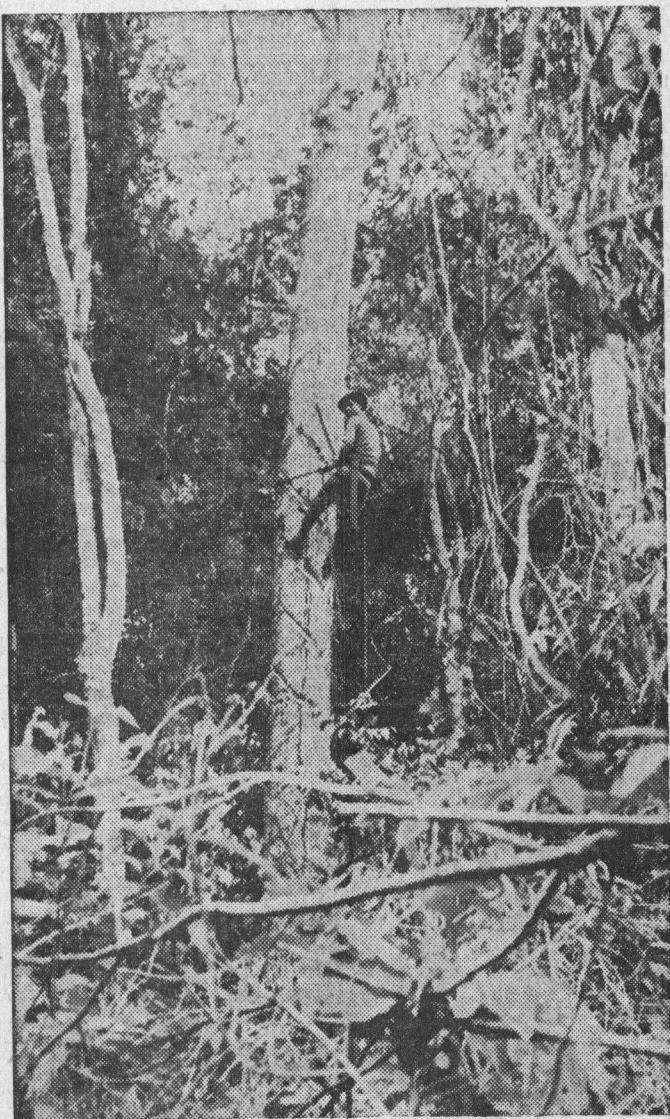
The company has a request pending before freight carriers and the ICC for approval of their program.

Chicle, one of several raw gums used in the manufacture of chewing gum, is a natural product of the jungles of Mexico and Central America.

In its primary state, it is in the form of latex (milk) of the achras sapote (sapodilla) tree, which is found in abundance in the Yucatan peninsula. It is called "cheek-lay" by the natives.

The tree yields the latex when it is tapped by a "chiclero," who

Cuts From Herringbone Pattern



The chiclero makes his cuts into the sapodilla tree in a herringbone pattern to obtain the latex. The chiclero must be

careful not to cut too deep for the latex comes from the bark and must not be contaminated by the gum of the tree.

uses a machete—a broad knife about 18 inches long.

On arriving at the tree to be tapped, the chiclero fastens a small canvas bag (known as a "bolsa") to the trunk by hanging it by a cord onto a peg driven into the bark. The first incision is made just above the bolsa, and the chiclero continues to make incisions, in a herringbone pattern, as he ascends the tree.

In order to climb the tree, he encircles the tree and his waist with the loop of a long rope, bracing his body against the rope, his feet against the trunk. Some chicleros use spurs (see accompanying picture), while others prefer to work in bare feet. While the chiclero works upward, the fluid latex, which exudes immediately upon tapping, flows downward following the course of the zigzag or herringbone canal directly into the bolsa.

The chiclero must use great care in using his machete lest he cut the rope that supports him and he fall to the ground and almost certain injury.

The latex flows for about 24 hours, after which it is collected by the chiclero, transferred to a larger bag and transported to camp by mule, the only means of transportation in the "bush" country.

However, once in camp, modern transportation methods take over and the latex is flown to market by airplane.

Each Saturday all of the collected latex is boiled to permit it to coagulate and be converted into chicle. The latex is about half water and half solids with the coagulation resulting from boiling off about 40 per cent of the water. It is then placed into molds of size and shape convenient for packing in bales. It hardens when cooled prior to shipping to the states.

The chicleros are Mayan Indians.

In about 800 A. D., some ca-

the roads, cities and temples and the Mayans vanished as a race.

About the middle of the last century when North Americans first became interested in chicle and found where it was available, the former area of the Mayans was inhabited by only a handful of wild Indians. They lived crudely by whatever livelihood could be gained from the encompassing jungle.

It is interesting to remember that they chewed the coagulated latex of the sapote or sapodilla tree.

Today, their principal livelihood is in the production of chicle, and while their life would be a great hardship to the average North American, the Mayans prefer it to any other mode of living they know.

The Mayans are a resourceful people who, with a machete and a rifle, are almost self-sustaining.

Through the development of the chicle industry, they now have many modern conveniences including schools, hospitals, medical care, clothing and transportation. They are by nature a clean people and take great pride in their personal appearance.

On the occasions when a bush pilot is forced to dump his load of chicle into the jungle on his trips from the chicle camps to civilization, the Indians frequently go out and bring the chicle to market over circuitous, treacherous routes through the jungle.

Two outstanding Mayan calamity overcame the Mayan civilization, although to this day, scientists have not been able to learn what happened. Their cities and temples were abandoned, jungle grew over and hid

Getting Latex From Sapodilla Tree



A Mayan chiclero taps a sapodilla tree in the Yucatan to get latex for chicle, a basic ingredient in gum. The William

Wrigley Jr. company is now making plans to ship the chicle direct to Santa Cruz from Central America. In the above picture, the Mayan is just starting

to ascend the tree, making the cut into the bark. The latex drains into the bolsa bag seen near the foot of the tree.

munities have been uncovered during the present century by North American and Mexican archeologists. They are Chichen-Itza and Uxmal, both not far from

the city of Merida, capital of the state of Yucatan in Mexico. The largest temple uncovered is at Uaxactun, in Peter, Guatemala. Thus, today, the survivors of

a once great American civilization are providing the basic resources for a modern North American industry — chewing gum.