

Notes of a Trip Through the Everglades

-BY-

EDWARD HELTZEL KUNKEL

SECOND PAPER

SINCE writing my last article for *The Tropic Magazine* I have made several prospecting trips through the state. In this article I will tell about one of them.

This trip, from Fort Lauderdale to Lakeport on the western shore of Lake Okeechobee was made in company with Mr. Herbert Shimp and his wife on their boat "Lakeport." When we arrived at the locks, we found the dam partly completed and the water raised some, which was a great help in navigation for quite a distance above the dam. We found the 'glades pretty well covered with water for a distance of about thirty miles above the locks. Part of this could have been caused by the dam, but for about twenty miles it was running into the canal from the 'glades.

As we sailed around Lake Okeechobee we found that it would have been impossible to get within many rods of the shore with a boat. In my opinion, if Lake Okeechobee is to be kept navigable there will have to be a lock, close to the lake, in every canal, and several below if the canals are to be made navigable.

With the canals at their present depth, if they are dammed so as to raise the water high enough for boats drawing three or four feet it will bring the water level almost to the surface of the land in the lower portion of the 'glades. It will be satisfactory for navigation, but how about the intermediate land between the pine land off the coast and the

high land around the lake? Occasionally during a dry spell it might be farmed with a hoe, but never until the canals are considerably deeper than they are now, can we expect the low 'glades to be drained sufficiently to permit farming with mules or horses. Before this is possible the water level will have to be dropped from three to four feet so that the land can pack sufficiently. This is, of course, the intention of the state; and as soon as our canals are dredged to the required depth—ten feet—and the locks put in, then we will have both navigable canals and well drained land.

Lake Okeechobee is the second largest body of fresh water entirely in the United States. When out in the middle of it one can well imagine he is out in the Atlantic Ocean, as no land can be seen in any direction. It is hard to believe by simply looking at the map that Florida has such a beautiful body of water within her boundaries.

Some time after we entered the lake we passed land which the captain told us was called Observation Island. From the distance it appeared to be about a hundred acres in extent. A little later we could begin to see the tops of trees and soon were in full view of what is known as Lakeport beach. It is a nice sandy beach about forty miles in length and we were told that there was a nice little settlement of about forty families a little farther back.

Well, we soon landed and I had



On the Shore of Lake Okechobee.

scarcely set my feet on the dock when I heard that there was to be a baseball game that afternoon! The Lakeport boys were to play the fishermen. In a few minutes I heard another surprising sound, apparently in the weeds near the dock. It sounded familiar. Soon two automobiles came up the road at the rate of thirty miles an hour—which explained the noise.

We found after getting in the car that the loam, sand and muck is so well settled and compact that when the growth of weeds is cleared off an automobile can go over it anywhere.

Mr. Shimp informed us that the business part of Lakeport was about three-fourths of a mile back from the lake, and that most of the beautiful lots near the lake front were intended for residence sites. I could not understand why they went back so far when there were such beautiful building sites along the shore. The muck here is from five to seven feet above the water. When I came to the town I found out why the first settlers went back a little to build. I am not exaggerating when I say that it is one of the most beautiful places in the state. The soil is sandy loam with a red sand and clay subsoil.

The country is level and almost as smooth as a board, and the grass is the finest in the state for fattening cattle. I saw many cattle grazing and they all looked well. I understand that over twenty thousand head have been shipped from this locality in the past few months.

One of the most beautiful attractions of the place are the palms. They make a good shade and yet are tall enough to allow the air to circulate freely. The country is covered with groups of them. As the town was only started last December and scarcely any of the settlers had heard of it before last October, they have not had time to do any great amount of planting. They are at present plowing up large tracts for fall planting, and I have been told that experiments have proved that all kinds of "truck" will grow to perfection without fertilizer. I have no doubt that this is true, as I have seen it proven in other places around the lake.

The only citrus trees I saw were oranges and lemons which were planted by stockmen some twenty or thirty years ago. The oranges were the sweet seedling variety and were heavily loaded and in fine condition.

With the
growing
in select
that thi

Lakeport
and hot
for a se
be read
settlers
teresting
develop
beautiful
body of

This
railroad
are b
have
most
them
afraid
live
a sav
is cu



Tenting Among the Palms

With the experience I have had in growing grapefruit and oranges, and in selecting soil for them, I must say that this looks good to me.

Lakeport has a store, post office and hotel. Lumber is on the ground for a school and a church which will be ready by fall, when many more settlers are expected. It will be interesting to watch the growth and development of this little town in a beautiful location on a beautiful body of water.

This place will probably have a railroad in a short time. The camps are busy, graders are at work. They have the right kind of settlers there, most of them young people, many of them college graduates—but not afraid of hard work. Most of them live in tents as yet, but they have a sawmill and as fast as the lumber is cut out they are building houses.

They all turn out and help newcomers get settled, and try to make them feel at home.

Mr. Shimp's bungalow was not yet completed, the hotel was crowded, so he turned his tent over to us, while his wife and he were provided for by good neighbors.

A town that is started with this kind of material and with its advantages of soil, climate and location, will go up like a mushroom. It will not be long before it will be a great city, and there will be fine orange and grapefruit groves to bring wealth to its citizens.

I have been called a dreamer by some of the readers of my other article, but are not realities always preceded by dreams? Besides, "what would we do in this world of ours, were it not for the dreams ahead!"

