

The Story of the Everglades

How This Great Territory Was Explored and Opened Up--Who the Men Are That Did the Work.

CONTRIBUTED

THIS Everglades matter is new. The encyclopedias know nothing about it. Neither do the officials of the Federal government.

Usually, when I want to know facts about farms, I write to the Honorable James Wilson, the genial head of the Department of Agriculture. But when I wrote to him for facts in relation to the Everglades, I got nothing. His answer was short and emphatic. He said:

"There is no publication by this Department that gives information in regard to the Everglades."

The only way to get the facts, I found, was to go to the people who had actually been through the Everglades, and who knew what work was now being done there.

The expedition of Mr. J. E. Ingraham, in March, 1892, across the Everglades, was the first of which any record has been kept that we have any knowledge of. Mr. Ingraham was then president of the South Florida Railway Company, now a part of the Atlantic Coast Line Ry.; he is now a vice-President of the Florida East Coast Ry. Co. His party consisted of twenty-one men. They started from Fort Myers on March 1st, 1892. They entered the Everglades at Fort Shackleford. They ran a line of levels from Fort Shackleford to Miami. They took soundings of the muck at frequent intervals. They observed the physical conditions of the 'Glades; took numbers of photographs. The water being low they waded the whole distance, some fifty-seven miles, arriving at Miami April 7th, 1892. They found that the highest point in the 'Glades was twenty feet above sea level; that the flow was 3-10th of a foot to the mile towards the southeast; the depth of muck varied from two to twelve feet with pockets deeper than twelve feet. They were three weeks in making the fifty-seven miles, averaging about a mile and seven-tenths daily when in the Everglades proper. The party had perfect health, although they endured great hardships, particularly from lack of food. The time consumed being ten days longer than anticipated and provided for, hence rations had to be cut down to the lowest possible limit.

Mr. J. W. Newman was the engineer of the party, and had charge of the survey. He afterwards was made superintendent of the State drainage works of the Everglades.

Mr. Ingraham, from information gained on this expedition, became convinced of the feasibility of draining the Everglades, under a practical and systematic plan, but has never thought it fair or just to force the cost of drainage upon five counties of the State while the whole State participates

in irrigation should go hand in hand; that ample lateral canals will be essential to the drainage of these lands in wet seasons and for irrigation in dry ones; that under such conditions these lands will become highly desirable for cultivation of sugar cane, rice, corn, oats, potatoes and other great staple crops. Mr. Ingraham says that the great land companies interested in the Everglades have stated that they will provide sugar refineries, rice mills, etc., to handle such crops to the best advantage.



Young Tomatoes on Okcechobee Road Land in Palm Beach County

in the profits, but when the drainage work began to assume such shape that the development of the whole State might suffer severely, and be greatly retarded unless the drainage system be perfected and completed promptly and within a reasonable time, Mr. Ingraham used all the influence he could bring to bear to secure the full and complete cooperation of the great land companies, interested, with the drainage board and thus help to complete this great work.

Mr. Ingraham has always taken the stand that Lake Okcechobee should be treated as a great fresh water reservoir; that the waters flowing from Lake Okcechobee should be controlled by locks, at proper intervals, so that drainage and ir-

Mr. Ingraham says, too, that he is confident that alfalfa will grow upon these lands successfully if care is taken in the planting; that he has seen some fine alfalfa grown on muck lands near Yamato.

Mr. Ingraham has made numerous other expeditions into the 'Glades, notably that of August, 1892, when he went up to the head or source of every river and creek in the Everglades emptying into the Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic ocean from Punta Rassa to Jupiter.

After Ingraham, the next prominent man who took up the cause of the Everglades was W. S. Jennings, of Jacksonville. It was he who originated the first public document on the drainage question. That was

in 1893, when Florida. He I interviewed and got him

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in 1893, when he was the Governor of Florida. He started the ball rolling, so I interviewed him in his Jacksonville office and got him to tell the story.

"The way I came to take an interest in the drainage of the Everglades is certainly a story," said the ex-Governor. "In 1902 I had to go to California to open the State Fair. I had never been West before, and I was struck with the vast stretch of dry, arid desert that lies beyond the Mississippi river. Never before had I appreciated the full value of water. As the train went on, mile after mile, day after day, through waterless plains, my eyes were opened to the possibilities of the Everglades.

"In Arizona I saw what the Government was doing to irrigate the land and make it fit for settlement. To my surprise, I learned that the cost of irrigation was enormous, rising as high as \$25 and \$40 an acre. Tens of millions of public money were being

expended to make the land as populous and as prosperous as the north is today."

The third man to take up the cause of the Everglades was Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, the most picturesque politician in Florida. He had been a filibusterer in the days of the Cuban Revolution, and after the Spanish War he picked up the Everglades matter as a sort of political adventure. It is one of the laws of Florida that a Governor can not be elected for a second term, so, instead of electing Jennings to finish the drainage enterprise, the voters of Florida marked their ballots for Broward.

In 1905, Broward, the ex-filibusterer, became the Governor of Florida. He tried at once, in his blunt, aggressive way, to carry out the plan of drainage that had been proposed by Jennings. He put four dredges at work, and hired several experts to make a survey of the flooded region. But his work was mainly of a

tion that aroused enthusiasm from all sides.

Bolles talked big and acted big. He looked at the whole undertaking in a comprehensive way. He was perhaps the first man to see the tremendous business possibilities in the enterprise. He saw such a future for the Everglades that all obstacles dwindled into insignificance.

He not only established harmony. He supplied money to carry on the drainage in a large way. He bought 400,000 acres of Everglade land from private companies, and 500,000 acres more from the State. For this State land he handed over a cool million in cash, with the stipulation that half of it was to be spent for drainage. And also, he took his land in alternate sections, so that the State would reap as much benefit as he would.

Next, in order to get an actual community of farmers established, he sold 180,000 acres in ten-acre lots. This he did through an agency established in Kansas City, as he had found that the farmers of the Southwest were quick to buy land in a region where water was sure and cheap.

I had not been able to interview Broward. He was absent in the far South on an electioneering tour. But I found Bolles in his Jacksonville office—a man of quiet force and decisiveness. When I asked him for the story of the Everglades from his point of view, he said:

"Well, it all came about because of a spell of sickness that I had in 1908. I had gone to Key West to recuperate. While there, I saw the Everglades with my own eyes, and at once I realized that this was the biggest business opportunity of my life. I went to see ex-Governor Jennings, who soon made me a complete convert to the drainage proposition. So I got busy, bought some of the land, worked out a plan of co-operation, and now three large drainage canals are being dug. One is 20 miles long, one is 14 and one is 8. I expect to see the whole job finished in two years."

"What previous experience have you had," I asked, "to fit you for carrying out this enterprise?"

"This is the most important piece of work that I have ever attempted," replied Mr. Bolles. "But I have handled other land projects of considerable importance. For instance, I bought 165,000 acres of land in Colorado. It was arid land, and most people thought it was worthless. I put in a \$300,000 irrigation plant, and sold the land in small farms. Today that land supports more than two thousand people; and there is a little town on it called Blanca.

"Next I bought a larger tract—300,000 acres in Oregon. It was as useless a piece of desert as any man ever set eyes on. Nothing grew on it that was of any value. But I spent \$350,000 in building a system of



Tomatoes Three Weeks on Virgin Pine Land Along the Okeshobee Road in Palm Beach County

spent, and the result was not worth the cost. Why not, I thought, spend money for drainage instead of for irrigation?

"At that time the Everglades question was all in confusion. The State did not even have a clear title to its land. It did not know how much it owned. There was no map and no money and no general interest in the situation. So I put several men to work, secured some facts, and prepared a message to the Legislature. This made a foundation for others to work on, and today, I am happy to say, the enterprise of draining the Everglades has begun.

"The State has now \$1,600,000 available for the Drainage Fund. Able engineers are in charge of the work. The question of title has been cleared up. And in the near future we may see the south of Flor-

ida as populous and as prosperous as the north is today."

pioneering nature. He was a fighter rather than an empire builder, and he had little or no money in the treasury to work with. What was needed was a practical business man, with the nerve and the capital to push the enterprise forward.

Two years ago this much-needed man arrived. He came from Colorado and his name was Richard J. Bolles. He had money—several millions. He had nerve—forty years experience in Wall Street and Cripple Creek. And he had confidence—twenty-three years in Colorado had taught him not to be afraid of too much water.

He was a harmonizer, not a fighter. He went to work by making friends, not enemies. He rounded up all the people who had vested interests in the Everglades, brought them in touch with the State officials, and made a big, fair-play proposi-

irrigation, and that region is now beginning to look green and prosperous. These two experiments prove to me that the Everglades undertaking will be a magnificent success. The people of our country are land-hungry; and if the land is made ready for them, they are quick to swarm over it. More land for the people—that is the keynote of national progress."

So, to put the story of the Everglades into a sentence, we may say that J. E. Ingraham was the first to explore the whole region; Governor Jennings originated the policy of drainage; Governor Broward made it a popular issue, and R. J. Bolles had the money and the enterprise to make the undertaking a practical success.

The Everglades will be drained. There is no doubt of it. The work is now in charge of Engineer J. O. Wright, who made his mark as a drainage expert in Illinois and

TEN acres in Florida will work while you sleep.

along the Mississippi. And the whole matter is under the supervision of the big five of the State government—the Governor, Attorney-General, Treasurer, Controller and Secretary of Agriculture.

To the average American citizen, not in Florida, this project means that in a few years the United States will have a three-million-acre hot-house, which will be able to supply fruits and vegetables in the heart of winter.

THE PRAIRIES OF FLORIDA

(By Frederic I. Haskin.)

NOT one man in a thousand will see the Everglades for the first time without an exclamation of surprise. The name suggests to the minds of most persons a hazy idea of a tangled tropical swamp, a jungle concealing alligators and poisonous reptiles, a breeding place for insect pests, an immense stagnant pool with a miasmatic and death-dealing breath.

Expecting such a picture, what a surprise it is to come suddenly into a great open space, for all the world like an Iowa prairie, and to be told: "This is the Everglades."

To the eye, from the vantage of the rear end of a Pullman, the region has the appearance of a Western plain.

The water itself is a mystery. It is wonderfully clear, it is pure as crystal, it is palatable, and there is no place where it stands long enough to become stagnant. Perhaps the greatest wonder of the wonderful Everglades, is the absence of mosquitoes.

The Everglades, grass-covered, fresh-watered, healthful, is a very different place from the great swamp of the imagination of so many people.

The Beauty and Charm of the Everglades

By DR. JOHN N. MACGONIGLE

(Century Magazine, February, 1905.)

THE hammocks of the Everglades are covered with luxuriant verdant forests. The live oaks and bays are present in large numbers, interspersed with wild cucumber, wild lemon and wild orange. The papaya, custard apple and the prickly-ash are of frequent occurrence, and here and there, governed by the size and elevation of the hammocks are the cabbage palmetto and the pine. Wild rubber trees are also found in some localities growing to enormous size. Throughout the region there is an enormous growth of vines. The morning glory and honeysuckle attain great size and are everywhere. The wild fig, which fastens itself about the massive trunk of live oak or bay, lives its cannibal life until the supporting tree trunk has been destroyed.

There is a remarkable profusion of wild flowers. Water-lilies and spider-lilies abound. Orchids are found in great numbers and are of great beauty. On many of the hammocks grow giant ferns, the fronds of which measure ten feet in length.

Animal life is also abundant. Deer are found on both the eastern and western edges, and now and then a bear is seen. Otters, too, are plentiful.

The southern edge of the 'Glades was until recently a great breeding place for the egret, the ibis and the heron. The limpkin, a large duck about the size of the brant, and the Everglade kite are characteristic of the region, while the large waders are found in moderate numbers.

Fish such as bass, gar and perch inhabit the streams. The Everglade terrapin, not unlike his aristocratic namesake of Maryland, and a flat soft-shelled turtle, both edible, are fairly plentiful.

The commonly accepted idea that the Everglades teem with insects is a mistaken one, due, doubtless, to the generally received impression that the area is a great swamp. Free as it is from stagnation in either water or air, it furnishes few breeding places for insect life. Mosquitoes are not found in the interior of the 'Glades.

Seen in the perspective, the Everglades resemble far-reaching prairies, with here and there distinct clumps of trees outlining "hammocks." This level prairie-like effect has a peculiar calm to the eye. The sunshine sparkles over it all; drifting clouds cast their few somber shadows on the vista; and the soft airs blow gently, never with

the threat of the fierce and biting winter chill of the far-away north.

For the climate of the Everglades is almost faultless. It is singularly equable, showing no extremes in heat or cold and not subject to sudden change. Even a "norther," coming out of the region of ice and snow, is soon softened to the milder temperature; and the heat of summer is made genial, though the mercury may be well up in the eighties, by the ozonized air which is everywhere in the 'Glades.

The year is divided into the dry and rainy seasons. The latter may be roughly spoken of as including June and September, although sudden light showers in limited areas are likely at any season.

A lifetime might be spent in the region and no malaria discovered. Pure air that moves in gentle breezes (direct from the Atlantic and the Gulf) is the perfect assurance of health, as evinced in the fine physique, splendid coloring and athletic figures of the natives, who now have a monopoly of as fine a climate as there is on earth.

The Everglade rivers are not matched for beauty anywhere else in the world. Their beauty is unmatched because it is entirely of its own kind. All the rivers of the 'Glades find their way into the sea. In some cases they run directly through the rocky channels which their age-long floods have worn. Sometimes they make their way through miles of meandering curves. Near the sea the shores are lined with mangrove trees, which reach out like giant spiders, throwing their roots into the water until swaying acres of forest line the river's edge. The mangrove gives way to its next of kin, the cocoa plum, a tree of similar habit and growth. Farther up the cypress fills the shore line and lilies come into view. The whole voyage is a scene of shifting greens—the dark olive of the mangrove, the lemon-like foliage of the cocoa plum, and the lighter green of the cypress, touched into life by vivid sunshine, making a scene of unique beauty.

No descriptions of the physical features of the Everglades can possibly convey any true idea of their beauty and charm. Both are indescribable and indefinable, yet the one is as clear as the sunshine which brings it into view, and the other as keen as the touch of awakened love.

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