

LAKE OKEECHOBEE

LAKE OKEECHOBEE is quite shallow, the deepest places not exceeding 22 feet at low water, and the average depth being about 12 feet. In the southern portions it contains several islands, some of which are two or three miles in extent, very low and swampy, and covered with a dense growth of custard apples, scrub oak, myrtle, and in some places a few cypress all interwoven with a network of vines.

The shores of the lake are not well defined, except on the East Coast, where there is a stretch of 25 miles of sandy beach, with well-defined banks. The rest of the coast-line is flat and marshy, and is covered with a thick growth of vegetation. As the lake rises, its waters inundate this flat country, and the shore line moves out in some places several miles, so that the area of the lake is much larger at high than at low water.

Even the bed of the lake on the south and the west side is covered with a growth of aquatic plants, that impedes the progress of a boat, and makes navigation impossible in some places. The bed of the lake, except in the southern part, is a fine, hard sand, with a comparatively smooth and even surface. The soundings disclose no deep holes or channels, and no rock is found except in the vicinity of Chancy Bay.

The lake has no tide, but its surface is easily affected by the wind, and it is not uncommon to find the water at least one foot higher on one side of the lake than on the other, due wholly to the influence of wind pressure. The water in the lake, when not agitated, is clear and wholesome, and is regarded by hunters as extremely healthful.—By J. O. Wright, Engineer in Charge of the Drainage of the Everglades.

THE RUSH TO THE SWAMP LANDS

THE swamp lands form the greater part of our agricultural lands that are still open for settlement, and they are the hope and the main resource of the millions from the cities now turning to the country for homes and a livelihood.

The nation is land mad, but it is a magnificent madness, for it is the assertion of the instinct for freedom, for liberty, and the right to a good living, which is born in every American.

A few years ago our farm boys were flocking to the cities in thousands, deserting the plow and leaving the crops to be gathered by the inefficient. But as the cost of living has gone up, as the control of business has centered in vast corporations, as the life of man in the city has come to be more and more guided and controlled for him, there has been a revulsion and young men and young women turn to the country again, seeking independent livelihood.

No trust has yet controlled the farmer. The man on his land, no matter what tribute he may pay for his woollens, has still the foundation of freedom under him.

Two great movements, both allied under reclamation, have fostered this tendency. Irrigation and swamp drainage have pushed it forward, because they have made farming without the old drudgery possible.

On irrigated land, with its continual sunshine, its regulated water, its fertile soils, ten acres makes a sufficient farm, and gives the owner comfort. On swamp land, with

its rich, often peaty soil, its nearness to market, its heavy rainfall and certain drainage, twenty to forty acres make an ample farm. On swamp land as on irrigated land, the method of cultivation is such as to make the calling of a farmer one of constant exercise of intelligence and skill—a profession. Small farms make community life possible; large profits from small tracts, the rural telephone, domestic water systems—all these go to provide a healthier and stronger home life for the upbringing of independent Americans.—John L. Matthews in Hampton's Magazine.

The Maligned Everglades

By WILLIAM TODD

CENTRAL AFRICA will always be "Darkest" Africa to the ignorant despite its broad sunny plains. The luxuriant growth of our Dismal Swamp will be forever "dismal" to those who have not seen its beauty, and for the same reason the Florida Everglades continues to be a "miasma swamp" because man has not taken the trouble to see for himself.

Those who love this rare garden hesitate to disapprove this misconception, it explains its solitude today and why it now remains one of the few spots in this land where one can be alone amid the beatitudes of nature.

The 'Glades were originally a shallow lake some seventy by one hundred and fifty miles with a coral rock bottom. Being shallow, grass gradually grew over it, tall, rich tropical grass that waves perpetually in a balmy breeze. The water moving toward the coast slowly wrought for itself winding channels through this meadow which today are lined with the rich purple of the floating hyacinth and peopled with bass. Contrary as it is to existing knowledge, this water is quite clear and safe to drink.

An elevation of something over thirty feet above tidewater gives a perceptible and sometimes strong current to the streams. Thus the Miami, draining the Everglades on the east, is a short but swift river and the Caloosahatchee, the main western outlet, is not to be negotiated in the rainy season except with a power

boat which can breast its deep, strong flow. Where the 'Glades proper approach the high land there is always an intervening stretch of high land prairie—"Savannahs" De Soto called them—back of which lies the timber growth. There are no mosquitoes in winter and strange to say few in summer compared to the coast. I have never heard this satisfactorily explained except that the larvae may thrive more prolifically in the brackish water of the salt water marshes.

The Great Landscape Gardener to ease the monotony of so much sameness in his meadow, dotted it with islets—hummocks they are called—heavy with tropical growth and plumed usually with one or two palmetto palms which rise smooth for thirty feet, and then burst into a bouquet of long waving branches. To give it color the birds came with feathers of every shade—the white heron, the blue heron, the white curlew, the pink curlew and his cousin, the bronze ibis with a design on his back like a turkish rug. There are every variety of wading bird from the sandpiper to the great blue heron, who stands five feet, and who can perforate one's skull with his bill, but he is gifted with a kindly disposition. In the winter time the ducks join this noisy throng.

Add to this many strange flowers of beautiful colors and fragrant perfumes and the picture of the much-maligned Everglades is complete.—Owling, March, 1908.

ALL the picturesque incidents of rapid growth which are suggested by the word "boom" have been for thirty years associated with the West. For the next twenty years the South is to be the country of quickly doubling population. And once started the South may easily go much farther than the West.

—Collier's, Editorial, January 22, 1910.