

On June 16th, accompanied by Mr. F. K. Ashworth, our civil engineer, and a crew of six men, I visited the Hopkins Tract, intending to lay off certain sections of the property for immediate sale, if physical conditions warranted or if not to determine as nearly as possible the cost of putting a limited area in shape to sell during the coming winter; to run preliminary lines for the Tamiami Railway; and to acquire at first hand a definite idea of what will have to be done to bring the Hopkins Tract into the market in the best and most inexpensive manner, and the classification of the various areas for development. The time selected was fortunate as we had both the spring tides and the rainy season to contend with, and can lay our plans with a full knowledge of the difficulties, some of which we could not have foreseen had we visited the Tract during the winter season. The following is a brief synopsis of my observations, during the three weeks of my stay on the property.

WATERWAYS.

In a launch drawing some 2 1/2 feet of water, I made trips to almost all of the inland bays, stopping at some dozen or more points, and found that there are a great number of excellent building sites which simply await improving and developing. A trip through these bays is a revelation to anyone, beautiful scenery, excellent cruising, and fine fishing.

LANDS BORDERING ON GULF OF MEXICO.

Some of our lands bordering on the Gulf have beaches and building sites, but on the whole mangrove extends down to the waters edge, directly back of which is a palm and palmetto prairie.

PRAIRIE LANDS BETWEEN GULF AND INLAND BAYS.

Between the land bordering on the Gulf and the water of the Gulf are these mangrove fringes, between these and the margin of the inland bays there are enormous prairies, with palm trees and clumps of palms, scattered here and there over this great acreage. The soil of these prairies is of unusual fertility and in my opinion will produce crops with little or no fertilizer. A great part of the acreage in the fall, winter, and spring seasons can be cultivated without draining, but to make the lands safe at all seasons, surface drains and ditches should be constructed, however, there are sufficient areas already available which would not necessitate any considerable drainage.

BUILDING SITES ON BAY.

As stated there are a number of shell mounds and elevated points for immediate building sites, the planting of groves, and the making of winter residences. These could be sold in their present condition without expenditure on our part.

LANDS BETWEEN INLAND BAYS AND TIMBER LANDS.

There exists an enormous prairie from the east margin of the inland bays to the timber lands further east. I am frank to say that I have never seen in all Florida better vegetable or trucking lands, large acreages could be utilized in its present condition for winter vegetable growing. This area, as a whole however, should have a system of surface drains which would create a necessary protection from extreme tides which occur. This area should be brought into cultivation as a whole by a progressive plan, selecting some given areas, and extending same as the land is needed for cultivation or as we made sale of same. The expense per acre would be so small, which added to first cost at which we could sell, by comparison would be the best and cheapest vegetable land in Florida.

PINELANDS.

I inspected the pine land on several portions of the tract. In the northern part of Twp. 54. S. R. 32 E. I saw some very fine pine timber land, but I examined more particularly the pine lands about the center of Twp. 55 S. R. 32 E. I reached this point by way of Lossmans River #5. The pine timber is less than two miles from the inland bays, the character of the soil is such as to lead me to believe it ideal for oranges, grapefruit, avocados, mangoes, and all other citrus and tropical fruit trees. While there are some outcroppings of rock on this pine land, there is so little rock as compared to Dade County rock soils, the fertility of the soil is so much greater, the protection from frost afforded by the Gulf of Mexico and the inland bays is so sure, that unquestionably the pine land of the Hopkins Tract will contain some of the best and no doubt, the largest fruit groves in Florida when proper transportation is provided. In addition to the adaptability of the lands for fruits and vegetables, it is my belief that Sisal Hemp can be and will be grown to perfection. Plenty of soil, just the proper amount of lime, soils never become too wet or dry, in fact ideal conditions for this valuable product. Potatoes, beans, egg plants, peppers, and some of Floridas best farm and garden crops can be grown successfully on these pine land soils. And as excellent artesian water, free from salt or strong sulphur, can be secured at an approximate depth of 400 feet, this affords to these soils cheap and sufficient irrigation, and as this advantage is not usual elsewhere in Florida where these crops are produced, the value of these lands can not be over estimated.

CYPRESS LANDS.

Much to my surprise and gratification I found the soil very rich and deep and elevated above the surrounding prairies and pine timberland. The soil in the cypress land was a rich, black, vegetable loam and its elevation fully as high as the surrounding lands except in the instance of natural drains or creeks; although it was the rainy season when I was on the land, I walked for hours among the cypress, there was no water standing on the ground except in the natural drains or creeks. The soil is so rich and fertile that fruit and vegetable crops can be grown on same without fertilizer. The opening of the natural drains and the taking care of the surface water caused by rain fall will be necessary. In addition to fruit and vegetables, I found that there was such a great number of "figs" or gum producing trees, plants and vines, that I believe that commercial rubber can be grown on these cypress lands to profit and perfection. The soil conditions are ideal, the climate is suited for its growth, hence I am now having the possibilities of profitable growing of this crop investigated, and if the reports are favorable, I believe it would pay us to immediately put experimental trees on the property.

MARL PRAIRIE LANDS.

These marl prairie lands occur between the strands of pine and cypress timber and while they show a rock outcropping at some points, they are generally free from surface rock for a depth of 1 to 4 feet. This is the character of soil on which the great tomato and vegetable crops of Dade County are now produced. With the added advantage and value that these soils on the Hopkins Tract have a great quantity of Humus or rotten vegetable matter incorporated in them, preventing clodding as is the case in other sections of Florida. While crops can be grown on this character of soil with very little or no rain, the fact that artesian water can be secured is a positive assurance for the growing of profitable crops on these lands.

TIMBER.

The cypress timber in the strands some time attain an enormous size and I think that Mr. S. J. E. Lucas, who cruised this land in 1907 gave accurate figures in fact, I took occasion to verify his estimates on several of the individual sections, and in each instance

his figures proved to be correct. In addition to the large cypress timber in Gator-hook, Sweetwater, Ganet, Robert's Lane, and Lossman's strands, there is a vast area of small cypress, between these larger strands of both pine and cypress timber, and while some of the cypress in these areas are large enough for milling, the smaller timber would well be utilized for barrel hoops, crate material, etc.

The pine timber is all good for naval stores, that is it will run turpentine when boxed, which is a valuable addition to its value for timber. The frontal lands also contain some very valuable hardwoods, i. e. red and black mangrove, etc. These timbers have proven excellent in the manufacture of furniture for the reason that they carry such a high polish. Among the large cypress there is also found considerable water oak, papash and red bay.

There are thousands of cords of button wood, which is the most valuable fuel wood in Florida, on the coastal lands of the property.

ARTESIAN WATER.

As already stated, Artesian water is found at approximately four hundred feet at Everglades and the stratification of rock is such as to lead one to conclude that strata will be found at a lesser depth further south. This artesian water is absolutely free from salt, has only a slight sulphur taste, an analysis proves it to be the best of drinking water. This water will be valuable for irrigation purposes because it can not only be used for underground irrigation, but, unlike most of the artesian waters of Florida, it can be sprayed on the most tender of growing vegetables without bad effect, but on the contrary fills every requirement for overhead irrigation.

CATTLE, HOGS AND OTHER STOCK RAISING.

It is hardly necessary for me to enlarge upon these valuable industries after one has read my description of this tract, because the natural conditions are ideal, and while the natural grasses will keep and feed what is known in Florida as range cattle, the soils are so well adapted to the cultivation of para, rhodes, cecil grasses and forage crops, which have proven so successful in Florida, that the raising of cattle, hogs, and other stock can be made a safe and sure industry on this tract of land.

SUGAR CANE.

No where in Florida can or has sugar cane been produced with the high percentage of sucrose as has been and can be grown on the Hopkins Tract. For over twenty years sugar cane has been grown without re-planting on the Watson place on the Chatham Bend River, and there are thousands and thousands of acres of land on this tract which will produce sugar cane to perfection, and in my opinion the percentage of sucrose is so high that commercial sugar can be produced which is not the usual case when sugar cane is produced in Florida.

FISHING.

The Gulf of Mexico and the inland bays provide the best fishing to be found in Florida waters, commercial fish as mullet, spanish mackerel and deep water fish; game fish, as tarpon are there in countless numbers, also saw fish, shark, etc.

HUNTING.

No doubt this property has been preserved to the hunter by reason of its peculiar geographical position more than any other section of Florida. Deer, turkey, quail, etc. are found in large numbers.