

The Tamiami Trail

Real Beginning of Reclamation Work in Everglades West of Miami

By LEONARD A. SLYE

LITTLE known to the great outside world, American ingenuity is slowly but surely conquering the last great frontier of our country—the Florida Everglades, comprising approximately 4,000,000 acres.

Although several canals have been dug from the Atlantic Ocean across the vast expanse to Lake Okeechobee (the second largest fresh water lake in America), which have lowered the water level in the prairies west of Miami about five feet, the greatest feat from which reclamation of the 'Glades is sure to radiate is the building of the Tamiami Trail from Miami to the west coast.

The highway in various stages of construction, after leaving Miami, touches the first settlement at Pinecrest, 46 miles due west, and the first town at Everglades, a distance of 75 miles. Beginning at Miami the Trail runs for 38 miles through muck lands intermingled with "fingers" of marl prairie which is claimed to be the richest land in the country. From Everglades, the line of the Trail runs in a northwesterly direction to Fort Myers, a total distance of 148 miles from Miami. From there it runs 144 miles to Tampa. The first point at which it touches the Gulf of Mexico is at Naples, where the broad white-sanded beaches are destined to rival those at Daytona Beach on the east coast.

Most people think of the Everglades as a vast swamp overgrown with thickly matted trees and vines, under which Seminole Indians paddle about in canoes and alligators and other reptiles splash about by the thousands. They are due

for a sudden surprise when they take a trip out the Tamiami Trail from Miami.

The strategic value of the Tamiami Trail can readily be seen when it is known that no highways cross the 'Glades from the east to the west coast, south of Lake Okeechobee, leaving a 120-mile wedge separating the two sections of the country. For this reason the west coast below Fort Myers and the extreme southern portion of the peninsula are little developed. Traffic from one side of the state to the other goes many miles out of the way to the north of Lake Okeechobee. Another highway is being



PART OF TRAIL IN COLLIER COUNTY

built around the southern tip of the lake but will not have the strategic value of the Tamiami Trail.

Railroads are already heading into the section and others are awaiting the opportunity. Likewise telephone companies, telegraph companies, developers, builders and farmers are watchful-waiting.

At present Miami has only one outlet by land to the north, of course not taking into consideration the entrance from the south where traffic is almost negligible, compared with the other direction. Another entrance from the west by way of the Tamiami Trail will mean much more than most people have believed. Hauling of merchandise from the west coast either by truck or by railroad will enable Miami shipping to miss the bottle-neck at Jacksonville, which has proven a serious hindrance at times during the last year.

Besides the importance of the Trail for its transportation value and as a nucleus for a great reclamation project,

the highway will be one of the most noted in the world for its method and soundness of construction. It will rank with the Overseas Railroad and highway (now under construction) to Key West, tunnels under mountains and rivers and other important engineering feats, because it is being built of rock, filled into excavations down to the solid rock strata which underlies the state of Florida, in the muck sections. The rock is sometimes filled in as much as fifteen feet deep.

A few words about the origination of the name, "Tamiami Trail," is interesting. At first the highway when proposed was designated "Miami to Marco Highway" or "Ocean to Gulf Boulevard." In 1917, Vance W. Helm, Miami realtor, and L. P. Dickey, secretary of the Tampa Board of Trade, coined the word "Tamiami"—Tampa to Miami, and presented it to the Dade County commissioners, through Eugene C. Stahl, who subsequently adopted the new name. Hence, the Tamiami Trail.

The first process in construction of the highway is the removing of the muck (partially decayed vegetable matter which has accumulated in the water for many centuries) which runs as much as six feet deep on the line of the Trail and twenty feet deep along Lake Okeechobee, and the canal is then filled in with rock blasted and scooped from a similar canal dug alongside.

Roads have been known to sink after construction over water-soaked lands, but this one should last indefinitely like the old Roman roads in Europe.

Like all really great projects, this one was long a fond dream in the minds of a few who knew that it could be carried



CLEARING FOR TRAIL IN MONROE



FORESTS IN MONROE COUNTY

THE MIAMI REALTOR

that the project was practical and Hobart Crabtree, county engineer, was asked to make a survey and sounding of the proposed route.

This survey was made in Seminole Indian canoes, paddled by Indians, headed by Jack Tigertail, Frank Cypress and Grover Doctor, who proved invaluable as guides in all the preliminary surveys. Captain Jaudon also went with the party and helped carry the surveyor's chains. Food and water were carried along in the canoes. The trip took about two weeks. The deepest water and muck encountered was six feet, which fact proved that the idea of building the cross-state highway was entirely practical.

In 1918 when the proposed route was changed, Captain Jaudon again went with the surveying party.

located, a dipper dredge started to work in a vast lake. The water line has since dropped five feet.

The first piece of work included the cutting of a drainage canal and building a passable road out thirty miles from Miami.

In 1918 it was found that more money was needed than at first anticipated, and another bond issue of \$75,000 was voted. Fifty thousand dollars of this was for carrying the Trail work to the Monroe County line and the remainder was to be used for building the Miami Canal Highway up the Miami River to the Pennsylvania Sugar Co. plantation and mills.

In 1923 another bond issue of \$125,000 was approved by the voters of Dade County and turned over to the state highway department for completing and improving the county's portion of the Trail.

The state has at present let a contract for hard-surfacing a 12-mile strip from Miami west, and is expected to let another contract in the near future. This work will include the widening of the surfaced highway to thirty feet.

Captain Jaudon says he is in favor of using the money now available for improving the road.

A STORY IN PICTURES

On the opposite page is a story in pictures of the building of the Tamiami Trail. No. 1, the original Everglades; No. 2, workmen boring preparatory to blasting; No. 3, taking the muck out of the first canal; No. 4, the first canal completed; No. 5, scooping up the rock from the bottom of one canal and piling it in a parallel canal; No. 6, leveling down the rock for the roadbed; No. 7, the roadbed; and No. 8, widening part of the first road built.



Capt. J. F. Jaudon

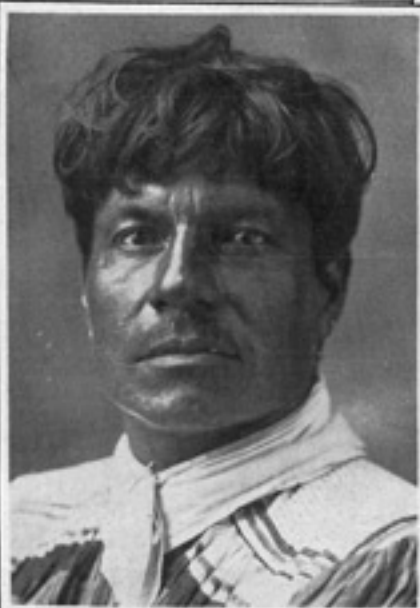
out, but were confronted by the skepticism of the great majority.

The sponsor of the Tamiami Trail is Captain J. F. Jaudon, Miami realtor and former county official, who has practically "lived" in the Everglades and has had his heart and soul in its reclamation for the last twenty-five years. No other man in Florida or elsewhere, unless it be the Seminole Indians who inhabit the waste, knows more about the Everglades than Captain Jaudon.

In 1915, Captain Jaudon made a trip to the west coast to discuss the practicability of a cross-state highway from Miami to Fort Myers with Francis W. Perry, president of the Board of Trade of Fort Myers; and E. W. Crayton and Judge E. G. Wilkinson, of Naples. These men with others promised Captain Jaudon that their county—Lee, which then comprised all the territory west of Dade County—would build its share of the highway if Dade County started it and carried it to the Lee County line.

Captain Jaudon agitated the project in Miami through the daily newspapers during the latter part of 1915, which resulted in a committee of three being appointed by the commissioners of Dade County to investigate the practicability of such a highway. Opponents of the project said that it could not be done because lakes and rivers with depths as much as fifteen feet would be encountered.

The committee was composed of Captain Jaudon, L. T. Highleyman and R. E. McDonald, then a member of the state legislature. This committee reported



Jack Tigertail

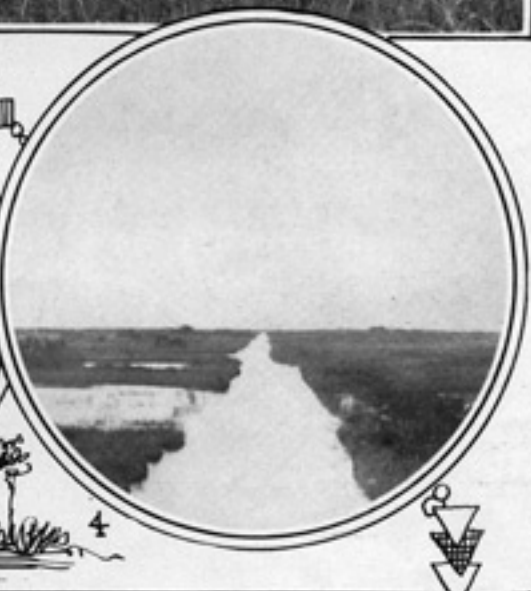
On the basis of the report of Hobart Crabtree, Captain Jaudon was asked to circulate a petition to get a bond issue approved for the work. In the early part of 1916 as the result of his efforts, a bond issue of \$275,000 was approved by the voters of Dade County. A quarter of a million of this was for the constructing of the Tamiami Trail and the remainder for building a highway to Hialeah.

Contract for the building of the Trail was let soon after to the J. B. McCrary Co., which in turn sublet it to the J. F. Morgan Co.

To those who see dry land for several miles out along the Trail today, it does not mean much if they do not know that before the highway was commenced, this land was under water. At the end of S. W. Eighth Street, Miami, where several beautiful subdivisions are now



Vance W. Helm







Two scenes of virgin Everglades; quite different from what most people think of the 'Glades.



JUNCTION OF TAMIAMI CANAL AND CUTOFF TO MIAMI RIVER

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project goes the Southern Drainage District, which is considered one of the greatest steps yet taken toward reclamation of the 'Glades. This district was created in 1917 through the efforts of Captain Jaudon. It includes 140,000 acres of land west of Miami, running three miles north of the Trail, five miles south and twenty-four miles west of Miami. Captain Jaudon sold 20,000 acres of this land netting the state \$100,-



CANAL 36 MILES OUT

000, which was spent in completing the connecting canal from the Tamiami Trail Canal to the Miami River and canal. Sixty thousand dollars yearly is now being raised through taxation of the land affected and is being used for the construction of more canals and the building of dykes.

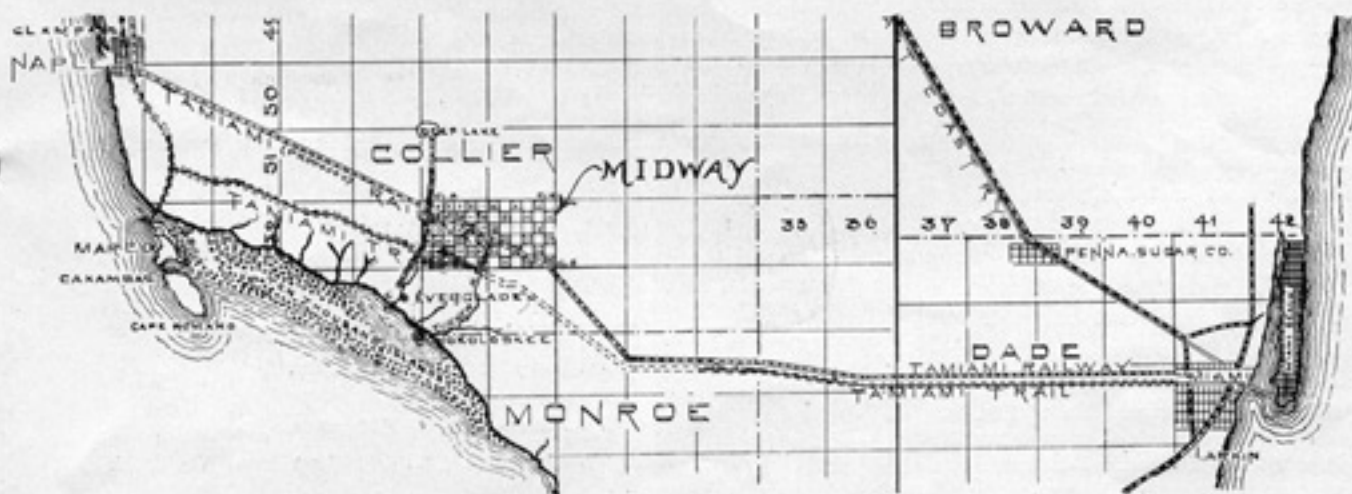
The Snapper Creek Canal has been completed, a portion of a canal running toward Coral Gables has been dug and work is now progressing on one which will enter Biscayne Bay at Black Point. The dykes around the area have practically all been completed.

Dykes prevent the water from the other parts of the Everglades from overflowing the drained portions and the canals carry off the surplus water caused by rains. The spoil banks thrown up when the material is dredged from the canals is used for road building, and usually the bank itself is smoothed down and surfaced making the finest type of highway.

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BROAD WHITE GULF BEACH AT NAPLES



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