

## STATE ENGINEER DRAWS VIVID PICTURE OF TRAIL WORK

By Thomas L. Stephens

When that part of the Tamiami Trail traversing the Everglades in Dade and Collier counties will have been completed, one of the most difficult pieces of highway construction in the Southeastern States will have been accomplished. It will represent an expenditure of more than three millions of dollars.

The idea of a highway across the Everglades westward from Miami is not new. It has been advocated for so long a time that the name of the first advocate has probably long since been forgotten. Never the less, the idea had been existant and its spark has been fanned to flame numerous times only to fade without anything of consequence having been accomplished. Lee and Dade counties had made a feeble effort toward the construction of such a highway, but the effort was little more than a gesture in the right direction.

### Trade Is Difficult

The difficulties of construction seemed insurmountable. Proper engineering preparations was woefully lacking. Solid rock always presents a serious construction problem, as does muck in low flat countries in wet seasons. It was a combination of these problems, solid rock overlaid with muck varying in depth from a few inches to several feet, often all under water, that caused the general impression that a cross-state trunkline highway across the Everglades, was little more than a mad geographer's dream.

In January, 1923, the Tamiami Trail Association was formed to again bring the idea to life and to make a determined effort toward the construction of a trunk line highway. A campaign of agitation and publicity was started. It was decided to locate the road through from Miami to Everglades and thence up the coast to Tampa via Fort Myers, Punta Gorda, Sarasota, and Bradenton.

### Work Is Started

In 1924, Collier County was created and almost immediately began a construction program in earnest. Grading on the road from Carnestown to Royal Palm Hammock was started. At the same time the work of grading a sixteen

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foot road eastward from Carnestown was begun. By the spring of 1926, the road to Royal Palm Hammock had been graded, and the road to the east had reached a point approximately twenty miles from Carnestown.

At this time negotiations with the State Road Department bore fruit. The Department agreed to take over the work as being in the preferential class, and carry it to completion. Subsequently contracts were let on August 1st to R. C. Huffman Construction Company for twelve miles in Dade County, on August 6th to Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., for twelve miles from the roadway to the Dade County line, and August 10th to Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., for ten miles from Royal Palm Hammock to Henderson Creek. At the same time a prison labor outfit, equipped with a fleet of trucks and loading outfit were ordered to Collier County to put down a nineteen foot rock base over the road from Carnestown to Royal Palm Hammock.

#### New Contracts Set

By January 1927, the work had progressed to the point where it was necessary to put the remaining distance between The Huffman Company and Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., under contract. Consequently the Huffman Company was awarded another twelve miles immediately west of its first contract and completing the distance to the Monroe county line in Dade County, Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., were awarded four and one-half miles from the east end of their first contract to an intersection with Huffman's second project in Dade County. Upon the completion of the ten mile project from Royal Palm Hammock to Henderson Creek, Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., were awarded four and one-half miles from the west end of that project to Naples.

At the present time, the project known to the Department as Project 669-V and being the twelve miles let to Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., on August 6th, 1926, has been completed. The project from Royal Palm Hammock to Henderson Creek, known locally as the "Ten mile cut-off" and known to the Department as Project 669-X, has also been completed. Huffman's first contract known to the Department as Project 669-C is more than half complete. The Huffman Company has concentrated some of the most modern equipment on the two projects awarded them. The four

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and one-half mile project in Dade County awarded to Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., known to the Department as Project 669-E will have been completed early in September. The other four and one-half Mile project at Naples known as Project 669-Z will be complete by October.

#### Rock Base Is Laid

In the meantime, the prison labor outfit has laid twelve miles of rock base on Project 669-W from Carnestown to Royal Palm Hammock. This project will be complete before October.

Alexander, Ramsay and Kerr, Inc., have been awarded the contract for dredging the material for raising and widening the twenty miles of road built by the county from Carnestown east. The hauling contractor will be named within a few days. The prison outfit will put the road in shape when the material has been hauled from the dredge.

Material for the construction of bridges for all work from Naples to the Dade-Collier County Line has been ordered. The work of building bridges will be vigorously pushed. Bridge crews are already building bridges on Project 669-X. More crews are expected to arrive shortly and work will be started in several places simultaneously.

This is what has been accomplished in the twelve-months since the State Road Department took over the construction of the Tamiami Trail in Dade and Collier counties. A well nigh perfect spirit of co-operation between the contractors and the State Road Department has been very evident. As has been said, that part of the Tamiami Trail lying in Dade and Collier Counties presents one of the most difficult construction problems in the southeast, but there has been no let-up in the attack, and the spirit that seems to permeate the atmosphere is "IT SHALL BE DONE!"