

"OPTIMIST" FROM CHOKOLOSKEE

C. G. McKinney

No matter how short the story of Collier county, no one would dare write it without due mention of C. G. McKinney--the "Optimist" of the rural correspondents;; from Chokoloskee.

The many so-called "staff correspondents" of the average weekly newspapers are the very backbone of small town journalism, and in Collier county Mr. McKinney leads the field, in interest, humor and optimism, without a struggle for supremacy. His unique style, forceful philosophy and downright human sympathy were enjoyed for several years by the readers of the Collier County News and at his death in October, the 16th, to be precise, 1926, the entire countryside mourned for a friend who would never desert them in times of stress and would not criticize them too severely when they stepped off the "straight and narrow path" and imbibed too much of "Satan's brew" or as he delighted to refer to the common or swamp variety of Moonshine, "low brush lightning." While the "Optimist" oftentimes enjoyed a congenial laugh at the 'preachers' still he was a religious man and his religion is reflected in all his 'works'."

Born August 8, 1847 near Americus, Georgia, very early with his parents he made the trek to Florida. He became a merchant, carpenter, shoemaker and "a tanner of leather with the red oak bark." Many will recall the autobiography which ran in earlier issues of the News of this interesting character entitled "Reminiscences of 79 Years." As the publishers of this edition wish to reprint quite a number of the choice "news items" from the early correspondence of "Optimist" there will not be room for a more detailed account of the life of this interesting writer.

A man may be known by his works and the writings of C. G. McKinney reveal the honesty, straightforwardness and depth of the man who for so many months signed himself "Optimist," and whose writings were looked forward to week after week by his friends and neighbors throughout the county. It has always seemed to this reporter that the larger New York journals missed something when they did not discover "Optimist" to share with their larger audience the humor and kindness which he so successfully "hid under a bushel" of isolation, in Collier county.

Here are a few of his "items" selected at random from his writings in the Collier County News starting with the date of June 5th, 1924. For those who have never made the acquaintance of the "swamp angles" it had better be stated that they are the inquisitive, cuticle drilling mosquito.

Optimist (Cont.)
April 26, 1928 Paper

June 5, 1924

We have quite a lot of the swamp engels yet but they don't seem to be as crazy as they were last week but they are pretty busy.

We have had a few Indians this week, all sober.

We have had no booze this week.

Fishing is very good.

The schooner Newport has not yet arrived from Key West. It is near two weeks now since she left. We hope she will be in next week, anyway. It is likely that she will run on the try weekly schedule (try one week and come next week). If she does that will be good enough for us in this neck of the woods. We are so used to disappointments that we will be glad to get anything.

Captain Anderson passed here this week with a cargo of cocounuts bound for Fort Myers. He left some fine bananas and plantons with us. He expects to take a cargo of melons and potatoes to Key West next week.

June 12, 1924

Note the timperature for time of the year.

We are still on the job as big as ever since no rain is in sight. We have mercury ranging like this:

Last Saturday just before sunrise 80, at 2 P. M. 89; Sunday 80, at 2 P. M. 90; Monday 80, at 2 P. M. 91; Tuesday 81, at 2 P. M. 91; Wednesday 81, 2m at 2 P. M. 92; Thursday 80, at 2 P. M. 93; Friday 78, at 2 P. M. 88; Saturday 76, at 2 P. M. 88.

We went over to the Big Collier County Election Wednesday and looked over the bill of fare and found only one lady. We thought it would look lonesome to vote for only one, so we just voted for the whole Collier ticket and felt that we were doing God's service. Why not praise the bridge that conveys you over safely? The Collier people have done more for this neck of the woods than anyone else could have ever done, except the good Lord. When he dropped the thing down here in the form of a few scraps he had left over, after making the balance of creation, he little thought that it would be improved so much. We should not only be thankful for the good start that the Lord made with the few handful of dirt and sticks left over, but we should be thankful for the improvement. Sorta like the fellow said about woman, "She overhauled herself so much that she made a lady out of herself." We believe that the Collier county people will make a paradise out of Collier county. Why not cooperate?

"Optimist" (Cont.)

July 2, 1924

Last Tuesday just before sunrise 79, at 2 P. M. 90.
Last Wednesday just before sunrise 76, at 2 P. M. 92.
Last Thursday just before sunrise 76, at 2 P. M. 85.
Last Friday just before sunrise 73, at 2 P. M. 87.

We have had just a little rain every day. Just enough to make the swamp angels swarm in great numbers.

Charlie Tigar Tail was here this week. He brought some bananas and sugar cane up from his farm to sell to us.

Fishing is not very good.

Mullet is scarce and trout a little more so.

August 14, 1924

We have had some Indians this week, and we have just a few swamp angels.

The Newport sailed last Monday from Key West. We expect her back sometime. She is on the try weekly schedule (try one week and come the next week).

Fishing is not very good, fishermen say. The water is muddy and they don't know why it should be so muddy.

We have had no evidence this week of booze.

We was 77 years old yesterday and we feel as good as new in many respects. We hope to report the same next August.

Mr. and Mrs. James Demaree have a new-comer to their home, a fine big boy, all doing well.

August 20, 1924

We have had no rain, but we have had some Indians this week. No booze and no preaching.

We read in the paper of low bush lightning striking 200 persons or more right in the city of Washington, and how the big officials were scandalized. Can't see how that could be unless they were around and smelled the breath of those that were struck by the lightning.

It would look foolish to stop the booze business when the government is taking in so much money in fines from the boats and the smugglers. Officers of many calling reap a big harvest, so why should they be interested in stopping it. If they would take no fines and land every one that was sentenced with it in prison to the full limit, they would come nearer putting the lid on the thing. But as it is, money is too easily made in the booze business and they can always pay the bills and play again.

Fishing is some better this week. Mullet is more plentiful but trout refuses to take the hook.

Mr. C. G. McKinney has a contract to collect 10,000

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large red grass hoppers and it appears that they are not so plentiful up the creeks as they have been in former years. She has as yet collected only one thousand and they are packed in half gallon jars in wood alcohol which keeps them in shape until they reach the market.

We have no swamp angels to speak of.

October 9, 1924

We have had this week some very strange evidence last Sunday of low bush lightning. Some of the disciples had the stuff that looked red and we supposed it was low bush goods. They asked us to take a nip but we had to decline. They were acting very suspicious yelling around the house and singing and yesterday we see the same thing. We have plenty of bootleggers around and all are doing well. Fishing is good. The salt fishermen are doing well and the ice fishermen also. We had a few Indians with us this week. They are getting ready for hunting. Our salt fish boat, the "Newport", has not yet come in from Key West. We suppose she is delayed by bad weather south. Cape Sable had some swift breezes and it possibly was more at Key West. We see from Pine Island item that they have had some swamp angels up there and seem to think we turned them loose on a southerly wind and they blew in there, but we will have to deny the charge as we know the swamp angel does not move with the wind, but goes against the wind. The wind catches under his wing if he goes with it and capsizes him.

September 18, 1924

A lot of rain yesterday. Fishing is not very good. We have a new school teacher, came in this week. She was a little late but reached us all the same. We have had some symptoms of low bush lightning this week. Nothing very serious. We have had just a few Indians. Our preacher is to pay us a visit tomorrow again. They stayed at Everglades last Sunday. They pulled down in a skiff and saw a chance to get a toe back and did not preach for us. Possibly they will have more time tomorrow to tell the folks about what may become of them in the wind up if they don't be good.

November 6, 1924

Fishing is good. Bootlegging good. Moonshining on the draw back, the Satan Angels seem to like the imported stuff best.

The Newport has not returned from Key West yet; we can't learn whether she sunk or is on top or not.

We have no preacher yet but the folks is getting along about as well as ever.

"Optimist" (Cont.)

We have no school either, we don't see or hear any prospects of anyone coming to hold the school down.

Mrs. C. G. McKinrey is filling another contract for ten thousand grasshoppers, the school children catches them for her and it has a tendency to keep them out of other mischief.

December 11, 1924

We have had some signs of Low Bush Lightning this week and some Indians under the influence of it, and some of the others just the same. We have decided that there is nothing in the prohibition game as long as so many officers can be bought off with from one bottle to a few bottles or cases of booze. They seem to have the old Adamic nature in them and the more you try to put the thing out of their reach the harder they try to get it. Just look how old Adam did it that time the good Lord told him not to bother that apple. That put the curiosity shop of his to work and he said, "Now I will see if there is anything to that," so his mate stuck her three teeth in the apple and extracted a little juice and passed it on to father Adam and he tried to swallow the whole thing and it choked him and they say that is why today we see a lot of men with a knot on their goozles. It is caused from that apple that Adam got choked on. We saw about 58 years ago an apple called the Eve apple. It was about the size of an ordinary apple, highly colored red and had the teeth prints of old mother Eve on it and looked like those three teeth had punctured it before it had matured and it had grown since and showed the teeth prints very distinct, so we suppose that mother Eve just extracted a little juice and passed it on to Father Adam and he liked the taste so well he tried to swallow the thing whole so it choked him. Now we see today if we tell the folks they must not bother so and so, he will bother it anyway.

If the good Lord had set a bottle of booze in the corner of the garden and told Adam to let it alone, he could not sleep at night and he would have crawled out there and got a cork-screw and pulled the cork and filled up his tank and went back and pulled out old Mother Eve from the bed and beat her.

We have just a few swamp angels on the island now and suppose they have come to enjoy Christmas with us.

Nearly all the men folks have gone from the island, hunting coons and otters and some other pursuits to gather in the almighty dollar with which to buy grits, etc.

We have no preacher and no school teacher yet.

January 1, 1925

We have had preaching all the week, Brother Dowers was on the job first, and Brother Whidden came down and began

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with Brother Bowers and Brother Bowers left us and went back up the coast again.

The hunters, both Indians and the whites, are bringing in a big lot of coon skins and some others. They are getting good prices for them and they are getting ready to go out now again. Some of them did not come in at all.

We see from reading the News that there are lots of booze ships being captured from foreign ports, with big cargoes of the Devil's goods.

Well, we all had a fine Christmas, we think, plenty of good things to eat. Some of the boys went out on the mainland and killed some deer and other game. We are having very dry weather, and vegetables that were planted some weeks ago are drying up. The shell land don't hold moisture.

We expect to have preaching right on for a week or two to see what they will do about it.

January 8, 1925

We had a cool and foggy looking morning, today. The Hick's weather book tells us that we will have a lot of cool and rainy weather this month. We will wait and see how it comes.

We have had no preacher at all now. Our Brother Whidden left us the first of the week. We have no school yet. We are doing very well, all getting in some cash to buy grits with, and have had no booze this Xmas. We had some Indians but all sober this week.

Mr. St. Claire Demers has moved from this island to Lakeehachee island.

Mr. D. R. House has gone to Port Myers on a business trip.

Nearly all the boys have gone back to their coon hunting. They are getting in a lot of furs and getting good prices for them.

January 15, 1925

We have had very pleasant weather for this season of the year. We have had a few Indians with us this week. Coon hunting is kind of slow, very few this week, weather too warm for them to walk the shores much. We have seen some booze this week. It was a white gin looking stuff. One of the disciples got down on the lift. The last we heard of him he was not able to be up but getting around similar to coon on his all-fours. He was getting around but not able to be up.

We see in the Pine Island items that a settler there has just had a well completed that flows a fine stream of pure, clear, sweet water. Now, if this water is convenient to the moonshiner he can take it and add a little yeast and

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and a little Red Devil Lye and make a common grade of moon shine. A well of that kind will be worth a big lot of coin to put out and rent. Possibly someone somewhere may bore a well that will flow the real stuff and then the bootlegger business will have to put the lid on the thing.

We have no preacher and no school yet.

The first item below is a gem and would delight H. L. Menken and his school of Biblous "anti-s".

January 24, 1925

We have no preacher yet and we have had no booze either this week.

Mr. D. R. House has just returned from a business trip to Fort Myers.

Mr. C. A. McKinney is putting a small addition to his house.

Our old hens have been so everlasting contrary and won't lay. We are selling them now to the Everglades folks for a dollar and a half each, and try to get pay for some of the high price grain they have been eating.

They are very fat and a lot of flesh in them old Rhode Island Red hens.

The old schooner "Newport" has not returned from Key West. She has decided to make a try monthly schedule; try last month and come this month.

February 5, 1925

We have had a few Indians this week and have seen some signs of low bush lightning. It was not on the Indians. The whites seem to know how to get on to the stuff better than the Indians. We had very little mail to come down Wednesday and none at all Thursday, but the mail carrier was on his job just the same lugging around a lot of empty mail bags. It is a great place we have, some times we have mail and some times none. Sometimes it is wet and some times it is dry. The "Newport" has gone to Key West again and she is to bring over some timber for Mr. G. Lopez to build him a house on this side of the island, so he will have a little more protection from the storms, and be near his brother, Joe, who fishes with him. Our school is getting along fine as far as we know of. There is 28 pupils so the professor said.

Brother "Adsock" is to be down next week and he is to build Mr. Lopez house for him. He may preach a little too so as to keep things kind of in line. Fishing is good but coon hunting is not so good. Mr. M. Johnson is clearing up a place for Mr. Lopez house near the water just north of Easy street.

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February 26, 1925
Work Starts on the Lopez Home

Well, we have Brother Hadsock with us now. He has begun work on Mr. G. Lopez house. The Newport has gone to Key West for more lumber for the building. Mr. Joe Lopez and family went over also to have his teeth taken out so he can begin anew. We have had some drunk Indians this week and last Sunday we had a mess of what we call mean boys, school age, shooting on our dock. They must have shot 150 shots, and shot up one of our neighbors boats and it sank, also broke his water jug and shot a hole in our front wall, of course we think there should be a remedy for those mischievous wretches, but we have not the medicine in stock and we just have to endure such cursedness. Our school is still getting along very well. Fishing is not very good, weather has stirred up the water outside and makes it bad for trout fishing.

April 2, 1925

Brother Hadsock returned from up the coast the first part of the week and resumed operations on the Lopez house and has all the shingles tacked on and is working down below. Brother Bowers is with us now also, and we hope to have some good preaching tomorrow.

We have had plenty of booze this week of the low bush kind, and we have had a lot of Indians, some drunk and some sober.

Fishing is not very good. Weather not favorable. We see some tourists around and some gentlemen from Everglades down. We have a gentleman from Washington, D. C. looking for some material for the Smithsonian Institute. He reports that the Kite has not layed yet. He has been up Turner's river with Mr. R. R. House to locate some nests in the tops of the pines and cypress trees. These Kite eggs are very hard to procure and are very scarce. They are worth sixty to seventy dollars per dozen. It don't look like it would pay to have a mess of them for breakfast once a week even.

Foreign Diseases Popular

A lot of our folks have had the flu and some of them have it yet. It is a good thing to have something with a foreign name; looks grand.

April 16, 1925

We have had a few Indians this week. Brother Babe Whidden has been with us all the week preaching night with some good attendance, sometimes very few. Brother Hadsock is neutral; it appears that they have a slight difference in their brands of faith and don't want to mix them. Brother Hadsock says he thinks he will complete the Lopez

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house next week except painting which he has not contracted to do.

May 7, 1925

Saturday--today--64. Yesterday we had a bunch of drunk Indians, but all quiet. They don't raise no rackets like the whites do in a common way. They are always quiet. Brother "adsock has completed all his carpenter work here and left us now. He has gone up to Lakeland where his home is. Mr. "E. B. Smith is preparing to move up to Lake Okeechobee soon. We was up at the court this week at Everglades, all was quiet, some of the disciples seem to have plenty of booze, it looked like gin. They invited us to have a dose of it but we declined again. Well our old hens have just simply declined to lay any more eggs. They had a rest day yesterday. Not an egg did they lay, they have holiday just the same as other creatures of this neck of the woods. Fishing has been pretty good this week.

May 28, 1925

Educational Difficulties of the Early Days

Mr. John Jordan, one of our old acquaintances, happened to a bad accident this week. He had set a gun for a panther and accidentally got into the wire himself and the whole load of buckshot crashed through his leg just above the knee and broke the bone. He lay there in the bushes several hours fighting the swamp angels and a neighbor came not far away and heard him call for help, and he went to his rescue and got him on a boat and went up the coast with him. Mr. Jordan was in the civil war and served quite a while and never happened to get crippled. He must be eighty years old or more.

Our school is still on the move but a little on the grunts. We hope the swamp angels will not break it up.

July 23, 1925

We have had no rain this week to speak of and weather just fairly good, mercury ranging like this: Last Saturday just before sunrise, 76 and at 2 P. M. 90; Sunday 78 and at 2 P. M. 98; Monday 76 and at 2 P. M. 88; Tuesday, 80 and at 2 P. M. 89; Wednesday 80 and at 2 P. M. 89; Thursday, 80 and at 2 P. M. 89; Friday, 80 and at 2 P. M. 89; Friday, 80 and at 2 P. M. 89; Saturday (today) 82. We have had no Indians this week. Last Sunday we saw several creatures here with the low bush lightning seemed to be quite jolly. Some of our folks have a realty fever again, but we don't want our little noses down on a grindstone trying to grind out yearly or monthly payments for such plunder.

"Optimist" (Cont.)

Mr. G. Lopez is roking on his fish house. Fishing is fairly good now.

Mr. C. B. McKinney has built himself a small lighter, 16 feet long, about four feet wide and has one of those off and on engines which drives it up to Everglades in a very reasonable time and brings down a ton of stuff very easy.

We have a few sand flies this morning. We very seldom have them here on this side of the key. They are very busy little creatures.

July 30, 1925

We have had a fairly cool week for July and a few showers with mercury ranging like this: Last Saturday just before sunrise 82; at 2 P. M. 89; Sunday 74 and at 2 P. M. 89 Monday 74 and at 2 P. M. 90; Tuesday 78 and 2 P. M. 80; Wednesday 74 and at 2 P. M. 81; Thursday 74 and at 2 P. M. 90; Friday 78 and at 2 P. M. 89; Saturday (today) 78.

We have had a few Indians this week and some drunk ones. We have to thank the Good Lord that we have plenty of lowbush lightening now and prospects is good for a plenty for a long time to come. The good book tells us to thank the Lord for everything so we, of course, feel that we are doing our duty when we thank Him for the lowbush lightening and anything that comes along.

Mr. G. Lopez and his brothers are near ready to go to salt fishing.

Mr. George Storter and his brother, Rob and their families have moved down from Naples to fish this season here.

Mr. Henry Thompson has been gone about a week on the NewPort down the Coast for cocoanuts for folks up the Coast.

August 20, 1925

We have had some warm days this week, the mercury ranging like this: Last Saturday, just before sunrise, 78, at 2 P. M. 88; Sunday, 78, at 2 P. M. 88; Monday, 80 at 2 P. M. 92; Tuesday, 80, at 2 P. M. 91; Wednesday, 78, at 2 P. M. 87; Thursday 78, at 2 P. M. 92; Friday 83, at 2 P. M. 90; Saturday (today) 82.

We hear of the tooth carpenter going away today, and between again something to this neck of the woods do the missing teeth at Everglades lightning.

We have had a lot of thunder this week. Lightning struck the fish house yesterday. Mr. Cole was shocked some but not serious.

"Optimist" (Cont.)

Fishing is fairly good.

We have seen no signs of lowbush lightning this week.

Brother Sullivan is with us now to tell the folks of their future misfortunes if they don't be good, but he has but few hearers--nearly all are childred and women. The other ones are too busy fishing to listen about the future mishaps.

August 22, 1925

Chokoloskee, Fla., August 22, 1925 we have had some rain this week and warm weather also with mercury ranging like this last saturday just before sunrise 82 at 2 P. M. 92; Monday at 2 P. M. 84; cool rain Tuesday 78; at 2 P. M. 90; Wednesday 78 at 2 P. M. 90; Thursday 79 at 2 P. M. 91; Friday 81 at 2 P. M. 87; Saturday (today) 80; our tooth carpenter left us and our preacher also (Brother Sullivan) thank the good Lord we have plenty of Low Bush Lightning imported goods. One of the deciples got into a racket last Sunday and got the pealing on the knot that was tied in his backbone to keep it from reveling out punctured and it was bleeding some leter in the evening he got a bottle of Dr. Porters Healing Oil and fixed it up O. K. and is still on the Job. Empty Bottles and Bottle stoppers is in good demand. Mr. C. C. Johnson from Henderson Creek was down with his family visiting relatives and friends this week, and Mr. John Brown and family from Everglades was down also visiting. We have had a few Indians this week. Fishing is pretty good.

September, 3, 1925

We have had no evidences of low bush lightning this week. They seem to be exporting now. We are getting along well. Some of the youngsters are learning to make cigaretts and pipes.

Mr. G. Lopez and brother have shut down their fishing for the present and are now fishing for the ice boat folks.

The Newport has gone to Key West to carry the salt fish they caught before they closed down.

We had Uncle Jim Daniels to see us this week from Marco. He reports that he had been spending some time at Everglades inspecting the material of the County Jail house. We did not hear him testifying of its good or bad qualities. We suppose he found it passible.

Mr. D. D. House has been to see us this week from Naples. He was accompanied by his friend, Mr. N. P. Sloan, a Real Estate man.

September 10, 1925

We are all on the mend now. We have had meetings every day this week and at night also. Some of the old back-slid-

"Optimist" (Cont.)

ers are trying hard to get back to God. Brother Babe Whidden, Crews and Townsend are doing their best to have a big time and doing some of them good. We expect some folks from Naples tonight to help stir them up.

We have not seen any evidence of Low-bush Lightning since last Sunday. We saw one of the disciples pretty full but we learn that he went to the altar and now is on the right track.

We have had no Indians this week. Fishing is not so very good.

Mr. D. R. House was down this week from Naples. Mr. W. P. Brown is at home now repairing his boat. Mr. Henry Thompson came back from Key West but left the Newport over there.

September 17, 1925

We have had just a few Indians this week and no evidence of Low Bush Lightning more than trading in bottles and bottle stoppers.

We have had preaching all the week and all doing well; some old backsliders that have been on the slide for two years or more came back to the fold and a lots of new seekers and some getting the Holy Ghost. We hear of the meeting breaking up tomorrow. We would be glad if they could work on for several weeks more. Possibly more of the natives would feel more civilized.

Fishing is not doing much. Mr. Henry Thompson and Mr. Jenkins is going off on a 'gaiter hunt for a few days.

We hear of our school to begin next Monday.

The folks that have guavas are putting them up in jars and those that have avocado pears are now shipping them.

September 24, 1925

We have had a good time all the week. Last Sunday Brother Babe Whidden baptised four of the disciples at our house. Mr. C. A. Row, Mrs. Joe Lopez, Mrs. Viola Thompson and Mrs. Leafey Brown. Mr. Row was a backslider and he thought best to take another dip after being reclaimed and Mrs. Joe Lopez was also a backslider and taken another dip. The other two was new converts. We wish them all well and hope they will stay in the straight and narrow way. We'll we have some more news coming. Mr. Dexter Hamilton got married to a Miss Williams, Mr. Isaac Williams' sister and we hear of the new couple going to give us some cake about tonight. We hope it won't hang-fire or make a great

"Optimist" (Cont.)

big bubble and all blow up. We wish the couple a long life and many happy returns. May they never be looking for something that would make them feel bad or disheartened. We have had a few Indians this week. We have seen no evidence of Low Bush lightning this week. Mrs. Ida May Haddock is down visiting her parents and brother (the Lopez family). She may do some preaching for us to keep us in line in the absence of other preachers. Fishing is not very good. The folks are shipping their avocado pears now and some are busy putting up guava jelly, etc. We have no swamp angels at all to think about.

October 1, 1925

We are getting along fine with meetings every night. The new converts and old ones have a fine time praying and shouting. Mrs. Ida Mae Haddock and Brother Cole seem to be in the lead and doing good work. The newly married couple seem to be getting on fine. We have had no lowbush lightning this week. It appears that so much preaching and a constant prayer meeting has put a quiet on the booze game. Possibly they think that the "buggerman" will get them by and by. We have had only a few Indians this week. We are expecting a flood of cake, ice cream and all other eatibles common for this neck of the woods about tonight from the results of the marriage last week. Fishing is not very good. The mullet is getting fat now.

November 5, 1925

Well, all of our preachers left us last Monday and some of the new converts are already thinking about backsliding, but we hope they will not. We did not have any preaching after they left until last night when Brother Griffin came down and preached and he had a very few hearers. He was expected to have been here on Thursday night but "hung-fire" somewhere on the line, and the people were disappointed. Another thing is that he is not exactly the right stamp to suit the majority of the people here, so there is a discord and some strife and contention among the citizens.

The Clem Dredge of the Burnham Packing company at Caxambas which has been digging clams along the coast was burned a few nights ago but we have not learned much about it.

December 31, 1925

Just as we expected we have had plenty of booze from two sources, and a lot of drunk Indians. Some buy the low bush lightning because it is cheaper than the imported goods. The Indians seem to have plenty of money to buy the goods and are behaving fairly good. We have Brother and Sister Haddock with us for the present. They expect to go back to take care of just as soon as Christmas is over, in a couple

"Optimist" (Cont.)

of days or so. We have had a fine Christmas with a whole lot of good stuff to eat and we have to be very careful to keep from eating too much. Coon hunting is fairly good. Moonshining and bootlegging is on the bum. Brother and Sister Hadsock have preached for two nights for us with a moderate congregation. Of course some of the hearers don't agree with his doctrine. There is a kind of strife and contention among them such as Saint Paul mentioned which we think belongs to the game anyway.

OPTIMIST.