

## CHAPTER XI

### SUGAR AND THE SECOND LAND BOOM

#### 1. Growing Pains

In accordance with a law (Chapter 6456) passed by the 1913 session of the legislature, which authorized the Drainage Commissioners to float and sell bonds, an issue of a million dollars payable in thirty years bearing six per cent interest coupons was prepared for sale by virtue of a resolution of July 1, 1914.<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners advertised that the bonds would be sold to the highest bidder on August 20, but on August 5 the sale was called off because of the poor condition of the money market and the financial stringencies of the first World War years.<sup>2</sup>

The state drainage officials were not long deterred by the poor financial situation in their determination to carry on with the South Florida project. In the early months of 1915 a contract was signed by the Internal Improvement Trustees and the officials of the Furst-Clark Construction Company for the execution of the twenty-five mile St. Lucie

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1 E. D. D. "Minutes," II, 63.

2 Ibid.; R. E. Rose, "The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida," loc. cit., 133; "Message of the Governor," Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1915, 42.

Other attempts were made to sell Everglades Drainage District bonds in 1915 and 1916, with no success. E. D. D. "Minutes," II On January 1, 1917, Spitzer, Rorick and Company of Toledo, Ohio, arranged for the first purchase of \$3,500,000 at 95 and accrued interest, paying \$489,165 for the first \$500,000 on April 23, Ibid., III, 1-8.

Canal.<sup>3</sup> The state officials were thus building a work to carry out the Randolph recommendations of an Okeechobee control canal, which under the terms of the contract would be completed with a dam at the eastern end three hundred fifty feet wide and eighteen feet high. The contractors agreed to accept "in payment for the work small monthly cash payments and notes of the Drainage Board, secured by drainage district bonds for the remainder...."<sup>4</sup>

In his biennial report to the legislature in 1915 Governor Trammell mentioned the handicap under which the Everglades work was progressing in regard to finances, but was optimistic over the collection of drainage taxes and the new construction contract which, ". . . with other work that is planned, no doubt means the ultimate success of the drainage and reclamation of the Everglades."<sup>5</sup> The governor asked the legislature to pass a bill enabling the Internal Improvement Trustees to establish and maintain one or more experiment stations on state lands in the muck soils which would add materially to the development of the state, as well as to the

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<sup>3</sup> I.I.B. Minutes, XI, 39; Florida Times-Union, February 16, March 13, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1915, 43; R. E. Rose, "The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida," loc. cit., 135. Rose stated that the contractors accepted notes, secured by bonds, under an agreement that if they were sold settlement would be made at par or 90 per cent of par value.

<sup>5</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1915, 43.

value of public and private lands. Trammell urged the legislature to memorialize Congress for a survey of the drainage canals from Lake Okeechobee to tide water with a view towards incorporating the state cuts into a federal waterway across the state.<sup>6</sup>

At the suggestion of the Florida State Federation of Women's Clubs, the chief executive recommended that the legislature set aside and designate Royal Palm Hammock in Dade County as Royal Palm State Park.<sup>7</sup> This area, including Paradise Key, remained one of the few natural habitats of the royal palm in the state and had long been a cherished retreat of natural scientists and nature lovers. In response to the various requests the lawmakers enacted Chapter 6949, at the 1915 session, of the laws of Florida which made the cession of a section and a half of land for a public park on the provision that the Federation secure 960 additional acres in the same vicinity to be used as an endowment to carry on the maintenance of the domain.<sup>8</sup> This far-sighted act of the State has provided for posterity one of the few truly tropical areas of the United States and will be the nucleus of a proposed Everglades National Park.

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<sup>6</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1915, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50-53

<sup>8</sup> General Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at the Fifteenth Regular Session Under the Constitution of 1885, 337-339.

In a survey of the history of the Everglades drainage scheme and its progress Frederick C. Elliot, chief drainage engineer of the state in 1915, traced the program from its inception as a plank in Broward's platform through the first decade. Putting the problem on a factual basis, Elliot declared that ". . . notwithstanding the many obstacles necessary to overcome, reclamation by drainage has, on its own merits, gradually become one of the fixed policies of the State."<sup>9</sup> With that statement as his background Elliot proceeded to deliver the most lucid and authentic brief of the Everglades program that had been made to that date. The chief engineer pulled no punches in forthrightly proclaiming that none of the canals were fully completed or discharging over a small fraction of their planned capacity. In round numbers Elliot listed 280 miles of open canal representing 21,000,000<sup>10</sup> tons of excavation at a cost of \$2,550,000.

In the drainage of this great inundated prairie there is being developed the most valuable resource which the State of Florida possesses. The Everglades Drainage Project is the greatest work of reclamation being carried on in the world to-day.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Frederick C. Elliot, "The Everglades," Florida Quarterly Bulletin of the Agricultural Department, XXV (April 1, 1915), 49.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 66. "The drainage will not become thoroughly effective, and lands in the Glades cannot be cultivated with entire safety against damage from overflow until the large canal for controlling Lake Okeechobee shall have been constructed, and the main drainage canals traversing the Everglades are well on toward completion. Conditions gradually improve as the work progresses." Ibid., 70.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 71.

In spite of the exaggerations of various writers and the sales talks of real estate agents, such as "So much of the vast reclamation has been accomplished that within a year the entire area will be ready for the farmer and the settler,"<sup>12</sup> the enterprise was still in its experimental stages. In response to this and similar statements, F. C. Elliot secured the publication of a retraction in the same magazine in which the above quotation appeared informing the public that the contributor had been guilty of gross misrepresentation. The Florida engineer informed his readers that "the canals now under way are not planned to drain the entire area. . . the drainage of two-thirds of the Everglades has scarcely yet<sup>13</sup> been undertaken."

The year 1917 saw the inauguration of Governor Sidney J. Catts, a former Alabama Baptist preacher, who had beat the bushes of Cracker Florida and had been elected on an anti-Catholic, social leveling platform. Declaring that the governorship had been raped by the Democrats in the first primary, Catts ran on the Prohibition ticket in the general election<sup>14</sup> and won by a small majority. Insofar as the Everglades program was concerned Catts had his hands tied by the commitments

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<sup>12</sup> Day Allen Willey, "Reclaiming the Everglades," Scientific American, CXV (September 16, 1916), 258-259.

<sup>13</sup> "Draining the Everglades-A Retraction," Scientific American, CXVI (January 13, 1917), 61. Elliot wrote the editor of the magazine that only a six mile strip on Okeechobee's south shore and the lower reaches of the New River and Miami Canal banks were ready for cultivation, and that even these sections were subject to overflow.

<sup>14</sup> K. T. Abbey, Florida, Land of Change, 343-344.

of his predecessor in the sale of the three and a half million dollar bond issue in the first few days of January, 1917.<sup>15</sup> The bond sale was contested in the federal courts of the Southern District of Florida by J. B. Showhalter of Pennsylvania. Showhalter sought to throw the drainage district into receivership, forcing the sale of state lands to complete the drainage program, because of alleged bad faith on the part of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund in not doing the job.<sup>16</sup>

On January 18 former Governor Trammell threw some light on the subject when he informed the press that the court fight was being made by several large landholders who had sought to influence the Drainage Board for several years in the proposition of disposing of the lands of the state in order to continue the south Florida work of reclamation.<sup>17</sup> The bond sale in 1917 brought to a head the opposition which had existed in the state to the Everglades proposition. Catts soon found himself in the center of a battle "to bond or not to bond." In a speech delivered in January, 1917, he said:

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<sup>15</sup> Florida Times-Union, January 6, 1917. Along with the announcement of the bond sale was published the news that 6,000,000 cubic yards of material had been excavated in 1916, which was forty per cent more than any previous year.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.; January 16; 1917.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., January 18, 1917. On February 22, United States District Judge R. M. Call dismissed the bill of complaint since he held that the lands were vested in the state legislature (in presenti in the State), and that the legislature had not divested swamp land titles from the state into the hands of the Trustees. Ibid., February 23, 1917.

One trouble about the matter is that the people living in other sections of the state are not in sympathy with the drainage of the Everglades as they should be. . . [this bond sale] should put the whole section largely in condition of cultivation, and after the first crop is made on this land you may look for prices to soar until the fabulous prices of California will be nothing to what this, the richest land on earth will bring.<sup>18</sup>

In the years since Broward's election the Everglades had become a disappointment to the people of the state at large. Ranchers and others whose stock roamed the open range were not happy over the prospects of free grazing on state lands being discontinued after it passed into private ownership and was fenced.<sup>19</sup> North and west Florida farmers were hostile to the project on account of threatened competition from the muck soils, and state legislators had made a number of proposals to sell all the state lands below Okeechobee and chuck the drainage program.<sup>20</sup> Within the drainage district itself the residents complained of too much "drainage by mail" and asked for a drainage board of competent engineers who would have their headquarters in the Everglades, "where they will be in direct touch with actual conditions and know the needs of the pioneer farmers of this coming empire."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ft. Lauderdale Sentinel, January 5, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Isham Randolph, "Reclaiming the Everglades of Florida," loc. cit., 67

<sup>20</sup> Edward Howe, "Looking About in the Everglades," Country Gentleman, LXXX (August 23, 1919), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ft. Lauderdale Sentinel, October 6, 1916, as reprinted in Everglades News (Ft. Lauderdale), January 30, 1917.

In late March and early April two more groups of 'Glades landholders sought to enjoin the Trustees from collecting the drainage tax and selling any bonds, but both suits were decided in favor of the state officials.<sup>22</sup> Faced with the pros and cons and finding himself in the middle, the Governor was so tired of the Everglades battle that when the legislature met in the first week of April he greeted that august body with a brief paragraph on the subject.

In regard to this mooted and restless matter I desire to recommend that the Legislature pass a law putting all of the one million two hundred and fifty thousand acres of land now held by the Internal Improvement Board for sale at from five to eight dollars an acre, and that the same be sold at private or public sale and the amount of money gotten from these sales be, after the debts of the Board have been paid, turned over to the State School Fund, whereby each and every child of the State shall obtain its pro rata share, and allow the drainage of those lands to continue after they pass into the hands of private owners. 23

The reaction to Catts' somewhat abrupt solution was rapid. Meeting a delegation of state legislators from the lower east coast, the Governor maintained his position to sell out the 'Glades lands in accordance with the terms of his biennial message. The members of the delegation sought to rebut Catts' argument by showing the chief executive that to sell out to the State's interest would leave the present owners, who had

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22 Florida Times-Union, March 30, April 7, 1917.

23 Journal of the State House of Representatives of Florida of the Session of 1917, 24. The Florida Times-Union, which had opposed the Everglades project from the start, did not hesitate to play up Catts' message on the 'Glades. Florida Times-Union, April 4, 1917.



bought in the area trusting the honor and integrity of the State to reclaim the district, holding the bag.<sup>24</sup> The question was finally settled for the 1917 session by the completion of the sale of the first bond issue and the creation of the N. B. Broward Drainage District Involving 528,000 acres in the Ft. Lauderdale section. This was a sub-drainage district within the Everglades Drainage District, to give special care to the large acreage.<sup>25</sup>

Roughly a year after the first bond sale, F. C. Elliot, chief drainage engineer, reported that ten dredges were in operation on seven canals, among them the Palm Beach, which was nearing completion and would be offered for acceptance within two months.<sup>26</sup> In reply to numerous questions on the subject of agriculture on imperfectly drained saw grass muck

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<sup>24</sup> Florida Times-Union, April 11, 1917. These men submitted a twelve point plan for the project which included local representation on the drainage board, transfer of state lands to this board, a \$25,000,000 bond issue, applying drainage tax to school lands, carrying out of present contracts, continuing present boundaries of the district, paying commissioners \$3600 each yearly and expenses, and expending \$50,000 for an experiment station with \$5,000 yearly for maintenance.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., May 25, 1917. Conforming with Senate Concurrent Resolution number 6, the Senate Committee on Public Lands and House Committee on Canals and Drainage held a joint meeting and public hearing on the action to be taken in regard to the Everglades problem on the night of April 17, 1917. Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at the Sixteenth Regular Session Under the 1885 Constitution, 332-333.

<sup>26</sup> Florida Times-Union, March 25, 1918. Elliot added that locks were being constructed on the Caloosahatchee and North New River Canals. The contractors had been forced to change the boilers on one dredge to burn wood, and were afraid two others would have to be converted if the fuel situation did not improve.

land the State Chemist, Rufus E. Rose, wrote in July, 1919, that more perfect drainage was necessary for the vast bulk of the Everglades organic soils.

At the present time, excepting a comparatively narrow belt immediately surrounding Lake Okeechobee, which has been subject to drainage and the circulation of water and air at divers time, since the first State Canals were cut in 1881-82, there is comparatively but little drained land, except the spoil banks of the State Canals, though there are large areas of dried land.<sup>27</sup>

However, the Board of Drainage Commissioners had expressed the belief publicly the previous year that a quarter million acres of 'Glades lands were in a good condition from a drainage standpoint, and that the placing of the finishing touches on the works then under construction would provide main canals  
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for a half million more acres.

There can be no doubt that the Everglades, when opened and developed will present to the world the most magnificent array of rich muck lands that the world now has upon its surface; at the same time the peculiar formation of the Everglades is of such nature that much experimentation must be done before ultimate success will crown the efforts of the men who cast their destinies in these muck soil lands.<sup>29</sup>

With these words Governor Catts, in an "about-face" on the Everglades from his speech to the previous session, requested the legislature to locate experimental farms in the region south of Okeechobee before all the choice lands were

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27 R. E. Rose, "Drainage Versus Drying of Productive Soils," Florida Quarterly Bulletin of the Agricultural Department, XXIX (July 1, 1919), 88.

28 Florida Times-Union, August 1, 1918.

29 Journal of the State Senate of Florida for the Session of 1919,<sup>27</sup>.

taken up by settlers, men of larger means, and corporations. Catts laid particular emphasis on the opportunity for the State to experiment with sugar cane as well as with truck, forage, grain, and citrus crops.

Calling the attention of the legislature to the combustible character of the organic soils of the Everglades, the executive pointed out that the practice of grazing cattle and hogs on the adjacent prairies had led to the custom of stockmen burning the grazing lands over during the spring dry season, which in turn spread to the muck, "destroying in a year millions of dollars of this rich muck composite."<sup>30</sup> Catts recommended "very strongly" that the legislature provide means for fire guards outfitted with "fire-fighting apparatus for the protection of these valuable sections."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1919, 29. The 1919 legislature enacted Chapter 7362, Laws of Florida, which amended Chapter 6456, 1913, to the extent that the most favorably located lands in the Everglades Drainage District had their drainage tax scale raised to 28¢ an acre through 1920; 30¢ through 1923; and 35¢ through 1927; and the assessment was raised for the majority of the remaining acreage in a like proportion. The act further authorized the Drainage Commissioners to issue negotiable coupon bonds not to exceed \$6,000,000. General Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at its seventeenth Regular Session Under the Constitution of 1885, 154-194. Cited hereafter as 1919 Session Laws.

<sup>31</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1919, 29.

The early settlers had not been bothered by high water. When the Palm Beach Drainage and Highway District began ditching, residents on the lake complained that such works lowered the water levels too far. As a result of this complaint excavations in the highway district were dropped for a time. In general, the period from 1918 to 1922 was one of low water and<sup>32</sup> fires burned actively over the Everglades.

The mass of sawgrass and muck soil were a dandy combination for fires. The fires could not be stopped once started as a lot of the land was above water level. The small fires of trappers and campers would smoulder for days until favorable conditions arose for their spreading.<sup>33</sup>

Acting on Gatts' recommendation the 1919 legislature enacted Chapter 7943, Laws of Florida, which made careless, wilful, or malicious setting or neglect of fires in the Everglades Drainage District a misdemeanor punishable by a \$500 fine or six months imprisonment. The second section of the act authorized the employment of one or more fire wardens or patrols and the promulgation and enforcement of fire rules by<sup>34</sup> the Board of Commissioners of the District.

In compliance with Chapter 7943 the Board of Commissioners hired Andrew Carter of Arcadia and Moore Haven as a fire warden at a salary of \$200 a month. Carter appeared before the Board on July 7, 1919, and received his authorization and plans to

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<sup>32</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., IV, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Laws of Florida, 1919, 327-328.

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combat the muck fires. Six months later Carter was dismissed as the Board decided his services were not needed in the wet season, and A. R. Richardson, assistant drainage engineer for the Board, was given the fire warden's job as collateral duty. John Newhouse commented that the more preventive work done by the wardens and the settlers the worse the fires got. In the spring of 1922 a strong wind blew the fire almost over Okeelanta, and a number of muck roads in the vicinity burned up. After some experience at fighting these fires, the wardens and deputies, according to Newhouse, burned out the dangerous spots.<sup>37</sup>

Another consequence of the drainage and ensuing low water was the subsidence of the soil, greatest at its highest altitude along the lake shore. In the spring of 1921 the Board of Drainage Commissioners discussed the construction of a dike from Moore Haven to Ritta, on the eastern side of the Miami Canal, but because of meager finances no action was taken until the middle of August.<sup>38</sup> At that time the Board contracted with Ben Johnson to excavate and pile muck for a dike from

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35 E. D. D. "Minutes," III, 263

36 Ibid., IV, 4.

37 John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 144-145. The 1921 legislature amplified the 1919 law by declaring fire a "common enemy" and an informer's reward of \$5 for information leading to the arrest of any intentional or unintentional fire lighter without a permit from a legal warden or deputy was authorized. Chapter 8414, Laws of Florida, 1921.

38 E. D. D. "Minutes," III 30. It was estimated in 1921 that muck soil would shrink up to 50% or more of its depth under drainage and cultivation, and that the deeper the water table in the soil the more the subsidence. F. C. Elliot, "Tests on Run-off from Muck Soil in the Everglades," Engineering News-Record, LXXXVII (July 28, 1921), 157-158.

Moore Haven to Sand Point (Clewiston). <sup>39</sup>

Further evidence of the compaction and shrinkage of Okeechobee's shore, twenty-one feet above sea level, was given in the direction of the Trustee-Commissioners to the chief drainage engineer in 1921. Elliot was authorized by Governor Cary Hardee and his fellow officials to proceed to Washington and contact the War Department engineers regarding a change in the May, 1912, permit setting Okeechobee's level at sixteen feet. The board pointed out a two to four foot drop in the land bordering the shore and, believing that it would settle further, sought to bring the big body of water down to fourteen feet to provide a safe margin. <sup>40</sup> The high water in the latter part of 1922 was sufficient proof of the need of the then unfinished St. Lucie control canal as well as a levee to protect the lake flooded lands of the upper Everglades. An earth and sand levee stretched from Moore Haven to Pelican Bay by 1926 but its irregular height and poor construction did not withstand the wave action of the lake and breaks

<sup>39</sup> E. D. D. "Minutes," III, 143. On December 11, 1922, Homer Vivian of Pahokee sought the aid of the Drainage Board to close Pelican Lake by a dike to protect the Pahokee town-site. The Board agreed to construct the requested work as soon as funds became available. *Ibid.*, IV, 270.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 63; I. I. B. *Minutes*, IX, 443-445. Lowering of the underground water supply caused the Miami Water Company to petition the Drainage Board for the use of the Miami Canal waters in 1921. E. D. D. "Minutes," III, 183.

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occurred.

The Everglades settlers slowly realized that the State drainage program would have to be supplemented by sub-districts. The creation of the Palm Beach Drainage and Highway District, later incorporated into the South Florida Conservancy District, in 1919 was the first of the sub-drainage districts in the upper Everglades patterned on the N. B. Broward District set up two years earlier. By 1921 eighty miles of ditches had been dug. Although the flood of 1922 slowed up the work there was some progress the following year, but the high waters of 1924 brought the definite conclusion that pumping would form a necessary addition to gravity drainage.<sup>42</sup> The move to add the sub-drainage districts brought a recommendation from Governor Catts in 1919 to the legislature to pass legislation which would guard the interests of the State and other property owners in the matters of bond flotation and taxes.<sup>43</sup> The lawmakers complied with an act, Chapter 7866, Laws of Florida, that required sponsors of proposed sub-districts in the Everglades Drainage District to submit their data to the Board of Commissioners and to a court of the State for a public hearing before approval.<sup>44</sup>

41 John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 178.

42 Ibid., III, 121. Following the Broward and South Florida Conservancy sub-districts were Gladeview, Geerworth, Disston Island, Pahokee, Pelican, Sugarland, and Brown. The Conservancy District covered 300,000 acres south and southeast of the lake. Its yearly taxes ranged from 50¢ an acre for lake front lands to 10¢ an acre on the back lands. Newhouse wrote that the costs of pumping installations doubled these taxes and that in some ways the area was worse off than ever.

43 Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1919, 43.

44 Laws of Florida, 1919, 198-206.

In the spring of both 1921 and 1922 the water table sank to very low levels, only to rise and flood the land with the advance of the rainy season. In 1922 the water got so low that transportation on the Lauderdale Canal was brought to a stop, but the summer rains pushed the water a foot and a half above the farm land at Okeelanta.<sup>45</sup> Drainage and navigation were two major problems in the 'Glades in the early days. The boatmen wanted high water; the farmers wanted low water. F. C. Elliot, the State's chief drainage engineer, tried to settle the controversy by setting up committees from both groups to control the water levels to mutual advantage with the two locks in the North New River Canal.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, 1922 was a black year for the Everglades. The rainfall for the nine months ending September 30 was reported to be more than ten inches in excess of the annual average for the entire year. The towns of Bare Beach, Okeelanta, and Clewiston were all under water and southwest of Moore Haven was a body of water a half mile wide and forty miles long.<sup>47</sup>

Governor Cary A. Hardee made a strong plea to the legislature in his first message in 1921, as had several of his

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<sup>45</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 139-140, 169. T. E. Will wrote in 1927 that he was driven from the Everglades in 1921, but that he had since fought for "Water Control and Roads to be followed by Rational, Practical, Planned Settlement and Development." T. E. Will "Confessions of a Conservationist," Memorandum in Will Collection.

<sup>46</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 139-140.

<sup>47</sup> Florida Times-Union, October 5, 1922. The Drainage Board had let a contract for the excavation of the Indian Prairie Canal, opening the lands northwest of Lake Okeechobee on March 17, 1922. The prices had gone up to 16¢ a cubic yard for earth and 50¢ a cubic yard for rock from the 1912 levels of 8¢ and 20¢ respectively. E. D. D. "Minutes," IV, 63.



predecessors, for the establishment of an agricultural experiment station in the Everglades. Hardee stated that the solution of water removal was without question, but that the problem of reclamation would not be solved until agriculture was placed on a sound basis, and that the entire justification for drainage rested on the assumption that soil when drained would be available for agriculture.<sup>48</sup> The governor informed the legislature that the Drainage Board had recently made a trip through the 'Glades and was impressed with the possibilities, progress, and work accomplished.

With the passage of Chapter 8442, Laws of Florida, pursuant to Hardee's request the long sought experiment station was born. The South Florida station was incorporated into the Florida experiment station organization under the State Boards of Control and Education, with an appropriation of \$10,000 annually for the years 1922 and 1923 and \$5,000 annually thereafter from the Board of Commissioners of the Everglades Drainage District and like sums from the general fund of the State Treasury.<sup>49</sup>

In the following September at a meeting of the Boards of Control and Education, Wilmon Newell, director of the Florida

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<sup>48</sup> Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1921, 19-20. Newhouse recorded in his reminiscences that T. J. Campbell of West Palm Beach had been elected to the State Senate in 1920 and had pushed the bill through the 1921 legislature. John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 155.

<sup>49</sup> Laws of Florida, 1921, 154-157. In accordance with Chapter 8842 the Trustees deeded section 3, Township 44 South, Range 37 East to the State Boards of Control and Education on August 24, 1921. I.I.B. Minutes, XIV, 77-78.

Experiment Stations, and F. C. Elliot, chief drainage engineer, were made a committee to visit the site four miles east of Belle Glade on the Hillsboro Canal and make recommendations. Later, in November at a joint meeting of the above two boards and the Internal Improvement Trustees, it was agreed to proceed with the building program of ditching, docks, and housing under the direction of the Board of Commissioners of the Everglades Drainage District. The work progressed slowly on account of the floods of 1922; however, by August 28, 1923, the Drainage Board had drained the section and constructed two frame buildings of two stories each which it turned over to the State Board of Education.<sup>50</sup>

The sale of \$2,500,000 worth of bonds to Spitzer, Rorick, and Company of Toledo, Ohio, on July 22, 1920, closed out the \$6,000,000 total authorized by the legislature in 1917. The construction expenses in 1920 were averaging \$100,000 a month and it was the plan of the Drainage Board to have the bonds taken up at about that rate.<sup>51</sup> At that time the St. Lucie

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50 I.I.B. Minutes, XV, 112; University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1922, 18R-21R; Bureau of Immigration, State of Florida Department of Agriculture, All Florida, 47.

51 E. D. D. "Minutes," III, 76-90, 99. Chapter 8413, Laws of Florida, 1921 again amended the basic 1913 drainage district act, Chapter 6456, in raising assessments and authorizing a total of \$7,750,000 in bonds to be issued. Laws of Florida, 1921, 64-103. The same legislature also levied a one mill maintenance tax on all real and personal property in the Everglades Drainage District, Chapter 8412. Ibid, 63-64. On January 21, 1922; the Drainage Board issued more bonds to the extent of \$1,750,000. E. D. D. "Minutes," IV, 15.

Canal was about forty-five per cent complete, and the opinion was expressed that

When this amount is expended it is expected that all property of the Everglades between the Miami Canal and the St. Lucie Canal will be drained, with the exception that farm ditches will have to be constructed to make it ready for cultivation. 52

In the fifteen years from 1908 through 1922 the Internal Improvement Trustees had grossed \$2,449,486.29 on land sales, less the twenty-five percent due the State School Fund. 53

The Internal Improvement Trustees had certain lands on the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee platted and these they advertised for sale in 1917 in five to thirty acre tracts ranging in price from \$30 to \$125 an acre. Two years later the Trustees offered Okeechobee custard apple lands at not less than \$35 an acre in 40 acre lots, one to a purchaser. 54

## 2. Sugar and the Land Boom

Results obtained so far indicate that the large outlay required for the purpose of carrying on this great work was fully justified, as the drained lands are producing large crops without the use of fertilizers of any kind, and the property is being rapidly purchased at good prices by substantial settlers . . .

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52 Florida Times-Union, July 26, 1920.

53 E. D. D. "Minutes," XI, 385, XII, 150, 307, XIII, 147, 310, XIV, 135, 281.

54 I.I.B. Minutes, XI, 354-355, XIII, 84. In 1917, the Trustees established a policy of leasing not more than 20 acres to a person at \$4 per acre per year. Ibid., XII, 139.

there is little doubt that in the near future the Country surrounding Lake Okeechobee will be producing vast quantities of sugar. . . .<sup>55</sup>

The settlement of the upper Everglades continued; after the war many of the newcomers were veterans seeking a new start. General business prosperity and the first rumblings of the coming real-estate boom were felt in the Everglades in the early 1920's.

The farmers flocked into the lake area after the war, seeking cheap, highly productive land, and began the foundation of the present commercial vegetable industry. They continued to hang on, notwithstanding the tremendous losses generally suffered by the flood of '22 and subsequent bank failure at Moore Haven, the flood of '24 when the territory generally had 19 inches of rain in 3 days in October. . . .<sup>56</sup>

The post-war depression of agriculture which affected most of the nation had little reflection in the truck gardens of South Florida. With the establishment of truck produce, improved cropping methods, shorter water hauls to Clewiston and West Palm Beach, good prices, a new bank at Canal Point, better houses instead of tar-paper shacks, the residents of the upper 'Glades were convinced that the large profits from the winter vegetables would more than compensate for the money needed in preparing the soil, heavy drainage taxes, and the expenses incurred in farming the organic soil.<sup>57</sup>

"The hard struggles of a pioneering terri-

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<sup>55</sup> George F. Miles, Manufacturer's Record quoted in Literary Digest, LXII (August 9, 1919), 23-24.

<sup>56</sup> Testimony of J. E. Beardsley, 1942 Migration Hearings, 12560.

<sup>57</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 166.

tory seemed to be almost past. . . Nevermore would land have to be broken or cultivated by hand,"<sup>58</sup>

Interest in the use of 'Glades land for sugar cane production came to a definite focus in the last years of the first World War when sugar was retailed as high as thirty cents a pound, which was sufficient impetus for the farmers who had formerly had only a small patch of cane to put their plantings on a commercial basis.<sup>59</sup> In a pamphlet issued in the promotion of sugar cane growth in the Jacksonville area in 1918, the author pointed to the relative costs of producing an average of thirty-five tons of cane on muck soils of Florida for \$16.66 an acre as compared with \$20.56 for Cuba, \$37.95 for Hawaii, \$41.68 for Puerto Rico, and \$60.18 for Louisiana.<sup>60</sup> During the 1918-1919 season Bell and Johnson and S. W. Bollinger harvested 120 acres of Otaheite cane in the Pelican Bay section on the eastern shore of Lake Okeechobee; the cane was hauled to Canal Point, then barged to Okeechobee, and shipped by railroad to the Stevens Syrup Mill at Jacksonville.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 169.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., III, 118.

<sup>60</sup> C. Lyman Spencer, The Sugar Situation, 64. These figures were based on an average of 14% sucrose or 240 pounds of sugar to a ton of cane. Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> F. D. Stevens, "History of Florida Sugar Operations," 18. R. A. Conkling, Palm Beach County Agent, wrote in November, 1919: "I am convinced that trucking should be a side issue and that cane should be the main crop. . . From twenty to forty tons can be grown on land in the Lake Worth Drainage District, if properly prepared and cultivated." Prospectus of Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, 13.

A commercial planting of sugar cane was begun in 1920 east of Moore Haven at what is now known as Benbow by Judge John C. Gramling of Miami where he had bought several hundred acres of custard apple muck for \$6,000.<sup>62</sup> Gramling had gone to Louisiana and bought some equipment which turned out to be for syrup making rather than sugar refining. The planting consisted of 125 acres and it was expected to purchase the product of 50 acres in addition from chicken-yard patches along the shore line. Lack of water control, high prices paid for the land, and insufficient capital investment were responsible for the failure of the enterprise.

There were about 200 acres of cane actually planted and a mill was operated for at least one season. The Martha Washington Candy Company subsequently acquired the property but the project was abandoned.<sup>63</sup>

Prospects for sugar production in Florida took a decided turn when the Pennsylvania Sugar Company of Philadelphia set out an experimental planting in the fall of 1919 which was increased to 700 acres in 1920.<sup>64</sup> The plantings were later extended and a \$500,000, 1,500 ton sugar mill was placed in operation. Ernest R. Graham, manager of the holdings sixteen

<sup>62</sup> F. D. Stevens, "History of Florida Sugar Operations," 18.

<sup>63</sup> J. E. Beardsley, Testimony, 1942 Migration Hearings, 12563. In a survey made in 1920 from South Bay twelve miles west to the county line Beardsley had counted seven syrup mills on as many farms. Ibid:

<sup>64</sup> I.I.B. Minutes, XIII, 105-109, 239-243, XIV, 81-83. John Newhouse remembered that the Pennsylvania Sugar Company had bought some of its seed from the Okeelanta settlers. John Newhouse, "Memories," III, 117.

miles northwest of Miami on the Miami Canal, fought high water for several years before the project was given up.

It is now known that soil deficiencies and the shallow depth of the muck in that locality were also contributing factors in the decision of the sugar company to abandon sugar cane for truck cropping and cattle grazing on its lands west of

Hialeah.<sup>65</sup> The Pensuco mill later became the nucleus for the present Clewiston sugar house.<sup>66</sup>

Wilmon Newell, speaking for the Florida Experiment Stations, requested help from the Internal Improvement Trustees in 1920 to the extent of \$1,000 to fight the mosaic disease then beginning to infest the South Florida cane fields, but was advised that the Board had no statutory authority to make such a grant.<sup>67</sup> For this and other reasons including the mild climate, the United States Department of Agriculture established a sugar cane breeding station at Canal Point in 1920.

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<sup>65</sup> Howard Sharp, "Sugar Industry in South Florida is Now Established," Fort Lauderdale Sentinel, September 9, 1924; I. I. B. Minutes, XVI, 476; E. R. Lloyd, "Agricultural Possibilities of the Everglades," Senate Documents, Number 85, 71 Congress, 2 Session, 15-16.

<sup>66</sup> F. D. Stevens, "History of Florida Sugar Operations," 20.

<sup>67</sup> I. I. B. Minutes, XIII, 165.

Here were tested thousands of cane varieties, as well as types of soil best adapted to sugar cultivation. Cane cuttings resistant to frost, mosaic, and various root diseases were developed and distributed. 68

About this time F. E. Bryant and E. T. Anderson, of the firm of Bryant and Anderson which had been dealing in Everglades lands for eleven years, organized the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, incorporated under the laws of Massachusetts,

. . . to develop a sugar, syrup and food products industry of South Florida, by establishing first of all a plant for the manufacture of cane syrup and the manufacture also of guava-jelly, guava, orange and grapefruit marmalades, kumquat preserves, crushed pineapple, and other tropical products for which there is a big demand at highly profitable prices. The final aim of the company is the manufacture of plantation refined sugar to be used in connection with its food product business and for sale to dealers. The sugar operation will be reached as fast as the acreage planted to cane and financing will permit. 69

The company planted enough cane in 1920 to furnish seed to local farmers and promised to purchase their crops to grind for syrup. This outfit sought a goal of 5,000 acres in cane in

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68 Fritzie P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," 1942 Migration Hearings, 12957. The Canal Point station, situated at the lake entrance of the Palm Beach Canal, was reputed to be the most northerly cane breeding station in the world. Everglades News (Canal Point), October 17, 1924.

69 Prospectus of Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, 3. The Okeechobee Sugar Corporation was organized in 1920 and sought to float a bond issue to purchase 35,000 acres in Lee and De Soto Counties stretching from Sand Point on the lake shore to an eight mile frontage on the Hicpochee Nine Mile Canal. This corporation proposed to plant sugar cane and erect a syrup mill to process the product of the fields. With some smooth figuring the corporation planned to net \$762,000 for the 1920-1921 season on 2,000 acres of cane, including harvesting 32,000 tons of its own product for seed. Prospectus of Okeechobee Sugar Corporation, 1.



three years. The usual glowing figures were quoted to show the great profits which would accrue from syrup and sugar milling. Upon completion of their proposed financing, Bryant and Anderson planned to capitalize at \$1,000,000, and were seeking \$400,000 in 1920 in eight per cent \$5 common stocks to be converted into preferred stock at a later date.<sup>70</sup>

In August, 1921, Bryant appeared before the Trustees of the Improvement Fund relative to a transfer and purchase of lands owned and sought by his company. Bryant was able to consolidate his holdings into acreage along the Palm Beach Canal about four miles from Canal Point.<sup>71</sup> The Bryant Company agreed to construct a \$200,000 sugar mill of at least 400 tons daily capacity within twenty months and posted a \$5,000 faith bond. The Trustees were advised on May 14, 1923, that the mill had been finished as required in the articles of the 1921 agreement.<sup>72</sup>

The Florida Sugar and Food Products Company hired Anthony R. McLane, a well-recommended sugar land expert and engineer with twenty-four years experience in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii, to make a survey and report of the lands between Canal Point and Sand Point in the summer of 1921. After spending three and a half months in the Everglades, during which he walked from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, McLane

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<sup>70</sup> Prospectus of Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, 10-12.

<sup>71</sup> I. I. B. Minutes, XV, 72-76.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., XV, 49

submitted his findings on October 21.

McLane began his report by noting that sugar cane growing had long since passed the experimental stage around Lake Okeechobee, that fields planted in 1913 were still producing from the original ratoon. There were some 800 acres in cane, including 125 belonging to the Bryant Company, on or near the eastern and southern shores of the lake. <sup>74</sup> The sugar engineer and agricultural consultant was enthusiastic over the fact that frosts had never killed Everglades cane, that no fertilizer was required in the deep muck soils, and that there was no necessity for irrigation. The treeless, level land was ideal, in his opinion, for machine cultivation and the volunteering of individual land owners to plant as high as 1,000 acres was a godsend which would relieve the company of financing the first crop. <sup>75</sup> McLane viewed the long dry winter season as extremely beneficial thus permitting a harvest season of 180 days, yet with cool enough weather to bring the sucrose content up to sixteen per cent. This expert found that on a basis of

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73 Anthony R. McLane, "Report on the Lands on the east side of Lake Okeechobee between Canal Point and Sand Point in Palm Beach County, Florida and the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company Lands at Canal Point on the West Palm Beach Canal and its Proposed Sugar Estate Development," 1, 10. Loaned to the author, in unpublished manuscript form by F. E. Bryant, Azucar, Florida. Hereinafter cited as "McLane Sugar Report."

74 *Ibid.*; 1-2.

75 *Ibid.*, 3. "The farmers in the district are all industrious and intelligent workers and are eager to see the new enterprise a success. Their efforts and funds will solve labor and finance in some degree for the company."

comparative costs Everglades lands should produce sugar five to ten per cent cheaper than any other area in the world.

I recommend to anyone who will consider making an investment in a sugar plantation and mill, the area embraced in this report in preference to Cuba, Hawaii, or Porto Rico, as in my opinion his investment will be safer and financial returns larger than could be obtained from any one of these countries. 76

In a letter to the stockholders of the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, dated July 24, 1922, the officers reported satisfactory progress in planting and construction of the mill, which by this time had been changed to an outright sugar factory since "the opportunity for a larger and more profitable undertaking is so apparent. . . ." <sup>77</sup> In order to finance the various operations the sugar company announced that it was seeking a \$100,000 loan, which was open to stockholders, and would not increase the stock until the mill was in full operation, "when a better deal can be secured from brokers." <sup>78</sup>

In the spring of 1922 W. S. Blatchley revisited the points on Lake Okeechobee he had first seen in 1911. Taking a train from Lakeland to Moore Haven, he mused over the voyage he had made down the Kissimmee River years before. Moore

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76 Anthony R. McLane, "McLane Sugar Report," 12. "Sugar grown in the district reported on will meet the competition of sugar grown in any of the countries from which our supply is now drawn, and in my opinion, returning a greater profit, without tariff protection." Ibid.

77 F. E. Bryant and E. T. Anderson, Letter to The Stockholders of the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company, 2-3.

78 Ibid., 3.

Haven, he found, was now twelve miles from the lake shore  
 where once the waves had lapped.<sup>79</sup> The former Indiana state  
 geologist observed that

In spite of the five big canals, much of the land in this region which is used for truck gardens is overflowed during the rainy season and the settlers have to move out until the water disappears. During the winter and spring the muck surface often becomes so dry that only deep rooted plants can survive. 80

The winter and spring drouth of 1922 was followed by a rainy season which saw the water rise in September and October and remain until February and March of 1923, putting many  
 men along the lake shore out of work.<sup>81</sup> Matured sugar cane losses ran from ten to fifty per cent with considerable damage to the young cane, and destruction generally to avacado and vegetable plantings. The Everglades Drainage District Commissioners felt that the residents of the area knew that the region would not be entirely safe until the program was complete, but that "the conditions" get worse as the "infor-  
 mation" traveled away from the big lake.<sup>82</sup>

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79 W. S. Blatchley, In Days Agone, 317. Blatchley found the lake area cooler than the sandy ridge section to the north. "Frost occurs here often when the higher areas are not affected by it."

80 Ibid., 319

81 John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 171.

82 E. D. D. Minutes, "IV, 1-2. The 1922 rains were the heaviest since the records were begun in 1888.

There was no flood in 1923 but the water again became too high for farming. W. A. McRae, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, reported: "I wish to say that gloom seems to be on every hand among men who have heretofore stood by the board loyally, and who in the face of everything were optimistic."<sup>83</sup> The trouble was explained by the heavy rains of 1923 which followed the highest recorded precipitation of 1922, and which could be solved only by larger canals. McRae found the Hillsboro Canal incomplete and discharging but a small amount of water, while the area southwest of Moore Haven was in a deplorable condition. McRae urged the Internal Improvement Board to lend the Drainage Board a hand as further delays were seen to be fraught with danger to public and private interests.<sup>84</sup>

October of 1924 brought heavy rainfall to such an extent that Lake Okeechobee at Ritta rose seven and a half feet in five days.<sup>85</sup> The October rains, pushed higher by strong winds, made the water knee deep at Okeelanta and all agricultural enterprise was flooded out.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> I. I. B. Minutes, XV, 120.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., XV, 121

<sup>85</sup> Everglades News (Canal Point), October 31, 1924. Hereinafter cited as Everglades News following cessation of Ft. Lauderdale publication of same name.

<sup>86</sup> John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 172. All through these wet periods the Everglades News asked that the Palm Beach and other canals be blasted and excavated to permit water to flow into the ocean and not into the lake. In December, 1924 the paper stated that the Everglades were all right, but that the administration was all wrong, and that the canals should be made deep enough to avoid such floods as those of 1922, 1923, and 1924. Everglades News, December 12, 1924.

The inability of the Drainage Board to provide better main canal drainage brought about the conviction that the only hope for the 'Glades lay in mechanical pumping systems.<sup>87</sup> Within fourteen months such plants were installed or on order by all the sub-drainage districts around Lake Okeechobee.<sup>88</sup>

During the first few days of the 1923 legislature the Trustee-Commissioners invited several representatives from Palm Beach, Broward, St. Lucie counties, and the lower east coast to meet with them and consider the inclusion of the coastal area from Stuart to Miami in the Everglades Drainage District. It was decided to draw up a bill for a one mill ad valorem property tax and have the legislators submit it to their voters for discussion prior to introduction into the legislature.<sup>89</sup>

The 1923 legislature upped the annual drainage tax assessments to eighty-two cents for zone one lands through 1926, and ninety-two cents thereafter, with other zones except marginal areas coming in for a proportionate raise. The legislature also upped the bond limits for the district to

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<sup>87</sup> Everglades News, May 1, 1926. "In view of the refusal of the Everglades Drainage District to take the rock out of the canals, the only hopes of the 'Glades are pumping systems."

<sup>88</sup> Everglades News, July 30, 1926. The Gladeview development installed the first pumping system in 1922. John Newhouse, "Memories," III; 123.

<sup>89</sup> E. D. D. "Minutes" IV, 58.

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 \$11,250,000. By virtue of Chapter 10,026, Laws of Florida, 1925, the drainage taxes for zone one lands in the district were set at \$1.25 for 1925 and 1926 and \$1.50 thereafter, while the taxes in other zones, except certain lands exempted in the act, were similarly raised. The act also authorized the Drain-<sup>91</sup>age Commissioners to borrow up to \$14,250,000 in bonds. Spitzer, Rorick, and Company on June 16, 1925, took up the \$1,250,000 increase in new bonds, and also a \$8,950,000 re-<sup>92</sup>funding issue for maturing bonds.

Governor John W. Martin had, in his message of April 8, 1925, informed the legislature that he believed Florida was definitely committed to the reclamation of the Everglades, and although millions of dollars had been expended in the undertaking and many more would be required before it was<sup>93</sup> finished, "there can be no turning back."

If the first worry of the Everglades pioneers was the water table, their second was transportation. Mail, freight,

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90 Chapter 9119, Laws of Florida, 1923, 9-27. This act was approved on May 25, 1923. On May 26 the Drainage Commissioners authorized the issue of \$3,500,000 additional drainage bonds. E. D. D. "Minutes," IV, 77.

91 Laws of Florida, 1925, 15-39. The same body set up a board of fire wardens for the Everglades Drainage District and enacted into law a penalty of one year imprisonment or a \$5,000 fine for fire setting or refusal to carry out a legitimate order by a warden. Ibid., 191, 194-196.

92 E. D. D. "Minutes," V, 122.

93 Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1925, 17.

and passenger boats were prospering on Lake Okeechobee and its connecting waterways as late as 1926, but the muck roads slowly gave way to hard surfaced highways and railroads in

the 1920's.<sup>94</sup> W. J. Conners, the Buffalo, New York, politician who had successfully tried his hand at truck cropping and dairying along the Palm Beach Canal, turned to highway building in 1923. Conners and his associates met with the Trustee-Commissioners on March 17 and secured a contract to construct a toll road from Okeechobee City around the north-eastern shore of the lake to the bend in the Palm Beach Canal.

<sup>95</sup> Construction on the fifty mile highway began on April 23, 1923, and the strip was opened to traffic on July 4, 1924. Two thousand cars passed the toll houses, and a gala celebration was held at Okeechobee City with Governor Hardee, Governor-elect Martin, and Justice Rivers Buford of the State Supreme Court as speakers.<sup>96</sup> The procedure used in building the road was an innovation, in that marl was piled four feet deep and thirty feet wide on top of the muck to form the

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<sup>94</sup> For mail boat and other boat service see the Everglades News, November 6, 1925; W. S. Blatchley, In Days Agone, 316; John Newhouse, "Memories," III, 100.

<sup>95</sup> I. I. B. Minutes, XV, 24. The Trustees agreed to a 66 foot easement along the canal bank and to pay for 50% of the cost of excavating the necessary rock for the road bed. Conners agreed to build a hard surfaced road fifteen feet wide and to construct drawbridges over all canals 40' x 10' or larger. Ibid.; E. D. D. "Minutes," IV, 56-57.

<sup>96</sup> Everglades News, March 11, 1924; John Newhouse, "Memories," V, 181-184. The Conners Highway costing approximately \$1,000,000, was leased in 1930 at \$35,000 a year to Palm Beach County, and was bought by the State in 1931.



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roadbed.

Although a cross-state highway was opened in December, 1923, from West Palm Beach to Ft. Myers it was not until 1928 that hard surfacing of the road had been completed. Prior to its macadamization the road had almost always been negotiable, at least in low gear.<sup>98</sup> A somewhat more publicized highway than the road along Okeechobee's south shore was the Tamiami Trail. William Stuart Mill, news editor of the Miami Herald, enlisted the interest of James F. Jaudon, tax assessor of Dade County, in the early 1920's. Jaudon was something of an authority on road construction as well as an enthusiast over the Everglades.<sup>99</sup> Lee, Dade, and Collier counties were induced by Jaudon and Mill to spend \$500,000 as a starter on about sixty miles of rough road, beginning in 1916. The State Road Department took over in 1924 and completed the Miami-Ft. Myers road, digging a canal and using the rock therefrom for the road bed.<sup>100</sup> The Tamiami Trail was opened in April, 1928, having cost \$9,000,000; 3,000,000

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97 For details of its construction see "Unique Floating Toll Road Across the Everglades of Florida," Engineering News-Record, XCIII (September 11, 1924), 412-417.

98 John Newhouse, "Memories," III, 100; Everglades News, September 4, 1925, February 4, 1927, March 9, 1928; E. D. D. Minutes, V, 34, 37. In January, 1927, traffic was permitted on the Belle Glade-Pahokee road and South Bay Okeelanta Road. Everglades News, January 28, 1927. In 1926, "A ferry for automobiles from Canal Point to Clewiston supplies the missing link in the cross-state highway until it can be completed." Frank Parker Stockbridge and Frank Holliday Parker, Florida in the Making, 236.

99 Federal Writers Project, "The Everglades," Florida Highways, IX (July, 1941), 38.

100 Miami Metropolis, April 9, 1918; Miami Daily News, April 22, 1928.

pounds of dynamite were used in securing rock. This road reduced what had been a ten day journey in 1926 to a six hour ride in 1928.<sup>101</sup>

Railroad construction in the Everglades occupied no small place in the development of the lakeshore region. In 1925 the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad purchased the Moore Haven and Clewiston Railroad, and then added an extension to Lake Harbor at the Miami Canal.<sup>102</sup> Beginning in 1924, the Florida East Coast Railway extended its Maytown-Okeechobee branch to Canal Point, and the first refrigerated vegetable freight car left that place on February 20, 1925, for northern markets.<sup>103</sup> The East Coast reached Belle Glade in 1926, and met the Atlantic Coast Line at Lake Harbor in 1928.<sup>104</sup>

The first railroad across South Florida came as a result of a \$7,000,000 bond issue by the Seaboard Air Line Railroad under the leadership of S. Davies Warfield. The Seaboard laid 238 miles of track in 1924 and 1925 when it extended its line from Coleman to Miami for what was called the fastest record ever made in railroad

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101 Miami Daily News, April 22, 1928; Federal Writers Project, "The Everglades," loc. cit., 38.

102 Everglades News, January 9, 1925.

103 Ibid.; February 20, 1925.

104 Ibid., September 14, 1928; E. D. D. "Minutes," V. 8-10; VII, 23.

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 construction. The Seaboard passed through the northern margin of the Everglades and real estate activities were sponsored by the railroad as a method of selling its land. The carrier organized the Land Company of Florida to handle 160,000 acres which accrued "through advancement coming from the development of the railroad."<sup>106</sup>

Indicative of the trend of land use in the Everglades after the first World War was the venture undertaken by Brown Company, a Portland, Maine, paper manufacturing corporation. In connection with the company's pulp mill, a chemical mill was operated to produce chlorine to bleach the pulp, but a by-product in the form of hydrogen gas was used to treat cottonseed and peanut oils, thus producing vegetable table and cooking fats.<sup>107</sup> The war cut off supplies of vegetable oil, and later a tariff placed on such oils forced the Brown

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105 "The First Railroad Across Florida," Literary Digest, LXXXIV (March 7, 1925), 82. The first Seaboard passenger Service into West Palm Beach was a train with Warfield and Governor John W. Martin aboard which arrived on January 30, 1925. Everglades News, January 30, 1925. The Seaboard secured a number of options on canal bank rights of way to establish branch lines into the Everglades, but it allowed them to lapse. E. D. D. "Minutes," V, 235; VI, 78-91.

106 "The First Railroad Across Florida," loc. cit., 82. Shares of stock in the railroad land company was given as a bonus for the purchase of the Seaboard's bonds to finance the Palm Beach-Miami extension. Homer B. Vanderblue, "The Florida Land Boom," Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, III (August, 1927), 263.

107 S. Davies Warfield, editor, Conference on Florida Everglades Reclamation, 1927, 82. Hereinafter cited as 1927 Baltimore Everglades Conference.

Company to seek a cheaper supply. J. C. Sherman, a Brown official, spending a winter on the lower east coast, became intrigued with the possibilities offered by the Everglades to raise peanuts and on returning to Maine interested O. B. Brown. The latter rented a farm in the lower 'Glades and produced eight very satisfactory crops, after which J. C. Sherman approached the Florida Improvement Trustees and purchased several thousand acres on the Hillsboro Canal, fourteen miles from Lake Okeechobee.

This company cleared 1,300 acres of land and by 1927 had it under cultivation, but the high water and hurricane flooded the peanut plantings out. Under scientific direction twenty-six crops were tried, including cotton, tobacco, celery, and sugar cane, successfully. The plan was to raise truck crops through the winter and peanuts in the summer. A peanut planting machine and other innovations including smudge pots and overhead irrigation were introduced.

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108 I.I.B: Minutes, IV, 29, 42-43, 64-67; John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 161. Newhouse stated that the Brown Company established "Shawano" (plantation name) in 1922 with the purchase of 10,000 acres.

109 S. D. Warfield, ed., 1927 Baltimore Everglades Conference, 83-84; John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 161-162. The "reclaiming disease" got the 1926 crop, and those peanuts dug were left in the field to be blown away by the hurricane. In 1927 the thousand acres were replanted and copper added to the soil resulting in a good crop in 1928, though this crop was harvested in the wet season. "The Brown Company went along slowly and surely in its development," and gave employment to many workers after the collapse of the 1928 boom, but when the 1929-32 depression came, the Brown Company shut down its 'Glades agricultural pursuit. John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 162-164.

O. B. Brown became so engrossed in the Everglades and its problems that he made two trips to Holland and checked on four hundred years of drainage; he found great similarity between Florida and Dutch situations. The Maine Manufacturer was adamant in his stand that the control of the water level through drainage was essential, and that "until that is done a man has no business to be in those Glades at all, because he cannot tell from one six months to another whatever he puts in is going to be a total failure or not." 110

Notwithstanding the high waters and floods of the rainy seasons of 1922, 1923, and 1924, cropping on the muck on the lake shore and along the eastern edge of the Everglades had been profitable to some.

During the last three years progress has been very great. Scores of truck farms have sprung up on the reclaimed lands. The reclaimed section around the southern end of Lake Okeechobee from January to June [1923] shipped \$4,000,000 worth of vegetable products. A little branch line railroad shipped out 1200 carloads of products for the North. 111

The Everglades News estimated that \$1,000,000 had been grossed from the ten mile stretch on the eastern shore of the big lake from Canal Point to Bacon's Point in the winter of 1924. Twelve hundred acres of tomatoes produced one thousand

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110 S. D. Warfield, ed., 1927 Baltimore Everglades Conference, 85.

111 Christian Science Monitor, January 11, 1924. A tomato canning plant was installed at Canal Point in the spring of 1925 and made a test run before the rains stopped the tomato picking. The cannery began regular runs in the spring of 1926. Everglades News, May 22, December 4, 1925.

car loads, averaging \$600 a car, while the remainder of the crop was made up of English peas, peppers, beans, and potatoes.<sup>112</sup> In March of 1925 a thousand hampers of beans averaged \$3.25 to \$3.50, and tomatoes sold for \$1.15 a crate.<sup>113</sup> January, 1926, saw beans go to \$5.00 a hamper as ten cars moved from Canal Point in two weeks.<sup>114</sup>

The report of the director of the Everglades Experiment Station near Belle Glade for the year ending in June, 1925, however, provided dismal reading. Floods of October had continued for sixty days killing two acres of orchard plantings which included pears, tung, avacados, bananas, figs, and citrus.<sup>115</sup> The high waters destroyed plantings of fifty different grasses, sugar cane, and beans. Valuable records, however, had been collected on the height for the water table

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<sup>112</sup> Everglades News, March 21, 1924. The Okeechobee fishing industry, from October 1, 1923, to May 1, 1924, dressed 6,500,000 pounds of fish which brought close to \$1,000,000 gross to four wholesale fish houses in Okeechobee City whose combined investments would not run over \$325,000. Some 32,000 barrels and 6,000 tons of ice were used in the fish packing houses. These figures did not include those of Moore Haven's two fish houses. Everglades News, May 16, 1924.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.; March 11, 1925.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., January 8, 1926.

<sup>115</sup> University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1925, 91R-95R. Dr. A. L. S. Shealy, Professor of Veterinary Science at the University of Florida, spent three of the summer months of 1924 at the Everglades station working on sterility and other stock troubles of the area. Ibid., 96R; Everglades News, June 27, 1924. John Newhouse recalled these early stock troubles and remarked on how many were cured with the addition of copper, iron, and other minerals to stock feed. John Newhouse, "Memories," V, 201.

and pumping statistics, together with daily records of temperature, humidity, canal levels, evaporation, frosts, and wind.

The report of the director of the station for 1925-1926 called attention to the completion of an area 160 acres in extent which had been completely diked. All drowned plantings had been reset and experiments had been made on a large variety of crops but with no conclusive results. Soil studies had proven, in the short time of the station's existence, that a two foot water table was to be favored in general over other heights. <sup>116</sup> The appointment of Robert V. Allison, former chemist and soil biologist of the Tropical Plant Research Foundation in Cuba, as a specialist at the Everglades station in 1926 was in line with the Board of Control's policy to enlighten Florida agriculturists on organic soil problems. <sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1926, 112R-125R. Hereinafter cited as Experiment Station Annual Report, 1926. Charles A. Walsh, of Davie, reported in 1924 on a ten acre citrus grove on Everglades muck which had produced its first crop in 1918. No cultivation, except a grass mower, and no fertilizer were used to 1924, when Walsh's crop averaged 4½ boxes per tree. Verna B. Vaniman, Florida Grower (Tampa), August 2, 1924.

<sup>117</sup> Everglades News, July 30, 1926. Everglades profits may be illustrated by the experience of W. F. Buchanan, of Canal Point, who "planted string beans in December and marketed them in February and March, obtaining an average of \$5.50 a bushel for 340 bushels. . . . In December he started his tomato seed bed, transplanting from it in February, after the beans had been harvested, and sold his tomato crop from the same acre for \$550. At the same time he grew on the same land fifty bushels of corn, worth \$1.25 a bushel. This gave him a total cash income from one acre of land of \$2,482.50, in a single short season. He could have grown another crop or two on the same land, but thought he was justified in taking things easy the rest of the year." F. P. Stockbridge and J. H. Perry, Florida in the Making, 230.

The heavy rains of 1922 had damaged the sugar cane plantings of the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company on the Palm Beach Canal and had forced the digging of extra ditches, the construction of dikes, and the installation of pumps. In 1923 the company produced the first white sugar ever made in South Florida.<sup>118</sup> It was reported that the Canal Point Company was cutting an average of sixty tons of cane per acre from its fields and seeking to buy cane from private growers. In 1924 a State Plant Board inspector located only 900 acres of cane around the southern and eastern shores of Okeechobee, a decrease of several hundred acres from previous years caused by the heavy rains of 1923.<sup>119</sup>

The vicissitudes of poor water control, rising expenses, poor transportation facilities, world sugar market conditions, and financial troubles combined to cause the Canal Point Company to practically cease operating in early 1925.<sup>120</sup> The resources of this company were taken over by the Celotex Company of Chicago, Illinois, which became interested in the Everglades in 1925 as a possible location for the growth of sugar cane to provide a source of the bagasse used in the manufacture of wallboard.<sup>121</sup>

118 "Cane Sugar at Canal Point," Florida Department of Agriculture Bulletin, XXI (1923), No. 3.

119 Everglades News, March 21, 1924. The Canal Point Company reported an average of 177.4 pounds of 96% sugar from each ton of cane ground through May. Ibid., May 23, 1924.

120 F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12957; John E. Dalton, Sugar: A Case Study in Government Control, 42-52. Hereinafter cited as Sugar.

121 Statement of J. E. Beardsley, 1942 Migration Hearings, 12560.



Engineers made the surveys in May, 1925, following which the Dahlberg interests purchased and leased land south and east of the lake until control over 160,000 acres of the muck lands was obtained. In June, 1925, drainage operations and a pumping station were contracted for at Clewiston and in December the Celotex manufacturer and his business associates absorbed the Florida Sugar and Food Products holdings at Canal Point. 122

The Dahlberg interests were incorporated as the Southern Sugar Company, but did not

. . . undertake to produce raw sugar commercially until a period of trial had demonstrated its feasibility. Experiments in drainage control were carried out on 35,000 acres by means of canals, ditches, and reversible pumps, and some 500 acres of seed cane were raised and tested before planting on a large scale. 123

In a review of the situation of the Everglades in 1927, the chief drainage engineer for the state emphasized that the value of the investments of private enterprise was then larger than the cost of all the drainage work to that date. It was estimated that the resident population of the drainage district approached 25,000 and that the income of the Okeechobee section of the Everglades approached fifty to sixty thousand dollars a day in the peak four weeks of the vegetable

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122 Everglades News, May 29, June 19, December 4, 25, 1925. F. P. Stockbridge and F. H. Perry, Florida in the Making, 127

123 F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12958.

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 season. The drainage engineer estimated the value of the state's Improvement Fund and School Lands in the drainage district at \$15,000,000 on which \$235,000 was being spent in drainage taxes each year.<sup>125</sup>

The land boom which had been budding in Florida in the years following the first World War broke into full bloom in 1924 and 1925. In 1924 the Clewiston townsite, aggregating 2,800 acres, which had been platted by Clewis and C'Brien at the beginning of the decade was sold for \$300,000 to J. T. Cook and others of St. Louis.<sup>126</sup> In May, 1924, F. E. Bryant, president of the Florida Sugar and Food Products outfit at Canal Point, remarked that good land in the Everglades would soon be selling for \$1,000 an acre; six months later the editor of the Everglades News wrote that the area should be settled in five and ten acre tracts.

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124 F. C. Elliot, "Draining the Everglades," reprint from The Florida Magazine, (July, 1924), 7.

125. Ibid., 11. The proposed Disston Island Drainage District, near Moore Haven, reported 200 farms with approximately 4,000 acres in cultivation, valued at \$250 an acre in 1924, plus 11,700 acres of uncultivated land valued at \$200 an acre. Everglades News, March 11, 1924.

126 Everglades News, October 10, 1924. The townsite was sold to the Dahlberg interests a short time after this. For a scholarly survey of the facts, figures, and fanfare which surrounded the Florida land boom of the early 1920's see Homer B. Vanderblue, "The Florida Land Boom," Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, III (May and August, 1927), 113-131, 252-269, which in turn cites a vast number of other articles and literature on the subject.

All of Palm Beach County can be settled like this. There can be 10,000 homes in localities where there isn't a house now--50,000 population, and ten million dollars wealth where now the land is assessed at under \$5.00 an acre. 127

The year 1925, in addition to being remembered as the big year of the real estate boom, was free from heavy rains and high waters and turned out to be a period of good markets for produce. 128 J. S. Phipps, W. J. Conners, and others secured a large tract extending along the south bank of the St. Lucie Canal and down the eastern shore of Lake Okeechobee in 1925 which was to be expanded into a model city of industry and trade. 129

Taking advantage of the activity in real estate, the trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund were asking \$500 an acre for lake front land along Okeechobee's southern and eastern shores, especially in the Pahokee section. Land away from the lake in the same section was priced at \$300 an acre. 120 A forty acre tract just outside of Ft. Lauderdale brought \$750

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127 Everglades News, May 23, December 19, 1924. Howard Sharp, a reporter on the Palm Beach Post, established the South Florida Developer on the east coast in 1921. He moved to Canal Point in March, 1924, where he began and edited the Everglades News. The paper never missed an issue, through high water or hurricane, and Sharp became a militant force in the fight of the people of the upper Everglades to develop the muckland. John Newhouse, "Memories," IV; 151, 159-160.

128 John Newhouse, "Memories," IV, 172.

129 E. D. D. "Minutes," V, 209; Everglades News, January 15, 1926.

130 I.I.B. Minutes, XVI, 134 (July 7, 1925).

an acre on August 11, 1925.<sup>131</sup> The 900,000 acres of Everglades lands held by the Trustees in 1926 were appraised by two writers at \$13,000,000, or \$15 an acre, whereas it was pointed out that the entire acreage of the district before 1905, or twenty years previous, had not been worth \$750,000.<sup>132</sup>

The policy of the Internal Improvement Board, however, is to sell none of the reclaimed land at less than one hundred and fifty dollars an acre [in 1926], and at that and higher figures every parcel offered for sale under the administration of Governor Martin has been eagerly bought.<sup>133</sup>

The Florida land boom reached its peak in the late fall of 1925; a reaction set in during the spring of 1926, but the collapse was evident in the summer of 1926, and acknowledged that fall. A student of the economics of the boom wrote in 1927 that recovery would be certain, but very gradual.

The two great assets of the state--a mild climate and relative proximity to the densely populated sections of the country--promise that, over a period of years, the recovery from the present depression will be both certain and substantial.<sup>134</sup>

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131. I.I.B. Minutes, XVI, 156. Everglades land sales made by the I.I. Trustees in 1925-26 aggregated 52,328 acres for \$1,052,661 or roughly \$20 an acre. Everglades News, January 7, 1930.

132 F. P. Stockbridge and J. H. Perry, Florida in the Making, 225.

133 Ibid., 228

134 H. B. Vanderblue, "The Florida Land Boom," loc. cit.,