

# *Davie — First Reclaimed Land in the Everglades*

VISIT TO THE FAMOUS SECTION IS A LESSON IN OPTIMISM AS THE FARMERS ARE ALL CONFIDENT OF THE FUTURE POSSIBILITIES OF THE LAND WHICH CONFIDENCE IS BACKED UP WITH PRESENT AND PAST RESULTS IN THE GROWING OF WONDERFUL CROPS

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One's brain convolutions are given a sudden and decidedly unexpected twist, which might by no means be called unpleasant, upon the occasion of one's first visit to the Davie farm. By the time the second visit takes place, the little tracks which we are taught are made in the matter by each new impression take some definite direction. After many visits one might perhaps just begin to realize what Davie means, what it stands for in relation to the future of Florida, and what is in store for those pioneers who are standing by the proposition through thick and thin, sure of success in the end.

Davie is in the Everglades. Yes, those same Everglades we all read about in the "jography" when the thrilling story of the "impenetrable swamp inhabited by alligators, huge snakes, monster turtles and brilliantly colored birds" was accompanied by a picture of the aforesaid swamp with its various population which was enough to make one's flesh creep. It has always been a mystery how those pictures were obtained in an "impenetrable" country.

## On a Level Plain

Cunningly hidden by Mother Nature behind a fringe of jungle which makes a trip up the New River exceedingly picturesque, if one journeys to Davie by that means from Fort Lauderdale, is the broad level plain stretching far out to the horizon, and embracing thousands upon thousands of acres of land in one corner of which is Davie, small in comparison with the whole, yet at the same time, the largest piece of absolutely reclaimed land in the Ever-

glades. Here, in deep, black soil, which fairly seems to exude richness, plants of every variety, which beggar description, grow, blossom, bear fruit and spring up again time after time, in a never ceasing procession of production, which almost defies belief without actual observation of the accomplishment of the fact.

Drainage is responsible. By the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars, canals have been dug, dikes built, and pumping plants installed, affording both protection from the great overflow from Lake Okeechobee many miles away, or from the droughts, which, paradoxically as it may seem, do sometimes injure the plants.

## Reclamation Methods

There are 2,000 acres in the Davie farm, that is the land within the dikes, of which perhaps 800 are under cultivation, although practically the entire tract is sold. Most of the farms are in ten or twenty acres. In order to make the land habitable the entire year and to prevent flooding of the crops, an immense dike has been thrown up around three sides while on the north is the bank of the state drainage canal [south fork of New River]. Running back through the tract at right angles to the canals are the laterals, ditches sufficiently large to carry off all of the water, and also to serve for transportation purposes. These laterals, however, do not empty into the main canal, but flow into a collecting canal which runs parallel to the state waterway. The water is thus collected in here, and by

means of pumps, lifted over the bank into the state canal. There is a pumping station on the south side of the canal and another on the north. The former is run by steam and has a capacity of 15,000 gallons per minute, while the latter uses gasoline for power and pumps 9,000 gallons per minute. The system is so arranged that should the instruments record that the water level is too low, the water is forced back through the laterals and to the land, thus in reality providing sub-irrigation.

This expensive system has been the reclamation of Davie, and has made possible the present day conditions there, where its residents enthusiastically declare will some day be a great city.

## History of the Farm

It is not necessary here to go back into the history of the tract, for there really is not much to tell. It was bought by the Everglades Sugar & Land company and developed by this concern, or rather allied companies which finally merged into that corporate body. Mr. Davie, after whom the place is named, was once interested in it. About four years ago the first settlers began to arrive. Many of them were from the Panama canal zone, and, so the story popularly goes, impelled by memories of their life in the southern region, named the place Zona, although the tract was still called Davie. Only recently the post office name was officially changed to Davie, and now Zona is no more.

In 1910 a few stragglers arrived to

take up their holdings and begin the task of carving their fortunes, not in stone or clay, but in the muck. The Cross brothers were among them, as were also James, William and Thomas Hill. Prof. A. W. Potter, now president of the Davie Board of Trade and highly influential in the community, came in 1911.

Those people had no easy time. They took a risk when they went there, knowing that the land was not thoroughly drained as yet, and that the dikes were not built, and the rains fell and the floods came in truly Biblical fashion. There were alligators galore, often in the door yards; wild duck flew low over the wet fields; travel was almost impossible for the rock road to Dania was then but a thought and the boat trip down the river was a slow one. Those were truly pioneering days for the little band of people who saw the possibilities of the "black soil belt" and stuck to it.

Then, as the seasons passed, and not many of them at that, the canals sucked out the surplus water from the land; the dikes were finished, and this year \$18,000 was received by the farmers for produce represented by shipments of 9,000 hampers of tomatoes, beans, potatoes, peppers, egg-plant and other vegetables, and judging from present prospects, next season's returns will be much larger.

#### Over Two Hundred There

Since 1911 approximately 250 people have settled at Davie. Some came south for their health; others to escape the cold winters. For a few perhaps, it was somewhat of a lark, but most of those who went into that new country, little understood, scarcely known, with the intention of working hard and making homes in which might some day be found all of the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. Some of the homes contain that already, for a majority of those who live at Davie are independent, prosperous men and women who have enjoyed advantages, frequently unusual, and come from refined and cultivated homes.

There is a marked spirit of cooperation among the people of Davie and their hospitality is famous. Witness how they entertained the Orlando good roads boosters the other day. The Orlando men and women could not get over talking about it for, in the language of the small boy, it was "some spread."

#### Farm Improvements

Now that we have the setting and the situation, and have introduced the char-

acters in a general way, it might be well to proceed with the story, which is, if the gentle reader has not guessed it before, a simple little tale of what will be seen when you visit the Davie farm, and everyone is sure to see it sooner or later, you know.

Along the south dike is a well surfaced rock road leading in from Dania, and built directly on top of the dike. About the middle of the tract, the road leaves the dike and passes between the farms, clear through to the canal, making easy access to the townsite by automobile. Eventually rock roads will be built, it is hoped, through other sections of the farm, so that transportation will be an easier matter.

Dotted over the landscape will be found the cottages of the dwellers. None of them are pretentious. Few countries just three or four years old do have pretentious homes, but the majority of them are mighty neat little places with a substantial atmosphere about them which is delightful. Some artistic bungalows have [been] built and the coziness of them is somewhat of a surprise in many cases. About many of them are neat little patches of lawn, flower beds are common, while pots of ornamental plants are to be seen on every porch. Ornamental trees and shrubs are commonly found and the amount of work which has been done by the farmers, in addition to overseeing their cropping, is considered remarkable.

#### Some Davie Folk

W. S. Bush is one of the latest arrivals at Davie. He has purchased a nice tract of ten acres down in one good corner of the farm and there is trying his luck with various vegetables. He seems much encouraged, too, and announces that he is here to stay.

When the famous dinner was given to the Orlando people the other day, the dessert was strawberries, and luscious, red and juicy they were, too, over which the visitors smacked their lips appreciatively. These berries were grown by H. M. Viele, whose ten acre farm is one of the show places of the tract. Mr. and Mrs. Viele have spent much time in beautifying the surroundings of their pretty bungalow and, in cooperation with some of the neighbors, have worked out some interesting hedges, and now also have a nice grove of banana plants. There are divers and sundry kinds of plants growing on the Viele place, all well worth seeing.

A. E. Taylor is another who comes in with the "ten acre" men. He has a nice little place, with many improvements and some good tomatoes and staple crops.

Next on the list is J. S. Norton who

has been doing general cropping and finding it just about as interesting and profitable as any other occupation could possibly be. The outdoor life appeals to him.

When M. Cantwell purchased his farm, he varied a little from the usual and secured an extra two acres, making his place just equal to a dozen. He thinks it is at any rate, and this year realized a neat sum from it.

#### Literary Folk

Pages might be consumed were one to begin to tell the history of the Steeles, both husband and wife, if one knew it, for more than thirty years of newspaper work for each has given them a fund of information and a library of reminiscences stored away which is enviable.

Many years ago, R. F. Steele, then city editor of the Chicago Tribune, gave Peter Finley Dunne (Mr. Dooley) his first assignment as a cub reporter. From Chicago to Galveston, from New York to San Francisco, Mr. Steele has been connected in important positions with the leading newspapers of the country, and Mrs. Steele has been no whit behind them, for all her life she has been in the profession, specializing in court work.

They have a little home at Davie with ten acres of land where they have produced some remarkable crops in a little more than a year. Mrs. Steele has become quite an authority on the possibilities of the Glades and has written a number of articles about them.

Another literary person who lives at Davie is H. E. Earle. It is difficult to get Mr. Earle to talk about this phase of his life, but he will admit to having had a number of articles published in *The Country Gentleman* and other high class publications. Mr. Earle is a botanist and takes up the cultivation of the soil and the raising of plants from a scientific standpoint. His pansy bed is famous the tract over, and the pride of them is an enormous variety, as nearly dead black as a pansy can be, looking even more smooth and lustrous than the finest velvet. Mr. Earle was recently elected a member of the board of supervisors of the Davie sub-drainage district, which has been organized only a few days, and which, it is expected, will, under the new laws, prove of great benefit.

#### Chickens Profitable

C. L. Nichols has thirty acres of land, and in addition to his trucking he is going in for chickens on a big scale. Special preparation is being made for them, and during the next year he



Davie pioneers enjoy an excursion to Dania Beach, 1913.

expects to establish good sized business. Since he has plenty of room, Mr. Nichols has been paying considerable attention to the various forage grasses, particularly the para and St. Augustine. The para grass flourishes with unusual rapidity in the muck soil as does also the other.

Another man who is going in for the chicken game, or rather has already plunged, is W. E. Wadsworth. The other day 90 healthy chickens were hatched out on his place. He has an incubator and with these 90 as a start he expects to prove that, while perhaps there may not be a fortune in chicken raising there, it may be profitable and bring in a nice income during the season when the land is resting.

Practically all of the farmers have a few chickens for their own use, and the specimens shown are unusually healthy. A. B. Lowe has a big 30-acre piece of ground and he too has gone in for poultry. His white Leghorns look fine. Mr. Lowe proposes to make his place a highly developed all around farm. He is a hustler, and is now prominent in the various affairs which come up, particularly in regard to the vegetable growers' association, of which he is president. To Mr. Lowe's industry is largely due the success of the entertainment to the Orlando people last Wednesday, for he worked all the previous day making preparations and until one o'clock that night, as well as being on hand bright and early the day of the big event and on the run until the last visitor had departed and the last fork or spoon returned to its rightful owner.

#### Still More Chickens

Charles Hendricks, who has not lived in Dania long, is another man who has faith in chickens. He is just starting out, but the fowls are doing so well that he says by next fall he expects

to have 300 at least. At present he has 21 laying hens, all White Leghorns, and 170 chickens. Disease or pests seem not to bother them.

C. E. Hendricks, a brother, is another chicken enthusiast and one might almost imagine that Davie is one chicken farm, from the number who are interested in raising them. Such is not the case, however, but many believe that it will in time be one of the staple resources of revenue. Mr. Hendricks has 100 chickens and like the others reports that all are doing well. Few are lost when the incubators hatch out, it is found.

Joseph Davis has some 75 chickens and others who have nice little flocks are Frank Boyd and A. W. Potter. Of course none of these raise nothing else but chickens, but they do find them a profitable side issue and valuable additions to the farms.

Some raise ducks, too, and Mrs. H. M. Viele in particular has some fine specimens of the Indian Runner variety.

#### Celery Grows There

Who says celery will not grow on muck?

No one would dare make such an insinuation after seeing the celery raised this year by A. Emans on his 20-acre farm. Crisp, sweet and well flavored, the celery has attracted much attention. Mr. Emans has about eight rows of it 200 feet in length. He grew it more for an experiment than anything else, and is simply delighted with the outcome. He expects to go into the celery raising on quite an extensive scale next season. In addition to his trucking, Mr. Emans has also gone into the nursery business and now has some 500 sour orange seedlings and about 8,000 grapefruit. Like many of the others there is room for chickens too, on his place, and he has 40 nice ones right now.

John Aunapu is another one of the

farmers in Davie who, like the rest, is of the opinion that it is just about the best place on earth. He has a well developed little farm. H. Bartell, his neighbor, owns ten acres on which also much of interest may be found.

Davie citizens are peaceable and law abiding, but just to remind them once in a while that the dike does not give them a principality of their own, a deputy sheriff has been placed there. He is J. B. Porter. The business of deputy sheriff is not a strenuous one in that community, so Mr. Porter finds plenty of time to develop his ten acres of land. He has a general crop.

His neighbor, W. S. Garnett, also has a good crop of tomatoes, beans and other vegetables. He has ten acres nicely improved and a neat little home. Walter Henry is another resident of Davie whose place is worth seeing for the excellent manner in which it is maintained.

#### Forage Crops

Five acres of Rhodes grass will be planted this summer by W. H. Hammers [Hammer] who has approximately 20 acres in his farm, therefore plenty of room for practical experiments with the forage crops. Rhodes grass is believed by many to be the best variety for this purpose, while some favor the para of which there are a number of small patches scattered throughout the tract. There are a few thoroughbred Jersey cows on the tract and it is believed that with the successful growth of forage plants, which all believe to be only a matter of sufficient time to get the roots well set, stock will be another valuable addition to the assets of the community.

These farmers in a new country have found so many things waiting for them to do that some have been put off longer than others, and the stock matter is one which has waited.

Murray Wilson is also the possessor of twenty acres of fine land on which a multitude of various vegetables are grown. W. S. Brooke also has 20 acres, and of his property nine acres are planted to grove.

#### Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits will in a few years, it is anticipated, be another of the money-making products of Davie. Owing to the newness of the country of course none of the trees are yet in bearing, but they are healthy looking, and many of the farmers are putting out new tracts into trees, trucking between them in the meantime.

Beside Mr. Brooke's grove, C. A. Walsh has the only other large citrus



grove. His is ten acres in size and has just been planted. Emans' nursery stock is supplying many with seedlings and it is expected that within a comparatively short time, every farm will have at least sufficient fruit to occupy the household needs, if not to ship out.

### Some Potatoes

J. B. Ott and Co., the "Co." being a number of fellow Germans who are proving to be among the best farmers in the district, grew the biggest crop of potatoes this season, for they had fifteen acres to that vegetable. The tubers grow most luxuriantly in the muck soil, too, and are smooth, firm, free from blight, and of bright color. Early potatoes seem to be much in demand and the little group of Mr. Ott's associates expects to specialize in that line.

Veteran of the Civil War is J. B. Thompson, who has found that the hardships of life in a new country are a little matter after a strenuous campaign, and he is winning the present fight for a livelihood in a new country. He has ten acres of choice land.

Gustave Sear also has ten acres of land with the usual crops, and Frank Voight, who lives over on the other side of the canal, has 30 acres from which he is deriving a nice income.

Last, but by no means least in the list is Prof. A. W. Potter, president of the Davie Board of Trade and prominent in affairs of the district. He was at one time a professor in the University of Michigan, later taught mathematics in various colleges, and is the author of several text books along that line. He might come under the literary list, but he really stands in a unique niche by himself.

Prof. Potter likes the south, he likes Florida and Davie especially, and with his good wife, declares that this will be the place where the remainder of his days will be spent. All sorts of interesting things are found on his farm, and it will be remembered that he took sweepstakes for his exhibition at the county fair, when 90 vegetables, fruits and plants were shown.

### Amusements in Davie

Going on the theory that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" or Jill a dull girl, the people of Davie have arranged for plenty of pleasure to relieve the daily routine. The Concordia club of which W. H. Aires is president and A. Dahman is secretary-treasurer has a number of good times during the year. Sometimes these take the form of dances, and other gatherings are excursions down to Fort Lauderdale beach, picnics, boating parties and var-

ious other entertainments. Mr. Aires and Mr. Dahman are both busy farmers but find time to keep the club going in good shape.

About 30 congenial souls have organized a six o'clock dinner club, with meetings every Wednesday evening. Each housewife supplies one dish for the dinner, and the result is a happy gathering, a good time and no burden on the hostess.

Musical people are frequent, too. A male quartette [sic.] composed of Messrs. R. J. Wanklyn, Henry, Lowe, and Viele, with Mr. Leavitt as pianist, furnishes good music on many occasions. The voices of the men blend well, and they have sung together sufficiently to be in perfect accord. Mrs. Henry, who recently arrived in Davie, is also a good pianist, and there are a number of musical instruments to be found in the little homes of the tract.

### A Board of Trade

Strictly up to date are the men of Davie, who recently organized a Board of Trade which promises to be a factor in the business life of the place. Prof. A. W. Potter is president of it, and it has a full quota of officers. One of the first important steps taken by this organization is an agreement among the members to put out their seed beds on a certain date. The plants will then be set out at the same time, and will be ready for harvesting at the same time, thus insuring carload shipments, reducing the cost of marketing, and adding to the profits. This is only one of the many plans of the organization.

Davie is by no means all farms, for about the center of the tract, along the canal bank, is the village and townsite where it is hoped there will quickly grow up a good sized town. D. N. Graves, the postmaster, also runs a general store with a goodly stock of necessities. There is the big packing house of the Southern Produce Exchange, a busy place during the harvesting season, where the 9,000 or more crates of produce were loaded on the barges and sent down the river. Then there is the new canning factory; a school, two schools in fact, with 44 pupils enrolled altogether taught by Miss Hicks and Miss Bivans; and a new hotel. The townsite has been platted, and prospects are that it will grow rapidly. It is understood that a number of businessmen are planning to establish themselves there soon.

### The Canning Factory

Edward Stiling of Detroit is getting the canning factory in readiness for use, and hopes within a season or two

to have the produce coming in so that he will be kept busy the year around.

His machinery is not all on hand at present but will be ready soon, and eventually it is expected that 30 persons at least will be given steady employment there. His tomato canning apparatus will have a capacity of 10,000 cans per day. The big steam kettle for making catsups has a capacity of 60 gallons and his sauerkraut machine will turn 2,000 heads of cabbage into the famous Dutch dainty every day.

Sixty acres of tomatoes and between 50 and 60 acres of beans will keep the factory busy at present. Eventually vegetable soup and all sorts of preserves and catsups will be made. The cans are sealed by a crimping machine instead of being soldered and it is the purpose of Mr. Stiling to make every nook and corner absolutely sanitary. His building has provisions for sleeping rooms for his employees.

Although they have been in Davie only six weeks, Mr. and Mrs. L. F. Lawrence of Calumet, Mich., have established a nice little hotel and have a number of regular boarders. When finished their house will have 13 rooms. It is the first structure to go up on the townsite.

### The Demonstration Farm

So much has been written about the demonstration farm, conducted by the Everglades Sugar and Land company that to say anything more about it is almost trite. It is conceded to be one of the most remarkable spots in the state, for on the small tract over 200 varieties of fruits and vegetables are growing, or have grown during the season. Robert Warner is in charge and not a fruit or vegetable may be mentioned but that he can take you to some spot on that farm and show it to you.

E. B. Embry's tobacco field of one acre, from which 1,500 pounds will be harvested, is one of the sights of the farm and he also has a tobacco house where it is being cured. This is the first successful experiment in tobacco conducted in the Everglades, and it is probable that many farmers will take up this line.

Up the canal a short distance there is another experimental station, the real purpose of which is a mystery. It is owned by Adams and Moore and there are ten acres of land under cultivation. This, it is said, is all that is known about the place. All employees refuse to give out any information.

A lesson in optimism and faith is a visit to the Davie farm with a chat with the farmers who live there, for they are confident of the future, have faith in the present and apparently have clear consciences regarding the past.