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State of Florida
Office of State Treasurer
Tallahassee

J. C. LUNING
STATE TREASURER
AND
INSURANCE COMMISSIONER

Apr. 22, 1926

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
c/o McCall's Magazine,
236--250 West 37th Street,
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

I have read with great interest the first of your Florida articles in the May "McCall's." Without going into a discussion of the major propositions, I am presuming upon your desire to be strictly accurate by inviting your attention to some details which may be of interest to you in the event that these articles are to be republished in permanent form, or that the details referred to may be taken into consideration by you in arriving at your final conclusions.

First, the statement that Florida has 11,970 miles of seacoast I am sure is a typographical error, and that you intended to say, 1,197 miles; there being in fact about 400 miles of Atlantic seacoast, and approximately twice that on the Gulf. A larger figure might be used by following the shore lines of bays, harbors and islands, but 1,197 miles would be approximately correct.

From the body of the article, one might get the impression that prior to 1920 there were no railroads on the west coast of Florida farther south than Tampa. I hand you a map taken from a special editon of the Florida Times-Union issued in January, 1890, which shows the old South Florida Ry. (now a part of the Atlantic Coast Line) already built as far south as Punta Gorda, and about 1903 this line was extended into Fort Myers. In 1904 I myself went as far south as Sarasota on the then newly built branch of the ~~xxxxxxx~~ Seaboard Air Line ~~to Sarasota~~. In 1916 I went by rail ~~across country~~ from Bradenton to Arcadia, and somewhere about the same time the Florida East Coast Ry. built its branch into Okeechobee City, on the north side of the Lake. There has been some very important railroad construction down and across the peninsula section since 1920, but the lines above referred to were of earlier construction.

I notice that you give the acreage of the State as 30,000,000. This perhaps is near enough for practical purposes, though our Department of Agriculture in a recent publication gives land 35,000,000 acres, water 3,000,000

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acres. This squares more nearly with the area of the State, 58,666 square miles, approximately 37,500,000 acres. The Department of Agriculture's figures not being intended as exact.

You also credit the State with 30,000 lakes; an estimate that has appeared in print before, and one which on one occasion at least provoked interest in Minnesota which has claimed the championship with 20,000 lakes. There does not seem to be any very accurate estimate of the number in this State, and I am inclined to think the honors are really with the "Star of the North" on this score. The State Geologist made a purely unofficial estimate some time ago that there were between 7,000 and 8,000 "lakes and sizable ponds" in Florida, and that of this number, probably 2,300 were one-eighth of a mile wide, or more; that is, covering 10 acres or more. It is a fact, however, that we have the largest fresh water lake (Okeechobee) lying wholly within the United States, excepting Lake Michigan.

I have n't your article before me as I write but I cannot recall any reference to the oyster and sponge fisheries in Florida, the latter the only sponge fisheries in the United States, I believe, nor any reference to minerals, though Florida produces 80 per cent. of the phosphate mined in the United States, and other mineral products, notably limestone, kaolin and fuller's earth, bring the Florida mineral production to $15,000,000. to $20,000,000. annually. Nor do you refer to cypress in the list of Florida timbers. Some 12 or 13 years ago, when I was secretary of the Fort Myers Board of Trade, it was estimated that there were half a billion feet of cypress timber in the "Big Cypress Swamp," in what is now Collier county. Though at the present time I believe cypress forms less than 3% of the nation's timber output, and is insignificant in Florida by comparison with the lumber and naval stores produced from the yellow pine, I think the potential value of the Florida cypress forests may be worthy of inclusion in a comprehensive discussion of the State's resources, however condensed it must be.

I was a little surprised to find "Alligators and turtles" listed alone under the head of "Game." We have been trying for years to get away from the idea of

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"alligators" in connection with Florida. In fact, this saurian has been all but exterminated in most parts of the State in past years, for the hides. Though not a sportsman myself, I feel that deer, wild turkey and ducks, quail (partridge) and doves may be considered the principal "game" at this time, though for huntsmen in search of "thrills," bears and wildcats are not entirely extinct, and the lesser swamp animals, such as the raccoon and the opossum, still have their lure.

I trust you will not consider any of these suggestions officious or ~~xxxx~~ captious. I am interested only as a life-long ~~resident~~ resident of the State, spending my first 21 years in southern Florida and most of the other 20 years in this immediate section, and being acquainted to a certain extent with the State's resources and possibilities, though rather a stranger to the events of the last two years, as it has been that long since my duties have either taken me or permitted me to go more than 30 miles from the capital of the State, which has not been in the immediate path of these recent events, but which we trust will keep pace with the permanent development that we believe is in store for all Florida, and to the discussion of which, in your next article, we look forward with profoundest interest.

With assurances of respect and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A. H. Roberts

Albert H. Roberts.

In the interest of historical accuracy, may I add that the Indians of DeSoto's time were not "Seminoles." This tribe, whose name signifies "Runaways," left the Creek Indians in Georgia and migrated to Florida two hundred years after DeSoto. A.H.R.

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