2 1a Interview and Notes

Notes 1.E-II.

DeLand New Symmes Colony Ill.

Dr. Lincoln Hulley, President of John B. Stetson University at DeLand, tells me the story of the town and the college. It might be a story of today, for H. A. DeLand saw things much as men here today are seeing them. He came first in 1878 on a sightseeing trip, was captivated by what is now Volusia country, dreamed of building a town, developing an academy. His home was in Fairport, New York, but he closed out there largely, came back, bought a large tract of land, began the town which is now DeLand. He wanted wider streets, as the present town builder wants them; sixty feet was very wide for those days. He wanted trees and planted them, rows upon rows. He wanted schools and started an academy, which he helped in various ways, among others always making up the deficiency of the teacher's salary which resulted from the meager income. Like other town builders, he built a railroad, not long, but it ran to the St. John's river and that was navigable to Jacksonville. Things seemed to have gone very well in the town with the colonists and the orange groves were just about ready to bear when in 1885 there came along a frost which destroyed everything. It ruined most of the orange growers. Now, Mr. DeLand in selling the land, such was his confidence in the land, said the settlers should make ten percent of their money after the groves came into bearing. He was obliged, or felt himself obliged, to meet this. It took almost everything he had and imperiled the academy. He could not endure the idea that the young institution should fail, so turned the property over to a Board of Trustees. Among his winter neighbors in DeLand was John B. Stetson, the Philadelphia hat-maker. After a good deal of persuasion Mr. DeLand persuaded him to allow them to incorporate his academy under the name of John B. Stetson University. Now, Mr. Stetson was not the rich man then that he afterwards became, but he was sufficiently well-to-do to be able to help Mr. DeLand's former practice of making good deficiencies in salaries. He helped out in various ways, sent

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loads of wood and loads of oranges to pupils and teachers. Gradually as his means increased he gave money and buildings and he drew to the institution other patrons - men of wealth. Before his death Mr. Stetson had the satisfaction of seeing the endowment reach a million dollars.

Out of all this there has come in the last few years an undertaking which means much to Florida as well as to the country. The son of the elder Stetson, John B. Stetson, Jr., now Minister to Poland, has always had a keen interest in anthropology and antiquities. His interest has been keen in the early history of Florida and he realized how meager the sources are for writing that history. Nothing of any importance has existed for the use of students on the aborigines of Florida. Spain held Florida for two hundred and fifty years before it was turned over to England. There were governors here who made reports to the government in the old country, the friars reported back to their superiors what they were doing and enduring, but of all this nothing has been available. The early history of Florida has been a meager lot of legends repeated perennially by historians because they had nothing better to give. Mr. Stetson resolved to change this. Together with a few right minded people he started about five or six years ago what is known as the Florida Historical Society, an organization which sets out to form a library, gather historical documents, to foster research, to publish results. The Society proposes to buy when it can and what it can't buy to secure facsimiles or copies. Already Mr. Stetson has at work in the archives of Spain, of Mexico, of England, men of scientific training who are gathering all sorts of invaluable material. In 1922 the

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first record appeared and properly enough an essay of the aboriginal inhabitants by a learned member of the Smithsonian Institute. In 1924 a second volume appeared "Notes of the Life and Works of Bernard Romans", an Englishman who in 1775 published "A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida" with two whole sheet maps. These notes which are P. Lee Phillips', a remarkable director of the map department of the Congressional Library in Washington, are full of the most fascinating material on the period. "The Concise Natural History" is to be published later. The first volume of the colonial records has appeared, also the memorial of Pedro Menendez, the explorer and settler who did so much for the first Spanish colonists and of whom we have known so little. One particular publication is "A History of Florida" by one of the most cultivated of her modern women, Caroline Bevard, a teacher and a writer who, when she died in 1920, left the unfinished manuscript of an elaborate history of Florida - the only thing of its kind that has ever been written. Now here is what comes out of a man's vision. He believes, he draws others to him, there is apparent failure, but today because of what he undertook there is one of the lovliest towns in Florida, one of the most flourishing, a university with five hundred or more students and already started one of the finest pieces of history work which is going on in the United States. What vision is ever lost?

COLONIZATION

The whole source of colonization in Florida from the days of the Spaniards on is full of lessons to the numbers of men today who are attempting colonization and a multitude of enterprises. One of the most suggestive is the colony at New Smyrna on the east coast started in 1763 by an Englishman, Dr. Andrew Turnbull. Dr. Turnbull

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has had a bad name in history largely because of the entertaining writer of "A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida", which was published in 1775. Romans told there how this cruel doctor had t[illegible] out of their beautiful homes in Monoca, where his wife came from, and out of the pleasant places in Italy and England some five hundred colonists and brought them to a bleak and desolate coast where he had practically made slaves of them, ~~that~~ they suffered every deprivation, were ~~that they had been~~ starved, flogged and mistreated until finally some of them ran away and reached St. Augustine where they told their tale. Now, ~~it seems that Dr. Turnbull's colony had a short life,~~ like many before and since in Florida, and it passed away in 1777. Many reports say that the year before the colony had passed into the hands of Spain? When this story appeared Dr. Turnbull, who was living in Charleston a respected citizen, defended himself with spirit, and in defending himself he showed the weakness of the structure on which he had built. What, according to him were these innocent people he was said to have had dragged from comfortable homes! To begin with one hundred of them were single men whom he had picked up in the streets of Leghorn, Italy, where they were about to be banished because of their idleness and wretchedness made them a nuisance; "vagabonds", he calls them. As for the families from Monoca, he declares ~~that they were very poor~~, that they had begged him to take them where they might have food. ~~Now as he says~~, "I only asked vagabonds and the indigent and took such as could have no reason to look back or regret leaving their own country." Now what does the doctor do, but take this boat load of vagabonds and indigent families to an utterly untouched Florida coast, pine jungle and mangrove swamp down to the water's edge. Men are conquering

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thousands upon thousands of acres of that kind of land in Florida today and doing it with ease, but it was a terrible proposition to be put up to a boat load of people with little to work with but their hands and who, according to the doctor's own story, could have had no great interest or skill in using them. They were not only unskilled but probably terrified by the wilderness that confronted them, ~~but still there were~~ some ~~that~~ were lazy and would not work and ~~there were~~ others ~~that~~ were vicious. ~~Nevertheless all~~ the evidence seems ~~that something was built at New Smyrna beside a slave pen.~~ The latest researches into the case seem to show that Dr. Turnbull did do as well as he could with the material that he had brought over. The severest criticism against him is that he should have so little sense as to attempt to colonize with such material and right there has been from the start in Florida, as in other parts of the country, a primary weakness in colonizing. Anybody that would go would be taken, a pair of hands with nothing in them behind them — only a desire to make a change because life has become so hopeless and unsatisfactory where they are.

Going through the streets of the town, where I am writing today, I saw an example of one type of people that come to Florida today to colonize. It was so helpless and pathetic a thing that even the lads who might have been expected to jeer were sober and helpful. A battered, old car had shed a wheel in the middle of a busy street. Tied to the rear was a rusty cook stove, tied to one side were the springs of a bed. The back of the car was piled with all kinds of household goods. The owner was a woman with a baby

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of a few months under her arm. Her poor old carryall had shed a wheel and whether she had the money to have it repaired I do not know. I take it, however, that no money she offered would be accepted. I never saw a more sympathetic group of men anywhere than around her. Now she was the type of colonist that come to Florida on their own, but would she have come if she could succeed anywhere? It did not look so to me.

WATER AND RAILROADS

Miss Bevard's history gives data of real value in regard to the commercial development. She summarizes it something like this: As early as 1826 when Florida was still a territory, that is one hundred years ago this month, a memorial was presented to the United States Congress by the Floridians requesting that a ship canal should be built across the peninsular. There was no response on the part of the United States government. A few years later, in 1843, the Floridians had another suggestion that Congress help them build a railroad from the St. John's River to the Swanee River. Railroad building seems to have begun about this time and to have grown rather rapidly through the north of Florida. In the next twenty years manufacturers began to come in, there was more or less drainage done and then the war came and destroyed all that had been done. Bridges, tracks, equipment were lost and Florida found herself in the 70's in a poor condition. Through parts of the country one of her chief inducements to railroads had been grants of land. The state had what was called the Internal Improvement Fund which controlled some thirty

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million acres of land. It doled it out to those it thought fit to take shares in the railroad or canal. It not only gave them this, but the Fund guaranteed them seven percent interest on the bond the railroad issued. The railroads destroyed by the war were unable to meet their payments so they gave the Fund stocks, but the stock was no good. The trustees of the Fund seized roads and sold them, but it seems not to have helped them very much - there was no money coming from anywhere - they could not sell at any price the lands that they held. There was eight years in Florida history after the war when they averaged only a little over $13,000 a year on sales of lands. The fact of the matter was that both the Internal Improvement Fund and the railroads were bankrupt until 1881 the governor of the state, Boxham, persuaded Hamilton Disston, the saw manufacturer of Philadelphia, to buy four million acres at twenty-five cents and that cleaned up the debt. The contract between Disston and the Fund was for "swamp and overflowed land" though, as a matter of fact, much of it was not overflowed. Disston placed his land in foreign companies who sold it to colonists - that brought in people. There was a great outburst of enthusiasm throughout the state. Boxham thought it was the most important fact since the war for people came in and began draining and planting, the orange district particularly received their attention. There were probably none among these colonists as helpless as those Dr. Turnbull had brought in a little over one hundred years before, but there were many of them whose capital was insufficient to stand the years it takes to grow an orange grove, who were unfitted to wrestle with the hard work of redeeming the swamps and jungles. They were just beginning to be started when the frost of 1885 caught them and ruined many as it

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many have died

ruined the settlers at DeLand. They had not the capital to go on and many of the Disston colonists left carrying back to England and the North terrible tales of Florida.

WATER

Dr. Hulley thinks it is very doubtful indeed whether Ponce DeLeon ever reached the Springs they are exploiting near here. He says that the Indians of that day were of such ferocity that they would have destroyed them all before they could have gone that far up the River. Certainly so far as any records go information has been found that he descended the St. John's River. To have come suddenly to such a Spring as this boiling up at the rate of 40,000 gallons a minute, its temperature unvarying 72 degrees the year round, surely he might have thought it the Fountain of Youth. To these early settlers and explorers the water of Florida must have been an unending amazement as well as lure. In Bernard Romans' "A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida", published in 1775, and about which I have already spoken, there is an allegorical frontispiece which includes among other devices a water god pouring copious streams of water from jars on each side of him. What more fitting an allegory for Florida? A bringing together of this water power, lakes and rivers by cutting canals is an old, old dream of this country. Judge Massey, when I said to him in Orlando, that nothing excited me more than the possibilities of the water development of the state which I heard talked on all sides, sighed patiently, and said, "We talked it just the same way forty years ago." Miss Bevard's history seemed to show that they were talking much in the same way one hundred years ago.

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