St. Augustine, Fla. Mar.

D. P. Davis has developed a new industry in Florida- that of making islands. Davis, a native of Florida, had to borrow the money to buy a railroad ticket from his home town of Tampa to Jacksonville 10 years ago to 39 He worked with varying success there, and was the owner of a commisary during the World war

In 1919 he went to Miami, against the advice of friends, and engaged in the real estate business. He got in touch with a sub-division which was partially sold out. The lots, three miles from the city hall, were sacrificed at for $165 each with no buyers Davis tried to get the real estate men with whom he was associated to advertise the lots and let him sell them. They refused to do so. He hunted up the owner, offered to invest all of his own savings in advertising if would give him the exclusive listing of the property. A deal was made. He spent all of his money, about $1,000, in an advertising campaign, but sold off the lots in 10 days and cleared a profit for himself of $40,000. To do this he worked day and night, and one day established a record by making 26 separate sales himself. He not only sold the lots in Miami, but took photographs of the property, went to other towns in Florida where he had an acquaintanceship and sold lots there

This record attracted the attention of a wealthy man from Tennessee, who backed Davis in his earlier enterprises. Davis put on several developments around Miami, in which he made several million dollars.

The return to his home town of Tampa was a dramatic high point.

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The return to his home town of Tampa was a dramatic high point. The newspapers had streamer headlines announcing "Dave Davis Returns to Tampa." The man who had been a newsboy on the streets during the Spanish American war, who had clerked in grocery and hardware stores, who had worked his way through school and later the state university, was back home, a millionaire, with a project which startled the most optimistic Floridian. At the mouth of the Hillsboro river was a series of low-lying islands, worthless, and containing only a few acres even at low tide. Davis bought them from the city. They had an excellent location, being only a half mile from the city hall and just 1,500 feet in Tampa bay from the exclusive Bay Shore drive, the Tampa "gold coast".

Davis assembled a fleet of dredges and started pumping up the bottom of the bay. Right behind the dredges and sandsuckers, came the builders.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

On land, most of which was under water a year ago, there now stands a large family hotel, three smaller hotels, a seven story apartment building, numerous other apartment buildings, scores of beautiful homes, a coliseum with the largest dance floor and auditorium in the South, a magnificent country club in which Isham Jones and his famous orchestra plays nightly, a tennis club on which the Dixie Championships have just been played, and the beginning of a highly restricted business section, in which several store buildings and a large office building have been started. Like all the other great developers of Florida, Mr. Davis put back on the land his profits, investing $7,000,000 in buildings in 1925 on his Davis Islands and throwing open to property owners a loan fund of $10,000,000 offering liberal terms for those who wished to building for themselves on Da is Islands.

As soon as Davis Islands was sold out for $30,000,000, in October, 1925, Mr. Davis announced a new development, Davis Shores, on 1500 acres of march land just across the Matanzas river from St. Augustine. This project was also an island development, for when completed there will be five separate islands in the group which comprises Davis Shores. The largest private dredging contract in the world that of pumping up 13,000,000 cubic yards of sand and shell from the bottom of the Matanzas river, was entered in the reclaiming of the marsh.

Early in 1926, a great deal of this land had been raised to a level of more than two feet higher than the shore of St. Augustine, a $10,000,000 contract for building and physical development had been let to the Foundation company, of New York and Atlanta, and operations for building 15 miles of sea wall, to cost $1,486,000, had been started.

And in 100 days, the sales force of the D. P. Davis Properties had sold more than $50,000,000 worth of Florida real estate.

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