

THE ISLE OF PINES

President Roosevelt Interested
Interview With Mr. Greene

Our representative had a very interesting visit with Mr. G. P. Greene, who has just returned from a business trip to the Isle of Pines.

This is Mr. Greene's second trip this year to this beautiful island, and it is certainly a treat to listen to even a partial description of its many wonderful features.

Mr. Greene said in part, I left on the 26th of April going from Chicago over the C. & E. I., and the Florida East Coast line, as I had heard so much about the wonderful road built to the Florida keys. The building of this road is a vast undertaking, greater in magnitude than anyone can conceive, who has not made the trip. So far, there has been expended upon the construction, over fifty millions of dollars, and the end wont be reached for another year or two, and a further expenditure of probably ten millions of dollars.

Availing myself of a stop-over privilege, I spent a day in looking around Miami, Fla., and was almost dumfounded at the number and magnificence of the hotels there. Tarpon fishing is the king sport there, but as the weather looked quite threatening, I was timid about making the essay, and spent the day in looking about town, leaving the following morning for Knight's Key, the present terminus of the Coast road, arriving there about four P. M. Immediately embarking on the Steamship "Miami" for Havana.

As the tourist season had just closed, there was but one steamer making the trip between Knight's Key and Key West and Havana, therefore, being in no hurry, it was really a pleasure to make the trip that way. We arrived at Key West about eight o'clock, and while the steamer was unloading and loading freight, we were allowed to go ashore, and spent a couple of hours sight seeing in that quaint town with its narrow and extremely dirty streets.

The sea, unlike our last trip, was as smooth as a mill pond, and after a very uneventful trip, we arrived at Havana at about six the following morning.

Havana Beautiful

Havana is a beautiful city, and as clean as a parlor in every nook and corner. They say that the Americans cleaned up the city, but it is hard to believe, after visiting Key West, or New Orleans, which last city is, I think, the filthiest that I ever saw, and I've certainly seen some dirty ones.

On account of my steamer not sailing from Batabano, until the following day, I took another trip to Camp Columbia, and called upon several Highland Parkers, among them Chaplain Rice, formerly of Fort Sheridan.

The barracks there are beautifully situated, overlooking the ocean, and all seemed to be contented and happy.

After a day spent principally in street car riding, I left Havana at 5:50, crossing the Island via the Midland railway, and arrived at Batabano about eight o'clock, taking the magnificent Isle of Pines steamer "Colon" for the "Island", where we arrived about six A. M., and thence by carriage to Santa Fe, the principal city of the Island.

I think that I ought to stop right here, for I am accused of being absolutely crazy on the subject of the Isle of Pines, but it is certainly contagious, for I have yet to meet anyone

who has been there, who is not equally enthusiastic, and for the very good reason that it is in every way an ideal spot.

Climate Good

The climatic conditions are almost perfect, for contrary to the general belief up here, the temperature in summer is lower than here, and it rarely gets below 60 in the winter. Again, people north, seem of the belief that it rains all summer down here, but the facts are that they do not have what could be rightly called a "rainy season", the rains commencing usually in April as they do here, and, as here, it may not rain for a week, or it possibly may rain for a half hour, after which the sun comes out and in a few minutes, one would hardly believe that it had rained at all.

There is always an elegant breeze blowing, and as for the nights, if you are careless enough to have forgotten to put on a woolen blanket, you will surely regret it.

On my trip this time, I took quite a number of photographs, and in the pursuit of a subject, it became necessary to frequently cut our way through dense jungles that had probably in many instances never been visited by man, but in all of my "hiking", I did not meet with a poisonous reptile or insect of any kind, except a few mosquitoes, that seemed so surprised at seeing us, that they usually forgot to sting.

In extent, the island is about thirty by forty miles, or 800,000 acres. It is divided into two parts by a strip of water and salt marsh running east and west; the northern portion contains about 600,000 acres. It is diversified by rich valleys hills, beautiful mountains, mineral springs and many fine streams, navigable for some distance by steamers of considerable size.

No yellow fever, cholera, or epidemics of any kind have ever been known to make their appearance on the island, and another peculiar fact is, that although it is south of Cuba, the temperature is lower, and it is visited by the sick from there and abroad, who come to be cured by the pure air and beneficial waters of its springs and creeks.

Hurricanes tornadoes and cyclones are unknown. The location of the island is such that it is protected from storms on the east, west and north by Cuba, and as a further protection, is surrounded on all sides by keys or small islands.

The President Wants Pictures

The amount of development that has been done on the island since my last trip was, even to me, almost beyond belief.

Since last January some fifty thousand trees have been planted, the arrangements in the way of clearing, plowing etc., have been made for many thousand more.

The majority of the groves have been set out in grape fruit, which is a much better shipper than any other of the Citrus family, and which brings greater returns to the grower on account of the immense demand for it in all parts of the country.

There are however, many thousands of orange, lemon, lime, tangerine and other citrus fruit trees planted, and all are doing finely, the soil being fertile and the climate so favorable, that about all other fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables of the tropics, and almost all the vegetables and some of the fruits of the temperate zone are grown successfully.

Poultry and live stock do well all the

year round. Two or more crops per year of almost all garden truck, is the rule and not the exception.

Another feature, not generally understood up here is that the grower of fruits in the Isle of Pines has the advantage over Florida of being in the market from thirty to forty days ahead of Florida, so you can readily understand that they get the best prices, in fact fancy prices.

There have been failures there as there are everywhere else, but upon investigation I found that in every instance it was due, and entirely so, to neglect, or to put it a little stronger, to laziness.

A lazy man will do no better down there than he would here and is not wanted. At present the island has a population of about three thousand, of whom twenty-five hundred are Americans, who own eleven twelfths of all the land.

There seems to be a general impression in the North that the island is owned by Cuba, but the facts are, that it has never been ceded to Cuba, and at the time of the signing of the Paris Treaty was not included in the transfer to Cuba. It is under Cuban rule and law however, as your friend Mr. Roosevelt "promised" the Cubans that he would give it to them, but with its strategic position with relation to the Panama canal, and the fact that on the southern shore there is a harbor that can accommodate the entire American navy, and that has a depth of water exceeding fifty feet, would seem to preclude the possibility of Teddy being allowed to make his promise good. Incidentally, I might remark in passing that a Mr. Christy of Chicago, and a very large investor on the Island, called upon Mr. Roosevelt a few days ago and interested him to the extent that he asked that a full set of photographs recently taken by Mr. Wark, a prominent photographer of Havana, be sent him, and seemed greatly surprised at the advancement made on the Island.

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