

MARION SMITH NOW IN FLORIDA

Editor's note: The following letter was written to the Ossian Journal by Marion Smith, of Poe, former member of the famous Poe quartet, who is now in Florida. The Poe quartet was broken up several months ago when death claimed one of the members. Cal Kunkle, of Monmouth, was a member of the quartet, also.

209 Hyde Park Ave.,

Tampa, Fla., Feb. 10, 1928.

Thinking maybe the readers of the Ossian Journal would like to know what I saw in Florida, I thought I would write my observations.

Florida—you may call it the sun—she may shine some every day, still some days and nights are cold, as the thermometer last week registered 26 degrees, and many were seen on the streets wearing overcoats.

Business is very dull and you find many looking for a job they never find. There are quite a number of tourists here, but not so many as last year. Eight thousand are registered here at present, while last year there were 28,000.

There are not so many oranges or grapefruits as last year, owing to the frost, which did much damage, and in many groves you can see bushels of oranges and grapefruits lying on the ground, not salable.

It has been very dry this season, the total rainfall being 23 inches less than usual, so you find a scarcity of cabbage and strawberries. If you wish strawberries you must pay sixty cents a quart for them where you could buy them last year on the ground for ten cents a quart.

You find many acres of ground being burned over and much on fire, and trenches being dug around the burning muck. On our way home from a boomer camp called Venice on the gulf, we saw a rattlesnake at least six feet long come out of the burning grass, so you see when we have snow and rain in the north, we have sunshine and dry weather in the south.

The roads are splendid here and you can go most anywhere in Florida on paved roads. The road will be opened from Tampa to Miami through the everglades this spring. The everglades contain millions of acres of muck land, the soil being from five to nine feet deep. The Lake Okeechobee, which is 23 feet higher than the ocean, has always kept this land wet and when it is ditched it is very productive. At one time we crossed this lake and on it were millions of ducks which had come from the north. I asked a resident why the did not kill them and ship them north. He said after they were there a few days they tasted fishy and were not good. Talking about fish, we catch all the fish we want at the end of the street on which we live. The kind of fish we have now are trout, whiting, yellowtails and catfish. The darkies eat the catfish as they are not so good as our catfish in the northern waters.

The temperature of the state is becoming colder each year, so the old settlers say, on account of cutting away the forests and ditching the country.

This is no farming country, and if you come here to make a living by farming, it will be a failure. Of course you can truck, but no one gets rich by trucking. It costs too much to get it to market, and there are only spots in the state where you can truck, and then you must fertilize. Some of the orange groves are fertilized three times in raising one crop of oranges.

There are three kinds of soil in Florida: First, very nearly all sand, where you can raise nothing; second, muck and sand, where they raise strawberries, cabbages and other kinds of truck; third, yellow soil, where oranges are grown. As I was going to Daytona, I saw some low land that looked rich. I asked a native why it was not cultivated, lying so near Daytona, and he said, "Well, neighbor, that land is all right part of the day, but when the tide comes in, if you walk on it you will get wet feet, even if you have your shoes on."

Yesterday, I went with a friend, Mr. Wood, 50 miles north of Tampa. The sun was shining warm, and as we motored along we saw beautiful lakes

on each side of the road, with here and there a filling station, but we seldom saw anyone except near the villages. In one instance we traveled twelve miles without seeing a house.

As a reminder of the boom in 1925, we came to a townsite two miles long, laid out in lots, with one single house. The next place we came to was where a bootlegger had a small store, and we were told he used 100 pound of sugar a day to make booze. On his counter lay a large revolver while he sat near smoking his pipe.

We were now only four miles from the Gulf of Mexico, where we saw thousands of acres of land covered with water and hundreds of ducks feeding. As we passed a few houses we came to a beautiful spring called Blue Springs, abounding with many kinds of fish. The water looked bluer than the sky, but on examination we found the color was caused by the blue stone which formed the bottom of the stream.

We were now at our destination and started back to Tampa, arriving home at nine o'clock.

Marion Smith.

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PETERSON NEWS

By

Miss Jeanette Spade

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