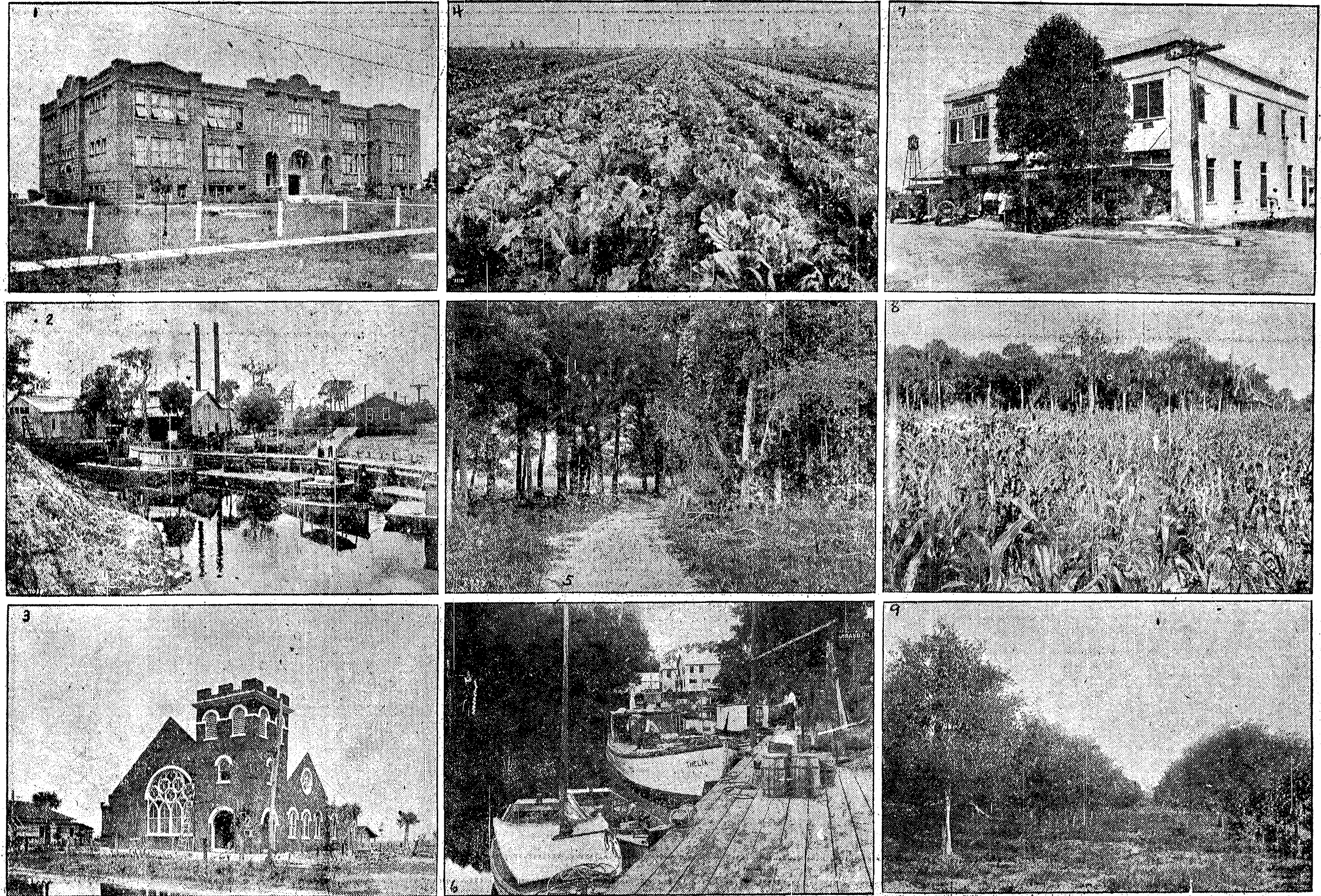


# PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS FROM FLORIDA COUNTY OF POTENTIAL WEALTH



1—Okeechobee's handsome school building, built in 1910, at a cost of \$50,000.  
 2—Electric light plant and ice factory at the left and freight warehouse in the right background, with fishing fleet at anchor in Taylor's Creek.  
 3—New brick Methodist church. At the left is part of the old frame structure, which is being remodeled for use as a parsonage.  
 4—Field of cabbage growing on muck land three and a half miles from Okeechobee.  
 5—Road through uncleared hammock. Much of the land near Okeechobee is hammock land and is well suited for the growing of citrus fruit trees.  
 6—Fishing craft at anchor in Taylor's Creek, two of the town's four fish houses are seen in the background.  
 7—Bank of Okeechobee, the city's oldest financial institution.  
 8—Corn growing on hammock soil. The uncleared land with its native growth is seen in the background.  
 9—Eight-year-old orange grove owned by Peter Raulerson. Okeechobee county has 400 acres of such groves and 40 acres of younger trees, all of which are in a flourishing condition.

## OKEECHOBEE PROMISES TO BECOME ONE OF THE STATE'S LEADING CITIES

Lack of Adequate Transportation Has Prevented Development of Naturally Fertile Land, But This Handicap is About to Be Removed by The Building of Highways.

**BY WILLIAM STUART HILL.**

Surrounded by thousands of acres of land suited to citrus culture and general farming and many other areas adapted to truck growing; the center of an important cattle industry, headquarters of the largest catfish production center in the United States, Okeechobee, the county seat of Okeechobee county, faces the future with a feeling of optimism and the belief that it will be a city of 50,000 inhabitants within the next decade.

And there seems to be ground for this confidence in the future, for nature has been kind to Okeechobee and man has stretched out his hand to aid the work of nature in the building of highways and the extension of the railway there, and the finger of destiny is pointing to Okeechobee as one of the most important centers of the Florida of the future.

Okeechobee county land is underlaid with a marl or clay subsoil. This makes the land suitable for almost any purpose, especially when it is irrigated, for the subsoil serves to retain moisture and prevent fertilizing elements from leaching out during heavy rain fall.

Marl and clay are to be found under the top soil of the light sandy loam, the heavier loam near the lake, the large areas of hammock land and in some instances under the sand muck and muck lands close to the shore of Lake Okeechobee, so that it may be said that practically all of the land in Okeechobee county is well suited to general purposes and much of it is especially well adapted to the growth of citrus trees.

It seems then that the inhabitants of the county would have taken advantage of this fact long ago and Okeechobee county would now be one of the leading farming counties of Florida, but such is not true, for Okeechobee has been almost cut off from the outside world by a lack of roads and until the coming of the Florida

East Coast railway several years ago had no means of transportation.

The best sources of information at Okeechobee place the area planted to bearing citrus trees at 400 acres and the new groves at 40 acres, but it is thought that with the completion of several highways which are now in process of construction and consequent improvement in transportation the area will be largely increased.

**Cattle Principal Industry.**

Cattle raising is probably the leading industry of the county, with fishing a close second. Cattle prices have been low for the past year and a half, however, and this has reduced the incomes of persons engaged in it, as most of the cattle men are holding their stock for better prices.

One cattle ranch, the Southern, which has its headquarters 20 miles from the town of Okeechobee, has 25,000 acres of land under fence and is pasturing 8,000 cattle. Another, the Dixie Land and Cattle company, has at present few cattle, but is preparing to go into the business on a larger scale and is planting a large area to the molasses grass of Brazil, a pasture grass which the Dixie Land and Cattle company has proven to its own satisfaction, is well adapted to southern Florida.

Four fisheries companies at Okeechobee find employment for several hundred men and ship millions of pounds of catfish, bream and other fish to western markets every year. Employees and their families are said to number more than a thousand persons.

**Truck Growing Important.**

The area planted to garden truck is placed at 1,000 acres this year, somewhat below normal because much of the land generally planted is now too wet to cultivate. Quite a large area has been planted to corn and this crop appears to be in excellent condition. The greater part of the corn is growing on the heavy loamy soil near

the muck land which borders the lake shore.

Nearly all of the citrus trees are planted in hammock soil, although there are some growing in sandy loam, on prairie land, and these latter are in a flourishing condition, which promises an excellent yield in the near future.

Another of Okeechobee county's industries which puts large sums in circulation in wages is the turpentine business. Several companies are tapping trees in large areas of Okeechobee county's pine lands. It is said at Okeechobee city that a lumber company has bought a large tract of timber from which the sap has been drawn and will cut it into lumber. It is expected that the mill will be erected by fall.

**Building Saw Mill.**

Interests associated with W. J. Connors of Buffalo, N. Y., and Palm Beach have bought the machinery and are now erecting a saw mill at the southern end of the county. The company's first contract is for 250,000 cypress clogs ties which Mr. Connors will use on a tram road for hauling material for the highway which he is to build from the West Palm Beach-Okeechobee road to Okeechobee city. These ties will be used later by Mr. Connors in building a tram way at a sugar mill which he purposes to erect.

The Florida East Coast Railway company has begun work on the extension of its line from Okeechobee to Miami. Laborers are throwing up the grade near Okeechobee.

While some of the other counties of the state have been discussing highways and perhaps wishing they had good roads, Okeechobee county has been building them. The highway from Okeechobee east toward Ft. Pierce is in splendid condition to the Okeechobee county line, but from there east through part of St. Lucie county the road needs much attention to put it into good condition.

The town of Okeechobee has a population of 1,500. It was incorporated eight years ago, and since then has built fifteen miles of paved streets, five of which are of hard surface construction. It has three miles of concrete sidewalks, owns its own water works and sewer system. Water is obtained from an artesian well about 300 feet deep. The town owns a park extending 10 blocks through the heart of the town.

Officials of Okeechobee are: Mayor,

T. W. Conely, Jr.; president of the county, H. H. DeYarman; other councilmen, H. C. Adams, L. M. Raulerson, A. Berka and P. W. Hampton; clerk and assessor, H. F. Fletcher; marshal and collector, William Collins.

The city owns its cemetery and has \$50,000 worth of other city property. Its outstanding indebtedness consists of \$205,000 worth of bonds and time warrants.

Okeechobee has an ice factory, which is owned and operated by the Southern Utilities company, which also owns the electric light plant. The town also has a telephone exchange. It has five hotels, two rooming houses, three restaurants, five general merchandise stores, two drug stores, two butcher shops.

There are four churches, the Methodist, Baptist, Catholic and Church of God. It has an excellent high and grammar school building which is well equipped and which is listed in the Grade B class of accredited schools. The town boasts of two thriving banks, two garages, two women's shops, a clothing store, one dry goods store, an aviation field and two locally owned machines; a newspaper, four fisheries companies, a lumber yard, a construction company, a novelty works, a motion picture theater, two cold drink stands and other businesses.

**Two Thriving Banks.**

The Bank of Okeechobee, the oldest of the two financial institutions, was organized in 1916. It is capitalized at \$25,000 and has resources of \$400,000. L. M. Raulerson is president, R. E. McLaughlin vice president, W. R. Gray, cashier, and S. C. Harper, assistant cashier. This bank has paid 138 per cent in dividends during the six years of its existence and has accumulated a \$12,000 surplus. It has handled every bond issue of the county and the city amounting to \$350,000 county bonds and \$195,000 city bonds.

The Peoples Bank was incorporated in 1920. Its capital is \$25,000 and its resources \$89,000. A. P. Anthony of Jacksonville is president, F. M. Blledge of Jacksonville vice president, E. Frank Bowers of Jupiter second vice president, and D. R. Henderson, cashier. Perhaps the most active organization in Okeechobee is the Chamber of Commerce of which W. R. Gray, cashier of the Bank of Okeechobee, is president; F. E. Henderson, cashier of the

Peoples Bank, vice president, J. Denham Bird, second vice president, and W. W. Dumlidiff secretary. Recently the secretary has been paid a salary to devote his entire time to the duties of his office. The Chamber of Commerce is arranging to publish a booklet setting forth the advantages and attractions of Okeechobee.

**Handsome Schoolhouse.**

No town of Okeechobee's size in Florida can boast of a handsome school building. This structure was erected in 1910 at a cost of \$50,000. W. N. Henderson, the principal, was graduated from Emory college with the A. B. degree. He was for two years principal of the Ft. Lauderdale schools. The school has an enrollment of 400 pupils, 64 of whom are in the high school. The athletic showing of the pupils is excellent.

Under the direction of the Parent-Teachers' association of Okeechobee a cafeteria is operated at the school and meals are served to the pupils at a cost of 15 cents each.

**Large Fishing Center.**

Okeechobee claims the distinction of being the largest catfish producing center in the United States. Several millions of pounds are sent to other markets, principally in the west, every year. The town has four companies catching and shipping fish. The principal portion of the catches is made up of blue and channel cats, although some scale fish are taken. The number of scale fish could be increased greatly if market and other conditions warranted doing so.

The Booth Fisheries company, Inc., of which F. R. Brookman is manager, ships an average of 550 barrels weekly from September 1, the beginning of the season, until May 1, its end. Each barrel contains 200 pounds of fish. This company employs 80 men and operates 60 boats of all sizes. This season, Mr. Brookman said, is the best in the last three years. He thinks it is unlikely that the supply of catfish will be depleted.

The Standard Fish company, the largest of the four, employs 125 men, operating 18 crews, with six boats to the crew. It ships 2,000,000 pounds of fish a year. The present season with the Standard is an average one.

The United Fish company which last year shipped 800,000 pounds of fish will increase its output this year to

1,000,000 pounds. It employs 75 men and operates 50 boats.

The Everglades Fish company employs 75 men and has 65 boats. Its shipments average 1,250,000 a year.

**Several Large Ranches.**

But, great as is the fishing business in Okeechobee, it ranks second to the cattle business in the county, according to some well informed business men of Okeechobee. There are several large ranches in the county, but none close to the town, although numerous small herds may be seen in the vicinity of Okeechobee.

The Dixie Land and Cattle company, the nearest of these to Okeechobee, has not yet reached the stage of its advancement when it may be reckoned on as a factor in the county's output, but has planted nearly 800 acres to Gordura, or Molasses grass, which it imported from Brazil and which has been found to be adapted to Florida soils. The company is experimenting with Jaraguay, another Brazilian grass, for low lands.

Associated in the ownership of the Dixie Land and Cattle company and its 23,000 acres of prairie land and other holdings are Alexander Mackay of Argyleshire, Scotland, and Murdo McKenzie of Denver, Colo. The latter, one of the best known cattle men in the United States and developer of one of the country's leading herds of Hereford cattle in Texas, was for some years manager of a 10,000-acre ranch in Brazil. Seven thousand acres of the 10,000 were planted to molasses grass and Mr. McKenzie was so favorably impressed with its possibilities in the United States that he imported it into Florida and it is being tried out at the Dixie Land and Cattle company's ranch.

W. W. Webster of Arbroath, Scotland, is another member of the company, and R. F. Mackay is president. He is a son of Alexander Mackay.

**5,000 Cattle on Ranch.**

Two thousand of the 5,000 cattle at the Southern Cattle company's ranch near Bassenger, Okeechobee county, are of the Texas variety. This company is using Brahma and Indian Brahma bulls in improving the quality of its herd. There are several hundred of these bulls at the ranch.

Okeechobee county, created by the Florida legislature seven years ago,

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