

# ENTHUSIASTIC OVER THE OKEECHOBEE SECTION

## Mayor Watson and a Party Of Friends Have Re- turned Home

THE LAKE IS LOWER THAN EVER BEFORE, THE MAYOR SAYS—  
REAL ESTATE AT TANTIE AND VICINITY IN DEMAND—MANY SQUATTERS SEEN ALONG THE BANKS OF THE CANAL

Enthusiastic over the development and evident future of the region around the lake, Mayor Watson and party are back from a ten days' business and vacation trip to Lake Okeechobee. The mayor, Henry Arguile and E. R. Koile made the trip to the lake via Fort Lauderdale and the canal in one of Mr. Watson's boats. The water, even in the Fort Lauderdale canal, is so low that in one place for a distance of 1,000 feet or more they had to pull the boat over the rocks by the anchor rope. The lake is said to be lower than it has ever been known before, leaving a wide beach that is popular as an automobile course for machines that make the trip to Tantie and Totopie over the new road from Fort Pierce and Jupiter.

The shores of the lake support a population of over 2,000 people, according to the mayor, a majority of whom are in the fish business. This business is of vastly larger proportions than is generally known. Last year the cat fish caught in the lake sold for more than \$1,000,000. The mayor helped land a catch of 10,000 fish. Most of this fish is sent down the canal to Fort Lauderdale. If the Miami canal were navigable this city would get a fair share of the business, though when the railroad reaches the lake much of the traffic will be diverted to that.

At Okeechobes City, on the site of Tantie at the mouth of Taylor's creek, over \$100,000 worth of lots have been sold already and the railroad will not reach the place until October. Plans for a big hotel on the beach at this place and an ice plant and docks are already made, and the city bids fair to have a magical growth. The soil of the tributary country is some of the richest in the state with fine orange and grape fruit groves in full bearing near the lake. The cattle industry is also proving profitable with stock cattle selling for twenty dollars a piece that a few years ago would have brought only four or five dollars. Some of the finest cypress timber in the state is growing around the lake and as soon as the railroad gets through a shingle mill will be built.

Mr. Watson said they passed the tents of a number of squatters on the Everglades who are farming along the canal banks. He sees a danger of the water in the lake being lowered too far after the opening of the big canal, and thinks steps should be taken to install sufficient locks to raise the water to such a level that it will insure transportation in the state canals and guarantee the glades against over drainage. But he believes the present system of tolls in the canals should be abolished. It cost him \$2.50 to take his boat through the lock on the canal, and he had only a small boat. There are seldom less than ten boats going through the lock in the Fort Lauderdale canal every day, and some days many more, so that the toll amounts to considerable.

This is a burden on the fishermen and farmers and the state is rich enough to pay for its own locks without making the people who use the canal as their only highway, pay for the privilege of marketing their produce.