

## Tourist Business in The South.

(Richard H. Edmunds, in Manufacturers Record, of Baltimore.)

Reports to the Manufacturers Record from the railroad and steamship lines from the Florida show that from the beginning of the season to the first of March the total number of visitors to that State, mainly, of course, tourists, was 171,000. If to this be added the number of motorists who went to Florida in their own cars, the total would be at least 200,000.

This is not as high as some wild estimates that have been made, but it is far greater than careful students of the development of the tourist business would have justified in estimating. It means a magnitude and importance to Florida of the tourist trade far beyond anything which that state has ever before known.

It is impossible to get any definite facts as to the amount of money expended in the state by these 200,000 tourists. A careful canvass and a study of the situation in all parts of Florida make it very conservative to estimate that the average length of the tourist's stay in the state was 30 days. A large proportion of the people who went to Florida last winter spent the entire season there. The number runs far into the thousands. A large number spent a month or more, while a considerable number stayed only a week or ten days. But the movement of travel into the state during the winter months and the heavy rush of outward travel in the spring shows that it will be very conservative to estimate 30 days as a minimum for the average time spent by each tourist in the state.

As it is not possible to get exact figures on this point, so it is not possible to do more than speculatively estimate as to the amount of money expended by the average tourist. There are thousands of people who at the elaborate, costly hotels run their daily expenditures into big figures. There are some who spend very moderate amounts at boarding houses and the smaller hotels and between these two extremes there are tens of thousands who at the average Florida hotel pay \$5.00 a day or more for hotel accommodations. To hotel and boarding house expenses should be added the expenses for motoring, yachting, fishing, the purchase of souvenirs and the thousand and one things which absorb the tourist's money. It is safe to estimate that the average expenditure for a tourist for the winter was \$5.00 a day. Some estimate the amount considerably above \$5.00 a day and some a little lower, but \$5.00 is at least a conservatively low figure. On this basis, the average cost to the winter visitor while in Florida was \$150.00 for the 30 days and for the 200,000 visitors, this would mean \$30,000,000 expended in Florida last winter by tourists. These figures, except as to the arrivals by transportation lines furnished to the Manufacturers Record, are estimates. Others speculate as to the average length of the tourist's stay and as to the average amount expended and make their calculations as to whether \$30,000,000 is too much or too little. We believe, based on a rather wide study of the subject, that it is a low figure. Its magnitude, however, is far beyond any estimate that we have ever seen as to what the tourist travel means to the State of Florida.

A large proportion of these visitors were from the Far West and Northwest, and during the present winter, a considerable number were from Canada. The average length of the trip prior to reaching the State would be upwards of 1000 miles or 2000 miles for the round trip to Jacksonville and return.

Counting the cost of the Pullmans and the incidental expenses of the journey the railroad expenses must have been on an average not less than \$75 per capita. This would mean as a minimum \$15,000,000 to the railroads and steamship lines before these travelers passed beyond Jacksonville, the gateway into the State.

From early February to April, every hotel in Florida was over-crowded and was compelled to refuse accommodations to many would-be visitors. Vacant rooms and houses in the neighborhood of these hotels were rented to help take care of this overflow, and still there was an incessant cry from the tourists for accommodations far beyond the hotel capacity of the State.

While Florida thus had its greatest and most prosperous tourist season last winter, the whole South had similar conditions. Apparently everywhere south of Richmond from the Pinehurst and Southern Pines section of Carolina on down through Camden and Augusta to other far Southern points, the rush of tourists far exceeded anything that this section has ever known.

This situation was due in part to the bounding prosperity of the North and West and to the fact that all European resorts were cut off and those who

formerly went abroad, this year visited other parts of our own land. There was also a larger movement than formerly from Canada and a notable number of Canadians seeking to escape the rigors of their winters come South.

Climate conditions from Carolina to Miami were probably never surpassed during any winter. Florida had one of its most superb winters from the climatic point of view, just as it had its greatest amount of tourist travel. If it were possible to get the figures that would tell the story of the tourist business from Richmond to San Antonio, the total would amaze the country. These figures, unfortunately, are not available, but what can be definitely stated as to Florida is an indication of what is going on throughout the South in the growth of the tourist traffic. From every part of the Far North and Northwest, from the Central West and the East, and as stated from Canada, people poured into the South this winter, not only far beyond the capacity of the hotels but far beyond the facilities of the railroads for handling this traffic.

There was a lamentable shortage in facilities on the part of some roads from the East to Florida in handling traffic adequately and comfortably. The trains were so over-crowded as to necessitate their being cut up into two and even three sections with far more cars to each than could possibly be handled to advantage on the tracks of these roads. There was almost universal complaint about the jarring and jolting in the starting and stopping of trains, due doubtless in part to the fact that engines were not equal to hauling such heavy trains and to the track not being solid enough to meet the conditions of such travel.

These complaints were so numerous and so persistent and so vigorous that it is absolutely incumbent upon the railroads catering to this tourist business to put their lines in shape with heavier rails and better track and with larger power equipment in order to avoid such justifiable complaints. It should never be possible for the tourist to be compelled to make such justifiable complaints as have been heard in every part of the Carolinas and Florida during the winter. Indeed, this condition is the most serious handicap against an increase in tourist traffic next winter. Hotels are preparing to enlarge their facilities, many new hotels will be built and great efforts will be made in every resort center to provide for the crowds that are expected, but upon the railroads will fall the heaviest responsibility and upon them will rest the need of bettering their facilities so far beyond existing conditions as to avoid the universal complaints of the winter against the jarring and jolting and bumping which threatened the health of many travelers and made even the strongest weary with their journey. This condition must be met and overcome. It would be the height of folly to permit it to continue into another winter. Every criticism of this kind and these criticisms were thoroughly justified by what travelers had to endure, is a reflection not only on the railroads, but on the whole South. Travelers who have to endure such discomforts are inclined to believe that everything in the South is done in that way, and they blame the whole section for the shortsightedness of railroads.

The South has at last caught its pace in this tourist business. If the railroads are wise and if Southern communities will afford the hotel accommodations, it will be possible within the next few years to double the entire tourist traffic of the South. The 200,000 tourists who went to Florida during the winter and spent \$30,000,000 or more there, were enthusiastic beyond expression as to the glorious climate of the winter. From the North and West they had daily reports of storms and blizzards, of the gripe and pneumonia and kindred diseases which afflicted the whole Northern and Western country by reason of the severity of their winter, whereas day after day and week after week and month after month from December to April, there was the most glorious, brilliant sunshine, with scarcely a rainy day for the entire season, in Florida. The visitors who were in that state have gone home enthusiastic, thousands are figuring on the possibility of doing what many thousands have for years been doing, viz.: Having winter homes in Florida, and soon the tale will spread from one end of the country to the other as never before of the glorious winter climate of the State.

In the Sand Hill region of the Carolinas and Georgia and in other winter resorts of the Central South, the tourist business, as in Florida, exceeded anything that has ever been known in those sections, and these visitors likewise will be spreading abroad the attractions of these resort regions of the South, for they, too, had splendid weather.

The South, except Florida, as a whole, has never adequately understood or appreciated the tourist business. Counties and states of the South have made comparatively little effort to adequately prepare for the tourist trade. Hotels have done their best, but they have not received, except in rare cases as an enthusiastic support as they deserved from the communities in which they are located.

Many people have looked upon the tourist trade as merely a passing event of no particular importance to the commercial or industrial life of the South, whereas it is a most vital factor in the development of the South.

It was the tourist traffic that made California.

Henry M. Flagler was a tourist who, spending the winter in St. Augustine to escape the rigors of New York's climate, became enamored of the climate and in the 25 years following that tourist trip, he expended more than \$75,000,000 of his own money in the development of Florida.

creating activities. One of the Deerling plow manufacturers was a tourist to Miami, and becoming enthused over that section he is spending \$1,000,000 in the building there of a winter home and the beautifying of its grounds. Carl G. Fisher, one of the leading manufacturers of Indiana, was a tourist to Miami. He, too, fell in love with its attractions and promptly undertook the reclamation and development of nearly 1,000 acres of overflowed lands, with plans looking to the building of a city, into which he has poured a vast amount of capital.

Everywhere throughout Florida similar conditions exist. Men have gone to look and have stayed to locate.

They have gone as transient travelers, but seeing limitless possibilities in such climatic advantages they have become enthusiastic investors and tireless workers in material upbuilding.

In every tourist resort in the South similar conditions are found and many of the tourist hotels, through the energy of their owners or managers, have become leading factors in this development work.

Florida has appreciated these facts more than have other states in the South. It is showing its recognition of their importance and of catering to the tourist trade by spending millions of dollars in improving its highways.

In proportion to wealth and population, Florida is probably spending more money on road building than any other state in the Union. Counting the expenditures made during the last 12 months, those under way and those for which bonds will shortly be issued, there is in process of expenditure by Florida on its highways at least \$10,000,000. Florida is not simply "talking" about good roads and then making cheap ordinary dirt roads; it is building permanent highways, many of brick, so that within a year or two it will be possible to travel to and from every part of the state over splendidly built brick or macadam or other solid highways. It is doing a work in this respect that bespeaks the energy, the enterprise and the intelligence of its people. It is setting an example to the entire South. Indeed, it is setting a pace that it will be hard for any other state in the Union to more than match, and very few of them can keep step with it. It is the only state in the South where the friendly rivalry and competition in road building between different counties is as active as here. The rivalry is so great as to assure the completion in the near future of a chain of highways which will reach from Jacksonville to Miami, from Miami across the Everglades to Tampa and from Tampa to Jacksonville, with all intermediate towns connected up by similar good roads.

The population of this country, now exceeding 100,000,000, is increasing at the rate of about 18,000,000 every decade.

Our national wealth is gaining at the rate of about \$10,000,000,000 a year.

Every increase in population and in wealth is enlarging the field of population for the development of the tourist business in the South.

Increasing wealth makes it possible for thousands who in the past were compelled to remain at home and endure Northern winters, now to seek the South.

Increasing population is enormously adding to the number of people in the country who will look to the South as a place of winter residence.

Here and there are seen evidences of the tendency of the people of wealth and of people of moderate means as well to own winter homes in the South. Hundreds of thousands of fairly well-to-do people in the East and the West have reached an age when they want to get away from the hardships of cold winters and spend the latter years of life in quiet in a mild climate. Many of this class located in California, carrying with them \$40,000 or \$50,000 or \$100,000 apiece. They had gone out in times past as tourists. They enjoyed the pleasures of California's climate and settled there as permanent residents.

They did not know that in Florida and in other parts of the South there could be found advantages far superior to California's. It was their ignorance of these facts that took them to California rather than to the South. The number of people in similar conditions as to age and a competence is increasing with amazing rapidity. The tide of settlement in the South by people of this class is rapidly rising. It can be helped and its momentum vastly increased by the right kind of work on the part of Southern railroads and the people of the South. And this thought leads to another.

Florida, for instance, has never been even half advertised for people of this kind. Never have the towns, or cities or the railroads of the South adequately presented to the country the opportunities and the advantages of permanent homes in Florida for people of moderate means who want to settle down in a good climate for the balance of life. Never have the advantages of house-keeping in Florida during the winter months been adequately

presented. The vast majority of people suppose that in Florida they would have to depend upon boarding houses or hotels, and to many neither are desirable. The fact that furnished houses, from the inexpensive bungalow to the elaborate residence, all furnished, ready for immediate occupancy, can be rented in nearly every part of the state has never been made known broadly throughout the country.

Indeed, as one studies with some care the situation in Florida and notes its possibilities he is amazed at how little the officials of many railroads leading to and from Florida have appreciated the limitless mine which is open to their development.

They have not yet scratched the surface.

They have been moving along without any vision, except in rare cases, of the possibilities for creating traffic, unless per chance some of them have realized that the traffic which they have is fully equal to their capacity to properly handle, and therefore they are not seeking to enlarge their business except in a perfunctory way.

It is time for them to wake up.

It is time to be doing things on a broad scale.

They should be the leaders in this development. To a large extent they are merely utilizing the advantages that they have created by nature, by the hotels and by the people interested in Florida's development.

The East Coast section of Florida has been more widely advertised through Mr. Flagler's activities than any other part of the state and the result is an amazing development in that section. The superb advantages of the Lake Region and the West Coast have never been properly made known. This, however, is due to a considerable extent to the fact as often stated in the Manufacturers Record, that the railroads of the entire South, with rare exceptions, have never grasped the possibilities of this country. There have been no E. H. Harriman's or C. P. Huntington's as great constructive leaders in Southern railroad upbuilding activities. This is partly due to the officials of Southern roads, many of whom do not themselves quite understand the South, and it is partly due to the fact that the financial interests in the East who control Southern roads have been shortsighted to the extreme, have had no adequate understanding of the South and have been parsimonious in doing the things which the Pacific Coast roads did and which resulted in the marvelous advancement of California.

Probably no better illustration could be found in the entire country of how the financial interests controlling a railroad can develop a country, increase its activities and at the same time enormously expand their own business than that of the Clinchfield, a 250-mile line across the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. This road has simply revolutionized the entire region through which it runs by the intelligent way in which it has investigated the resources of the country and the energy with which it has sought and found the capital for the development of that territory.

There is scarcely a mile of railroad in the South in which work of the same kind could not be made to bring forth results commensurate with what the Clinchfield has been doing.

The time has come for the railroads of the South, for the financial powers who control them and for the people at large to wake up and do things on a broad scale and with a larger vision and a greater expenditure of energy and intelligence and money than has ever yet been seen.

Will J. P. Morgan & Co., who have been dominant factors in controlling vast railroad mileage in the South, take the lead?

Will the City National Bank crowd, which numbers along its leading men, bankers who have been brought up from the South because of their commanding ability, take the lead in turning capital to intelligent investment in the South?

Will the Steel Corporation crowd look at the South from a broader viewpoint as to its own interests and also from that of the welfare of the nation, than it has yet shown?

Will the Midvale or the Bethlehem companies become leaders in this work? Who is there among the great capitalists of the country with the genius and the daring and the vision of C. P. Huntington or E. H. Harriman or Henry M. Flagler, or the men who have created the wonderful work done by the Clinchfield, who will lead out boldly for the broadest utilization of every advantage of the South, whether it be the development of tourist traffic, the reconstruction and rebuilding of Southern railroads, so sadly needed by many, or the broader development of the metallurgical interests of the South?

The field is open, the opportunity is one of national, indeed, of world-wide importance. Who is to be the great constructive genius to do the South and his country infinite good through leadership in the largest utilization of the boundless resources of the South?

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