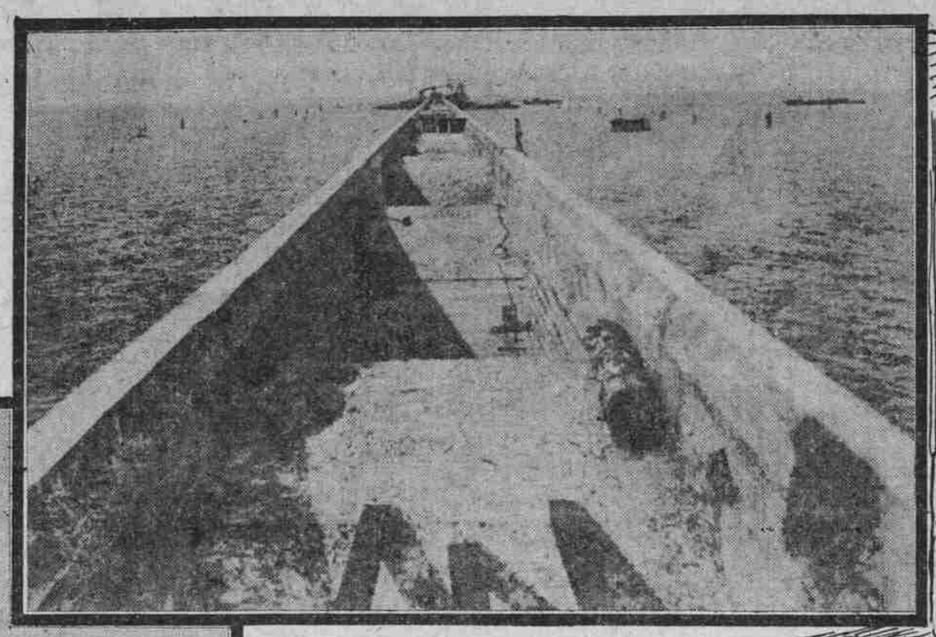
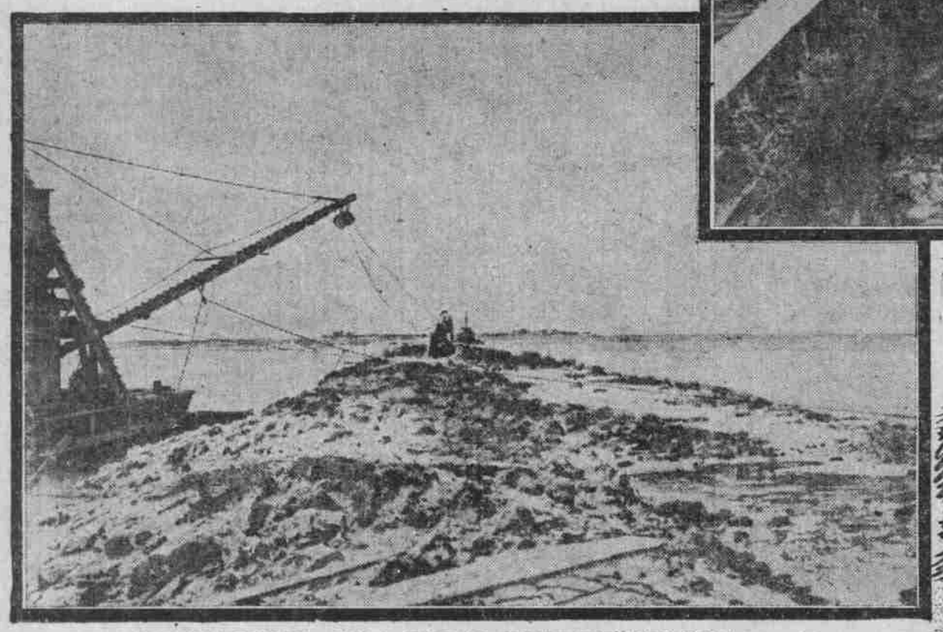
GOING TO SEA IN A PULLMAN CAR

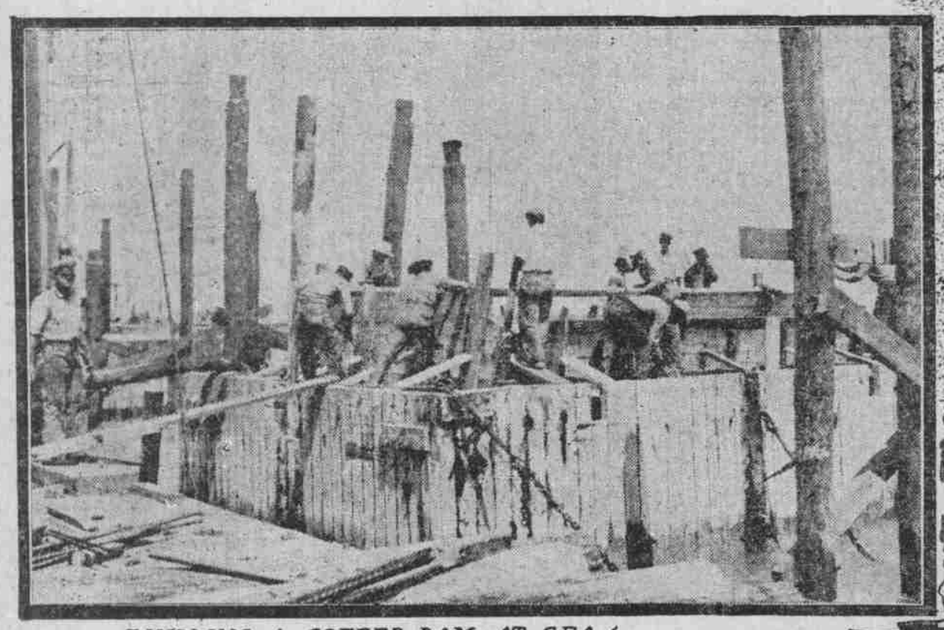
Coral Reefs of Eastern Florida, Used as Foundation for a Railroad Which Brings Cuba One Hundred Miles Nearer to Us.





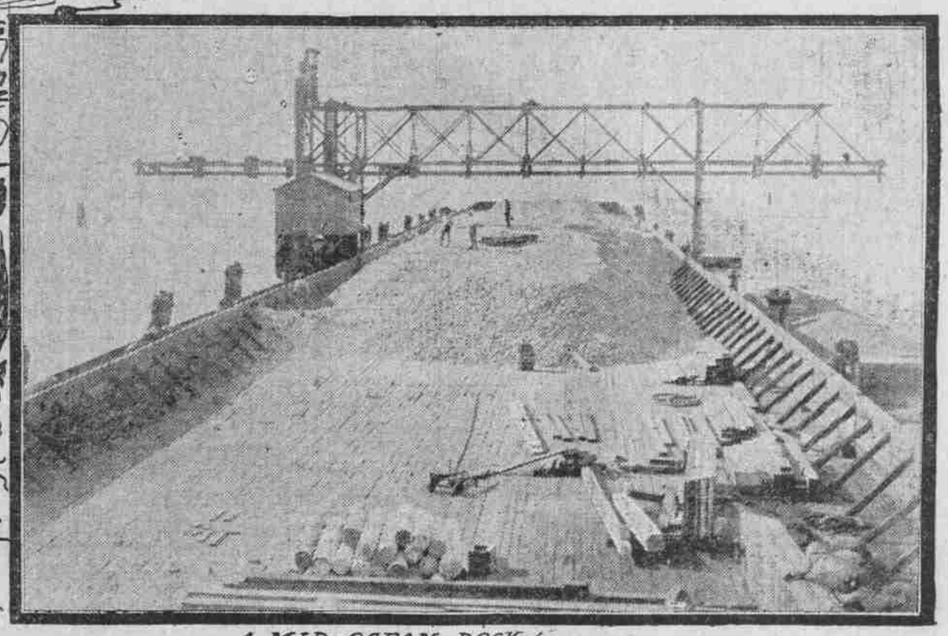
COMPLETING THE CORAL-INSECTS' WORK

STRAIGHT ACROSS A WATERY PRAIRIE



BUILDING A COFFER-DAM AT SEA

BETWEEN THE GULF AND THE DEEP SEA



A MID-OCEAN DOCK

IN THE early days of next January it will be possible for the first time for Americans to make an ocean journey by rail. From a comfortable seat in a parlor car the traveler will be able to look out on one side across the rolling billows of the Atlantic and on the other side over the bluer waters of the Gulf of Florida, the two commingling directly beneath the tracks which support his train. The tracks themselves will be invisible, of course, so he can enjoy the novel sensation of going to sea by train.

Here and there the voyager by ocean railway will cross diminutive coral keys and at intervals he will traverse larger islets through groves of tangled palms. He will be set down at length on Knight's Key, the southernmost point in the United States, reached by rail, and the temporary terminus of the only seafaring railroad ever built. There he may step aboard a fast steamer and six hours later land in Havana, having traveled all but 115 miles of the distance from his starting point by train.

The effect, so far as the traveler is concerned, will be the same as if a wonder-working genii should pick up the Pearl of the Antilles and move it a hundred miles or more nearer to the United States. The journey to Cuba from New York or Chicago, or any point in the eastern half of the country, will be shortened in point of time nearly one-third. Leaving New York on any wintry evening the traveler will be able on the second afternoon to step ashore in the Cuban capital, having made the entire trip in less than forty-eight hours.

Flagler's Chef-d'oeuvre.

This will be made possible by the opening to traffic of a section of the "railroad at sea" that Henry M. Flagler has been pushing out over land and water along the thickly dotted line of coral islands that curves from the Florida mainland southwest to Key West. When work was begun, about two years ago, it was announced that trains would be running in three years, but so rapidly has construction gone forward that already more than two-thirds of the distance has been covered, and the line is almost ready to be opened for more than 100 of the 154 miles of its projected length.

The building of this remarkable ocean highway is regarded by Mr. Flagler as the crowning achievement of the great development that he has been carrying on in Florida. Though he has long been prominent in other great industrial enterprises, Mr. Flagler's real work—or, at least, that in which he takes the keenest interest—has been transforming the eastern half of Florida from a barren waste of sand into a thriving industrial section and the Winter playground of the country, the only counterpart in the United States of the far-famed Riviera of Europe.

Though sometimes spoken of as a hobby, his development of Ponce de Leon's land of perpetual youth has been conducted as a business enterprise pure and simple. The building of the ocean railway was undertaken with an eye to the growth in importance of Key West that is certain to follow the completion of the Panama Canal, and to the steadily increasing traffic between the United States and Cuba. At the same time, the man who is responsible for these great enterprises has devoted to them all the enthusiasm that some men give to golf or yachting, or raising thoroughbreds. In this sense they have been his hobby, it is true.

Two Years of Effort.

According to Mr. Flagler himself, the scheme of carrying his railroad line out across the coral islands to Key West and of conveying his trains from there by rapid car ferries directly to the Cuban capital, first took tangible shape in his mind during the Spanish War. At that time the certainty of closer political and trade relations between this country and Cuba became evident, as did the commercial and strategic importance of some means of quickly reaching the island republic from the United States. The dream grew in Mr. Flagler's mind and he directed that a survey be made by engineers to determine whether such a road as he imagined could be constructed. When the voluminous reports, estimates, drawings and blue prints of the engineers were submitted, Mr. Flagler glanced at them hastily and turning to Mr. J. R. Parrott, vice-president of his railway and his right-hand man in all his Florida undertakings, said:

"All I want to know is whether the road can be built."

"Yes, it can," replied Mr. Parrott.

"Then go ahead and build it," Mr. Flagler directed.

That was in 1905. Since then the dirt has been flying ceaselessly. Immense piledrivers have been sinking foundations, huge dredges have been sucking up sand from the bottom of the sea to construct a roadbed, and an army of between 3000 and 4000 men has been pushing its way steadily southward from Miami out over the waves and the tiny islands towards Key West.

Worked Without President.

There was no precedent in the history of railway construction for the building of this sort of a road. Consequently the difficulties were many and the problems to be solved unusual. In the first place, it was necessary to assemble a veritable navy, including steamboats, tugs, lighters, hundreds of barges and bateaux, launches, floating derricks, pumps, piledriver and repair shops, for, since this was to be a railroad at sea, sea craft had to be utilized chiefly in its construction. The Florida keys traversed by the line are mostly uninhabited and afforded neither shelter nor support for the army of men employed. It was necessary to establish camps, transport supplies, build hospitals for the sick, and establish reading and clubrooms in which the workers could find relaxation from the monotony of their isolated lives. In some cases big houseboats or floating dormitories were anchored in protected spots to serve as living quarters. Even the drinking water must be transported in huge tanks on barges a distance of a hundred miles or more.

At the northern end of the line, the route for a number of miles is on the mainland and extends through the borders of the Everglades. Here it was impossible to use ordinary means of land construction and barges were employed. The water was so shallow, however, that the heavy boats could not be floated and canals had first to be made for them. These canals extend along either side of the railroad and through them the barges worked their way, digging their own channels as they moved along and throwing up at one side the earth taken out, so as to form the roadbed. Further down, where the railway crosses to Key Largo and begins its real career as an ocean-going line, problems of another sort presented themselves for solution. Even the building of the road across the different keys was not a simple matter, for there palms, vines and various kinds of tropical vegetation grow in such luxuriance that they formed a dense jungle that had to be cleaned away before digging could begin. Where long open stretches of water were traversed it was necessary to put down caissons or to build cofferdams in which the men worked while laying the foundations for the huge concrete viaducts that carry the rails over the sections of the route.

Mostly Marine Work.

Nearly all the building materials, including the ingredients of the concrete, the timber for piling, the heavy stone for abutments, and the crushed stone for the rip-rap work put in as a profection against the action of the waves, were brought to the points where they were used on barges towed by tugs and steamers. Only the ballast or filling for the roadbed was secured on the spot. On the various islands this was obtained by excavating and breaking up the coral rock, which makes a bed of gleaming white. Where the line crosses open water filling was obtained by the use of huge pumps which sucked up sand from the bottom and dropped it into the fill. Thus the engineers forced Old Ocean to yield not only the right-of-way but, as well, part of the construction material.

Knights Key, which for the time being is to serve as the southern terminus of the ocean-going railway, and at which passengers will take the boat for Havana, is 108 miles below Miami and 47 miles from Key West. From here to Havana the distance is only 115 miles, or but 25 miles further than from Key West. It has been selected for a temporary terminus not only because it is the point to which the road has been fully completed, but because the construction work which is being done here will provide a safe and commodious harbor for the use of steamers.

Cost $100,000 a Mile.

In explanation of the reason for beginning the operation of the train service from Knights Key instead of from Key West, and a year earlier than the date originally set, Vice-President Parrott said:

"In the middle of the past Summer we found, on taking stock, that by concentrating our efforts and our working force on the section of the road above Knights Key we could have this portion completed and open to traffic by the middle of January, 1908—that is, we could put the road in operation and have it earning something during the coming season instead of allowing it to remain idle and unremunerative for another year. Practically 80 per cent of all the land work on the Key West end of the line has been completed, so there should be no difficulty in pushing the work forward to completion on its scheduled time."

One of the peculiar difficulties in the execution of Mr. Flagler's ambitious project was the discovery that there was not sufficient space on the island of Key West to provide railroad yards, terminals and wharves. Accordingly a vast area is being filled in which will add approximately 179 acres to the area of the island. This space will be utilized for the terminal of the lines and for the six big piers which are to be built for the use of the ferries plying between this point and Havana.

This ocean railway has in one sense been in course of construction far longer than any other line in existence. For thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of years before the existence of America was known to the forebears of its present inhabitants myriads of tireless coral insects were rearing out of the depths of the ocean the islets which form the stepping-stones of this novel railway in its seaward course. For an equal period the winds and the waves have been at work piling up the sand which forms the abutments of the original structure. Only the finishing touches were left for the master mind of the American magnate to complete. And, it may be added that these tiny insects and the elements are the only partners Mr. Flagler has had in his unique enterprise. Although the road, from the nature of its construction, is one of the most expensive ever undertaken, costing approximately $100,000 per mile, the task of financing it has been borne entirely by the man who planned and is building it. It represents an expenditure of between $15,000,000 and $20,000,000 for the realization of an idea—the linking together of Cuba and the United States by the peaceful but effective bond of the steel highway.

Yearly Paper at Polar Circle.

Cincinnati Inquirer.

Newspaper men ought to have easy times of it in the Polar Circle, where the papers are issued only once a year. There are three or four of these. One of them is the Eskimo Bulletin, edited near Cape Prince of Wales on Bering Straits. The English missionaries there have established a school in a village inhabited by Eskimos, and as only one steamer lands at that place and that only once a year, the news it brings from the outside world is printed on a sheet of paper with the and it is printed only on one side.

Mutual.

Our relatives! Heaven bless the tie
(It needs it)—and then murmur why
On earth where nature holds full sway
We should have had to come this way?
So hemmed and bounded, fenced and barred—
So brothered, sistered, pa'd and ma'd—
So crossed and crisscrossed, tied and looped
By aunts and uncles, and so hooped
By second cousins, not to note
A thousand others more remote.
Our poor relations are a curse,
Our richer ones are often worse,
The country batch is green and crude,
The city bunch is wild and rude.
The ones we like are never near,
The ones we hate are always here;
There's not a night we go to bed
But what we wish that some were dead;
Or if we don't, I quite surmise,
We choke ourselves with lots of lies.
Sometimes we're glad to have a few,
But what's the use of such a crew?
A pa who gives us lots of cash,
A ma who lets us cut a dash,
A sister or a brother fine—
I'd like all these, of course, for mine.
But saddest of this awful mess—
Each relative of mine, I guess,
This selfsame, free opinion shares,
As I'm a relative of theirs.

—L. S. Waterhouse.

The passport system dates back to the time of the Crusaders.