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-NEWSY NOTES-

By J. A. Clark, D.Sc.

LAKELAND TO JACKSONVILLE

A motor trip that developed into one of the most enjoyable features of our stay in Florida, began about 9. A. M. on the morning of February 27th., 1953, with a most gracious send off to us and our travelling companions, by our hosts at the Belmont Hotel, and two thirds of their guests. The feature of the occasion was the wringing many times of the hostess' handkerchief, which received a generous replacement of Lakeland water, from a hidden source to produce the copious tear effect.

Lakeland, which has an elevation of less than one hundred feet below the top of nearby Iron Mountain, the hightest point of land in Florida, has within its borders 13 beautiful lakes. It lies near the centre of the great citrus belt of Florida with groves of orange, lemon and grapefruit trees within and about it. We drove through these to the Polk county seat, at Bartow, then to Lake Wales and Frostproof which are both surrounded by beautiful lakes, groves of citrus fruit and meadows devoted to stock raising. This rich agricultural region enables Polk County to rank first in the production of fruit and live stock in that state.

* * *

Polk County, and a section of Hillsborough which lies to the West, have vast phosphate mines which produce three-quarters of the world's total output of that fertilizer. This material lies under a shallow overburden of soil, which is first removed and piled in great mounds on either side of each excavation, then the phosphate is washed from the soil in water to where it is freed from other materials and ground for the fertilizer trade. Near Bartow, at Mulberry and other points, different fertilizer companies have large plants for the manufacture and shipping of this valuable agricultural commodity.

We drove by Lake Sterns, near Lake Placid and from there to and around Lake Okeechobee, the largest body of fresh water in Florida; we saw great herds of cattle on Alfalfa and other pasture fields, which indicated the year round production of grass beef and dairy products at low costs compared with those where cattle have to be housed and stall fed for months each year.

* * *

Our first picnic lunch was enjoyed under the shade of beautiful trees in full bloom, at tables with other facilities provided, near the south shore of Lake Okeenchobee by the lovely town of Clewiston. From there we followed around the lake by South Bay and Belle Glade and then by the side of the Canal to Palm Beach on the Atlantic Coast turning South we secured cottages for two nights at Pompano Beach, a short distance north of Fort Lauderdale.

There had been a shower of rain in the night, and the air was fresh and cool as we drove south the next morning, through the many winter resort towns, along the Atlantic shore to Miami, where we visited relatives and friends. The ladies went shopping and we drove through the main streets and boulevards of that great winter tourist centre of the South. We were told that last year, Miami had five million visitors. The enormous hotels that seemed to be everywhere about the city and beach indicated that full provision had been made for their pleasure and comfort. We found light summer clothes very comfortable and after a very enjoyable day we arrived back at our cottages at Pompano Beach.

* * *

Sunday we drove leisurely north along the coast. The day was fine and warm and it was a wonderful trip following the beach highway through Lake Worth to Palm Beach, then along the intercoasted Indian River shore from Stuart through Jesen, Fort Pierce, Melbourne, Cocoa, Titusville and New Smyrna Beach to Daytona, where we were located for two days at the Homestead House. After a dinner at Morrison's Cafeteria, the last available seat was secured, near the door, of the First Baptist Church. A much larger new church is being constructed on an adjoining lot.

Monday at Daytona proved to be a very busy day, at Rotary the 141 visitors provided the entertainment, they taxed themselves an extra dollar each and presented this to the Daytona Club for its community projects. Visits to five cousins and other friends and trips Olds Hall and the famous Daytona racing beach, which included taking pictures of the Beach Theatre and Pier filled out the afternoon. The Coast Guard said that though the day was cool, a host of visitors would cover the beach when the sun had warmed the sand and the air later in the afternoon.

Tuesday the shore and sea was blanketed in fog. We had a picnic lunch near the Marine Gardens and arrived at St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States, in time to see the oldest house, the Ancient Gates near Fort Castella de San Marcos, the old school, the curiosity shop and the mill with its ancient water-wheel still turning; however, what we enjoyed most were the hours spent in Potters Wax Museum, with 169 wax figures, many of them replicas of Madam Tussaud's, from the Wm. the Conqueror to Sir Winston Churchill. At Jacksonville we took the "Sunset Limited" for California on March 4th, 1953.

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox And Mink Farming

Man of the Year in the fur industry for 1953 in Frank G. Ashbrooke, in charge of wild life animal investigation branch of Wild Life Research Department of the Interior, Washington. Mr. Ashbrook became the tenth recipient of the annual testimonial dinner slated for the Hotel Statler, Washington, in recognition of his selection. Two outstanding contributions to the industry made by Mr. Ashbrooke were his efforts in working out details of the fur labelling act and his continued support of freer trade in connection with raw-fur imports. Fox farmers here will remember Mr. Ashbrooke when he was one of the top authorities in the United States on fur farming there. For several years we have not heard very much about him but no doubt that was due to the fact that he had taken over the Department of Wild Life Fur Animal Investigations. He was a prolific writer on fur topics and there are one or two of his publications still being advertised in fur farming journals.

We have been looking for some time to see what happened to the 12,400 foxes which were consigned to Eastwood & Holt's Fur Exchange for the account of the American Fox Breeders Association. The official report of the first day's sale is as follows: Pearls, $22, purchased for domestic purposes; silvers, $16.50, the darker goods for European consumption, the paler for U. S. use; three quarter silvers $17 and half silvers $17.50. These darker shades were for Europe. No quantities were mentioned and we have no idea whether these prices represented selects or average qualities.

Sudack Fur Auction last week saw an active market with good interest in all wanted articles and a good turnout of buyers. Sixty-five per cent of the 6,500 mink pelts sold at slightly firmer prices. Standards sold freely at the following levels: males, $14.50 to $18.50; females, $8.50 to $10.25; mutations were unchanged.

There is a big agitation in the United States to kill the 20 per cent Federal excise tax on furs and a New York representative speaking in Congress said it should be killed as one step in preventing utter ruin of the fur industry. The tax, said he, is no longer necessary and adds much to the industry's burden. The fur industry has been hit severely in recent years and much of this situation is strictly attributable to the burdensome excise taxes which increase the cost of furs to such an extent as to bring them out of reach of the great masses of American women.

The above words are true and we wish they would sink into the consciousness of those farming the tariff at Ottawa. What is happening in the United States to the fur trade has happened and is causing the ranchers to receive lower prices for their mink and has practically forced silver fox off the market. A 20 per cent excise tax on a fur when it finally gets to the customer has grown so much it makes a very appreciable difference in price and the retailer may often lose a sale because of so much for furs which are almost it. People can only afford just in the luxury class and when prices get beyond their ability to buy there can be no sales.

A further report on the fox sale in New York appears in Women's Wear Daily as follows: Approximately 50 per cent of the 17,600 foxes were sold Friday and Monday for the account of the American Fox Breeders Association according to fur exchange Eastwood & Holt officials. Exceptions were top pearls, silvers and platinums. White marked foxes were reported as selling 40 per cent.

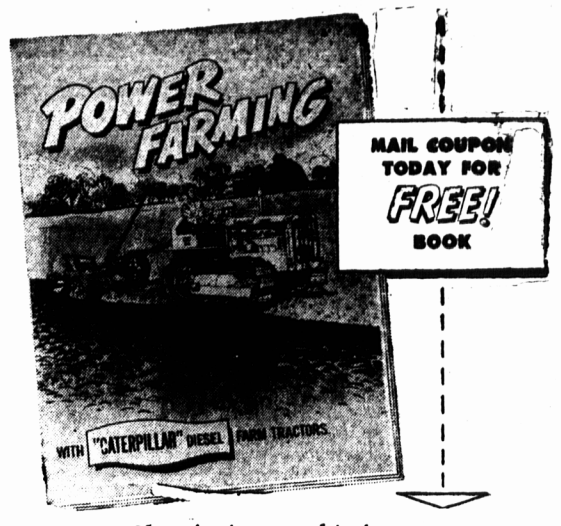
Independently produced raw and dressed mink mutations were unchanged to 12 per cent higher at Lampson, Fraser & Huth's sale last week. All goods moved from 73 per cent to 100 per cent. Comparisons were with levels at the January 28th sale of independent mutations. Raw pastels, 100 per cent sold; top for males, $54, for females, $17. Both Breath of Spring prices were slightly stronger; 97 per cent sold, prices firm. Dressed pastels, 83 per cent sold; Breath of Spring top males, $65, top females, $22; regular top male, $49.50, female, $25.50; Sapphire, 73 per cent sold, top male, $70, top female, $43; prices firm. Whites, 80 per cent sold, top male, $75, top female, $43; prices unchanged. Platinums were running very strong in the afternoon with almost 100 per cent sold; top prices were, males, $35, females $18.

We have received a copy of the Master Rancher, published in the interests of Canadian fur ranching by the Department of Fur Bearing Animals, Master Feeds, Toronto, Canada. The author is Dr. E. Rendle Bowness, one of the outstanding authorities of fur farming in the United States and Canada. This is a brief review with extracts from it..... "Too many mink — Most people dismiss our unsatisfactory market position in mink with the words that we are producing too many mink ..... At the present moment we are producing too many dark mink which have very little quality to recommend them. Most of these mink are the by-product of our mutation mink and the time is rapidly approaching when we will have to breed these mutation mink pure or well we'll find the millstone of these Hybrids of sufficient weight to sink our ranching enterprise.

"We are treading on dangerous ground when we over produce on a basically un-wanted quality of mink and try to jam it down the market's throat...Dumping ... The early mink pelt markets have been quite active and quite profitable for those who patronized them in the last few years. However for the last two years the late markets were unsatisfactory and a rush to get the mink pelts off for the first sales has developed. In the past between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the pelts offered for sale during the month of December with bulk of mink offerings being made in January. It was estimated that last December saw 80 per cent of the Canadian crop offered and a similar rise in percentage for the American crop We feel that these precentages are a little on the high side and they serve to illustrate our panicky tendency to dump pelts on the market and our inability to realize that this is another way to ruin a profitable business."

Some Thinge We Can Do, is a really very interesting section of The Master Rancher. We quote just a couple of items from it.... The things we can do right now to increase the profit on our ranch this fall are to kill of any of the unprofitable types of mink as shown by our price returns this past winter and to do that killing off just as quickly as the nest box is open for the first examination. The second thing is to feed a good diet throughout the summer and if you must add Antibiotics then do so on the basis of adding them to good food, not to some thin cheap diet in the hope that they will improve it. Thirdly, give your mink all the individual care you can and try to hurry along those individuals that seem to grow more slowly than the rest When fall comes make sure of good housing conditions so as to get clean, clear pelts at pelting time.

The island of Columba in Scotland's Firth of Forth has an Augustinian monastery founded in 1123.



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