

“Florida Has Added Five Years to My Life”

This is an interview of Thomas Edison that was published in 1926. In it, Edison describes his first visit to Florida and his opinion of the state.

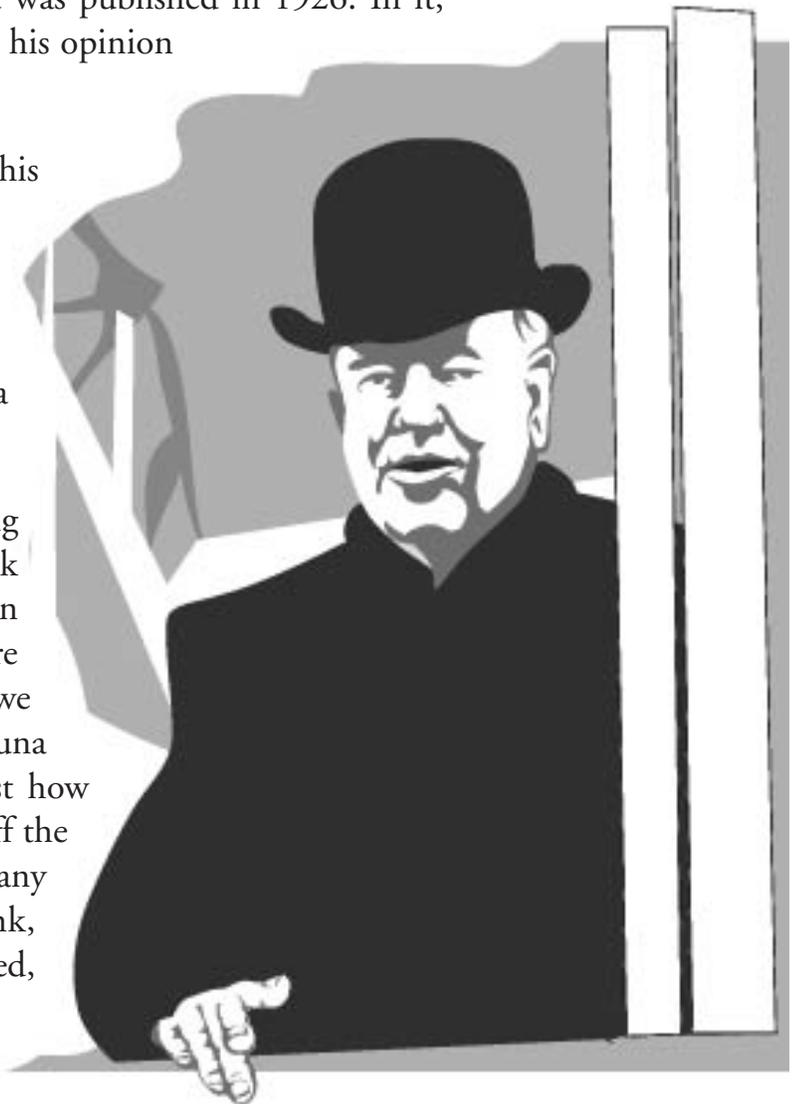
“Our party had landed in Jacksonville on this first trip and then we took what was locally known as a railroad, going from Jacksonville to Cedar Key, where Faber, the pencil manufacturer, had purchased a large tract of cedar.” It is Thomas A. Edison talking to a representative of Suniland.

“That railroad was one of the roughest riding affairs I have ever encountered. The trip took three or four days, and during that time we ran off the track at least three times. While we were waiting for the cars to get back on the rails, we had plenty of opportunity to observe the fauna and flora of the State. You may realize just how ordinary a thing it was for the train to run off the track when you learn what the telegraph company did. The Western Union Company, I think, owned the poles that ran alongside the roadbed, and they got tired of having them knocked down by the train, so they took the poles up and placed them farther away from the tracks.”

Mr. Edison chuckled.

“We cruised around in Florida, and finally reached Fort Myers on the Caloosahatchee River. We observed the trade winds, the temperatures, and the tropical vegetation, and I decided that here was the place for me.

“I looked forward to the time when I would be getting on in years and would want to come to Florida every winter, and I couldn’t image a nicer place than Fort Myers. There were wild ducks by the acre, the river was full of fish, and it seemed to afford a perfect opportunity for rest and recreation.”





Mr. Edison stretched himself luxuriously and gazed about him with satisfaction.

“So having fallen in love with Fort Myers, with its hundred inhabitants and its sand streets, I bought ten acres on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River. Shortly afterwards I had a couple of houses built up in Maine, shipped them to Florida knocked down, and then put them up on the tract of land.”

“Not infrequently I am asked what contributions Florida has made to me. Pleasure, rest and recreation are real but not necessarily tangible assets, but in addition to these things, I feel that at the least Florida has given me five years of additional life. Perhaps I can stretch it out to six or seven years, but of five added years I am reasonably certain. I am not over-fond of pneumonia so common in the North.”

“Florida is a great state for the old folks, when they haven’t the vitality they once had. This has been discovered by a great many people, and to me it affords assurance that Florida will never be forgotten. There are a great many more men and women living up North who only have to get in the sunshine for one winter to become real enthusiastic for the State, as well as annual visitors.”

A question brought out the Edisonian viewpoint on the subject most vital to Floridians.

“Whether the so-called ‘boom’ will continue is not of so much moment. If the State’s development has been pushed too fast, necessarily there will come a lull, but in any event all these things will adjust themselves. The real Florida will never lose its appeal.”