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## GERMAN TOURISTS IN FLORIDA: A TWO CENTURY RECORD

by EARL R. BECK

**I**N 1981, 74,219 West German tourists landed in the airport in Miami. This figure, which represents over a ten per cent increase over 1980, does not take account of many Germans who came to Florida after landing elsewhere in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Those thousands of Germans who visit Florida today are continuing the lively interest in this state which began more than two hundred years ago. But, strangely enough, the number of German accounts of Florida and its myriad lures has been quite small. Stranger still, while tourism has grown, German writing about Florida has declined, and some recent accounts have been sharply bitter and cynical.

From the first, Florida's warmth held a special lure for Germans, for theirs is a cold country; the climate is modified somewhat by the Gulf Stream, but winters are still severe and summers short. Through modern times Germans have been strongly drawn to lands of summer climes— Italy and the Riviera, Egypt, the South Seas, and Florida. Florida also held another enticement for German visitors. This was the unusual profusion and manifold variety of its flora and fauna, particularly as seen in the Everglades and other swamp areas of the state. Naturalists found in the dismal reaches of the cypress and mangrove swamps an opportunity to study geological and biological developments long past elsewhere. This was, wrote one of them, one of the few places in the world where one could see in process of formation the lignite coal which was so vital in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Plant and animal

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Earl R. Beck is professor of history and former chairman of the history department at Florida State University. The author wishes to express his thanks to Edward Keuchel for his help and suggestions in respect to the background of Florida history.

1. Statistics from Elisabeth Finn of the Florida Bureau of Tourism Research. It was reported in 1980 that 67,000 German tourists landed at Miami International Airport.
2. Raoul Francé, *Lebender Braunkohlenwald. Eine Reise durch die heutige Urwelt* (Stuttgart, 1932).

life in Florida also presented the challenge of that which was unique and extraordinary.

In spite of these attractions Florida was not until quite recently so much visited as other parts of the country. It was not on the normal transcontinental line from east to west which Germans followed in their quest for the grand tour—“quer durch”—“straight across.” Those who visited Florida thought they were coming to a semi-frontier area, a newer portion of the country. The visit did not contribute too significantly to their interpretations of modern America. The very fact that they came—unless, as was true in some cases, the visit was essentially accidental—set them off, as more serious, less superficial students of the New World. In most cases they arrived with a purpose and a mission—to look for areas for potential German settlement, to see the land of the “boom,” or to visit an area which joined a primitive and a modern world.<sup>3</sup> Many of their published accounts attracted a wide reading public.

Tourism in Florida did not begin until late in the nineteenth century. But several German visitors anticipated the lures which Florida would present for later visitors. As early as 1784, Johann David Schöpf, a German surgeon who had been in the service of the British army, visited St. Augustine just as it was being retroceded to Spanish control.<sup>4</sup> Although the British had allowed some decline in the closing years of the American Revolution, Schöpf was impressed by the houses with little gardens surrounded by stately lemon and pomegranate trees. Religious structures were badly deteriorated; the place of a German church was marked by a single remaining wall, and the major Spanish church was showing signs of dilapidation. A Negro church held services in the hut of a black Baptist.<sup>5</sup>

The British had made efforts during their twenty-year occupation to improve the economy of St. Augustine and the surrounding area. Some 1,500 Minorcans and Greeks had been brought

3. Such an objective qualified the travel as a *studienreise*, a “study trip,” which raised the observer above the level of the casual visitor.

4. Johann David Schöpf, *Reise durch einige der mittlern and südlichen vereinigten nordamerikanischen Staaten nach Ost-Florida und den Bahama-Inseln unternommen in den Jahren 1783 und 1784*, 2 vols. (Erlangen, 1788). This work has been published in English; see Alfred J. Morrison, trans. and ed., *Travels in the Confederation [1783-1784]* (Philadelphia, 1911).

5. Schöpf, *Reise durch . . . Ost-Florida*, II, 359-62.

into New Smyrna by Dr. Andrew Turnbull, a Scottish physician, in 1768.<sup>6</sup> The Minorcans, who constituted the largest number of the settlers, found conditions there unendurable, and by the time Schöpf was in Florida they had abandoned New Smyrna and were living in St. Augustine. Dr. Turnbull had already left Florida by the time Schöpf arrived, but they had met in Charleston. It was there that Schöpf heard about the difficulties and financial loss occasioned by the project.<sup>7</sup>

Schöpf described East Florida as backward; the only settlement besides St. Augustine which might qualify as a city, he said, was St. John (St. John's Bluff). The old Spanish city of St. Marc de Apalache had virtually disappeared.<sup>8</sup> He noted that the reputation of Florida as having an unhealthy climate was not justified; St. Augustine had clear air and fresh winds which softened the summer heat.<sup>9</sup>

Almost half a century later another German, Traugott Bromme, wrote about Florida. A professional traveler, he came to Florida in 1832.<sup>10</sup> Arriving by ship from St. Marys, he stopped first at Fernandina, then a "city" with eighty houses, 500 inhabitants, a church, and a Catholic chapel.<sup>11</sup> He proceeded to New Smyrna and then St. Augustine.<sup>12</sup> The beauty of the coast between New Smyrna and St. Augustine, the pelicans that showed themselves to the passing ship, and the shipwrecks along the coast, which would provide salvage bounty for future generations, were noted.<sup>13</sup> Bromme described St. Augustine in detail, then a town with over 200 houses and a population of 2,489, including 610 slaves and 322 free colored. The gardens and lush surroundings of the area fascinated him, and he described in detail the plants and birds of the area.<sup>14</sup>

6. Ibid., 367-69.

7. Ibid., 359-69.

8. Ibid., 370. Bromme, who visited St. John in 1832, described it as a small, unimportant place of twenty-eight houses and 107 inhabitants.

9. Schöpf, *Reise durch . . . Ost-Florida*, II, 394.

10. Traugott Bromme, *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten und Ober-Canada*, 3 vols. (Baltimore [actually printed in Dresden], 1834-35). The abbreviated version on Florida, *Reise durch die Floridas, von St. Augustine durch die Halbinsel nach Pensacola (Aus Bromme's Reisen besonders abgedruckt)* (Baltimore, 1837), does not include the first part of his travel in Florida relating to St. Augustine.

11. Bromme, *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten*, II, 356-64.

12. Ibid., 365-66.

13. Ibid., 368-73.

14. Ibid., 375-80. Apparently Bromme had access to census figures for 1830,

Bromme traveled by small boat up the St. Johns River and through the back country.<sup>15</sup> He visited sections of the Gulf coast and places in the interior of the state.<sup>16</sup> Florida was very sparsely settled with fewer than 35,000 inhabitants, including 15,000 slaves.<sup>17</sup> Settlement was heaviest in the north— Leon and Gadsden counties were the largest as compared to Escambia, Duval, or St. Johns.<sup>18</sup> Tallahassee was a village when Bromme visited there, but the surrounding area was growing rapidly, occasioned by the raising of cotton, tobacco, indigo, silk, almonds, olives, figs, grapes, sweet oranges, and bananas.<sup>19</sup>

Bromme also visited Pensacola, which he described as unattractive, with its wooden houses and a poor Spanish population. The only solid and beautiful building was the market house.<sup>20</sup> Pensacola did have good soil on which sweet oranges and good grape vines grew, and the air was clean and healthy.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Bromme proclaimed, all of Florida offered healthier air, fewer dangerous animals, and more normal seasons than those found in other more popular regions.<sup>22</sup> Bromme hoped that with the end of the destructive war between the Indians and the American settlers, Florida would overcome the criticism leveled against it and achieve “the height of culture which its climate, soil, and products merit.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1854 still another visitor reported in German on his Florida experiences. Heinrich Bosshard, formerly a teacher from Schwamendingen near Zurich in Switzerland, was convinced that high prices in Europe and the dismal prospects of the future there created pressures for emigration to the United States.<sup>24</sup> Thus,

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although the figure he is citing here must be for the city alone. The city with its environs had 4,000 inhabitants and 844 free blacks by the census of 1830. See William W. Dewhurst, *The History of Saint Augustine, Florida* (New York, 1885; reprint ed., Rutland, Vt., 1968), 149.

15. This journey is detailed in volume III of Bromme's *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten*, 1-17, and marks the beginning of the abbreviated version, *Reise durch die Floridas*.
16. Bromme, *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten*, III, 17-41.
17. *Ibid.*, 71.
18. *Ibid.*, 75.
19. *Ibid.*, 76.
20. *Ibid.*, 77-78.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, 38.
23. *Ibid.*, Vorwort.
24. Heinrich Bosshard, *Anschaungen und Erfahrungen in Nordamerika. Eine Monatsschrift*, 3 vols. (Zurich, 1853-1855), I, 580-672, deals with Florida. Although Swiss, Bosshard wrote in German and may fairly be

he sought to evaluate for his Swiss and German readers the advantages of America's different regions for settlement.<sup>25</sup>

Bosshard's first stop in Florida was Apalachicola. In this period the Gulf coast was reached by sailing around Cuba; sailing vessels had too much difficulty bucking the Gulf Stream winds in the Florida Straits.<sup>26</sup> Bosshard's eighteen-day journey from New York was a favorable one; the captain of the vessel on which he sailed told him the trip often took twenty-eight to thirty days.<sup>27</sup>

Apalachicola was a busy and prosperous town in 1854. Bosshard estimated that there were 5,000 inhabitants. It was a major cotton port; thousands of bales were shipped each year during the period from January through April. Sandbanks and rock reefs made it necessary for small steamboats to unload and load the larger schooners, which stood out an hour's distance from shore. There were no paved streets, Bosshard found, and boardwalks served to protect pedestrians from the sand and shells.<sup>28</sup> The citizens, he reported worked hard and earned well. One German had twenty-three slaves and was worth at least \$20,000, but he lived like a miser in a ten-by-ten hut. Bosshard wondered if he might be saving to help poor German friends back home.<sup>29</sup> Most homes had gardens which produced fresh vegetables all year long, a fringe benefit worth at least, Bosshard calculated, \$250 a year.<sup>30</sup>

Normal farming, he learned, was not suitable for the area. The enormous task of clearing land was slowed by the hordes of mosquitoes and the tiny gnats, later called *noseeums*, which descended in droves on the hair, eyebrows, and lips. Potatoes were destroyed clear to the roots by "white, fuzzy worms."<sup>31</sup>

From Apalachicola Bosshard continued south to Key West, which he described as the healthiest place in the United States.

included with this group of writers carrying knowledge of Florida to the German reading public.

25. *Ibid.*, Vorwort.

26. Still true when Rudolf Meyer visited in 1881. Rudolf Hermann Meyer, *Ursachen der amerikanischen Concurrenz* (Berlin, 1883), 186. But Bosshard's vessel went past Key West, which he pictured as a location of wreckers who often came to offer help to ships stranded on reefs and then claimed salvage rights; Bosshard, *Anschaunngen*, 600.

27. Bosshard, *Anschaunngen*, 603.

28. *Ibid.*, 604-5.

29. *Ibid.*, 607.

30. *Ibid.*, 608.

31. *Ibid.*, 609-10.

Even tubercular patients, he was told, recovered their health there.<sup>32</sup> The houses were built of light wood, churches and the barracks of the navy establishment were covered with shingles, and the only stone buildings were the prison and navy hospital. Bosshard described Key West as a place of recreation for wealthy Southerners who had built comfortable homes in which their wives lived pampered and bored lives attended by their Negro slaves.<sup>33</sup>

The keys, Bosshard decided, would not be suitable for European farmers; there would be little profit from normal agriculture. Yet, as he summarized his Florida experiences, the state did offer opportunities. Bosshard estimated that there were fewer than 300,000 inhabitants living in Florida (actually there were less than 90,000 in 1850), and there would be ample room for newcomers. The turpentine forests provided opportunities for livelihood in addition to gathering Spanish moss to stuff mattresses, cattle raising, and the planting of rice, sugar, cotton, and tropical fruits.<sup>34</sup>

Another quarter century passed before the appearance of the next travel account by a German writer, Rudolf Hermann Meyer, who shared Bosshard's interest in potential settlement in Florida. Meyer was imbued with the optimism of his predecessors; Florida would be for the United States what Italy was for Europe, a place which "in a few years will become America's garden." The draining of the swamps would add new areas to the healthful regions along the coast. He also believed that tubercular patients could find a healthful refuge in many parts of Florida.<sup>35</sup>

Florida in 1879-1880 had assumed a more settled air since Bosshard's visit. There were good hotels in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Palatka, Sanford, and Enterprise, and rail connections from Jacksonville to the North and the West.<sup>36</sup> Railroad lines ran from Jacksonville to Baldwin and from there to Cedar Key and Lake Orange, and there was service to Gainesville and Palatka and south to Charlotte Bay and Tampa Bay. If these lines were expanded— and Jay Gould was in Palatka exploring this possibil-

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32. *Ibid.*, 633.

33. *Ibid.*, 652-54.

34. *Ibid.*, 665-66.

35. Meyer, *Ursachen der amerikanischen Concurrenz*, 173-76.

36. *Ibid.*, 177.

ity when Meyer visited that community— Florida products would be able to compete in western markets.<sup>37</sup>

Meyer provided a summary of the economic potential of Florida. He charted the cost of establishing orange groves— twenty acres with seventy-five trees per acre at about \$900, and a five-room house could be built for \$2,000. There might be a waiting period of some five years, however, before the trees would begin to bear well and before profits could be made. This period might be used to raise food in one's own garden.<sup>38</sup> Growing long-grained cotton, wine culture, and the raising of cattle and swine also offered opportunities.<sup>39</sup> Meyer claimed that 4,000,000 acres were held by the federal and state governments, and he anticipated the possibility of obtaining land from the railroads.<sup>40</sup> And the settlers were coming— farmers from the Midwest, who retained their wheat farms for summer work and enjoyed the winter opportunities in Florida, along with ruined southern plantation owners, who hoped to recoup their fortunes in family-operated orange groves, and some foreigners, mostly English. There were numbers of wealthy Northerners, who built comfortable and attractive houses in Florida far from the wintry blizzards of the North.<sup>41</sup>

Meyer's account is the last of the travel narratives by German visitors who were mainly discoverers and analysts, rather than tourists and sightseers. Later Germans increasingly saw Florida not as an exotic land which might be available for European colonization, but as a tourist attraction, a place where foreigners might come for rest and relaxation. This was how Paul Lindau, a novelist and dramatist described as "the German Maupassant," wrote about the state.<sup>42</sup> He visited the United States in 1890, and his two-volume travel account was published three years later.<sup>43</sup>

Most of what he saw as he traveled from Washington repelled him— poverty, poor architecture, unpaved streets, and "ugly"

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37. *Ibid.*, 177-78.

38. *Ibid.*, 182-84.

39. *Ibid.*, 184-86.

40. *Ibid.*, 183. Meyer was in Florida a year before the lands he referred to actually became available. Probably he was anticipating the early settlement of the legal problems involved.

41. *Ibid.*, 180.

42. Carl Beck, "Um die Weihnachtszeit nach Florida," *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, LIII (1906), 916.

43. Paul Lindau, *Altes und Neues aus der neuen Welt. Eine Reise durch die Vereinigten Staaten und Mexico*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1893).





Der „Singing Tower“ mit dem Vogelheiligtum. Orig. v. R. H. Francé

“The ‘Singing Tower’ with the Bird Sanctuary” – from an original drawing by R. H. Francé taken from *Florida, das Land des Überflusses* by Annie Francé-Harrar (used with permission of the author).



Seminolenfrauen aus den Everglades.

Original von R. H. Francé

“Seminole women from the Everglades” – from an original drawing by R. H. Francé, taken from *Florida, das Land des Überflusses* by Annie Francé-Harrar (used with permission of the author).

blacks.<sup>44</sup> He traveled from Jacksonville to St. Augustine by rail. In St. Augustine Lindau compared the many hotels there with those in Germany. In his country hotels were places where one stayed to visit other attractions; in Florida the hotels themselves were the attraction. The Ponce de Leon, where he stayed, was surrounded with banana and orange trees, camellias, cactus, and moss-laden trees. On warm evenings the patios were scented with lilies. There were libraries for those who wished to read and nightly concerts and balls. The dining rooms served excellent meals, but Lindau thought the black waiters served poorly. There were more waiters than one usually found in a German establishment. A stay in one of Florida's luxury hotels offered women an opportunity to display wardrobes of infinite variety. People, said Lindau, came not so much because they wanted to be in Florida but to escape the winters in New York and Chicago. But even though Lindau wrote with some disdain, he admitted that Florida would be the ideal place for a honeymoon.<sup>45</sup>

Enroute to New Orleans Lindau stopped briefly in Jacksonville, which he found even less attractive than St. Augustine. There were some broad avenues lit by dirty streetlights. Alligators, he noted, could be purchased—small ones for less than a dollar, a monster for several dollars. As he went by train westward, Lindau found nothing worth commenting on except the monotony and ugliness of the landscape.<sup>46</sup>

Lindau's account attracted few German visitors to Florida. Not until 1906 did Germans have a new opportunity to read an enthusiastic account of the wonders of Florida. This time, the writer was a German doctor named Carl Beck.<sup>47</sup> Born in 1856 in Neckargmünd, Beck had completed his work in medicine in Jena before coming to New York in 1882. There he became an internationally renowned surgeon, publishing books on the subjects of surgical sepsis, fractures, the use of x-ray, and surgical diseases of the chest. He also found time to write several books on his travels in the United States and Latin America. In 1906 he published a light and chatty account entitled "To Florida—at Christmas-time," which appeared in one of Germany's leading medical journals, the *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*.

44. Ibid., I, 73-74.

45. Ibid., 74-85.

46. Ibid., 85-91.

47. Beck, "Um die Weihnachtszeit nach Florida," 915-18, 978-81, 1025-27.

He left New York on a snowy afternoon late in 1905, and by "express train" arrived in Virginia by breakfast time the following morning. It was there that he first encountered segregated waiting rooms at the stations, which he regarded as one of the signs of the "deadly hatred" of the whites for the blacks in the South. Beck found some justification for this feeling in "the commission of beastly crimes" by the blacks, whom he described as "repulsively ugly."<sup>48</sup>

He saw palmyra and palm trees, Spanish moss, and, as the train pulled into the Jacksonville station, the straw hats which all the natives seemed to wear. An hour and a half later he arrived at St. Augustine, and like Lindau, he admired the beauty of the Ponce de Leon hotel. The Ponce and the Alcazar, Flagler's other hotel across the street (apparently he was unaware of Flagler's third hotel, the Cordova) were adorned with a profusion of flowers and exotic plants. Within these gardens, Beck noted, the kingdom of Scheherezade or the balcony of Romeo and Juliet were not far away: "Here is the El Dorado of the honeymooners."<sup>49</sup>

There was also the Alicia Hospital in St. Augustine, founded by Flagler, "whose heart, thank God, is as big as his capacious purse." Doctors in this area, according to Beck, had little work. In Titusville, south of St. Augustine, one doctor had so few responsibilities for perhaps as many as 1,000 inhabitants that he also served as notary and justice of the peace. Typhus, he reported, was no longer a problem, and he believed, incorrectly, that tuberculosis was virtually unknown in Florida.<sup>50</sup>

Beck proceeded southward from St. Augustine complaining of the slow and expensive Florida East Coast Railroad, which he compared to the secondary trains in south Germany. He found also that the beer available in the south German railroad stations was replaced in Florida by oranges picked fresh from the tree.<sup>51</sup>

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48. *Ibid.*, 915. Later German visitors were much more sympathetic to blacks than Lindau and Beck. See Earl R. Beck, *Germany Rediscovered America* (Tallahassee, 1968), 76-87.

49. Beck, "Um die Weihnachtszeit," 916-17.

50. *Ibid.*, 917. It was, of course, not unusual for southern doctors to assume the part-time legal services Beck mentioned. Although Beck's comment on the absence of tuberculosis was inaccurate, he was continuing a rather general assumption of German visitors that Florida was a place where tubercular patients recovered their health.

51. *Ibid.*, 978.

The slowness of "the whortleberry train" was redeemed by the scenery along the way. Beck noted the attractions of Ormond Beach, then the scene of automobile races, and of Daytona, "recognized as the most beautiful of all the villages of the South."<sup>52</sup> In the area room and board was available for \$5.00 a week. Among the less expensive areas he included New Smyrna, Coronado Beach, Lake Helen, Orange City, Oak Hill, and Titusville. All along the east coast the hunter could still find bear, deer, ducks, turkey, quail, and partridge.<sup>53</sup>

In Palm Beach, the end of his journey, Beck found the ultimate paradise, the real "regions of the blessed."<sup>54</sup> Barred to autos, the island was connected to the mainland by bridges which could be traversed only by bicycles or on foot. Great hotels lined Lake Worth. The largest, the Hotel Royal Poinciana, was able, he estimated, to accommodate 1,500 guests (actually 1,200). "No hotel of the Old World," wrote Beck, "can compare itself" to the architectural luxury and comfort of the Royal Poinciana.<sup>55</sup> The dining room provided an enormous and varied menu. Beck saved his greatest literary talent for lengthy descriptions of the tropical flowers and plants which surrounded the gardens of the great hotels. Even the human "flowers," Beck noted, seemed to flourish in this environment as the good humor and happiness of the vacationers seemed to indicate.<sup>56</sup>

Beck described jungle area near Palm Beach, an **alligator** farm, a citrus plantation, and the Indians who earned a living by posing for photographs with visitors. Beck was interested in how typhus had been eliminated in Florida, and the continued presence, although not a serious menace, of dengue. Again he found that doctors had little to deal with except the dispepsia and internal disturbances which accompanied advancing civilization.<sup>57</sup>

Beck also visited Miami which, he said, had been populated nine years earlier by eleven fishermen. It was now a city of 5,000.<sup>58</sup> He also noted that Flagler had begun construction of the Key West extension of his railroad.<sup>59</sup>

52. *Ibid.*, 979.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, 980.

57. *Ibid.*, 1025-26.

58. *Ibid.*, 1027.

59. *Ibid.*

The author of another sketch on Florida remained anonymous. This essay was published in *Prometheus*, one of Germany's major scientific journals, in 1908. At this time the Florida East Coast Railroad had been completed to "Kingston" Key, some fifty miles from Key West, and steamers were already using a provisional terminal station there to make the run to Havana. The writer sketched the enormous difficulties of the construction and estimated the cost to that point at \$10,000,000, "a gigantic outlay of capital."<sup>60</sup>

Late in 1908 a German geography professor, Albrecht Penck (1858-1945), also visited the keys. He described the continuing construction of the railroad and spent several days on a houseboat at Knight's Key, where company officials and train personnel lived. On Christmas day he strolled around the beach and took a boat ride in the area: "A wonderful piece of earth is being made accessible here. Nature and man stand on the same level; the former in its luxuriousness and tropical beauty; the latter in their ability and powers of achievement."<sup>61</sup>

The sparseness of travel accounts prior to World War I emphasizes the absence of any intense German interest in Florida. But the war and America's role in the defeat of Germany kindled interest in the United States. During the 1920s there was an increase in the number of Germans traveling in the United States and of the publication of accounts of their experiences and impressions. Florida shared in this travel literature, although the state lay outside the main routes of most foreign visitors.<sup>62</sup>

Some came and wrote about Florida because of their scientific interests. Raoul Francé studied Florida's swamps to determine the process by which lignite, so vital to Germany, was formed.<sup>63</sup> Othenio Abel, a professor of paleobiology at the University of Vienna, also studied the mangrove swamps.<sup>64</sup> Others came in the

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60. "O.B." [Anonymous], "Von der Key-West-Eisenbahn," *Prometheus*, XX, No. 970 (1908), 538-40. The author's use of "Kingston" Key does not conform to present map designations. From the context of his article, it would appear that he was referring to Spanish Harbor on the West Summerland Keys, which was apparently used as a temporary end of the railroad.

61. *U-S Amerika. Gedanken und Erinnerungen eines Austausch-professors* (Stuttgart, 1917), 12-15.

62. See for general account, Beck, *Germany Rediscovered America*.

63. Francé, *Lebender Braunkohlenwald*, 42.

64. Othenio Abel, *Amerikafahrt. Bindrücke, Beobachtungen und Studien*

German tradition of “bumming” voyages around the world. Thus Manfred Hausmann’s popular adventure account portrayed his railroad journey to the keys and his adventures as he hitch-hiked through Miami, West Palm Beach, the Dude Ranch, and Jacksonville. He used the term “paradise” for Florida, but poked fun at the provincialism of the guide in Jacksonville who said the St. Johns River was the only waterway in the world which flowed north.<sup>65</sup>

A major attraction of Florida was its role in the twentieth century growth and changes occurring everywhere in the United States before and after World War I. It exemplified American enterprise which awakened both admiration and envy among many foreigners. Among the Germans who traveled in Florida and commented on the people and the environment was Felix Baumann, who in an edition of his expose of prostitution and bordello life in the United States, included Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Tampa as cities of “‘depravity.”<sup>66</sup> Carl Kircheiss, a sea captain, could not make up his mind whether Miami was a “sin babel” or an “artificial paradise.”<sup>67</sup> And Heinrich Hauser, a German doctor who came to the United States in the 1930s and remained until World War II, thought the state an enlarged version of Wannsee and Luna Park, two famous German amusement centers.<sup>68</sup>

Admiration, however, was the predominant motif in the most widely read accounts. Dietrich Bruno, professor of economic geography at the University for World Commerce in Vienna, described Florida during the time of the great real estate boom of the 1920s. His optimism in respect to the future of the state was unbounded.<sup>69</sup> Josef Ponten, poet, novelist, and world traveler, came to Florida after the collapse of the boom. He reveled in the warmth of the area that he was visiting as he read news of foot-

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*eines Naturforschers auf einer Reise nach Nordamerika und Westindien* (Jena, 1926), 56-96, 162-83.

65. Manfred Hausmann, *Kleine Liebe zu Amerika. Ein junger Mann schlendert durch die Staaten* (Berlin, 1931), 144-247.

66. Felix Baumann, *Aus dunklen Häusern Amerikas. Chicago, die Stadt der Verworfenen. Sittengeschichte aus den Vereinigten Staaten*, Second Edition (Stuttgart, 1922), 68-69.

67. Carl Kircheiss, *Meine Weltumsegelung mit dem Fischkutter Hamburg* (Leipzig, 1942 [originally published in 1928]), 209-12.

68. Heinrich Hauser, *Feldwege nach Chicago* (Berlin, 1931), 17-18.

69. Dietrich Bruno, *U.S.A., das heutige Gesicht* (Breslau, 1925), 127-33.

deep snow along the Riviera and of frozen canals in Venice. Ponten declared that Florida's climate was as valuable to the state as gold had been for Alaska. His description of Miami's expansion was rhapsodic, and in spite of the decline after 1926, he regarded the future of the area with great optimism: "The magic city"—the courage to use such a description is a part of the excessive, somewhat childish and even cheap American optimism. And still, in spite of all the deception of speculation and bombast, the optimists are right; there is sound thought in the idea that one day this whole land will be the winter garden of the industrial and commercial North; for the natural wealth of the land will continue to rise, the welfare of the people will develop fabulously, and even the worker will take his winter vacation in the South."<sup>70</sup>

It was also in this period that perhaps the most significant study of Florida by a German was published. It even exceeded the enthusiasm of Ponten's book. Its author, Annie Francé-Harrar, was the wife of Raoul Francé, biologist. She was also a biologist, but her literary endeavors were more varied than her husband's. She published novels, travel accounts, books on the world of animals, as well as the volume on Florida. She might have labeled it "Fairyland Florida" rather than *Florida, the Land of Excess*.<sup>71</sup>

Some 70,000 copies of her book were sold in Europe, and the book became an unpaid-for advertisement for the state: "But I have more, at heart in writing this book than to present a more or less clear and vivid description. I am convinced that in the management, development, and cultivation of Florida a path has been taken which is almost exemplary for the growth of an area from its purely colonial economy. Here is an example that, at least here in Europe, cannot be too closely scrutinized, an example that proves that the backwardness and narrowness of a peasantry rooted in milleniums of tradition is not needed to make a land abundantly fruitful, free, and rich. Here methods are shown by which, with the help of scientific farming, miraculous harvests are achieved, and it is possible for primeval forests,

70. Josef Ponten, "Aus den Vereinigten Staaten," *Kölnische Zeitung*, August 11, 18, 1929.

71. Annie Francé-Harrar, *Florida, das Land des Überflusses* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1931).



Indian nomads, and the highest technical development to exist side by side. And all this is done without destroying, devastating, and impoverishing *nature*.<sup>72</sup>

Mrs. Francé-Harrar developed Goethe's theme of the oldness and effeteness of Europe with all of the land used and reused until little was left of the original. In America, she said, "there is so much unending space that developments there had to take a tempo different than is the case with us, much quicker and much shorter. There is no reason for surprise, therefore, that a genuine fairyland [Florida] was allowed over there to sleep like the unawakened Sleeping Beauty almost into the twentieth century, and that it was only a single generation ago that it awakened to an independent existence and a growing realization of its own worth."<sup>73</sup>

Francé-Harrar's book combined lengthy and artistic descriptions of the manifold beauties of Florida with analyses of its rapid economic growth. Florida involved, she calculated, 35,000,000 acres, somewhat less than a third of the size of Germany (in 1931). There were 30,000 lakes in Florida, and an area, approximately twenty to twenty-five per cent, in a natural and undeveloped state. "There are," she noted, "only a few places like this on the entire globe."<sup>74</sup> She followed the saga of Florida's development in detail— from the sponge fishing at Tarpon Springs to the drainage of 900,000 acres of flooded land with an increase in its value by at least sixty times. The transformation of the swamps into "plantations" for raising vegetables or sugar cane gave many Americans more land and wealth than the manor owners in Germany. Okeechobee, calling itself "the Chicago of the South," had doubled its population of 5,000 in the period of 1925-1930. And Mrs. Francé-Harrar had no doubt that one day its roads would pass between skyscrapers and carry "world traffic."<sup>75</sup>

Florida's phosphate provided another source of wealth; it was supplying half of the world's production. The agricultural production was calculated to have an annual value of \$109.76 per acre in Florida as compared to \$12.22 for Iowa, \$12.48 for Illinois, and \$13.36 for Ohio. On the average, the author calculated, an acre of strawberries in Florida brought \$302, cucumbers \$305,

72. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

73. *Ibid.*, 12-15.

74. *Ibid.*, 21.

75. *Ibid.*, 35-36, 49-55.

lettuce \$533, and cabbage \$262. Oranges, of course, were a major business, with 30,000,000 trees producing an average of fifteen boxes each.<sup>76</sup>

But the greatest source of wealth was tourism, and the German visitor described the attractions of Orlando, Bok's "Singing Tower" at Lake Wales, and the super-advertised Silver Springs. After crossing the keys to Key West, then involving both railroad and auto routes, Francé-Harrar traveled from Miami to St. Augustine. She visited turpentine forests which, she estimated, were producing a yearly output worth \$20,000,000.<sup>77</sup>

All of this the author summed up in a segment on "the great Florida boom." "The word 'Florida' rose like a flame," she related. People who sold a small piece of property for \$3,000 later repurchased it for \$6,000, and then resold it for \$12,000. A doctor's wife who inherited from her father a small estate on the Gulf of Mexico, which he had purchased for \$400, sold the land for \$600,000. "Every foot of earth was literally worth its weight in gold. Europe offers no example which could be drawn in comparison." She also related the saga of the creation of Miami Beach by a business entrepreneur at a hundredfold profit.<sup>78</sup>

By 1923, she related, the boom had spread to Tampa where a "Mr. [D. P.] Davis" created a new island and in thirty hours sold its land for \$3,000,000. Within eight months winter villas, tennis courts, and hotels decorated Davis Island, and a year after its opening the last 1,000 acres were sold for \$20,000,000. But by 1926 the boom had collapsed and when Mrs. Francé-Harrar visited Florida in 1930, estates were being sold at sacrifice prices. With the onset of the depression caution became increasingly the motif.<sup>79</sup>

But tourism remained in Florida. "The established price for one person at the Biltmore Hotel," she related, "is 75 dollars per day." This hardly compared with the price of a good hotel in Berlin at seven to eight dollars per day for room and board. The Florida establishment included a swimming pool, golf course, a radio in each room, an auto with chauffeur, and the use of motor yachts and glass-bottomed boats. People of more modest means

76. *Ibid.*, 56-64, 180-86.

77. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

78. *Ibid.*, 144-52. Mrs. Francé-Harrar speaks of a "Mr. Henderson" in this respect, but clearly means Carl G. Fisher.

79. *Ibid.*, 152-54.

could find board and lodging, according to the writer, at smaller hotels for four dollars a day. Even cheaper lodging was available in boarding houses where seven dollar a week could provide a person with a decent room and reasonable prices for meals. Some restaurants provided a five-course meal for a dollar and lunches in a drugstore or cafeteria were even less expensive. According to Mrs. Francé-Harrar, for \$100 or \$150 a month one could live comfortably even in Florida's luxury spas. If Miami were too expensive, there was Titusville, New Smyrna, Charlotte Harbor, or the keys. "Florida for everyone, for every purse, every need, every winter-shy, sun-seeking soul!" And in the end Mrs. Francé-Harrar provided her own invitation to her fellow countrymen, "Come and see Florida."<sup>80</sup>

By 1933, two years after the publication of Mrs. Francé-Harrar's book, Adolf Hitler had come to power in Germany. It was, perhaps, unavoidable therefore that the next Florida travel book should have been written by a Nazi, Ralph Colin Ross.<sup>81</sup> His father, Colin Ross, was a famous world traveler, who was in the United States on a lecture tour in behalf of the new regime. The visit to Florida was a vacation journey with no political purpose. They discovered that Florida was "the land without speed limits," as they drove rapidly to Miami. Here they had hoped to find a better hotel than those which they normally patronized, but prices made this impossible. They found cheaper hotels unsatisfactory (they did not even have a library), and they did not like the meals in a restaurant advertising "beef steaks" which resembled hamburgers they had eaten on the road. The family finally wound up in a trailer park "trying out" one of the trailers offered for sale. This was followed by a trip into the Everglades to see the Seminoles, but neither the visit itself nor young Ross's description of it were exceptional. Colin Ross in the foreword suggested that his son's travel book bore a special relationship to the future of Nazi youth— it was a part of the planning involved in their slogan, "tomorrow, the whole world."<sup>82</sup>

The visit of the Rosses ended in 1940, and then World War II brought a pause in casual visitors from Germany. The end of hostilities in 1945 brought in a new flood of foreign visitors to

80. *Ibid.*, 168-69, 228-34.

81. Ralph Colin Ross, *Von Chicago nach Chungking: einem jungen Deutschen erschliesst sich die Welt* (Berlin, 1941), 73.

82. *Ibid.*, 74-87, 9-10.

the United States. But as was true in the past Florida still lay off the beaten track for most tourists.

Herbert Weichmann, a Prussian minister of state before coming to the United States in 1942, did not himself visit Florida, but he reported that the vacation concept was now a part of everyday life and that business propaganda demanded that one should either be in Florida or have been there.<sup>83</sup> Peter von Zahn came with his family to America under the sponsorship of Northwest German Radio. While in icy cold Washington, he thought of Florida with longing and of awakening in the morning with the warmth and palm trees outside the window. Like Caesar's Gaul, he found that Florida was divided into three parts—swamps, sand, and beaches. The swamps and the Seminoles received the usual German attention. The sand and the sun brought wealth—Floridians could rob the fruit trees and the pockets of tourists. But the Gulf coast, reported Zahn, was "the world's greatest health belt." The Florida of 1953, he said, was the blood and the fruit of the American social security system. It was the scene of trailers and pensioners, of the vulgar and the attractive.<sup>84</sup>

The "bumming trips" had not completely disappeared. Rudolf Jacobs came to the United States with only four dollars in his pocket, and worked on a coastal steamer which stopped in Tampa. With a friend who was employed in Silver Springs, he traveled through the tourist areas to the Everglades and made an arduous journey through the swamps only to find that his romantic views of the Seminoles were not duplicated by reality.<sup>85</sup>

The fullest postwar accounts of Florida came from the pen of a much less sympathetic visitor than Mrs. Francé-Harrar. First, in an article in the widely-read *Westermanns Monatshefte*, and then in his mammoth book, *Der grosse Traum Amerika. Sieben Reise in die USA, 1926 bis 1965* [*The great dream, America. Seven Trips in the U.S.A., 1926-1965*] (Hamburg, 1965) A. E. Johann Wollschläger found some 3,000,000 readers for his acid comments.<sup>86</sup> As Mrs. Francé-Harrar would say, he had examined his fairyland

83. Herbert Weichmann, *Alltag in USA* (Hamburg, 1949), 137-38.

84. Peter von Zahn, *Fremde Freunde; Bericht aus der neuen Welt* (Hamburg, 1953), 88-93.

85. Rudolf Jacobs, *Mit a Dollar nach USA* (Stuttgart, 1947), 58-89.

86. A. E. Johann Wollschläger, "Gartenstädte zwischen Sümpfe," *Westermann Monatshefte*, CII (August 1961), 17-30; *Der grosse Traum Amerika. Sieben Reisen in die USA, 1926 bis 1965* (Hamburg, 1965), 397-415, dealing with Florida.

too closely. Yet in both Wollschläger publications the gorgeously colored photographs of Florida scenes tended to counteract his criticisms.

Wollschläger's views of Florida were often contradictory. He detested the monotonous scenery of much of north Florida, but he found Tallahassee beautiful.<sup>87</sup> He hated the propaganda and greediness for money in south Florida, the varied "attractions" which accompanied the quest for tourist dollars, the near nudity on the beaches, and the pornographic night spots which surrounded them. He noted the possibilities of places in Florida where one could live less expensively than on Miami Beach, and he saw the obvious attraction of the state for pensioners. He objected to some of their housing, describing it as "ghettos for the old people."<sup>88</sup> He had no criticism of his trip to Key West.

More recent German accounts give Florida only modest attention. Two photographs in Walter Weiss's illustrated book on the United States are devoted to Florida along with a few paragraphs or passing references to the Gold coast, fishing, and the phosphate industry.<sup>89</sup> A popular guidebook, published in 1979, notes many of the state's tourist attractions.<sup>90</sup> A well-known German poet provided the photographs for one of the most colorful recent books on Florida, but although the book was published in Germany, the commentary is in English and no German language edition was published.<sup>91</sup> Clearly the romance of Florida

87. Wollschläger, *Der grosse Traum Amerika*, 409. But a photograph in the book showed the poor housing of the blacks immediately surrounding the government buildings.

88. *Ibid.*, 419.

89. Walter Weiss, *Amerika. Die Vereinigten Staaten* (Munich, 1977), pictures on pages 32, 100; brief comments on pages 7, 18-20, 23, 32, 146, 153, 166, 176.

90. Wilhelm Voss-Gerling, *Der grosse Polyglott, USA* (München, 1979), contains historical references and sketches of Florida trips, 265-72.

91. Heinz Erhardt, *Florida, a Place in the Sun* (Offenburg, 1974). An earlier photographic book on Florida was published by Hans Walter Hannau, *Florida, a Photographic Journey* (New York, 1948). As the title indicates, the author let the pictures speak for themselves and provides almost no commentary. The author published a second Florida volume in 1963. Hans Walter Hannau, *Florida* (Munich, 1963). It was published in Germany but was distributed by Doubleday & Company in New York. It provided a brief but summary accounting, in English of "a land of endless pleasure in the sun—a phenomenon of the tension-packed age created by and for the millions of people seeking rest and relaxation, carefree days and nights in naturally beautiful surroundings." Apparently there was no German version of either of these books and neither entered directly into the German book market. There is also a recent article on

has faded, and German tourists no longer come with the sense of discovery which motivated the earlier travel books. In a shrinking world which Germans explore with the advantage of favorable exchange rates and domestic prosperity, Florida is only another area of attraction along with Italy, the Costa del Sol in Spain, and the islands of the Mediterranean. Tourism has expanded, but travel accounts are no longer marketable publications.

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Florida tourism by P. Michael Pötke, "Tourismus in Florida" *Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts geographie*, Jrg. 17 (1973), Heft 7, 208-13, which deals with this subject from statistics supplied from Florida, but does not seek to separate the German portion of tourism from the overall picture.