



### Park Without Mountains

**E**VERGLADES National Park, now assured to the United States by the action of Congress, will be unique among the larger national parks. It will be the first tropical reservation of its kind in the United States proper, and it will be the only large national park without any mountains.

When Yellowstone National Park was developed in the West, followed by such mountain magnificences as Yosemite, Glacier and Rocky Mountain National Parks, a sort of fashion was set; it was expected that an area must be rugged and steep to be a proper candidate for national park status. The beginnings of the national park system's eastern extension followed suit: Acadia and the Great Smokies, and the proposed Shenandoah park near Washington, D. C.

Partizan opposition to the Everglades bill attempted to take advantage of this somewhat nebulous though perhaps natural tradition, and tried to hoot it down with cries of "snakes and alligators," but the bill went through in spite of them.

If the opponents of the Everglades National Park had taken the trouble to look into very recent history they would have found that the project was investigated pretty thoroughly during the administration of former President Hoover, and that both official and unofficial investigators were practically unanimous in recommending its addition to the national park system.

The investigators included many noted botanists and zoologists, who pointed out that in addition to the "snakes and alligators"—interesting creatures in themselves, when it comes to that—the area shelters innumerable

birds, including several exceedingly beautiful heron species, spoon-bills and the almost extinct "bone-headed" ibis. Among the little "keys," or islands off the coast, some of which are included in the new park area, swarm innumerable tropical fish, good for sport as well as for "just looking." The royal palm, statelyst of tropical trees, rears its head high above the "hammocks" or islands of trees that stand here and there in the vast sea of grass that is the Everglades.

A good road, the Tamiami Trail, cuts across the peninsula near the northern boundary of the park area. It is proposed to establish the new Seminole

reservation to the north of this road, outside the park, so that motor tourists will have a chance to glimpse the fascinating native tropical plant and animal life on one side, and the equally fascinating life of one of our strangest Indian tribes on the other, as they drive through.

For those who wish to see the wild life of the park more intimately, there will be canoes with Seminole guides, and foot trails over the dry-land areas—for there is plenty of dry land in the Everglades, "snake-and-alligator" Congressmen to the contrary notwithstanding.

*Science News Letter, June 9, 1934*

### ARCHAEOLOGY

## Mayan Engineers Lacked Imagination of Artists

**L**ACK of imagination kept Mayan Indians in the American tropics from looking at their beautifully ornate stone buildings and seeing how the construction could be greatly improved.

For want of imagination, those Mayan engineers never discovered the principle of the true arch. They never learned the trick of bonding or overlapping their building stones to make a firmer structure.

This is the verdict of Lawrence Roys, noted engineer, who has just completed an appraisal of the engineering knowledge of America's most famous prehistoric builders. Mr. Roys made his study under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Imagination of the Mayas was poured out on artistic creations. The sculptors never wearied of contriving elaborate patterns and resplendent figures of gods and men. Where stone was used in artistic expression, says Mr. Roys, it "came alive." And as the sculptors advanced in their esthetic portrayals, they also advanced technically. But the engineers and architects who laid the plans and raised the walls achieved no comparable progress in technique.

"It would seem," says Mr. Roys of the Mayas, "that their architects thought in terms of monolithic masses wherever possible, and took comparatively little interest in the manner in which individual stones were laid together."

The Mayas developed only moderate skill in fashioning the dry rubble masonry of roadways, platforms, and pyra-

mids. They do not seem to have tried using wood to supplant stone in their more permanent structures. Their wall building methods set up strains when the foundations settled, and resulted in long vertical cleavages. They apparently never racked their brains to avert such mishaps.

In handling lime cement or concrete, on the other hand, Mayan builders made better progress, and Mr. Roys is highly complimentary to the real skill they acquired in using this medium. As for their greatest engineering achievement, he considers this to be the vaulted roof. Somebody used imagination there.

Whether the latest studies of science find something to praise in the Mayas or something to disparage, these Indians of tropical America who raised the greatest prehistoric civilization on the continent remain always impressive. It is impressive now to consider that Indians with not very much imagination for engineering problems nevertheless built the most distinctive, and some critics have said the most beautiful, architecture to be seen anywhere in the Americas.

*Science News Letter, June 9, 1934*

Government plant breeders have succeeded in crossing sugarcane with a sweet sorghum, in their efforts to produce a plant that will mature earlier and thus tend to avoid hazards of early frost; but the sugar content of the cross is not yet determined.