

Thank You James Smithson

by CHARLES F. A. GALLAGHER

JAMES SMITHSON, of England, bequeathed his property to the United States of America in 1846, to be found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, "an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

For over 43 years I have annually awaited with great interest and avidity the publication of the Smithsonian's Annual Report, then I have luxuriated in the intellectual pleasure of reading the discoveries and findings of the great scientists in every field of human endeavor.

I have turned its pages in camps in Maine, in the bustle of New York City, on the plains of Wyoming, in mining camps on the Caribou trail, on soft hillocks overlooking the waters of the Pacific, 'neath the soft swishing of Floridian Palms, stirred by a gentle wind, and, at all hours in many diverse places. Always, there has come surprise, curiosity, amazement and inspiration from the words of men who have traveled and worked in far and distant lands or labored diligently in laboratories and universities tirelessly seeking knowledge or the solution of a problem, or that driving distillation of the spirit that urges men to go into pure research.

In perusing the 1957 annual report, I came across an article that will be of interest to all Georgists. It was "The Land and People of the Guajira Peninsula" by Raymond E. Crist, Research Professor of Geography, University of Florida, Gainesville.

While this is a long, yet fascinating and wonderful article covering his trip and discoveries, two paragraphs which I know will interest all the followers of Henry George are quoted verbatim from it.

"Rights to real property, both surface and subsurface, are at the present time vested in the nation. Title to land, on which to build a house, in the vicinity of an urban agglomeration such as Paraguaipoa, can be granted by the Concejo Municipal. Over most of the Peninsula, however, land that can be used for agriculture is simply fenced in and cultivated. As long as the fence of organ cactus or thornbrush is kept intact and the land is actually cultivated, the usufruct thereof belongs to the cultivator. When the land is no longer cultivated and fences fall into disrepair, it reverts to the community.

"Here, as in most arid regions, rights to water are more important than rights to land. Those who have become wealthy, those who own the largest flocks and herds, are those who have managed to get control of a permanent supply of water. They have either enlarged an old *jaguey*, or pond, in which they have dug or drilled a well on which a windmill is installed to lift the water. . ."

It is not a place to which fast-talking land speculators should go, for this is a region "where the biblical injunction of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is followed to the letter, unless retribution is made in the wealth of the land, namely livestock."

Nor would it appeal to the modern American woman, Georgist or not, for here "togetherness" is carried to its ultimate power. As Raymond F. Crist reports: "Here also young women are frankly and openly acquired by purchase, in accordance with Guajiran law, and a man may have as many wives as his purse, his years, and his fancy will allow."