U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey
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U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

F. M. Thorn, Superintendent.

State: Florida.

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Topographic Sheets Nos. 1698, 1699, 1700.

LOCALITY:

West Coast of Florida, from Clearwater to Bayport.

1888.

CHIEF OF PARTY:

W. Irving Vinal.

Descriptive Report 1/2

☞ Give here full address to which reply should be sent: Woods Holl, Massachusetts.

U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey,

Woods Holl, Mass.,

July 12th, 1888.

Mr. B. A. Colonna,
Assistant in Charge of Office and Topography,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Your letter dated June 28th, although plainly directed, has been traveling about the county and reached me only a day or two ago.

The topographical surveys made by me on the west coast of Florida, during the seasons of 1884 and 1886, extending from Clearwater on the south to Bayport on the north, included Hog Island, the Anclote Keys and the Creek of Cedar Keys.

The characteristic features of the country traversed and shown on the field sheets, indicate recent geological formation, yet in-places rock of an apparently earlier age was found. The general relief of the country is simple and unbroken near the coast, rising and undulat-

ing

ing in the interior, particularly as we proceed northward.

The line dividing Hillsboro County from Fernando County runs eastward from the mouth of the Anclote River. South of this line the fast land is immediately adjacent to the coast and the shore-line is comparatively bold. North of this line the fast land generally recedes from the coast, the intervening salt marshes varying greatly in width from a few yards to several miles. Here the high water line is clearly defined by the grass and muddy edges of the marsh or an occassional spot of sandy beach, but the location of the low water line is uncertain. The sea here is extremely shallow, the bottom low and nearly level; "northers" frequently blow the water far from shore. Save on the Gulf side of Hog Island and the Anclote Keys there are no breakers and these, owing to the shallowness of the water and the gentle inclin of the bottom, are never dangerous. The entire coast is free from signs of wreck or drift. Recently a light house has been established near the north end of the Anclote Keys, inside of which is safe and commodious anchorage for vessels drawing 8 or 9 feet

feet of water. This harbor is the rendezvous for the sponge fishermen who have their "Bonuds" for curing and storing sponges on the north key. This is the only harbor, between Tampa Bay and Cedar Keys, for vessels drawing more than 3 feet of water. Shelter for small vessels can be found back of Hog Island, at the entrances of the Pithlachascootie, Weekiwachee and other streams, but the channels are narrow, intricate and poorly defined.

The eastern sides of the islands are fringed with mangrove but on the main shore the Mangrove trees have in most instances been killed by frosts. Palmetto and Pine also grow on the islands where there is any little arable land.

On the main land the forest growth consists of Palmetto, Pine, Cypress, Cedar and several varieties of Oak including live Oak. There is a great deal of scrub both Oak and Palmetto.

The extensive salt marshes of Hernando County are interspersed with islands of solid ground, often showing out cropping rocks, on which grow Palmetto, Pine and Cedar trees of large size. The trees having been cut from some of these islands they are now entirely denuded of

vegetation. The marshes are covered with a rank growth of "saw" grass and are intersected by numerous creeks, some of which are of considerable size and most of which have their origin in the woods on the east land. Many small, irregular and often detached marshes run up into the east land. Some of these have been reclaimed by ditches and dykes; the land thus gained is very rich and repays cultivation several years in succession at small expense. A Company of English Capitalists, headed by Sir Edward J. Reed, have acquired title to a large tract of marsh land in Hernando County and were engaged in reclaiming it at the time this survey was made. Many small muddy depressions are found, particularly in Hillsboro County, which in 1884 were dry (said to be an unusual occurrence), but which in 1886 contained from 3 to 4 feet of water. Sinks of fresh water, always found with limestone rock, are passed at varying intervals along the most traveled roads. A deep and powerful spring of fresh water was found in the Gulf between Yellow Bluff and Bay View.

There is a much larger proportion of arable land near the coast in Hillsboro County than in Hernando County, but the land in the latter county, while it lies further back, is in general of a better quality.

In Hillsboro County the settlements of Clearwater, Dunedin, Yellow Bluff, Bay View, Anclote and Tarpon Springs are made up largely of northern people who cultivate Oranges, Lemons and Vegetables. They have direct steamboat connection with each other and with Tampa and Cedar Keys twice a week. The Steamer "Governor Safford" was built expressly for this route. A smaller light draught steamer, the "Mary Kirston", runs from Clearwater to Tarpon Springs. During "northers", or when the water near shore is shoal, the larger boat is obliged to land passengers and freight on piers or wharfs built off shore.

The settlements along the Coast of Hernando County, as Port Richie, Hudson and Bayport, are made on islands surrounded by salt marsh but are connected by good roads with the interior. Sailing vessels of very light draught are the only means of communication by water between these

places and Cedar Keys.

Surveys for a railroad from Tampa to Brooksville were made in 1886 and it was understood that the rails would at once be laid. This road as surveyed is within easy access of all the places named above. Saw Mills are located at Dunedin, Bay View, Anclote and Tarpon Springs but a great deal of lumber used on this coast is furnished by the Fenniemore Mills (Fairchild's) at Cedar Keys. The sawmills of the Faber and Eagle Pencil Companies are located at Cedar Keys.

Tarpon Springs was projected by ex-Governor Safford of Arizona, Mr. Disston of Philadelphia and others as a resort for health and pleasure. It is regularly laid out with wide avenues and streets, pleasant drives have been arranged to best conform with the topography of the country and a fine hotel erected. A number of people have established their winter homes at this place.

Bay port for many years has been a place for shipping cedar logs. This traffic is not so extensively carried on as formerly owing to the growing scarcity of trees of large size. Mr. John Parsons, who for many years has controlled the interests of this

place and vicinity maintains, mostly at his personal expense, a road and a telephone line to Brooksville, distant 17 miles.

There are no settlements directly on the coast between Bayport and Cedar Keys; the most important, Crystal River and Homosassa, are from six to eight miles inland. Homosassa, formerly a noted estate belonging to Senator Yulee of Florida, is now owned by ex Governor Chamberlain of Maine and others.

Throughout this entire section real estate agents and land speculators were using every effort to induce settlers to take up lands and were apparently quite successful.

The unclaimed and unoccupied land covered by this survey is of little value as much of it is liable to overflow or, when it is elevated above flooding, the soil is light and barren.

Submitting the above I am

Yours very respectfully,

W. Irving Vinal,

Assistant U. S. C. and G. Survey.