U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

A. 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.
U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey,

Woods's Hall, Mass.

July 13th, 1888.

Mr. B. N. Colonna,
Acting in Charge ofoffice and Topography,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Your letter dated June 28th, although
plainly directed, has been traveling about the
country 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 north
of Biscayne Bay.

The characteristic features of the country
traversed and shown on the field work, in-
dicate recent geological formation, yet in-
places rock of an apparently earlier age was
found. The general relief of the country is simple
and embossed near the coast, rising and undulating.
ing in the interior, particularly as we pro-
cceed northward.

The line dividing Hillsbore County from Hernando County runs eastward from the mouth of the Su-
colot River. South of this line the fast land is
immediately adjacent to the coast and the shore-
line is comparatively bold. North of the 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 sharply defined by the grass
and muddy edges of the marsh or an occasional spot
of sandy beach, but the location of the low water
line is uncertain. The sea shore is extremely shel-
low, the bottom soft and nearly level; "northerns" frequent-
ly blow the water far from shore. Save on the Gulf
side of Hog Island and the Anclote Keys there
are no breakers and those owing to the shallowness
of the water and the gentle incline of the bottom are
miserable dangerous. The entire coast is free from
signs of wrecks or drift. Recently a lighthouse
has been established near the north end of the
Anclote Keys, inside of which is safe and com-
mmodious anchorage for vessels trading for or to
feet of water. This harbor is the rendezvous for the sponge fishermen who have their "founds" 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 entrance of the Littleclassiecutie, Wetkiwckiie and other streams, but the channels are narrow, intricate and poorly defined.

The eastern sides of the islands are fringed with seagrass but on the main shore the seagrass trees have in most instances been killed by frost. 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 cleared 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 fast land. Many small, irregular and often detached marshes run up into the fast land. Some of these have been reclaimed by ditches and dykes; the land thus gained is very rich and repays cultivation in several years in succession at small expense. A Company of English Capitalists, headed by Sir Edward T. Red, has acquired title to a large tract of marsh land in Hernando County and was engaged in reclaiming it at the time this survey was made. Many small muddy depressions are found, particularly in Hillsboro County, which in 1884 was dry (said to be an occasional occurrence) but which in 1886 contained from 3 to 4 feet of water. Springs of fresh water, always found with limestone rock, are present 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, Cedar Key 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 Tarpon and Cedar Keys twice a week. The Steamer "GrosvenorSafford" can be built expressly for this route. A smaller light Steam Steamer, the "Mary Kistner," runs from Clearwater to Tarpon Springs. During "sowthistle," or when the water near shore is shoal, the larger boat is obliged to land passengers and freight on pier leads built off shore.

The settlements along the Coast of Hernando County, at Port Richey, Hudson and Bay Port, are made on island surrounded by salt marsh, but are connected by good roads to 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 Brooks-ville 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. Said mills are located at Seminole, Bay View, Audubon and Tarpon Springs but a great deal of lumber used on this coast is furnished by the Fernandina Mills (Fairchild) at Cedar Keys. The sawmills of the Florida and Eagle Pencil Companies are located at Cedar Keys.

Tarpon Springs was projected by ex-Governor Safford of Arizona, Mr. Pistore 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 suit contours 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 now intensively 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, mostly at his personal expense, a road and a telephone line to Brooksville, distant 17 miles.

These 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 Governor Chamberlain of Maine and others.

Throughout this entire section, real estate agents and land speculators are using every effort to induce settlers to take up lands and are 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, where it is elevated above flooding, the soil is light and barren.

Submitting the above, I am

Yours very respectfully,

W. Irving Vivian,
Assistant U.S. Land C.S.