

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS

M1869

RECORDS OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER AND SUBORDINATE FIELD  
OFFICES FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA, BUREAU OF REFUGEES,  
FREEDMEN, AND ABANDONED LANDS, 1865-1872

Records prepared for microfilming by members of the Civil War Conservation Corps,  
under the direction of Russ and Budge Weidman.  
Introduction by Reginald Washington.

Department of Special Collections, Smathers Library  
University of Florida at Gainesville  
and  
National Archives and Records Administration  
Washington, DC  
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## INTRODUCTION

On the 15 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1869, are reproduced the records of the Florida headquarters for the Assistant Commissioner and his staff officers and the subordinate field offices of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. These records consist of 25 bound volumes and approximately 12 linear feet of unbound records, containing materials that include letters and endorsements sent and received, monthly reports, applications of freedmen for rations, and other records relating to freedmen's claims and homesteads. These records are part of the Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group (RG) 105, at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.

## HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was established in the War Department by an act of Congress on March 3, 1865 (13 Stat. 507). The life of the Bureau was extended twice by acts of July 16, 1866 (14 Stat. 173), and July 6, 1868 (15 Stat. 83). The Bureau was responsible for the supervision and management of all matters relating to refugees and freedmen, and of lands abandoned or seized during the Civil War. In May 1865, President Andrew Johnson appointed Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard as Commissioner of the Bureau, and Howard served in that position until June 30, 1872, when activities of the Bureau were terminated in accordance with an act of June 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 366). While a major part of the Bureau's early activities involved the supervision of abandoned and confiscated property, its mission was to provide relief and help freedmen become self-sufficient. Bureau officials issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps, and supervised labor contracts. In addition, the Bureau managed apprenticeship disputes and complaints, assisted benevolent societies in the establishment of schools, helped freedmen in legalizing marriages entered into during slavery, and provided transportation to refugees and freedmen who were attempting to reunite with their family or relocate to other parts of the country. The Bureau also helped black soldiers, sailors, and their heirs collect bounty claims, pensions, and back pay.

The act of March 3, 1865, authorized the appointment of Assistant Commissioners to aid the Commissioner in supervising the work of the Bureau in the former Confederate states, the border states, and the District of Columbia. In June 1865, Bvt. Maj. Gen. Rufus Saxton was appointed Assistant Commissioner for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Several months after Saxton assumed his duties, however, Howard appointed Bvt. Col. T. W. Osborn as the first Assistant Commissioner of Florida. Osborn established his headquarters at Tallahassee in September 1865. In May 1867, the headquarters moved to Jacksonville, where it remained until it was relocated to St. Augustine in August 1868. It moved back to Jacksonville in November 1868, and remained there until July 1870. Records relating to Florida that were created during Saxton's tenure may be included among the files of the Assistant Commissioner of South Carolina.

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An act of Congress, approved July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193), ordered that the Commissioner of the Bureau "shall, on the first day of January next, cause the said bureau to be withdrawn from the several States within which said bureau has acted and its operation shall be discontinued." Consequently, in early 1869, with the exception of the superintendents of education and the claims agents, the Assistant Commissioners and their subordinate officers were withdrawn from the states.

For the next year and a half the Bureau continued to pursue its education work and to process claims. In the summer of 1870 the superintendents of education were withdrawn from the states, and the headquarters staff was greatly reduced. From that time until the Bureau was abolished by an act of Congress approved June 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 366), effective June 30, 1872, the Bureau's functions related almost exclusively to the disposition of claims. The Bureau's records and remaining functions were then transferred to the Freedmen's Branch in the office of the Adjutant General. The records of this branch are among the Bureau's files.

Constrained by limited resources, Southern opposition, and the politics of Reconstruction, the Bureau faced an enormous challenge in its efforts to assist the freedmen and refugees. Its relief efforts, without question, saved thousands of southerners from starvation. Its attempts to assist freedmen to become self-sufficient, to provide public education, administer justice, and, to a lesser degree, to provide land, all worked with varying degrees of success to lessen the difficulties during the transition from slavery to freedom. One of the Bureau's greatest legacies is the body of records it created and received during the course of its operations. These records are arguably some of the most important documents available for the study of the Federal Government's policies, efforts to reconstruct the South, and Southern social history and genealogy.

### THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU IN FLORIDA

The Freedmen's Bureau activities in Florida generally resembled those conducted in other states. The Bureau issued rations to both freedmen and white refugees, supervised labor contracts between planters and freedmen, administered justice, worked with benevolent societies in the establishment of schools, and assisted freedmen in locating land. This last service contributed to an important, distinctive success in the Florida Bureau's program: more freedmen secured homesteads there than in any other Southern public-land state.

The Florida Bureau regularly assessed the need for services in the state. The resulting reports appear in these records and are valuable for learning about social conditions. In November 1865, for example, Asst. Comm. Osborn sent Capt. George Thompson on an inspection tour of southern Florida. During the following 4 months, Thompson toured the lower part of the state. His 47-page report includes living

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conditions of the populace, agricultural possibilities, and geographical information. He discusses how the Bureau can assist freedmen in education and land ownership.<sup>1</sup>

To prevent widespread starvation and destitution, the Florida Bureau issued more than 25,000 rations in its first year to some 22,000 blacks and nearly 4,000 whites.<sup>2</sup> By December 1868, the Bureau had issued more than 760,000 rations, at a cost of \$102,669.45.<sup>3</sup> In addition to its general distribution of rations to those in dire need, the Florida Bureau also utilized a relief system similar to one in use in Louisiana and South Carolina that provided planters with food for their laborers. Under this system, blacks who rented and cultivated at least 10 acres of land on a crop-sharing basis were issued rations. This allowed planters to produce a crop without having to feed their workers during growing season.

Of genealogical interest are the applications of freedmen for rations. These printed documents give the number of acres of rented land. They list the first and last name and age of the freedman renting the property, of family members, and of any others who will live and work the named property. Included in the information are the location of the property and the name of the owner. In some cases the relationship of those living with the freedman is given (e.g., stepson or nephew).<sup>4</sup>

The regulation of written labor contracts between planters and freedmen was a major part of the Bureau's operation in Florida. Between 1865 and 1868 thousands of freedmen entered into contract agreements for either wages or a share of the crops in virtually every part of the state. Contracts generally stipulated the hours and days of work, types of rations to be provided, and the amount of wage or crop to be paid. Nearly half of the freedmen on plantations in Florida worked for a third of the crop plus rations. Those who worked for wages also received rations and were paid at a rate of \$12 per month for men, \$9 for women, and \$5 for children. Bureau officials generally witnessed the contracts and were paid a small fee by the planter.

Safeguarding the rights and securing justice for freedmen was of great concern to the Freedmen's Bureau as well. Following the Civil War, several Southern states enacted a series of laws commonly known as "black codes," which restricted the rights and legal status of freedmen. Freedmen were often given harsh sentences for petty crimes and in some instances were unable to get their cases heard in state courts. In a circular issued by Commissioner Howard in May 1865, Assistant Commissioners were directed to adjudicate all difficulties occurring between blacks

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<sup>1</sup> See microfilm roll 15, Subordinate Field Offices, Tallahassee, Letters Received, Apr. 1866-Feb. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> House Ex. Doc. 1, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Joe M. Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* XLI, no. 3 (January 1963): 224.

<sup>4</sup> See microfilm rolls 11 and 12, Office of Assistant Commissioner, Other Records, "Applications of Freedmen for Rations."

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and whites in places where the civil courts were interrupted or where blacks were not allowed to testify.<sup>5</sup> On November 15, 1865, in response to Howard's order, Florida Assistant Commissioner Osborn issued a circular ordering that freedmen be allowed to testify in court and that corporal punishment be restricted and personal violence be reported to military commanders.<sup>6</sup> In Florida, Bureau officials, for the most part, supervised state courts until a new government was established under the military reconstruction act of March 2, 1867 (14 Stat. 428).

Bureau educational activity in Florida officially began with the appointment of E. B. Duncan as inspector and superintendent of schools in November 1866. Duncan served until June 1867, when he was replaced by C. T. Chase. Chase, who served from June 1867 to March 1868, was succeeded by Charles Foster, formerly Assistant Commissioner, who served from March through December 1868. In January 1869, in accordance with an act of July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193), Bureau operations in Florida, as in other states, were terminated except for the educational functions and the collection of claims. George W. Gile, who was the Assistant Commissioner at the time, became the superintendent of education and served in that capacity until August 1870, when the remaining Bureau activities in Florida were also terminated.

The schools maintained by the Bureau in Florida included day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sabbath schools. Rudimentary education including reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography received primary emphasis in most Bureau schools. Teachers were recruited from the local white population, from among the freedmen themselves, and from the North by freedmen's aid societies. No single policy of assigning responsibilities in the maintenance of the schools was followed consistently. The Bureau generally supplied buildings for schools and transportation for teachers and relied on the aid societies and freedmen to pay for textbooks and teachers' salaries, although at times teachers were paid from Bureau funds.

The Freedmen's Bureau in Florida sought, with a mixed degree of success, to secure land for African Americans. The Southern Homestead Act, approved by Congress on June 21, 1866, made available for public settlement 46 million acres of public lands in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Nineteen million acres of this Federal land was located in Florida. Because the Act specified that persons who applied could not be discriminated against because of race, it offered an opportunity for many Florida freedmen to become landowners. The land office opened on August 25, 1866. The Freedmen's Bureau, through "locating agents," assisted interested freedmen in finding plots, and provided them with 1-month subsistence, free transportation to their prospective tracts of land, and seeds for the

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<sup>5</sup> Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," pp. 228-29; House Ex. Doc. No. 11, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> House Ex. Doc. 70, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 87; Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," p. 228.

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December 1864 sent by George R. Richardson, assistant inspector of artillery, Department and Army of the Tennessee, and by J. W. Powell, chief of artillery, Department and Army of the Tennessee.

**PRESS COPIES OF LETTERS SENT**

The single volume of press copies of letters sent, October 1869–June 1870, is arranged chronologically, and they are not duplicates of the letters sent. The volume contains a name index. The letters are to Florida school officials, private individuals, and Bureau staff officers at the Washington headquarters.

**ENDORSEMENTS SENT**

Endorsements sent are characteristic of 19th-century recordkeeping practices. A reply to an incoming letter was frequently written on the letter itself or on a specially prepared wrapper. The reply, known as an endorsement, was then copied into an endorsement book, and the endorsed letter was returned to the sender or forwarded to another office. Endorsement books also usually include a summary of the incoming letter and, on occasion, previous endorsements that were recorded on it.

The two volumes of endorsements sent, October 1866–June 1870, are arranged chronologically and contain a name index. They are not duplicates of the letters sent.

**REGISTERS OF LETTERS RECEIVED**

Registers of letters received are also typical of 19th-century recordkeeping practices. In addition to a summary of the contents of the incoming letter, the registers usually include such identifying information as the name and sometimes the office of the writer, the date of receipt, the date of the communication, the place from which it was written, and the entry number assigned at the time of receipt.

The three volumes of registers of letters received are arranged by time period. The entries in the registers, August 1865–May 1870, are arranged alphabetically by initial letter or surname or office of correspondent and thereunder chronologically. The first two registers contain separate numerical sequences for each year within each alphabetical division. There is only one numerical sequence in the third register for each division.

**LETTERS RECEIVED**

The letters received consist of both registered and unregistered series. The registered letters received, June 1865–June 1869, are arranged according to their entry in the registers of letters received. The unregistered letters received, August 1865–July 1870, are arranged chronologically. The letters are written by the Assistant Commissioner or his adjutant and received back by endorsement, letters from Bureau officials in Washington, letters from staff officers of the Assistant Commissioner, letters from military department commanders, and letters from private citizens.

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Unbound oaths of office, 1867-68, are arranged alphabetically by initial letter of the surname of the individual who took the oath of loyalty to the United States. These oaths were required by an act of July 2, 1862 (12 Stat. 502), for all officeholders, whether elected or appointed.

Unbound records relating to the restoration of property held by the Bureau, 1865-66, are arranged by type of record and thereunder chronologically. The records include applications of owners for restoration of their property; Bureau orders to restore the property, October 1865-May 1866; and inventories of property held by the Bureau in the Apalachicola area, June 1865-June 1866.

Unbound applications of freedmen for rations, 1868, are arranged alphabetically by initial letter of the surname of the individual. Most of the applications are on a printed form, which gives the name of the landowner, the name of the freedman, the number of acres of land rented, the location of the land, and the names and ages of the people in the freedman's family.

The unbound miscellaneous papers, 1866-68, are arranged chronologically. Most of the records are freedmen's labor contracts.

### **Offices of Staff Officers**

#### **SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

Unbound letters received, June 1867-December 1868, are arranged chronologically. Most of the letters are from Bureau officers, members of benevolent societies, and teachers. Letters received by the superintendent of education after 1868 are among the letters received by the Assistant Commissioner.

Unbound monthly statistical school reports sent to Bureau headquarters, November 1866-June 1870, are arranged by type of report and thereunder chronologically. Unbound monthly statistical school reports from subordinate officers, January 1868-December 1868, are also arranged by type of report and thereunder chronologically.

Unbound teachers' monthly school reports, April 1867-June 1870, are arranged chronologically.

#### **CLAIMS AGENT**

Unbound letters received by J. H. Durkee, agent for claims, February 1869-September 1871, are arranged chronologically. These letters are mostly from the chief of the claim division at the Bureau headquarters, Bureau officers, and justices of the peace who were forwarding or writing on behalf of claimants.

The single volume register of bounty claimants, July 1868-March 1872, is arranged chronologically.

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**DISBURSING OFFICER**

The single volume of letters sent, November 1866–November 1867, is arranged chronologically.

Unbound letters received, July 1866–December 1868, are also arranged chronologically.

**SURGEON IN CHIEF**

The single volume of endorsements sent and received, October 1865–June 1866, is arranged chronologically. This volume also contains a register of heads of families receiving rations at Ocala, May–July 1868.

**Subordinate Field Offices**

**BARANCAS**

Unbound letters and orders received, January–August 1866, are arranged chronologically.

**FERNANDINA**

The single volume of letters sent, February 1866–December 1868, is arranged chronologically. The volume also contains endorsements sent from January to April 1867.

The single volume of letters and orders received, January 1866–December 1868, are arranged chronologically. The volume includes a name index and a few letters sent that have been copied in the series of “letters sent.” The volume also contains endorsements received from January to April 1867.

**JACKSONVILLE**

The single volume of letters sent, March 1866 and April–May 1867, is arranged chronologically and has a name index.

The single volume register of freedmen issued rations, June–July 1868, is arranged chronologically. The register includes the name of the head of the family, names of wife and children, ages of children, location of land, number of cultivated acres, owner of land, and date rations were issued.

**KEY WEST**

The single volume of letters and endorsements sent, December 1867–May 1869, is arranged chronologically. The last letter was written at Fort Warren, Mississippi, and sent to the disbursing officer at Washington.

**MONTICELLO**

Unbound letters received, May 1866–May 1868, are arranged chronologically. At the end of the series there are bills of lading for public property received at Monticello for the period 1866–67.



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**OCALA**

The single volume of letters sent and received, endorsements sent, and copies of monthly reports forwarded to the Assistant Commissioner, June 1866–November 1868, are arranged chronologically. There is a name index in the back of the volume. As previously mentioned, a register dated May through July of heads of families receiving rations at Ocala appears in the volume of “endorsements sent and received” by the surgeon in chief.

**PENSACOLA**

Unbound letters and orders received, February 1866–January 1867, are arranged chronologically.

**QUINCY**

The single volume register of freedmen issued rations, May–June 1868, is arranged chronologically. Information in the register includes the name of the freedman, location of the land, owner of land, and the number of adults and children in the family. The volume also contains two reports sent to the Assistant Commissioner and the superintendent of education, dated September 1 and 18, respectively.

**TALLAHASSEE**

The single volume of letters sent, June–December 1868, is arranged chronologically.

Unbound letters received, April 1866–February 1868 (four items), are arranged chronologically. Included is an undated inspection report by Capt. George F. Thompson.

Unbound records relating to court trials, 1866, are arranged by case. These are the cases of *Charles Bell and Jupiter Randolph v. William A. Carr* and *Florida v. Tom Clark*.

The two volumes of registers of freedmen issued rations, May–July 1868, are arranged chronologically by date of issuance of ration. The first volume, 1 (22), has a name index. The registers give the name and address of the freedman, the number in the family, and the number of rations issued.

**RELATED RECORDS**

In the same record group, RG 105, and related to records of the Assistant Commissioner for Florida, are those of the Bureau headquarters in Washington, DC, and the Assistant Commissioner for South Carolina. Several of these records series are available in the following National Archives microfilm publications:

**M742, *Selected Series of Records Issued by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872***, which includes the letters, endorsements, and issuances sent.

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**M752, *Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872***

**M803, *Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871***

**M869, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870***

Records in other record groups supplement those of the Assistant Commissioner. In Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, RG 393, are records of the military district that included Florida. Records relating to employment and welfare of freedmen and abandoned property before the establishment of the Bureau are among Records of Civil War Special Agencies of the Treasury Department, RG 366. The records of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874, in Records of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, RG 101, contain information relating to former slaves who maintained accounts with the bank branches at Florida.

There have been numerous books, articles, and dissertations published about the Freedmen's Bureau and its operations. For general background, see Paul S. Pierce, *The Freedmen's Bureau, A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (Iowa City, IA, 1904), and George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia, PA., 1955).

Several books written about Commissioner Oliver Otis Howard include *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* (New York, NY, 1907); John Alcott Carpenter, *Sword and Oliver Branch: Oliver O. Howard* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1964); and William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven, CT, 1968). For a history of Reconstruction in Florida, see William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913), especially pages 377-407.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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\* Volume numbers assigned by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO) are shown in parentheses to assist in identifying the volumes.

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ROLL	DESCRIPTION	DATES
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**APPENDIX**

This list provides the names and dates of service of known Freedmen's Bureau personnel at selected subordinate field offices in Florida. Additional information regarding persons assigned to various field offices might be found among the Bureau's Washington headquarters station books and rosters of military officers and civilians on duty in the states and other appointment-related records.

**Barancas**

Subassistant Commissioner: L. L. Zalousky

**Fernandina**

Subassistant Commissioners: Thomas Leddy, January–August 1866  
A. A. Cole, August 1866–July 1867  
D. A. Hammond (subassistant commissioner and post commander), July 1867–December 1868.

**Key West**

Subassistant Commissioner: J. B. Rawles, December 1867–January 1869

**Monticello**

Subassistant Commissioner: A. B. Grumwell, May 1866–May 1868

**Ocala**

Subassistant Commissioner: J. A. Remley, June 1866–November 1868

**Pensacola**

Subassistant Commissioners: F. M. Cole, February–August 1866  
J. R. Brinckle, October 1866–January 1867

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Roll 14

Target 6

**SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES**  
**BARANCAS**

**Letters and Orders Received**

Jan.-Aug. 1866

21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept of 1866.

Tallahassee Fla. July 9<sup>th</sup> 1866.

Brigadier Genl J. Seymour.

U.S.A.

Barrancas, Fla

+ Extracts +

He (the Major General Commanding) desires that the action of the Courts be not interfered with, except by the proper legal means, namely, by an appeal to a higher court, or for stay of judgment until an appeal be made to the Executive clemency, or a representation be made to these Headquarters.

The interests of Union-loving men, and the colored people, should be carefully watched, and if necessary the Officers acting as Agents of the Freedmans Bureau should go into Court, and make out the best case they can. This is in case the parties to be protected have not the means to engage regular legal counsel. Wherever justice can be obtained by compromise or other means, or the case be trivial, the parties must be advised not to engage in a legal action, but to settle by arbitration -

Official  
J. Heruberg  
Capt & Post Adjutant.

(Signed) Chas Menden  
Brigadier Genl J. Seymour.



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Roll 14

Target 7

**SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES**  
**FERNANDINA**

**Letters Sent**

1 Volume (15)

Feb. 1866–Dec. 1868

Volume numbers assigned by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO)  
are shown in parentheses to assist in identifying the volumes.

1868

Office R.R. & A.S.  
 Ferdinandia Fla  
 March 2<sup>d</sup> 1868

Lieut A. S. Jackson  
 A. A. G. R. & A. S.

in I have  
 the honor to report for the month of  
 Feb 1868. During the latter part of the  
 month the scarcity of supplies became  
 more manifest than at any previous  
 period since I have had charge.  
 The wharves & R.R. buildings being  
 completed a large number of mechanics  
 and laborers were left without employment.  
 It is now quite apparent that many  
 of these persons who have found  
 a means of livelihood in the building  
 & repairs that were in progress at this time  
 of the R.R. must look for other  
 resources, as such labor is pretty  
 well completed or suspended.

Some such have come to crave the  
 benefit of circular No 3. lately issued  
 by the Asst. Commr. This class of  
 people have found nothing & are  
 the most dependent of all freedmen.  
 Within the past two weeks I have  
 excited myself to find some place  
 where freedmen families may locate  
 & receive the benefit of the provisions  
 of circular No 3. I find one Mr Medary  
 has such a tract of good land seven  
 miles west of this place near the R.R.  
 have also found that Mr Mr will give  
 all such, as will cultivate land,  
 the most liberal terms for the ensuing  
 season. I am hopeful of locating  
 many families at that point.  
 There are a great many discharged

A. A. Jackson  
 A. A. G. R. & A. S.

1868

colored soldiers here who who have not  
 yet received their bounty, who are  
 awaiting it with a great deal of impa-  
 tience. The number of such here  
 is not less than one hundred, and  
 the aggregate of their bounty will appro-  
 ximate the thousand dollars. Many of  
 these persons would go elsewhere &  
 employ themselves in more useful occupations  
 than they can find here, but fear that  
 they will be liable to lose their allowance.  
 If they stir abroad from here thus  
 the bounty which is intended as a  
 benefit, by the long delay begins to lose  
 like a curse to the hungry expectants.  
 I have been much perplexed & puzzled  
 to know what Col Sprague will consider  
 a full case of destitution & find my  
 self in doubt upon this point.  
 The claims presented have a great  
 variety & permutation of cases.  
 One man has saved nothing but  
 has a trade & good health & plenty  
 of employ ment another has no  
 trade a large family of small  
 children, a few bushes of corn  
 & potatoes, but not enough to last  
 them through to another harvest.  
 Other cases of old and sickly  
 people who are not entirely destitute  
 but possessed of very limited resources.  
 I am confident from the present  
 developments that there will be a great  
 cry & clamor for the benefit of circular  
 No 3. And would suggest the forging  
 as a difficulty that may demand a defini-  
 tion of the term destitute as contained  
 in the circular.

March 2<sup>d</sup>

A. A. Jackson  
 A. A. G. R. & A. S.

From King Ferry

1868

I have received a deed of 12 acre  
of land at Kings Ferry for the  
erection of a School House

Also the pledge of all the labor  
necessary to erect the building.

This was pledged by Dr. Hammond  
one of the trustees named in  
the deed. Their School House

should be sufficiently capacious  
to accommodate from fifty to seventy  
scholars. As nearly as I can

ascertain the cost of the material  
will be as low as the same kind  
of material at Jacksonville.

At Fernandina the gentlemen have  
pledged themselves to contribute  
three hundred dollars in labor  
toward the erection of a school house.

March 2<sup>d</sup> The Board of Trustees consisting  
of James D. Curtis Peter Willidius  
& Joseph Scott, are soliciting further  
contributions. I have instructed me  
to solicit an appropriation from  
the Asst Commis of five or six  
hundred dollars to enable them to  
build a school house of sufficient  
capacity to accommodate not less  
than one hundred & fifty scholars.

I am Sir very Respectfully

Your Obedt Servt

Dr. Hammond  
A. H. Jackson J. A. C. R. F. & A. G.  
A. M. Lee

Dr. Hammond  
A. M. Lee

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS

Roll 14

Target 9

**SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES**  
**JACKSONVILLE**

Letters Sent

1 Volume (16)

Mar. 1866 and Apr.-May 1867

Volume numbers assigned by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO)  
are shown in parentheses to assist in identifying the volumes.

Office Civil Agent Bureau R. F. & A. L.  
 Jacksonville Fla April 23, 1867

Wm. B. Bowden Esq.  
 Sheriff Duval Co  
 Jacksonville. Fla

Sir:

Complaints are being made to this office almost daily of your Deputy officer Leaders, not only that he collects money for the freed people and never pays it over; but that the food that he furnishes the County prisoners is of an unwholesome kind, and of insufficient quantities - I therefore call your attention to the fact, and if he is not removed I shall report the case to District

Head Quarters: A reply is requested at your earliest convenience.

I am Sir Respectfully  
 Yours obdt Serv  
 Robt. C. Lantry

Civil Agent  
 Bureau R. F. & A. L.

Jacksonville Fla May 6. 67

Col Jno. S. Sprague of Staff,  
Asst Commdr B.R. Fort L.  
St. Augustine, Fla  
Colonel.

While at Magnolia Station  
on the 25th of April - It was represented to me  
by the Matrons in Charge of the Station that the  
ration for the freed children do not hold out - And  
that the Matron out of her own private store has frequently  
to feed the children until more rations are <sup>the difficulty</sup> ~~received~~ - It seems  
is that many of the children are about half grown  
and children of that size consume as much as an  
adult, whereas they are not allowed but half  
rations - Is there any way that they can be  
allowed to draw more rations - The Matrons assured  
me that the stores were used with the strictest economy  
I am Colonel

Very Resply Yours obed Servt  
Robert C. Lowry  
Civil Asst B.R. Fort L.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
M I C R O F I L M P U B L I C A T I O N S

Roll 14

Target 11

**SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES**  
**KEY WEST**

Letters and Endorsements Sent

1 Volume (18)

Dec. 1867–May 1869

Volume numbers assigned by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO)  
are shown in parentheses to assist in identifying the volumes.

11

1

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
M I C R O F I L M P U B L I C A T I O N S

Roll 15

Target 6

**SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES**  
**TALLAHASSEE**

**Letters Received**

Apr. 1866–Feb. 1868



Official Copy.

Report of Brig. Lieut. Col.  
Geo. F. Thompson of an  
inspection tour in  
South Florida.

No. 6.

Colonel F. W. Osborn,  
Asst. Commissioner,  
Bureau R. F. & A. I.,  
Tallahassee, Florida,

Sir,

Pursuant to your orders  
of 29<sup>th</sup> November last, I have visited the counties of  
Hillsboro, Manatee, Monroe, Dade, Broward, Polk,  
Orange and Volusia in this State and respectfully submit the  
following

Report.

I left Tallahassee in company with W. H. Gleason  
Esq. appointed by you as Special Agent to accompany  
me, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of December, two days after the  
reception of the order. We proceeded by rail to Gaines-  
ville in Alachua county on account of the inefficiency,  
or want of a spirit of accommodation on the part of the  
officers of the roads, we obtained transportation for our  
horses only as far as Baldwin, and this only after  
having been detained at Lake City for twenty four  
hours.

On their arrival there, I was unable to get them taken  
over the Fernandina and Federal Keys road to Gainesville,  
without being detained at least forty eight hours.  
The whole detention seemed to me under the circum-  
stances to arise almost entirely from a want of the  
disposition to accommodate the public. I therefore

gave the orderly directions to drive our horses over the nearest road to Gainesville, and proceed myself with Mr. Gleason to that point in the train. Our horses arrived on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the next morning we started on our way to Tampa via Brookville.

We selected Tampa as our objective point, because at that place we believed we should obtain such information both in regard to the state of affairs in Hillsboro County, and the best method of procedure for the examination of Manatee, Monroe and Dade Counties. In this we were not disappointed, for here we found several men who were familiar with the country from Tampa across to the east coast, along Indian River, and from thence down to the Miami River. From their representations of the state of the waters in the creeks and rivers, we were satisfied that to attempt to go across the peninsula and down to Miami in the then state of high waters, would be very hazardous if not entirely impracticable. After getting all the information we could from those best acquainted with the country, we determined to charter a sailboat and proceed to different points on the rivers of the West or Gulf coast, and penetrate the interior on foot as far as was necessary, to obtain a satisfactory knowledge of the country and its condition. We effected an arrangement with a Mr. Louis Pell, a native of that section of the State, and perfectly familiar with the whole west coast, having during the

Seminole War in 1857 been the mail carrier from Tampa to Fort Myers on the Caloosahatchee river.

We started on our expedition from Tampa on the 20<sup>th</sup> December and visited several points on the Manatee river, from thence went down into Charlotte Harbor, visiting several of the Islands therein, up Peasi's creek about ten miles, and there found a detachment of the 99<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T. under command of Lieut. J. C. Shaw. Lieut. Shaw had been there but a day or two on our arrival and consequently could give us no information touching the objects of our visit. We however found a party of herders with Mr. Jacob Summerlin, reported to be the largest stock raiser in the county, with a drove of beeves, loading them upon a steamer for the Havana market. By the kindness of Lieut. Shaw, we took his horses and went back from the river several miles, to verify the description which parties had given us of the country. To proceed further into the interior at this point we considered unnecessary, as the major part of the men living within a radius of fifty miles were here, employed by Mr. Summerlin in loading his cattle. After spending two or three days here, we proceeded down the river and made for Fort Myers, stopping at several of the Keys or Islands in Charlotte Harbor, where were congregated several parties engaged in taking fish. We arrived at Fort Myers in the evening of the fifth of January.

Here we found one family, residing in an old dilapidated building or hut which had been used or abused by its former occupants to such an extent that windows and doors were quite superfluous. Mr. M: Penathan and family really appeared as though they had been the victims not only of the rebellion, but of most every other misfortune which could afflict a family in this charming and healthy climate. From Mr. M: Penathan we obtained horses, and with him as our guide, went to Ostero Bay, stopping on our way at the famous "Billy Bowley's Spring" situated about one mile east of Fort Myers, and one half mile south of the river. This spring was a favorite resort of the Chieftain whose name it bears, and his braves. The water is warm, and impregnated with sulphur but not so strongly as to be disagreeable to the taste. I have heard that its waters have been pronounced by physicians, to contain properties particularly adapted to cases of a scrofulous character.

The country bordering on the river is low and has a sandy soil resting upon a base of solid lime rock; immediately upon the river the soil has a depth of two or three feet, but lessens in depth as you go south, until at Ostero Bay the rock protrudes upon the surface. The growth of pine also diminished in the same ratio, and the trees which are from twelve to fifteen inches in diameter at the river at the Bay are scarcely more than three or four.

Immediately on my arrival at Tampa, I sought an interview with Captain O. B. Ireland 99<sup>th</sup> U.S. I. then in command of the Post, and solicited from him such information as he might possess, in relation to the several topics embraced in my order. So far as the negroes were concerned, he represented them as doing well, even better than the whites; there was no suffering among them for want of food or clothing, and they found plenty of labor at fair prices; none are dependent upon the Government, for either full or partial support. The people generally, he represented as exceedingly disloyal, and disposed in every way to oppress and annoy those of union sentiments. This he believed to be the case, not only with residents of Tampa, but of the country around for miles. Although there were some few who entertained a feeling of loyalty to the Government, yet they were silenced and kept in entire subjection by the arrogant and tyrannical power of those whose course had been identified with the rebellion. This ostracism and enmity was so intense, that the loyal inhabitants were not only shut out from all society, but some of them were pursued with murderous intent, representing that there was no safety for a Union man to walk the streets, or be found alive in the highway by these men. To corroborate his views of the state of feeling among the people toward the Government

and its supporters, he introduced a Mr. Jacks, who was represented as Deputy U. S. Marshal of the District and perfectly familiar with the people in this whole section of the state.

Mr. Jacks representations differed with Captain Irelands only in regard to the intensity of the feelings and intentions of these people. Mr. Jacks spoke of them as actuated by the most malignant intentions, and instanced his own case as an illustration of their murderous designs; he said that he was hunted by that class of men day and night, and upon more than one occasion had barely escaped the assassins bullet. These representations were too highly colored to gain entire credence without some proof; consequently while we were sitting in our room, busily writing, with the door open upon the street, and in full view to passers by, about ten o'clock in the evening of Decemb. 19<sup>th</sup> we heard the reports of three pistol shots but a short distance from our hotel. Immediately after, Captain Ireland and Mr. Jacks entered our room apparently much excited, and inquired of us if we heard those reports, and informed us that an attempt was made upon the life of Mr. Jacks, when they returned shots with the unknown hidden assassin and instead of ferreting out the would be murderer, hurried to inform us of the alarming state of affairs. This trick was too patent to impose upon our credulity

and we contented ourselves by obtaining from them the names of the men whom they believed to be the most unrelenting rebels, and who would have few scruples to murder an active union man for his devotion to the Government. I have no criticism to make upon such conduct, believing that I will suggest its own to every intelligent mind. The next day, we visited several of these men, and found them quietly engaged in their business. Without informing them of the object of our visit, or giving them the least hint as to our intentions, we readily drew them into conversation in regard to all these topics suggested by the war. They readily acknowledged that their sympathies and efforts had been with the rebellion, and that the decision had been made for all time that the North and South must live together under one Government, and that to attempt again to resist the power of the General Government by force of arms, would be the height of folly, and that in their opinion, there was no intention, hopes or expectations among that class of people who were identified with the rebellion, of ever again resisting the will of Government by other means than those allowed by the constitution and laws of the country. Most of these people owned a few slaves before the War, and several of them expressed themselves as glad that the system was abolished, but had some fears that before the negroes

and whites become familiar with the system of free labor, the negroes would occasion much trouble, and believed that the colored laborers were, and would be, too unreliable to justify any large operations in planting. They universally scouted the idea that those who had been identified with the rebellion, had any intention to, or did persecute any man merely because of his difference of political opinion or action, and in the several instances which we cited of such apparent purpose, said it was entirely for personal or other reasons than political. They deprecated any such action for any reason preferring that the law should step in and arrange all public and private griefs in its accustomed mode. Although we gave them several opportunities by our inquiries, to manifest somewhat of that intense hatred to the Government and to those who were of Union sentiments that they had been represented as holding yet we failed to detect any ground for those highly colored statements which had been made. We neither saw nor heard of any murdered victims of rebellious hate, no bands of roaming desperadoes roaming through the country for their prey, which we should have a right to expect as the result of such a state of society as was represented to us, in fact nothing to excite the fears or discourage an honest and courageous man.



One class of men inform us that the secessionists are as bad as ever, that they are thirsting for the blood of union men merely because of their sympathy and adherence to the Government. The abused class represent themselves as having succumbed to the will of the Government and now claim to be Union men, desiring that all animosities shall be banished and an era of good feeling established. Men of both of these classes are to be found in different parts of this whole district.

With these two, diverse, representations of facts, what is the truth in the matter, or what is the explanation of such a diversity of opinion? I might content myself with having given the statements of each party and leave the actual condition of public feeling for inference, but a word or two may serve to explain. During the War, many of the Union men of the district were forced into the rebel service; others fled from their homes and were hunted like wild beasts, even by their own former neighbors, their families in many instances rudely insulted; their houses burned, and their names made a hissing and a byword among all those who espoused the rebellion. Others again, volunteered into the Federal Service, and for this have suffered the loss of property at the hands of their neighbors. On the return of these men to their

places, they are freshly reminded of the indignities they have suffered, and neither can nor even will forgive the Agents of their misfortunes. Their hatred is so intense that even if their neighbor should change his views and feelings, it would be exceedingly difficult for them to recognize it. Unquestionably this state of feeling conduces more or less to misrepresentation and exaggeration.

On the other hand, those who were secessionists, were the ruling class, always occupying places of trust and power; the control of the public policy was vested in them, as a class they are the more intelligent; the War ending in their defeat and impoverishment, with an experience which poorly qualifies them as a producing class, without the power to dictate to and control labor.

They understand very well, that position and power must inevitably come to those who uphold the Government, and if they do not feel themselves in harmony with it will conceal their opposition to it; they applaud President Johnson and point to their support of him, as indicative of their fealty to the Government. Although they confess the utter defeat of the doctrine of State rights by the War, yet their abandonment of that corner-stone of the rebellion is not so radical but they yet despise the men who chose to sustain the Government against their state. Between these two parties

crimination begets recrimination and all their difficulties, either present or past. I am of the opinion that more serious results are to be apprehended from a collision of these two classes in the settlement of their personal grievances, than from any effort of any class to subvert or resist the Government.

Notwithstanding the most extravagant predictions made to us that we should find the people hostile and repulsive wherever we should go, we were in no single instance rudely treated or made to feel that our presence was unwelcome. Indeed so far as the hostility of the people to Northern men is concerned, I would as soon live in any part of Southern Florida as in the City of Washington or Boston.

The people generally express themselves as hearty in favor of an emigration from the North, and I think this feeling honestly arises from a conviction of the necessity of institutions of learning going hand in hand with the system of free labor to develop the resources of the country. They expect or effect to have, an appreciation of the superior industry, skill and enterprise of the people of the North.

In seeking information we have made our inquiries of men of all classes and pursuits in life. The means of disseminating information in this district are so extremely limited for want of Post-Office

and communications one part with another, that the most absurd and extravagant statements circulate and become adopted as true, for want of contradiction.

Another misfortune for these people themselves, is the fact that their former education was such as to lead them to place great confidence in such newspapers as the "New York World", "News" and "Metropolitan Record"; I believe that these papers exert more pernicious influence, and tend to delay the growth of loyal sentiment more than any other cause. In all such cases we have endeavored, temperately, yet firmly and kindly to point out their mistake, and to show them that all the misrepresentations of these papers are made, like the wares and fabrics manufactured, for a market, and like the great medicines of the day are purchased because their buyer is under the mistaken apprehension that they will affect a cure.

*raising*  
The principal business of the people in this District, except at Key West, is raising stock, all other branches of industry are merely incidental; they do not even pursue agriculture sufficiently to produce the corn for their own use.

At all the places on our route across the State we found it exceedingly difficult to obtain food for our horses and several parties informed us that they were obliged to haul their corn from sixty to ninety-five miles, paying from \$2<sup>25</sup>/<sub>100</sub> to \$2<sup>50</sup>/<sub>100</sub> per bushel.

at the place where obtained. This arises not so much because there are no hands suitable for the production of the crop as from the exclusiveness with which the people are obliged to devote themselves to the care of the cattle. One of the principal owners informed us that he was obliged "to live with his stock, and that he had but little time to be at home with his family or to give any attention to improvements or conveniences about his house" - when we visited his house we found a part of his story to be but too true, for I doubt whether Adam and Eva had fewer comforts or conveniences for housekeeping than his family. After very thorough inquiries of the most intelligent Stock owners both east and west of the Mississimonee River, in regard to the probable number of cattle at present grazing through this District, I place the estimate at 150,000 head. When an entire stock is sold, the ruling price at present is six dollars per head; this would make a total valuation of \$900,000. - Selected cattle for the Havana market bring from fourteen to eighteen dollars in gold at the point of shipment; large numbers are shipped to Savannah and Charleston. The cattle are generally small the best of them netting no more than five or six hundred pounds. - Of one lot of Two hundred and fifty which I saw put on board the steamer and bound for the Havana market I do not think the net average could be more than

Three hundred and fifty pounds.

Habits & Manners.

To speak of the habits and manners of living of the people, and represent them truthfully, might be considered a delicate undertaking, especially as we enjoyed or rather endured their hospitality on many occasions. To say that they have no schools or churches is enough to indicate the general condition, but this would be far from giving a correct idea of the extent of their destitution. In the first place, the men seem to have extremely limited ideas as to providing, and in the second place, the women appear to have no idea how to use what little is provided.

Food.

The principal food is pork, cornbread, hominy and Hayti potatoes, and what these articles naturally lack in repulsiveness to a refined taste, is fully made up in the abominable manner in which they are cooked and served.

To cook a piece of meat with them means to fry it to the consistency of a piece of dry hide, and made about as palatable and digestible as live oak chips. The corn-bread is usually made (the process I have never learned) so as to be about as delicious and gratifying to the taste as an equal quantity of baked sawdust. The hominy is prepared by scalding with hot water, and the potatoes by boiling until the vegetable matter bears to the water a proportion of about 1 to 100.

Grease is used excessively as food, indeed so repulsive is the manner of cooking, that to a person of refined

habits and taste nothing but the direst necessity and a deep sense of moral obligation to preserve his own life, could induce him to undergo such a diet.

People living on the Gulf coast live much better; the art of cooking receiving much more attention, and the articles of food being more numerous; but in the interior if we judge of the civilization of the inhabitants by their proficiency in the acts of cooking and living generally, I fear they would take rank but little above the Savages. I have frequently sat down to the table when my olfactory and stomach have joined in a united protest against the task before them, and have only quieted them by the plea of necessity.

Houses. The log-house or hut is universal and might make a very comfortable residence. They are usually raised two or three feet from the ground by props, which allows of a free circulation of air as well as hogs and other animals under the house. In a majority of instances they have no windows, and comparatively few houses are shinked up; so there is about as free circulation through as under the house.

There is very little pretension to neatness, and cleanliness of person as rare as neatness of house. Their clothing is of home manufacture, and in many of its peculiarities bears a striking resemblance to their houses and style of living. In a word their habits and manner of living, border as closely upon

nature as possible, and seem to repulse all of the arts and refinements of cultivated taste.

The land around Tampa for a distance of six or eight miles is poor and sandy, with little or no lime mixed in the soil. As you near to the Alafia river however, you find some very good soil or at any rate it appears so. In this country there is no system of Agriculture at all, and very little actual experience in farming from which a person can judge of the productiveness of the soil or its peculiar adaptation to different crops. It seems almost as new as when it first came from the hand of the creator. Industry and science have not as yet been applied to demonstrate its capacity or peculiar fitness. The population is very sparse, with very limited means for the diffusion of knowledge, even if one has an experience which might be valuable to others to know.

On the Manatee River, in the County of the same name, there are some valuable tracts of land suitable for the cultivation of cotton, cane or fruits. On the North side of this river, about eight miles from its mouth is situated the plantation of Messrs. Davis and Coffield comprising between three and four thousand acres. This was before the war a sugar estate, principally, only sufficient corn being raised for the consumption of the hands employed. We were informed that the annual product of sugar on this



plantation amounted to about three hundred hogshead, of one thousand pounds each, and from eight to ten thousand gallons of syrup. I believe it is calculated that the syrup pays for the manufacture of the Sugar after the cane is cut. There are quite a number of Orange, Lemon and Limetrees upon the place, and they seem to be flourishing, notwithstanding for the last three or four years, no care has been bestowed upon them. The cultivation of the plantation is now entirely abandoned. That the cultivation of Orange would be a successful and profitable business here, I have no doubt. The soil is unusually good, and the centre of this plantation being elevated fifty-one feet above the river, the whole could easily be drained by a few ditches or drains.

There is upon the estate a large mansion, built of concrete, with spacious rooms and a verandah extending around the building, connected with is a substantial cistern built of brick capable of containing several thousand gallons of water.

The quarters (formerly occupied by the slaves of the plantation) about two hundred in number, still remain, though in a dilapidated condition; indeed, the mansion once the abode of refinement and luxury, seems to be fast giving way to the ravages of time and the elements.

Manatee.

Manatee, situated upon the opposite bank of the river, and ten miles below, comprises about

thirty buildings, some of which are very neat and tasteful in appearance. They formerly had a school at this place, with about sixty scholars, but the War scattering the inhabitants, it was abandoned and is not yet reestablished. The country between the Manatee and Passé's Creek is generally low, level and sandy, a large portion being subject to inundation during the wet season and of little account for farming purposes. The pine is of a small growth and too diminutive for extensive lumber operations. The

~~Palmetto~~ Palmetto, bastard Palmetto covers a very large part of the surface of the country with its huge roots, many of which are from four to six inches in diameter; this is one of the greatest obstacles in the cleaning of the land for cultivation. Their immense size and the firmness with which they are held to the ground by thousand of fibres running down into the ground and holding the root fast, makes it almost impossible to plough the soil until they are eradicated by hand. It may be that a very strong steel plough similar to the Prairie breaking plough with a sharp coulter with from four to six yoke of oxen, would be sufficient to cut them in pieces and turn them out. The root possesses strong tanning properties, but whether sufficiently to render them available or valuable, is still to be determined by practical test.

The Manatee River abounds with fish

and oysters of very superior delicacy. Dew, quail and ducks are here found in abundance. I have often thought that these beneficent gifts of nature instead of being used by the people for their benefit were abused by depending upon them too entirely for their subsistence. Instead of devoting themselves to the cultivation of the soil, and relying upon the fruits of their labors, they are made an inducement to indolence rather than a stimulant to a superior style of living.

At Shaws Point on the south side and just at the mouth of the Manatee River, is a ridge or bank of shells of from eighty to one hundred rods in length, and from twenty to forty feet in height. How they came there, and especially to be put in that shape, no one can tell. It is thought by some that this must have been the favorite fishery of the Indians or others before them, and that here they came to obtain their supply of oysters. Whatever the cause while shrouded in mystery, I prefer to credit it to nature until history or science shall demonstrate it to be the work of hands long since returned to the dust.

The surface of the country from Plase's creek to the Caloosahatchee River is similar in character to that between the Manatee and Plase's creek, low and level, and a large part of it subject to inundation during the wet season.

There are numerous ponds or sinks into which the water settles and constitutes the supply for cattle feeding upon these ranges during the dry season. There are also numerous swamps of from twenty to two hundred acres with a growth of cypress, but generally too diminutive for any thing except fence posts.

In crossing the Peninsula from Tampa to Fort Jackson there are three rivers to be crossed, viz: the Alafia, Passaic and Kissimmee.

The Alafia is fordable at all seasons of the year. Passaic creek at Fort Meade only in the dry season. When we forded it the water was about four and one half feet deep. A bridge spans the river about one hundred feet in length, and a crossing can be effected at any time. At Fort Kissimmee we were obliged to swim our horses. The water here is about twenty two feet deep, and the river about one hundred and twenty five feet wide; the current is quite strong, the waters black and forbidding in appearance, indeed this is the most villainous looking stream we found in our journey.

On arriving at the river, we first encountered several large black snakes, which we dispatched without any great delay; then upon the opposite side lay several alligators whose hideous looks added but little to the beauty of the scenery.

They seemed to understand however that their

presence was anything but agreeable to us, and immediately left for more quiet locations up the river. His good fortune would have it, a party of "Cowhunters" met us at the river after we had made two unsuccessful attempts to swim our horses, and very kindly helped us through our difficulty. The act of swimming horses across a river was new business to us and the difficulties seemed to have the advantage of us; but the ease with which these men of the woods and prairie accomplished the fact showed us how valuable a little experience may be to a man in a new country. The old Military corduroy road on the East side of the river for a distance of nearly a mile was covered with water to a depth of from two to four feet and upon each side of the corduroy, the mud was to an unknown depth, so that, had we succeeded in crossing our horses, we should have found our difficulties but first commenced. The probabilities are, that, had we not been fortunate enough to meet this party, the Government would have lost two horses and we should have had the pleasure of walking two hundred miles over the prairie and through the woods. The water was considered by this party quite low, and yet it was nearly even with the bank of the river except at the crossing. During the wet season it is from three to six feet higher, and Mr. Parker, one of the party, said he had found

the water in the channel of the river at the crossing, thirty feet deep by actual measurement; that however was an unusual depth. During the wet seasons generally the river overflows and forms a sheet of water from twenty-five to thirty miles in width. Owing to this annual overflow, these lands are useless for purposes of cultivation and can be only redeemed by some comprehensive system of drainage and it is at yet uncertain whether there is sufficient fall from Lake Okechobee to the East and West coast to make any system practicable.

East of the Kissimmee is a vast Prairie from ten to forty miles in width from East to West and upwards of a hundred miles in length.

Upon this Prairie are feeding thousand of cattle and deer and wild-turkeys we found in great abundance. While crossing the Prairie from Fort Kissimmee to the road running from Fort Drum to Melville (a distance of about fifteen miles) scarcely a mile was passed without seeing from ten to twenty deer, and turkeys without number. I believe a good hunter might have taken fifty deer within the distance of fifteen miles that day. There are but three points where the Kissimmee can be crossed with horses; the river is with these three exceptions skirted on one or both sides with a marsh which prevents any approach to it.

Vast quantities of water-lettuce are continually floating down upon the surface of the river and occasionally gets clogged and makes it extremely difficult to force even a small boat through the dense mass.

The country, from the Kissimmee North to Lake Popokukaliga and from thence through the interior of Orange County to Lake Harney, is generally low, level and sandy with few encouraging indications to an agriculturist. The forests and swamps recommend themselves to the lumbermen far more by the number, than the size of the trees, for a distance of upwards, of seventy-five miles from the Kissimmee towards New Smyrna, the number of trees suitable for lumber was so considerable as hardly to be worth mentioning. Some idea of the value of this country for lumbering purposes may be gathered from the fact that in this whole district there are at present but two saw-mills, and the total capacity of these two mills is not over 10,000 feet per day. One of these is at Tampa, the other at Burton in Polk Co. One however, is in process of erection in Mosquito Lagoon by a Land and Emigration Company from the North. - On Mosquito Lagoon borders a narrow strip of excellent land of from two to six miles in width; here the pine timber is much larger and offers some inducements to that class of labor.

New Smyrna

New Smyrna and vicinity, two hundred years ago, had a population of thirteen thousand souls; now, there are three families - and two of these are only awaiting a suitable opportunity, to remove elsewhere.

Dunlawton

Dunlawton about eighteen miles north of New-Smyrna in the Lagoon, comprises an estate of about one thousand acres of superior land for cultivation.

Previous to the Indian wars, this was cultivated as a Sugar plantation, but those disturbance broke up the settlements and the lands have now grown up a dense mass of palmetto and brush. A sugar house about 150 x 40 feet still stands and contains some of the Machinery.

From New-Smyrna to St Augustine the face of the country is the same as elsewhere about one eternal plain - the only considerable elevations of good land found during our whole route over-land from Gainesville to Tampa, and from Tampa across the Peninsula to St Augustine, were the one in the vicinity of Brookville in Hernando Co. and at Palusea Creek in St Johns Co. about twenty five miles from St. Augustine.

Education.

of the means of education in these counties but little can be said. - Outside of Tampa, Manatee, and Key West, there is not an organized school or church in the whole district. The



population in all these countries, is exceedingly small and widely scattered. On the main land of Monroe county there are but three families, one at Fort Myers on the South Side of the Caloosahatchee River, one about forty miles up the river not far from Fort Thompson and one on Pavilion They down on the Gulf coast. The difficulties of establishing and maintaining schools in any of the other countries arises from this same cause.

Yet the people are not entirely insensible to the value and importance of these institutions, for in approaching them upon this subject, they generally express regrets that they cannot avail themselves of educational facilities, and in most instances express a desire for a northern emigration to supply these wants.

The two Schools at Tampa accommodate about eighty scholars and are primary in character. If scholars advance to the higher branches of an English Education, they must go to some Academy at a great distance. At Key West they have three schools, two for the whites and one for the colored people, accommodating about 160 pupils. One of the most noticeable facts in the colored school is the rapidity with which the younger pupils learn. I believe it is conceded even by those who have no little prejudice in favor of the superiority of the white race, that the colored children advance

quite as rapidly as the white children in their first lessons. It is not so however with those of advanced age; those from sixteen to twenty years of age do not seem to have that power of application, and learn less rapidly. The Schools are supported by tuition, and from conversation with the negroes, I find that the expenditure is quite as cheerful to them as to the whites.

Churches.

At Tampa there are three churches though without regular service at all of them. At Key West there are five churches, one of which is for the colored people. My observation and experience with the people of this district has thoroughly convinced me, that, compare the negro with the whites, in reference to his desire for education, his respect for religion, or his disposition to lead an industrious life, he is in none of these respects their inferior. In coming to this conclusion, I will be frank enough to say, it was not without overcoming a strong predisposition to a different result.

Disposition of the whites and negroes to labor.

One of the most general complaints among the whites is, that "the negro want work". I have investigated the ground of this complaint in many cases and generally have arrived at the conclusion from facts ascertained. Either that the employer wanted the labor for less than its value, or the negro could do better at some other employment than that offered. While I was at Tampa, the

same complaint was made by several parties, and I had occasion to test the justice of the charge. I desired to employ a man to accompany me to assist in sailing the boat, cooking &c but was able to find but two men disengaged and they said their labor was worth \$1.50 per day with plenty of work. I advised them to remain at home and accept of the certain employments and concluded to work myself.

The fact is the aversion to labor is quite as much in the mind of the white man as the colored, and in the course of quite a long conversation with one of the most intelligent men of this section in regard to the country, institutions, climate &c he insisted that the long continued heat of the summer produced a lassitude, an unavoidable disposition to physical exercises which neither habit nor any mental stimulant or association could overcome. That such a theory is a libel upon the climate is evident from the fact that in this same climate in Southern Florida are as active handy a set of men as are found in any northern latitude. The men who tend stock in the ranges are continually moving and no class of men have a greater amount of physical exercise than they. Action, physical exercise, are the requirements of their vocation and qualifies them for its endurance. Indolence and success in stock raising are incompatible, and in this branch of business necessary stimulates to

industry and in return industry gives success and vindicates the climate from the charge of being the cause of indolence. Considering that the negro is set free from an odious system of compulsory labor in a country without any system of industry, it would not be at all strange if some of them should indulge the erroneous idea that it was a liberation from labor itself. - They have learned however, that the boon conferred upon them is the right to choose the kind of labor and enjoy its fruits and not to "reap where they have not sowed".

Negroes peaceable  
disposed.

The negroes are almost universally peaceable disposed and I believe have really a higher regard for the law and civil authority than a majority of the whites. - At New West where considerable numbers of the negroes have congregated, I was informed by the Mayor and Marshal that they were generally peaceable and occasioned them much less trouble than the same number of whites, and that but for the whiskey-shops they would be far more orderly than they now are. At Tampa Captain Harding informed me that during his stay at that place, but one or two complaints had been made of their insubordination, and upon examination they proved to be trivial matters, and but for a prejudice on the part of the complainants would not probably have been made at all.

Orange Orchards.

of the Orange orchards, there are three on

the Gulf Coast, and one upon the Atlantic worthy of notice - one at Old Tampa of about two hundred trees owned by Mr. Phillips, one bordering upon Sarasota Bay of about three hundred, with upwards of an hundred fine lemon trees owned by Dr. Suell, and one at Fort Myers of between four and five hundred orange lemon and lime trees.

Of the one at Old Tampa, I can say nothing from observation, but from representations made to us, I should judge it must be a valuable one. - That of Dr. Suell's we visited and obtained between four and five hundred of the most delicious oranges I ever tasted. The man who has it in charge, pays no attention to it except to gather the fruit as it is called for, and even that labor he seems to consider a peculiar hardship. When we were there in December and again in January (11<sup>th</sup>) the Lemon trees were bent to the ground with the immense loads of fruits, and many of the trees were nearly ruined by the limbs being broken off under their great weight, and yet the ground was nearly covered with as nice looking fruit as yet hung upon the trees. The Orange trees were not so heavily laden and many of the trees had been injured by the gale of October last. During the last five years the trees have had no care, and many of them are standing monuments to the indolence and stupidity of the present occupant.

The grove at Fort Myers has been neglected by the proprietor whoever he may be and sadly abused by the temporary residents at that place, for the last two years; with a reasonable amount of care this might be made one of the most beautiful, as well as remunerative places I have seen in Florida, the trees are all young and thrifty and the soil in this vicinity seems to be particularly adapted to the growth of this fruit, and notwithstanding the want of care and hard usage these trees have experienced, they give promise of being exceedingly fruitful in a year or two. The Orange tree bears about the seventh year from the seed, and the third from the graft.

The grove upon the East coast is situated about thirty miles south of New Smyrna, and is reported to be the most flourishing and valuable one in the State. It is owned by an old man by the name of Dummett who in addition to the raising of Oranges, has tasted the experiment of Miscegenation, the results of which may be seen running about his place with complexions of a color midway between charcoal and chalk. I merely speak of this fact to indicate the character of some of the men to whom has been entrusted the settlement and developements of some parts of this country. If this was an isolated case, it would hardly be worth mentioning, but such peculiarities are by

no means rare.

When we take into account that Oranges, Lemons and Limes require water transportation, and that all along the west coast there are numerous places where this fruit may be cultivated with very little labor or expense, and that New Orleans and St Louis are the best accessible markets for these productions, it would seem that not many years could elapse before a thriving population should skirt the coast from Tampa Bay to Cape Romano. I think the country bordering upon the Manatee and Alachua Rivers offers more than ordinary inducements for such enterprises, for beside having sufficient water for boats of five or six feet draught, the land is richer and better adapted to their growth than upon Peace Creek or generally immediately on the coast.

Of the productions of this fruit I could get no positive information, for those who have these orchards never have taken any exact count of the number raised upon a single tree, and their estimates vary so largely, that but little reliable data could be obtained to form an idea of the general average. Their estimates would vary from 1000 to 10,000 Oranges per tree. I saw no tree which had upon it as many as the latter, though in several instances I should judge there were upon the tree as many as 3000. -

I find the same difficulty in getting accurate information in regard to other productions throughout the country. The people never weigh or measure anything except in delivering to a purchase, and then it is generally done with great regard to their own protection. The idea of pursuing any system in agriculture has never yet even entered the mind of most people. They know that selected cattle are worth from ten to twenty dollars a head, but have no idea as to how many could be raised on any given amount of territory. They know that Hayti Potatoes grow when they take the precaution to set the plant in the soil, and that after they are raised, are good for food, but as to the quantity raised, or value, can give no definitive idea, simply for the reason that they have none. They have not accustomed themselves to notice any such particulars and consequently their knowledge is as unsatisfactory to themselves as it is unreliable to others. This peculiarity is remarkable among all the inhabitants of the interior and is not in all cases confined to want of attention to products of the soil, for in one instance in making the inquiry of a man as to the number of his children, he actually named his fingers and then made the enumeration before he could give a decided answer.

Fisheries.

The Fisheries of Southern Florida promise



at no distant day to attract the attention of many of the hardy Fishermen of the North. In the vicinity of Charlotte Harbor we found several parties engaged in taking Fish especially for the Havana Market, they numbered in all about twenty five men.

We visited two of them and they imparted to us such information as led us to believe that the business was to them a very profitable one.

Messrs. Dewey, Bennett and Co. from Connecticut were located at Punta Rosa and employed eighteen men, and although they had been there but five or six weeks, had succeeded in taking and curing upwards of 1800 Quintals of Fish, which in the Havana Market brought between six and seven dollars per quintal in gold. They employed white men exclusively in their Fishery and paid \$25, to \$30. per month and found.

Besides taking and curing Fish, they also caught large numbers of sharks, from which they extracted the oil - although this was not a prominent part of their business yet it suited to keep the men profitably employed when the weather or other circumstances were unfavorable for taking Fish with the line. With the other parties, there was not that judicious division of labor confining themselves almost exclusively to taking such Fish only as they would find sale for in Havana.

The Mullet is the principal Fish and the Waters of Charlotte Harbor as well as Sarasota and Tampa Bay are completely alive with them. The tarpon, Jewish Redfish and many other kinds are also found in great numbers.

Oysters of fine flavor are also found here in great abundance. Upon Indian River also are found immense quantities of Mullet, Turtle and Oysters. In Piscayne Bay are found large numbers of Turtle.

Dade County. There are some distinguishing peculiarities about Dade County, which have induced me to speak of this part of the County separately. The other Counties except Monroe have such a general similarity, in climate, soil and productions, that whatever may be said upon these points in regard to one, may apply generally, with equal justice to them all. By far the larger part of this county on the mainland is known as the Everglades, the available land comprising a narrow strip from three to fifteen miles in width and extending from Hillboro Inlet to Cape Sable.

There are numerous Keys or Islands comprised within the County limits and upon them the principal part of the inhabitants are to be found; they number probably about two hundred souls. Their principal occupation is wrecking, but when not engaged in this, they employ themselves in taking sponges, fish and turtles. They are entirely destitute

of all educational institutions, but yet as a general rule are a more intelligent class of people than can be found in the interior of the Peninsula. Their vocation brings them in contact with people from all parts of the world and this keeps alive among them a spirit of inquiry, and they do not sink into that lethargy which seems to take so strong a hold upon those living inland. There are but three colored people in the country and they are so circumstanced that any interference of the Bureau is entirely unnecessary. Two of them are the wives of white men, and one is the son of white parents. We did not stop to inquire the reason of this state of things but simply contented ourselves with a knowledge of the facts as related to us by the parties themselves.

The history of this section of the State has frequently been written in blood and during the last Indian War, the most cruel and barbarous murders were committed by the Seminoles without a single premonitory warning.

Many families were entirely annihilated, while others barely escaped in the darkness of night from the clutch of the infuriated savage. These savages have been reduced since then very materially by removal to the west, and little or no apprehension is now felt on their account.

Climate of Duval  
Co.

The first and most noticeable charac-

teristic of this section is the climate; beyond all question it is the most equable of any in the United States and by many travellers is pronounced superior to that of Italy. During our stay here from the 27<sup>th</sup> of January to the 14<sup>th</sup> of February the Thermometer varied but little from 74° at eight o'clock in the morning and about the same at sunset, but what makes even a higher temperature endurable, is the fact that about eight o'clock in the morning an exhilarating breeze commences and continues until towards evening from the Bay, and in the evening returns from the land so that there is a continual cooling process going on and a person at no time feels uncomfortable warm or suffers from the cold. Our Guide had lived at the "Hunting Ground" several years and he testified that in Midsummer he had never suffered any more with the heat than while with us. There was no day when it was warm enough to endanger a mans health in any out of door occupation. The flowers were in full bloom, the birds - as lively and gay, and vegetable growth as fresh and green as in New England in the month of June. It really seemed at times as though the season had changed, and instead of being winter was suddenly converted into summer. We have found vegetables flourishing as rapidly as in summer, and nothing whatever

to remind us of the season of the year.

Surface of the country in Dade County is divided into Pine Barrens, Low Prairie and Hammock. The Pine Barrens seem to constitute about 4/10. Low Prairie 3/10 and Hammock about 1/10 of the available surface. The Pine Barrens are at first sight rather repulsive - the surface of the "Hunting Ground" is entirely a rotten limestone with a honey-comb surface - the trees are small and scattered, with a knotty and gnarled growth which with their diminutiveness renders them entirely unfit for lumbering purposes.

I really can see no useful purpose they can be put to except in building cabins and fences and for the manufacture of Serpentine and Tar. There have been several attempts to manufacture lumber, but we were informed that the general result was a complete failure. As far North as the Miami River the rock is covered with a thin layer of sand, and this increases in depth as you proceed in that direction. Where this appears, there also comes a vegetable growth, a little grass, a great deal of knalt and an unwelcome amount of the bastard Palmetto. There are occasionally sinks or depressions in this lime-rocks where the vegetable growth is very luxuriant. These places seem specially adapted to the growth of the Panama or in fact any of the tropical fruits.

Soil of the  
Low Prairie.

The Low Prairie are by far the most inviting to the skill and industry of the country. They vary in extent from 500 to 5,000 acres and appear to have been formed by the washing of vegetable matter and lime from the Everglades. They are generally very long and narrow, and make their head near the Everglades. The soil bordering upon the Pine Barrens is from six to twelve inches deep and towards the centre of the tract has an unknown depth. Mr. Addison at the 'Hunting Grounds' informed us that he had several times tried to touch the bottom on several of these tracts by forcing a pole down when the soil was softened by water in the wet season, and had reached from ten to fifteen feet, without being able to strike the rock. The soil appears to contain a very large proportion of vegetable matter with a liberal quantity of lime. That it is a rich fertile soil is evident from the immense growth of grass which appears. The only difficulty in making them available for cultivation is in draining them; from a somewhat careful examination of several of them, I believe that a system of drainage and dyking would succeed in reclaiming some of them for profitable cultivation.

Hammocks.

The Hammocks are small in extent varying from forty to one hundred and sixty acres, considerably higher than the barrens and covered with

dense growth of wood, such as red, white and live oak, mastie, wild fig, magnolia &c. The soil upon these is extremely fertile, producing sugarcane, cotton, tobacco of superior quality, vegetables of nearly all kinds and fruits of superior flavor. The Hammocks are so small in proportion of this country, that unless the Low Prairies are brought under cultivation, the country would support but a small population from its products.

Production of  
Dad. C.  
Kourtee,

The productions of this country are very limited, but sufficient experiments have been made to indicate its adaptation to the culture of all the tropical fruits and plants. Here is found a root called by the Indians Kourtee resembling somewhat in shape the Mangel Wotzel or Puta Baga. It contains a large amount of starch and formerly large quantities were manufactured for the Northern Market. The process of manufacture is very similar to that of Potato Starch.

At one time it had a high reputation among many of the manufacturers of cotton goods and was eagerly sought for. The Indian wars however, broke up the establishments where it was made, and the uncertainty of supply led the cotton manufacturers to abandon its use. There are several small establishments however, on the Miami and other fresh-water streams where it is made to great profit. It readily commands from

ten to twelve cents per pound at Key West, where it is preferred to other kinds for the laundry, besides large quantities being used for food. We visited one establishment where three hands were employed, using the rudest of machinery and averaging 1000 pounds per week. Six bands of the roots produce one barrel of 196 pounds of Hards. It is very hardy and grows upon the poorest soil, and the supply seems almost inexhaustible.

Another plant found here and which grows with astonishing rapidity even upon the poorest soil is Sisal Hemp. The value of this plant is in the fibre it produces; it has already a high reputation in the market, and only requires some feasible mode of separating the fibre from the vegetable matter to make its production one of the most profitable on the continent. In appearance the Sisal Hemp resembles the century plant and flourishes even as high as the 30<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude but the general opinion is that the growth is very much retarded even if the strength of the fibre is not injured by the frost. In this section of the country it is beyond frost and continues its growth throughout the year.

The leaves or blades grow from four to six feet in length and from four to eight inches in width, yielding from one to one and a half ounces of clear fibre per leaf. It matures in three years and then shoots up a staff about twenty or twenty five feet



and from the branches of this Staff ripen hundreds of young plants which drop down and immediately take root and grow, despite the most unfavorable circumstances. They are also propagated from suckers shooting up from the parent root. It is a plant which resists the draught beyond all calculation. When corn and vegetables are entirely subjugated, this seems as fresh and healthy as ever. The fact that it attains such growth in such poor soil and resists the draught so successfully, shows that a large part of its nourishment is derived from the atmosphere. From the indications of its growth upon the keys and main land, I should judge that one ton (of 2,000 pounds) per acre would be a reasonable estimate. During my tour I became acquainted with a gentleman who is interested in the cultivation of the plant in Camprochy and he informed me that he had found the following process for separating the fibre to be successful viz: pass the leaves through two sets of rollers, running the juice into vats, after the juice ferments, immerse the leaves and let them remain from 24 to 48 hours. The juice takes an ascetic state, and when in that state will dissolve both the starch and vegetable matters. Shake and rinse the fibre in clean fresh water, and dry either in the sun or by steam. If this method is successful, it opens this country to a rapid development even by the lowest class of labor.

Process of separating  
the fibre from vegetable  
matters.

Castor Beans

The castor bean from which Castor Oil is manufactured, grows here almost to perfection. The increasing demand for this article and the liberal protection afforded by the Government by a Revenue duty levied upon the importations, commends it to the especial attention of those, who seek the settlement and development of this country.

Fruits of

Oranges, Lemons, Limes, Pananas, Cacao, Nuts, Grapes and in fact all the most delicious of the tropical fruits can be produced here with comparatively little labor. We saw some specimens of very

cotton

fine long staple cotton raised here and were informed by the party who raised it that the yield was far more abundant on a given space than in the favorite locations in South Carolina where the party formerly resided.

Tobacco.

Some samples of Cuba Tobacco were also shown us from which we made some cigars, and the flavor was superior to any I ever used. - Sugar cane, grows upon the Hammock land to a prodigious size and I have no doubt, that should the low prairies be drained, and cultivated for this crop, an immense harvest could be obtained. From the descriptions of Demarara and Barbadoes given by Anthony Proloffe, I should judge that this country is similar in some respects and especially the peculiarities which make them so valuable for the grow of the Sugar crop.

Springs.

There are numerous Springs of fine cool water found in the Hammocks, on the Prairies and also upon the Beach - standing upon the beach at the "Hunting Grounds" you will find numerous Springs boiling up and rippling the waters of the Bay: By placing a barrel or tube over any of the Springs, the water will force itself above the barrel or tube and furnish an inexhaustible supply of as pure fresh water as comes from a Mountain's side. In the Hammocks you will occasionally find an opening to a current of clear running water making its way to the ocean or Bay in its subterraneous passage; numerous fish are in these living streams. Unquestionably these Springs or Streams have their source from the Everglades. In the bed of the Miami River about four miles from its mouth is found one of these Springs, which seems to be strongly impregnated with Iron - by placing a pen-stock over the Spring the water is raised three or four feet above the level of the River and a continual supply furnished. The equally climate, the springs of pure water, and the continual supply of fresh fruits and vegetables throughout all seasons of the year, commend this section to the especial attention of those suffering from pulmonary complaints from all parts of our country. Game is not as abundant as in some other sections, but Deer are found, and the Rivers and creeks abound with Fish.

Insects, Reptiles

Wild Animals.

Although this part of the State offers peculiar inducements, for settlements, yet it is not without its annoyances, for during the entire year Mosquitoes and Sand-Flies seem to vie with each other in their efforts to torment humanity. While we were there in the Winter, they were almost intolerable, and during the summer months are said to be still more numerous and aggressive. To sleep at night without mosquito bar, would be nearly as fruitless as to attempt to fly without wings. In April and May appears a blue head, and a grey fly about the size of a honey bee which attacks cattle and horses with great violence and drives them mad. We were told of several cases where horses had been attacked by a swarm of these insects and killed within three hours. We encountered a few of the grey flies on the sand ridge or 'divide' between Pease's Creek and the Kissimmee River, and so violent was the attack that the blood oozed out of our horses in big drops where bitten or stung. The blue-headed fly is represented as much more venomous than the grey. It is thought by some, that on account of these insects, stock or horses can never be raised in Dade County except by great care during the fly season.

Moccasins and Rattle snakes abound in the Hammocks. Wild cats, Panthers and Bears infest the Hammocks and jungles of the Everglades.

But unquestionably most of these annoyances would disappear or at any rate be very much diminished by a settlement and improvement of the Country. They constitute the general objections to nearly all new countries in a Southern latitude.

The value of this County for general settlement as well as the entire valley of the Kissimmee, embracing millions of acres of the best land in the State, depends entirely upon the feasibility of draining or lowering the waters of Lake Okechobee. It has been ascertained that the fall from the Everglades to Piscague Bay through the channel of the Miami River amounts to six feet nine inches. Could the water of this Lake be reduced that amount, I am inclined to the opinion that Southern Florida would become the Garden of the United States; if the reduction of the Lake is impracticable these lands must remain unfit for cultivation or general settlement, until nature shall accomplish this result by some general upheaval or volcanic action.

Seminole Indians.

We were unable to find any of the Indians; they had been at Key West about two weeks before our arrival at that place, and on reaching the "Big Hunting Grounds" they had a few days before started for their homes through the Everglades. We were informed that they manifest a feeling of friendliness and occasionally come down to the

coast to trade. Their principal article of barter is skins, such as deer, bear and panther; they are not entirely destitute of money, but have learned the value of Greenbacks and use them in their purchases and in adjusting balances. They have also obtained a passion for wrecking, but manage this business somewhat differently from the whites. Instead of putting the cargo into the hands of the Marshal and awaiting the decision of the Court for a decree of salvage, they make their own decree and the cargo is generally considered the salvage. They dress on special occasions like white men, and in some other respects imitate his customs i. e. get drunk and "stick their head in the sand".

Their passion for whiskey is inordinate and the greater misfortune is that there are white men debased enough to pander to their appetite. We found one man here by the name of Mick Sayres or as he is called "French Mike" who keeps a dirty shanty and trades with them and without doubt sells them whiskey. They number about 112 warriors or probably about 600 in all; they live principally upon game, fish, corn and hountee. They still resist the march of civilization among them, and probably in a few years will become entirely extinct as a tribe.

The result of my observation through the District has convinced me that such is the condition

and disposition of the colored people, that there will be but little if any occasion for the interference of the Powers of the Bureau, unless it should be to establish schools and assist them in settling upon Public Lands under the Homestead Bill. The desire to become land owners is almost universal, and according to the provisions of that Bill, they can become so by having a little direction how to proceed, from individuals or officers of the Bureau. I have however counseled them in all instances to hire themselves out for a year or two and save their earnings as far as possible, so as to have some capital to commence with in case they should avail themselves of the provisions of the law. The lands available for actual cultivation are in comparatively small tracts and no general settlement of the Southern part of Florida can ever be effected without first adopting a vast system of drainage to reclaim the country from annual inundations.

Such is the nature of the country that for years the principal part of the labor will be most profitably absorbed in the Fisheries, cultivation of fruits and raising of Stock.

Wherever we have been the people have treated us with kindness, and if in any case their hospitality was limited, it was on account of their destitution of means, rather than any manifest disposition to embarrass

us in the objects of our mission

(Sigs.) Geo F Thompson

Capt. 90<sup>th</sup> Regt. Inf. U.S.A.

Official:

A. A. A. Gen.