

Log Book
of the
OKAHUMKEE
from
Jacksonville
up the
OCKLAWAHA
& back to
Palatka
2nd Month 19th to 24th 1874

Enterprise, Fla.

1874

[Attributed to Martha D. Allen (1827-1900);

also associated with Martha H. Holmes]

9.30 AM. Cast off and headed up the St. Johns; temperature about 30°, wind nearly north; weather dull with a hope of improvement; spirits as good as could be expected.

9.35 Passed sail boat on larboard side going South, with an ash [?] breeze, 9.36 blew off some steam and corrected map. 9.46 Captain put on travelling hat & the Professor took to mathmatizing the sunrises of the Peninsula. The Governor is interested in talking with a fellow passenger.

10.45 Nearing Mandarin, the Scribe knitting, Professor still deep, though showing signs of a pause.

At 12 M. The Captain takes a recline on one of the new green cushions of the salon. The Governor, erect & dignified sits by the door looking at the scenery and listening to the Reader while she interests us all in the lively descriptions of Florida experiences given by the ready pen wielded by Harriet Beecher's toe [Stowe]. The Governor's daughter is fondling [?] on her uncle, the Captain, and carrying an occasional message from him to some one of the company. The Captain's 7/8 & the Scribe are both knitting.

12.20 P.M. met the "Starlight" going South.

12.38 Passed Hibernia & the Professor thereupon took to the couch.

1 P.M. are passing Magnolia. The Reader is reclining, the Captain & Professor having each had his turn on the green cushion. Dinner table nearly set.

1.19 Dinner bell rang as Green Cove Springs were approached. Dinner satisfactory. Green Cove Spring was visited, a sulphur water flow of some force, very clear. Greenish bottom, bad smell; those who tasted made faces in describing it. Captain took a nap, the rest ought to have done so but didn't all.

3 P.M met the Florence coming down from Tocoj. Temperature 55°; Wind northern, weather getting more pleasant as the day wears on. 3.40 Stopped at Picolata to unload corn.

4.30 Nearly opposite Tocoj, met the Volusia bound South. 4.54 Clear streak of sky in the west, nearly the prettiest thing out to-day. Most of the party doing up some writing.

5.11 passed the "Lollie Boy" much to the joy of brother Ebony down stairs whose tickling tickled the Governor & he tickled the rest. Steam reported 80 pounds. 5.21 "Lollie Boy" puff up and is going head. Ebony probably depressed. 7.PM. Supper over and Palatka at hand. Prospect of accessions.

7.30 Arrived at Palatka. Here the Governor and Reader made a call on some of their friends, while the Captain and Scribe took a promenade to see the town, its Hotels & Stores. The St. Johns & the Putnam are the principal Hotels, by whose windows they walked and peeped in. A pleasant looking company occupied the parlors of each. The Stores and curiosity shops attracted the pedestrians most, & perhaps only one thing prevented their returning to the boat quite heavily laden. Most temptations cost more than 25 ct, Scribe thought she would like the simple & unadorned tooth of an Alligator, but the price

was two dollars, for one the size of her thumb. A fine wing of the pink Curlew cost \$2.50 and a Duck without stuffing \$2. But the Captain thought of his beloved 7/8 and bought her a pure white wing of the Snipe, pure & white, a mere little token of his affectionate remembrance. He thought of his nephews at home and finding a photograph of Steamboats on the St. Johns, he purchased it for them. They called at the Telegraph Office, but no message awaited them. Then they returned to their party on the Okahumkee, apparently to the joy of the Professor and the Captain's 7/8. The Governor had retired, & it therefore being the proper time for the rest they did likewise. Nos. 10 & 11 answered for most of the party, but the highest location was awarded the Governor & Captain, the sky bed-room. About 12 P.M. the Okahumkee left its moorings & sailed a few hundred yards, then returned to the wharf and put up for the night, the weather being too thick to navigate with certainty. Shortly before daylight the voyage was resumed up the St. Johns. The first stopping place was Buffalo Bluff, Hamilton Store, a wood wharf, where we "wooded up", while the Professor & Scribe & the Reader went ashore to flouinge[?], & the Captain to do something which proved to be whittling. Returning, breakfast was in due course dispatched. The Professor then went deep into his Botany Book, taking with him the Specimens Gathered. Party gathered into the Pilot House to enjoy the entrance of the Ocklawaha, which imposing ceremony took place at 10.23 AM 2[nd] mo 20th 1874

The Gunners are a bothersome set of fellows, crackwacking at the animals, not often to their damage, but making the Alligators skoot before we can see them.

The river near the mouth is about 40 to 50 yards wide, quite winding or torturous. Numerous creeks enter it from either side, but no names or sign posts being put up they cannot be designated.

The vegetation is now decidedly more Floridian. The winter is past. He must sail back far down the St. Johns. These green and tender leaves are too beautiful for his icy touch. 11.9 The sun shines brightly and our voyaging is perfectly exquisite. The Governor & Captain care naught for the price of Gold. 12.25 Stopped at Durenport [?] to put off 2 bales of hay & 5 sacks of corn. Sufficient for the place until the boat comes again. One little low wooden house, one man & two mules form the settlement. But then comes a man through the woods on horse back & then another, so there may be a settlement beyond. The sun shines bright & warm, the birds are singing but notwithstanding, the Reader & 7/8 have gone down weary. We have seen several birds; kingfishers & a large crane. Mistletoe is growing upon many of the trees, as also an air plant which resembles the leaves on the top of a Pineapple. Butterflies occasionally flit about. A limpkin just flew across the pines; quite a large bird with brown plumage.

1.05 Thermometer 76 in shade. It was 55° at 7 o'clk A.M. River now about 20 yds wide, that is the open water; swamp said to vary from ¼ to one mile wide. Palmettos now more frequent, sky perfectly clear, sun bright & hot making the day all that should be desired for the light & shadows. Cypress trees large & numerous.

2.02 Passed a water moccasin [?] sunning on a log. River now double the width at 1.05.

We have passed at great many turtles to-day, mostly of the kind according to our pilot "what they call Yellow bellies." Another Florida turtle is called the Alligator terrapin, another is the soft shell turtle. The shell is soft and can be nearly all cooked. 4 PM Temperature 80°.

4.30 Passed a large collection or grove of Palmetto trees.

4.45 Reached Fort Brooke, went ashore for recreation. Professor again found something new in the plant line. A few passengers went ashore here, among them a colored mother & child, who went home on a mule, the Grandmother walked along side carrying the trunk. Orange Springs is about two miles from Fort Brooke & that is about 25 miles by land from Palatka & we have travelled probably 60 miles or more by water. 5.49 Let Fort Brooke, sun set about this time, beautifully as reported by the Reader, the only one who thought of looking. River here about 40 yards wide.

6 PM The new moon has been visible for sometime, growing brighter as the darkness comes on.

At 6.45 the torch was lit, a fire of pine sticks in an iron stand on top of the Pilot House. This fire was kept up all night. It cast a bright light on the trees, on either hand & for a short distance before and behind us. The effect was very striking. The tall crowded trunks of the Cypress were beautifully illuminated, as was also the drapery of moss that hangs in such profusion from the branches. This gave a sort of enchantment to the scenery and added much to the variety & interest of this unique expedition, giving us a realization of the descriptions of the Ocklawaha. The party spent all the evening before & after tea, on the front part of the boat, that they might have full enjoyment of the weird like voyage up the river. Stopped at Isla [?] a timber place. Land behind said to be high priced, \$5 per acre.

Shortly after 9 o'clock we met the Oklawaha, the consort of our boat, going down the stream. The boat halted for a few minutes making a strong contrast with the solitude of this wilderness place. Most of the party retired about 10 o'clock though not to sleep all the time, as the temptation was strong to look out upon the trees from time to time

“ As all night long by our fire light Camp,

We paddled our great Curve [?]”

During the night the branches often brushed our boat as we rounded the short curves or passed the narrow places. Now and then poles were used to assist in steering and once or more we ran into the bank or slightly grounded.

2nd mo: 21st. Seventh day. At 7.45 we left the Ocklawaha River and entered Silver Creek for Silver Springs 6 miles up. The country near the mouth opens out on either side about half a mile wide for some two miles & then the trees again come to the water's edge as before. 8.45 a flock of paraquets flew across our pathway, adding another evidence that we are in the Sunny South.

The water of Silver Creek is very clear, the bottom showing distinctly at the depth of 15 or 20 feet. The bed of the stream is white, but much of it is covered with a ribbon-like grass. In some places it had a bluish greenish cast, which reminded the Professor of specimens of copper ore.

Fish and turtles appeared to be enjoying their limpid home. The boat lay at Silver Spring about an hour, where her passengers very generally took a stroll along sandy roadways without finding much that was interesting in the vegetable world. One of the party was interested in a conversation with an aged

colored woman who had come up on the Okahumkee & who said she lived 6 miles back in the country. A mule was there in readiness to carry her home. She seemed delighted to be free, said they could do as they pleased, and that they were doing well, that her children were going to school. She had thought she was too old to learn, but she was so much encouraged by what was said to her, that she said she would go home and begin. We enjoyed our sail down Silver Creek, and entered the Ocklawaha about [?]. (The temperature of Silver Spring is 72°)

The day is all that can be desired. The sunlight through the trees that skirt our beautifully winding stream, lends an enchantment to our noon-day [?] ride which makes it truly enjoyable.

At 12.5 passed the ferry with the corduroy [?] coming down to the river on either side and we noted the post box on the [?] described in ~~the magazine~~ *Picturesque America*. Now at 1.30 P.M. our river flows through a marshy savanna and our gunners take more delight in shooting at the birds than some of the more humane passengers do in hearing them. Wild ducks, a long white crane, a limpkin & a red-winged starling have been seen. 2.30 Thermometer 87°; it was 60° at 7 A.M. Sun hot, but a delightful breeze blowing so that in the shade, the day does not seem like a warm one.

3.55 Passed a man plowing on the fast land & next a corn-field & a sweet potato field & fields for other things. 4.15 Stopped for wood, ran ashore & got some bitter-sweet oranges to look at. About 7 men started off to walk 1½ miles while the boat goes 5 by water. About 4.45 PM the Professor & Scribe made a visit to their trunk, to do which they had to climb over boxes & bags of merchandise, a bale of hay, etc. In the basement they saw sundry colored hands employed about the boat, also the steerage passengers. Of the latter a colored man and his wife, with two little children, who came on board at Palatka interested the two visitors aforesaid. They informed that they were going to Lake Griffin to settle for a year or longer, the man having been engaged to take charge of a church there. At 5 PM the Professor & Scribe made a safe passage over the pile of freight already alluded to & emerged from the basement to the main story, bringing with them trophies of their visit in the shape of articles of clothing calculated to make them more comfortable in the heat of the day, also some Zephyr work to give a casual employment to the fingers of the Scribe. 5.40 Reached the landing at Moss Bluff and took in the pedestrians who report a pleasant walk of 2 miles. They brought in some large lemons, one of which was sliced & handed around to taste and found to be very like a lemon indeed; size and shape of a large orange, with a very thick skin. A natural lemon without cultivation.

The sun went down behind clouds to which it gave gorgeous trails & linings, and the daylight of the week winds up like a calm summer's day, with the party, some 1300 miles from home, contented and peaceful, but a wanderer's thought now and then flitting across the great intervening space, with query made but not answered, how is it with all the loved ones of the good old city of ~~Penn.~~ our Home [?]. Ten days of our journey pass before the mind as we sit in a quiet review of the varied scenes, from snow covered fields & wintry air, to tropical lands & balmy breezes and a little feeling of thankfulness arises that He who holds us in the hollow of His hand has thus far mercifully extended to us the blessing of preservation from perils by land and perils by water, while our senses have enjoyed the glories and the marvels of His footstool.

The evening wore away, a pleasant starlight & moonlight evening. Lake Griffin was entered about 12.25 & several stops made on the shores. It is about 12 miles long and 4 wide, a new and pretty feature of the Oklawaha.

First day 2mo 22nd 1874. At 6 AM the lake was left and the course was again a narrow stream through the marsh. 7 AM Thermometer 66. Sky overcast, air soft. Last night we saw several fires in the woods on or near the east border of Lake Griffin. At 12.15 (midnight) these fires were about East of us. There appeared to be 5 or 6 fires apparently in a row. Some parties, no doubt were clearing up the land. Entered Late Eustice [?] at 9.10 a beautiful sheet of water some 4 miles by 8, and said to be about 12 feet deep. Stopped at Fort Mason on the Northern corner which we left about 10.30. The sun is now breaking through, a pleasant tho' gentle breeze stirring, the gunners in deference to public opinion or out of respect to the day, are not pursuing their sport & the day is quiet & lovely.

It is said that from Leesburg on Lake Griffin to Palmyra on Lake Harris the distance is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, but round the Lakes and through the river as the boat goes the distance is over 30 miles.

About 11 AM a refreshing treat of Oranges was given by the Captain ~~of the boat~~ Rice which was very satisfactory.

11.15 Left Lake Eustice & passed through the connecting stream about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long and 125 yards wide into Lake Harris. Saw several Alligators on the way through, some 5 or 6 ft long from tip to tip. The banks & woods of Lake Harris are much higher than those of the preceding ones. We stopped at Harris's on the shore of Lake Harris and some of us visited a garden & yard attached to quite a comfortable looking dwelling. The hostess was sitting on a rocking chair on the piazza, enjoying the balmy air of a quiet first day morning. Lantanas, verbenas, geraniums & several other plants were in bloom; a fine Coleus had been in the ground all winter. The hostess said they had had no weather to injure their plants out of doors this winter. Their corn was about 4 inches high & nearly ripe mulberries were upon the trees. We saw some pineapples which were just beginning to bud. But I believe we did not see a blade of grass.

12.45 Stopped at Harris's grove, where we saw several very nice looking people. Some of the passengers left us here. Took on board some oranges for Jacksonville. A small boy came to sell some little rabbits but as there was nothing for them to eat no one purchased. The Reader & the Governor's daughter became quite interested in the lad & enlisted the sympathy of some of the passengers and the penniless boy was made the happy possessor of 29 ct. The Captain took a run to the orange grove, but could find no one to sell fruit, so he only brought us accounts of the beauty of the trees, etc.. 1.17 the whistle hurried some of the passengers on board, others waited until they could comfortably come. One of the passengers reported a lemon tree with 7000 lemons on it. Left the wharf at 1.25. Reached Okahumkee 250 miles from the mouth of the Oklawaha as travelled by boat at 3.10 & remained until 5:38. The party went ashore, some up to the town a few hundred yards distant consisting of 2 or 3 stores & 2 or 3 other houses. No school but a meetings reported 3 & 5 miles distant with preaching once in three weeks. Cotton and oranges were taken in as freight. Some of the men got a boat & went out for Alligators. They returned with one 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft long from tip to tip. Quite a collection of specimens of Natural History were

brought on board; Stuffed Alligators, otters, a gar fish, a deer, and quite a number of deer horns. They belonged to a man who came on board & who appears to follow gathering such things as an occupation. He appears well versed in Nat. History & is dubbed Dr.

At 9.10 PM Entered lake Eustice & at 9.30 passed out. The moonlight ride on the Lake was very beautiful. In the river which was very narrow between Lake Eustice & Lake Griffin we managed to get aground, but worried off after a few trials. After the moon went down the fire torch was lighted to show the route over the meadows, as a fog was prevailing.

2nd mo: 23rd Morning opens a little overcast & damp. Lake Griffin was passed in the night. A good sized Alligator swims on ahead of the boat for a few minutes, grunting or making observations which the Governor hears but does not understand. The Pilot however translates by saying that it is a saucy fellow.

The dimensions of the sky state room by long measure are 71 inches high in the clear, 73 long & 47 wide. 24 of these are occupied by the berths, leaving 23 for promenading in completing toilets.

8.45 Left the open country or marsh and entered the woods.

9.19 Passed the ferry at the Corduroy road. 9.41 an unfortunate shy [?] on a tree sends us plunging into the woods. The Professor takes out his compass and announces we are in the right direction for Jacksonville. The boat however not being calculated for land travel stops, and a series of pushings & capstainings take place, resulting in getting off; meanwhile a large moccasin is killed & held up for view. 9.53 A log or two is lying across the river, which we pass by simply running over it. 9.57 We again enter the beautiful Silver Creek. The Professor, who has been deep in his bird book much of the morning to be prepared to ask questions of the "Doctor" about the Limpkin now puts on his spectacles and enjoys the scenery. 10.19 Doctor now appears with a bucket & exhibits his stock of live Alligators & informs that the Alligator is a peculiar animal & will live 2 months out or in water without food. They lay twice a year 40 to 120 eggs to hatch at once. The male Alligator eats all the little ones he can find until they are 3 mos. old. The Professor takes out his rule & finds the one supposed to be two years old, is 18 inches long & the two littler ones about 12. The Alligator has two ridges on his back, while the Crocodile has but one.

10.30 A large Alligators 8 to 10 ft long slides off into the water from the base of a tree. 11.23 Reached Silver Spring, some of the passengers went boating round the Spring. Captain Rice opened a box of oranges from the freight & allowed the passengers to purchase greatly to the joy of the party, who proceeded to have an orange feast. Left Silver Spring at 12.45. The Professor strengthened by his lunch goes deep as ever into his botany. He left home to rest & this is perhaps his way of doing it. But it doesn't look like resting as he sometimes takes off his coat to do it. 1.38 passed a rookery of white cranes. 1.53 reached the Oklawaha again. 1.55 Made Jostler's station, took in a barrel of molasses, some eggs packed in cotton and a large Calabash also containing eggs. 2.45 Stopped at Beef landing where we took in about 4 beeves & 4 other animals whose slaughtered remains somewhat resembled mutton. This meat was hanging under a roof thatched with palmetto leaves, supported upon 6 upright posts, with two smoking fires near by, which we supposed were for the purpose of keeping off flies. Etc. Well intended care, for surely the consumer could not afford to have any of the remaining juices extracted.

Florida may be the land of flowers & oranges but not the land of meats. 3.15 at Beck's station – quite a high bluff- took in some venison. Saw two dogs & the Dogwood in bloom.

4.10 A letter handed to our boat in a slit in a stick. Palmettos quite numerous and the wild orange growing on the shore of our stream. The interest in botany seems to be spreading & we have succeeded in gathering several plants this PM as we sweep by them in our boat. No idle time for the Professor.

4.30 Passed the Dardanelles—so named we are told from a narrow passage in the English Channel. This is a particularly interesting part of this peculiar river, so winding & so narrow that the boat is scraping the trees & bushes first on one side & then on the other. Some of the Cypress trees are very large and the Palmetto tall—with tall and slender trees of various kinds making a thick wood.

4.45 Stopped at Goen [?] to take on some one said Butter. Pleasant freight— as we were informed at dinner the boat's supply had all been consumed. Air plants grow along the Ocklawaha, four varieties of the Tillandsid [?] but although the passengers of the Okahumkee have spent 4 days upon its waters, they seem unable to adopt the habits of these plants, & wish them old desires, enjoy their bread & butter. Weather warm & oppressive.

The ride, the last day & evening on the Ocklawaha was full of interest. The current being with the boat increased the speed, as also the difficulties of navigation, as the curves could not all be safely rounded with out "slowing" the boat, and with all precaution the rubbing against the trees and the action of the current frequently set the boat ashore. At the narrowest point the width of the river between two large Cypress trees exceeded that of the boat by only 18 inches. In due time the fire torch was lit, & the wildness of the night some enjoyed to the full. At 10 the party retired, but loathe to leave that which they might never see again. Several adventures occurred during the night but no accident & in the morning we had left the wild Ocklawaha & were upon the placid bosom of the St. Johns and arrived safely at Palatka about 7.45 AM (3rd day the 24 of 2 mo.)

We leave the good Okahumkee with a kindly feeling. Five days and nights thou hast borne & housed & fed us, as we journeyed in ways and places unknown before. We shall remember thy cabin, thy state rooms, thy sky bed room, and thy Captain & Pilot shall have a pleasant place with us.

We will remember thy patient ploddings on the long voyage, thy buffetings with the bushes, the boughs, & the trees, thy turnings & trials in tortuous pathways & safe delivery of us all at the end. Long may thou live to give pleasure & profit to the unknown passengers, who shall in the future succeed us.

And now we bid farewell to thee Oh Ocklawaha and leave thee to flow on in the depths of thy solitudes, wherein we felt some of the charms, which sages have seen. Other scenes shall daily meet our vision but we shall still ~~meet~~ see thee with thy wondrous panorama. We shall recall thy grand old Cypress trees, thy Palmettos, and graceful draperies of moss, thy mistletoe & thy air plants, thy blooming jessamine & delicate forms & thy beautiful water-lilies.

Thy limpkin shall skip & flap, thy ducks shall swim & spatter & fly, the flocks of thy red-starlings, thy white cranes & the green wigs of thy band of paraqueets shall rise again & again before us. We cannot

fully recall the glories of thy hundred miles of forest, thy many windings through the savannas, and of thy spreading Lakes as we looked upon them day by day & night by night, though we saw them by the sunlight, in the moonlight and by the more mysterious glare of our own weird-like-torch of the midnight, for the mind of man is finite and cannot grasp the details of the work of the Infinite. But thy memories shall be so our mental perception, a feast perennial and a continual joy.

Note 1.

Some of our passengers got down the ships yawl at Silver Spring & rowed down the Creek. Having left the Spring sometime before us, they had quite a row before we overtook them. They kindly brought us a specimen of a large white flower that we had observed both on 7 day & to-day growing on the banks of Silver Spring Creek. On examination the Professor found it to be the *Panocratium Coronarium*, one of the *Amaryllis* family. It is a Southern plant and it would appear that it has been found in but few localities. Chapman in his "Flora of the Southern States" mentions only two localities, near Augusta, Ga. & near Columbia, S.C.

Note 2.

The trip on the Ocklawaha is one which the robust and hardy traveller may enter upon and enjoy. The perils and hardships to be endured in case of accident or sickness far in the wilderness a hundred miles from the comforts of life, and out of their reach by several days of weary travel, are not pleasant to contemplate. We entered upon the dangers while unknown, and have no regrets that the trip was made, but to the weak or sick who may be tempted to take the voyage, we would say consider & be discreet.