INTRODUCTION

The main object of geography is to describe and classify the surface of the earth, by means of the things or features found thereon. These features are of two principal kinds: inanimate, such as soil, topography, water and climate; and organic, such as vegetation, fauna, population and industries. In the second group it is customary to make a distinction between the plants and lower animals on the one hand, and the human population or civilization on the other, on account of the extreme complexity of the latter. Physical geography deals with the natural features, including all the inanimate and the plants and lower animals; and human geography with the rest, which may be classed as artificial features, because they are developed or modified by thinking beings.

The natural or physical features constitute the environment of civilization. They are supposed to have existed much longer than the human race, and to change much more slowly than civilization does, except where man himself changes them, by cutting down forests, damming up streams, killing wild animals, etc. The artificial or human features may change very rapidly, though, especially in an area like that covered by this report; and in order to describe them adequately it is necessary to use a great variety of statistics, for density and composition of population, acreage and yield of crops, kind and value of manufactures, etc., etc. Physical geography is indeed also capable of some statistical treatment, in the way of soil analyses, weather records, stand of timber, etc., but such statistics are usually much simpler than those used in human geography.

The present report seeks to describe the physical features or natural resources of South Florida, from the northern boundaries of Manatee and Indian River Counties to the south end of the State, an area of about 17,000 square miles, not counting lakes and salt water. At present people all over the United States are looking toward this section, and many doubtless have very hazy ideas about the soil, water supply, climate, vegetation, fauna, etc., all of

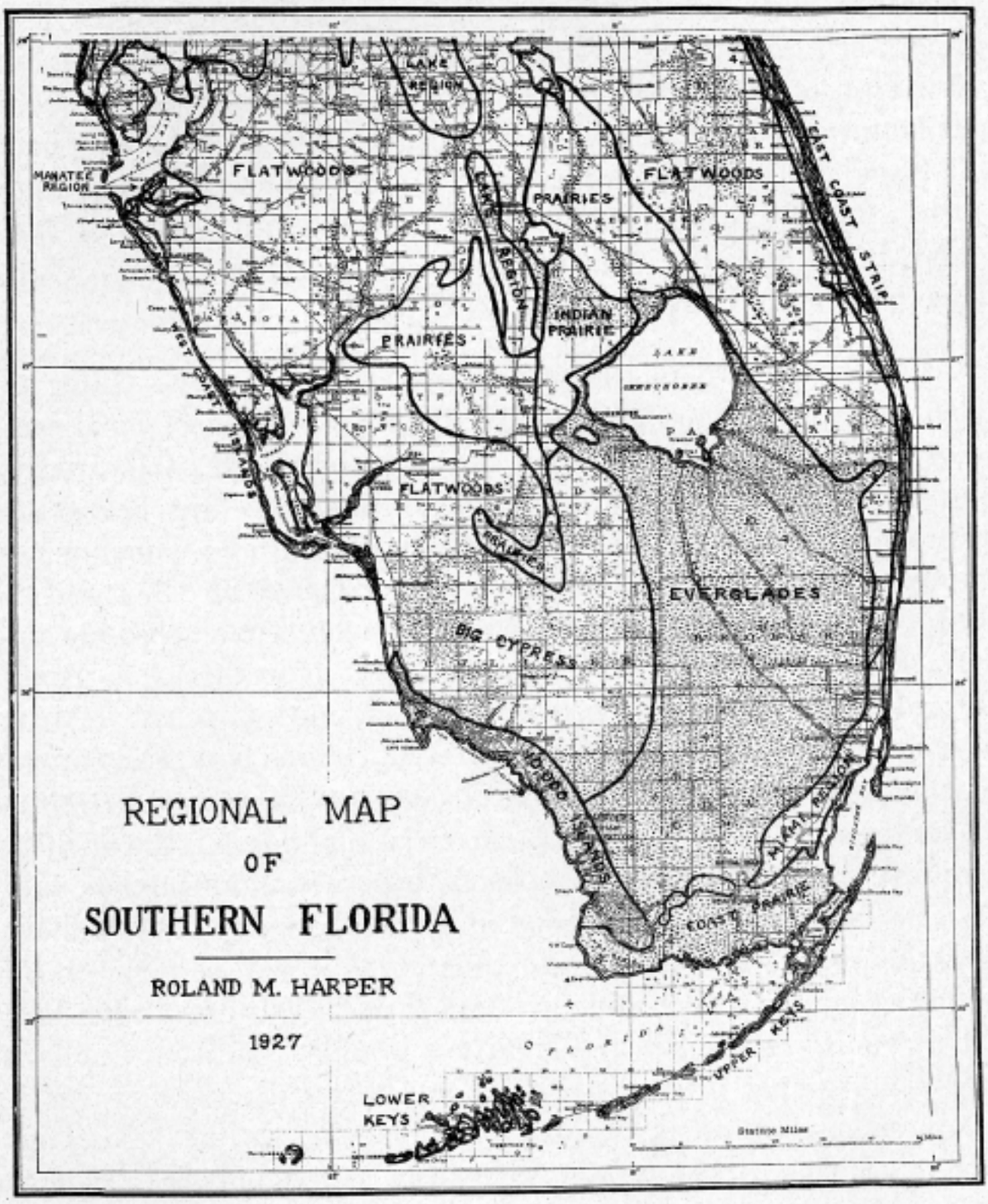

FIG. 2. Map showing location of regions described in text, together with rivers, railroads, counties, townships, etc. The regional boundaries are only approximate in some places, and those of the Big Cypress are not shown at all, because too little known at present. The dotted line northeast of Lake Okeechobee, in Martin County, indicates a low scarp or terrace, which may some time be treated as a regional boundary. (See regional descriptions.) Scale about 3,040,000, or 48 miles to the inch.

which are treated in the following pages. It is of course also important to a home-seeker or investor to know something about what kind of neighbors he may expect to have, as well as about agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, etc., but information about the population and industries can be given better at some future time, after the results of the federal agricultural census of January, 1925, and the state population census of February, 1925, have been more fully analyzed or digested.

In this report, in conformity with the established policy of this department (and practically all other state geological surveys) we have tried to present the important truths impartially, not overlooking the fact that some of the soils are below the average in fertility, some of the water is hard, the weather is not always perfect, some of the trees are crooked or otherwise of little use, mosquitoes are occasionally seen, etc. Absolute accuracy is not claimed, for there are still large areas in South Florida that have never been seen by any one competent to write a scientific description of them, and even with the best of intentions mistakes sometimes occur. And of course a complete description of an area of this size cannot be given in 160 pages. But if there are any errors or serious omissions they are unintentional, and just as likely to be on the good as on the bad side. We believe that the whole truth, or an approximation to it, will be more useful to prospective settlers and investors than merely the better half of it; and to ignore the disadvantages would be as inexcusable as for a newspaper to omit all mention of fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, accidents, crimes, epidemics and deaths. Constructive criticisms will always be welcomed, and if important enough they can be incorporated into future publications of this office.

In order to avoid making this report too bulky and delaying it indefinitely, no notice is here taken of publications, explorations and occurrences subsequent to the Spring of 1926, except that some information obtained by correspondence and reading since then has been incorporated.