THE HIGHLANDS OF WEST FLORIDA

Washington County a Favored Spot

The following is taken from a booklet prepared several years ago by A. G. Chandlee, of Chipley. The facts, so pertinent and well stated, are equally as true now as when they were first published and they are therefore reproduced in part as follows:

West Florida Highlands

This little book is written and compiled for the purpose of attracting attention to the young and growing town of Chipley, situated on the highest plateau of the "West Florida Highlands," which are the highest parts of Florida, and lie between the Choctawhatchee river on the west and the Chattahoochee on the east.

The peculiar lands have an extent of about one hundred miles north and south by fifty east and west. They are peculiar, and different from the most of Florida by having a good top soil with a clay subsoil within twelve inches of the surface, and that in turn underlaid with limestone. This makes it susceptible of the highest state of fertility with little cost. In fact, the fertility of some of these virgin lands can not be surpassed anywhere.

These lands have an altitude of about three hundred feet above tide water, and the absence of large swamps and extensive lakes, the freedom from malaria and mosquitoes, the warm winters and cool summers, ever tempered with the delicious gulf breeze, which is nature's great remedy for weak lungs, catarrh, hay fever, etc., render this region unsurpassed for health and comfort.

Here the rheumatic lays away his crutches; here the pure soft water of the springs and wells cure kidney, liver and blood diseases.

Here in the "high, piney woods, with the mountains on the north and the gulf on the south, the victims of the ever-changing climate of the north take a new lease on life, with a degree of pleasure and comfort they have long been strangers to. And in the midst of this region is the town of Chipley, fifteen miles south of the Alabama line, one hundred and sixteen miles east of Pensacola, and fifty miles north of St. Andrew's bay. It is on the L. & N. railroad, on a direct line from New Orleans and Pensacola to Jacksonville.

To give our readers a better idea of this wonderful country, we here submit some facts from the able pen of Judge J. G. Kamp, United States statistical agent for Florida. His official business has required him to travel throughout the state gathering facts and statistics, and he knows whereof he writes. In his book, "Only One Florida," speaking of the state in general, he says:

"Earth has but one Florida, and that is ours. One peninsula in all of earth is washed on the west, south and east by the greatest, warmest of all rivers, 'The Great River of the Ocean;' but one region in America, one place in all of earth over which devastating cyclones and tornadoes do not pass carrying death and destruction in their paths; but one semi-tropical land over which siroccos do not blow and parch; but one habitat for plants, animals and men that is daily fanned by ocean breezes, and where men every day breathe balsamic odors from plants, trees and flowers; whose equally tempered atmosphere is health—that peninsula is Florida. It is the best inheritance bequeathed by the Father to his children, long reserved, but revealed at this last day, possessing a treasure such as none of her sister states possess or can secure.

"Florida is incomparable with all other countries and regions. There can be no comparison except by contrast. Italy is a region of hills and mountains, snow-capped during a large part of the year; Florida is nearly a plain, and in most of it snow was never seen, and nowhere lies. Italy is swept by cold mountain winds in winter, driving men and beasts to hyemal quarters, and by hot relaxing siroccos in summer; Florida is free from both of these extremes. Italy is often parched with droughts making irrigation a necessity to the growth of vegetation; Florida has rains well distributed throughout the year. Italy is a peninsula extending into the Mediterranean Sea, whose waters are no warmer than the ocean in the same latitude. Florida is also a peninsula, but extends into the warmest portion of the ocean, and on the border of the trade winds, its breezes are tempered by the genial equability of the gulf stream.

"Spain and the Grecian Isles compare with Italy as to climate and productions. California compares favorably with Italy in its snow-capped mountains, winds and drought, in its dry plains and needed irrigation, in rushing torrents and dry arroyas. If her panegyrists choose, they may compare that state to Italy, and call her the 'Italy of America,' but Florida stands alone; no place can be compared to her. Hereogenous Florida; when attempts are made at comparison, they degrade rather than elevate her. Her highest praise is to call her by her own beautiful Castillian name,

New Track and Road Bed of the B., C. & St. A. R. R., Now Being Built From Chipley to St. Andrews Bay.

Florida. Italy would rejoice should she be called the Florida of Europe. She never can. No country can be like Florida, and she needs no gems borrowed from another's crown.

"Go where you will search the states and territories from ocean to ocean, from the cold British possessions with their short summers and long winters of snow and ice, to the Gulf of Mexico, and the hot parched plains of Mexico, and you can find no such climatic conditions; no lands suscepible of greater improvement at equal expense; no region producing such varied and valuable products as this; no region constantly fanned by such health-giving breezes. Great heats do not burn by day nor colds pinch by night. Rains do not flood the lands nor droughts destroy vegetation. Summer, the most pleasant of all seasons, is not avoided, nor is the approach of winter dreaded. The entire population of the state bear evidence to the beauty and comfort of the one, and the thousands who flock hither in winter bear testimony to the other. If there be any people who should sing psalms of praise to the Great Father for gifts bestowed, that people are the residents of Florida. The millions of unoccupied acres invite the suffering millions of other less favored regions to a residence here.

"Not only does the land invite settlers, but the waters say come. Fish and game as plentiful, as gustive as those in the cold waters of the St. Lawrence and Newfoundland, swarm along the shores and enter the bays, sounds and inlets of Florida. Oysters and clams not inferior to those of the Chesapeake, line the sea coasts, and the green and loggerhead turtles swarm along the southern shores as nowhere else.

"Climate, soil, trees, flowers, fruits, the waters of the sea, the land, and last and greatest of all else, healthfulness, invite the immigrant to Florida. The varying character of these in different portions of the state allows most tastes to be suited, except that change must be expected.

"Florida is not only the blooming land, but she is also a land of fruits; and to her Castilian name may be added frutosa. Her flowers ever bloom, her fruits are never gone.

"These combined make Florida what we find it—the most desirable of all regions for its pure air, its genial and equitable temperature, its ocean-tempered breezes, its balsamic atmosphere, invigorating body and mind.

"As Florida differs from all other countries and states, so, too, it differs from itself in regions and parallels, as if to supply the desires of all choosing to locate within its borders. In Florida may be found locations suited to the tastes and desires of every would-be resident, and every production the agriculturist may desire to grow.

"To speak of all these would occupy too much of the reader's time."

Then speaking especially of "The West Florida Highlands," he continues:

"A region possessed of a climate and soil, vegetations and capabilities, differing from, yet equaling those of any other region when cultivated with crops adapted to its conditions.

"The character of all soils, whether productive or barren, depends in a great measure upon the geological formation from which they are derived. This region has its rocky foundation upon the eocene, or oldest statum of the tertiary formations. That was the period when the marine animals built up rocks of lime, silica, and phosphorus. Today these rocks crop out in the sides of the ridges, along the banks of the streams and in a few places on the level surface. Sometimes as hard rocks, sometimes advancing toward hardness, yet soft enough to be cut with a saw or hewn with an ax; and again they appear as a soft marl. The retiring ocean left abundance of soda behind, and the salt atmosphere keeps up the supply; thus we now find the whole region covered with a stratum containing all the mineral elements needed for plant food. These soils may be made to fertilize themselves by turning into the soil all that will grow thereon, not considered marketable.

"These lands, in their wild state, can be cheaply purchased, and if to the purchase money, and cost of labor, and the applied minerals, shall be added to the value of the Florida climate, which permits constant croppings, each acre of this soil will be more valuable, because it will produce more than the richest acre of country farm land in any northern state, where but one crop can be grown in a year. On this two crops, at the least, can be grown.

Climate.

"This region lies south of the great Appalachian chain of mountains, which north of here have trended from their general course, northeast and southwest, to the west, and as completely obstructed the course of the northern wind currents of winter as do the Pyrenees the plains of Spain, on the Alps and Appennines the olive and orange orchards of Italy. The winter climate is warmer than is found on the same parallel farther west. This climate shows that the fig, which can endure a cold of three days of zero, and the olive, that is only killed when a cold of 12 degrees F. remains for a like period, can be cultivated in this region. Indeed so mild are the winters here that near the gulf coast are growing some of the oldest orange trees in Florida, which yearly perfect their crops of fruit. If the winters are warm the sumer heats are never oppressive, but are tempered by the breezes passing between the mountains and gulf, and by the northernmost tradewinds of the Atlantic. The farmers of Jackson county report that but once in a period of thirty years has there been sufficient cold to kill the oats sown in November. Frosts are less severe here in January than in Ohio in November or April. In fact, no winter has been known since the first settlement of this region, nor even a week experienced in which the winter rye and perennial grasses did not grow, or cattle and sheep could not find sustenance from pastures of Bermuda grass. Now, suppose one acre of land in this portion of the state was planted to rye in November, in March the rye would be headed out, and the grain ripened in April and harvested. The stubble and grass could be turned under and the land planted with corn by the 20th of May. That last crop would ripen in September. That makes two crops of grain on the same land. But in July let there be planted a full stand of cow peas, that may be gathered by saving pods only. About the first of October they would completely cover the ground, and with the corn stalks should be turned into the soil ot enrich it. The grain of those last would more than compensate for labor and give about two tons of dry matter, equal to a large crop of clover to be buried by the plow. The rye may be varied by oats or Irish potatoes, and the corn by sweet potatoes and millet. Thus the climate gives to the farmer the power to make two crops each year, and also bury sufficient vegetable matter in the soil to even improve its fertility. In this method of constant cropping we have the example of the Japs, whose climate more nearly resembles Florida than does that of Italy. Indeed, to compare Florida climate to that of Japan, would be a fair one; but to compare it to that of Italy, as is often done, does Florida injustice.

"A man in these highlands had prepared his acre of land and planted it in Irish potatoes in January, 1884. In April he planted corn between the rows of the potatoes and dug the potatoes in May, which gave the last dressing to the corn. In July he planted between the corn rows sweet potatoes, which he harvested in November, and he counted up his yield as follows: 96 barrels of Irish potatoes, worth $4 per barrel, $384; 40 bushels of corn, worth with the corn shucks for fodder, $40; and 300 bushels of sweet potatoes worth $150, a total of $574 from an single acre of ordinary farm crops. Had the acre been set with pears, peaches, figs, olives or Japanese persimmons, with less labor and less outlay for manure, he might have realized even greater profits; and in garden products still more would have been realized.

The Orchards.

Here bear their annual crops. The dry lands, when properly fertilized, will produce orchards of pears, plums, peaches apricots, quinces, figs and olives; and on the damper lands the pecans and European walnuts will thrive, as also on the dry lands, and produce more profitable crops than do the orchards of the north, and rival the orange and other crops further south in value. Both wet and dry lands, seeded to proper grasses and fodder plants, can be mowed three and four times a year, yielding as many pounds of fodder at each cutting as will the best meadows in New England or New York, where but a single crop is obtained in a year.

"Rainfalls and Droughts

"The average amount of rainfall for this belt is about fifty inches in the year. It is quite evenly distributed throughout the year, rather more abundant between the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox, which is also the warmest and most growing season of the year, as also the one in which the greatest suffering from droughts are felt farther north.

"Excellent pastures may be made in the piney woods, by removing brush, dead and decaying trees and logs, plowing the surface so as to destroy the wild grasses and weeds, and planting Bermuda and other grasses and the Japan clover, and be kept in good condition at small expense. This would not injure the valuable pine timber, and the stock would have ample shade.

"The Poor Man's Paradise.

"The cost of building with lumber is here reduced to the lowest possible figures. The amount and cost of clothing, the expense for fuel and of food for the family, are at minimum rates. Cattle and sheep can gather their food from the unburned range or the prepared pastures. Something of the table may be obtained from the field and garden in less than one hundred days after the seeds are placed in the soil. The immigrant needs but ask himself the question: What sum will carry me to my future residence, establish me on it, and keep me for six months. After that period he should find his support from the farm itself.

"Upon the dry lands nothing but imprudent exposure of person, eating improper food, or deposits of filth near the dwelling, can induce malarial disease. There is nothing in the soil, water or vegetable growths to produce miasma. The flat, wet lands off the dry ridges, the thick hummocks, are to be avoided as places of residence; all the balance is healthful. On the dry lands springs supply the best of drinking water. The much-dreaded yellow fever has never been known to enter the dry pine ridges, and the whole region is equally secure from death-dealing diphtheria and typhoids; small-pox, measles and scarlatina here lose their virulence. The rays of the sun never prostrate the man in the field, and the hottest hour always has its accompanying breezes, and is followed by a cool night for refreshing sleep. The high barometric pressure indicates freedom from tornadoes, violent storms, or sudden changes of wind. The differences between the dew point and barometric pressure and temperature show an atmosphere not charged with humidity exceeding that of the so-called 'dry atmospheres of Dakota or the mountain regions.' Those suffering from pulmonary diseases can here find an atmosphere sufficiently dry and warm for their comfort. The greater pressure enables them to breathe slow, and they are in less danger of rupture of lungs and loss of blood thereby. Thus here is the home of the invalid, as well as the robust. The same dry atmosphere and high pressure that benefit the sick prevent that enervation of the laborer and the student so prevalent in other warm regions. Frosts and cold piercing winds are not here required to brace up the human system. Florida is not only the land of agricultural greatness, but is equally the land for health of body and mind.

Conclusion.

"Taking into account the whole matter of climate and healthfulness, cheapness of land and the facility with which it may be prepared for cultivation, the extent of its varied productions, and that some of them are constantly growing, the winter warmth, and summer breezes, the pureness of the water for drinking for man and beast, and the cheapness of living it seems wonderful that such a boon should have been resorted from the last generation. Add to these the fact that while the new settler is planting, tending and waiting for his orchard of pears and peaches, figs and olives, plums and apricots, almonds and pecans, European chestnuts and walnuts, to mature and give him stores of luxuries, he can from the same land harvest two and three crops of corn and grain, potatoes and casava, strawberries and melons, with all the products of the garden and truck farm, and because of their earliness find a ready market at top prices in the cities of the North, thus making a support for himself and family while he fertilizes the land and the trees that are to be his ultimate dependence.

"Crops in Florida come not singly, but succeed each other in double, triple, quadruple successions, on the same land in the same year; and if soil shall be fertilized and cultivated as the northern farmer fertilizes and cultivates for his one crop, the yield of each here will equal in value the one on the Ohio farm. Your cattle, sheep and young horses shall gather their food in the pastures and fields to which they are admitted during the winter as well as summer, and as to them the pitchfork and scythe may be hung up. If you yard them at night most of their manure may be added to the compost pile. Lands supposed to be worn out are only

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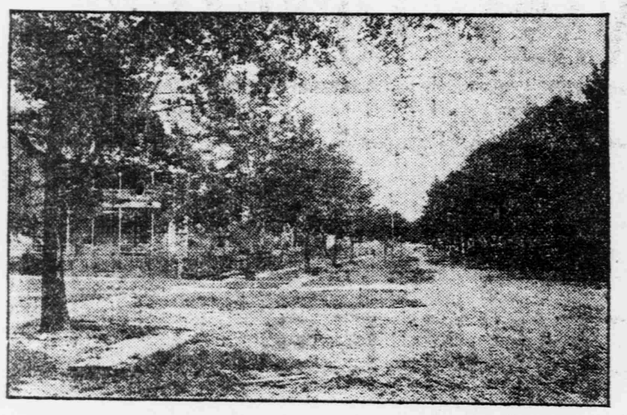
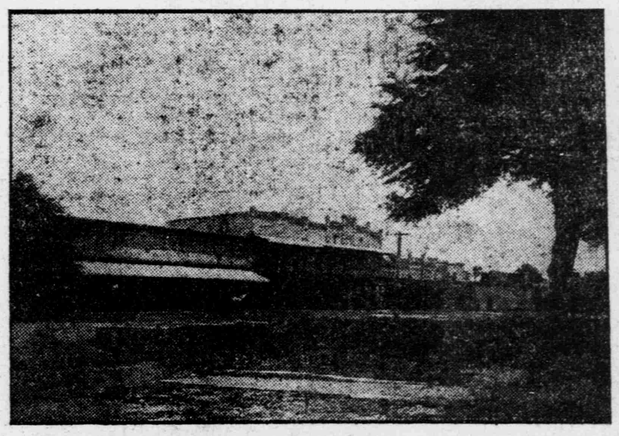


Sixth Street, Looking North From the Verdict Office, Chipley, Fla.



A Business Portion of Chipley.

ANNOUNCEMENT—To obtain a certain lot I desired, I was compelled to purchase twenty-three lots. The balance, twenty-two in all, I will sell at a nominal figure.

L. W. CROW. CHIPLEY, FLORIDA.

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CAPITAL - - - $20,000.

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