

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

J. E. Hilgard, Superintendent.

State: *Florida.*

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Topographic Sheet No. 1652

See Misc. Dir. Comm. SHA for 1652 in bin

LOCALITY:

*South End
of Indian River.*

1883.

CHIEF OF PARTY:

B. A. Colonna.

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY OFFICE,

Washington, Feb. 7th, 1883

Plane Table Sheet No. 1652. Scale $\frac{1}{20,000}$
East Coast Florida, Indian River,
From Eden Post Office or Richards Δ
Southward to Pecks Lake, and including
St. Lucie River.

Surveyed By E. L. Taney Aid U.S.C. & G.S.
in 1882-3, B. A. Colonna Asst. C. & G.S.
Chief of Party..

On the west shore ^{of Indian River} the ground rises from five
to eighty feet above the level of ~~the~~ ordinary
height of the water in Indian River, the
higher ridges give quite a pretty land-
fall when seen four or five miles off
shore quite overtopping the land and forest
between Indian River and the ocean.

On the east shore of Indian River and
between it and the Ocean the mangrove
swamp is about on a level with the water
in the River at ordinary stages and next
the beach it is from 3 to 15 feet above

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Ocean high tide. I had a signal
scaffold 45 feet high on top of a hill
82 feet high on the West Side of In-
dian River (Blue Hill?) from this
scaffold I had a fine view of the
Country to the Westward which con-
sisted of numerous parallel ridges of
sand with intervening low-places
pools the major Axis of all of which
extended in a northerly & southerly
direction. Cattle-men that I met
at St. Lucie P.O. informed me that
it was a succession of these ridges
back to Okechobee and that the
old Government wagon road which
ran north and south and was back
about 4 to 12 miles from the river was
still passable and ran for the most
of the distance along each ridge. Nearly
all of this ~~sandy~~ country rests on
a foundation of marine conglomerate
called Conchina which is at various
depths but occasionally crops out rising
from 3 to 5 feet above mean Ocean tide

This Conchina differs very much in structure from that of Beaufort N. C. and other places north of here. Large shells are seldom found in it and some of it presents the appearance of a coarse white or yellow sand stone. When burned it makes a fairly good shell lime and when wet can be readily cut into building blocks with an axe. The sand of which the soil is almost exclusively formed is white or yellowish, it underlies all of the streams, Saw-grass ponds, Mangrove swamps &c. two or three feet generally brings the white sand even in the Mangrove and other swamps. It is impracticable to dike any of the low grounds because the water on a rise would come in from the bottom. — Wherever pine is indicated there will be found a growth of underbrush of various kinds and ranging in height from 1 to 10 feet. The pine timber itself is of little or no value being of stunted growth and the underbrush

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is generally scrub Oak, ^{Low saw-palmetto} ~~Whortleberry~~, ~~etc etc~~
whose hard wood is depicted, except
the narrow swamps, the land is al-
ways best for cultivation, such hard
wood land is called hammock-land
by the natives and seems to owe its
fertility to the fact that Conchina lies
near the surface and like an im-
permeable clay holds those chemicals
that are gathered from the decaying veg-
etation. ^{Among} The trees growing in these hammocks
are ^{then} locally known as Palmettos, Mastics, Rubber
trees, Live Oaks, Iron wood trees, The Crab wood
and a great variety of others. There are
various cactus grasses growing along the
Ocean shore, and several varieties of
Dumming Cactus, pretty pear &c &c are
mixed in every where. A decided feature
on the level sand wastes and elsewhere
along the Ocean side and occasionally
west of the Indian River is the Scrub
palmetto, a species of palm that although
it has a trunk from 4 to 8 inches in
diameter and from 3 to 20 feet in length,
runs along the ground like a ~~scout~~ ^{vise}

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And among them progress is very difficult for their trunks cross each other in great confusion and their leaves are just about 5 feet high and have sharp edges, On the west side of the river among the pines and on the lands along the edges of the saw grass ponds there are nice tender grasses on which the deer feed, and I never ate more delicious venison than here. The Indians of whom there are 3 or 400 back in the ^(Remnants of the Seminoles) Glades, always burn off the underbrush as much as they can about January or February. The saw grass ponds to which I have alluded are of fresh water generally very shallow and ~~filled~~ cut up by narrow sloughs or streams, These streams are seldom over 4 feet deep and have hard sandy bottoms on which various water grasses grow. The saw grass itself has generally in the dry season only 3 or 4 inches of water about its roots but in the wet season the water rises 2 or three feet. The blades of this grass

are from 3 to 10 feet long, about ^{an} inch wide
 and their edges are serrated, ~~the~~ ^{rough} and
 very sharp. They rapidly cut out the
 clothing. If there is any hotter place
 than one of these Saw Grass ponds
 when the sun shines down and the
 myriads of Mosquitoes swarm in ones
 face stinging by tens and twenties, I hope
 it is not on top of the earth.
 Wherever there are saw grass ponds near
 Alled with the River and within a mile
 or so of it excellent water can be
 had by setting a flour barrel at
 the river side along the foot of
 the bluff. But on the east side of
 Indian River and between it and the
 Ocean good water is unknown for when
 fresh it is so strongly impregnated
 with lime that it is far from whole-
 some. The mangroves grow to a greater
 height here than elsewhere within my expe-
 rience. The natives divide it into two varieties
 the Black and the red. I had the
 black mangrove cut down from ^{one of} the

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lines of eight, that measured 85 feet from roots to top. When season the mangrove wood looks much like mahogany and is very hard, it takes a high polish, when burned the ashes are very strong in pot ash ~~a very small quantity of~~ ashes a fact that may prove of value come of these days because the trees are so accessible. The old Gilberts Bar Entrance now closed, is shown on this sheet. Wherever the salt and fresh water meet the mangrove flourishes and such has been the case at Gilberts Bar. Once fine oysters grew there and all kinds of fish belonging in these waters were abundant but since the inlet closed the oysters have died and the fish are few except a few bass and catfish, just outside, however and along the old Gilberts (Conchina Reef) there are lots of them. Baracouta, Pompano, Bluefish, Cavallio, Green Turtle, Mullet, Sea Bass and a beautiful fish much resembling

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Our Spanish Mackerel but having more beautiful colors and very game. Following them I have seen them take the hook and bound 5 to 10 feet clear of the water, I had thought the blue-fish game and the taking of it fine sport but one of these beauties far exceeds any thing I ever saw for pluck, rapidity of motion and beauty of form and color. From October to April the climate is delightful and the Indian River is the boatman's paradise, from May to Sept. the heat although seldom above 85° is seldom below 80° and the Mosquitoes and other insects are very troublesome. In all of the waters represented on this sheet the eelgrass grows luxuriantly and it is the favorite food and principal feeding ground of the Manatee. I have seen a herd of ten feeding in the St. Lucie of at one time, they go to bottom, eat, rise, blow the water in a spray from their nostrils and in a few seconds

they sink again, like other grazing animals they feed ^{early} in the morning and late after-noon principally. They are very careful of their young and I never saw one turn to flee until the calf was well started, There are a great number of Coots in these waters in the fall & winter and a few other ducks, In the woods there are quail, or partridge, and wild turkeys, Very many small birds of various colors migrate from these shores to the Bahama Is., every winter returning about the first of may. The country in 1880 had but one settlement, it now has several and the tide of immigration seems to be setting ~~this way~~ towards it. Settlers have located up the St. Lucie near the fort and they are prospecting in every direction. The influence of ocean tides are not felt within the limits of this sheet on the Indian River, during the rainy season the water rises one or two feet higher than in the dry season and at all times the

prevailing wind exercises great influence
 A Northern making high water, a South
 Easter or S. Wester making low water,
 The mean rise and fall of the ^{mean} tide
 is ^{about} 1.8 fath and the prevailing current
 along the coast is to the Southward
 The edge of the Gulf Stream is only
 2 or 3 miles off shore and an
 easterly wind throws it much nearer
 in shore the prevailing southerly current
 is supposed to be an eddy from
 the Gulf Stream. The limit of this
 sheet marks what is probably the
 Northern limit of the successful
 growth of the Coaco Nut Palm,
 Orango, Pineapples, Banannas and
 Sugar cane flourish, the tomato
 and other vegetables ripen in April, Sweet
 Potatoes grow the year round and I have
 eaten from one which I was informed
 was of two years growth. There was
 not a horse an Ox or a mule
 within the limits of this sheet, broken
 to harness in 1882-3.

House of Refuge No. 2 was the best dwelling within the limits of the Sheet and Doctor Baker's was the only place that look like a home. The Rattle Snakes are the largest I have ever seen being from 6 to 7 feet long but they are not very numerous. Alligators are no longer numerous and they have learned to be very shy. Raccoons and Opossums are so thick that it is difficult to raise domestic fowls. The wild Cots grow about 4 ft in from tip to tip when extended. Black Bears come to the beach every year about the 1st of June and come in for turtle eggs. When they arrive they are nice and fat and are very good eating but after running up and down the beach so much they get very thin. We were told that a bear could be seen almost any night and once we went over and got one but the mosquitoes were so bad that we did not try it again.

The prettiest land on this Sheet is the peninsula lying between the St. Lucy R. and Indian River and from Mt. Pleasant South to the point. It is high hammock land, with Coquina, foundation and covered by a heavy growth of Hard wood and underbrush with now and then a pine. This country had quite a population in it once, just before the Seminole outbreak, and for a time after it, the settlers had oranges, lemons & limes, some of the old trees are still to be found in the vicinity of Eden P. O. and the limes are very fine but the oranges are bitter and the lemons not bearing.

B. A. Estlin,

Asst. Sec. U. S. G.

Chief of Party.