

From Lemon City to Lantana by Hack

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pages 70-73.*

The following was written in November, 1893, before the railroad was finished to Lake Worth, and about the beginning of the cutting of the canal between Lake and Bay:

We commence at Lemon City on the Bay, and writing up, taking notes as we ride up on the old trap then called a hack, the motive power being mules that had not been curried since their arrival in Dade county, and had seemingly lost the devilish spirit supposed to be forever lurking beneath mule hide, ready to break forth at the most inconvenient time and tear things all to smash. These did nothing of the kind, but seemed on the point of lying down and going to sleep at any moment.

It was a long, tiresome trip at best — sixty-three miles with little to relieve the eye, after having once been over it and having nothing new in the way of scenery to expect. The fact is, one really gets a very poor idea of the country, as the road either follows on the high ridge next the saw grass flats adjoining the ocean beach ridge, or is in the low beach scrub, only seeing good land (except the saw grass) when crossing streams.

These saw grass flats are really the muck lands for the most part and run all the way down with only the beach ridge between them and the ocean and are from a half to two miles wide, with lakes, some of considerable size and having names, viz: Boca Ratone, Dumfoundland Bay and Lagoon. This was once an inside water course or an estuary the same as Indian River and of which Lake Worth is a part or continuance. We have been told by old residents that during one of the "high water" seasons several years ago parties sailed from Lake Worth into Biscayne Bay.

The route of the East Coast Canal is through this stretch or old river bed, taking advantage of the lakes and lagoons on the way.

Much of this muck land is amenable to cultivation now, but the canal will drain and reclaim all of it, and at the same time afford means of transportation to the truck growers settling along its route.

The high lands back afford fine residence sites and suitable soil for fruit growing. The Everglades are back from a mile to six or seven and even more in some places, while, as will be seen further along, there are numerous creeks and rivers, rising in the Everglades and flowing into each other and finally finding their way through New and Hillsboro Inlets, or into the northern end of Biscayne Bay.

Along these streams, in the edge of the Everglades and in them, there is abundance of fine timber, mostly cypress, some pine, and the various woods peculiar to the country, but of little service in building. The first named is very fine.

On the streams the land is termed hammock, of which there are two grades, high and low, but all good.

LITTLE RIVER

Little River is one-and-one-half miles from Lemon City, is three miles long, narrow and deep; rises in Wood's Hammock from five iron springs, so claimed, but we think it must be some other mineral as there is nothing in the country indicating the slightest approach to an iron formation; it runs into the Bay.

Four miles out and where we change mail is

BISCAYNE BAY POST-OFFICE

This was at one time the county seat, but nothing remains but a few old timbers and some lime and lemon trees.

Little Arch Creek is the next stream reached, six miles out, and one mile farther we come to

ARCH CREEK

proper. This is quite a stream and quite a curiosity, as it is crossed on a natural stone bridge of solid lime stone, and the banks are also high and rock-lined. Little Arch runs into Arch and it empties into the Bay.

LITTLE AND BIG SNAKE CREEKS

These are quite large streams near together, ten miles out, and flow into the Bay, the former joining the Big Snake first. Here we stop and eat dinner on the bridge. We don't think we ever saw so many trout and bream, and such fine ones as would rush for crumbs of bread thrown over. The next place is of considerable interest, as it was our stopping place for the night.

NEW RIVER

This place is fifteen miles farther on and twenty-five from Lemon City. Here is the Camp Hotel composed of a number of tents situated on the banks of the river and a most beautiful place. A post-office has been established there known as

FORT LAUDERDALE

from the proximity of an old Indian fort established by our troops during the Seminole troubles, and which was located down near the inlet. The river is about one hundred and fifty yards wide at the camp; rises in the Everglades about three miles westward and flows into the ocean about five miles east, forming a very safe inlet, bearing same name, with full six feet of water on the bar at ordinary tide. Sail craft of considerable size easily ascend, bringing supplies to the camp or to the dredge, cutting north from near the inlet, but now completed up and beyond Hillsboro Inlet. This portion of the canal was completed into Lake Worth in April, 1895, one dredge working south from Lake Worth and meeting the one cutting north.

NEW RIVER FIBER FARM

This is an enterprise of a Jacksonville corporation, of whose operations we shall have more to say hereafter. The house of the manager is located a couple of miles from New River, while the farm where the sisal hemp plant is being grown, or started, is a mile or so farther on. They are using one of the grassy savannas spoken of in this article and have succeeded in successfully ditching it. Everything points to the ultimate success of the company, who are pioneers in growing sisal for market.

SNOW CREEK

Snow Creek comes next, three miles from New River. It rises in the Everglades and empties into New River. This is properly Middle River, with north and south fork, both being close together.

CYPRESS CREEK

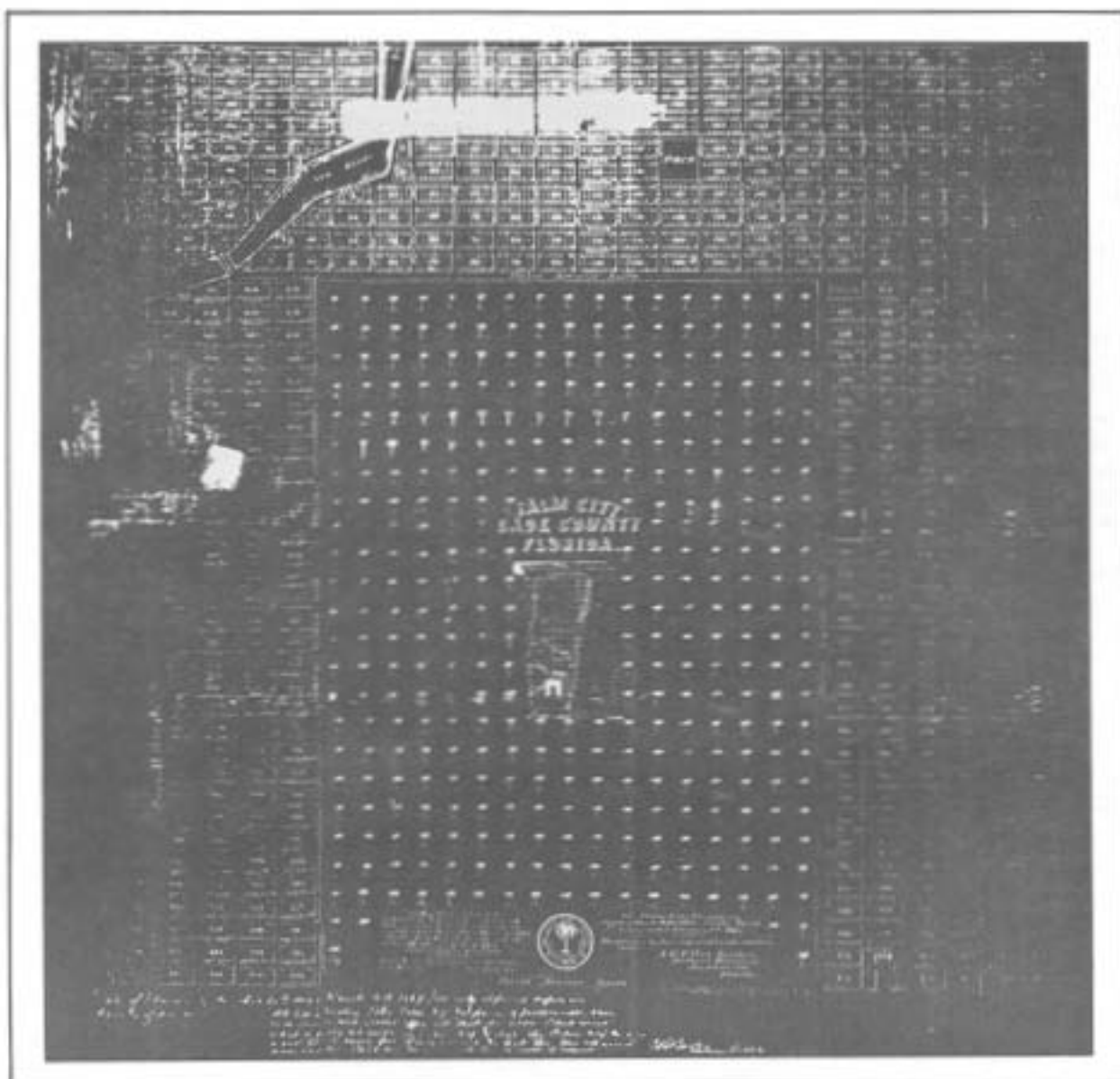
Quite a stream, swift and deep. It rises in the Everglades and empties into Hillsboro River at Hillsboro Inlet, eight miles from New River.

HILLSBORO RIVER

This river is nineteen miles from New River and about the same distance to Lantana. It rises in the Everglades and runs into the ocean about four miles from crossing. It is quite a large stream and has an inlet with sufficient water to admit light draft crafts.

INDIAN MOUND

A little over half way to Lantana will be seen the largest Indian mound in the state. In fact, the largest of the many the writer ever saw.



Plat of "Palm City, Dade County, Florida," Arthur T. Williams' proposed development on the south fork of New River, 1887.