

Florida First Cultivated Pineapples on Key Largo Back in 1866

Industry Has Grown Much Since Then—Unearthing of Old Report on Pineapple Industry Reveals Many Interesting Sidelights on This Business—Fruit Ripened in Field Is Superior to That Artificially Ripened

WHAT was possibly the first industrial report to reach the Government from Biscayne Bay came in 1893 when R. M. Munroe of Coconut Grove, special agent for fiber investigation, and proprietor of the Biscayne Bay Manufacturing Company, submitted a statement on the pineapple industry and possibility of fiber products. The following is taken from the report:

"It is claimed that pineapple cultivation was first successfully carried on in this part of the world by a native of the Bahamas, Captain Ben Baker, who established himself at the lower end of Largo Key about the year 1866, undoubtedly the result of the depression in shipping at that period and the consequent decrease in the number of wrecks which, in previous years, had been the principal, if not the only, harvest gathered in south Florida.

"Later on the industry received a further stimulus by the opening throughout the country of the large deposits of iron, coal and copper, and introduction of improved processes for working the same, thus reducing the value of old metal to the extent of making entirely profitless the dismembering of old hulks along the reef and consequent extension of the pineapple fields to the northward as far as Sands Key some 37 miles, and southward 18 miles to Indian Key, making almost a continuous line of plantations for a distance of 55 miles.

"The available land on these keys barely averages half a mile in width and consists of the honeycombed coral rock on an old reef, the interstices of which, from successive vegetable growths and deposits, have become filled with a rich leaf mold, soon exhausted and apparently unresponsive to renovation except by natural methods. With the aid of a pointed stock the young pine slips are planted, generally 12,000 to the acre, the fruit coming to maturity in 18 months, though producing suckers in less time.

"Three crops are usual from one planting, after which the land is turned over to weeds or to various less exhaustive semi-tropical productions.

"The first commercially successful plantation of any magnitude on the mainland seems to have been made by a Mr. Richards, at Eden, on the Indian River, about the year 1881, and at the Biscayne Bay region by Mr. Fuzzard of Culler in 1886, the latter thoroughly demonstrating that the hitherto supposed useless pine-land



A Scene On The Indian River Along The Banks Of Which The First Commercially Successful Pineapple Plantation Was Started.

could, with judicious fertilizing, be made to produce pineapples at a profit almost if not as great as the more fertile but less cultivated lands of the keys. These successes have led to a boom in the industry, which, like similar movements, bids fair to overstep the mark and thus entail loss to many enthusiastic but unexperienced people who have not carefully considered all the points of the enterprise. Undoubtedly there is a large and permanent field open in this section for the intelligent and progressive planter of semi-tropical fruits for several reasons:

"A very possible superiority over fruit from lower latitudes in flavor and texture from its being grown at its most northern limit is a theory with many horticulturists, but one which has few facts to demonstrate it. Systematic and scientific fertilizing and care by a people who are not apt to stop much short of perfection in prac-

tice has probably had more to do with the point of superiority; and, lastly, the assured fact that, with few exceptions, the fruit ripened in the field is superior to that picked half green and sweated in the hold of a vessel, which must be the case with the products of our foreign neighbors in the Bahamas and West Indies. Mail transportation from this section will place properly ripened fruit on the table of the consumer with the field aroma still clinging to it, and which no degree of cheapness can entirely offset.

"There are a few discouraging features of this new industry which time and experience will likely overcome. The mainland, like the keys, has for its foundation an old coral reef but with much greater elevation, age and extent. The outcropping rocks at first sight are anything but pleasing, but close inspection reveals the fact that disintegration has taken place to a large extent and that comparatively

little labor will complete the reduction, and while not wholly adapted to the making of tennis lawns, will produce land eminently suitable for the fruit farmer, inasmuch as the rock contains more or less phosphoric acid and is a good holder of other fertilizers and moisture.

"Expensive labor is another drawback common to most new localities, and though generally regulating itself in the course of time it is disastrous to the beginner with small means. And another drawback is the want of reliable transportation—an average of three days by small sailing vessel to Key West, and, if lucky in making connections, three or four days more to Northern points, but, as is often the case, a total loss from failure to connect.

"The variety of pineapple mostly grown on the keys and mainland has been the Red Spanish. This selection is due to its good shipping qualities as compared with the other finer kinds common to the West Indies, and also to the fact that but few of the earlier planters had the knowledge of and the means to procure the finer kinds from more distant localities. A few of the farms have small patches of Sugarloaf and Puerto Ricos for local consumption only. The American planter, of the main, has, and is securing, the tropical earth. In a few years it will indeed be a rare variety that is not represented on Florida soil.

"Regarding the other side of the industry, it has long been known that the leaves of many varieties of pineapple contain a more or less valuable fiber. With the idea that the leaves of the common variety grown in this country might be of commercial value in this respect and thus prove an extra source of profit to the planter, the department began its present investigations in that direction. Although in the end it may prove more advantageous to plant special fruitless varieties for fiber production, the only object at present has been to add, if possible, an extra source of profit to pineapple farming in the shape of ready sale for the leaves after their usefulness to the plant has passed and the fruit has been cut.

"The practice has been to let the leaves decay under the plant and afford possible nourishment to the young suckers.

(Factory experiments eventually proved that the yield of fiber from freshly cut pineapple leaves would range from 45 to 60 pounds from 2,240 pounds of leaves.)

WEST FLORIDA SEEN AS FINE FARM SECTION BY STATE COMMERCE HEAD

A visit to West Florida with the object of meeting leading business men of that section will be undertaken by Herman A. Dunn, President of the Florida State Chamber of Commerce, at the earliest opportunity. Mr. Dunn announced today. While no plans for the visit have yet been made it is highly probable the State Chamber executive will ask that one or two meetings be arranged at central points in order that he may discuss the future of that territory with its leaders.

"I realize that development of the entire state of Florida cannot go ahead on an even scale without the thorough co-operation of that wonderful western agricultural section," said Mr. Dunn. "Not only are some of the best lands in Florida located in the western arm of this peninsula, but many of the best minds are there, and we need their co-operation and help in planning future development of the commonwealth."

"The State Chamber of Commerce," Mr. Dunn said, "regards West Florida as the future staple food cupboard of Florida and as the future dairy center of the South. Nowhere in the country is there land better adapted to dairying. Nowhere is there such an opportunity to produce staple food crops on a large scale. Fruit production, now emerging from the experimental stage, soon will bring millions of dollars to West Florida. With the rabbit-eye blueberry it eventually will almost monopolize the blueberry industry of the country. West Florida, this season, will ship grapes in carload quantities. Its production of peaches, pears and plums is increasing. Already the little town of Graceville, in Jackson county, ships more watermelons annually than any other point in the world, and Jefferson county is producing eighty per cent of the world's supply of watermelon seed. The territory, too, is producing the highest grade paper shell pecans by the ton and I do not regard it as improbable that within a few years it will be the country's principal source of supply for this commodity."

"West Florida primarily is an agricultural section and, as a consequence, the solution of its problems lies in the opening up of the territory, something that can be accomplished only by the building of highways. Reports reaching me recently are that West Floridians are keenly aware of this fact and are going ahead with the development of highway systems. There is nothing else that will so accelerate the development of the country."

Vote Funds for County Agent for Highlands County

The County Commissioners of Highlands County have voted funds to insure the services in the county of a farm agent and to contribute to the farm cultivation work going on there. Six thousand dollars was the total of the sum appropriated by the commissioners.

Half of the appropriation will be allotted to the payment of the farm agent's salary.

Expert Inspects Tree That Bore 2,108 Avacadoes

THE ever-bearing avocado tree owned by Dr. E. E. Schmidt, of Blanton, has been heralded so widely the United States Department of Agriculture has become interested. Professor E. W. Savage and his son, Prof. F. W. Savage, of the Department, have inspected the tree.

Prof. E. W. Savage discovered that the Schmidt tree produced 218 avocados last year, while the largest yield ever known heretofore was 670. The two scientists made every possible test of the tree during their visit, inspecting blooms and pollen every thirty minutes for twenty-eight consecutive hours. They found that it is self-pollinating.

Marion Associations an Aid to Farmers There

The South Marion Dairymen's Association at Pedro and the North Marion Dairymen's Association at Lowell are two recent farmers' organizations in the county which are firmly established and are promoting improved dairy practices in the county. The two associations recently purchased a carload of cottonseed meal and are encouraging the farmers of the county to grow their own roughage and grain feeds, and mix their own feeds.

The associations have also brought 12 good cows from Volusia county into Marion, and with the assistance of the county agent, C. R. Hiatt, have kept farmers from buying for dairy purposes any of a carload of scrub cows, partly beef breeds, which was shipped into the county.

These associations were organized in December of last year, with the assistance of Mr. Hiatt, and now have their own secretaries who handle the business of the two associations. The Pedro association has 15 members and the Lowell association 30 members.

Investors in Lakeland Region Interested in Farms

Many acreage transactions have been reported by Lakeland real estate firms within the past few weeks indicating that purchasers of property are taking a new interest in farm lands, a condition which has not been noticeable heretofore because of the predominance of lot buyers.

Ten acres of groveland were sold in Lakeland Highlands to L. P. Broadfield and R. M. Marler, of Lakeland, by J. M. Taylor, for \$13,000.

Another grove sale, which is, in reality an estate development, was that of the 20-acre Kaufman property in Lakeland Highlands for \$60,000. C. F. Smith, Detroit chain store operator, was the purchaser and he has announced his intention to build on it a \$100,000 residence.

FLORIDA FORCED TO IMPORT FOODSTUFF

\$100,623,070 Worth of Food Brought Into State Last Year

When one considers that \$100,623,070 worth of foodstuffs was imported into the State of Florida last year one can readily realize the necessity and the need for a greater appreciation of this State's agricultural resources. Florida farmers see in these figures verification of their opinion that the State can consume much more of the products of the farms of Florida than she does now, if only the available farm lands here were cultivated.

Farmers outside the State will receive these figures with some degree of gladness. Many middle western farmers are said to be anxious to settle here and are glad to receive such news as this as further proof of the contention that Florida needs farmers.

Florida citizenry consumed \$20,427,650 in beef and veal. Only \$6,628,534 of this amount was produced at home, while \$13,979,106 was bought in other States.

A total of \$25,579,400 in pork and bacon was consumed during the twelve months. Home production amounted to \$6,176,179 and Government figures show \$19,403,221 was shipped in.

Consumption of lard amounted to \$4,266,230. Of this amount only \$1,066,562 was produced in Florida. Lamb and mutton were consumed at the rate of \$1,740,000 during the year. The State was able to produce only \$40,000, while lamb dealers shipped in \$1,700,000.

Floridians consumed during the year a total of \$31,125,000 in milk. Outside producers shipped in \$24,035,181 of the total amount. The consumption of poultry for the year amounted to \$11,250,000 with \$3,750,000 of this amount being produced within the State.

Much Progress Is Being Made in Marion County

Much progress is being made in Marion county. Reports received by the chamber of commerce of the county, at its headquarters in Ocala, from all parts of the county indicate a steady advancement and bright prospects for the year.

Fairfield, northwest of Marion, reports thirty earlot shipments of cabbage for the month of January and February and six cars of lettuce.

Fairfield also reports for the year, 1925, forty earlot shipments of beans, fifteen of cucumbers, eleven of lettuce, twenty-seven of cabbage, three of tomatoes, and one car of pepper and eggplants. Also one thousand express shipments of beans; one thousand express shipments of cucumbers, and one thousand similar shipments of peppers and egg plants.

Fifty thousand dollars represents the approximate value of real estate transfers for Fairfield during the months of January and February.

Among the business changes is the Joyce Mercantile Company, general merchandise, successors to the Gattrell Mercantile Company.

POWER BOAT GROUP NAMES OFFICERS

Florida Association Reelects President, Secretary and Treasurer for Year

The president, secretary and treasurer of the Florida Powerboat Association were reelected for the coming year at a recent meeting of the association in Tampa. They are: F. E. Demarest of St. Petersburg, president; H. Simmonds, Jr., St. Petersburg, treasurer, and A. (Pop) Pissott, Tampa, treasurer.

Commodore Selby of Sarasota was named first vice-president, and Commodore Willett, of Mount Dora, was elected second vice-president.

The association expressed itself in favor of strictly adhering to class rules in competition, and went on record as favoring a standard rate for shipments of boats from one place to another.

The latter, reducing rates for transportation of the boats, would tend to increase interest in the water sport, it was explained and bring out many more competitors.

'Work' is the remedy for Florida's "growing pains," Roger W. Babson, financial expert, told the Tampa Board of Trade. He said Florida needs more workers and fewer persons who wish to live off the other fellow's labor.

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