

Excerpts from Memoir of Reconnaissances  
With Maps During the Florida Campaign  
April 1854-February 1858

From microfilm in the National Archive (roll M 1090) collected and transcribed for the Monroe County Public Library, Islamorada by Jim Clupper in June, 1994.

Colonel Dimmick 1st Arty. on March 6, 1854 from Fort Dallas, reports that all the islands between that post, Indian Key & Cape Sable had been examined with the exception of the islands between Indian Key and Cape Sable, which had just been examined by Capt. McGown, and with whom Polly & Philippe(?) had been left - Who were of no use - Polly not recognizing any feature of the country passed over - and acknowledged she was so young when at Key Largo she could not take the command to the point where she saw fresh water. Passed thro' Card's & Barne's Sounds examining & scouting as far as practicable the west side of Key Largo - which is an impenetrable Mangrove Swamp- the command being unable to scout the island from that side, was directed to scout the islands on Card's & Barne's Sounds. From the latter proceeded to Vermont (Windley) Key examining it and Upper Mattacumba. At Vermont Key supplied Capt. Brannans Company with water and directed the Captain to scout the Southern point of Key Largo. Directed Captain Doubleday to scout the islands N.W. of Vermont Key and to reach Indian Key the next evening from whence he was directed to retrace his steps thro' Card's & Barne's Sounds and examine some islands more minutely than before and then proceed to Key Largo and scout down to meet Capt. Brannans company - The 2 companies arrived at Fort Dallas on the 4th & 5th inst. In Card's Sound discovered, by the aid of Pilot Duke, on the main land a fresh water stream not heretofore known - The Everglades were so dry as to enable the command to burn the undergrowth on all the islands - Captain Brannan when at Chi's Cut attempting to reach the Everglades on the 12th Feby. observed a recent track of an Indian and followed it to a launch of the same cut where he lost it & again at the hunting grounds on the morning of the 18th saw the trail of 2 Indians very recently made, followed the trail to a creek where it was lost.

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Capt. Brannan 1st Arty. reports having left Fort Dallas on 9th February 1857 with 2 Subalterns & 50 rank & file of Company "B" 1st Arty. and arrived at Caesars Creek at sunset that day - On the 10th & 11th Elliotts Key, Rhodes Key & the adjacent ones were scouted - several Indian camps were found but all old - Crossed Key Biscayne Bay on the 12th from Caesars Creek to Chi's Cut, sent a party to ascertain if it was the right river who returned reporting that it was & that Indian tracks were found which were quite fresh - The command then proceeded ashore & passed up the river stopping at the camp where the Indian tracks were seen - the trail disappeared in a small creek about 2 or 300 yards from Chi's Cut. No further signs were seen at this point. Proceeding up the river about 1 1/2 miles dragging the boats about 1/2 mile over the land, the river not being passable & filled with logs roots & mangroves. Feby. 13th landed on Chi's Cut, about 2 miles from its mouth & proceeded up as far as the day previous endeavoring to find its source without success. Feby. 14th. Left camp with 5 canoes & proceeded up the river cutting a passage thro' the obstructions & about 5 P.M. came to its source, distance from its mouth about 5 miles - it spread out over the source thro' mangroves interspersed with wet hammock islands - no channel could be found any further up - encamped on an island & returned to camp next day. Feby. 15th. Sent a party to examine a stream that runs from Chi's Cut in a more Southerly direction about 1 1/2 miles above the camp - which was found to empty into the Bay about 2 miles S. of Chi's Cut. Chi's Cut or Little River as it is called by the Coast Survey is only a small creek having its source in a Mangrove Swamp. Feby. 16th. Left Chi's Cut and

proceeded to examine one of the rivers about 6 miles S. of the camp at the hunting grounds & endeavored to find its source - at its mouth it is wide deep, has a rocky bottom & for a 1/2 of a mile is navigable without difficulty, it then branches off into small streams until lost in the prairie - About 3/4 of a mile from the mouth two distinct tracks of Indians were found & of very recent date - not more than 24 hours old - Scoured the place and followed the trail to the stream where it is lost. A party was sent under Lt. Duryea the same day to the spot where the Indian Camp was found in November last, no indications of Indians were seen - The Command was embarked on the Schooner "Laura" for Key Largo and arrived there next day & encamped in a Mangrove Swamp in Card's Sound. The next day the entire shore in a Southerly direction was examined and a landing endeavored to be effected, without success, on account of the thick mangroves which line the whole distance as far as the cut entering into Little Barnes' Sound. Went W. about 10 miles and endeavored to find Taylor's River but failed - returned to camp rowing about 35 miles. The next day passed thro' Little Barnes' Sound & skirted the N. shore of Barnes' Sound & found a small cut 1 1/2 miles long passing into a large Bay N. Feby. 24. Run about a S.S.E. course & encamped on Vermont Key after examining all the Keys on the route - The next day scouted Vermont Key & Mattacumbe Key: on the latter found good fresh water Atlantic side & near the N. end, where there are 2 houses - no signs of Indians on the Key. Feby. 26th. Left for Key Largo and arrived there that morning passing thro' Tavernier Cut. On the 27 & 28th Feby. 1st. & 2nd. March scoured Key Largo from its lowest point to Basin Hill and no signs of human beings ever been there except the Coast Survey - most of the Key on the W. side is an impenetrable mangrove swamp - and also on the E. side but not to the same extent - no fresh water was to be found on the Key - Returned to Fort Dallas on the 5th March 1857.

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Capt. A. Doubleday, 1st Arty. reports that he left Fort Dallas on 18th Feby. 1857 with Co. E 4th Arty. in obedience to orders from Col. Demick, reached Caesars Creek that day & encamped - Feby. 19th. The Company started this morning & reached a point on the upper part of Key Largo in Card's Sound, where it was overtaken by Company "B" 1st Arty. after scouting Key Largo for a short time both companies landed & encamped - The scouts revealed nothing but endless Mangrove Swamps on all sides. February 20th. Scouted the upper and inner portion of Key Largo as far as Pumpkin Key - The whole country is a vast Mangrove Swamp intersected by numerous salt water creeks shallow at the mouth, but very deep after passing the bar. February 21 st. Established a camp at Crab Point in Card's Sound, and proceeded to investigate the western portion of Key Largo, which forms the Eastern boundary of Little Barnes' Sound, which proved to be but interminable marshes. Some salt water creeks were discovered ending in a lake in the interior of Key Largo. Went entirely thro' to the Atlantic Side, but could discover no indications that any human being had ever been there, returned and continued our examination as far as the outlet which leads into Barnes' Sound, at which point the scout connected with Captain Brannan - Feby. 22nd. Examined the creeks mentioned above under the impression they might give a passage thro' Key Largo Into the Ocean, but found they came out in Barnes' Sound, all of which presented the same character as those previously explored. February 25th. Scouted Plantation Key which contains a small portion of firm rocky land, the remainder being swamp. At night returned to Vermont Key - February 26th. Started to scout the numerous small keys in the bay which had not been previously examined - found the greatest difficulty in approaching the islands on account of the low water on the bars, which for long distances would be only two or three inches in depth - Only on 4 of these Keys dry land was found the remainder being Mangrove Swamp. Feby. 27. Continued scouting with the same results and reached Indian Key in the afternoon Feby. 28. Started for the upper end of Key Largo and at night reached Shoal Key - March 1st. Went to Caesar's Creek and examined on the way some islands. Found them surrounded by shallow water and covered with Mangrove Swamp - March 2nd. Proceeded to the upper extremity of Key Largo to scout

down. The island has a firm ridge of rocky land in its center running thru' nearly its whole length which is bordered by Mangrove Swamps on the Eastern & Western Side -  
No signs of Indians could be found on it. March 3rd & 4th spent in returning to Fort Dallas.

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#### Marco Inlet 1855

On the 5th of May 1855. Capt. Pratt, 2nd Arty. reports that on the 18th of April he proceeded with his company on the Steamer "Texas Ranger" to Malco (Marco) Inlet and assisted by Lieuts. Robertson and Blunt, 2nd Arty. commenced an exploration of the coast - the sketch accompanying his report was transmitted to Washington and had not been returned. Lieut. Robertson was ordered to make an examination North and East from Malco to follow the shore of the mainland from Juan Pass around Eastward and ascend every River and Creek. On the 21st of April he entered a creek making from the N.E. corresponding with Malco. - On the 20th he again ascended to the Indian Fields the water still salt. Unable to proceed further in a skiff - continued a mile and a half by land when he found fresh water - It is a narrow creek rising probably in the Big Cypress navigable only for boats drawing less than two feet of water. The Indian field is three miles from the mouth of the creek. - Lieut. Blunt & Capt. Pratt were employed East and South - April 21st. Visited White Horse Key passing from Malco Inlet through a narrow channel to Gallivans Bay - The entrance to the channel is difficult to be found. Boats drawing more than two feet cannot pass through - White Horse Key - A small mangrove island Southern shore high sand ridge - water obtained by digging not fit for use - Returned to camp via Cape Roman - Found on White Horse no place to encamp - as represented by the guides. April 23rd Lieut Blunt with eight enlisted men was directed to proceed to Caximbas and Chokoliska and ascertain if either was suitable for a camp, on his return he reported fresh water could not be found at either place. - He ascended Chokoliska Creek several miles. Examination continued in the neighborhood of Malco Inlet until 28th of April. On the 2nd of May Lieut. Blunt ascended Chokoliska Creek Six or Seven miles as far as it would admit a skiff - the water still salt banks lined with mangrove and country on either side marshy - No Indian towns or lodges discovered deserted camps were found on some of the outer Keys and on the creeks - probably camps of fishing & hunting parties. The Indian field at Chokoliska planted in corn in 1854 and water melons in 1855. - Where Indian fields have not been under cultivation for several years.

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Lieutenant Pratt reports that on the 7th of May he proceeded to examine the coast in the vicinity of Corkscrew River and the country on the mainland from a point East of Carlos Inlet to Malco River, The shore of Otsego (Estero) Bay - examined - Is low, indented by numerous inlets and broken for some depth with mangrove. Pines approach the shore in many places but only come down to it at one place. - In the position of Corkscrew River - laid down on the maps found a stream entering the bay but could not ascend it more than 1 mile on account of dense growth of mangroves - water was very deep and dark colored - stream ten feet wide. Proceeding to the Gulf on the Southern side of the bay entered a small channel which led into the channel of a River running from the south. Followed it up to about 3 miles above its fresh water point, being by the channel about 20 miles from the Gulf - the lower part of the river for 12 miles varies in width from 1 mile or more to 100 yards - the banks rise two feet from the water. Above this it