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Letter from the Land of Flowers, Fruit and Plenty

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“A LETTER FROM THE LAND OF FLOWERS,
FRUIT AND PLENTY” *

[Pasco County and The Farmers' Alliance]

Macon, Florida [1889]

EDITOR MERCURY: - Believing that your readers would like to hear from South Florida, I will write a few lines. This part of the state is thinly settled. Pasco county has a population of 4,500, is on the western coast of South Florida, has good railroad facilities and the citizens will give you hearty welcome, if you wish to come to a country where there are no northerners and the winter months are almost like spring time. The weather during December has been delightful, the thermometer ranging from 60 to 75 deg., during the day, and at night it falls to 50. The most disagreeable season is the rainy season in the summer. At this time of the year we have but little rain.

The most of Pasco county is high, rolling pine lands, which produces fine vegetables, grapes, long staple cotton and fruit, if they are fertilized. The low lands are good for raising vegetables and oranges, when they are fertilized. The hammock lands will grow fine vegetables and fruits without fertilizing. Oranges is the staple crop of South Florida. In this part of the state we raise corn, potatoes, grapes, vegetables, (cabbage, tomatoes and beans are raised for market), tobacco, oranges, lemons, pine apples, bananas, limes, plums, peaches, (peaches don't do well) and figs.

There is money in an orange grove but you need not expect to get a good grove for the asking. They are high priced. It takes money and a great deal of hard labor, from six to ten years to get them to bearing, after which it is necessary for you to give them constant attention and fertilize them plentifully. Forty trees will do well on an acre and a tree will bear

* This letter is from *The Southern Mercury*, Dallas, Texas, January 9, 1890. Professor Robert C. Cotner of the University of Texas called it to the attention of the *Quarterly*.

from 500 to 3,000 oranges. They bring on an average at the tree \$1 per box, and a box holds from 96 to 300 oranges.

Macon is a nice and pleasant town on the South Florida and O. B. [Orange Belt] railroad and one mile from where the F. S. [Florida Southern] and F. C. [Florida Central] railroad crosses. There is considerable excitement in this and other counties over the finding of phosphate beds. Men are here now buying lands wherever they can find phosphate.

[The Farmers' Alliance]

The Alliance is coming to the front. It is a power in the land. Brethren, let us, like brave soldiers, come to the front and be true to the cause we are fighting for. Victory is ours, if we will only work as a unit. Brethren, read your state paper and the national organ; keep well posted. The Alliance is gaining strength here and all over the state. We have an Alliance store here and at San Antonio on the Orange Belt railroad. Both are doing a good business. Yours,

J. F. MOODY.

TEQUESTA

The issue for 1951 of ***Tequesta, The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida*** appeared as our last number went to press, hence this delay in our congratulations on its excellence to the Association and to its editor, Charlton W. Tebeau. This is the eleventh of the series, and the sixth issue which Dr. Tebeau has produced. Its 102 pages makes it one of the largest of the eleven, and the contents makes it one of the most interesting.

The average historical magazine is often dry and sometimes dull, but who would not be interested in the colorful narrative of the leading article ***Miami on the Eve of the Boom, 1923***, by Frank B. Sessa, as well as the other articles of the issue.

Dr. Sessa, formerly of the History Department of the Uni-

versity of Miami and now Director of Libraries of the City of Miami, says:

Miami, in 1923, was on the threshold of its first great period of expansion, its boom. In a large measure the stage was set and the characters moved into place. The pattern of the boom was set, too, for Miami was a curious combination of the serious, the artistic, and the bizarre. For every conservative, well-planned development offering attractive home sites and improvements to its investors, like Coral Gables, for instance, there were many which traded upon barbecues, jass bands, and car raffles to attract buyers to lands of dubious value. Just so was the community with its established businesses, its lectures and concerts, and its Seminole golf caddies, beach honky-tonks, and fiery letters painted on North Carolina rocks.

In contrast, economic development of the region is brought out in *The Pennsuco Sugar Experiment* by William A. Graham. In the early days of the Territory of Florida sugar cane was the most extensive crop planted on the East Coast; but the Seminole War with its widespread destruction, wiped out the industry. Later, cane was planted to some extent in central Florida, around Homosassa, and in the Manatee region, until the War for Southern Independence and its aftermath put a brake on that. In the upper Everglades region in the 1880's, and around Okeechobee about 1915, sugar was produced, but its future was still uncertain.

Mr. Graham, who had a part in what he tells, describes the operations of the Pennsylvania Sugar Company which in 1919 became interested in sugar production in the Everglades and began planting on a large scale. Continuously experimenting and solving most of the problems of an industry in a new region, the effort at last failed, largely because of floods; and, by degrees, crops of vegetables took the place of cane until the Company at length withdrew in 1931.

The horticultural importations and experiments of Dr. Henry Perrine, and the Indian Key Massacre in which he lost his life, arouse a perennial interest. So his *Random Notes of Tropical Florida* published in *Magazine of Horticulture* (Sept. 1840) is reprinted in this issue of *Tequesta*.

Another installment (30 pages) of *Across South Central Florida in 1882*, begun in the last issue of *Tequesta*, is reprinted from the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*. This is an account of an exploring expedition sent out by the *Times-Democrat* for "heralding the potentialities of south and central Florida;" and, later, the paper bragged "Florida is now one of the most promising portions of the South. Much of it has hitherto been unknown wilderness to the rest of the world, but is now being opened up, redeemed and rendered habitable. Immigrants of the best kind are pouring in from all directions and helping to build up the State, and everything is promising there. The *Times-Democrat* claims some of the credit for this Florida 'boom.' Its articles, which were copied by the northern and western papers, have done much towards creating this 'boom'."

The party left Kissimmee in November 1882, and after travelling 500 miles in about two weeks reached Fort Myers; being, as claimed by the *Times-Democrat*, "the first white men who ever succeeded in making the journey" through the "unknown" Everglades region.