

LEON COUNTY FLORIDA,

Descriptive of its History, Topography, Climate, Soil, Resources and Natural Advantages.

Leon county is bounded on the north by Gadsden county and the State of Georgia, on the east by Jefferson, on the south by Jefferson and Wakulla, and on the west by Gadsden and Liberty counties.

It has an area of 730 square miles of land surface, or 467,200 acres.

Its population in 1890 was 17,752, and in 1900 it was 19,887, of which number 3,886 were whites and 16,001 were negroes.

At the close of the school term of 1904 there were in the county 73 schools, of which 34 were for whites and 39 were for negroes.

Leon county is situated between 30 and 31 degrees north latitude and 83 and 84 degrees west longitude. The entire west side is bounded by the Ocklockonee river. The southern boundary is about 12 miles, and the northern boundary about 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The surface gradually rises from the southern to the northern side, reaching in some places a height of over 280 feet above sea level. About 130,000 acres are in actual cultivation, leaving over 300,000 acres available for cultivation and settlement, over 100,000 acres of which is improved. The surface is uneven and rolling, entirely free from rocks and boulders, interspersed throughout with lakes and forest.

Lakes Lafayette, Jackson, Iamonia and Miccosukie are extensive bodies of water and abound in fish, and during the winter offer a fine field for snipe and duck shooting. The environment of these lakes is varied and beautiful. The hills surround them with gently receding curves, with bolder bluffs, or terraces rising one above another to the height of a hundred feet or more. The timber growths are of magnolia, water oak, live oak, hickory and wild cherry, which line the shore, and between, around and over these hang the clematis, woodbine and wild grape and muscadine vines. The general aspect of the country has been further described as beautifully rolling forest and field, alternating; a genuinely Piedmontese landscape, the like of which cannot be found elsewhere in the far South.

SOIL.

The soil of Leon county greatly differs from that in many other portions of the State. It is principally composed of an alluvium of red and chocolate-colored clayey loams covering a territory of about 200 square miles, and piled in a rambling outspread of sweeping hills and dales. It possesses great uniformity of texture and lies below the surface to an average depth of forty-five feet. Sand predominates in the component parts, the first foot of top soil containing about thirty times as much sand as clay. The soil does not clod or subside. An analysis by the State Chemist shows that the average soil contains the three prime elements of plant food in the following proportions: One measure of phosphoric acid and three measures of niter to each one thousand measures of soil. Soda and magnesia are present in slightly less proportions, with carbonic acid at a rate of one and three-quarters parts in a thousand. To these excellent chemical conditions may be added equability of temperature, the prolonged period of growth and the regularity and copiousness of rainfall.

AS TO HEALTHFULNESS.

It is frequently asserted by ignorant people that because Florida is comparatively level, and extensive swamps exist in certain localities, that the country is unhealthy and that malaria must, therefore, pervade every section of the State. Good climate and good health go hand in hand; we have shown by scientific facts that the climate is good par excellence, and we will demonstrate by records that experience has proven the healthfulness of Florida equally as good.

In the first place, it is not the flat, low country that it is often represented to be, except in the extreme southern portion and perhaps one or two localities near the coast; on the contrary, the greater portions of the State consist of high, rolling lands, while other portions are composed of high hills, rugged, broken and rocky, with numerous elevations of near 400 feet above tide water.

Malaria exists to some extent in every portion of the world, and, of course, in a country where vegetation grows with the exuberance that it does in Florida, where the breath of real winter is scarcely felt, the presence of malaria is to be expected; but the diseases arising from malarial influences are limited to the mildest forms of fevers and bilious complaints. There are no such uncomfortable and dangerous symptoms of malarial poisoning met with in Florida as manifest themselves in various parts of the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. Bilious fever of a remittent character is the most prevalent, but it readily yields to proper treatment. Intermittent fevers also occur, but are rarely attended with dangerous results. Typhoid fever, as known in more northerly States, is totally unknown here.

Consumptives, or those suffering from chronic disorders of the mucous membranes, particularly of the air passages, usually find much relief, if their change has not been too long postponed. Here are vast forests of pines, breathing forth their balm till the whole atmosphere is fragrant with it, and if there is a possibility of relief for the unfortunate victim of consumption, this, in conjunction with the genial sunshine and soft, balmy air, will effect it.

The climate of our State is regarded as a specific for most forms of rheumatism, and when coupled with the bathing to be had from the numerous sulphur springs, the beneficial influences of which have long been known, a cure is often certain and complete. The following comparisons from the mortuary records of various States

and territories of the United States will forcibly illustrate the superior healthfulness of Florida.

COMPARATIVE DEATH RATE.

Maine, one in 315; Massachusetts, one in 254; New York, one in 473; Pennsylvania, one in 462; Illinois, one in 579; Virginia, one in 557; Minnesota, one in 755, and Florida, one in 1,447. The records also show that the ratio of deaths to the number of cases of remittent fever is much less in Florida than in any other section of the United States. In the central section of the United States the proportion is one death to 36 cases; in Northern section, one to 52; in the Southern, one to 54; in Texas, one to 78; in California, one to every 122; in New Mexico, one to each 148; while in Florida it is only one out of every 287. And the average annual mortality for the whole State is less than 3 per cent.

On the foregoing statement of facts, concerning climate and healthfulness, Florida bases her claim to absolute supremacy over all competitors.

PRODUCTS OF THE SOIL.

The list of productions is a long and varied one, embracing nearly all the crops and fruits of the Middle, Northern and Southern States. The agricultural resources of the county are unlimited. The climate and fertility of the soil give the farmer advantages not possessed in more northern latitudes. Something may be planted every day in the year. This county is in the center of the rich agricultural section of Northern Florida, and no district of the same extent in the State can offer superior inducements to cultivators of the soil. Whether we consider its unexceptionable climate, the variety, abundance and value of its timber, the wonderful fertility of its soil, with its adaptability to such a vast catalogue of crops, the ease with which the soil is cultivated, no portion of the State can offer superior inducements to farmers.

The staple products are cotton, corn, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, oats and tobacco.

Cotton was once the chief product, but now only about 6,034 bales are raised. New land will produce about a bale to the acre, old land less. When the land is fertilized and cultivated according to the improved methods, two bales to the acre can be easily raised. The seed are readily sold at 20 and 25 cents per bushel to the cotton oil factory. The cotton seed meal and refuse hulls are extensively used for stock food and fertilizer.

Corn—About 500,000 bushels of corn is raised annually, ranging from 12 to 60 bushels per acre. This crop now has become very profitable and the surplus readily sold. Planting begins about the middle of February and laid by in June.

Sugar Cane—The farmers of this county have long since realized the value of this crop. The soil here is peculiarly well adapted for the growth of cane. Even when crudely raised and crudely manufactured, by old and wasteful methods, Florida sugar and syrup rivals in color, grain and quality the best Louisiana production. Syrup, while hot, if bottled or canned and sealed, will preserve its new flavor a long period, and when used tastes as if just brought from the mill. Syrup put up this way finds a ready sale and brings from 60 to 80 cents per gallon. This crop is planted in February and made up in October and November. The average yield is about 300 gallons to the acre, but under proper conditions and management, will produce 600 gallons. The acreage planted is small. About 5,000 barrels of syrup and 10,000 pounds of sugar is the usual crop. There is a fine opening here for a large sugar plant.

Sweet Potatoes—Nearly 200,000 bushels are raised annually. The yield is all the way from 100 to 400 bushels to the acre. The slips are planted from June to August, and early potatoes can be had the latter part of July. This is an all round food, can be used for man and beast, and should be, next to corn, the chief food crop.

Tobacco—The modern culture of tobacco has brought it to the front as a valuable and paying crop. This will soon become one of the most profitable industries of the county, returning large revenues to the farmer. The famous "Vuelta Abajo" seed seems to be the best for planting. The Sumatra tobacco, raised from the genuine Sumatra seed under shade, is equal to the foreign product. The success which has attended the efforts of tobacco growers has proven beyond all doubt that the soil and climate of this county possess all the requisites for successful tobacco culture. Besides the tobacco grown for wrappers and fillers, a very good quality of tobacco, equaling any produced in Virginia or the Carolinas, can be grown for plug wrappers, also for cigarette and pipe use. The seed can be sown for plants the same as celery seed or any fine flower seed. The usual method is to sow on land where trash and wood has been burned to ashes.

The settings are planted out in April and May. Pruning and cutting begin in July.

The yield is from 800 to 1,000 pounds to the acre. It sells from 20 to 40 cents a pound. Fancy tobacco brings higher prices.

Oats—This crop is planted in October and February, and when properly planted yields from 25 to 35 bushels per acre. Oats raised in Leon county are in large demand for seed, and this crop is becoming very valuable and profitable.

Peanuts—This crop is largely under-estimated as a food crop. The yield is about 30 bushels to the acre and the nut readily sells at \$1.00 a bushel, while the vine is valuable as forage and can be easily kept.

Cowpeas—These are always in demand. The yield is about 15 to 20 bushels per acre. The vine, cured, is a fine winter fodder.

The principal agricultural and other farm products for 1903 were as follows:

	Value.
Upland cotton, bales	6,034 \$283,776
Corn, bushels	359,340 219,129
Oats, bushels	38,099 29,066
Sweet potatoes, bushels	93,947 39,169
Hay, tons	1,853 25,442

Peanuts, bushels	12,901	12,901
Syrup, barrels	3,159	33,473
Tobacco, pounds	15,555	5,325
Pears, barrels	3,673	6,376
Peaches, bushels	1,973	1,976
Figs, crates	1,465	2,348
Live stock on hand for 1903:		
Horses, number	2,180	176,040
Mules, number	840	91,843
Work oxen, number yoke	1,020	19,680
Stock cattle—native—number	6,277	39,882
Cattle—thoroughbred, various types—number	1,426	27,448
Milch cows, number	3,197	55,237
Hogs, number	14,328	42,301
Poultry, all kinds, and their products		27,882
Dairy products:		
Milk sold, gallons	453,377	48,076
Butter, pounds	155,820	39,490

STOCK RAISING AND DAIRYING.

The natural pasturage of Leon county makes it possible to extensively enlarge this industry with the addition of some cultivated pastures. The equable climate, the abundance of water and forage greatly reduce the labor attached to this work in other districts.

The four annual grasses—the crab grass, crow-foot grass, barn grass and water grass—furnish the principal hay supplies, these seed themselves coming up in abundance when the land is stirred. Besides these, the Bermuda, sedge and smut grasses are perennial, and chemical analysis shows them to be rich in nutritive qualities.

The desmodium, known as the beggar weed, grows rank and luxuriant after the corn crop is laid by in June. This weed fully equals clover in its nutritious elements, and stock prefer it, green or dry, to any other forage. This weed can be cured and baled in the same way as other hays. All of these grasses, with sorghum cane, cattail millet, German millet, cowpeas, clover beans, turnips, carrots, with field corn planted for ensilage, furnish an inexhaustible supply of forage for stock of all kinds.

As good water, an abundance of reliable pasture, mild climate and freedom from cattle diseases form the principal requisites for successful stock raising and dairying, the above stated facts place Leon county in the front in this field of work.

Horses, cows, hogs, sheep and goats and beef cattle are raised here to some extent, yet this industry is in its infancy and all the labor and money invested in this occupation will richly repay the investor.

The Leon county horse is noted for his hardiness, health and "bottom." Good beef is a rarity in this section, because the stock sold here is fed on wire grass and hence very tough, while beef cattle fattened on Leon county pasturage is tender and palatable. There is a wide and profitable field here for enterprising people who are interested in stock raising.

Since the introduction of centrifugal separators and methods of dairying, more scientific and convenient than the old methods, dairying will soon rank as one of the chief industries of the county. The Jersey stock seem best adapted to this county for dairy purposes. Other breeds also do well. Cross breeding with Hereford, Short Horn and Devon stock has proved very successful, and the cattle of this county have already gained a reputation for superiority. There has been a steady demand for milch cows raised in Leon, and these cows always bring fair prices. The butter from Leon county has won a name for excellency abroad and large quantities have been shipped at profitable prices. There are several fine dairies already established here and good butter readily retails from 25 to 30 cents a pound. Cheese has been made here, and it is said that this branch of dairying is more profitable than butter making. Large quantities of milk are sold in the city, giving steady employment to four or five milk wagons.

The money value of dairy stock and products is over \$160,000, and of farm stock, hogs and sheep, over \$192,000.

There is a wide field here for the improvement and extension of this industry, and no other section of the State can offer better inducements to the dairyman and stock raiser than this.

TIMBER.

The forest growth of this county embraces live oak, red oak, water oak, white oak, hickory, walnut, cherry, magnolia, sweet gum, pine and other trees. The pine furnishes an abundance of lumber and the lumber mill industry is very profitable. Lumber for all building purposes is plentiful. The oak, hickory, walnut, dogwood, cherry and other hard woods offer the best inducements possible for erecting an extensive hard wood factory. A factory of this kind could easily work up axe handles, broom handles, wheelwright material and hardware of various kinds. The chinaberry flourishes here and is of very fast growth, and could be utilized for furniture and no doubt used for lead pencil covers.

The pecan, hickory and walnut are not only useful for the wood they furnish, but also for the nuts. These trees grow rapidly here and fruit heavily. The heavy growth of trees indicates the nature of the soil, and these trees, like all other bounteous supplies, are not appreciated as they should be. In addition to this forest growth, there is some cypress and black gum, which can be easily reached and utilized. A hard wood factory would be a paying investment in this county. Pecans sell readily for \$5.00 per bushel. The trees begin to bear in about six years. A pecan grove is a more certain paying investment than an orange grove.

VEGETABLES.

All varieties of vegetables can be grown and trucking, for the home market and for shipping can be made a source of immense profit. The spring garden includes garden peas, celery, lettuce, Irish potatoes, beets, cabbage and cauliflower, followed by tomatoes, onions, beans of all varieties, early corn, okra, melons, cantaloupes and egg-plant. The fall garden, beginning about