

MY FIRST TRIP TO TAMPA.

After spending a month or six weeks at Belair, the latter part of 1878 and the early part of 1879, my curiosity was aroused as to whether or not the west coast of Florida would be a better point for me to grow up with than to remain in or around Sanford. I tried to hire a single team, but as I was unknown and did not have enough money to buy a team outright my negotiations failed. One of the men working on the Belair Grove at the time told me that he knew of a man in Orlando who had a black ox and wagon which he was willing to sell for \$12. I had less than \$25. all told to my name, so with a moderate amount of money over the \$12. or \$15. I expected to pay for the ox outfit I started with this fellow workman, named Silas B. Carter, and walked to Orlando.

We left Belair shortly after breakfast, I think on February 22, 1879. On reaching Orlando we found that the ox man had changed his mind and refused to trade. I then proposed to Carter that we complete our journey on foot. He did not think I could stand the tramp, but I convinced him that I was able to begin atleast. We bought a sack full of supplies, bacon, flour, coffee, sugar, and a coffee pot, and headed towards Tampa.

Kissimmee at that time was not on the map. The first night was spent on a small pine island in a cypress swamp beyond Boggy Creek. Just before leaving Orlando Carter said we were going to pass thru a very bad snake country, and suggested that we get a bottle of whiskey, so I gave him what he said a quart of whiskey would cost and went to a saloon which was operated by Patrick, located a short distance from the old court house about where the Overstreet Arcade now is. I slept but very little the first night owing to the hoots of owls and various other strange noises. The second night we got a little

beyond a point known as Fort Davenport at that time, which I presume is in the neighborhood of the present station of Davenport. When we were about to camp for the second night I thought the surroundings looked quite snakey, so I asked Carter where the bottle of whiskey was. His reply was that we were out of the snake country, the first night was in the snake country and he had drunk up all of the whiskey.

The next night we camped on a ^{at} little point near Auburndale on one of the big lakes. The following night we camped at a point near the old Platt Grove, near where Plant City is now located, and spent the night as guests of a cracker family named Yates. They complained about having had a very bad crop season the year before, and had hardly made enough grain to feed their cow pony. We had for supper corn bread, fried sweet potatoes and syrup. They all lived in one big room, with three or four beds stuck away in the corners of the room, one of which Carter and I occupied. Shortly after we reached the Yates homestead the man stopped plowing, went to the house, ^{rubbed} wrenched out a hand basis on the side porch, picked some Florida lemons and proceeded to make some lemonade in this hand basis, which he sweetened with cane syrup. I could feel my stomach reacting against any such dose, and I was wondering how I was going to get out of indulging, but when offered a glass of this lemonade I told Mr. Yates that lemonade was one thing I was unable to drink, as it poisoned my whole system, but my friend Carter drank heavily of the mixture.

The next day about noon we reached Six Mile Creek, near Tampa. There was a farmer camping on the banks of the creek getting his dinner before going in to Tampa with eggs, chickens and other products which he had to ^{off} over. Carter and I were almost starved when

we reached Six Mile Creek. The farmer had an ox team, and had several ^{large} boards in which he was carrying the eggs to Tampa. He had a layer of spanish moss, then a layer of eggs. I inquired about the cost of the eggs, and he said ten cents a dozen. We ~~purck~~ purchased three dozen, which we proceeded to scramble and eat, and we ate until the whole three dozen were consumed. At night time we reached Tampa and camped on the old reservation. The nearest house to our camp was the old Collins house. This reservation was used as a camping ground for all teamsters that worked from the interior to Tampa, so we had plenty of company that night. I bought a barrel of oysters for 25 cents, and entertained the whole crowd. The next day I hired a negro with a small sailboat to take us to Little Manatee, and from that point we walked to Palmetto. Little Manatee was the first time I had tried to wash in salt water with soap. I know I was pretty dirty at that time, and all the soap and salt water did was to move the dirt from one place to another.

We spent a day around Palmetto and saw the old sugar mill, which is now close to where the old Atwood Grove is located. The parties we saw in and around Palmetto said that the sugar house, or mill, had been bombarded by a Federal gunboat during the ^{civil} war, and put out of business, which I learned years afterwards was not the case. We left Palmetto ^{and} headed towards Fort Meade, passing thru what is now known as Parrish. A party by the name of Parrish owned a clump of large seedling orange trees. We went to the house and asked if we could buy some oranges, and the owner told us we were welcome to all we wanted to eat. I have lost record of the number of oranges we ate at that time. The country between Manatee and

Parrish was a wilderness and from Parrish on to Fort Meade was also a wilderness. Some distance beyond Parrish we struck what was known as the wire road, which was the main highway between Tampa, Fort Meade and Arcadia. We followed this wire road until we reached Fort Meade, having camped between Parrish and Fort Meade for the night.

The next afternoon we reached Bartow, where we purchased some additional rations from a store operated by a man named Hughes. Amongst the articles purchased was prepared coffee. It was finely ground coffee, or essence of coffee, with condensed milk, and all we had to do was to put a given quantity of this mixture into a cup of hot water, and you had ready made coffee. We walked about a mile beyond Bartow, and camped on the bank of one of the creeks, Saddle Creek I believe, which is a little beyond where the present Bartow baseball park is located. The next day I had to walk across the various water courses on round logs. Carter ran across them like a cat, but I had to go very slowly, and even then I fell off of one of the logs and got pretty thoroughly drenched, and also wet our bag of rations.

We passed thru the Winter Haven section, which I thought was the prettiest country I had ever seen, and later on I had Mr. Trafford locate me 400 acres close to where the town of Winter Haven is now located.

The second day out from Bartow towards Orlando we unintentionally left our powder and shot pouch where we had eaten our lunch, and did not discover our loss until almost sundown, when it was too late to turn back. We only had one charge of shot left in our gun, and we were saving that for big game. As we failed to see any big game we camped that night without any nourishment other than

coffee, as we only had a couple of small slices of bacon left. The next morning we decided not to cook the bacon, but to eat it raw as we had about a forty mile tramp before we would reach Orlando, which was the first point we could buy rations. We got in there late in the evening, just before Patrick's store and saloon closed. I bought some sardines and old fashioned soda crackers, and that night we camped in a little turkey oak grove where the present court house is now located.

We reached Belair the following afternoon pretty well played out. My digestive organs were upset, and it was a week or ten days before I could eat with any satisfaction. I think it took us just about two weeks to make the round trip.

During our trip to and from Tampa we got considerable game, quail, squirrels, etc. I might add that Tampa at that time was not as far advanced as Sanford. They had a steamer line between Tampa and Mobile, operated by Miller & Henderson, and I believe this same firm had a store to which the farmers took their produce and exchanged it for merchandise which they could use. They got very little value out of anything they took to Tampa.

A year or eighteen months after the railroad entered Tampa Mr. Ingraham, in whose office I was employed, went to New York and wired me to go to Tampa and interview Mr. S. M. Sparkman, the railroad attorney, and have him get an option on the Hayden place, ~~which is~~ where the Tampa Bay was later located, and see if Mr. Plant advanced money for the construction of a bridge across the Hillsboro River whether they would arrange for the construction of the bridge and refund the advances made by Mr. Plant at a later date. I was

also instructed to get an option on two river lots owned by a Mr. Long. Mr. Sparkman acted promptly, and arranged with the Commissioners to borrow the money from Mr. Plant for the construction of a bridge, which I think was the Lafayette Street Bridge, and he obtained an option on the Long lots at \$500. each, and on the 40 acres owned by Mr. Hayden on the west side of the river he had an option for \$3,500. As soon as I returned to Sanford I made a report of my accomplishments by wire, and shortly had a reply stating that he would take the two lots from Long, but to offer Mr. Hayden \$3,000. for his property, which I think covered approximately 40 acres on which was located a small house and an orange grove. I carried out instructions, and Mr. Hayden refused the offer and withdrew his original price. Mr. Plant eventually paid some \$40,000. for the same property. Whether Mr. Hayden got the benefit of this increased price I do not know, but I am inclined to think there was some confidential manipulation.

With the exception of the one night which we spent in the Yates house, near the old Platt grove, we slept on the ground and in the woods during the entire trip.