Inland Routes from Fort Jupiter to Fort Dallas via Fort Lauderdale:
The Ecology, Topography and Mainland Travel in Southeast Florida 140 Years Ago


INTRODUCTION
Lieutenant J.C. Ives, U.S. Topographical Engineers, compiled this MEMOR in 1856 to supplement a map of south Florida for the military forces under the direction of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. Both the MEMOR and map were compiled from information derived from military correspondence and other maps dating from 1838. The MEMOR and map were created to provide assistance to military forces that, in 1856, were engaged against the Indians in the Third Seminole War.

Ives secured much of the data from reports that originated with Army Captain R.D.A. Wade, commanding officer of Fort Lauderdale in late 1841. From November 5 to the 11th, Wade led a military expedition to and from Fort Lauderdale to Lake Worth. This was the most successful foray against the Indians in the Second Seminole War in southeast Florida; Wade's expedition killed 8 and captured 49 Seminoles.

The MEMOR is the earliest unified description of the coastal topography of southeast Florida.

INLAND ROUTES FROM FORT JUPITER TO FORT LAUDERDALE

OLD FORT JUPITER stands upon the southern shore of Jupiter River, about three miles from the bar at the mouth of the Inlet. It is upon the western point, formed by the junction of Jupiter River and JONES'S CREEK, a stream that rises three or four miles to the south. The land in the immediate vicinity is grown up with thick scrub, and is bare of timber. The back country is a high pine region, through which the old road to Fort Von Swearingen may still be distinctly traced. Half a mile distant from the old Fort, upon the eastern point made by the creek and river, is the new post, now called Fort Jupiter. Here the pine land is still more elevated, and continues so for five miles back; the timber coming down to the water's edge, and the water itself being of sufficient depth for small boats, close in to the shore. Abundance of wood, suitable for building purposes, can be conveniently obtained. The soil is fertile. There is an excellent anchorage, and a good place for loading and unloading boats, making the site of the present Fort preferable to that of the old one, or any other location in the vicinity.

Objections exist to it now as a military position, from the fact that the Inlet is closed, and the post rendered inaccessible, from the sea, to the smallest coasting vessels. The closing of the inlet causes the locality - at other times salubrious - to be an unhealthy one; the water on the inside of the bar then becoming fresh, and inducing a rapid growth of vegetable matter, which, decaying, taints the atmosphere and engenders disease. The alternate opening and closing of this inlet is somewhat remarkable. Between the years 1840 and 1844, it was closed. At the latter period, Capt. Davis, the mail carrier from Fort Capron to Cape Florida, endeavored, with a party of four men, to excavate a channel. After digging for several hours, they succeeded by nightfall in starting outward a stream of water four inches in depth. Upon this they desisted from labor and went to their camp, which was some fifty feet from the ditch. The river inside
was unusually high, from a freshet in the everglades, and a strong north wind was blowing. At night, the sleeping party were awakened by a flood of water, and had to abandon their camp equipage and run for their lives, barely escaping being carried out to sea. The next day there was a channel nearly a quarter of a mile wide, and the rush of water could be traced far out upon the ocean.

The inlet stayed open till 1847, when it closed till 1853, during which year it opened itself, but remained in that condition only a short time. In 1855, Maj. Haskin, First Artillery, in command of the post, endeavored again to clear the channel. Sand hills of considerable size, which had accumulated, were cut through, and the attempt would doubtless have been successful but for the low condition of the water during that unusually dry year. A small amount of labor expended under favorable circumstances would, in all probability, effectually open this inlet, and render the harbor one of the best upon the eastern coast. At times it has admitted vessels drawing eight feet, and the entrance is protected from north winds by a ledge of rocks.

TWO INLAND WATER ROUTES have been explored, between Forts Jupiter and Lauderdale; one, very near the coast, and the other, some miles towards the interior. These were traversed, during the month of December, 1841, by Capt. Wade, with a command of eighty men. Both of the routes leave Jupiter River by LAKE WORTH CREEK, the mouth of which is a mile and a half below the post. This stream, like most of the rivers in Florida, is exceedingly crooked, and, where it empties into Jupiter river, is one hundred yards wide, and several feet in depth. It runs almost due north, with a strong current. Pine barren lines either bank for five miles, when on the east side a growth of sawgrass commences, extending to the sea shore, which is about two miles distant. On the west the pine barren continues, but recedes a quarter of a mile back from the creek, which, at this place, is only forty feet wide. Two miles higher up, the two routes to Fort Lauderdale diverge. The stream being no longer navigable - except at very high water, when there is sometimes a practicable channel as far as Lake Worth - it is necessary, in following

the COAST ROUTE, to pull the boats three-quarters of a mile in a southeasterly direction, through a sawgrass pond, to a haulover, four hundred yards across, which leads to the head of the lake. Over this haulover, Captain Wade's command, with seventeen canoes, was three hours in passing.

LAKE WORTH is a pretty sheet of water, about twenty miles long and three quarters of a mile in width; bounded on the west by pine barren, and the east by the sand hills of the beach, which are sometimes twelve or fifteen feet in height, and covered with cabbages, mangroves, saw palmettos, &c., with here and there a variety of the cactus. In the centre of the lake, a mile and a half from the head, is an island bearing a tree resembling the wild fig in appearance, with a fruit like the olive in shape and size, of a yellow color when ripe, and used by the Indians as food. A delicate running vine is also here found, yielding a vegetable about three quarters of an inch long, with a flavor similar to that of the cucumber. Opposite to the middle of the island is a haulover, only eighty yards across, descending twelve feet to the sea, at an angle of forty-five degrees. Two miles and a half beyond is another haulover, one hundred yards in width. Below, along the eastern border of the Lake, are long strips of cultivable ground about two hundred yards wide, separated from the beach by ponds and wet prairie. These were formerly tilled by the Indians, who had large villages in the neighborhood. The soil is light, but very rich, being almost entirely vegetable mould. Rock occasionally makes its appearance on the surface, and heaps of sea shells are strewn here and there. The country on the west side would afford fine grazing. Six miles from the last haulover, on the west side of the Lake, is Chachi's landing. A broad trail, half a mile in length, formerly led from this place over a spruce scrub towards the villages of the Indians.
whose gardens were upon the opposite side of Lake Worth, which they reached by hauling their canoes over the trail. The last fields were five miles from the foot of the Lake. A small creek forms the outlet at the southern point; along which, at ordinary stages of the water, boats can be paddled for only a quarter of a mile. They can then be pushed along the creek to its head, half a mile beyond, where commences a sawgrass marsh through which they have to be hauled. Half a mile of hauling brings to a small clump of palmettos that can be seen for some miles and serves for a landmark. Another mile through the sawgrass conducts to a lagoon along which boats may be paddled for a third of a mile; the lagoon widening into a little pond that is only a hundred and fifty yards distant from the sea. The ground rises abruptly twelve or fifteen feet and then descends rapidly to the surf. Under the mould which is but a few inches deep, there is rock, three or four feet thick; in one place ruptured, forming a cave of twenty feet front, and extending back fifteen feet; the bottom covered with water. Palmettos of enormous size and Spanish bayonets grow in the vicinity. Near by is an old haulover, used by the Indians in moving from Lake Worth to gather KOONTEE which grows in abundance on the pine barren to the west. A narrow sluggish sort of creek, five feet deep, extends from the pond for a quarter of a mile, over which distance canoes may be pushed. More than a mile of sawgrass marsh is then to be traversed before reaching the LITTLE HILLSBORO.

The head of this creek is very narrow: wide enough to allow a canoe to lie in it, but not to be turned around. The banks are eighteen inches high, formed of snail shells and black mould. The prairie is three quarters of a mile wide and covered with thick grass. Canoes have to be pushed along for a mile and a quarter, when the stream becomes sufficiently wide to admit of paddling. A quarter of a mile below is ORANGE GROVE HAULOVER. A small mound marks the spot, and among the trees that grow in the neighborhood are a few wild oranges which give the place its name. The distance to the sea is about three hundred yards. It required five days of hard labor for the eighty men in Capt. Wade's command to haul their seventeen canoes from the foot of Lake Worth to Orange Grove Haulover; the whole distance being but six miles. Twenty men were needed, in some places, to pull a single canoe. In the sawgrass marshes they would sink into the soft mud a foot deep at every step, and sometimes up to their middles; the matted grass interposing an additional and even more troublesome obstacle to their progress.

For two miles from the haulover the Little Hillsboro winds through the prairie; the width of the stream increasing gradually from seven to fifty feet. To the east grow palmettos, mangroves and wild figs, and [to] the west there is a pine barren, with palmettos and occasional thickets. A belt of mangroves, one hundred feet broad, with openings to the pine country behind, then skirts the western bank for five miles. The river opens twice into small lakes, and increases in width to one hundred feet, when it joins BOCA RATON ES.

This sheet of water is a mile and a half wide and three quarters of a mile long. The sand bank which separates it from the sea is, in one place, only a hundred yards wide. Here there was once an inlet. The timbers of a ship lie buried in what was formerly the channel. It is said by the Indians that many years ago a wrecked vessel drifted on to the bar, and, being left there by the receding tide, formed a nucleus about which the sand collected and closed the mouth of the river.

The creek that forms the southern outlet from Boca Ratones is twenty feet wide; mangroves growing along the banks, whose pendant roots obstruct, to some extent, the passage of boats; which, as the creek narrows, have to be finally hauled for a distance of two and a half miles along a small and very crooked channel. This conducts to the north branch of the HILLSBORO, a stream fifty feet broad, lined with mangroves, and increasing in size to its mouth, five miles distant, where it is about a quarter of a mile in width.

Hillsboro Inlet runs south for a mile; leaving a ridge of sand, three hundred feet wide, between it and the Ocean. It narrows very much towards the entrance, affording a passage for row-boats only. The depth of water on the bar at low tide is about two feet. Five hundred yards from the bar the river can generally be
forded; the water being three feet in depth. A third of a mile from the mouth a small creek comes in from the south. For nearly half a mile its sides are lined with mangroves; the stream gradually narrowing from thirty to twenty feet, and running between banks two feet in height. A mile and a half beyond is the head, and here it is so narrow as scarcely to afford room for the passage of a canoe. A grassy prairie, a mile wide and two miles and half long, sometimes dry and sometimes with a few inches of water upon it, leads to the head of another small creek. Pine barren still continues upon the western side. At a distance of three miles the creek enters into NEW RIVER, on the eastern side of which - four miles distant - is the site of Fort Lauderdale.

The SECOND INLAND WATER ROUTE from Fort Jupiter to Fort Lauderdale, as has already been stated, diverges from the one just described, at the point where it leaves Lake Worth Creek. An extensive sawgrass pond or marsh extends from this place, twelve and a half miles south, to Chachi's Village, which is a mile and a half west of Lake Worth. Lagoons of deep water, covered with spatterdocks, are here and there to be met with. In many places, canoes have to be pushed and hauled, but at others the water expands into grassy lakes, a quarter of a mile in extent, and generally from one to two miles apart. To the east can be seen a growth of spruce with some pines, and to the west, a line of cypress bordering the pine barren back of it. Capt. Wade's command were two days in going from Fort Jupiter to Chachi's Village. The site of this is upon a pretty island, bounded on the north and east by a deep clear pond half a mile wide, and between a mile and a half and two miles long. On the west and south it is surrounded by the grassy lake. The trail to Lake Worth leads, a third of a mile, to a small pond, a quarter of a mile across, on the opposite side of which is the haulover. Westward, a trail runs from the village to the swamp bordering the Everglades, the eastern boundary of the former being about seven miles distant. Capt. Wade's command examined this trail at a time when the water was rather low, and did not attempt to take the canoes over, as it would have been necessary to haul them a mile and a-half over perfectly dry and rather rough ground. There were indications that it had been frequently traversed in boats during high water. The grassy lake was followed by the exploring party two miles and a half to the northwest. For the last quarter of a mile the water was but a few inches deep. A dry pine barren, more than a mile across, through which runs the wagon-road from Fort Jupiter to Fort Lauderdale, forms the boundary of the lake. Beyond this is a small pond, and an eighth of a mile further a string of them, deep enough to paddle in, and generally not more than forty feet apart. At the end of half a mile of water again spreads the surface of the ground to the depth of two feet; dotted with small islands of cypress and pine.
Leaving Chachi's Village, and travelling six miles a little east of south through the grassy lake, where the water continues about two feet in depth, the pine barren to the west is again encountered at a point where the lake makes into it for a short distance. Turning to the west, canoes can cross to the Everglades at this place without difficulty, and the ponds themselves, at such times, too short to admit of canoes being paddled in them. The labor hauling is excessive. Five miles beyond, there is a belt of cypress marsh, three hundred yards wide, with plenty of water, but requiring the constant use of the axe to clear a passage for canoes. An open space of a hundred yards then leads to a boat-trail through a thin cypress growth. This continues, four miles, to a kind of haulover, where the cypress trees are of large size, and there is no water at most seasons of the year. This haulover, which is but four hundred yards in width, Capt. Wade's men were five hours in crossing; sinking sometimes several feet into the soft red mud, and having to cut a way through the cypress roots and branches, which, in tangled mass, obstructed the way and endangered the safety of the canoes. A mile beyond the haulover the Everglades commence. The route continues about thirty-five miles along the eastern border to the head of Snook Creek, which may be followed to Fort Lauderdale. Capt. Wade was two days in reaching the fort after entering the Everglades.

At very high stages of the water, many of the difficulties met with in examining the two routes now mentioned would be obviated, but it is not probable that, under any circumstances, either would be selected, were the object merely to pass from one post to the other. The mail is carried from Fort Jupiter to Cape Florida, down the strand; the intervening waters being crossed on rafts when too deep for wading. Small parties can follow the beach in this way during some seasons of the year, but it would not be a practicable route for the transportation of troops or supplies. The only one available for this purpose is the wagon-road already alluded to. This road was opened many years ago. It follows the pine barren, which extends almost uninterruptedly, a few miles from the coast, from Fort Jupiter to Key Bis-

CAYNE BAY. No itinerary of the route has been met with.

A vegetable somewhat resembling a large parsnip, from which, when it is reduced to a pulp and washed, a substance like arrow root is obtained. The juice is said to have poisonous properties.

ROUTE FROM FORT LAUDERDALE TO FORT DALLAS

OLD FORT LAUDERDALE is on the right bank of the west branch of NEW RIVER, a little more than a mile from its mouth. The branch rises in the Everglades five or six miles to the west of the Fort, and runs nearly east through cypress and pine barren. Part of the way it flows between steep rocky banks. Its average depth is about four feet. It is forty feet wide at its source, and about one hundred yards wide at its junction with the main river. Opposite this place, on the sand bar which separates New River from the ocean and which is but a few hundred yards wide, is the site of FORT LAUDERDALE. The location is healthy at all seasons. It can be approached by small vessels. When formerly occupied by troops it received supplies by haulover from the Atlantic. The ordinary mode of communication between Forts Lauderdale and Dallas is by water. New River, opposite to the former post, is about three hundred yards wide and four or five feet deep. It runs parallel to the coast, in most places only four or five hundred yards from it. The water upon the bar at low tide is but little over two feet in depth. From thence to Fort Dallas by sea it is about twenty three miles.

A wagon road, a few miles inland, is laid down upon some stretches of the vicinity. It leaves the west branch of New River at the site of the old Fort, and runs nearly parallel to the coast, passing to the west of a sawgrass marsh which extends some miles to the south. It follows, throughout its whole extent, a dry belt of country grown up with pine, palmetto, and koontee, and crosses three streams; the Boca Ratones, ARCH CREEK — which is spanned by a natural bridge — and LITTLE RIVER. The whole distance by land, from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Dallas, is about twenty five miles.