output, showing the vast increase there has been in the consumption of citrus fruit in the country during that time. This increase applies to all other kinds of fruit as well as to citrus fruits. Boston, Mass., Paper No. 1 from Committee on History.

EARLY DAYS AT CITRA, FLORIDA

A. S. Kells.

Mr. A. S. Kells of Steubenville, Ohio, went to Florida in Nov., 1876, through the influence of Mrs. Wiser of that city who had gone to Orange County, Florida, about three years before this time. She wrote of the wonderful climate, and prospects in orange growing, which made the call of the south very alluring. So five men from Steubenville went to investigate. Upon arriving at Jacksonville Mr. John O. Matthews met them, and asked them to go with him to Orange Lake, Marion Co., Fla., where he had orange lands to sell. He and his partner owned 200 acres of wild orange groves, so the party went with him. The party included Mr. A. S. Kells, Dr. Oliver Kells (his brother), Mr. W. B. Lindsey, Mr. Robert Hawkins, and Mr. Thomas Johnson.

The only way into this wild country at that time was by the beautiful Ocklawaha River. They landed at Iola, where they took a mule team, and drove 16 miles into the dark, dense forest. At sundown Mr. Matthews pulled up to a cabin. An old colored woman, Mr. Matthew’s cook, called out, “Who dar?” Mr. Matthews said, “auntie, supper for six.” She informed him “dar was not a bite for white folks to eat in de whole house.” Mr. Matthews saddled a mule and she rode 3 miles to the nearest neighbor, Mr. John Harris, to get some provisions. The appetites of these men was somewhat sharpened by the time Aunt Martha returned and had prepared the meal.

In the absence of a cooking stove, she made a fire in the yard, fried bacon, and baked some “so-called” biscuit in a “spider oven.” At last supper was ready, and the hungry men ate ravenously, while Aunt Martha stood by, holding a fat-wood torch, the black tar running down her arm. After the meal was over they sat by a fat-wood fire made in a sand box, until Mr. Matthews suggested they retire as the fire was burning out.

There were very poor accommodations for six men. They drew cuts to see how they would sleep. It fell to the lot of Mr. Lindsay & Mr. Kells to sleep in Aunt Martha’s bed (she disappeared somewhere). The other men slept on the floor on whatever they could find. It fell to Dr. Oliver Kells to sleep in the middle, between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Hawkins. It was a very warm night, and he did not altogether enjoy his lot. When the last fat-wood knot burnt out, the rats came forth to get their suppers from the sack of corn under Aunt Martha’s bed. It is needless to say the men, excepting Dr. Kells in the middle,
did not sleep. The other men hammered the floor all night and kept the rats off while he slept. The next day Mr. Matthews showed them over a beautiful tract of wild orange grove along Orange Lake front, consisting of 1,000 acres, of which he and his partner owned 200. It was presumed to have been planted by the Indians or Spaniards.

The Indian mounds and shell mounds found in these regions point to the fact that Indians had dwelt there. Some of these mounds were excavated and pieces of pottery and Indian relics were taken from them.

This wild country threw its spell over these men and they formed a company and bought 100 acres of land from Mr. Matthew's partner, Mr. Vincent.

They left them to tell the tale of the wonderful opportunities of the Southland to other northern friends, among whom they had many listeners.

In a few months Dr. Oliver Kells went down with his family to take charge of the place. He found it so wild, and far out of the world, that he only remained a short time. Then Mr. Albert Kells, his younger brother, started forth to try his luck and grit in the new land. He took his family also, Mr. D. S. Borland, brother-in-law of Mr. Kells, accompanied him. They went the same route up the Ocklawaha to Iola, and the 16 miles drive into the wilderness. They went to the cabin in the grove, built an addition to it, stopped up the rat holes, whitewashed it inside and out, opened their furniture and lived comfortably for six months, until they could haul the lumber from Iola, and build a small house in the pine woods about one half mile away from the hammock lands.

The greatest deprivation was food supplies. Everything was hauled from a little store 6 miles away at Millwood. The nearest postoffice was at Ocala, 18 miles away. Some one of the little settlement went once a week for the mail. There were five or six families in a radius of 4 miles.

After they were more comfortably located in the "Piny Woods," everything went better. Malaria was a terrible drawback. It molested every member of the family, but they all lived through it.

The cultivation of these dense wild orange groves was very difficult. Some of the wild orange trees were six to eight inches in diameter; and they grew so thick that it was impossible to walk through without first cutting a path. Many had to be cut down; others were dug up, and transplanted as new land could be prepared. Later on some were sold to new comers.

These wild groves were not in straight lines, as the orange groves of today, but were here and there in their original stand. The wild trees were cut off and budded, and produced fruit in two years from the bud.

The transportation was a great drawback to the growers in those days, the fruit being hauled to the Ocklawaha River at Iola, 16 miles away, by mule teams. It took a team one whole day to make the trip. It wasn't very long until the Florida Central & Peninsula Railroad reached Lockloosa, but owing to the long trestle to be built over Orange Lake it...
was delayed in coming to Orange Lake. The fruit was taken from the grove in flat boats, through channels cut through the "bonnets" and floating islands out to the main channel, where a small steamer met it and took it through Peegee River, or Alligator Creek and across Lockloosa Lake to the railroad.

The fruit was sized and sorted in a very primitive manner. An orange of the size to be packed in each box was placed directly in front of the man doing the work and he sized by eye. Later, boards with holes cut in them of the size of the oranges to be packed, were placed over the boxes, and every orange was fitted, or sized through them. The H. B. Stevens sizer came into existence, and was used for many years until the late improved machinery was invented. Washers were not used in those early days, as the fruit was bright and beautiful. No fertilizer was needed for many years. The orange boxes were strapped with wild grape vines until the Bangor hoops came in.

One day the Florida Central & Peninsula railroad engines thundered down the tracks. The negroes and whites, many of whom had never seen an engine, collected from miles to welcome this wonderful event, which connected the first settlers around Orange Lake with the outside world. It was not long until many people began pouring into the little settlement. A school house and several churches were erected. The little town was named Citra, on account of its production of citrus fruits. The production of oranges increased very rapidly. It was not long until the whole 1,000 acres of wild orange grove was under cultivation, and the Citra groves were known far and wide. In December, 1894, and February, 1895, these beautiful groves were cut to the ground by the terrible freeze. They were all about 20 years old, and it was a sad sight. But with the same perseverance and energy which characterized their first attacks on the wild groves, the Citra growers at once pruned back and re-budded their trees, and the present thrifty groves are the result.

Beaver, Penn. Paper No. 2 from Committee on History.

REMINISCENCES OF A PIONEER ORANGE GROWER

H. B. Stevens.

Mr. O'Byrne, chairman of the Historical Committee, has asked me to prepare a brief account of my experience in the early days of the citrus industry. In complying with his request, I make no claim to any expert knowledge or to speak with authority, for I realize that there are others far more competent to depict those good old times than I am. But I feel it incumbent upon me to do my little bit toward passing on to future generations the lessons gained in the hard