

The Great Freeze of 1885-1886

Fact Sheet

Event date: Freeze of 1885 – 1886



Figure 1. Photographs from the Florida Photographic Collection.

Summary of event: Extreme damage occurred in the south as citrus crop loss was intense. About \$1 million worth of oranges froze in the south. Pineapple plants were killed to the ground in peninsular Florida



THE FROSTBITTEN SOUTH.

A MILLION DOLLARS' WORTH OF ORANGES FROZEN IN FLORIDA.

of January; certainly it is the longest and hardest cold spell within my recollection. During former severe spells the temperature has sunk suddenly to a very low degree, and soon after risen; but the present cold seems to have come with a determination to remain with us all Winter. There have been nearly five weeks of very cold weather here, and for three successive days we have been treated to continued ice.

With few exceptions, all the pine-apple plants of the main-land of Florida were killed to the ground by the great freeze of January, 1886, while in many cases on Key Largo and the other keys the leaves of the plants were whitened.

orange trees to a minimum. Dispatches from all parts of the State confirm the belief that the cold wave carried frost to almost the extreme southern end of the peninsula, and there is little doubt that substantially the entire orange crop remaining on the trees is frozen and spoiled. The precise effect of the freeze upon the orange trees cannot be determined until the warm weather sets in. Probably every tree in the State will lose its leaves, and it is believed that most of the young trees, except those protected, are killed. The gradual thaw under cloudy skies is very fortunate, however, and the opinion prevails that the old and mature trees, which have been relied on for producing



Figure 2. Photographs and newspaper clippings.

Acknowledgements: The State Library and Archives of Florida: (Florida Photographic Collection). The Lakeland Ledger, 2005. The New York Times, January 15, 1886.