

FLORIDA CATTLE RANCHING

FIVE CENTURIES OF TRADITION



FLORIDA CATTLEMEN'S FOUNDATION

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Cover: Herding cattle through water, Horse Creek Ranch, Hardee County, 2012.
Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

*L-R: Doyle Carlton III, Brian Alexy, and Dale Carlton move a few head of cattle
with the help of yellow cur cow-dogs.*

Opposite: Cattle on the beach. Apalachicola, 1900s. Courtesy of the State
Archives of Florida, image n047144





Cow skulls on fence. Okeechobee, 2008.
Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of
the Florida Folklife Program/Florida
Department of State.

*A collection of cow skulls adorns a fence
at the Dixie Ranch.*

Introduction

Florida's cattle industry, one of oldest and largest in the nation, is vital to the state's well-being. Ranching is an essential economic activity that preserves many aspects of the natural landscape, protects water resources, and maintains areas used by wildlife or for recreation. Yet few know about Florida's unique ranching traditions, which have been adapted to the subtropical climate and influenced by the state's distinctive history.

In Florida, those who own or work cattle traditionally have been called cowmen. In the late 1800s they were often called cow hunters, a reference to hunting for cattle scattered over the wooded rangelands during roundups. At times the terms cowman and Cracker have been used interchangeably because of similarities in their folk culture. Today the western term "cowboy" is often used for those who work cattle.



Brahman, Brahman-Angus crossbred, and egrets.
Vero Beach, 2008. Photo by Bob Montanaro.

Cattle egrets among Brahman (light) and Brahman-Angus crossbred (dark) cattle at the Treasure Hammock Ranch. A common sight in Florida, the graceful cattle egrets came from Africa via South America. They eat insects that cattle flush from the grass as they graze.



Herding cattle through water, Horse Creek Ranch, Hardee County, 2012.
Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

L-R: Doyle Carlton III, Brian Alexy, and Dale Carlton move a few head of cattle with the help of yellow cur cow-dogs.

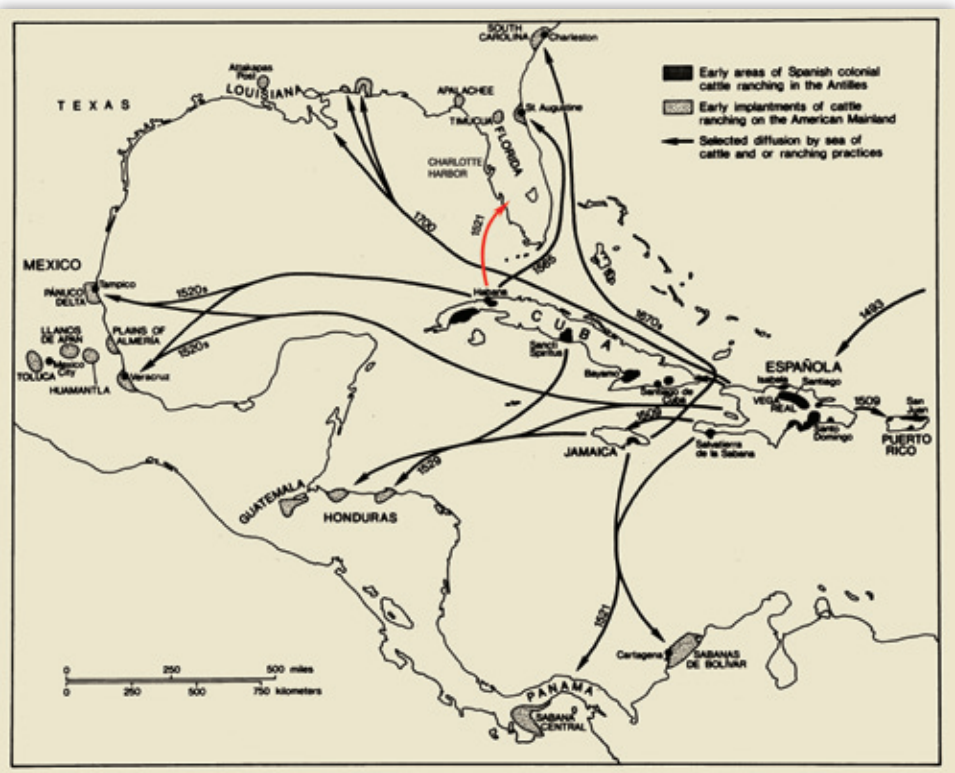
HISTORY OF FLORIDA CATTLE RANCHING

Colonial Florida

Florida ranching has evolved from many different cultural traditions, though the most important sources were the marshy coastal areas of Andalusia, Spain, and the hill regions of Britain and Ireland. In Andalusia, ranchers living in towns hired cow hands (vaqueros), who marked or branded the cattle, managed them from horses, and moved them to different locations during the year. They later brought long-horned Andalusian cattle to the Americas. In highland Britain and Ireland, herders marked or branded cattle for identification, penned them at night for protection, and moved them to different pastures during the year. In the fall, the animals were sold to drovers, who used dogs and whips to drive them to markets or slaughterhouses. The Spanish and British took these traditions to the West Indies, where they were adapted to the tropical climate and combined to create ranching systems used throughout the Americas.

Florida’s Andalusian/Caribbean cattle were the first in today’s United States. Some scholars believe that cattle brought by the expeditions of Ponce de Leon in 1521 and Don Diego de Maldonado in 1540 escaped and survived in the wild. Organized ranching began with the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, when cattle from Spain and Cuba formed the basis of herds that fed the garrison and surrounding communities. In addition to herds owned by the Spanish and Indians, wild cattle flourished in the rangelands and prairies. Eventually Spanish colonists began exporting cattle to Cuba. During the 1600s, Spanish clergy raised cattle at the missions, where many Native Americans learned to tend them.

By 1700 Florida contained approximately 34 ranches and 20,000 head of cattle. After British-Creek Indian raids in 1702 and 1704 devastated Florida cattle ranchers, Indians sustained cattle raising



Colonial Cattle Ranching in the West Indies and Diffusion to the Mainland.

Based on the map on page 66 of *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* by Terry Jordan (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), which has been revised to include the cattle brought by Ponce de Leon to southwest Florida in 1521.



Old Spanish Brands. Drawn by Joe A. Akerman, Jr. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc5555.



Florida Cracker Cow. Sponsored by the Florida Cattlemen's Foundation and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Florida Cracker Cattle descend from criollo cattle brought to Florida in the 16th century by the Spanish. Settlers of British descent who were known as Crackers moved into Florida—primarily from Georgia and South Carolina—in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The independent, hardy, and self-reliant Crackers rounded up wild Spanish cattle to form their own herds. These cattle, which became known as Cracker Cattle, were the foundation of Florida’s immense cattle industry. Cracker Cattle were able to withstand the heat and insects of the Florida environment but were relatively small and yielded less beef compared to “modern” breeds. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, Florida cattlemen sought to improve their herds by introducing breeds such as Red Devon, Hereford and Brahman cattle. The Cracker Cattle were being slowly bred out of existence. Through the efforts of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services the Florida Cracker Cattle Association was formed in 1988. Today, the future of Cracker Cattle as a heritage breed is ensured through herds maintained by the Department and private owners.

The small, lean body, head shape, and horns distinguish Florida Cracker cattle from other breeds.



Spanish stirrup. Brass, ca.16th–17th century. Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This is the only verifiable colonial Spanish stirrup in Florida.

in Florida. Many had established large herds of wild cattle and stock acquired from the Spanish. Cattle herding was vital culturally and economically to the early Seminoles, as attested to by the name of their leader, Cowkeeper (ca. 1710-1783). They remained Florida's major livestock producers throughout most of the 1700s.

During British rule (1763-1783), English planters and Creek Indians in west Florida owned substantial herds. Cowmen from Georgia and the Carolinas spread into north Florida during that period.

In early Florida, Europeans, Americans, and Indians stole cattle from each other. Rustling became particularly widespread by the second half of the 18th century, and was one of the elements that led to the Seminole Wars.

During the periods of Spanish colonization (1565-1763, 1783-1819), the main ranching areas were Payne's Prairie in Alachua County, Tallahassee-St. Marks, inland from St. Augustine along the St. John's River, and, later, Pensacola. Hides, tallow, and sun-dried beef were processed for the St. Augustine garrison and for export. Ranchers owned land, cattle, and horses; cowhands came from more modest economic backgrounds and many were Native American.



Handmade wrought iron British-style riding stirrup, ca. late 18th–early 19th century.

Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Location of Spanish ranchos in Florida ca. 1680. From *Florida Cowman, A History of Florida Cattle Raising* by Joe A. Akerman, Jr. Kissimmee: Florida Cattlemen's Association, 1976. Page 4.



Spanish riding spur. Reproduction of a spur found on the Atocha. Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

The Nuestra Senora de Atocha and the Santa Margarita were Spanish galleons that sank near Key West during a hurricane on September 6, 1622.



Riding spur. Iron. Pre-1704. Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This light, delicate spur was found at the San Juan de Espalaga mission site, Jefferson County.



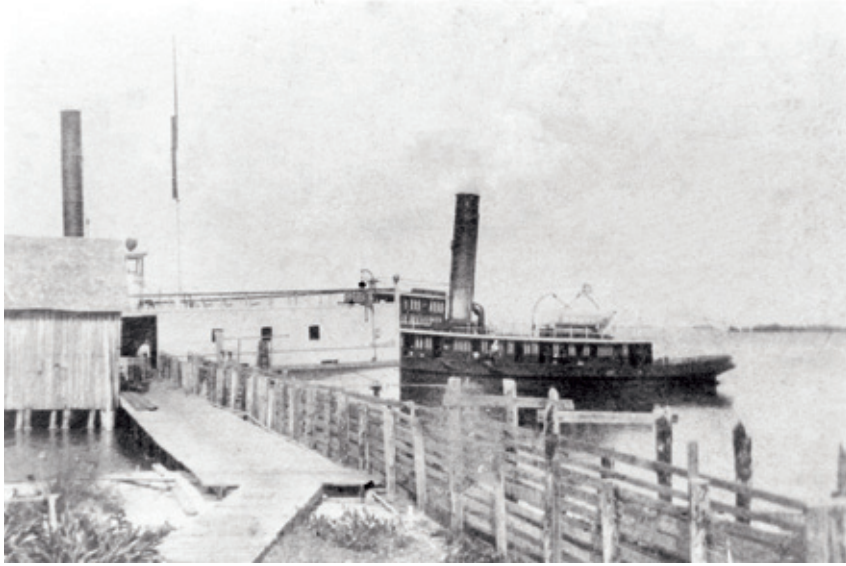
Horseshoe. Wrought iron. Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This is the only horseshoe from a Spanish ship wreck ever recorded. It was found on the San Miguel de Archangel, which sunk off the coast of Jupiter in 1659.

Snaffle bit. Tin-coated iron, ca. 1760. Loaned by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Probably a trade item, this bit was found at the Flintlock Site, a Seminole site on the Apalachicola River, Jackson County. Other trade items found at this site include alloyed silver trinkets and muskets.





Steamship at Wharf. Punta Rassa, 1890s. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc19392.

At the wharf, cattle were crowded into every available spot on board schooners or steamships that plowed the waters between Punta Rassa, Tampa, St. Andrews Bay, Charlotte Harbor and Cuba.

The 19th Century: Struggle and Sacrifice

When the U.S. took possession of Florida in 1821, it was described as a “vast, untamed wilderness, plentifully stocked with wild cattle.” Florida "scrub" or Cracker cattle were descended from the mix of Spanish and British breeds. These hardy creatures survived on native forage, tolerated severe heat, insect pests, and acquired immunity to many diseases.

Early Florida cowmen survived in difficult conditions. They fought off panthers, wolves, bears, and cattle rustlers. Cowmen spent weeks or months on cattle drives across difficult marshes and dense scrub woods, often enduring burning heat, torrential thunderstorms, and hurricane winds. From central Florida they sometimes drove cattle as far as Jacksonville, Savannah, and Charleston. This gradually changed in the 1830s when the cattlemen re-established trade with Cuba, and Tampa, Punta Gorda, and Punta Rassa became important export ports.

The number of cattle increased rapidly from the 1840s until the Civil War. Florida was second only to Texas in per capita value of livestock in the South. After the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, cattlemen from the overstocked states of Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas homesteaded 200,000 acres in Florida. Some seized



Cattle Drive at Bartow. 1890s. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc02673.

This early photograph was identified as follows: “At the far left is Crayton Parker, in the middle is Tom Smith on a horse named Boomerang and at the right is Aunt Jeanie feeding hay to a cow.”



Scrub Cattle at Punta Rassa, early 1900s. Courtesy of the Southwest Florida Museum.



Jacob Summerlin.
Courtesy of the
State Archives
of Florida, image
rc02467.

Jacob Summerlin (1820-1893)

Reputedly the first child born in the Florida Territory, Jake Summerlin was said to have started working cattle and cracking whips by seven years of age. At 16, he travelled south to central Florida, where he earned his fortune raising cattle in the Kissimmee and Peace River areas. Summerlin became one of the state's wealthiest men before he reached 40. He and his partners sold cattle to Cuba and the U.S. Naval Base in Key West. He purchased large land parcels in southwest Florida, including a wharf at Punta Rassa. During the Civil War, Summerlin smuggled beef to the Confederates by shipping them out of present day Charlotte Harbor, then later sold cattle to Union soldiers at Ft. Myers. After the war he donated land to establish a school in Bartow. In Orlando, he opened the Summerlin Hotel, donated the land for Lake Eola Park, and became the City Council's first president.

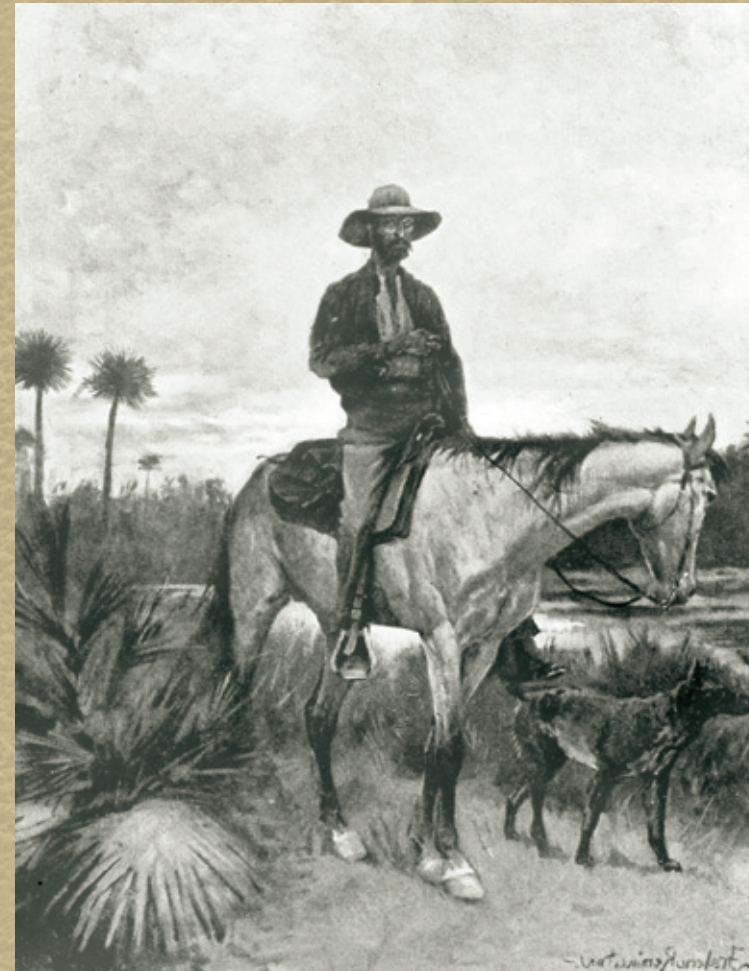
range territory that the Seminoles had been forced to relinquish as a consequence of the Seminole Wars. The newcomers often brought foundation herds that interbred with wild scrub cattle. Few cattlemen owned grazing land since there was extensive open range. By mid-century, ranchers were running large herds on the extensive open range in central and south Florida.

Wars provided an economic boost for Florida cattlemen, who provisioned armies during the Seminole, Civil, and Spanish American Wars. Although the Civil War disrupted the Cuban trade, Florida cowmen became beef suppliers to both armies. Hides, tallow, and meat from Florida were so important for the Confederacy that a Cow Cavalry was organized to protect herds from Union raiders.



Fighting over a Stolen Herd. From Frederic Remington (1861-1909), "Cracker Cowboys of Florida," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, v.91:543, August 1895. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc02054.

The best-known artist and chronicler of the western cowboy, Frederic Remington, visited Florida in 1895. In early Florida, Europeans, Americans, and Indians stole cattle from each other. Rustling has continued to be an irritant throughout Florida into the present—with some of the worst occurring after World War II.



A Cracker Cowboy. From Frederic Remington (1861-1909), "Cracker Cowboys of Florida," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, v.91:543, August 1895. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc02055.

Bone Mizell, on his mount and his dog at his side, was sketched by Remington when he came to Arcadia in 1895 to illustrate and write about the Florida frontier.



Bone Mizell

Morgan Bonaparte Mizell, known to his fellow cowmen and the law as just Bone, was a true legend in his own day, held in high esteem by his cowhunter peers for his free-spirited, hard-drinking, fun-loving approach to living. He was said to "outrope, outride, outshoot and outdrink" any cowman in Florida. It is thought that the folk hero offered his unpredictable antics to all as some distraction from their hard lives as range riders.

While tales about Bone Mizell have been exaggerated over the years, his

real life was colorful and represents well the eccentric lifestyle of a Cracker cowboy. He rustled cattle, marked his livestock with his teeth (by notching the cow's ears), and rode horses into bars and ordered drinks from his saddle. Once, he hitched a big-top tent to a passing freight train when a traveling circus banned him for attracting too much attention. Known for his wild spending sprees and spur-of-the-moment generosity, Mizell was hardly driven by money and did not eagerly aspire to be wealthy.

Bone Mizell's hard-living lifestyle took its toll and on July 14, 1921 at the age of 58 he died drunk in a railroad depot at Fort Ogden, Florida. Mizell and other legendary Cracker cowhunters will forever be etched in Florida folklore as enduring symbols of the way things used to be on the Florida range.

Dana Ste. Claire, *Cracker: The Cracker Culture in Florida History*, Daytona Beach: Museum of Arts & Sciences, 1998, pp. 181-183.

"Them that's got, has to lose. Them that hasn't, kaint."
—Bone Mizell, ca. 1900.



After the Civil War there were still wild cattle in Florida, as well as attractive markets to the north and south. During the next three decades, trade boomed with Cuba, Key West, and Nassau, and Florida became the nation's leading cattle exporter. From 1868 to 1878, ranchers received millions of dollars in gold doubloons for more than 1.6 million cattle exported to Cuba. The Cuban commerce provided income to cattlemen, merchants, and shippers, and contributed to the state's recovery from Reconstruction-era depression.



A bit and a pair of spurs, ca. late 19th century. Loaned by Billy Davis. Photos by Ray Stanyard.

These inexpensive, utilitarian items are typical of those used by Cracker cowboys of the period, possibly originally purchased from Montgomery Ward or Sears Roebuck and Co. catalogues.

Bit, Star brand, Buermann's Dog-leg. Cast iron.

Spurs, Buermann's Eureka Star brand. Sheet metal.

The cowboy on the opposite page is using a bit and spurs identical to these.



Cowboy with Cracker horse at an open range roundup near Fort McCoy, ca. 1910. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image n045020.



A Bit of Cow Country. From Frederic Remington (1861-1909), "Cracker Cowboys of Florida," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, v.91:543, August 1895. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc02057.

The drawing depicts a 19th century cow camp.



Two bits and a pair of spurs, ca. late 19th century. Loaned by Billy Davis. Photos by Ray Stanyard.

Bit, McChesney Gal-leg. Steel.

Bit, North & Judd Anchor brand. Cast iron.

Spurs, North & Judd Anchor brand. Steel.



McClellan Saddle with saddle pockets. Leather with brass fittings, ca. 1904. Loaned by James Levy. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Thousands of military saddles like this McClellan were left over at the end of the Civil War, Spanish-American War, and World War I. Many were utilized by American stockmen, particularly in Florida, as the split seat afforded good ventilation. Several different McClellan styles were manufactured, but only the model 1913 "mule packer's saddle" was made with a saddle horn. When roping became more common in Florida, early cowmen would sometimes attach a small horn to the front of the pommel. As roping became more common, McClellan saddles faded from popular use. Today working cowboys rely almost entirely on western saddles.



Barbed Wire. Steel. Loaned by the Florida Cattlemen's Association (FCA).
Donated to the FCA by Linda A. Dorough. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Florida cattlemen used barbed wire long before fencing was required by state law in 1949. Fencing became necessary during the 1920s and early 1930s during the tick eradication program, which required dipping all cattle every 14 days. Fencing was also used to control breeding, which improved herds.

From top:

- 638B Kelly Thorny Common, pat. February 11, 1868
- 651B Stover Regular Corsicana Clip, pat. June 29, 1875
- 39B Glidden Twisted Oval, pat. August 22, 1876
- 175B Wing Two Staple, pat. February 26, 1878
- 162B Reynolds Necktie, pat. May 14, 1878
- 693B Scutt Arrow Plate, pat. June 18, 1878
- 722B Crandal Zigzag, pat. November 4, 1879
- 992B Allis Medium Width Buckthorn, pat. July 26, 1881
- 306B Ellwood Parallel Strands & Reverse Wrap Barb, pat. January 31, 1882
- 774B Stubbe Large Plate, pat. October 23, 1883
- 861B Cady Barbed Link, One & One-Half Wrap, pat. January 22, 1884
- 9B Briggs Slanted Kinked, pat. July 1, 1884
- 733B Hodge Spur Rowel on Twisted Strands, pat. August 2, 1887

Mitchell L. Kolbe (1955–). Get Behind. Bronze sculpture. Commissioned by the Florida Heritage Historical Society. Loaned by Connerton, a new town in Pasco County. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This historically accurate work portrays a cowman returning to camp at the end of a long day, calling his catch dog off a subdued cow that wandered from the herd with the command, "Get behind." Kolbe worked with Bronzart Foundry, Inc. in Sarasota, to cast an edition of 27 sculptures from a wax model. For more information about Get Behind, contact Mitch Kolbe at mitchkolbe@yahoo.com or the Florida Heritage Historical Society, dconner@connergroup.net.





20th Century: Ranching Modernizes

The 20th century brought changes affecting cattle ranching infrastructure and occupational traditions. As Cuban demand declined early in the century, ranchers turned to domestic markets and cattle were shipped by rail throughout the country.

Modern technology brought many positive changes. As early as 1858, ranchers attempted to improve the quality of their herds with Brahman cattle, originally from India. Since the 1930s, ranchers have successfully cross-bred native cattle with Brahman, Angus, Hereford, Shorthorn, Charolais, and Limousin to improve size, resistance to heat and insects, hardiness, and meat quality. This led to the development of hybrids such as the Braford and Brangus breeds.

Ranchers struggled with and overcame severe insect pests, such as Texas ticks and screw-worms, through medical and scientific research. In the early 1900s, Texas tick fever entered Florida with cattle from other states. By the 1920s, the State Livestock Board made it mandatory for ranchers to construct vats and dip cattle in an arsenic solution every two weeks. Although expensive and



Tick Inspection Station at the Baker County Line. Early 1900s. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image pr01403.



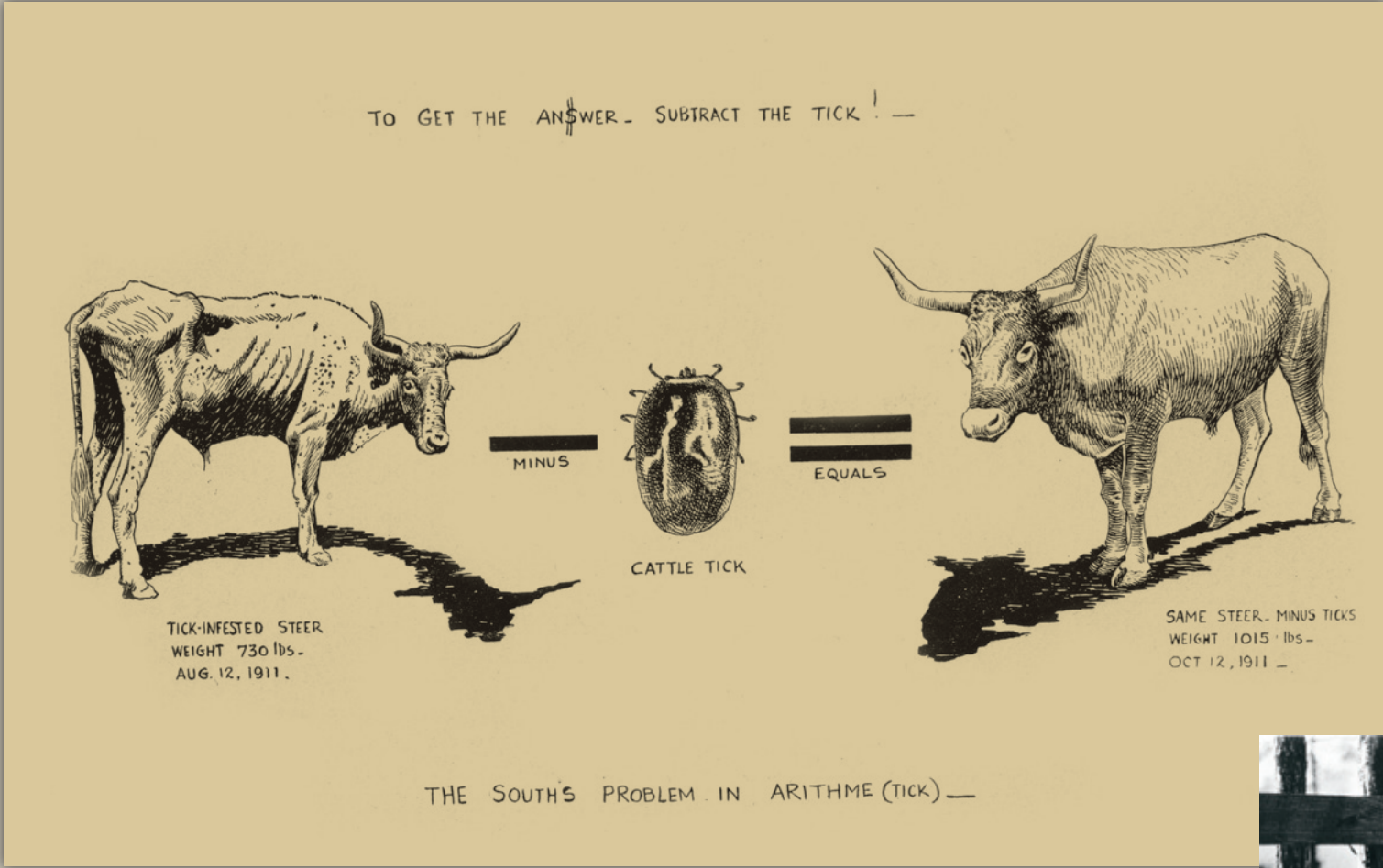
Brahman bull. Bradenton, 1900s. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image pc5941.

Brahman cattle are well-suited to Florida because they are heat tolerant, mature early, and are larger and more disease-resistant than many breeds. This early Brahman bull, Emperor Jr. 10th, owned by T.P. Chaires Jr. of Bradenton was said to be one of the outstanding Brahman Bulls of the time.



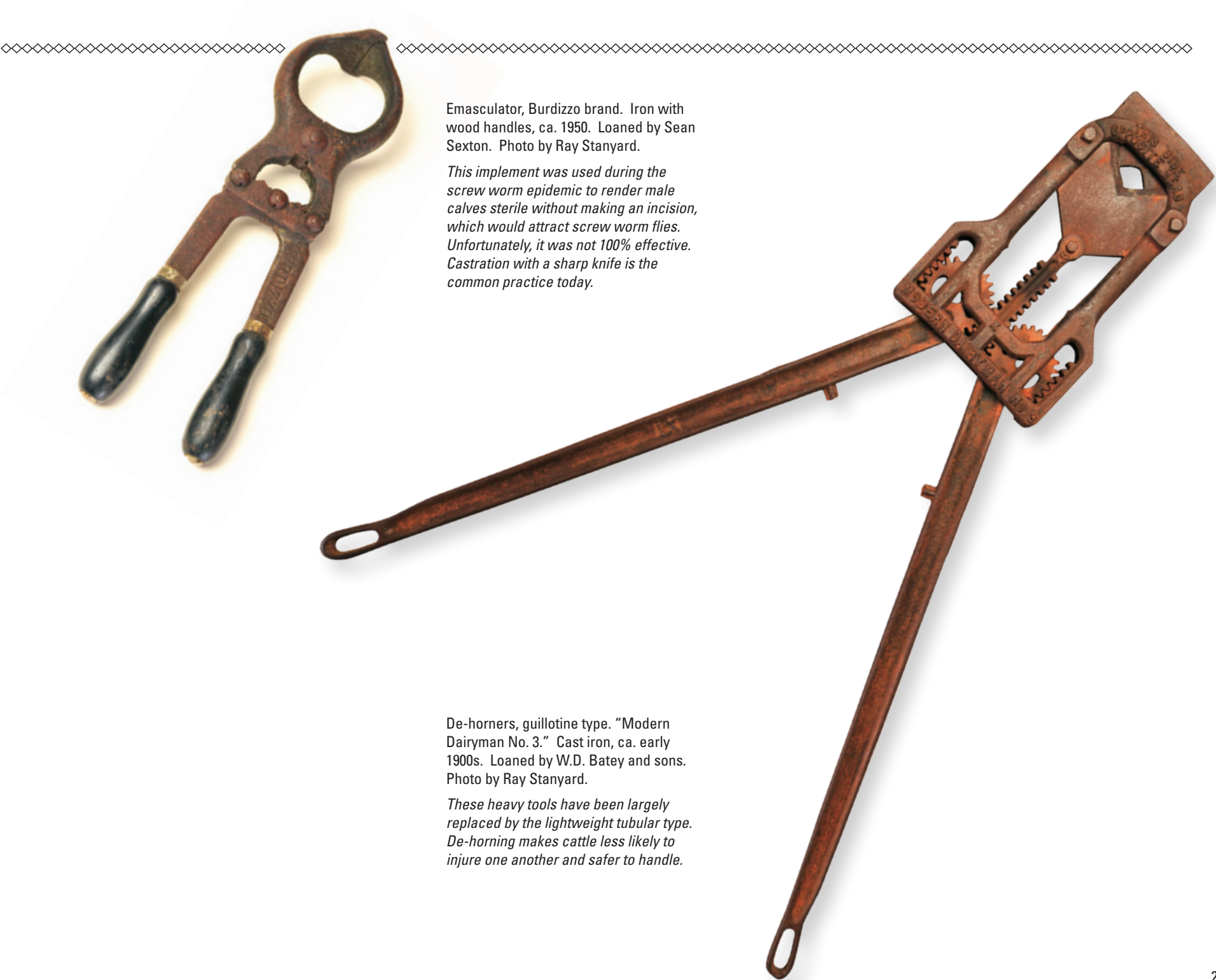
Brahman cattle, Hardee County, April 2008. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

Brahman cattle head for the cow pens on the Bar Crescent S Ranch. The fifth generation of the Smith family continues the ranching tradition established by their great-great grandfather, Doyle Carlton, governor of Florida from 1929-33.



Effects of Ticks on Cattle. 1913. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image pr01404.

Duval County man dipping and paint marking cattle between 1923 and 1929. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image pr01396.

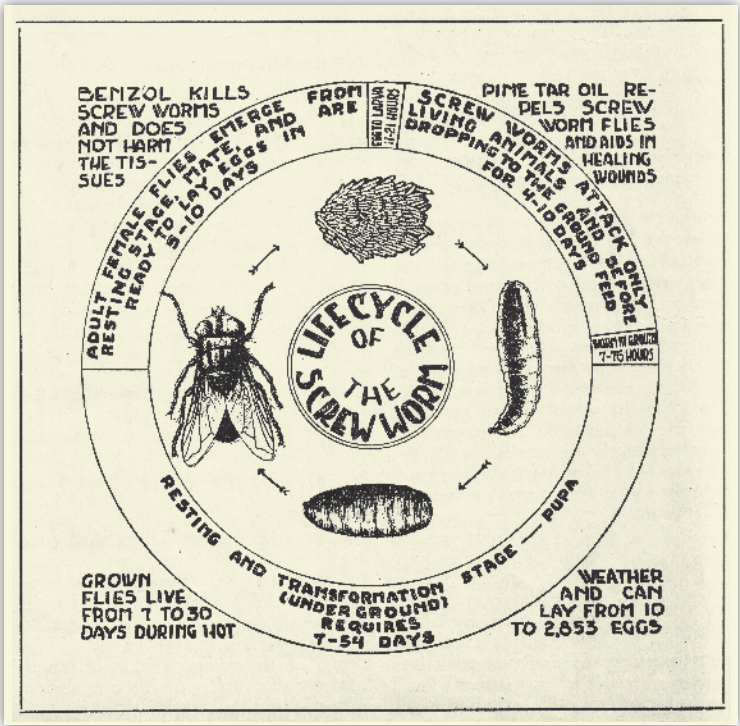


Emasculator, Burdizzo brand. Iron with wood handles, ca. 1950. Loaned by Sean Sexton. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This implement was used during the screw worm epidemic to render male calves sterile without making an incision, which would attract screw worm flies. Unfortunately, it was not 100% effective. Castration with a sharp knife is the common practice today.

De-horners, guillotine type. "Modern Dairyman No. 3." Cast iron, ca. early 1900s. Loaned by W.D. Batey and sons. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

These heavy tools have been largely replaced by the lightweight tubular type. De-horning makes cattle less likely to injure one another and safer to handle.



Screwworm cycle, *The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal*. October 1949.

difficult, the effort curbed the problem. Fencing became widespread in order to separate treated from untreated animals. The fever re-surfaced in 1935 and 1960, resulting in intense eradication programs implemented by Florida’s Department of Agriculture.

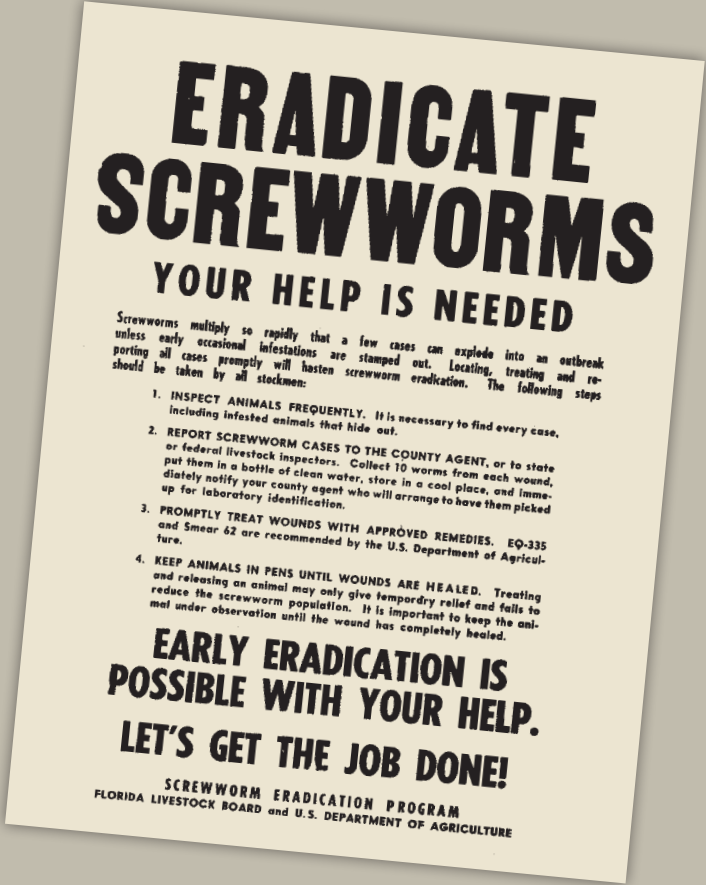
In 1949 the Florida Legislature passed the Warren Act, requiring ranchers to fence their pastures. The fence law struck a blow against small ranchers who relied upon grazing cattle on open tracts of land that they could not afford to buy.

In the mid-20th century, many ranchers improved nutrition by upgrading their pasture grasses. This made it possible to raise a cow on three or four acres, in contrast to the 40 acres previously required. To further maximize growth, ranchers provided their cattle with supplementary feed at crucial points in the yearly production cycle. Dried citrus pulp pellets, produced from byproducts at citrus processing plants, have been used as feed since the 1920s.



Barry’s Screw Worm Killer. Liquid in steel can, ca.1940s. Loaned by Julianne Barry. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Barry’s Screw Worm Killer, made in Newberry, was one of two popular screw worm medications marketed statewide by north-central Florida companies. The other was Smearex, which was made in Ocala. During the screw worm epidemic every animal had to be frequently checked for cuts and scratches and all wounds treated with medication.



Screwworm eradication flyer by Florida Livestock Board and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1940s. Courtesy of Florida Cattlemen’s Association.

Fighting screwworms. Sebring, 1958. Photo by Jim Stokes. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image c028500.

A pilot prepares boxes of sterile screwworm flies to be dropped on a cattle ranch. Within a short time this program eradicated one of the most serious pests in the history of cattle ranching. It is estimated that the screwworm damage to livestock in the Southeast was about \$20 million annually from 1935-1959.



Barry’s Screwworm Killer advertisement. From *The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal*. February, 1945.

For Complete Screw Worm Control . . .

Ask for **BARRY'S**

Keep both kinds on hand

BARRY'S SCREW WORM KILLER
and Fly Repellent

AND

BARRY'S SMEAR NO. 62

In paste form. Thousands of satisfied customers. Try it and satisfy yourself at our risk. Your local dealer has it—or write directly to

SUWANNEE DRUG CO. Drawer 15, NEWBERRY, FLA.

Cookware and utensils used by cow hunters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Loaned by W. D. Batey and sons. Photos by Ray Stanyard.

Skillet, spider type. Cast iron, ca. early 1900s.
The legs keep the skillet above the wood fire.

Forks, dinner. Steel with wood handles, ca. 1860s.
Probably from Civil War mess kits.

Plate, dinner. Porcelain over tin, ca. 1860s.

Spoon, wooden.

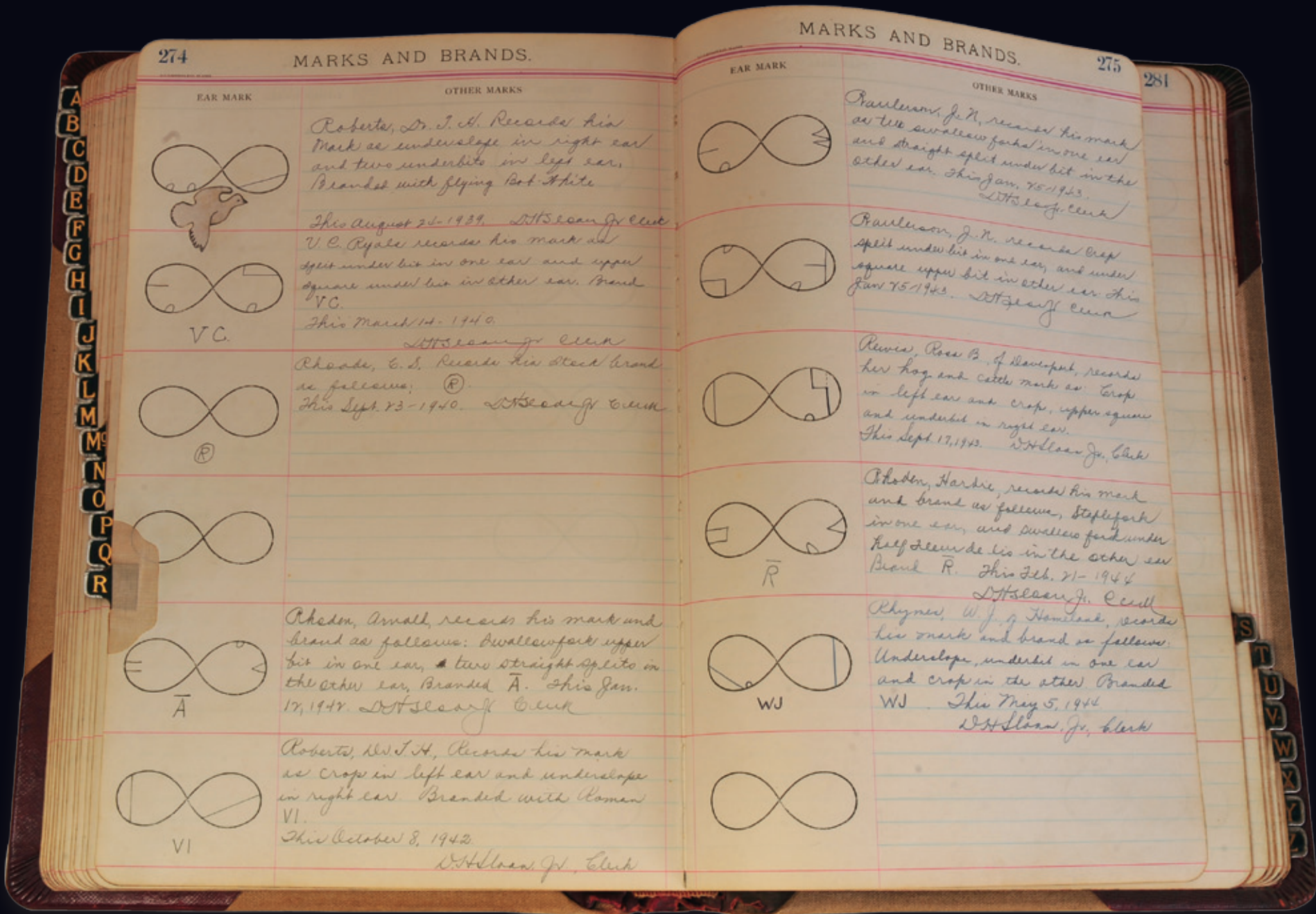


Early barbed wire fencing in Osceola County, Kissimmee. 1915. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc11287.



Marks and Brands Record, Polk County, vol. 2 (1938–1945). Loaned by Polk County Historical Museum. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Before registration became statewide in 1945, livestock brands and earmarks were recorded by each county. Cattle ears are represented by a figure-eight diagram. The brands and marks of many pioneer cattlemen recorded in this book reflect Polk County's rich history of cattle ranching.





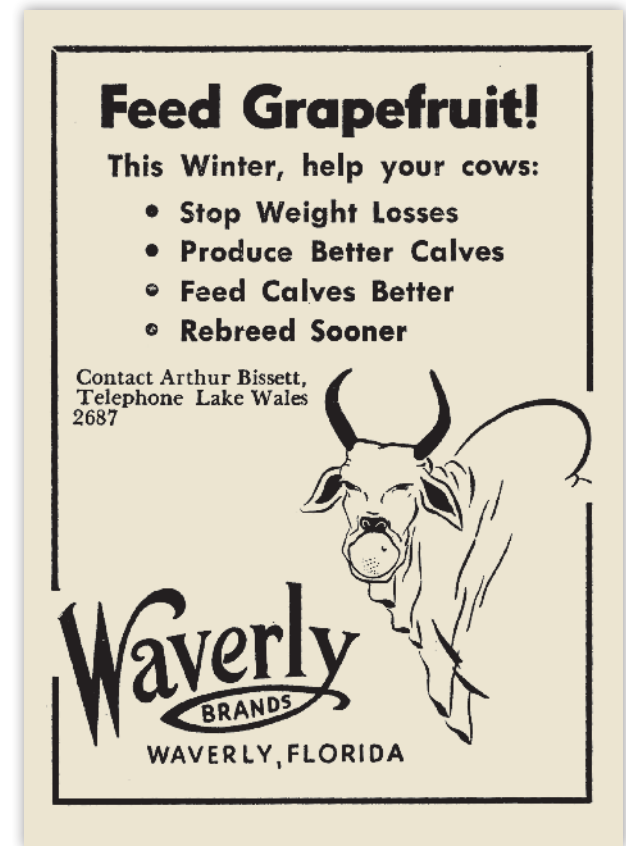
Citrus labels. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.

Cattle ranching and cowboy themes have been incorporated into many citrus labels, a practice that demonstrates the close connection of the citrus and cattle industries in Florida.



Cattle feed produced from Minute Maid Company's citrus pulp. 1950s. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc15569.

Cattle feed made from pulp, membranes, seed, and rind discharged during the manufacture of concentrate converted a disposal problem into a profitable operation.



Waverly Brands advertisement. *The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal*. January, 1949.

Feeding cattle whole citrus is a practice continued by some cattlemen today.

Arsenic test kit. Cooper's "Cattle Dip" Tester, William Cooper & Nephews, Chicago, ca. 1920s. Wood, glass, cotton, and other materials. Loaned by David Hunt. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This test kit from the Florence Akins Ranch in Polk County was used to measure the strength of the arsenic solution used for dipping cattle during the tick eradication program of the 1920s and 1930s.



Cow killed by an automobile. Volusia County, 1920s. Florida State Archives. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image rc11290.

Before fencing became mandatory in 1949, automobiles and cows sometimes collided. The result was often disastrous.



Cattle tattooing kit: cast aluminum pliers; Ketchum brand "Animal Tattoo Ink;" needle-type letters and numerals; and plastic toothbrush. Loaned by Sean Sexton. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

The ears of cattle are tattooed to track tests for brucellosis infection, also known as contagious abortion and Bang's disease. In 2001, Florida was granted brucellosis class-free status by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.





Seminole Cattle Ranching

The Seminoles’ relationship with cattle has endured for centuries. Prior to their arrival in Florida and subsequent designation as Seminoles, Creek Indians in Alabama and Georgia were engaged in cattle production. By 1740 the followers of the Oconee Creek leader, Cowkeeper, established Florida’s largest settlement in the Alachua area. Heavily involved in a cattle economy, by 1775 the Seminoles were working cattle herds alleged to number thousands of head on Paynes Prairie using trained cow-dogs.

Slavery was a long-term cultural practice among the southeastern Indians. Black slaves fleeing to Spanish-held Florida often lived with the Seminoles, affording them a major source of manpower for such pursuits as cattle production. There was constant trouble between the Seminoles and Georgians over the ownership of cattle and runaway slaves on the Florida/Georgia border. These conflicts sparked U.S. aggressions against the Seminoles in the First Seminole War (1818).

Continued aggressions between the Seminoles and European-American settlers over cattle and grazing lands contributed significantly to starting the Second (1835-1842) and Third Seminole Wars (1855-1858), which reduced the Seminole population to around 200.

After the Civil War, Seminole families in Big Cypress and around Lake Okeechobee raised cattle despite harassment by rustlers. In the early 20th century, cattle posed such a liability that few Seminoles raised them. Without strife over rangelands, the Seminoles and Cracker cattlemen got along well. Ranchers sometimes hired Seminoles, whom they considered to be excellent cattlemen.

A new era of Seminole cattle ranching began in the 1930s, when the Dania and Brighton Seminoles acquired starter herds. The Seminole Tribe established the Indian Livestock Association in 1939. In 1944, they created separate cattle enterprises for Brighton and Big Cypress, with the Central Tribal Cattle Organization providing general supervision. Seminoles banded with other Native American stockmen in 1974 to form the National American Indian Cattlemen’s Association.

Today, the Seminole Tribe is one of Florida’s leading beef producers. Sophisticated video auctions promote tribal cattle across the nation. The success of the cattle program has allowed the Tribe to pursue other successful economic ventures.



Le Anne Billie with horse. Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.



Lariat, or Lasso. Nylon. Immokalee, 1997. Loaned by Stanlo Johns. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This coiled lariat is made of three-strand nylon hard twisted rope. The Seminole Brand rope factory began manufacturing in 1996 and closed about two years later.

Bumper sticker advertisement for Seminole Ropes. Paper. Circa 1997. Donated by Stanlo Johns. Photo by Robert L Stone.

Cattle branding irons, ca. 1940–1960. Steel. Loaned by Stanlo Johns. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Brands shown here are “ID,” “J,” and “HG.” ID stands for “Indian Department.” It was used from the early 1940s until around 1953, when the cattle were distributed to individual herd owners. Toby Johns (Panther clan) used the J brand, and Henry Gopher (Panther clan) used the brand HG.



Seminole cattlemen holding branding irons. Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation, 1941. Courtesy of Judy Montsdeoca Bronson.

Left to right: Willie Gopher, Sr., Joe Henry Tiger, Jack Smith, Sr., Frank Huff, Sr., Andrew J. Bowers, John Josh, Naha Tiger, Toby Johns, Frank Shore, John Henry Gopher, Lonnie Buck, Charlie Micco, and Harjo Osceola.





Seminole Indian cowboy Charley Micco and grandson Fred Smith on horseback on a cattle ranch. Brighton Reservation, 1950. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image c013676.

Charlie Micco helped establish the cattle management program when the U.S. government shipped a starter herd of starving Hereford cattle from the Dust Bowl states to the Brighton Reservation in 1936. Fred Smith became president of the Seminole Tribe of Florida in 1971.



1774 Cowkeeper letter facsimile. Courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Seminole Tribe of Florida.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida owns a letter to “The Cowkeeper and Other Headmen and Warriors of the Creek Nation” dated February 9, 1774 by John Moultrie, the Lieutenant Governor of the Territory of British East Florida. Written before the term Seminole was commonly used, the letter is significant as the first documentary proof of the identity of the band’s leader and their relationship with the British.

Cowkeeper came to Florida with his band of Oconee Indians around 1740 to assist in General Oglethorpe’s attack on the Spanish at St. Augustine. Afterwards he established the town of Cuscowilla, on the plains south of present-day Gainesville. There the emerging Seminoles gathered cattle that had strayed from the abandoned missions or old Spanish ranches, eventually creating large herds and ranches envied by white settlers.

The letter arose from a conflict involving 2.1 million acres of land claimed by both the Creeks and the Cherokees. When it appeared to be leading to war between the English and the Indians, the English government inquired whether Cowkeeper’s people were preparing for war. Governor Patrick Tonyn met with Cowkeeper and other leaders on March 14, 1774, averting a war until the American Revolution erupted.

Cowkeeper Letter Transcript

Manifesto to the Creek Indians
Gen. Moultrie
1774

Talk to the Cowkeeper and other head men and warriors of the Creek Nation.

Men and Warriors,

I send you bad news. I have heard that some of your nation have struck the great Kings children in Georgia, and spilt their blood upon the ground. The white people grew angry and have killed some of them.

You know that I have always told you that I loved my people, and that I loved your people, and that I wanted to see them live like Brothers, and that our Children should grow up together or on the same land. This is the great King’s desire, who will be sorry and angry to hear this bad news.

Let us like good men and wise men, and like men that love our people, force the Hatchet out of the hands of mad men and fools.

When any of you have met me, I have told you that I was your friend and that I loved your people. You told me that you were my friends and loved my people.

Now is the time to try whither wee make truth or told a lye, and whither our hearts, our hands, and our tongues went together. If it is only some madmen and young fools that have done this mischief, they only are to blame; and they only ought to suffer for it.

I will not believe that your nation will go to war with us, unless you tell me so. I send this talk to you to know whither it is war or peace. If you will hold your white brothers by the hand, tell me so, and let us try to cover the blood that has been spilt, and let us make the path clean, and safe to walk in again while I hear from you, or know whither ‘tis peace or war. I shall only take care to guard my people. If any of you have a mind to talk like a friend, come to me you shall be safe, not a hair of your head, shall be touched.

Given under my hand and seal at St. Augustine this 9th of February 1774. Gen Moultrie

Manifesto to
the Creek Indians

By: Moultrie

1774

The Cowkeeper and War-
rior of the Creek Nation

Talk to the Cowkeeper and other head men
and Warriors of the Creek Nation.

Men and Warriors.

I send you bad news. I have heard that
some of your nation have struck the great
King's Children in Georgia, and spilt their
blood upon the ground. The white people
grow angry and have killed some of them.

You know that I have always told you
that I loved my people, and that I loved
your people, and that I wanted to see
them live like Brothers, and that our
Children should grow up together on
the same land. This is the great King's

desire, who will be sorry and angry to
hear this bad news. Let us like good

men and wise men, and like men that
love our people, force the Hatchet
out of the hands of madmen and fools.

When any of you have met me,
I have told you that I was your friend
and that I loved your people. You
told me that you were my friends
and loved my people.

now

Now is the time to try whether we spoke
truth or told a lye, and whether our
hearts, our hands, and our tongues went
together. If it is only some madmen
and young fools that have done this
mischief, they only are to blame; and
they only ought to suffer for it.

I will not believe that your
nation will go to war with us, unless
you tell me so. I send this talk to you
to know whether it is war or peace.

If you still hold your White
brothers by the hand, tell me so, and
let us try to cover the blood that has
been spilt, and let us make the path
clean, and safe to walk in again.

While I hear from you, or know whether
it is peace or war, I shall only take care
to guard my people. If any of you have
a mind to talk like a friend, come to me
you shall be safe, not a hair of your
heads shall be touched. Given under
my hand and seal at St. Augustine this
9th of February 1774 J. Moultrie





Moving cattle. Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

Herding cattle into pens on the Brighton Reservation: (left to right) Adam Osceola, Eric Johns, Bobby Yates, and Adam Turtle.



Seminole Indian cowboys marking and branding a calf in the corral during round-up. Brighton Reservation, 1950. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image c014304.

Left to right: Andrew J. Bowers, Joe Henry Tiger, Willie Gopher, Sr.



Rudy Osceola and his grandson, Rowdy. Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

Rubber boots are sometimes worn when working in wet pastures.



Contemporary Ranching

Cowmen and Cowwomen

Ranch work is often a family tradition in which many occupational skills are transmitted through generations. People raised on ranches develop “cow sense,” a deep understanding of and ability to predict the behavior of cattle. Members of Florida’s ranching community are diverse, encompassing men and women, Crackers, Seminoles, African Americans, and Latin Americans.

Crackers have been a dominant force in Florida ranching since the 19th century. Crackers are sometimes defined as the rural white settlers of Celtic heritage who entered Florida from Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas. Historically, Cracker culture reflected many traits derived from rural life in Scotland and Ireland: open-range herding; a leisurely lifestyle with an emphasis on hospitality, food, drink, and outdoor sports; and a strong sense of honor, self-reliance, and tenacity.

Some of Florida’s earliest African American cowmen were Black Seminoles—free men or runaway slaves who chose to live with the Seminoles. African Americans who migrated to Florida from other states often brought cattle raising skills with them. Since the 19th century, there have been many African American cowmen throughout the state.



Bud Adams, Ft. Pierce. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.
Alto “Bud” Adams, Jr. is the venerated patriarch of the Adams Ranch, which has properties in St. Lucie, Osceola, and Okeechobee Counties. He established the Braford breed by crossing Brahman and Hereford cattle.



Lawrence Silas, 1986. Courtesy of the Osceola County Museum.
The Silases were respected African American cattlemen. Tom Silas worked for a Florida cattleman after the Civil War, then developed a 2,000-acre ranch near Kenansville, and became a trusted friend to many ranchers. His son, Lawrence, won acclaim for his character and knowledge of cattle. He ultimately owned thousands of cattle on ranchlands in Kissimmee and along the St. Johns River. Folklorist Zora Neale Hurston wrote about Lawrence Silas for the September 5, 1942 Saturday Evening Post, in which he vividly described a stampede during a cattle drive:

“Never will forget one big stampede. I saw...at Fort Basinger. Eleven hundred steers went into a stampede. We men heard it in time and run in every direction. The stampede headed for a big swamp. Wasn’t a thing we could do. The next morning we followed the trail down to the edge of the swamp. We knowed that the ground was too soft for ‘em to get across. They didn’t; you couldn’t see no cows at all. All you could see was horns, just a whole lot of horns.”



Adams Ranch cowboys herd distinctive red and white Braford cattle, St. Lucie County. Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.
The Adams ranch is known for its ecological integrity and preservation of natural ecosystems.



"Hombres." Arcadia, 2008. Photo by Jimmy Peters.

Mexican American cowboys at the VC Ranch: left to right, Alfredo Manriquez, Lynn Hollingsworth Mills (daughter of ranch owner Victor Clyde Hollingsworth), Francisco Barbosa, Javier Manriquez, Luis Manriquez, Teofilo Manriquez, and Pancho "Juan" Martinez.



Iris Wall with granddaughter Whitney Edwards. Indiantown, September 2006. Photo by Robert L. Stone. Courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

2006 Woman of the Year in Agriculture, Iris Wall owns the High Horse Ranch in Indiantown. Her granddaughter, Whitney Edwards, a hairdresser, often helps her with cattle work.



Partin Family sitting on fence. Osceola County, ca. 1952. Courtesy of the Osceola County Museum.

The Partins of Osceola County are a well known cattle ranching family. Along the fence, left to right: Richard Earl Partin holding Janie Partin Pickering; Dorothy Platt Partin; Barbara Partin, Bertha Bass Partin (Mrs. H.O.); Kathy Tyson Baker, Connie Autrey Partin, Judith Partin; Michael Steven Partin; "Peetie" Partin; Martha Thomas Booth; Becky Partin Kemfer; Henry Hyatt Partin, Jr.; Susan Bronson Williams, Steve Partin; Katherine Partin and Sherry Bronson. Standing, L-R: Henry O. Partin, "Geech," "Doc," and Doug Partin.



Ranch Life

Ranch life revolves around the annual cycle of work generated by the cattle. Most Florida cattle ranchers are in the cow-calf business. On many ranches calves are generally born in the fall and spring. At two to four months they are wormed, vaccinated, earmarked, and the males are castrated. When the calves are 7 to 9 months old they are weaned and sold at weights ranging from 300 to 600 pounds. Since Florida’s environment does not support efficient grain production or highly nutritious forages, calves are shipped to western states where they are grazed and fed until they reach finish weights.

Cattlemen refer to gathering livestock and performing procedures as “working” the cattle. Most cattle require working twice a year. On large ranches cattle are worked year round; smaller herds may require working only every two months. The cattle are herded into pens using a system of gates and chutes to separate the calves,

brood cows, bulls and steers. Calves are usually worked in a mechanical “calf table,” a steel frame that holds them in position while multiple procedures are performed. Larger animals are worked in mechanical-hydraulic squeeze chutes. Most Seminole cattle belong to small family-owned herds tended by a central crew under a cooperative arrangement. They often work the cattle by roping and using manpower to handle the stock because cow pens, calf tables and squeeze chutes may be far away.

The annual roundup and shipping is the busiest time on the ranch, and the major annual payday. Only the largest operations employ a full-time crew of six or more cowboys year round. When ranchers need additional help to work cattle they may hire “day-riders,” or receive assistance from family members, friends, or neighboring ranchers with whom they have a reciprocal agreement.



Working cattle. Vero Beach, September 2008.
Photo by Bob Montanaro.

Cowboys herd heifers into Treasure Hammock Ranch pens where they will be treated with insecticide for horn flies. Left to right: Will Barker, Rob Tripson, Daniel Brolman, Sean Sexton (on tractor), Davey Pitman.



Working a cow in squeeze chute. High Horse Ranch, Indiantown, September 2006. Photo by Robert L. Stone. Courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

Left to right: Cab Butts sprays the cow's back with an external parasite treatment, Whitney Edwards vaccinates for respiratory disease, Marshall Davis and Jim Harvey administer two different oral medications for internal parasites.

Mike Wilder (1954—). Working cowboy saddle, leather. Rain slicker, rope, and cow whip attached. Saddle, slicker and rope loaned by Mike Wilder. Whip made and loaned by Ned Waters. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This saddle and attached accessories are typical of those used by working cowboys. The saddle itself is designed for comfort and durability, was custom-made to fit the rider and his horse, and is devoid of frills and fancy decoration.

The full-length yellow vinyl-reinforced nylon rain slicker is split at the waist to allow it to drape over the horse and saddle, as a wet saddle will quickly chafe the rider.

The 14-foot nylon cow whip is a popular length for working from horseback; long enough to afford adequate reach, but not so long as to be difficult to handle.

The nylon rope may be used to lasso cattle which range from small calves to bulls weighing up to 2,000 pounds.

Many cowboys also attach small saddle bags, or pockets, (not displayed here) to carry a variety of items.



Work Area. Photos by Robert L. Stone.

Work table. Cypress wood. Built and loaned by Sean Sexton.

The table contains items typical of those used when working cattle in a squeeze chute. All items loaned by Sean Sexton:

1. Antibiotic, LA-200 brand. Brown glass bottle.

The antibiotic is administered with small syringes (not displayed) to treat cattle for infections. Alcohol and cotton balls are used to clean the area.

2. De-horner. Steel.

Cattle are de-horned to protect themselves and those who handle them from injury. After de-horning, the area is treated with blood-stop powder.

3. Notebook.

Cattlemen keep detailed records on each animal.

4. Nose leads. Steel, with rope attached.

Nose leads are used to control cattle resistant to being worked.

5. Large syringe. Stainless steel.

This is an older device used for administering oral medicine, such as de-wormer. The modern method employs an applicator gun, such as the one being used by two men in the photo (page 57), connected by a plastic hose to a one gallon container as shown on the table.

6. Large red marker crayon.

The crayon is used for temporary identification of cattle as they are worked.

Branding iron set. Steel. Loaned by Sean Sexton.

This set of branding irons consists of 0 through 9 and the "Bar G" ranch, or holding, brand. Cattlemen use the numbered brands for year designation, and some may give each animal an individual identification number. The holding brand identifies the ranch or owner.

Branding iron heater pot. Steel. Loaned by the Florida Cattlemen's Association.

A portable propane-powered gas-fired "pot" like this is probably the most common method of heating branding irons today. However, some ranches use electrically-heated brands.



Barbed wire, Adams Ranch.
Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.

Fence maintenance is a continuing task on cattle ranches.

Uploading. Sarasota, 2008. Photo by Jimmy Peters.

Arthur Kersey loads cattle into a tractor trailer at the High Hat Ranch.



Working cowboys with cow-dogs. Okeechobee County, January 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image FS060805.

Left to right: Cab Butts and Ernie Carrier head out with a pair of black mouth yellow cur dogs to gather cattle early on a chilly January morning at the Dixie Ranch.

Cowboy with calf. St. Lucie County. Photo by Carlton J. Ward, Jr.

Sean Moss carries a tired calf to help it keep up with the herd as they move across the Adams Ranch.





“Cut it Out.” Arcadia, 2008. Photo by Jimmy Peters.
Working as a skilled team, Frank Langsford and his ranch horse expertly cut a cow from the herd at the VC Ranch.

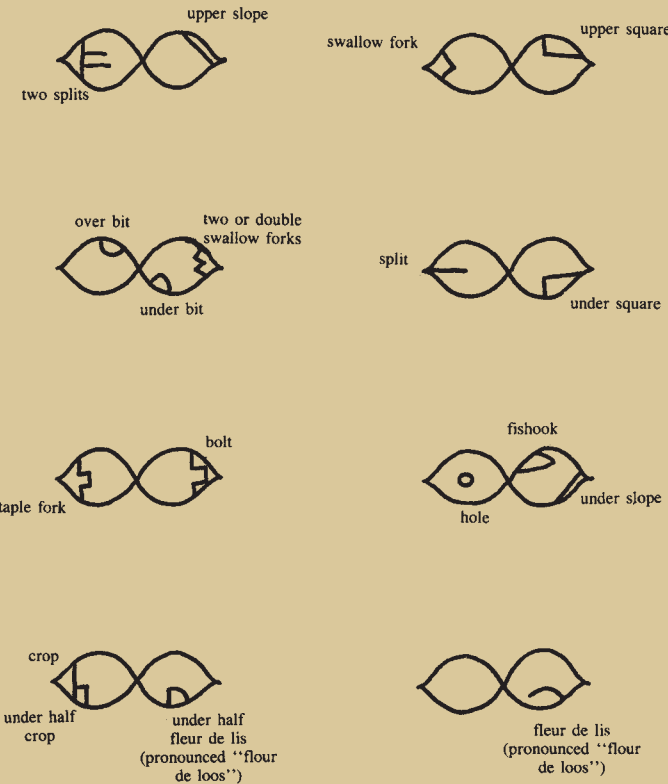
Graphic: Earmarks. From 1984 Florida Folk Festival program booklet (White Springs: Florida Folklife Program), page 12. Courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/ Florida Department of State.

Earmarking a calf. Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation, January 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.
Bobby Yates cuts earmarks with a razor-sharp pocket knife while Carlos Leon holds the calf down.



Reading Ear Marks

Ear marks are usually “read” from left to right as you face the animal. Seasoned cowmen say marks have advantages over brands. When you approach a cow, it will invariably turn its head toward you. Properly notched ears are clearly visible, making identification quick and easy. In addition, if a brand is mud-covered or old, or if the cow is too far away for a brand to read, the ear marks provide identification. The diagrams below show what the different marks or cuts are called:



From folk notes by folklorist Blanton Owen, 1984.

Cow-Dogs

Florida is one of the leading states in the use of dogs for cattle ranching. Florida cow-dogs are mixed breeds. Probably the most popular breed in the mix is the Southern Blackmouth Yellow Cur. Another popular breed is the Catahoula Leopard, which may have its origins among the French or Native Americans of Louisiana.

Florida cow-dogs perform three important functions. The cow-dog flushes strays from hammocks, scrub and swamps, working easily in areas that are difficult for horse and rider to penetrate. While mounted cowmen drive the cattle from the rear, cow-dogs control their movements by working the sides and front to keep the stock in a cohesive herd. And, since cattle view the dogs as predators, they will seek safety by gathering into a tight group when the cow-dogs repeatedly circle or “ring” them, while barking and nipping.



Cow-dog circling herd. Morriston, June 2006. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

One of Billy Bellamy’s yellow curs circles a herd at his Cedar Hill Ranch to keep the cows in a tight bunch. A few good dogs can maintain a large herd tightly grouped for hours if necessary.



Working cow-dog. Okeechobee County, January 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

A yellow cur cow-dog aggressively confronts a cow that has broken from the herd on the Dixie Ranch.



Material Culture

Floridians hand craft specialized equipment used by the cattle ranching community. Mexican vaquero culture played a profound role in shaping the fancy, highly-decorated cowboy equipment, tack and apparel that developed in the West—but there was little vaquero influence in Florida. Most gear used by Florida cowboys is unadorned in comparison to that used in the West.

The cow whip is an essential part of working cowboy gear and an icon of Florida cattle ranching. In the past, cow whips were plaited from tanned buckskin. Today, most Florida cowboys use weather- and rodent-proof whips plaited from braided nylon cord. The Florida cow whip is fastened to a wooden handle by two thongs, a distinctive feature that gives it more flexibility than whips plaited over the handle.

A comfortable, durable saddle is essential. A custom-built saddle fits the rider and horse properly, is designed to meet the demands of its intended use, and lasts for many years.

Ranch brands were used by early settlers and Indians to identify livestock. The practice was especially important when cattle ranged freely. Ranch brands are usually passed to the next generation,



and old branding irons become treasured heirlooms. Many brands consist of simple block numbers or letters, a characteristic derived from the British ranching heritage.

Ranch architecture includes entryways, gates, and signs. These utilitarian art forms range from simple hand-made wood and metal components to elaborate designs cut from metal using high-tech computer-controlled plasma arc machines. Designs often incorporate the ranch brand and visual elements, such as cattle, herons, live oaks, and cabbage palms, which reflect the ranch environment.

Riders use spurs to help control the movement of horses. Used properly, they are necessary tools for the protection of the rider, cattle, and the horse itself. Ready-made spurs can be purchased, but many prefer spurs that are custom made to personal specifications.

Chaps are protective leather garments worn over jeans. Chinks are short chaps that have become increasingly popular among Florida cowboys, in part because they are not as hot as full-length chaps. In Florida, chaps are most often seen as colorful, fancy apparel worn by drill teams, bronc and bull riders, and rodeo queens.

George Altman. Wauchula, March 2007.
Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of
the Florida Folklife Program/Florida
Department of State.

*George Altman is one of the few who still
plait cow whips from buckskin hides he
tans himself.*



Junior Mills. Okeechobee, June 2003.
Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of
the Florida Folklife Program/Florida
Department of State.

*George “Junior” Mills made
buckskin whips to supplement his
income as a working cowboy. He
treated the finished whips with
a heated mixture of pine rosin,
beeswax, and beef tallow to
preserve the leather and prevent
barn rats from eating them.*





William Noah Waters (1871–1944). Cow whip. Buckskin with guava wood handle. Bartow, ca. 1940. Loaned by Ned Waters. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Ned Waters inherited this 12-foot whip from his grandfather. It probably was originally a 14 to 16-foot whip, but was shortened when it was fitted with a new tail. The hide was tanned using animal brains.



George (1912–2006) and Buddy Mills (1958–). Cow whip, buckskin. Okeechobee, 1975. Loaned by Buddy Mills. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

George “Junior” Mills cut the “strings” for this 11-foot whip then taught his son, Buddy, how to plait the whip. Buddy has continued to craft traditional buckskin whips using the methods he learned from his father. The dark coloration is the result of dipping the finished whip in a heated mixture of beef tallow, beeswax and pine rosin to preserve it and discourage rodents from eating it.



Ned Waters (1957–). Cow whip, nylon with guava wood handle. Bartow, 2008. Loaned by Ned Waters. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This 14-foot whip was plaited from nylon cord, the material preferred by contemporary working cowboys because it is rot- and rodent-resistant.



George Altman (1946–) Cow whip, buckskin with hickory wood handle. Wauchula 2005. Loaned by the Florida Cattlemen’s Association.

This 14-foot whip was plaited from a hide Altman tanned in an alum solution. All Florida cow whips, whether nylon or leather, are loosely fastened to the handle by two thongs, which makes them flexible and easy to use.

Felix T. Torres (1913–1995). Saddle carved for his son, Felix G. Torres. Miami, 1964. Leather, silver. Loaned by Felix G. Torres. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

At the Torres Saddle Shop in Hialeah, the Torres family has made and repaired saddles and other custom leather goods for several decades. The late Felix T. Torres was from the ranching area of Santa Clara in the province of Las Villas. He moved to Havana, where he became an accomplished saddlemaker. He passed the tradition to his son, Felix G. Torres, when he was very young. Torres saddles enjoy an international reputation for excellence. One of the family's old photos shows the Governor of Havana riding on a Torres saddle.



Felix T. Torres making a saddle with wife Maria E. Torres, son Felix G. Torres and Nery Perez looking on. Havana, Cuba, 1956. Courtesy of Felix G Torres.



George Platt. Okeechobee, January 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

George Platt makes tack and a variety of leather goods for working cowboys. He also builds and repairs saddles.



Jeremy Evans. Fellowship, February 2007. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the Florida Folklife Program/Florida Department of State.

Jeremy Evans and his wife, Connie, fashion custom spurs in a shop behind their home in Fellowship, west of Ocala.



Jeremy and Connie Evans. Spurs, custom handmade "Gal-Leg" style. Steel with sterling silver and copper overlay and brass rowel. Fellowship, 2008. Loaned by Jeremy and Connie Evans. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Jeremy made the body of the spur and his wife, Connie, did the overlay and engraving. The rowel is a brass clock gear.



Billy Davis in his spur making shop. Kenansville, April 2004. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image FS060849.

Billy Davis clamps the heel ridge portion of a spur onto a jig in preparation for welding the shank to it. He crafts custom spurs and spurs similar to the classic designs of 1840-1940.



Doyle Rigdon's lace-up boot with spurs. Brighton, September 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image FS060829.

Like many Florida working cowboys, Doyle Rigdon prefers to wear lace-up boots because the snug fit and low heel make it easier to move quickly when working on the ground.

Oral Traditions

Cowboy poetry borrows from such sources as folk poetry and song, popular poetry, historical writing, fiction, film and television. Florida cowboy poets express a wide range of themes through verse. Poems may vividly describe the rugged and beautiful landscape, recount memorable events, or express the excitement and frustrations of everyday life. Most repertoires include a considerable amount of humorous material. Cowboy poetry is a popular part of many events that showcase Florida heritage.



Indian River County cattlemen. 1951. Courtesy of Sean Sexton.

There is a story associated with this image of four principals of the Kenmore Cattle company and two cowhands. Kneeling in the foreground is “Mr. Gilbert” Barkoskie, considered to be the grandfather of the Indian River Cattlemen’s Association. To his right is Waldo E. Sexton. Standing in back are (left to right) Prescott Gardner, cowhand Perry Savage, Hubert Graves, and Perry’s brother, cowhand Charlie Savage.

Later in the 1950s, Perry Savage was gored by a bull in the Moodys’ pens out near Twenty Mile Bend while they were working cattle. Someone ran up to him as he lay on the ground and asked, “Did he hurt you Perry?” “No, he kilt me,” he replied. They took him to nearby Okeechobee but the hospital was closed, and he died in the vehicle between Okeechobee and Vero Beach.

Ballad of Bone Mizelle* by Ruby Leach Carson

At Kissimmee they tell of old M. Bone Mizelle
And the stranger who died on his hands;
How he died in dry season, and that was the reason
He was buried awhile on Bone’s lands.

He was buried awhile on that pine and palm isle
In a swamp under Florida’s sun
By the Cracker who nursed him, who loved him and cursed him
Just before his demise had begun.

“Jes take this news ka’mly,”Bone wrote to the family.
The deceased had left livin’ up north,
“I can send th’ remains when there come up some rains
And us pine island folk can go forth.

“So providen’ yuh ask it, I’ll dig up th’ casket”. . .
Which was done when the season brought rain,
And the river could float the flat-bottomed boat
And the dead boy could travel again.

When Bone went with the coffin, he smiled much too of’en
On the boat and en route to the car.
At the train he said “Gimme one fare from Kissimmee
To Vermont! Ain’t this corpse goin’ far!”

Thus the money was spent that the family had sent
And a friend of Bone’s said the next day:
“So yuh shipped that lad hum?” And Bone said: “No, by gum—
For I thought hit all over this way:

“As his kinfolks air strangers to all of us rangers,
Why not give some dead Cracker this ride?
Why not make all this fuss over some pore ole cuss
Who in life hadn’t wallered in pride?

“So instead of that Yank with his money and rank
Who had been ‘round and seen lots of fun,
I jes’ dug up Bill Redd and I sent him instead
For ole Bill hadn’t traveled ‘round none.”

*Carson used this spelling. The correct spelling is Mizell.

“Ballad of Bone Mizell,” by Ruby Leach Carson. Tinsley, Jim Bob. *Florida Cowhunter: The Life and Times of Bone Mizell*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1990, p. 104.

One of the best known poems about a Florida cow hunter is “The Ballad of Bone Mizelle,” written by Ruby Leach Carson in 1939.

Doyle Rigdon. Brighton, September 2008. Photo by Robert L. Stone, courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image FS060837.

Doyle Rigdon works as cowboy for the Lykes Brothers Ranch. His poems express the excitement and frustrations of the everyday life of the Florida cowboy and are often marked by side-splitting humor.





Rodeo award belt buckle. Silver and gold. Loaned by Leo Ledesma. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

This buckle was awarded to Cuban-American rodeo champion Leo Ledesma for winning the team roping championship at Davie, Florida in 1998.



Faye Blackstone (1915-2012) executing one of her most famous tricks, a reverse fender drag. Parrish, 1952. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image n036758.

Faye Blackstone achieved national fame as a barrel racer and trick rider, inventing feats such as the daring "back fender drag," which she performed in Wild West shows. Faye's husband, Vick Blackstone (1913-1987), was a rodeo champion. In 1982, he was inducted into the National Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame, and Fay into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame—the only couple to share this honor.

Faye Blackstone trick saddle, Manufactured by the Western Saddle Company, Ca. 1940. Leather, metal. Loaned by the Florida Agricultural Museum. Photo by Ray Stanyard.



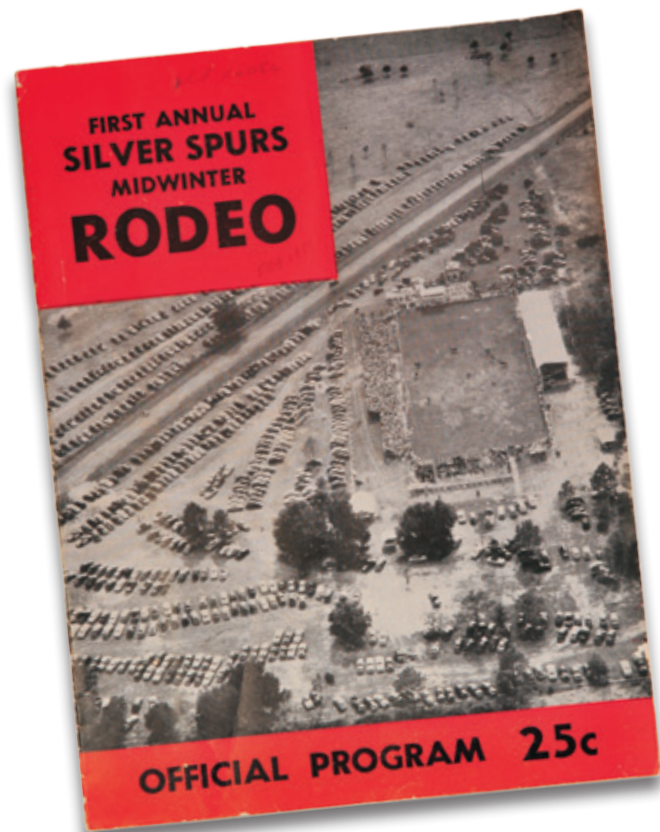


Pete Clemons
receiving award boots.



Fancy cowboy boots. Leather, sterling
silver. Loaned by Pete Clemons. Photo by
Robert L. Stone.

*These boots were presented to Pete
Clemons at the 1955 Silver Spurs Rodeo,
Kissimmee, for winning the "Best All
Around" title for two consecutive years.*



Program booklet, "First Annual Silver Spurs Midwinter
Rodeo." Paper, 8.75 inches x 11.75 inches, 20 pages.
Event dates: February 25-26, 1951. Courtesy of Silver
Spurs Rodeo. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

*The Silver Spurs Rodeo is held each February and
June in Kissimmee. It is the largest rodeo east of the
Mississippi and is annually ranked among the top 50
events sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys
Association (PRCA). The program booklet cover depicts
the old rodeo grounds. Today the event is held in an
indoor climate-controlled 8,300-seat arena.*



Pete Clemons with Buster Kenton. Kissimmee, 1949. Courtesy of Pete Clemons.

*When Pete Clemons was asked to represent the Kissimmee Jaycees at a national
convention rodeo in Colorado Springs in 1949, they fixed up a pickup truck to look
like a chuck wagon. Buster Kenton (right) decorated it with a cartoon character he
called Cowboy Jake. Clemons won the Best All Around competition to the dismay
of the western competitors. Cowboy Jake became the mascot for Osceola High
School.*

*Clemons was tremendously successful in his 25-year rodeo career. He won the Best
All Around Cowboy title at the Silver Spurs Rodeo in Kissimmee nine times. This
required excelling in five events: saddle bronc, bareback bronc, calf roping, steer
wrestling, and bull riding. He competed throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada,
Cuba, and South America.*



Rodeo award belt buckle. Silver and gold. Loaned by
Pete Clemons. Photo by Robert L. Stone.

*This buckle, inscribed "All Around Cowboy, San Antonio,
Florida, 1951," was presented to Pete Clemons.*



Rodeo chaps. Leather. Loaned by Matt Condo. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

These bat-wing style rodeo chaps were made from the hide of a mule deer killed by Florida rodeo champion Matt Condo when he was competing in Colorado ca. 1961.

Pat Hansel presents a buckle for Best All Around Cowboy to Matt Condo at the Indiantown Rodeo. Photo by Charles Covington, courtesy of Debbie Hansel Carlton and Leola Parker Hansel.



Matt Condo, bronc rider. Palatka, 1971. Courtesy of Matt Condo.

Matt Condo rides a bronco named Claim Jumper at the 1971 Florida Rodeo Cowboys Finals Rodeo, Palatka. Condo garnered Best All-Around Cowboy honors at the Arcadia Rodeo five times. Seminole rodeo legend Josiah Johns, who is next to ride, is in the chute, wearing a light-colored hat.



Josiah Johns, Seminole rodeo champion. Las Vegas, 1976. Photo by James Fain, courtesy of Willie Johns.

Josiah Johns ropes a calf at the 1976 Indian National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nevada. The legendary Seminole cowboy garnered Best All Around Cowboy honors five times at the Arcadia All-Florida Championship and Chalo Nitka rodeos and was three-time steer wrestling champion of the Florida Cowboy Association.



Bareback bronc rigging, leather with steel D-rings. Loaned by Matt Condo. Photo by Ray Stanyard.

Made by Bob Fraker, Ft. Collins, Colorado, for Matt Condo, ca. 1965. The rigging is secured to the horse with a cinch.

Pat Hansel

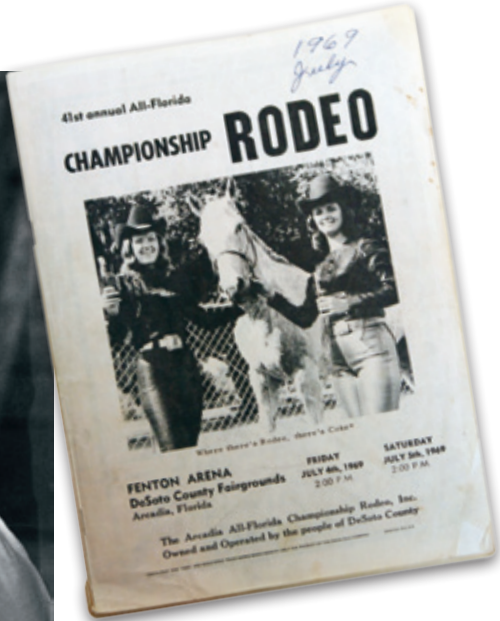
The All Florida Championship Rodeo, held in Arcadia since 1928, is Florida’s oldest rodeo and the centerpiece of the state’s vibrant rodeo scene. Pat Hansel was known in Arcadia as “Mr. Rodeo.”

As a stock contractor Pat provided some of the best roughstock—bucking bulls and broncos—of his era. His bulls included Wooley Booger, a big black Brahman-Angus crossbreed; Bearcat, a quick, compact red bull; and the legendary Seminole Chief. Seminole Chief so dazzled the audience, contestants and stockmen with his performances at the 1981 PRCA National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City that he brought a \$20,000 selling price, an astronomical sum at that time.

Pat’s bucking horses were always among the best, too. Claim Jumper was the most renowned, having a rodeo career that spanned eighteen years.

Pat is remembered by thousands for his warm and colorful commentary as rodeo announcer at the Arcadia arena. His close friend, livestock auctioneer Wendell Cooper, was inspired by Pat’s friendship and contributions to the rodeo community to write this poem for Pat’s funeral.

Photographs and artifacts loaned by Debbie Hansel Carlton and Leola Parker Hansel.



41st Arcadia All Florida-Championship Rodeo program booklet, 1969. Jacki Duncan Condo (L) and Debbie Hansel Carlton pose for a Coke advertisement.

Pat Hansel announcing the rodeo in Indiantown, 1972.

Rodeo Memories of Pat

Pat Hansel was a man you needed to know
If you were a Florida Cowboy and loved rodeo.
He knew all the contestants and could call ‘em by name.
Pat changed a lot of things in the rodeo game.

In the old days rodeos weren’t organized and the judging was rough,
The stock wasn’t even and winning was tough.
There was a lot of complaining, most times about pay.
Pat set out to change all that, said he would find a way.

He was one of the first in Florida to join the PRCA.
Pat’s efforts in rodeo are still remembered today,
He took a bull to the national finals because he could.
That bull brought \$20 thousand, no one thought he would.

Now things were better and it wasn’t just luck.
Pat raised his own stock and those suckers could buck.
His bulls were his pride and their names would inspire.
A lot of bull riders still remember Ring of Fire.

Another little bull that was seldom rode,
A full-blooded Angus that was a sight to behold.
A little guy that would spin right outside the gate,
he was so small Pat just called him six-and-seven-eights

How he came up with those names sure puzzles me.
He must have stayed up nights thinking what the next one would be
Those names were sure different I remember one now,
The funniest of them all was one he called screech owl

His friends will sure miss him of this there’s no doubt.
He taught all us cowboys what rodeo was all about.
Be fair and honest, try hard as you can
In rodeo and in life, you will be a top hand

I’m glad I could count Pat a personal friend of mine.
If you ever needed help, he’d be there every time.
If you were down and out Pat would lend a hand,
But he’d make you get up saying, “Son act like a man.”

Pat was a winner right up to the end,
surrounded by the love of his family and the respect of his friends
His last win was his best; he’s left this earthly sod.
Pat went home to be with Jesus and the family of God.

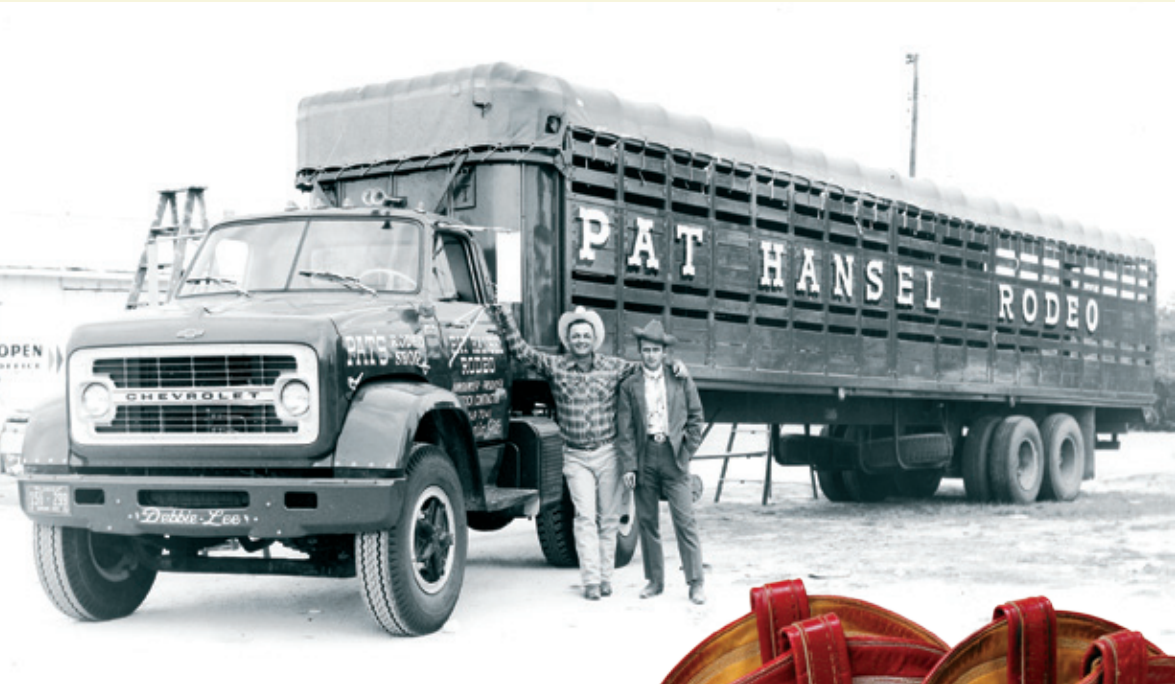
—Wendell Cooper March 24th, 2007

A note from Pat Hansel’s daughter, Debbie Hansel Carlton:
Wendell Cooper was fighting a battle with cancer when he wrote this wonderful poem. He lost that battle and also went home to be with Jesus and the family of God a year later. Thank you God for making our lives richer because of Daddy Pat and Wendell.



Custom-made belt buckle worn by Pat Hansel, silver and gold. The figure of Pat was originally holding a microphone, which has broken off.

Rodeo clown Bill Shaw fends off Pat Hansel’s bucking bull, Seminole Chief, at the National Finals Rodeo, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1981. Pat Hansel is in two-tone western jacket, center. Photo by James Fain.



Pat Hansel (L) and unidentified sign painter with Pat’s rodeo stock truck, Arcadia, 1966. Photo by George Shupka.

Red checkerboard cowboy boots made for Pat Hansel by the Tony Lama Company. Pat had several pairs of boots custom made for his rodeo announcer attire.



This handsome 128-page publication presents the entire content of the acclaimed multi-media museum exhibit, *Florida Cattle Ranching: Five Centuries of Tradition*, in book form. More than 200 photos present historical documentary images, scenes of contemporary ranch life, and artifacts that range from the Spanish colonial spurs to modern electronic ID tags. The engaging text describes Florida's cattle ranching heritage from the 16th century to the present.

An enclosed DVD includes two broadcast-quality videos that present the fascinating story of Cracker Cattle and Cracker Horses descended from stock introduced by Spaniards in the 1500s, and twelve audio segments that feature dozens of Florida cowboys, cowgirls and ranchers who inform and entertain you on topics ranging from cow-dogs and Cracker cow whips to cowboy funerals and hilarious poetry based on ranch work experiences.



Cowboy with Cracker horse at an open range roundup near Fort McCoy. Ca. 1910. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, image n045020.



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