

## RANCHING The Shrinking Range

# Breeding of quality cattle a source of rancher pride

By JON RABIROFF  
Tribune Staff Writer

**NEW PORT RICHEY** — When ranchers get together, talk inevitably turns to one's offspring.

There will be bragging about the newborn's size, and perhaps its durability. A photograph or two might even be passed around.

Mention might even be made of the newborn's lung power, and how loudly he or she moos.

Moos?

In the world of cattle ranching, it appears ranchers take almost as much pride in the calves they breed as they do in their own children.

"When you say they brag on their cattle like they do on their kids, you're not too far off," said Pat McCaffrey of the Florida Cattlemen's Association. "Cow people tend to get very attached to whatever breed they're breeding.

"Some even keep track of how (their calves) grade out as slaughter animals," after they are shipped off their ranches, he said.

Wesley Chapel rancher Don Porter agreed.

"All men have to satisfy their ego in one way, shape or form, and (cattle) are simply the toys that ranchers play with," he said. "I don't know anybody that tells the truth about (the success of their breeding programs)."

Cattle ranchers use breeding to develop calves durable enough to withstand the Florida heat and humidity, physically able to handle the terrain of their particular ranch and capable of producing large amounts of lean meat.

That is accomplished by cross-breeding bulls and cows, and coming up with calves that inherit the better qualities of both.

In that respect, ranchers must run something similar to a dating service for cows — bringing together only those bulls and cows that have strong personality traits and are likely to match up well.

Bulls are left with a select group of cows, at approximately a 1-to-20 ratio, in the hopes that 85 percent to 100 percent of the cows will conceive.

Brahman are the most popular breed in the state, McCaffrey said, "because they do very well in the Florida climate and make very good mama cows. They take good care of their calves."

They are frequently bred with Hereford and Angus cattle to produce Brangus and Braford mixes. The cross gives the cattle the size of the Hereford and Angus and the heat resistance of the Brahman.

"A Brahman will lay down in direct sunlight and it won't bother him a bit, while a Hereford will be panting in the shade," Odessa rancher J.B. Starkey Jr. said.

Heat-resistance is not the only advantage.

"There's something about cross-breeding that improves cattle in that the offspring is hardier than either of its parents," Starkey added.

By crossing mixed-breeds, ranchers must double as genetic gourmets, seeing that the right combination of various breeds is represented in particular herds during breeding season.

"Different breeds serve different uses," said Don Berry, editor of The Florida Cattleman magazine. "If you're running cattle on rough land, you need more Brahman in them than you do for lush, improved pastures. They gear their breeding to their individual man-

### Brahman



**Reputation:** More likely than other breeds to get upset and make life miserable for any people in the vicinity.

**Features:** Gray in color, humped back and generous amount of loose skin.

**Characteristics:** ideal for Florida, all but immune to heat and humidity.

### Hereford



**Reputation:** Easygoing.

**Features:** Red-colored except for its white face. Long hair and short legs. Popular in cross-breeding with Brahman.

**Handling:** Because of their easygoing nature, they can be roughed when troublesome on cattle drives.

### Angus



**Reputation:** Docile.

**Features:** Black with short legs and wide, squat bodies. Dense in terms of weight.

**Characteristics:** Known for high quality meat, which may explain why about the only time they get feisty is when they're being led into confined areas.

### Limousin



**Reputation:** The Hulk Hogan of cattle. Known for being very muscular.

**Features:** Light brown to light red in color.

**Characteristics:** A high-yielding carcass, especially known for the amount of red meat.

agement plans."

Starkey said: "The name of the game is pounds. You need to produce as big a calf as you can handle — one that will continue to grow, and gain and produce meat."

Starkey pointed out that because calves are sold for future slaughter in bulk, "you can have one or two individual calves that are real whoppers, but it's the average weight (of the group sold) that really counts."

Crystal Springs rancher Robert M. Thomas said, "You're trying to pull the best characteristics out of each breed to produce a more efficient, beef-producing unit.

When they find what they believe to be the right genetic mix for their cattle, ranch owners are eager to share the information with others.

"They are not generally ones to be real protective of what they're doing," Berry said. "They're pretty proud of what they do, and they like to share information.

"I guess it has to do with their background," he added. "For years, all they had to depend on was their neighbors, and that is something that has stuck with them through the years."

The relationship between ranchers and their cattle is also an important element in the breeding process, in instances where special attention has to be paid to particular cows or bulls.

"If you don't spend quite a lot of time with them, they're going to be quite a bit sillier," said Dan Ritter,

*Monday:* Development pressure, environment concerns and taxes are squeezing West Central Florida ranchers. Big land sales by two in Pasco County illustrate the problem.

**TODAY:** Home on the range still rings true for West Central Florida as writer Jon Rabiroff goes on a cattle drive. Experts see little hope for youngsters to become ranchers.

*Wednesday:* Ranchers find Uncle Sam has a lot to say about whether their ranches will survive his hungry tax bite.

Two Rivers cattle manager. "They'll run and scatter like quail sometimes.

"When they are used to a certain truck, horses or dogs being in the pasture, they'll just settle right down," he said. "But, if you come here in a Hawaiian shirt, they're probably going to look at you a little different."

Porter said the days of ranchers bragging about their cattle may be nearing an end. "In most of the conversations I have with other people in agriculture, we tend to talk more about the negatives — the increasing regulation, the changes in tax structures.

"I think that over the past decade, it's been difficult to find many good things to talk about," he said.

## Cracker cows at home on Florida's range

### Agriculture department rounds up cattle that are part of state's heritage

By JUDY HILL  
Tribune Staff Writer

LAKE KISSIMMEE STATE PARK — Noah Oliver wistfully remembers when the Sunshine State had fewer than 1 million residents and a paucity of paved roads.

But there were plenty of Florida Cracker cattle roaming free in the piney woods of the Panhandle. And it's the cattle that the 77-year-old resident of Enterprise, Ala., is most wistful about.

In an accent laced with country ham, grits and red-eye gravy, Oliver recalls trips to the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast in the 1920s and 1930s during which he would spot the rangy critters, which were descendants of the cattle brought to the New World by Spanish explorers in the 16th century.

The area "was nothin' but pine trees and palmettos. Those ol' cows were runnin' wild all over the country. They'd be down in the branch bottoms in the wintertime eatin' palmettos.

"When I got older and tried to find some of those boogers, they were gone. They were almost extinct. You just couldn't find them."

Oliver was so fascinated by the wild cattle that during the days he was an aircraft mechanic at Fort Rucker, Ala., he'd hitch airplane rides and ask the pilots to fly low over the Florida backwoods so he could look for them.

"There was just somethin' about 'em," says Oliver. "They were good ol' cows."

#### Cattle become collectible

Oliver's fascination eventually turned into an avocation — he began collecting the cattle in the 1960s and now has about 30 head on his 500-acre spread outside of Enterprise, west of Dothan.

"I just thought that they were something unique and they should be preserved ... I thought something that persistent in trying to live should be helped."

A growing number of Cracker cattle fans share Oliver's enthusiasm, including Florida Agriculture Commissioner Doyle Conner.

Because of their historic significance and possible genetic value, four small Cracker cattle herds now are maintained by the state, new private breeders are being enlisted and an infant association, the Florida Cracker Cattle Association, has been formed to protect and preserve the cattle.

These descendants of Spanish cattle, which came to be known as Cracker cows, were canny, often hiding in heavy underbrush and deep woods, forcing early Florida cowmen to search them out with dogs and whips — whips that "cracked" when flicked.

Legend has it that the term "Cracker," which old-time Floridians are sometimes called, came from the cracks of those whips.



George Aycrigg oversees a herd of 35 Cracker cattle owned by the state at Lake Kissimmee State Park.

“These cattle are a living link to our heritage and history — a tangible relic, a living link to our past.”

— Stephen Monroe,  
Florida Department of Agriculture  
and Consumer Services

Sometimes known as scrub, woods or wire-grass cattle, the endangered critters, who have survived heat, hurricanes and mosquitoes for more than 450 years, provide a path into the state's past worn smooth by cloven hooves.

"These cattle are a living link to our heritage and history — a tangible relic, a living link to our past," says Stephen Monroe, association official and development representative for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, who manages the FDA Cracker cattle herd in Tallahassee.

Cattle are important to the state's economy today, and much of Florida's early social and economic history can be painted with a cow-hair brush.

The Andalusian cattle brought to Florida by Ponce de Leon in 1521 were the first domestic cattle brought to the continental United

States, says Joe Akerman, a Madison, Fla., author and historian whose book, "Florida Cowman," provides a fascinating look at "Home on the Range" Florida style.

"The basis of the whole cattle industry is those cattle," says Akerman.

#### Pioneer ranchers thrived

As Spanish influence in Florida and the South spread, so did Andalusian cattle. When St. Augustine was founded in 1565, the first of many Spanish missions in the state, more cattle were imported — 200 helpers, according to Akerman.

But the demand soon outstripped the supply.

In 1605, the first working ranch began operation. By the end of the century, more than 30 "ranchos" dotted north Florida from the St. Johns to the Apalachicola rivers.

The largest was the Rancho de la Chua — Anglicized to Alachua — in the Paynes Prairie area around Gainesville, which may have had as many as 1,000 head.

The first exporting — smuggling, actually — of cattle to Cuba began in the mid-1600s. Although the trade was condemned by Spanish authorities because of the domestic shortage of beef, the trading relationship with Cuba and other Caribbean islands eventually would



"Short, rangy and scrawny," Cracker cows eat palmettos and wire grass and require little supplemental feed.



Cracker cows are descendants of the cattle brought to the New World by Spanish explorers in the 1500s.

# Cracker cows produce protein at little cost

■ From Page 1H

become very profitable for the ports of Tampa and Punta Rassa near Fort Myers.

Pioneer Florida families — with familiar names such as Roberts, Carlton, Lykes, Summerlin, McKay, Hendry, Alderman, Welles, McMullen and others — also profited.

The ranching style of the Spaniards — open ranges with cattle allowed to roam free — also left its mark. In fact, the issue of open ranges plagued Florida for generations.

The American Indians in Florida also were impacted by the cattle.

While they were being "Christianized" by the Spanish missionaries, they were taught to herd cows. After the Spaniards left, the Alachua Seminoles and others had huge herds.

The most valuable characteristics of cracker cows, also related to Texas longhorns, were their hardiness and ease of keeping.

Cracker cows were also capable of surviving on native grasses and vegetation without supplemental feeding. They knew what to eat and when to eat it, says Monroe.

The ones who survived wild in the woods became a profitable resource to later settlers who became ranchers merely by "harvesting" the wild cattle.

The characteristics that made them survivors in the woods, however, led to their downfall.

They did not "feed out" or fatten up very well. So as ranching became more sophisticated in the mid-1800s, other more efficient strains of beef from England and

Europe were imported.

Some cattle ranchers bred Cracker cattle with the imported strains to preserve hardiness. Those products were known as Florida range cattle.

Others actually kept small herds of Spanish-origin cattle to preserve the breed. But the cows that once seemed almost as commonplace as rabbits became an endangered species because of crossbreeding and a fall from favor.

## Florida beef is big business

Cattle is a major industry in Florida, which ranks 15th in the nation in total cattle, ninth in beef cattle production and first in beef cattle in states east of the Mississippi River, according to the Kissimmee-based Florida Cattlemen's Association. The 1989 inventory of livestock in the state indicates a total of 2,025,000 cattle in the state.

Even today, with modern preservation efforts, there are only about 300-500 surviving head of Cracker cattle in Florida.

Preservation efforts began in the early 1970s, when Commissioner Conner asked the Florida Cattlemen's Association to help try to save the breed, says Monroe.

Seed stock for the current Department of Agriculture herds — five helpers and a bull — were donated by Zona Bass and Zetta Hunt of the pioneer Bass family in Okeechobee County.

The herds in Tallahassee and Withlacoochee are out of this original donation and number about 100.

Modern Cracker cattle are certainly not the same as those original Andalusian stock. But the purest are close in lineage. Their genetic and

historical significance, however, is not immediately visible to the untrained eye.

Much smaller than the average modern beef cow, Cracker cows are "short, rangy and scrawny," says George Aycrigg, assistant manager of Lake Kissimmee State Park, who oversees a herd of 35 Cracker cattle owned by the Florida Department of Natural Resources. They are used in the park's re-created 1876 Cow Camp.

The other department-owned herd is at Paynes Prairie State Preserve south of Gainesville.

The Department of Agriculture herds are in Tallahassee at the Department of Agriculture's laboratory facility, which is home to the Florida Agricultural Museum, and at the Withlacoochee State Forest near Brooksville.

## Old genes may be useful

Although the Cracker cows may not look like meat lockers on hooves, Tim Olson, a University of Florida geneticist, says the strain is worth preserving for more than its historical significance.

Olson believes that Spanish-origin cattle are more resistant to Florida parasites and disease because of natural selection.

"In case they are, let's try to preserve them," he says. "They may have genes that will be useful down the road."

The cattle also appear to be resistant to hot weather, humidity, insects and lack of nutrition, says Olson. "After all, they've been here 450 years."

Their historical heritage is what appeals to Levy County rancher Peggy Miller, a descendant of the pioneer McMullen family of Pinel-

las and Hillsborough counties.

Miller, who raises Simmental bulls, just purchased five Cracker cattle helpers.

"I'm real proud of them," says Miller, whose mother, Nancy McMullen McLaughlin, still lives in the McMullen homestead in Pinellas County.

"We call them 'the Cracker girls' ... We're just going to raise them and breed them. We're trying to keep the bloodlines pure. It's a preservation thing that's really unique. There's very few things you can trace back that far. We just like to keep a little herd of old Florida going."

Miller adds with a laugh, "We've taken 150 years to upgrade (beef production in Florida). Now we're going back."

Miller and Noah Oliver are part of the 60-member Florida Cracker Cattle Association and two of the 20 members who actually own Cracker cattle.

The primary mission of the association, says Monroe, is to preserve the breed in as pure a form as possible. Therefore, a selection committee including Olson, Oliver, Monroe and others now is evaluating Cracker cattle herds.

Cattle with lineage as pure as possible are being certified as "foundation stock." Others are being registered as "Cracker cattle." Cattle with obviously sullied lineage are culled.

One of Monroe's goals is to see more Cracker cattle, which can produce protein at little or no cost, being kept on public and marginal land.

"They are a renewable resource that may some day be needed by a hungry world."

June 1988

file: Cattlemen

# Florida Cracker Trail Riders Will Follow Pioneers' Route

by Phillip Keyes

Florida's Crackers -- young and older, home-grown and transplanted -- are preparing themselves for a week-long trek across South Florida along the same route as used by Florida Crackers more than 100 years ago.

Participants are providing their own means of transportation on the 150 mile ride, including horse, buggy and wagon, according to Maggie Butler of Sebring, Executive Director of the Florida Cracker Trail Association.

"We've had a fantastic response from people all over Florida who want to make this ride," she said. "Part of the attraction is the route which follows as closely as possible the original trail used on cattle drives by our famous relatives."

The ride begins near Bradenton, on Florida's Gulf coast just south of Tampa, on June 11 and follows a total of five different state and county highways before it reaches Fort Pierce on the Atlantic Ocean. The combination of roads has been designated The Florida Cracker Trail. The ride will begin at the Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, 2.7 miles east of I-75 on SR-64. Activities on Sunday, the 11th of June, are being co-sponsored by the Manatee Cattlemen's Association and Manatee County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"This ride is open to experienced riders who want to join us for the entire trek or for a day at a time," Ms. Butler said. "The trip

will be remembered as the first one for the Florida Cracker Trail Association. Future rides will also be memorable events and are already being discussed."

The idea to designate the route from Bradenton to Fort Pierce as the Florida Cracker Trail belongs to Highlands County grove service owner, Marvin Kahn. The idea caught on quickly, and numerous civic and business leaders from cities and counties lying north and south of the Trail have pledged support and participation. Florida Representative Bert Harris and Senator Bob Crawford presented the bills

to the Florida Legislature gaining the Florida Cracker Trail designation. Future DOT maps will carry the name. The week of June 11 to 18 has also been designated by the Legislature as Florida Cracker Trail Week.

"The response has been infectious," Ms. Butler said. "People from all over the state are wanting to become part of the Florida Cracker Trail Association, and we're obliging them as fast as we can."

The Association's master plan calls for more than just rides back and forth across the state. This is an

*Continued on page 12*

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## Trail Riders from page 11

idea which promotes economic development, accumulation of historic data, tourism promotions and even social events.

"There is just so much history to be learned and seen at almost every stop along the Trail," Ms. Butler said. "But that is only part of the reason so many people are responding to the Association and this ride. There is great natural beauty with varieties of wildlife and plant life. There is low lying marshland, pinewoods, oak hammocks, even sand dunes. Two of Florida's largest fresh water lakes and two state parks front on the Trail. There are many creeks and streams and, of course, there is South Florida's unmatched climate."

Undoubtedly, the agenda and itinerary the Association has put together are a great attraction for many participants. The fun begins Saturday, June 11, with registration of riders at 9 a.m. and a dutch-treat public barbecue at 6 p.m. at the Schroeder-Manatee Ranch.

Sunday morning the riders strike out for the Kibler Ranch at the intersection of the Florida Cracker Trail -- SR-64 -- and Bare Bay Road, 5.4 miles west of the Hardee County line.

Monday, June 13, the riders arrive at Hardee County's Pioneer Park at Zolfo Springs. This part of the Florida Cracker Trail Ride is co-sponsored by the Hardee County Chamber of Commerce. There will be a dutch-treat barbecue at 6 p.m. and entertainment.

Tuesday the riders travel to the Kahn Ranch, 10 miles west of U.S. 27 in Highlands County on SR-66. Wednesday, June 15, the ride continues across Highlands

County to the community of Lorida and the Horse Town Rodeo Arena. This is 8 miles east of U.S. 27 on U.S. 98. That evening there will be a Pee Wee's Rodeo at 6 p.m., a dutch-treat public barbecue and entertainment. Several community and county organizations are co-sponsoring this part of the Trail Ride and extend an invitation to the public to join in on the fun.

Thursday, June 16th, the ride continues eastward on U.S. 98 to the Flying B Ranch on County Road 68 in Okeechobee County. Friday the riders cross U.S. 441 just north of Okeechobee City and make camp at the Grasse Island Ranch, 5.7 miles east of 441, on County Road 64.

Saturday, June 18, the end

is in sight. The riders will arrive at the Adams Ranch in time for a party of the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce and the St. Lucie Cattlemen's Association. The Adams Ranch is located 12.5 miles east of U.S. 441 on CR-68. Activities will include a barbecue supper and a special awards ceremony.

Sunday, June 19, the riders will break camp after a special trail ride around the ranch.

Ms. Butler said people interested in joining the Florida Cracker Trail Ride for the entire week or on any of its segments are welcome, but riders should be experienced and riding well trained horses. For additional information including Florida Cracker Trail Association membership information, call Jann Towsan at 1-(813)-385-1130, or write the Association at P.O. Box 1005, Sebring, FL 33871-1005.



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# CLAIRE PHILLIPS LAXTON



## Cattle kept county strong in the '30s

*Editor's note: Citrus County is 100 years old this year. In conjunction with the Centennial, the Citrus Times will publish an occasional feature about Citrus County's past. Claire Phillips Laxton, a 10-year county resident, is a free-lance writer who specializes in history.*

LECANTO — In 1930, when Citrus County's population was 5,516, Lecanto was known for farming, dairy and beef cattle. The only two churches were the Church of Christ and the Baptist Church. Murray Davis owned a general store and post office and Mr. Newport owned the only gas station in Lecanto. Residents did their shopping, mostly for staples, in the nearby towns of Crystal River and Inverness.

Charles H. Allen, Citrus County's appraiser, was raised in Lecanto and remembered those times.

"If my mother spent \$5 a week on groceries, that was high, because we raised livestock and farmed," he said.

"My great-grandfather, Early A. Allen, came to Citrus County in 1840, residing in Crystal River," recalled Charles Allen.

"Early's son, Charles E. Allen, became the director of a local bank, supervisor of elections and the tax collector in the early 1900s.

"As stated in the Journal of

Taxation book, he was sued by Camp Phosphates over taxes while he was serving as tax collector. It was the first case of taxation to go to the Supreme Court in the history of Florida." Allen said his grandfather won the case.

"My father, Eldwood F. Allen, was a Lecanto farmer who raised cows and hogs, along with row crops, (corn, beans and cabbage)," said Allen. "We also had work horses and riding horses."

During that time, cattle were able to roam because the fencing laws were not in effect. If a motorist ran into the cattle, it was his or her responsibility to replace the cow.

Cattlemen had some theft problems in letting cattle graze in open pastures. In the 1930s, cattle were branded with registered markings on the hip and in the ear. They are not branded today. The ear markings could be cut out, but the branding with hot irons was permanent. The fencing law came into being in the 1940s, forcing many cattlemen to reduce their herds.

Some of Lecanto's cattlemen besides the Allens were the Van Nesses, the Crofts, the Rooks, the Belomys, the Hodges, the Johns and the Maynards. Inverness, Floral City, and Citronelle also had cattle. Citronelle's cattlemen were the Priests, the Bertines, the Stricklands and the Turners.



These cattle are on the Covey Rise Ranch in the 1940s. The ranch was later sold and eventually used for the Pine Ridge subdivision.

The main problem confronting the cattlemen was limited vegetation in the woods to feed thousands of cattle. "Cattle were taken to the coastal area of Ozello during the winter, rather than plant rye," Allen said.

"During the summer, cattlemen would burn wooded areas so that the cattle could graze in the spring on wire grass, (new growth that was tender and edible). There were always new calves to be branded when the cattle returned from wintering in Ozello," he said.

The Depression was here with hard times, but the Allens and many others were well prepared with food — crops, hogs and cattle. They also had a smokehouse for pork. Allen remembered his mother, Eva, putting her vegetables in Mason jars. When some

families fled, trying to get back to Georgia and other areas for work, Eva gave many families food for their trips. Some offered to work in exchange for food.

"My mother couldn't stand to see anyone go hungry, so when they'd leave, she'd always give something extra for their journey," Allen recalled. Allen's father peddled his farm foods locally and sold side orders of beef to Colburn's Market in Crystal River (now Sun Market) before the new processing laws were in effect.

Harry Eugene Maynard and his wife, Tamsy, were dairy farmers back in the 1930s who still farm today raising livestock. Their children, Mae Lewis, Donald and Harry Maynard, also raise beef cattle, which they haul once a year to Ocala or to the Webster markets.

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# Ranch family recalls early days in Citrus

*Editor's note: Citrus County is 100 years old this year. In conjunction with the Centennial, the Citrus Times will publish an occasional feature about Citrus County's past. Claire Phillips Laxton, a 10-year county resident, is a free-lance writer who specializes in history.*

Citrus County residents Horace and Pauline Allen recall living in Lecanto with "Granddaddy" Charles E. Allen on his dairy ranch, where the Allens still live today.

In 1932, Horace Allen bought a horse named Jigger for \$25. His granddaddy always said: "Never lie to your horse, and you must always have more sense than he."

Horace would ride Jigger to Crystal River for visiting or shopping, then send Jigger back. The horse would return home to Lecanto alone. Jigger was once ridden in a race — which it won — by rodeo man Pat Moore. Moore was the son of Elizabeth Moore, county home economics agent of the 1930s.

Horace Allen served on the Citrus County School Board from 1958 to 1974. His grandfa-

CENTENNIAL

**CLAIRE PHILLIPS  
LAXTON**



ther was president of a bank and in 1931 went into the dairy business. The Allens delivered milk to Crystal River and Homosassa.

Horace recalls the old Lecanto school going through the eighth grade. It was where the canning plant is today, just off County Road 491.

Annette Gibbs Maynard and the Allens' daughter, Lillian Allen Waugh, were the last to attend that school. Twenty-four children graduated in 1958 from the eighth grade.

Pauline Allen's parents worked in the phosphate industry. They left Nottingham, England, and came to Ocala in the the late 1880s or early

1890s. They later settled in Inverness.

Morgan Payne, Pauline's father, was paymaster of the phosphate mines when Pauline was 5 years old, she recalls.

He and another young man, both about 30 years old, were riding a stagecoach with a mine payroll on board when they were ambushed by three drifters. Both men were killed but the drifters never found the money. Payne told only one other person where the money was hidden in the stagecoach, in case a robbery ever occurred.

By the time a posse arrived with dogs, the two young men were dead. But the dogs picked up the scent of the drifters, who were found and hanged.

Morgan Payne is buried in the Lecanto cemetery with his partner. Local legend says remains of the ropes still hang on a tree somewhere in Lecanto where the drifters were lynched.

Today, the Allens raise beef cattle on 600 acres they share with their grown children.

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## CLAIRE PHILLIPS LAXTON



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**LECANTO** — It was 1930 when John Newell purchased the property in Lecanto that he would later develop into the Covey Rise Ranch. When Covey Rise was created in 1940, Lecanto's James C. Gibbs (Jimmy) became ranch foreman of the 13,500 acre spread, a job he would hold until late 1983.

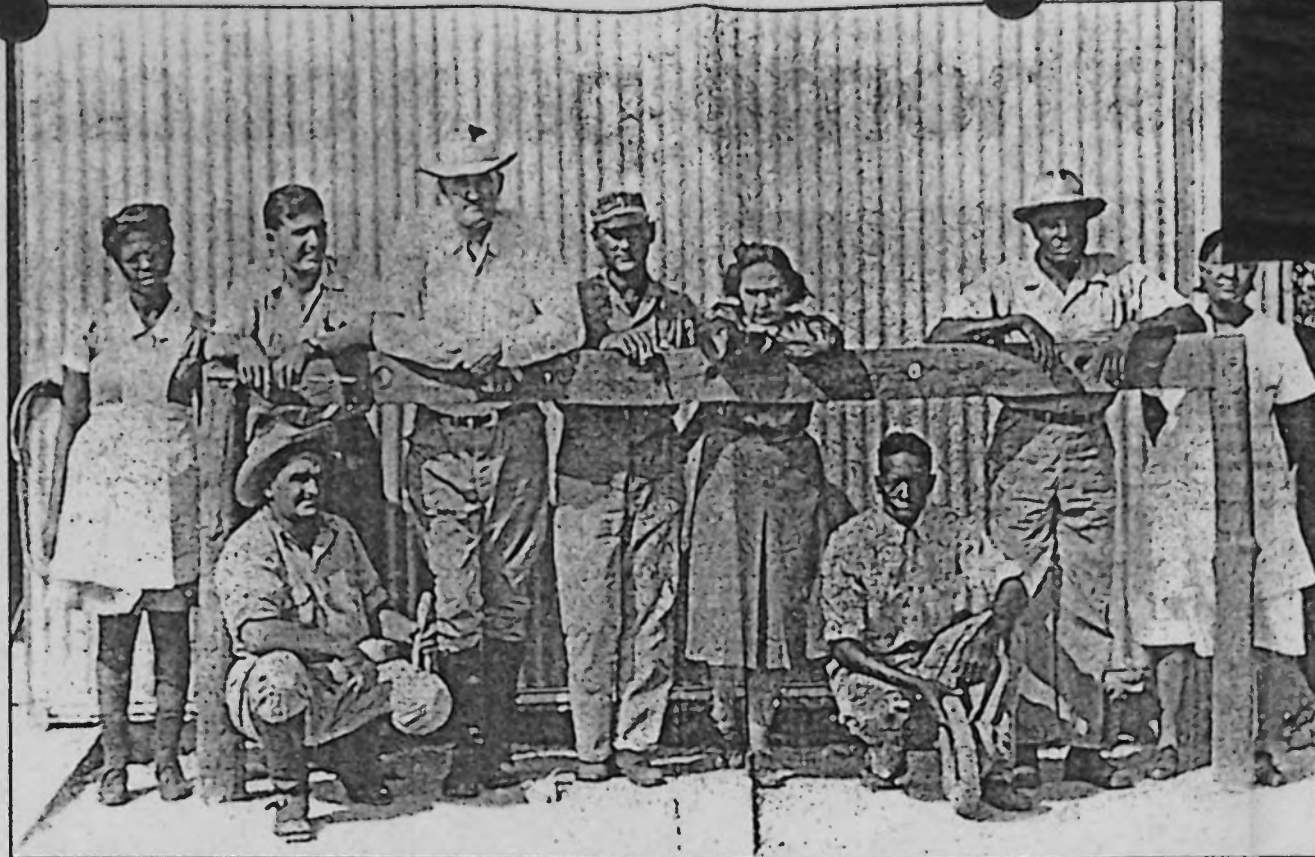
Covey Rise Ranch's birth was announced statewide on the radio during the Farmers Hour, which was broadcast from Gainesville. Ranch workers made their own hay, used horses for cattle roundups, raised large Hampshire herds of hogs and grew crops.

Newell raised Brahmas and later introduced the Santa Gertrudis bulls for breeding. The animals' grazing area was surrounded by fences that stretched for 23 miles. "There was a cold storage, a smokehouse and a curing room," recalled Thelma Gibbs, wife of the late Jimmy Gibbs. "They also had a peanut field," she said. Newell later changed the ranch's name from Covey Rise to the Live Oak Plantation.

In 1950, Newell sold the ranch to John S. Taylor of Largo, a bank director who owned a hotel and fruit produce company called Black Diamond. Jimmy Gibbs stayed on as ranch foreman with Taylor, who renamed the ranch Black Diamond.

Taylor built a beautiful cypress wood home on the property that still exists today. "He brought another home from Largo to the ranch for Jimmy, myself and our daughter, Annette Gibbs Maynard, to live in," recalled Mrs. Gibbs.

In the late 1960s, Taylor sold most of the ranch's acreage to the Deltona Corporation, which built the Pine Ridge development there. The remaining 1,500 acres were sold in late 1983 to developer Stan Olsen. Olsen took over the property in January 1984.



The crew of the Covey Rise Ranch. Owner John Newell is third from the left, standing along the railing; ranch foreman Jimmy Gibbs is on his right.

**Ranch workers made their own hay, used horses for cattle roundups, raised large Hampshire herds of hogs and grew crops.**

Olsen is remodeling the old Taylor house and building a development and golf course on the site.

Jimmy Gibbs worked on the ranch until late 1983. Gibbs died on Feb. 24, 1986, but these memories of the Black Diamond Ranch will always remain.

Harry Eugene Maynard and his wife, Tamsy, were dairy farmers in the 1930s; they still raise livestock, today. Their children, Mae Lewis, Donald and Harry Maynard, also raise beef cattle, which they haul once a year to Ocala or to the Webster Markets.

"We carry out the young calves and the

older steers for markets, saving the finer heifers for breeding," said Tamsy Maynard. "Back in the 1930s we strictly raised dairy cattle. My husband peddled milk to Arthur Atkins Market in Crystal River," she said. The Maynards also planted crops and raised hogs. "We planted peanuts and velvet beans, which were vines planted among the corn to fatten the hogs," recalled Mrs. Maynard. The Maynards remembered spraying their cattle to protect against the fever tick epidemics.

During the cattle tick invasion, the government ordered cattle dips, and chemical vats were built to dip the cattle. The cattle were forced to walk up the incline and jump into the vats.

They were dipped every two weeks and painted different colors so range riders could identify those not dipped. Agents built a section of barbed wire fence starting at the Chassahowitzka River to the Withlacoochee River at Istachatta to ensure that livestock in Citrus and Hernando counties would not be reinfested.

Although that was the Depression era, people survived and helped each other like the Lecanto farmers and cattlemen did.

CENTENNIAL

# CLAIRE PHILLIPS LAXTON



## Cattle kept county strong in the '30s

**Editor's note:** Citrus County is 100 years old this year. In conjunction with the Centennial, the Citrus Times will publish an occasional feature about Citrus County's past. Claire Phillips Laxton, a 10-year county resident, is a free-lance writer who specializes in history.

LECANTO — In 1930, when Citrus County's population was 5,516, Lecanto was known for farming, dairy and beef cattle. The only two churches were the Church of Christ and the Baptist Church. Murray Davis owned a general store and post office and Mr. Newport owned the only gas station in Lecanto. Residents did their shopping, mostly for staples, in the nearby towns of Crystal River and Inverness.

Charles H. Allen, Citrus County's appraiser, was raised in Lecanto and remembered those times.

"If my mother spent \$5 a week on groceries, that was high, because we raised livestock and farmed," he said.

"My great-grandfather, Early A. Allen, came to Citrus County in 1840, residing in Crystal River," recalled Charles Allen.

"Early's son, Charles E. Allen, became the director of a local bank, supervisor of elections and he tax collector in the early 1900s.

"As stated in the Journal of

Taxation book, he was sued by Camp Phosphates over taxes while he was serving as tax collector. It was the first case of taxation to go to the Supreme Court in the history of Florida." Allen said his grandfather won the case.

"My father, Eldwood F. Allen, was a Lecanto farmer who raised cows and hogs, along with row crops, (corn, beans and cabbage)," said Allen. "We also had work horses and riding horses."

During that time, cattle were able to roam because the fencing laws were not in effect. If a motorist ran into the cattle, it was his or her responsibility to replace the cow.

Cattlemen had some theft problems in letting cattle graze in open pastures. In the 1930s, cattle were branded with registered markings on the hip and in the ear. They are not branded today. The ear markings could be cut out, but the branding with hot irons was permanent. The fencing law came into being in the 1940s, forcing many cattlemen to reduce their herds.

Some of Lecanto's cattlemen besides the Allens were the Van Nesses, the Crofts, the Rooks, the Belomys, the Hodges, the Johns and the Maynards. Inverness, Floral City, and Citronelle also had cattle. Citronelle's cattlemen were the Priests, the Bertines, the Stricklands and the Turners.



These cattle are on the Covey Rise Ranch in the 1940s. The ranch was later sold and eventually used for the Pine Ridge subdivision.

The main problem confronting the cattlemen was limited vegetation in the woods to feed thousands of cattle. "Cattle were taken to the coastal area of Ozello during the winter, rather than plant rye," Allen said.

"During the summer, cattlemen would burn wooded areas so that the cattle could graze in the spring on wire grass, (new growth that was tender and edible). There were always new calves to be branded when the cattle returned from wintering in Ozello," he said.

The Depression was here with hard times, but the Allens and many others were well prepared with food — crops, hogs and cattle. They also had a smokehouse for pork. Allen remembered his mother, Eva, putting her vegetables in Mason jars. When some

families fled, trying to get back to Georgia and other areas for work, Eva gave many families food for their trips. Some offered to work in exchange for food.

"My mother couldn't stand to see anyone go hungry, so when they'd leave, she'd always give something extra for their journey," Allen recalled. Allen's father peddled his farm foods locally and sold side orders of beef to Colburn's Market in Crystal River (now Sur Market) before the new processing laws were in effect.

Harry Eugene Maynard and his wife, Tamsy, were dairy farmers back in the 1930s who still farm today raising livestock. Their children, Mae Lewis, Donald and Harry Maynard, also raise beef cattle, which they haul once a year to Ocala or to the Webster markets.

CITRUS TIMES  
SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1987 3

200 words were cut here —  
So, I have 2 different cattle stories coming later —

# CATTLE INDUSTRY



▲ Cowboy Bone Mizell, whose exploits and folksy story-telling earned him the label "King of the Crackers." Artist Frederic

Remington painted this portrait in DeSoto County in 1895. (University of South Florida Library—Special Collection)

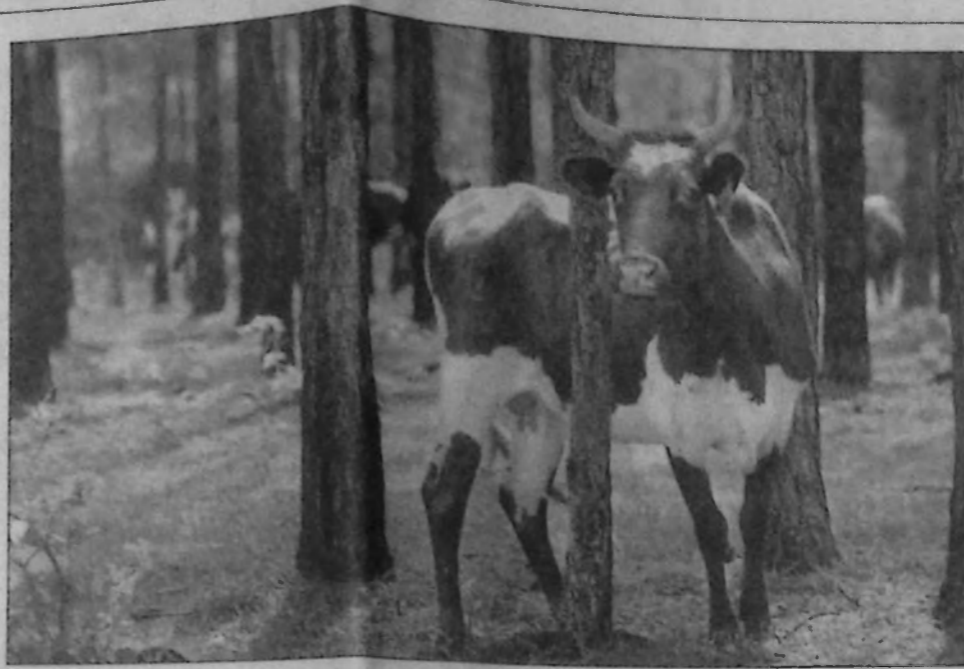
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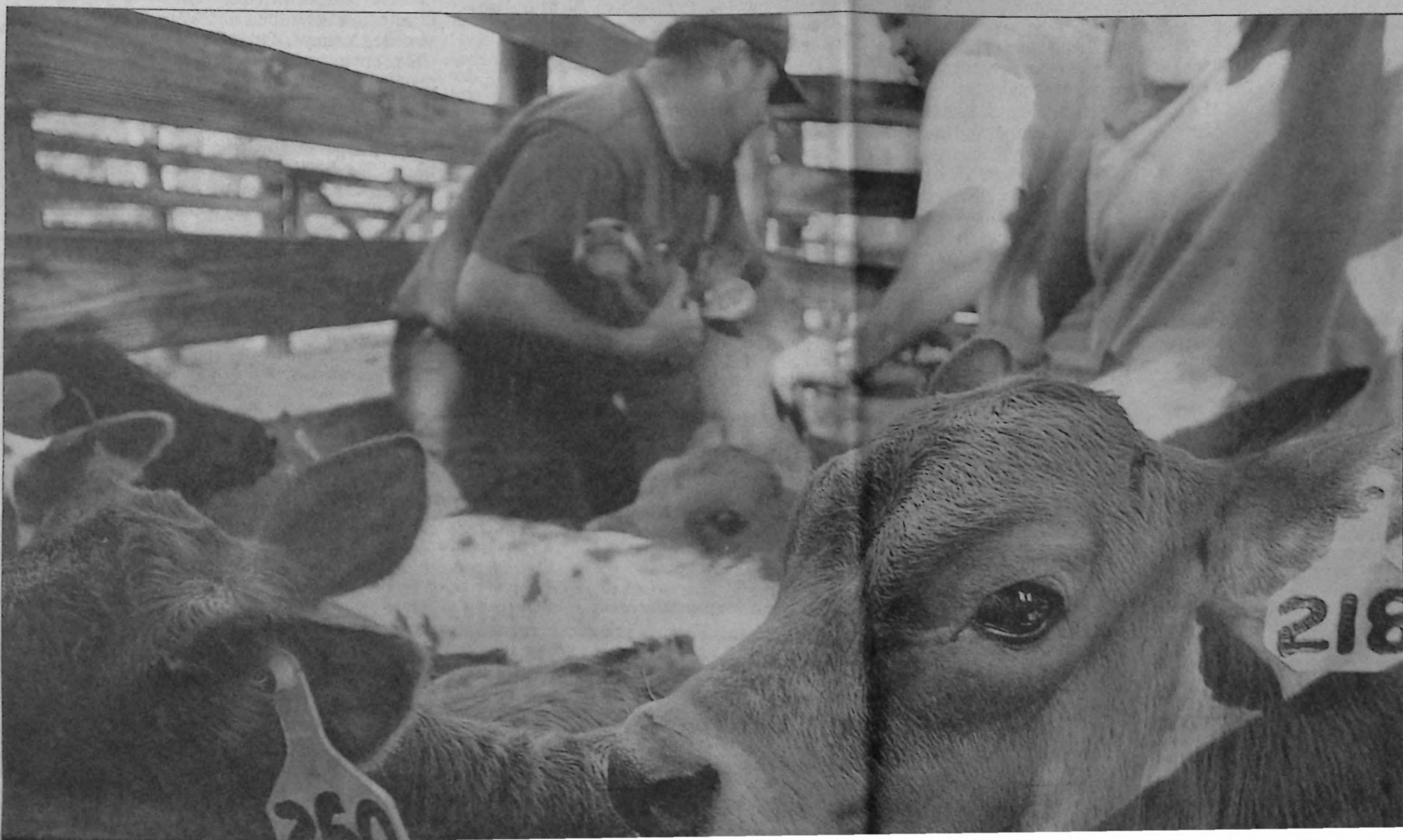
# CITRUS TIMES

SUNDAY ■ APRIL 20, 2003

## Cattle project preserving herd's history



A Florida Cracker cow stands amid the pines in the Withlacoochee State Forest. The state maintains the herd of cattle, descendants of a breed brought to the state by Spanish explorers more than 400 years ago.



A Florida Cracker calf waits with part of the herd for worming in a holding pen this week in the Withlacoochee State Forest. The breed used to roam wild in the state.



Darrell Griffey, right, of the State Division of Forestry releases a Florida Cracker cow from a pen after it was treated with medicine as part of a state program.

■ The state hopes more than 60 Florida Cracker cattle that make their home on 180 acres of the Withlacoochee State Forest will sustain the breed.

By RICHARD RAEKE  
Times Staff Writer

The black bulls seem to come from deeper in the woods, Darrell Griffey said.

They're more likely to test your composure with a few quick steps and a flick of the horns. Run from their bluff and, with horns down, they will chase after you — just like the Spanish toros from which they descend.

The Florida Cracker cattle don't have the roly-poly demeanor of a milk cow sidling up to the feed trough.

"They're more . . . active," Griffey added with a sly grin. Once released from the corral, they wander back into the woods, grazing between the pine trees.

The Florida Division of Forestry keeps a herd of

60 Florida Cracker cows, along with a few breeding bulls, in the Withlacoochee State Forest south of Citrus. The division has set aside 180 acres in Hernando, Sumter and Pasco counties for the Florida Cracker herd, part of the state's effort to preserve the history and bloodline of the breed.

On Thursday, with calving season nearly done, Griffey, who, along with other workers from the Division of Forestry would usually be operating heavy machinery, drew the choice duty of the day. They corralled the animals, wormed them, then separated the breeding cows to be taken from Sumter County to another pasture in Hernando County for breeding.

Until 1950, when the state Legislature enacted a fencing law, Florida Crackers would roam throughout the state, including Citrus.

"I still hear stories of them out in the woods, not too far from (Citrus County)," said Tim Olson, a professor of animal breeding at the University of Florida. But he has some doubts that they are pure Florida Cracker.

With little meddling from humans, Florida Crackers survived in the scrub for nearly 400 years,

Please see **CATTLE** Page 7

## Cattle from Page 1

running wild through the pines and living on palmettos and oak seedlings. Unlike their corn-fed cousins, they are the product of natural selection, not selective breeding.

In the New World, the Cracker cattle thrived and built the foundation of the Florida cattle industry. In recent decades, they have been nearly driven out of existence by crossbreeding and the demand for big beef cattle. Stephen Monroe of the Florida Cracker Cattle Breeders Association estimates there are 600 left.

"It is a living, breathing touchable, tangible link to our history," Monroe said of the breed. "This isn't some artifact in a stagnant, cold, mildewed museum exhibit."

This summer, the Division of Forestry plans to open a Florida Cracker cattle demonstration center in Ridge Manor to educate more Floridians about the breed.

"The amazing thing about Florida Crackers is that they are so closely associated with the history of the state," said Don Bixby of the American Livestock Breeds Conservan-

cy, a North Carolina group whose goal is preserving historic breeds and their genetic diversity. It lists the Florida breed's population as critical.

The Florida Cracker breed, also known simply as scrub cattle or in Alabama as the Pineywood, is the smaller cousin of the Texas longhorn. Both breeds are criollos, descendants of cattle brought to the Americas by the Spaniards.

In 1521, Ponce de Leon brought Andalusian cattle to Florida on his second expedition. He was killed by Caloosa Indians, but the cattle reportedly went into the wilds, according to the Division of Forestry.

Don Diego Maldonado brought more Spanish cattle to Pensacola Bay to supply Hernando De Soto's expedition. But Maldonado never made contact with De Soto and the cattle were reportedly abandoned in the woods as well. Pedro Menendez De Aviles began shipping cattle from Spain in 1565 to supply the new outpost of St. Augustine.

Those that didn't adapt to the parasites, the heat and the scrub diet died. The strong developed resistance to parasites, a high reproductive rate, heat tolerance and a hard

hoof to prevent foot rot from the damp soil. And they grew so quickly that the calves equaled or in some cases, were larger than their mothers by weening, Bixby said.

In the late 1880s, ranchers began crossbreeding the Florida Cracker with English breeds such as Herefords and Black Angus. But in the 1930s, a cross with Zebu Brahmans proved the perfect match.

It produced "a magic animal," Monroe said. "It was perfectly adapted for the conditions."

The Brahman brought vigor and size to the wiry but hardy Cracker stock. It also began the steady dilution of the bloodline, Monroe said.

The Florida Cracker was neither a pure beef cattle or a milk producer but a generalist, and therein lies its demise, Bixby said. "Their only job was to live and breed."

By the 1970s, their numbers were "a straight line down," Olson said. But the descendants of cattleman James Durrance kept the bloodline pure and in 1975 donated five heifers and a bull to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. From those animals, the state built a herd. Other herds were established in

Paynes Prairie and Lake Kissimmee.

To prevent inbreeding, the state would mix up the bulls, but in 1990, Olson began taking blood samples from the state's Cracker herd and discovered some had been polluted by a Hereford bull along the way. For the past 13 years, he has helped select the cattle with non-Cracker traits to be culled.

"I'm not sure we eliminated all the descendants (of the Hereford), but we're pretty close," Olson said.

Olson, who keeps a small herd at home, finds them tamer than other breeds.

Griffey has his favorites, too. Old No. 91, speckled red and white, has given birth to "good friendly calves." She doesn't have much life left in her, though.

"These cattle have been on the earth a long time," Griffey said. "A lot of people forgot about them. Most people never knew about them."

If the Florida Cracker breed dies off, nearly 400 years of natural selection would be lost. "It would be absolutely tragic to lose that history and lose those genetics," Bixby said.

## TOURISM 2003 EXPO

The Citrus County Tourism Development Council (TDC) and the Nature Coast Visitors Guide present the "TOURISM 2003 EXPO"

**SATURDAY  
APRIL 26TH  
9AM-4PM**

Builders Association Hall Hwy. 491

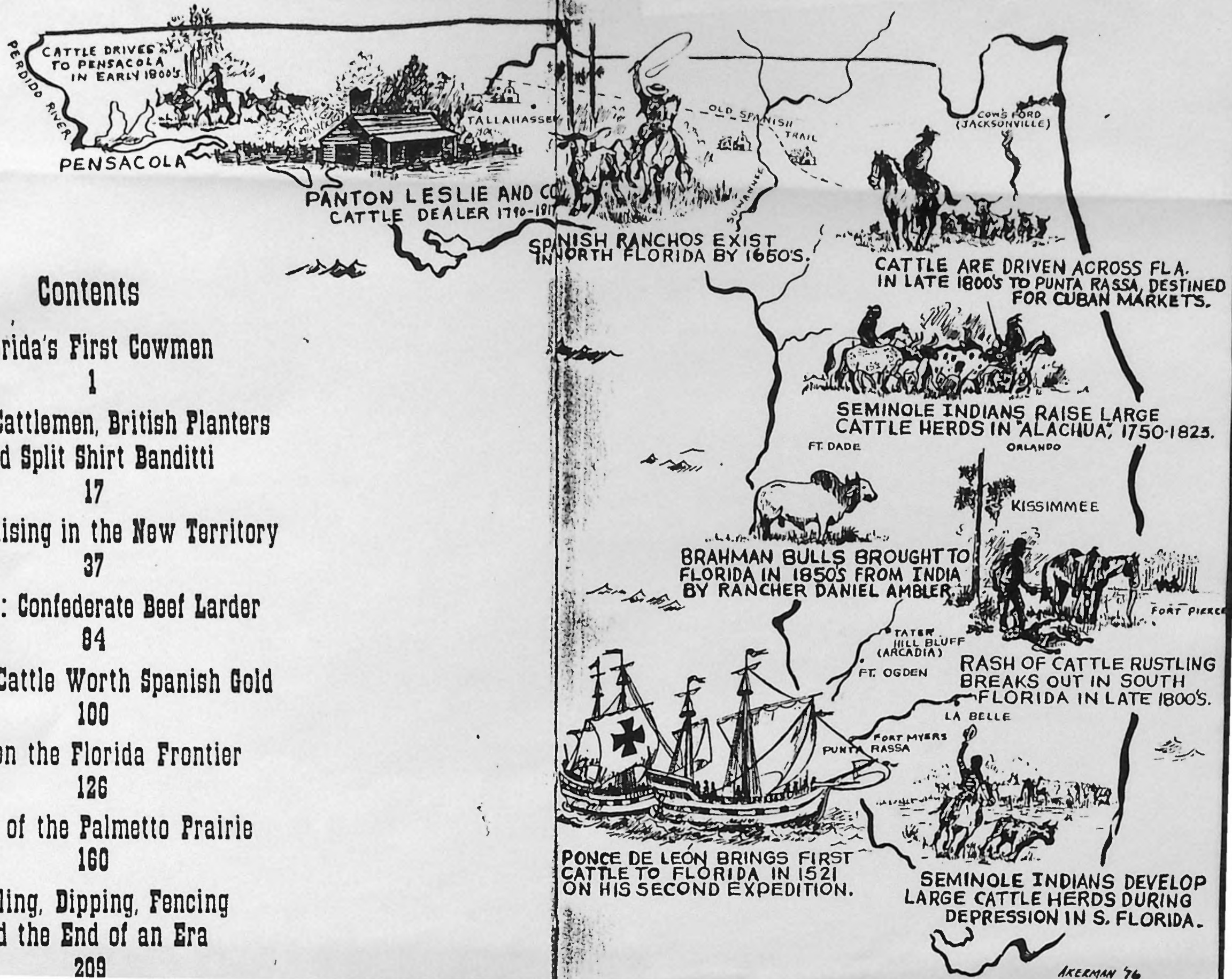
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## Contents

Florida's First Cowmen	1
Indian Cattlemen, British Planters and Split Shirt Banditti	17
Cattle Raising in the New Territory	37
Florida: Confederate Beef Larder	84
Florida Cattle Worth Spanish Gold	100
Life on the Florida Frontier	126
Riders of the Palmetto Prairie	160
Rustling, Dipping, Fencing and the End of an Era	209

J. W. Jernigan Farm

22

Marlon O & Mary J. Tidwell  
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Pinellas County

Dallas Dart  
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Sarasota



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Pinellas County

# Ranch family recalls early days in Citrus

*Editor's note: Citrus County is 100 years old this year. In conjunction with the Centennial, the Citrus Times will publish an occasional feature about Citrus County's past. Claire Phillips Laxton, a 10-year county resident, is a free-lance writer who specializes in history.*

Citrus County residents Horace and Pauline Allen recall living in Lecanto with "Granddaddy" Charles E. Allen on his dairy ranch, where the Allens still live today.

In 1932, Horace Allen bought a horse named Jigger for \$25. His granddaddy always said: "Never lie to your horse, and you must always have more sense than he."

Horace would ride Jigger to Crystal River for visiting or shopping, then send Jigger back. The horse would return home to Lecanto alone. Jigger was once ridden in a race — which it won — by rodeo man Pat Moore. Moore was the son of Elizabeth Moore, county home economics agent of the 1930s.

Horace Allen served on the Citrus County School Board from 1958 to 1974. His grandfa-

CENTENNIAL

**CLAIRE PHILLIPS  
LAXTON**



ther was president of a bank and in 1931 went into the dairy business. The Allens delivered milk to Crystal River and Homosassa.

Horace recalls the old Lecanto school going through the eighth grade. It was where the canning plant is today, just off County Road 491.

Annette Gibbs Maynard and the Allens' daughter, Lillian Allen Waugh, were the last to attend that school. Twenty-four children graduated in 1958 from the eighth grade.

Pauline Allen's parents worked in the phosphate industry. They left Nottingham, England, and came to Ocala in the the late 1880s or early

1890s. They later settled in Inverness.

Morgan Payne, Pauline's father, was paymaster of the phosphate mines when Pauline was 5 years old, she recalls.

He and another young man, both about 30 years old, were riding a stagecoach with a mine payroll on board when they were ambushed by three drifters. Both men were killed but the drifters never found the money. Payne told only one other person where the money was hidden in the stagecoach, in case a robbery ever occurred.

By the time a posse arrived with dogs, the two young men were dead. But the dogs picked up the scent of the drifters, who were found and hanged.

Morgan Payne is buried in the Lecanto cemetery with his partner. Local legend says remains of the ropes still hang on a tree somewhere in Lecanto where the drifters were lynched.

Today, the Allens raise beef cattle on 600 acres they share with their grown children.

## *History of Citrus County*

owners were penalized for this service. All horses and mules were inspected, and dipped only if necessary.

The routine of dipping, zone by zone, completely eradicated the regular cattle fever tick and subtropical fever tick. Barriers were rivers, fenced railways, or fenced highways or other spans. Federal and State agencies cooperated, under State and Federal appropriations.

(I was a boy then and we had a family milk cow named "Rose". It was my chore to march Rose over to the cattle dip vat, which wasn't far from our house in Floral City, near Road 5 (U. S. 41). Rose was a sensitive cow (she wouldn't allow a man to milk her — only my mother) and she soon got "gun-shy" on this dipping bit. She became increasingly difficult to drive to the vat as the long weeks went by. Worse, I don't think Rose ever had any ticks on her, anyway).

The agents constructed a barbed wire fence 25 miles in length, which ran from the head of the Chassahowitzka River to the Withlacoochee River at Istachatta. This fence was to prevent Hernando County cattle from getting into Citrus County and reinfesting the county with the fever tick. Except for this 25 mile stretch, the county is completely surrounded by the Withlacoochee and Chassahowitzka Rivers. If a canal, 25 miles in length, were constructed to connect these two rivers, Citrus County would be an island!

### NEW BUSINESS

George A. "Pop" Allen was a man who dared to brave the economic ills and started a new business in Inverness in 1931, with an investment of \$60. At that time, "Pop" and his son, Otto, decided on a new business venture at their lumber yard, located alongside the Seaboard Air Line Railway track. Their first bill of goods was bought from W. T. Grant's 10 - cent Store in Tampa, and consisted of \$60 worth of varied items. These were placed on boards with wooden horse supports, and priced exactly at cost. The experiment was to see if the citizens would patronize such a store. The result, "Pop" recalled 16 years later, was that in one year he had extended his display warehouse 60 feet along the railroad track. In 1932, he moved to a location on Main Street. At that time Inverness had not recovered from the slump which followed the boom days. Three-fourths of the business buildings were empty, and most business was done in Ocala and Tampa. Allen's grew and grew and the firm became one of the most successful and outstanding businesses in the county.

A colorful Confederate veteran, Henry V. Taylor, 93 years old, was killed in Hernando on Dec. 22, 1930, when struck by an automobile on the street in front of the home of his daughter, Mrs. Sarah E. Horne. A native of Georgia, born in 1837, Taylor married the former Miss Susan Parkerson on Jan. 1, 1859. They had three children. In 1862, Taylor enlisted in Clinch's Artillery, 4th Cavalry and served the Confederacy until he was captured and held prisoner at Fort Lookout Mountain, where he was discharged in June, 1866. Taylor was buried beside the grave of his wife in the Lecanto cemetery.

After 35 years of practicing dentistry in Inverness, Dr. T. S. Henley announced in February, 1931, he was retiring. He said he sold his office and practice to Dr. Samuel J. Parker, of Birmingham, Ala.

In November, Dr. Henley and Mrs. Alice Warnock, also of Inverness, were invited to a dinner given by Maas Brothers in Tampa. After a campaign to ascertain the names of citizens who had resided in Inverness for the longest continuous time, Dr. Henley and Mrs. Warnock seemed to be the winners. Dr. Henley was able to attend the affair, Mrs. Warnock was not. "Oldest citizens" from all cities in South Florida came to the dinner.

The 1931 Florida Legislature handed Gov. Doyle E. Carlton a bill to legalize pari-mutuel betting at race tracks, and the Governor promptly vetoed it. Citrus County's two lawmakers, Sen. E. J. Irby and Rep. Sol D. Moon voted to override the Governor's veto, and the Legislature did override it. *Chronicle* editor Joe Wilson wrote an editorial note to Irby and Moon: "Good

## RANCHING The Shrinking Range

# Odds against future ranchers

## Many choose other vocations

By CAROL JEFFARES  
Tribune Staff Writer

DADE CITY — Chris Jones has no doubts he is going to be a rancher.

Jones, 13, is off to a good start, raising Santa Gertrudis cattle on 6 acres in the back yard of his Dade City home.

For three years, he has raised steers to show and sell at state and county fairs. He uses the money to buy Santa Gertrudis heifers. The heifers already have had two calves, bringing his herd to seven.

But Jones is in the minority, Pasco educators say. Not many of their students will become ranchers and farmers in Pasco County.

The high cost of ranch land — about \$3,000 an acre — will stop most students. That — coupled with changing school requirements — has sent enrollment plunging in agriculture classes and clubs.

Ten years ago, every Pasco County middle and high school had agriculture programs that emphasized livestock production, said Ann Johnson, the school district's director of vocational education.

Now, agriculture classes in west Pasco are offered only at Marchman Vocational Center and the Gulf and Hudson middle schools. Those classes focus on horticulture, Johnson said.

"They are not coming out of here and starting their own business," said Ed Dillard, an agriculture teacher at Pasco Comprehensive High in Dade City. Instead, agriculture students work for someone else.

With high land prices, today's students cannot afford to become ranchers unless their families are already in the business, said Betsy Kirkland Temple, who has taught agriculture at Zephyrhills High for seven years.

Dillard agreed. "The only way to get around it is marry it or inherit it. ... Most kids today just are not

County's going to be the place to do that. It's getting eaten up by development."

Even those who possibly could inherit ranch land — such as Clint Barthle, 13, the fourth generation of his ranching family — said they will not become ranchers.

"I don't think I'm going to go into ranching. But I'm thinking of becoming a veterinarian. So it will be close," said Barthle, who raises steers for county fairs to earn money for college.

Sometimes raising steers for fairs gives youngsters a false view of the cattle business.

"They can make \$300 off raising a steer and that's a lot of money to a kid," Dillard said. The youngsters do not realize the money and work involved in running a ranch as a business.

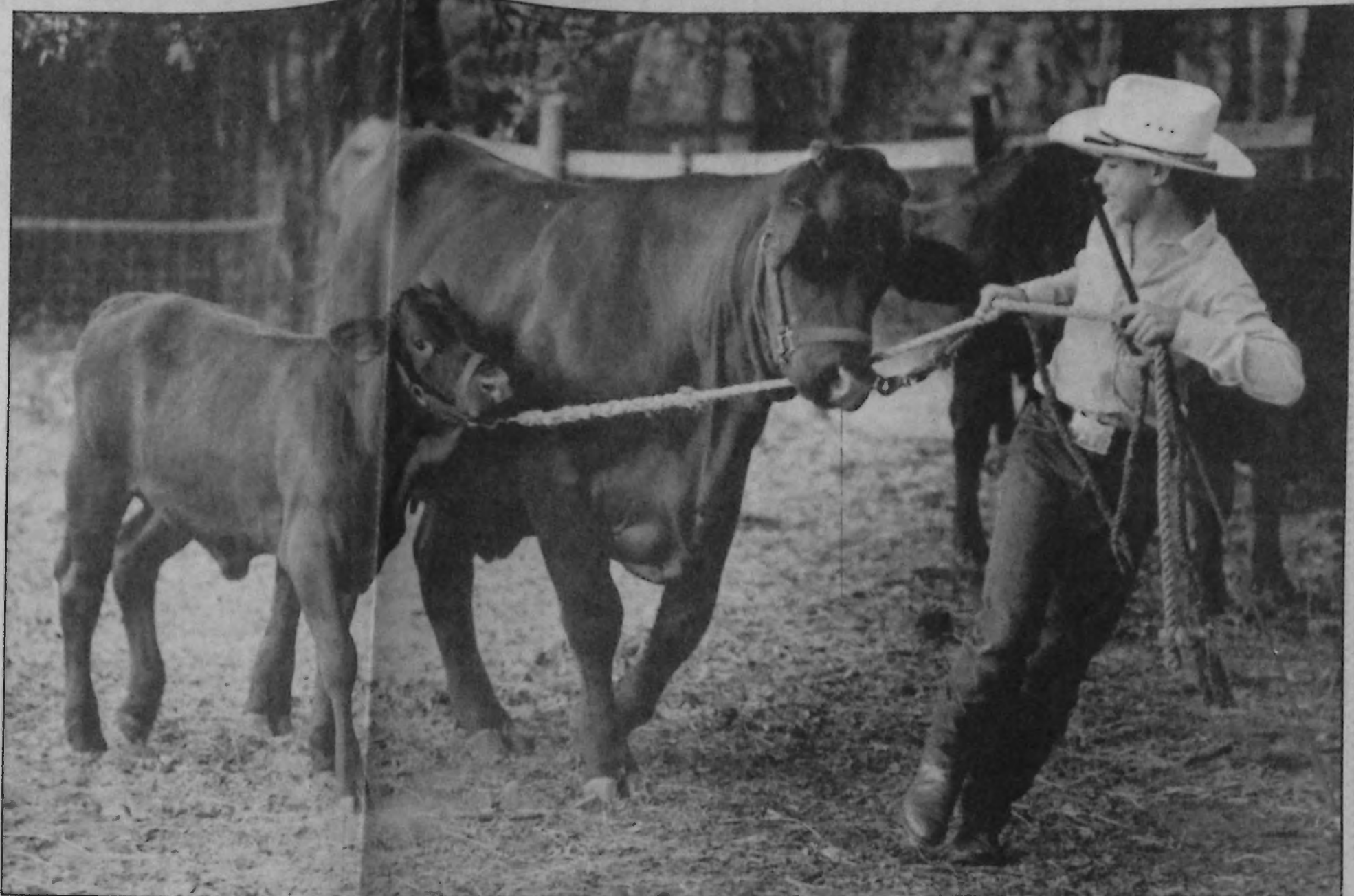
Dillard, who is also a Future Farmers of America (FFA) adviser, said children often lose enthusiasm moving from middle school to high school. There are more electives and more clubs to choose from, he said.

Jones' parents, Connie and Bill, said they think their son will be a rancher. "I think he knows what he's doing and where he's going," Connie Jones said.

But Jones' plans are touched with naivete. "I want to play (professional) baseball, make money off that and buy a ranch," he said.

Agriculture classes are losing students because students want to make money, Dillard said. "A lot of kids get jobs pretty young. I think that hurts them. They should stay in school and get an education. That's going to help them more than a minimum-pay job," he said.

The Pasco County School District does not keep enrollment figures for agriculture classes, Johnson said. However, she said, the drop in the number of agriculture teachers — from 16 seven years ago to 11 today — shows the



Chris Jones, 13, leads some of his prize Santa Gertrudis — a calf named Chrissie and its mother, Classie. The youth plans to raise cattle for a living, but the cost of West Central Florida ranch land may force him to build his dream elsewhere.

Tribune photographs by PAM HIGGINS

Bartlett, spokesman for the state FFA in Tallahassee.

FFA, founded in 1928, had 15,000 members in Florida in the mid-1970s. There are now 10,000, Bartlett said.

FFA membership in Pasco is 254 in 11 chapters.

Pasco membership for prior years is not available but FFA advisers said it dropped along with class enrollment.

"When I started teaching, I had to turn kids away," said Dillard, 37, who has taught agriculture for 15 years. "They were here every time we opened the door."

Temple, 29, was one of those enthusiastic students Dillard taught. "When I was in school, everybody was in FFA," said the 1978 Pasco graduate.

Agriculture classes are now only half full at Pasco High, Dillard said.

Educators said another reason for the drop in agricultural enrollments is the a 1984 state law that increased requirements for high school graduation from 15 to 26.

It also increased academic requirements, leaving students with fewer elective choices, Johnson said.

College-bound students are limited even further by college requirements, such as two years of foreign language study. "That knocks them out of taking ag, art, things like that," Johnson said.

Bartlett said he also blames farm problems. "Farmers even make jokes of it. 'Crime doesn't pay. Neither does farming.' I've seen that on hats and bumper stickers."

The majority of serious agriculture students will not be able to go into production — raising livestock

himself. "If there was any kid anywhere that wanted to go into farming, it was me," he said. He raised hogs and cattle with his father in Alabama to put himself through college.

But rather than go into debt to become a farmer, Dillard became a teacher.

Dillard married Jan Barthle, a member of a ranching family, which gives him the opportunity to be around cattle. He would encourage his sons, Nick, 11, and Brian, 10, to study agriculture "but with the idea they're going to have to find a career out of Pasco County."

Temple said she would like her 2-year-old daughter Stephanie to grow up in the same atmosphere she did on her family ranch. "Since the fourth grade I was down in the cow pen, helping brand and cut 'em. ... I went out and built fences,

you a different set of values, a different feeling for land and property. When I drive around and see the open spaces, I think that's great."

But open spaces are being eaten up by development.

Because of this, classes focus less on agriculture production and more on horticulture, agribusiness and agricultural mechanics. Students learn metal work, how to maintain farm equipment and drive tractors.

Classes continually change.

"Things in agriculture change so fast, we can't even keep an up-to-date textbook," Dillard said.

The 4-H clubs also have changed to keep up with the times, according to Ed Jennings, Pasco County Extension agent.

In addition to the traditional animal and cooking projects that were the basis for forming 4-H in 1916

in that situation. If they want to stay in agriculture, they have to spend time collecting capital and knowledge. ... And I'm not sure Pasco

drop in student interest. The popularity of FFA nationally has slipped by a third since a peak in the mid-1970s, said Danny

There are various reasons for the decline, including the prohibitive costs of ranch land.

and crops, Dillard said. Instead, he predicted they will be in the service end of the business.

Dillard is an example of that

penned cows," she said.

"I wonder what would I be like if I didn't live out there. ... It gives

projects now include subjects such as rocketry and photography, he said.

# State growth threatens to rein in cattle industry

■ From Page 1B

"All the people coming into the state are more or less pressing the cattle people out," he said. "Between here and Tampa, I remember all the places that were just woods. Now, it's just saturated with homes and cars on the highway.

"It worries me because if things keep going on like this, they ain't going to have places like this anymore," Ritter said. "It would be real easy to tell people to take their progress someplace else.

"You can ride a good horse to death and he'll let you," he said. "I mean, enough is enough."

Still, Ritter had a 3-mile, 350-head cattle drive to complete.

For Ritter, it was another day doing what he has done most of his life — working the ranch. There is nothing he would rather do. "You get to work with the most beautiful woman in the world — Mother Nature," he said.

"You have to be a little bit of everything," Ritter said. "You have to be a welder, a carpenter, a plumber. You name it. ... But, most of all, you have to suit the fella you're working for."

Ritter works for Robert M. Thomas, whose family owns 17,000 acres of ranch land, including 4,000 acres in Pasco, 10,000 acres in Hillsborough and 3,000 acres in Hernando.

The family has owned the ranch for three generations. The last decade has been spent turning the property into what Thomas called "a showplace."

Located a half-dozen miles south of the frantic winter activity of Zephyrhills, and just off the raceway that is U.S. Highway 301, the Two Rivers Ranch is a collection of chin-dropping vistas.

Shortly after the sun rose over the ranch's mist-covered fields, Ritter; his older brother, Phil; and Hank Cannon, 25, met at the stables for the morning's cattle drive.

The horses, apparently attuned to the hum of arriving pickup trucks, gathered at the stable gate in anticipation of their morning meals.

"On a cool morning like this, it's hard to get out of that warm bed," Ritter said to Cannon, between sips of coffee.

If Marlboro still ran television



Dan Ritter swings the gate closed on a pasture after moving the Two Rivers Ranch herd to better pastureland.

commercials, Ritter might have a second career. A slender man with a mustache, he wore blue jeans, a matching jacket, a button-snap shirt and work boots.

A .44-Magnum hung from his belt. Around his neck, what he believed to be a bear tooth dangled from a chain. Spurs poked out from his boots. Sunglasses shaded his eyes. A black cowboy hat covered his head.

Ritter's fondness for ranching goes back to the day he was born, when his father was the foreman of what was then the Saginaw Ranch, north of Gowers Corner. Aside from a half-dozen years as a self-employed carpenter, he has never been away from horses and cattle very long.

"It's just one of those types of

excitement you never grow out of," he said. "I could do a lot of other things and probably make a hell of a lot more money, but you have to be happy with what you're doing."

The three men said little as they saddled their horses for the day's cattle drive — moving the animals to taller, thicker grass.

Everyone knew what to do, Ritter said, even the cows. They have been moved enough to know the appearance of men on horseback means it is time to go.

"The worst ones in the bunch when you're moving them at this time of year are the bulls, because once it starts getting warmed up during the day they'll start hunting some shade and cool places," he said.

"Those black bulls in that

bunch, they're some of the worst when it comes to finding them," he continued. "You just try to check every little place you can think of."

Rotating herds field to field is key to raising healthy calves. Two Rivers is a cow-calf operation, meaning the ranch raises calves to sell to businesses that beef them up prior to slaughter.

A cow-calf operation carries as many head of cattle as the ranch can handle without supplementing the grass and vegetation they eat with feed.

Ritter said Two Rivers carries 1,300 head, and may build the herd to 2,000.

With one bull for every 25 cows, ranch managers hope to breed as many as 85 percent of the group which, in the case of Two Rivers,

would result in the birth of about 1,000 calves.

Calves are sold as a group once their average weight climbs to 450 pounds, Ritter said.

Because a bull needs to conserve as much of his strength as possible to mate as many as 20 times a day, Ritter said, it is important to keep herds as close together as possible. "The more you can save his energy, the more cows he'll be able to breed," Ritter said.

However, on this day the bulls were forced to take time away from their stud duties. The three men approached groups of cows and bulls from different angles, cracking whips and yelling to scare them into a trot.

Once a few cattle moved, the rest followed in close order, mooing

loudly.

Frequently, dogs were called to round up a stray and move it back into the pack. The cattle halfheartedly tried to butt the dogs, only to give up quickly when they lost contact with the herd.

"They have enough respect for the dogs because they know they'll get bit in the nose if they stay out there long enough," Ritter said.

Training a dog to keep herd cattle takes two to three years, he said, and there are no such things as pets at Two Rivers.

"If it don't pay, it don't stay," he said. "That goes for people, dogs, horses, cows and you name it."

In fact, two young dogs were not up to the task on this cattle drive. They were nowhere to be found as the herd approached the gate to a new grazing pasture.

Once the herd passed into its new pasture, Ritter and company turned their attention to the cow from a neighboring property.

Without a metal tag in her ear to indicate she had been vaccinated, Ritter feared the cow might carry brucellosis — a disease that infects cattle and causes miscarriages and underweight calves.

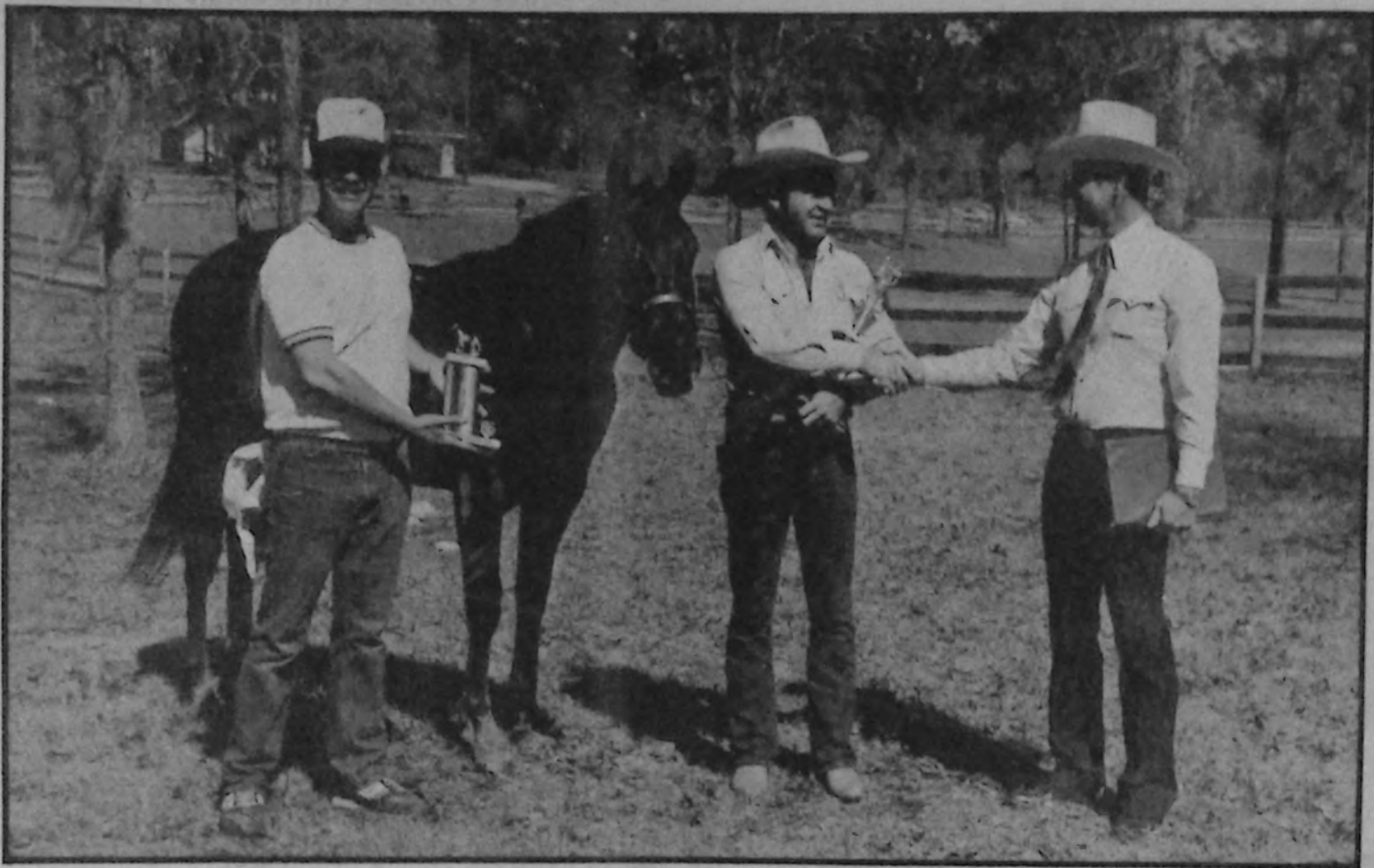
Ritter said it was usually not difficult to spot a cow from another ranch. "It's amazing but, out of the 1,300 head — with my getting out here and being with them like I do — I can remember what calf belongs to what cow, or what she had last year or three years ago.

A case in point, Ritter said, is how cows practice their own brand of segregation and racism. "You can take Hereford bulls which are red and white, and black bulls which are Angus, and put them together," he said. "After a year's time, all them red bulls would be over here and all those black bulls would be over there.

"If a cow doesn't belong in a certain bunch, and she goes over there, they'll run her out," Ritter added. "It really makes you wonder."

As the last of the herd strolled through the gate at the end of the three-hour cattle drive, Ritter and his assistants shook their heads at the effect the morning's wind had on their effort.

"The cows, the horses, you name it," Ritter said. "Everything acts strange when the wind is like this."



## Grand champion

"Skippa Lee Wimpy" took top honors in the Feb. 16 open horse show sponsored by the Deltona Corporation Pine Ridge Equestrian Club. The quarter horse was chosen first in his class and was awarded a trophy as Grand Champion Halter

Horse. Judge Jim McDowell (right) congratulates the owner, Mickey McClure of Ocala. John Phillips was the exhibitor riding the champ for the show. (Photo by Anne Smith)

THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF  
THE 90TH ANNUAL MEETING  
OF  
THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AT  
ST. AUGUSTINE  
MAY 1992

THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. Box 290197  
Tampa, FL 33687-0197

RANGE WAR IN THE EAST:  
CONFLICT OVER CATTLE AND  
LAND ON THE GEORGIA-FLORIDA BORDERLANDS

Joe Knetsch

THE FRUITFUL SCHOLARSHIP of Kenneth Porter and, more recently, George Klos, has pointed to the escaped slaves and free negroes belonging in the Seminole society as the major cause of the Seminole wars. The jealousy, fear and envy aroused by the relative freedom and productivity of these "Black Seminoles" engendered such a hatred of the Indians that war was the inevitable result. So persuasive has this argument become that the tendency toward monocausationism now looms as a definite threat to a more balanced view of the causes of these wars. One of the most important of the "other" factors in the equation was the nearly constant conflict over cattle and the range on which to feed them. It is the purpose of this paper to begin the process of a more balanced reappraisal of the causes of the Seminole wars, by the study of this conflict.

It is, of course, common knowledge that cattle were introduced into Florida by the Spanish at a fairly early date. Throughout the Seventeenth Century, the Spanish had large ranches in central Florida, most notably at Lachua, near Payne's Prairie. That the natives of Florida assisted in the raising of cattle is also without doubt. Unquestionably, the Spanish traded with many of the Southeastern tribes, including the Creeks, Chickasaws, and others. However, it has often been asserted that these tribes did not pick up the concept of raising domesticated cattle until somewhere in the 1730s or 40s period. Or, to put these dates in perspective, the alleged adoption of domestication took place about the time of the great smallpox epidemic of 1738, which devastated the Cherokee, Creek, Chactaw, Chickasaw and Natchez tribes, and the founding and early expansion of the colony of Georgia. I would suggest that these dates are too coincidental and

need much more research before any definite conclusions as to the date the Creeks (or any other tribe) adopted domestication are reached.

It should be here noted that the "domestication" of the cattle found in the Southeast, especially Florida, was of a most cursory kind. Cattle, even in the Spanish period, were allowed to roam freely, with no fences, a few "cowpens" and a periodic roundup and marking. Thus, any assertion that a specific date can be assigned to the adoption of domesticated cattle by any Southeastern Indian group is open to question. What cannot be doubted is the fact that these Indian groups became more reliant upon this source of meat as the Eighteenth Century wore on.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important factors in the adoption of the domestication of cattle (and swine) was the shortage of deer and other wild meats once relied upon for subsistence. The reason behind this decline in deer and other game was the increased population of Creeks and other Southeastern groups, especially after 1750. Unlike the historical trend in other Indian populations, the Creeks, in particular, actually grew by sizable numbers after their bout with smallpox. To borrow the arguments put forth by Anthony Paredes and Kenneth J. Plante, one cannot argue that this growth was the result of the assimilation of groups such as the Yuchi, Alabama, and others because the emigration of other elements, such as the Seminoles, appears to have offset any unnatural increase.<sup>2</sup> The increase in trade in deer hides with the Spanish and British also played an important role in reducing the available game. These two causes explain, for our purposes, much of the reasoning behind the adoption of domesticated cattle as a source of meat in the Creek/Seminole diet.

As Paredes and Plante correctly point out, the "rather dramatic growth in Creek population exacerbated the other changes and served as an important catalyst for the Creek War..."<sup>3</sup> The population increase also forced certain elements within the Creek Confederation to look for greener pastures and better hunting grounds. Because of the devastation of the Apalachees, Yamasees and other earlier Florida

inhabitants by Governor Moore's well known invasions, the land most available for settlement was the territory of Florida, which conveniently came with some semi-wild herds of cattle already in place. As Brent Weisman has recently pointed out, the "cattle complex" was already in place in Creek culture prior to the Seminole occupation of Florida.<sup>4</sup>

By the late Eighteenth Century, the cattle herds of the Creeks and Seminoles had grown to impressive proportions. William Bartram, one of the most famous of the visitors to the early Seminole lands in central Florida, commented: "At the same time are seen innumerable droves of cattle; the lordly bull, lowing cow and sleek capricious heifer...The cattle were as large and fat as those of the rich grazing pastures of Moyomensing in Pennsylvania. The Indians drove off the lowing herds, and we soon followed them to town..." Bartram was, of course, on a visit to Cuscowilla and the "Cowkeeper."<sup>5</sup> Bernard Romans wrote of the same area: "Herds of cattle in Alachua are so numerous that from 7,000 to 10,000 head can be seen grazing at once on Paynes Prairie."<sup>6</sup> John Pope, in his A Tour Through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North America (1792) described the cattle of "General" Alexander McGillivray as "large stocks" requiring two or three white men to superintend them.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Lachlan McGillivray concerning his son's death in 1793, William Panton wrote: "He died possessed of sixty negroes, three hundred head of cattle, with a large stock of horses."<sup>8</sup> The famed Indian agent, Benjamin Hawkins, noted that the Seminoles left the main Creek settlements because they were, "invited by the plenty of game, the mildness of the climate, the richness of the soil, and the abundance of food for cattle and horses." In his sketch of Creek country, he noted each town and, frequently, the number of cattle in each. One chief, Toolk-au-bat-che Haujo is noted as having five hundred head, but sold none, while his village sold seventy during 1799 to traders. Some of the other villages noted by Hawkins had impressive numbers of cattle: "Four of these villages have valuable stocks of cattle. McCartney has one hundred; E-cun-cha-te E-maut-lau, one hundred,

Totecuh Haujo, one hundred and Tools Mico, two hundred."<sup>9</sup> The examples go on almost ad nauseam, but the main point is clear; the Creeks and Seminoles, by the end of the century must be considered impressive herdsmen.

The relatively large number of cattle owned and herded by the Indians required a large amount of territory for grazing. Hawkins and others noted the sometimes desolate nature of the land surrounding certain villages and claimed that this was caused by the grazing of the cattle.<sup>10</sup> The need for grazing territory and the expansion of the white population into the crowded lands of the Creeks could only lead to conflict. The need of both sides for lands to raise cattle and establish farms put each on a collision course. Hawkins, a man who believed that the Indians would adopt white farming techniques and gradual integration, was stuck in an untenable position and died in 1816 a somewhat disappointed man. The two forces wanted the same thing at the same time and no one could have stopped the conflict that loomed.

Even prior to the American Revolution, the Creeks and the Georgians were attacking each other in a series of raids that threatened open warfare. In 1771, for example, Governor Peter Chester of West Florida promised to expel any English settler who ventured onto Indian lands for purposes of settlement or who committed violence against an Indian, however, he also warned that Lower Creek warriors had recently visited some white plantations and had destroyed the cattle and plundered the poor inhabitants' property. This too, he promised, would not be tolerated by the English government.<sup>11</sup> But, because of the Revolutionary War, the tune the British government sang to the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles changed and raids into Georgia and the Carolinas were encouraged.

The pace did not settle any issues on the frontier and, indeed, exasperated the Indians, who did not fully understand the stakes being played on the international scene. The creation of a new nation, with a weak central government, did little to clarify the situation. Along with a government

agent, the sovereign state of Georgia sent "commissioners" to negotiate for more land. Additionally, Spain once again "controlled" Florida and the policy of the Spanish was almost no policy at all. Trade was sought by the Panton and Leslie Company, after a short struggle with two rival firms, and the Americans from Savannah and Charleston. Because of the Creek-Chickasaw War, these tribes could not effectively unite in opposition to the expansion of the whites and the others were either weakened by their exertions during the Revolution or were even more encroached upon than the Creeks. The final bits of fuel to be added to the frontier fires were the machinations of the British through various agents and the erratic behavior of Abner Hammond, Elijah Clarke and other volatile frontiersmen seeking who knows what.

The constant pressure by the Georgians for more land led to a series of conferences and treaties, some of which were not in the best interests of the Creeks. These treaties were made under false representations and with only a minority of the leadership of the Creeks. The treaties of Galphinton and Shoulderbone stand out as two of the more infamous attempts to deceive the Creeks, however, the national government stepped in and negotiated the Treaty of New York which gave the Georgians some of the land they sought. Even here, President Washington wisely, from the white point of view, played upon the ego of Alexander McGillivray, by granting a pension and a rank in the American army, and achieved a short-lived peace on the frontier. Within four years, Elijah Clarke attempted to settle his followers on Indian lands in total disregard for the treaty. Prompt action by Governor Matthews soon ended this threat to security.<sup>12</sup> But the pressure continued and treaties were negotiated in 1802 and 1804 which expanded the boundaries of Georgia to the Ocmulgee River.

In 1795, the Spanish signed the Treaty of San Lorenzo which, in the words of historian Jack D. L. Holmes: "Whatever its utility of Spain in Europe, this treaty marked the beginning of the end for Spain's North American empire by yielding control over the Mississippi and by surrendering the strate-

gic posts north of the thirty-first parallel and east of the Mississippi."<sup>13</sup> It also brought into focus the resistance to be expected to running a definite boundary between Spanish and United States territory when the "banditti" among the Seminoles halted the line at the Chattahoochee River. The line, if run, would have made the Creeks and Seminoles members of one group or another without their consent. It would also jeopardize their status as independent groups and threaten to deprive them of hunting and grazing rights that they exercised freely on the open frontier. The running of the line, therefore, was a definite threat to the Indians' well being.<sup>14</sup>

An uneasy truce, if it can be called that, settled on the Georgia-Florida frontier from 1800 to 1811. Constant raids for slaves and cattle, however, continued along the border throughout the period. Raids from Georgia centered on Camden County and Coleraine and those from Florida came mostly from the Miccosukee settlements near the lake of the same name and occasionally from Alachua. It should be remembered that this period was also the time of the infamous Embargo Act of 1807-08 which saw border towns along the frontier of Florida, especially St. Marys and Fernandina, prosper from illegal trade. Also, the Spanish had technically closed the border for trading in 1804, but, with the usual efficiency of Florida's Spanish administration, this was simply a minor technicality at best.

The lack of Spanish settlement, the attachment of the settlers to their relatives in Georgia and lax administration by Governors Folch, in West Florida and White, in East Florida allowed for a rather fluid situation along the entire frontier. Beginning in 1810-11, the situation began to change and Folch, though remaining loyal to Spain, was approached to bring West Florida into the United States, while George Matthews and others attempted to undermine Spanish authority in East Florida by fomenting revolution. The result was an undeclared war with the Seminoles and an attempt to tighten the border by Acting Governor Estrada in East Florida.<sup>15</sup>

The Patriot War in East Florida has been covered many times and needs not be repeated here,

however, a main goal of those in East Florida who wished to establish a republic was to set up large cattle ranches in the Alachua region. Punishment of the Indians by Newnan's men and others was simply a prelude to the attempt of "General" Bunker Harris to establish a large plantation in Alachua.<sup>16</sup> In one of the more revealing documents found on this episode, Horatio Dexter testified: "That about the year 1815, an Indian brought to the Governor Kindelan, the scalp and pocket book of General Harris. Witness saw the pocket book examined, and say in it a plat of the tract of land described in Burgevins survey, being a fac simile of General Harris' as far as the deponents memory serves him. That after the pocket book had been examined, it was handed over to F. M. Arredondo junr and Arredondo senr memorialized for the lands."<sup>17</sup> If Dexter's statement is true, the basis for one of the more important settlements in early Florida was established because of an incident in the border wars between the Indians and whites. The date given by Dexter, it should be noted, coincides with the complaint filed by Bowlegs with Hawkins who quoted the Indian leader as saying the people of Georgia had entered his lands, driven off his cattle and destroyed his property.<sup>18</sup> Hawkins, earlier, had reported that he had had an interview with General Harris and an associate, a Mr. Sanchez, wanting to know the disposition of the Indians toward them in attempting a settlement. Hawkins warned that the Indians were favorable unless the cow and horse thieves provoked retaliations.<sup>19</sup> Though Harris and company proceeded to Alachua to settle, the border raids continued and the project was doomed to failure by either the retaliatory raids of the Indians or the plotting of the Spanish governor.

The more interesting facts of the period include the observation that the letter of Hawkins, noted above, was written to the British Colonel Nicholls, who was then stirring up the Seminoles and Miccosukees along the border and establishing the Negro Fort on Prospect Bluff. Again, as the historian of the Florida cattle industry, Joe Akerman, had written, it was an incident involving cattle that helped to set in motion the invasion of Spanish

Florida by Andrew Jackson in 1817-18.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the invasion, Jackson's subordinates kept count of the cattle and Indians they had captured or destroyed. Jackson boasted that he had seized nearly 1,000 cattle at Kinhaji's town on Lake Miccosukee.<sup>21</sup> Jackson's Adjutant General, Robert Butler, later Florida's first and longest serving Surveyor General, reported that, in the action at Bowleg's Town on the Suwannee River, the army seized nearly 90 head of cattle and numerous horses.<sup>22</sup> This detailed accounting of the cattle seizures appears to emphasize the importance of beef as a factor in military calculations.

The settlement of the Alachua area, after the acquisition of Florida from Spain in 1821, centered around its attractiveness for cattle raising. Charles Vignoles, who did some of the first surveying of the Arredondo Grant and was familiar with the territory, waxed eloquent on the "luxuriant pasture ranges" and the possibility that "millions of horned cattle may be raised with no other trouble than herding and periodically burning the grass..."<sup>23</sup> William H. Simmons, in his Notices of East Florida, noted that previous to Jackson's invasion and the pressures of further Creek migrations to Florida; "Bowlegs, one of their Chiefs, sold annually a thousand head of steers, and was in the habit of killing, daily, a portion of cattle, for the use of his people." He, also, admired the fine cattle country of central Florida.<sup>24</sup> Little wonder that Moses Levy, Peter Mitchel, and other investors in the Florida Associates' colonization plan were so anxious for their grant to be surveyed and populated. Aside from the "four leagues to each wind" amount of land, the prospect for profits from the cattle industry must have appeared to grow with each colonist who signed to immigrate.

The Seminole and Miccosukee Indians, and other groups associated with them, were not to be allowed in this prime cattle land. In 1823, they were in attendance at the signing of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, which confined them to an area that was not nearer than 10 miles to any coast and was further restricted to an area, mostly south of Tampa Bay and

eastward to the Ocklawaha River. The descriptions of this country by Captain John Bell, James Gadsden, Governor William Duval and trader Horatio Dexter are anything but flattering. So poor was this area considered by these observers that the reservation was extended northward to include the allegedly fertile lands of Big Hammock and Chucachatee, where two of the recognized leaders of the tribe, Micanopy and Sitarky, had settled. Even here, however, the Indians enjoyed some prosperity as herdsmen and Dexter, for one, noticed that at Palatlahaha (where Micanopy's "slaves" lived), the surrounding savannahs afforded ample range "for innumerable herds of cattle."<sup>25</sup>

The relatively poor lands assigned to the Indians under the treaty did not help feed the large population forced to migrate to the south. The game was scarce and the movement scattered their animals and, as the weather also refused to shine on the Indians, the new crops failed to provide an adequate diet. The situation was very grave in 1825 when surveyor Leroy May, an old associate of Andrew Jackson, was halted while surveying south along the meridian between the 23rd and 24th ranges. Here, near the Ocklawaha River, he came across the new settlement of John Hicks. Hicks warned him not to go further south as his warriors were on a hunt and desperate enough to shoot his pack animals for meat. The chief then allowed May to look into the houses of the settlement for signs of food: "I was in several of their houses," reports May, "and saw nothing except two or three pounds of venison, and briar root soup and bread. I am confident of Hicks statement being true with respect to their starving situation."<sup>26</sup> This was at the same moment in time of the Swearingin murder near Palatka which was attributed to a Seminole Indian. The tensions along the new frontier created by the Treaty of 1823 were to remain high from the signing of the document to the outbreak of the Second Seminole War in December of 1835.

As a final observation, it should be stated that the settlers of the Alachua area in the 1820s were mostly from South Georgia and modern-day Columbia County, Florida. Many of the same names appear

on the documents signed during the course of the Arredondo litigation (in the 1840s) that show up on the petitions from the citizens of Alachua asking for military protection against marauding Indians who were stealing their cattle. The names of Summerlin, Pile, Dell, and others inform us that these are the founders of some of the leading cattle families in Florida's history. In the period leading up to the outbreak of the war, it is these pioneer families who most often clash with the Seminoles and Miccosukee Indians. Thus, the constant rivalry for good pasturage for the purpose of raising cattle can not be over-looked as a cause of the Seminole Wars and should be in the main text of any balanced discussion of the frontier relationships in Florida. It should also be observed that this was the heritage of the border conflicts between whites and Indians all along the Georgia-Florida borderlands.

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## AARON JERNIGAN: ALLEGED FRONTIER "VIGILANTE"

Brenda J. Elliott

GEORGE CASSEL BITTLE has written much about the Florida militia and frontier incidents regarding Aaron Jernigan. In his doctoral dissertation, In Defense of Florida: The Organized Florida Militia from 1821 to 1920, written for Florida State University in 1965, Bittle concluded that "It appears that it took the state government from 1852 to 1858 to realize that Aaron Jernigan did not have the state militia's best interest at heart in his frontier ventures." Such an assessment as Bittle's of one of Florida's most prominent pioneers bears examination.

Towards that end, this paper will address three incidents in 1852 which have received much notice and too little accuracy in reporting. The first regards the alleged theft of 120 hogs from the Indians. The second is the reported killing of Indians on scouts. The third is the subsequent hanging of an old Indian squaw. It should become obvious that the rumors and information surrounding these incidents pretty much resemble a Florida frontier version of "Gossip," a once-popular parlor game.

According to his daughter, Mrs. Martha Jernigan Tyler, Aaron Jernigan first came to reside in Orange County, Florida, in 1843 from Camden County, Georgia, bringing five to six hundred head of cattle. A former Georgia militia volunteer during the late Second Seminole War, Jernigan filed his Armed Occupation Permit application at the St. Augustine Land Office on July 21, 1843. At the time, his nearest neighbors were at Fort Reid south of Lake Monroe, over twenty miles to the north. In January 1844, he returned to Georgia and brought his family, including his brother, Isaac Jernigan, to the Lake Conway area south of Orlando. The Jernigan settlement site was located near the Indian and former military trail from Fort Mellon, east of Sanford, to Fort Gatlin, south of Orlando, to Tampa.<sup>2</sup>

Born in Georgia in 1839, Mrs. Tyler related in

Board declared J. K. Kelley winner over W. E. (Earl) Vann, Inverness druggist, by a vote of 204 to 202. The result had see-sawed in earlier counts. Vann appealed and the Supreme Court ruled the first primary count showed Vann had 202 votes to Kelley's 201, and ordered his name on the general election ballot as the Democratic nominee. Kelley called for write-in-votes, but Vann was the eventual winner.

Despite the depression, new businesses sprung up. The A & P announced it would open a modern grocery in Inverness, and O. K. Livingston was ready to open Southern Candy Co. for wholesale trade. J. C. Bacon, who owned the largest drug store and soda fountain business in Brooksville, opened a branch Bacon Drug Store in Inverness with T. J. Lanier in charge. The Homosassa-Inverness Bank celebrated its first anniversary in Inverness and showed increase in total resources of more than \$70,000.

Seeking to boost trade in Inverness, the City Council passed a resolution allowing theatres to show on Sundays and baseball games to be played on Sundays. This was expected to make Inverness the trading and amusement center for a large radius, since Brooksville and Dunnellon had closed theatres on Sundays.

Inverness had permanently-installed "talkies" now. *Chronicle* editor Joe Wilson had moaned, "Inverness is about the last town in Central Florida to stick to silent movies. Bring on the gabbies!" early in the year. A few weeks later, J. L. Leonard and R. E. Baker leased the Avalon Theatre, which had been closed for more than a year, and announced that first class equipment would be installed. Herbert Pittman of Clearwater leased the chain of theatres owned by Mrs. P. G. Maddox, including the Valerie in Inverness, and announced talking equipment would be installed. The Valerie cut its prices to 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults.

The ninth grade was moved from the Floral City School to Citrus High School at Inverness.

(Let me tell you now about the "Tom Sawyer" of Floral City. That has to be Julian Sweat, who was as adept as Old Tom Sawyer was in getting others to do his work. His father and his brother, Roy, and Julian had a Model T dump truck in which they hauled sand and dirt. In the early thirties, I was going to high school in Inverness. I had a real desire to learn how to drive an automobile. My mother was a widow by now and we had no car. But Julian had an idea how to teach me to drive. He would give instructions and let me drive the truck if I would help him load it with sand. So for much of one hot summer, I would shovel dirt into the truck, over and over again, for the privilege of getting to drive. And Julian got some much-welcomed help for his task!)

Cattlemen in Citrus County had another big fret on their hands, starting in 1930. The cattle fever tick was a threat and the government ordered periodic dipping of all cattle as a means toward eliminating the pest.

So it was, late in August, that J. C. Jeeter, agent of the Federal Government in cattle fever tick eradication, had moved into Citrus County, where the task of ridding this section of this pest had already gotten well underway. Jeeter had moved his family here from Williston, where he spent the previous 16 months in this work, having succeeded in getting Levy County well under control in the matter of tick eradication.

Jeeter announced 16 dipping vats already had been constructed and a total of 40 would be built. A force of about 30 men would be employed to carry on the work, and dipping would begin in March, 1931.

The agent got an editorial farewell from the *Williston Sun* before leaving Levy County. It said: "He (Jeeter) hasn't had the least sign of trouble, no opposition, and has handled this work here so that he has received the full cooperation of people that at first were hard against the work."

Cattle of all ages had to be dipped every 14 days, in Cooper's (arsenical) dip, for 16 months. Paint of different colors was spotted on the right, or left, shoulder, loin, or rump, as the animals emerged from the dip vat. The respective paint daub enabled range riders to identify cattle that had not been dipped. The Range Riders drove those animals without fresh marks to the vat, and

Before the storied Texas longhorn" cattle came into being, a somewhat less spectacular long-horned breed were browsing on Florida's prairies and vast stretches of palmetto scrub.

These, and many other facts are brought out in Akerman's work, together with a rich condensation of legendary figures and happenings that are the equal of those that inspired the writers of western cow country yarns which became the most popular fictional literature in the world.

Where chancy enterprises are in progress, villains are sure to put in an appearance. Florida's cowmen had to contend with the likes of "Bloody Watson," credited with killing 50 men; Jesse Fish, Britisher George Armstrong and Daniel McGirt. The latter became a notorious cattle rustler and outlaw leader, after withdrawing from service as a scout for the American patriots during the revolutionary war.

In the interim McGirt had switched sides, to join British Governor Patrick Tonyn's "army" of East Florida Rangers, who were accused of being more outlaws than lawmen.

"Some of McGirt's henchmen," Akerman's book states, "could have probably taught the James brothers or the Dalton's some techniques in trickery and thievery."

rattler with a flick of the whip, or kill a rabbit - or a man.

Another point of difference, "Florida Cowman" notes, was that the Florida cowmen relied heavily on cow dogs for herding and retaining cattle. One in particular, John Jay Bronson, in Lake County, "depended so much on cow dogs for cow hunting and driving that he would put out 10 or 20 dogs at the time. According to William C. Wing, former cowman, of Wildwood, 'Bronson had his dogs so well trained that they would bunch up cattle way off from where Bronson was working and keep them together all day long. Bronson usually would locate his cattle, leave a dog to hold them up and return later at night to bring the cattle and dogs in.'"

Akerman relates how a Levy County man, F. W. Priest got started in the cattle business. Priest was running a small country store in Morristown when a cattleman and meat dealer from Sumter County, Clyde Bailey, came through wanting to sell Priest a Jersey cow. Although Priest at first demurred, Bailey persuaded him, and from that one cow Priest built a herd of 67 head.

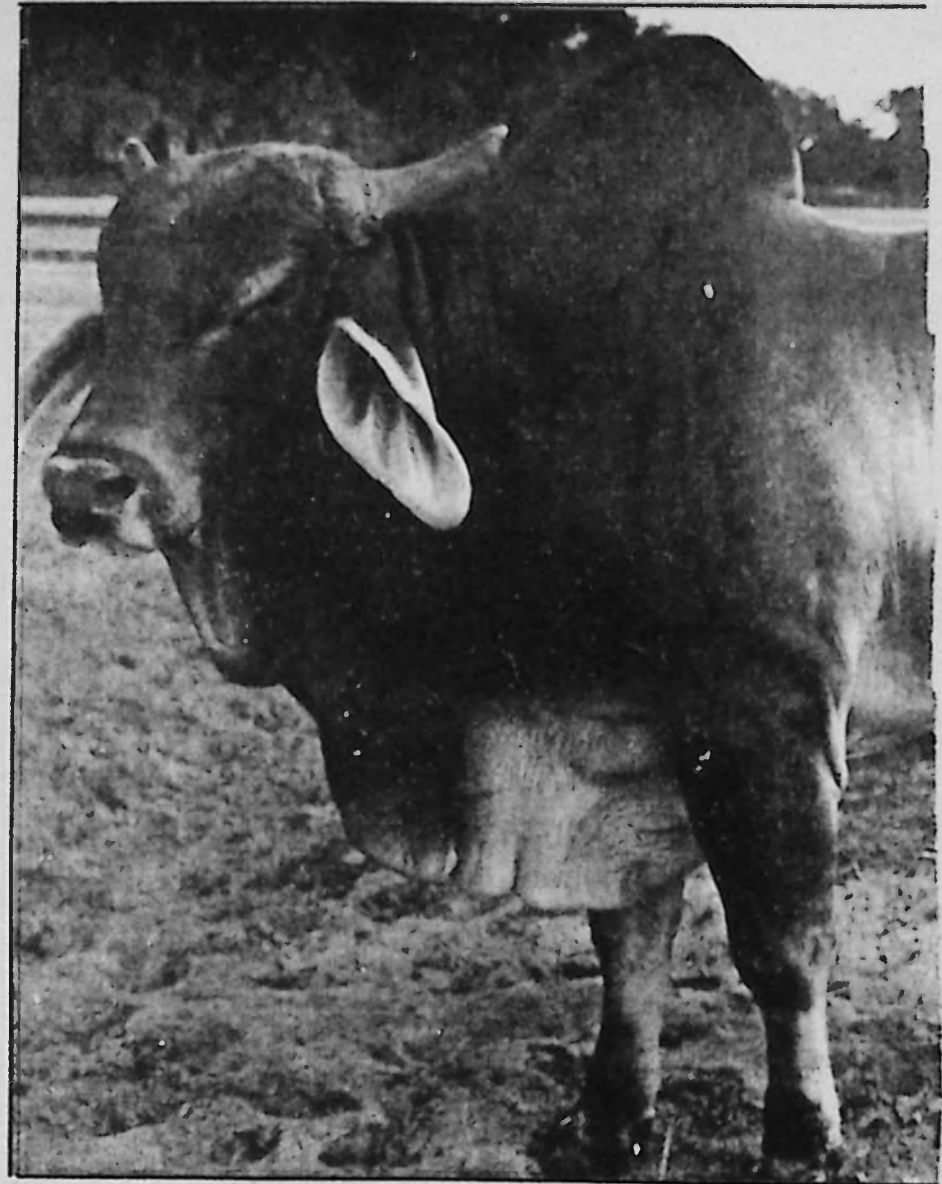
Range wars, such as the one that occurred in Desoto County, have presented a further parallel between the Florida cattle industry and that of the old West. In the Desoto incident it even was

maintained important herds, exhibiting unmatched cow- and horse-savvy. Akerman's book speaks of as many as 10,000 head of Oconee-owned cattle being visible at a single time on the rich

stood in self-defense, in the way of white ranchers' expansion into their domain.

Just as in the West, rustlers of Florida cattle, and horse thieves occasionally were hanged to a

state. Color those cattle Chisholm Sedalia of wec drives i



SPECIMEN — "430/1" pride of the "Circle H" spread

## DAVID MAXIE CRUM

An old-timer farmer and cattleman—one of those men of the earth on whom we all depend in the long run for our very sustenance—such a one is David Maxie Crum of Brooksville.

He was born February 24, 1879, in Powell, Florida, a son of John Washington Crum who was born in Georgia in 1851 and died near Brooksville, June 9, 1895. John Crum raised cattle and had six acres in grove. He was active in the Democratic party and was elected as a delegate to the National Convention in 1895 but died before he could go. David's mother was Ann Pyles Hope, born in Brooksville in 1855, who died in Tampa, January 9, 1935.

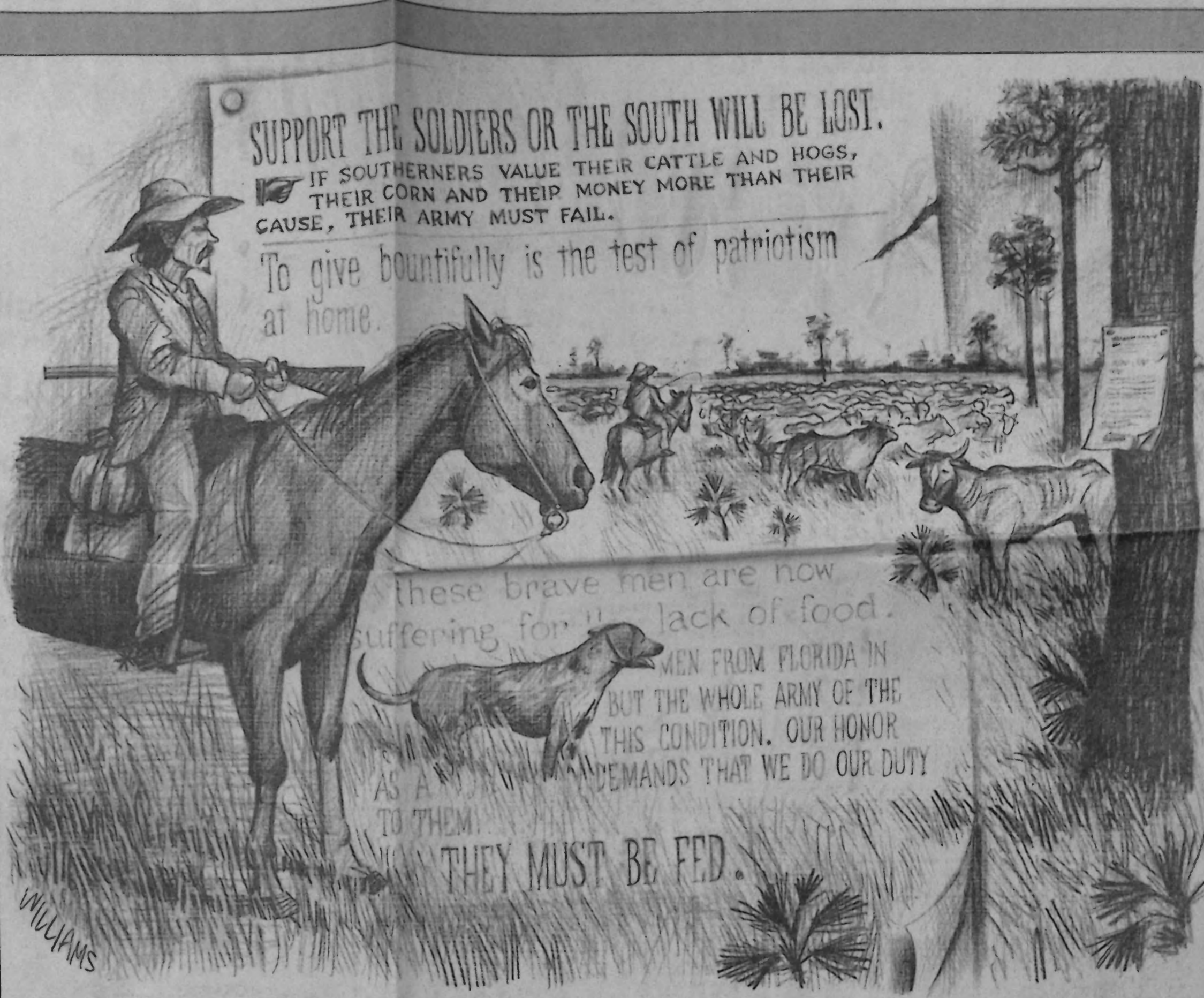
He was educated in the Hernando County schools as far as the 8th grade. Through school, he started working for Fred Lykes as a cowhand, and worked for the Lykes family off and on for over forty years.

When his father died, 160 acres were divided into nine pieces, and David received one of these. He acquired more land until at one time he had 300 acres. Up until about ten years ago, between the summer months when not working for Lykes Brothers, he farmed his land, raising corn, snap beans, sugar cane, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and velvet beans to fatten the cattle and hogs. Before the No Fence Law he had 1,500 or more hogs, and at one time he and his father and brother Eugene had about 5,000 hogs between them. Now he owns about 200 acres of land and leases other lands to keep his cattle—about 100 head. He and his two sons have together about 450 head of cattle.

Over a period of years he was in charge of building many roads around Hernando County. Back about 1932 he was Recorder of Marks and Brands. He served one year as constable and a term on the School Board. He also was in the State Militia, Company M, 51st Division. He is a Woodman of the World in Brooksville since about 1912, and belongs to Hernando Cattlemen's Association, which he joined in the 30's. He is a mem-

CATTLE MEN

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SUPPORT THE SOLDIERS OR THE SOUTH WILL BE LOST.  
 IF SOUTHERNERS VALUE THEIR CATTLE AND HOGS,  
 THEIR CORN AND THEIR MONEY MORE THAN THEIR  
 CAUSE, THEIR ARMY MUST FAIL.

To give bountifully is the test of patriotism  
 at home.

These brave men are now  
 suffering for lack of food.

AS A... MEN FROM FLORIDA IN  
 BUT THE WHOLE ARMY OF THE  
 THIS CONDITION. OUR HONOR  
 DEMANDS THAT WE DO OUR DUTY  
 TO THEM.

THEY MUST BE FED.

A message from the commissary chief of Florida brought home the urgency of the food shortages in the Southern armies.

# Florida's cows for the Confederacy

Rounding up cattle for the Confederate armies in the Southeast took on an increasingly desperate tone in 1863, when supplies were cut off west of the Mississippi.

The circular was sensitive and revealing: It told how urgently the Confederate armies needed Florida beef in order to continue as viable fighting forces.

Although it was intended for only the upper echelons of Florida officialdom in that grim November of 1863, midway in the Civil War, copies of the memo showed up on many a North Florida crossroad, nailed to a post or tree.

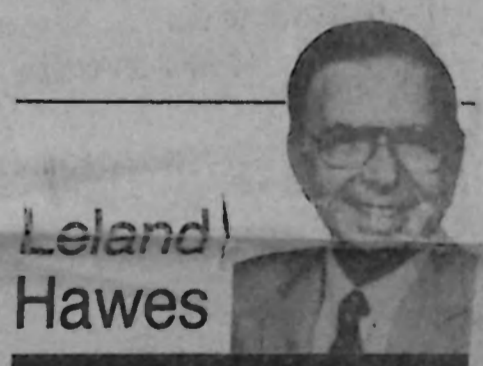
The confidential message apparently was displayed through ignorance, for its content was of extreme interest to federal intelligence agents. Until then, Union leaders apparently did not realize the extent of Florida's role in supplying foodstuffs for the Southern cause.

The importance of that role is brought out convincingly in a University of South Florida master's thesis written by Robert A. Taylor, now pursuing his doctorate in history at Florida State University.

Taylor's topic in attaining his master's degree emerged from an earlier USF seminar course in Florida history. He tackled the subject of the Cow Cavalry, brainchild of Tampa's Capt. James McKay and a key factor in keeping the cattle flowing.

The 27-year-old student's paper on the wartime riders became a chapter in his much broader thesis, which consumed almost a year of research.

Taylor scored a breakthrough to new information in the library of the Florida Historical Society, which is housed at the USF Special Collections Library. He discovered previously ignored material in the papers and letters of P.W.



Leland Hawes

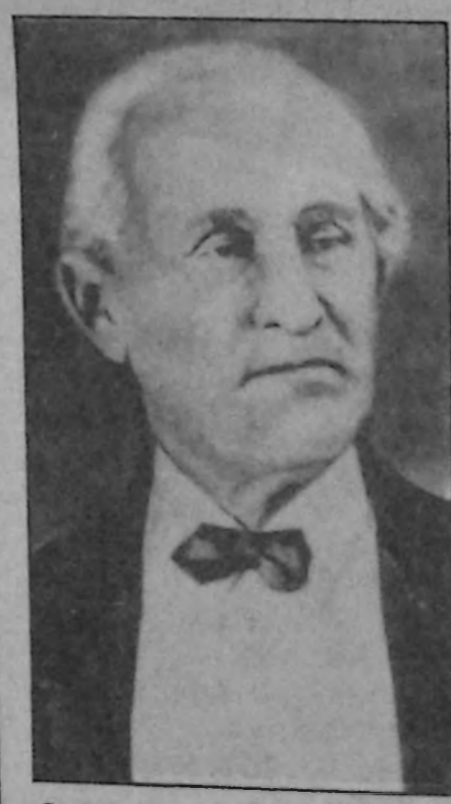
(Pleasant Woodson) White, the Confederacy's top commissary man in Florida.

Included in the White file were wartime letters to and from McKay, which revealed new details of the struggles going on to ward off starvation in the embattled Confederacy.

For example, McKay and White worried periodically that the Seminole Indians remaining in the Everglades redoubts might pounce forth unexpectedly to settle old scores from the recently concluded Indian wars.

And they commiserated constantly on how to drive greater numbers of scrawny Florida range cows into Georgia and South Carolina, where they could be slaughtered for protein-hungry troops.

The White papers proved to be a "bonanza" for Taylor in his quest for background on this dramatic period in Florida's past.



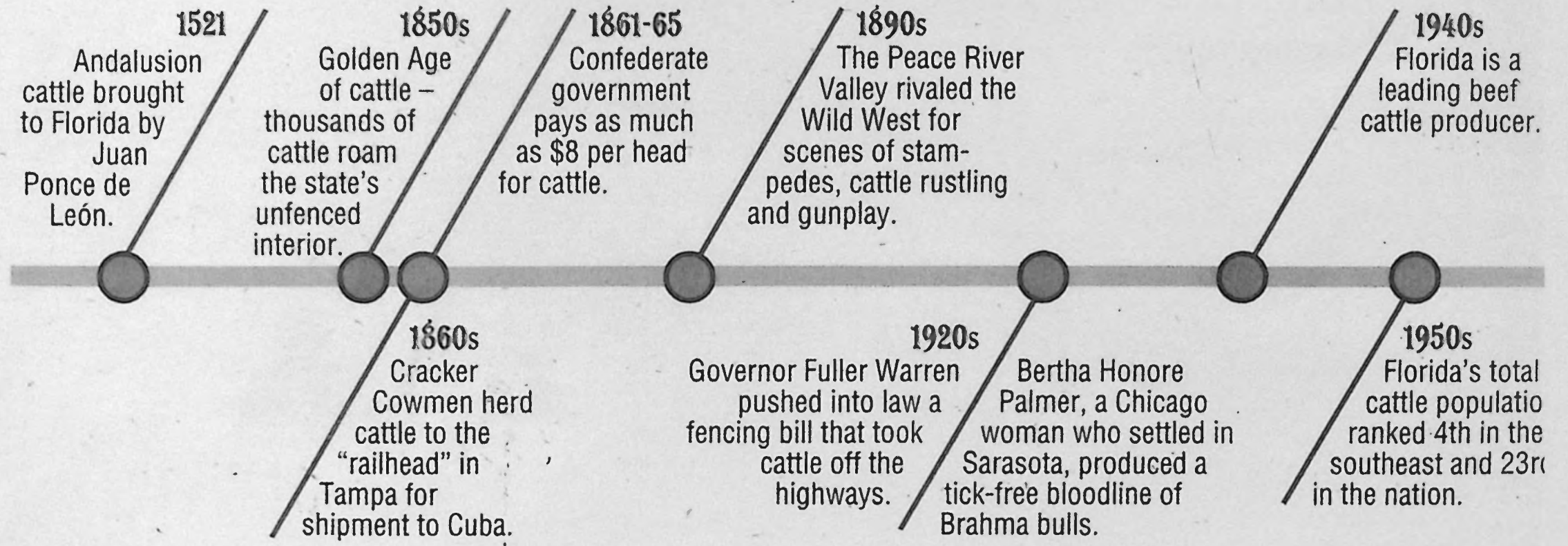
Capt. James McKay



Robert A. Taylor

See HAWES, Page

## CRACKER COWMEN TIMELINE



## "COWBOY CAVALRY"

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Late in the Civil War, Florida was filled with Confederate deserters and Union sympathizers. They often helped keep the Union army supplied in beef by stealing the cattle of people loyal to the Confederacy. To check these rustlers and keep the South supplied with beef during the Civil War, the Cowboy Cavalry was established. Organized by Captain James McKay in 1864, the Cowboy Cavalry was a very effective militia unit charged with keeping Confederate cattle safe from rustlers. These cattle ranchers were exempt from other military service, but when needed, acted as a 'home guard'. Through McKay's efforts, the shipment of cattle continued until the end of the war.

Source:

Akerman, Joe. *Florida Cowmen: A History of Florida Cattle Raising*. Kissimmee, FL: Florida Cattlemen's Association, 1976.

Mormino, Gary and Anthony P. Pizzo. *Tampa: The Treasure City*. Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, 1983.



Frederic Remington drawing  
ca. 1890s



225 S. Franklin Street • Tampa, FL 33602 • (813) 228-0097

File No. 1110.

77 578

H. T. Lykes

Letter

to

Dated October 24, 1941

George E. Cason,  
2106 Central Avenue,  
Tampa, Florida.

Filed November 17th, 1941

Deed Book 77, page 578

Recites: "On basis of 7¢ per acre, for the purpose of grazing cattle only, this is permission for you to use land we own in Sections 21, 22 and 28, Township 20, Range 17, Citrus County. Acreage involved in approx. (1000) acres. Payments for this privilege are to be made six months in advance with the understanding that I may cancel it on six months notice.

It is strictly understood that there will be no burning of woods on this property."

Signed by H. T. Lykes.

**December 1, 2006**

## **Living Link To The Past, Hope For The Future**

*Florida's first cattle breed, the Cracker, makes a slow but steady comeback*

Passersby wonder about them. People in cars, heading for work or home or play, puzzle over the sight of these small cows in their urban setting. Speckled and solid-colored, horned and hornless, they're grazing in a pasture at the Doyle Conner Agricultural Complex in Tallahassee. Surrounded by strip malls and fast food restaurants, they're within spitting distance of one of the city's busiest thoroughfares. What are they? Why are they here?

Those in the know might answer like this: "They are a very old breed. They came to Florida with the Spanish nearly 500 years ago, and for centuries they wandered wild all over the state, through piney woods and watery prairies. Sometimes they roamed in mixed herds with buffalo. The Indians raised them. Here is some of what's left of them."

They're known as Cracker cattle, or Florida Native cattle, and there are about 30 of them on land adjacent to the Conner Complex, which houses laboratories and offices for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Department maintains another, larger herd at the Withlacoochee State Forest near Brooksville, and the Department of Environmental Protection has herds at Lake Kissimmee State Park, just south of Orlando, and Paynes Prairie near Gainesville. There are small private herds sprinkled throughout the state.

The State of Florida has been involved in the preservation of the Cracker since the 1970s, when the breed hovered on the edge of extinction. Today, the total population of Cracker cattle is estimated at about 800, but there were once hundreds of thousands.

On a warm, humid morning, Stephen Monroe, who manages both of the Department's herds, tours the rolling pastures at the Conner Complex. It's early, and a lovely sunlit fog is just lifting over the hills, and cattle are lowing in a distant pen—it's a mournful, quiet sound. In his boots and hat, Monroe looks every inch the cowman, and he's obviously comfortable in this setting.

"I grew up with these old Cracker cattle," Monroe says. "My daddy was cow-hunting the day I was born. Back in those days, in the fifties, cattle still ranged in the piney woods all over Jefferson and Taylor counties. They were still truly wild then. But the timber company wanted them out, and my daddy was one of the men who gathered them up and hauled them out. My daddy made his living getting rid of them. Now I make my living helping to preserve a few."

Monroe opens a rusty metal gate and closes it behind him, and cattle gather cautiously around him, in the shade of a live oak tree. Cracker cattle are noticeably smaller than

When Florida became a territory of the United States in 1821, its plentiful rangeland and its profusion of wild stock drew a stream of frontiersmen and adventurers from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. The animals were scrawny—even downright bony by today's standards—but they played a vital role in the development of Florida's cattle industry. During the Civil War, Florida was a major supplier of beef to the Confederate troops. After the war, a lucrative cattle trade with Cuba helped Florida rebuild its economy.

The cattle industry was Florida's first industry, predating citrus and tourism by decades.

"Animal agriculture had enormous significance in the settling and development of Florida," Monroe says. "After the Civil War, the South's economy was in shambles. The Confederate currency wasn't good enough to light your cigar with, but Florida was exporting cattle to Cuba for gold. This was really a boon to the post-war recovery."

Throughout the 1800s, cattle was king. Range was open; in fact, there wouldn't be a fence law in Florida until 1949. Cattle wandered at will, grazing where they pleased on the native vegetation, and ownership was proven by earmarks and brands.

Lean, rugged "cow hunters" rounded up the cattle and took them to market. Cattle from all over the state were driven to the port at Punta Rassa, south of Fort Myers, to be loaded onto ships bound for Havana and other Caribbean cities. Tools of the cow-hunting trade included a good cow dog and a long braided buckskin whip to encourage the cattle on their way. The distinctive sound of the whips, which carried for several miles, gave the cow hunters and the cows their shared name: "Cracker."

"The Florida cow hunter had a lot of unique tools, terms, and idiosyncrasies," says DJ Conner, president of the Florida Cracker Cattle Breeders Association. "His use of the cow whip was one way he was special. He wore a flat hat and rode on a flat saddle. He used lots of dogs. He was a good horseman and tough as a lighter knot."

The tougher the better—because 19th-century Florida was still a wild place. Wolves and panthers roamed the woods. Gators roared in the swamps. Many cow hunters carried guns, not just to defend themselves against wild animals, but to protect their stock from rustlers.

In 1895 the artist Frederic Remington, famous for his depictions of the American West, visited Florida. In an article for Harper's Magazine, he described the cow hunters he observed as "wild-looking individuals" whose "hanging hair and drooping hats" reminded him of Spanish moss. Remington painted an equally unflattering picture of the native Florida cattle, describing them as no bigger than donkeys.

The small size of the scrub cattle had always been a point of concern for Florida's cattlemen. In the late 1800s, purebred beef and dairy breeds of northern European origin began to be imported for the purpose of improving the native herds.

modern breeds, and they're smaller than the Texas Longhorn, their look-alike cousin. Mature Cracker cows weigh between 700 and 900 pounds; mature bulls weigh 1,400 to 1,600 pounds. In contrast, many commercial breeds might weigh half again as much. Lyre-shaped horns and a light red coloring are common in Crackers (lyre-shaped horns are found only in cattle of Spanish origin) but colors and horn shapes vary. Cracker cattle can be every color a cow can be, and they come in many patterns—solid, speckled, spotted, and brindled. Horns can be straight, twisted, or crumpled, and some individuals are naturally polled, or hornless.

Cracker cattle may be small, but they're not meek. If they're not handled right, they can get a little cantankerous, Monroe says. "For centuries these cattle lived wild, on rough scrub, so they had to be able to protect themselves," he explains. "Well, they still have that ability. They'll fight if they think they're being threatened."

The breed was shaped by natural selection. The ancestors of today's Cracker cattle were brought to Florida by the Spanish as early as the 1500s. Over the years, animals were lost or abandoned by their owners. They became a part of the wild.

In 1521, on his second expedition to the New World, Ponce De Leon brought a small herd of Andalusian cattle and horses to Florida. Soon after landing, his party was attacked by the Calusa Indians and forced back to their ships. Ponce was wounded and later died from his injuries. The cattle wandered into the woods.

Other explorers came—and went—leaving behind more cattle and horses. Spanish missions and ranches were established and abandoned, and the population of feral cattle and horses grew.

Only the hardiest survived, only the strongest, those that could withstand the heat and the parasites. They had to be tough and smart enough to escape from predators and protect their young. And they had to be able to make do on forage that was rough and sparse.

"If one of these cattle needed coddling, then it died; it's as simple as that," Monroe says. "If a cow had trouble calving, for example, she didn't live to pass that trait on to her daughter—because she died and her daughter died. The thing that makes Cracker cattle stand out is their hardiness and their ability to adapt to Florida's harsh environment. Cracker cattle are tough because they had to be."

Today, Cracker cattle are known for their calving ease and excellent mothering instincts. They have a high rate of fertility and disease resistance. They grow fast.

"Nature spent 500 years selecting these traits," Monroe says.

In his book *Florida Cowman: A History of Florida Cattle Raising*, historian Joe Akerman describes Florida's first foundation herds of cattle and horses as an "unintentional gift" from the Spanish, and a lasting legacy. Florida's Indians were the first to make use of this gift, Akerman writes. By the 18th century, many chiefs had built up impressive herds.

"Cracker cattle survived this first onslaught," says Dr. Tim Olson, a geneticist with the University of Florida's Department of Animal Sciences, "because the new breeds simply didn't do well. They weren't well adapted enough to Florida's difficult conditions."

But when the heat-tolerant Brahma from India arrived in the 1930s, it was a different story.

"The Brahma is the only bovine that can sweat," Conner says. "It could take the heat."

Breeding Florida Cracker cows with Brahman bulls became very popular because it resulted in bigger, stronger, bulkier animals. When advancements in veterinary medicine and insect control finally made it possible for English cattle to survive in the Sunshine State, breeds like the Angus and the Hereford were also thrown into the mix.

"Pure Cracker cattle were quietly, almost without notice, being bred out of existence," Monroe says.

By the late 1960s, there were only a handful of pure Cracker cattle left—aging animals scattered across the state on the ranches of old Florida families.

"Only a few pockets of purebred Cracker cattle remained," says Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson, who is a staunch supporter of his department's Cracker cattle program. "And a few forward-thinking people became concerned about that. Cracker cattle have enormous historical significance. Their ancestors arrived in Florida before the Pilgrims were even born; they were the first cattle to set foot in North America. A few smart people began to realize how threatened they were, and how important they were. They began to consider how to save them."

Doyle Conner, Florida's agriculture commissioner from 1961 to 1990, was the driving force behind the preservation effort.

"In 1965 Doyle Conner spoke at the annual convention of the Florida Cattlemen's Association," Monroe says. "He said, we've made a lot of progress, but what we haven't thought about doing is saving some of our granddaddies' old stock. He challenged the Florida Cattlemen to save the breed of cattle that our industry was founded on."

Five years later, the daughters of pioneer Florida cattleman James Durrance donated five Cracker heifers and a bull to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on behalf of the Florida Cattlemen's Association. The Department was now in the cattle business; it had been entrusted with the preservation of the breed.

The state's involvement in the preservation effort is important because it provides "continuity," Olson says. Ranchers get old; they get sick; they can fall on hard times; they might be forced to sell their land and their herds. The state-owned herds provide permanent assurance that the breed will persist in sufficient numbers to keep the population viable.

But the state herds are intended only as a safety net.

“We want to share these animals with families,” Monroe says. “That’s our goal. The best way to save Cracker cattle is for people to use them, to raise them for milk and meat. That’s what we want. We don’t want these cattle to be only museum pieces.”

“We would like to see these animals returned to production,” says Don Schrider of the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), a non-profit working to conserve and promote endangered breeds of livestock. “That’s the only way to get their numbers up.”

The ALBC still lists Cracker cattle as “critically rare” because the estimated global population is less than 2,000.

Schrider believes the trick to preserving heritage cattle is to expand the market for heritage meats. “If people become interested in eating Cracker beef—and buying Cracker beef,” he says, “then farmers will raise Cracker cattle.”

It’s not a wild dream, but something that could easily happen, he adds. Heritage meats are becoming increasingly popular, sought after by chefs excited by their unique old-time flavors and textures. Around the country there is growing interest in “place-based foods” and the renewal of regional food traditions.

Cracker cattle can be purchased at the Florida Cracker Cattle Breeders Association’s Annual Gatherin’ and Sale, which is held each fall. The breed is still affordable enough for families and small-scale ranching operations. Because they are naturally hardy and self-sufficient, Cracker cattle are a good choice for organic farmers or any Florida farmer looking to take a less resource-intensive approach to food production.

Cracker cattle appeal to people because they are easy keepers—but their allure goes deeper than that. Many Floridians who raise Cracker cattle do so for history’s sake. “These animals are a hands-on, living, touchable, tangible link to our heritage,” Monroe says.

Others invest in this rare breed because they care about protecting the biodiversity of agriculture. They hold that a rich genetic diversity offers valuable options for farming in an unpredictable future.

There could be climate changes, or the threat of a new disease. Consumer tastes could change.

“We don’t know what people will need or want 30 years from now,” Schrider explains. “For example, maybe the day will come when we can’t use fertilizers anymore and we need cattle like the Cracker that can thrive on native forages. We don’t know what will happen in the future, so why should we bankrupt our genetics today?”

Cracker cattle have many desirable traits and could be very useful in the development of new breeds.

“There is a worldwide effort to preserve locally adapted livestock breeds and their unique genetic material,” Commissioner Bronson says. “Cracker cattle are a precious part of Florida’s agricultural inheritance. They help us remember our past, and they are also an important resource for the future.”