

## About The Author

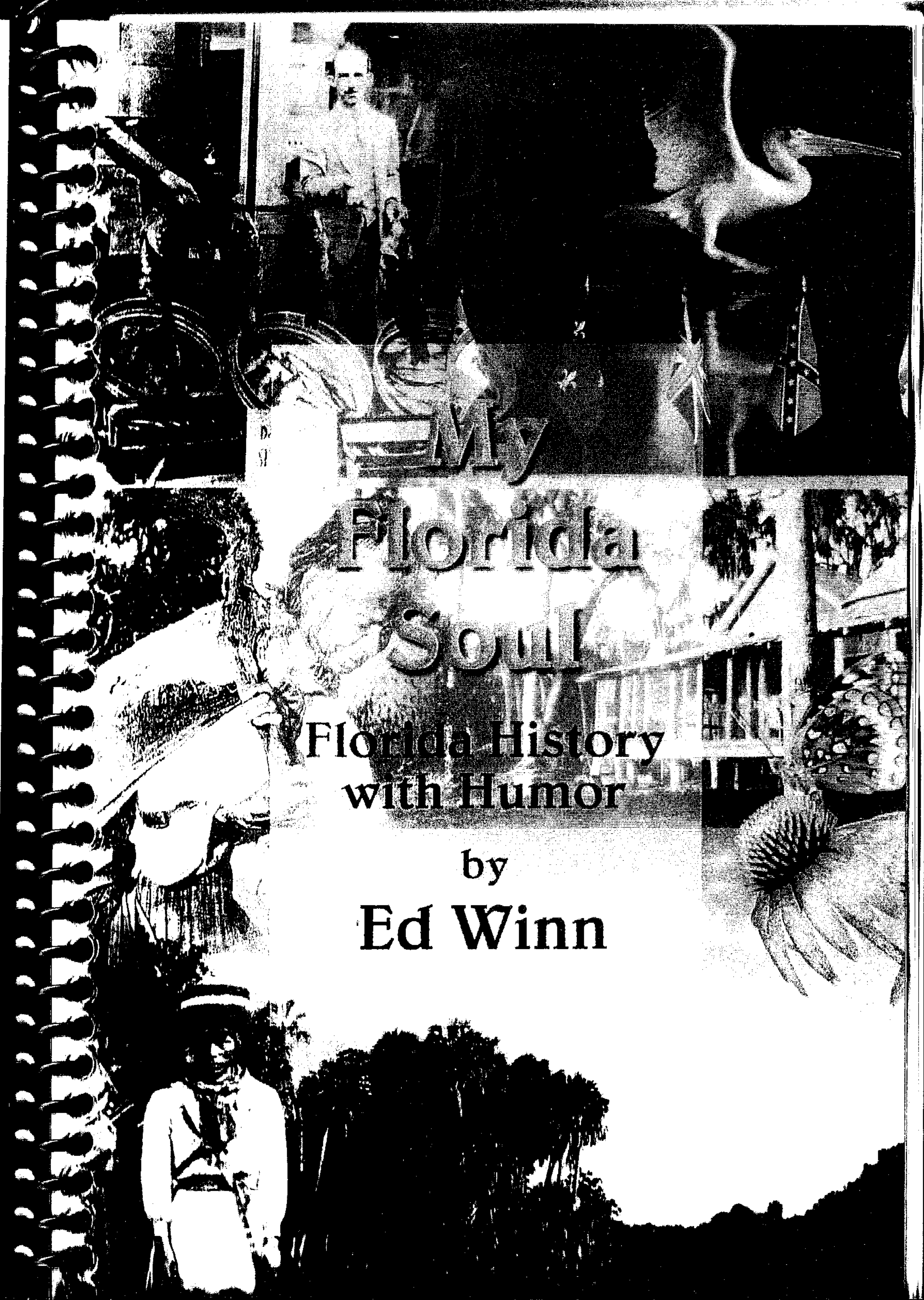
Ed Winn was born and has always lived in Florida. He is a true native son who has fished Florida's lakes and hunted game in the woods. He is a man who truly loves this State, so it seems to naturally follow that he finds himself wanting to spread the facts about Florida and relate some stories so that other people can appreciate this great and fragile place where we live.

When he was a student in an English class at the University of Florida, his professor remarked, "Did you know you could write?" Ed answered, "Yes, I know I can write, but I just can't spell!"

In 1993 he wrote a book of short stories entitled "I Never Had Enough Money To Leave Town". It was greeted with great success in the Winter Park area. He has spent many hours talking to groups of all ages encouraging everybody to write their own family stories for future generations, as no stories are as important as family stories. So, readers of "My Florida Soul", read - - and write.



**Ed Winn**



TO JEANNE BELL  
MY FLORIDA SOUL

Florida History With Some Humor

By Ed Winn

Ed Winn

MARCH - 2010



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## LOVE OF FLORIDA

I was born in Florida 67 years ago, for which I thank God each day of my life. When I leave this earth, what is left of me will remain in Florida. I find beauty in almost everything that God made in Florida. I love to travel to our East Coast and watch the sun quickly rise above the rim of the Atlantic - spraying the sky with its colors of light and promise. As it rises, one can almost hear the beat of life as all the plants and trees begin another day of growth. I love to travel to the Gulf Coast - sit down and relax, and watch the same sun slowly disappear behind the rim of the water, the pink-orange colors of the sunset constantly changing as the sun leaves us yet another day.

I love Florida's Palmettos. I find the fan shaped leaves perfect in their symmetry, and the green color is pleasing to my eyes - especially as late evening approaches and the color turns into a waxy dark green. I love the Sabal Palms and the Cabbage Palms that yield our "Hearts of Palm" (or Swamp Cabbage) while the palm is still young. I like to see the palms stand tall and proud - impervious to fire and wind, as they stand alone or together, quietly bringing beauty to their appointed place. I like to see them hanging over the rivers where the soil has been washed away. They refuse to die, and just lie down and look even more tropical and beautiful to these ol' Florida eyes. I love to stop and watch groups of Florida range cows just standing around as if they are lost in a perfectly contented way of their own, with the small trails leading them to wherever they might want to go - usually around the small hammocks that contain some cypress trees and everything else that

wants to grow in a low wet spot. Those small hammocks, for some reason, are especially beautiful and timeless looking.

I love to talk to old Florida people. Most are very quiet spoken. Their eyes are clear and reflect total honesty. They often have suntanned faces with small lines around the eyes from squinting at the sun. Even though they might tell some stories of times past, they seldom brag, even those folks who have accumulated wealth. It is never displayed, or even discussed. They seldom raise their voices: and many times, one has to pay completely focused attention to what is being said. Their conversations tend to be short and truthful. Now, when they are telling stories about Florida, that becomes another matter, altogether! I love their old Southern dialects that are so pleasing to my ears. I love the fact that over 1,400 miles of seashore go around the State, with the highway scenery changing every so often so as to please everyone somewhere along the way. As if this were not enough, Florida gives us 58,560 square miles of land area to play and work on; and of this, 4,298 square miles are water.

We even have a mountain in the Florida peninsula. Well, sort of! It's near Bok Tower at the southern end of the Piney Ridge that goes down the middle of the State. Right near there, Florida is 315 feet high, and let's not forget we have a town named Mt. Dora!

I love the fact that no matter where you are in Florida, you are never more than 60 miles from the water. I love the 30,000 lakes and ponds and the hundreds of miles of

rivers - each different and varied. I love to visit our Springs and Boils (of which there are about 100 large springs) and watch the crystal clear, pure waters of our substrata rushing to reach sun light and begin the trip to their destination. Most are 72° degrees, year round, and are 99% pure. I love our climate - usually with just a few cold weeks in the winter to keep us inside or scurrying to find the "buried in the back of the closet" cold weather clothes. I do need to mention, however, that we do have a few WARM months in the summer.

When I entered the Army in 1946, I was sent to northern Germany, through the North Sea, in the cold of Winter with an Icebreaker ahead of us to crack the ice so our Troopship could proceed. Needless to say, it was at that point in my life I really appreciated Florida for the first time. I knew then I would never leave it again if I didn't freeze to death before I could get back home.

I could go on, but you understand what I'm trying to say. Florida's name implies flowers. For example, in Germany, they speak of Florida as "The Land Of Blooms". As I travel to various states and countries, I realize why Florida is such a magnet to nearly 1,000 new people per day. Central America and most of South America are too hot and steamy for everyday life. Our northern states are very beautiful, but too cold for almost six months of the year; but, in the middle, in just the right location, is our Florida. It's just right!

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book of some history and stories about Florida and the Upper St. Johns River to the sons and daughters of the early pioneers of the 1800s who worked and lived along the Upper St. Johns River. From all accounts, these pioneers were amazing people whose accomplishments in a largely uninhabited wilderness are almost unbelievable. These early settlers came from all over the South - mostly from Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina and Georgia. Most left their native states to make a better life for themselves and their families. They were brave people who were willing to face unknown perils to carve a new way of wilderness living. The most prosperous of the settlers came by covered wagon, pulled by oxen. Most came with horse drawn carts, some rode horses, and some just walked - carrying all their earthly belongings on their backs. They headed south to settle around the Upper St. Johns River in some areas where even the Seminole Indians would not hunt because of the huge rattlesnake population.

Strangely enough, it was because of the earlier Spanish intrusion into Florida that made most of this possible. It was because of the herds of wild cows that had wandered off from the Spanish. These cows flourished in the Florida wilds. Because of that, many of the early settlers became cowboys, and they opened the Florida trails along the rivers with the cow trails creating a new land for their future generations to follow. I have met many of the sons and daughters of these earlier settlers. It is plain to see they have inherited some of the pioneer spirit of their fathers

and mothers. I have interviewed a number of these families and find they are deeply religious people with honest handshakes which still seal the best contracts that can be made. They all share something in common with one another. They love this Florida land with a reverence that can be heard in their voices and can be seen in their eyes when they tell their old Florida stories. As the old saying goes, "They just don't make people like this any more!"

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to thank my wife, Gloria, for the endless hours she has spent preparing this book. She has had to read my horrible handwriting, correct my spelling, and prepare all my stories for entering them into our computer along with taking off the tapes the voices of five other people who join me in the Florida stories. I must add she also prepared our first book, "I Never Had Enough Money To Leave 'Town".

There are many, many people I wish to thank for their myriad contributions to the text itself, the details of printing, the final preparation. Being a story teller and not an historian, I had to depend on others who have studied Florida history for their insight and knowledge. We have had to depend on friends and relatives for their "computer smarts". Let me tell you who they are:

Reg Garner - for his technical assistance and endless patience so that Triangle Reprographics could print our book;

Lorna Devito - a fine local artist, for her design and preparation of the book cover. Lorna also designed the cover of "I Never Had Enough Money To Leave 'Town";

Steve Vaughn - a photographer of great skill in panoramic photography, for his exquisite gift of a scene on the St. Johns River;

Patsy West - Director of the Seminole-Miccosukee Photographic Archives, for her picture of the four Seminole Indians in their native costumes;

Jimmy Caple - Cowboy Artist, for his picture of Judge Platt on his horse;

Fred A. Hopwood - a noted historian of Brevard history and author of several books, one of which I am proud to have. It is "The Rockledge Florida Steamboat Line". I could never have put together the history of the Bumby Camp on Lake Winder without his assistance. The many phone calls and shared notes for the early history of Florida are appreciated so very much;

John M. Ericksen - who recently published his book "Brevard County - A History To 1955". John told me his book took three years of work and cost him \$30,000. I relied heavily on his fine book for the details of the formation of Florida;

Cecil Tucker - for his invitation to the Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium in Kissimmee and for his guidance in my purchasing the Proceedings of that Symposium which covered the years 1845 to 1995 from which I learned a great deal;

Edward Mueller - for his book "St. Johns River Steamboats". Ed Mueller is the Dean of the Florida steamboat history. I thank him also for the fine program he gave last year at the Maitland Historical Society and for the pictures of the Steamboat Willey;

Dr. John K. Mahon - Professor Emeritus of History, University of Florida, for his presentation of the details of the Seminole Wars at the Fort Christmas Historical Society and the books he has written over the years, principally "The Second Seminole War". Dr. Mahon's knowledge of the Seminole Wars is absolutely amazing, and I know he has studied this subject over most of his life;

Mary Ida Bass Barber - for her book "Florida's Frontier, The Way It Wuz". Her overlook at the early settlers and the Civil War is superb. This is the best book about the early settlers I have ever read. Mary Ida, your book is a masterpiece to an ol' Florida boy like myself;

Calvin Bell and Maurice Sterling - St. Johns Water Management District, for their information kit and film. The St. Johns Water Management is our last defense against the destruction of the Upper St. Johns River!

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Mary Winn - for her able assistance in transcribing the interviews on tapes and for her computer expertise;

The staff at Fort Christmas - for their contributions on the Second Seminole War;

And to the others who may not be on this list, please know you all have my sincere thanks;

and finally, Rollins College Archives - for their assistance not only to me but to the Maitland Historical Society. When this book is completed, my notes and maps will be turned over to the Archives.

## FORWARD

I want you to know before we start that the nice part about being a storyteller is that you can write with some humor and feeling that helps make our history a lot more interesting. A storyteller is not bound by strict rules or a narrow band that keeps his writings to just dates and events.

So in this book I have tried to present some Florida history with humor and to give the reader a better "feel" of Florida. In addition to my stories, I asked five Floridians of 4th and 5th generation Florida families to tell their stories along with mine.

I want to apologize in advance for the duplication of some of the information you will find from story to story; but I found this necessary, as each chapter or story stands alone. You will probably be tired of hearing about the Spanish Period and the release of their cows, horses and pigs. Forgive me. I have divided the book into three parts. Part I is the history of Florida. Part II is the history of the Upper St. Johns and the Bumby camp, and Part III contains stories of five other Floridians.

Our Florida history is the oldest, finest, and most exciting history of any of our other States. I know very little about the history of the other States; but after making that statement, you must understand that I am a proud Floridian who is only a storyteller and not an historian - by any means. But the statement still stands, "We've got the best!"

As I began my research, I realized not only how rich our history is, but also how special it is. Putting together the history of the Upper St. Johns River was like a detective story. As I plodded along, I began to understand why. It was because the great scholars and historians of Europe who journeyed to our "New World" came from countries that did not have anything that looked or sounded like wild Florida. They feared the snakes, alligators and "crocodiles", fevers, palmettos, untamed people and Indians, and whatever else their minds could conjure up; so, they settled in South Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, etc. to a more urban way of life—more comfortable and to their liking. So they wrote book after book about those areas. Florida's history meanwhile went unrecorded for the most part.

If this were not enough, the early settlers, before the Civil War, wanted nothing to do with government. They refused to register their land for fear of being put on County records. They also refused being registered land owners because of taxes and would then have to serve on jury duty. For example, back in the 1700s and 1800s, if you saw your neighbor's son commit murder and you said so before a jury, you would probably be next! To compound this fear of government, many of the early settlers were wanted for crimes or "misunderstandings" in the other Southern states and did not want anyone to know where they were. After the Civil War waves of settlers were forced off their land in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and their hatred for government of any kind was intensified and again few records were made. (I expect there have been some unexplained Courthouse fires, too). It's easy



Cracker Boys in the 1890's. Frederic Remington.

to understand why our early history is so sketchy. I would call our Florida history "the best kept secret".

Did you know that in the early 1500s when our whole country was unknown, our Florida history was already beginning? Did you know Florida had cowboys 100 years before the West did? Did you know the first Cowboy and Indian battles were fought in Florida? Well, they were! And because of our lack of written historic documents, Hollywood has never made a movie about our Cowboys and Indians. The first cattle in the West came from Florida. The first grapes in our country came from Florida brought here by the French Huguenots. Also, to the north of us, the land was covered with buffalo in the 1600s and the 1700s, and later the Indians kept buffalo in pens near Tallahassee.

Our Florida cowboys were our first heroes in our early history. It was the Florida cowboys who made the first trails for settlers to follow. It was the Florida cowboys who kept our Southern forces alive for the last year of the Civil War by driving Florida cows to our troops!

This little book you are about to read strives to bring some of our history to life by using facts and stories - not only my stories but those of five other Native Floridians. As I have said many times to many people, it is my hope YOU will also write your own stories down - not only for yourselves, but for your children and your grandchildren. Just imagine the delight you would experience if you discovered a trunk in your attic, and after opening it, you found a hundred year old book written by a great-grandparent. What a treasure that would be! Then remember what YOU write will also become a treasure for your future generations - giving them your history, giving them roots, telling them where they came from, sharing family stories. Family stories are the dearest of all that children can hear. Children need to know their past so they can understand more of their future! Your history is part of our history.

When starting to write about the Upper St. Johns River, I found it almost impossible to ignore the history that surrounds it; therefore, the only place to start is at the beginning. So sit back and relax, and let a storyteller relate to you the beginning of our beloved Florida.

And so it began ...



Florida Cowboys Shooting it Out. Frederic Remington.

# PART ONE

## Introduction

### Part One

This book is designed to bring to the reader some history and stories about our Florida in an interesting way with a bit of humor thrown in. I have found that very few people are content to read history that is loaded with just dates and events. Since the explosion of newcomers has probably reached about 90% of our total population, I believe it is very important for all of us to understand how Florida began, so as to better understand our State's history and hopefully have a greater appreciation of what we have and how to help preserve our very fragile state - this great State of Florida.

Part 1 explains in simple terms how our Florida "came to be" and some things about its very early people. This is followed by the various periods of influence by the five flags that have flown over our State. The last part of this section is the history of our early white settlers and all the perils they faced including the wars with the Seminole Indians.



## OUR FLORIDA THE BEGINNING

A long, long, time ago, even before memories, the strip of land that was to become our precious Florida ripped and slipped away from what is now the coast of Africa as part of the shifting of the Continental Plates. Our land moved and shoved its way under what is now the Atlantic Ocean and came to rest as an appendage to the continent above. The shell dunes of Brevard County show splintered remnants of the ancient continent of Gondwana-land or what now is Africa. This continent has long been gone, but its existence is accepted scientific theory.

In John Eriksen's book "Brevard County, A History to 1955" - he writes, "Far below the high ridges of Central Florida lie sandstone and marine fossils that form the prehistoric cornerstone of Florida. Across the Atlantic, northwestern Africa rests on the same rock. Once common ground, the early Florida and African bedrock were split roughly 245 millions years ago when "Gondwana-land" began to break up and drift south. The shifting land divided the supercontinent of "Pangaea" and gave birth to the Atlantic Ocean. As the continents divided, a small sliver of the African land mass lingered."

Note that the same bedrock that is under Florida does not appear under the mainland States. These rock formations are what make Florida so fragile. This phenomenon of sand- stone and lime rock is part of our aquifer where our pure water is stored.

Anyhow, as the continents divided, a small bit of this African landmass lingered, and now as millions and millions of years passed by, some 195 million years, Florida remained submerged. It was during this time that strange animals and reptiles evolved and then suddenly disappeared. One of the earliest mammals to inhabit our underwater, our seas, was the Sea Cow. Existence of remains of Sea Cows date back nearly 45 millions years.

About 25 millions years ago, a relatively short time in eternity, our State emerged from the Ocean - at about twice the size it is now. For millions of years, the only sounds heard on our peninsula were the crashing ocean waves and the thunder of the tropical storms passing over and drenching the land with fresh water. No birds came to sing. There were no trees to rustle in the breeze. But as time passed by so quietly, birds began to appear at last, dropping seeds; and the winds brought more seeds and plant spores, and as the heavy rains washed the soil, they filled the lakes, and the lakes made rivers, and the underground reservoirs filled with sweet, fresh water. Green plants began to grow and grow until Florida was covered with dense growth of plants and animal life. Then, 20,000 years ago the great Ice Age was coming to an end, and the ice began to melt in the heat of the sun. Fully one third of the Earth was covered in an ice mass up to five miles thick. For 10,000 years this ice melted. At first there were just small streams, and then they became rivers, and finally torrents of water our minds can't even begin to imagine, and the seas began to rise; and for 10,000 years, these torrents of water raised the oceans, until roughly one half of Florida's width disappeared under the oceans.

(I note that when I Grouper fish on the Gulf Coast, you have to go out one mile to increase the water depth by one foot. So you have to go out 40 miles to fish in only 40 feet of water! It would be nice to have Florida's width back again, it would help out with the traffic problem for a little while!) As time passes, the coast line of Florida changes constantly.

I would like at this point to again thank John Eriksen for the wonderful research he did for his book "Brevard County - A History To 1955." John told me he spent three years of his life and \$30,000 of his money to prepare his book, and I have relied heavily on his information about the early formation of Florida.

Our first Floridians were descended from nomadic tribes that came from Siberia over the acknowledged ancient land bridge between Asia and North America. As thousands of years passed by, they finally began to push into Florida somewhat over 13,000 years ago. These magnificent people from Asia were called Paleoindians and lived at the time of the giant animals. They survived by killing these huge prehistoric animals which inhabited Florida during their time. They hunted the giant mammoths - animals which grew up to twelve feet high and weighed up to 20,000 pounds. These enormous animals had tusks that grew up to nine feet long. (For your information, there is a totally assembled skeleton of one of these Mammoths at the State of Florida museum in Tallahassee. It is most impressive). They also hunted the giant Cave Bear actually going into their caves to kill bears that were far bigger than our biggest Grizzlies. These brave and resourceful people killed these

huge animals by using one of one of two methods. One was using a spear thrower. The thrown spear could travel up to 100 mph with great accuracy. The other was by a large group of people driving them over a cliff into a bog - often killing many more animals than they needed for food at the time.

Where these brave warriors lived there were giant Buffaloes, huge Saber-toothed Tigers which were four feet high and up to nine feet long with six inch fangs that extended from their jaws and killed and ate most anything they wanted including the Paleoindians. There were giant animals called Giant Armadillo that stood five feet tall and reached up to 9 feet long. (This animal can also be seen at the State of Florida museum). There were many, many other giant animals. There was a bear that could weigh 500 pounds, small Asian horses, giant Anteaters, flat-tailed Muskrats, giant Raccoons, Wolves, Jaguarundi to mention a few. There was a giant Tortoise like the ones found on the Galapagos Islands. There was a huge wingless bird similar to an ostrich. There were Pumas, Peccaries, and Rattlesnakes that grew to be 12 feet in length. Perhaps the most spectacular animals after the Mastodons and Mammoths (both of which were quite similar to an Elephant) was the giant Sloth. This magnificent animal ate only leaves. It could stand on its hind feet and be 16 feet tall. It had claws as long as a man's arm, and its underside was covered with a thick hide that was filled with a bone-like substance that that protected it like armor.

Then about 10,000 years ago, and no one really knows why, these huge animals either died or left Florida in a

very short time. The reason could have been over-hunting or more probably the great Ice Age coming to an end causing Florida to have a much warmer climate. Most of the animals that vanished had heavy coats, and maybe they moved north to find a more suitable climate for their existence. It's also possible that some of the Paleoindians followed these animals northward out of Florida. This then left Florida with very few inhabitants for several thousand years, and was the setting at about 8,000 years ago for the Archaic Indians – who came here from several directions – to come into our Florida. They must have absorbed any remaining Paleoindians into their tribes. (A Special Note: The Paleoindians and the Archaic Indians shared the same background. They were of Asian descent. They did, however, enter Florida at different periods and from different directions – the Paleoindians at 13,000 years ago and the Archaic Indians at 8,000 years ago).

Like the Paleoindians, these Archaic Indians were highly intelligent, skillful and determined people. As they spread out through the Florida peninsula, they began to form different tribes and developed different languages and different social behavior. At the time the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s it is estimated there were 49 different tribes – some war-like and others not. The historian Tebeau suggests there were six major groups with many small sub-groups. The largest and most fierce group was the mighty Calusa Indians. They were thought to have at one time an estimated 100,000 people. The Calusa lived in south Florida on the west coast and the Lake Okeechobee basin. The next largest group was the Timucuan Indians who occupied the area from mid-Georgia south to about

Deland, Florida. They may have had close to 100,000 people also. The Timucuan Indians were the first to make peace with the Spanish in Florida. Some of the other outstanding tribes were the Apalachees, the Tocobaga, the Tequesta, the Ais, and the Jeago. There were many other tribes of Archaic Indians in north and south Florida including through the Keys.

It is sad to report that all of these early Indians, somewhat over 200,000 of them, were dead or had left La Florida by the middle of the 1700s. So in about 200 years these people vanished from the Earth. Some died in battle, but most died from white man's diseases for which they had no immunity.

It is about these early people that our real historians hold different views. But we do know Mound Builders erected mounds in Florida 10,000 years before the birth of Christ. One of the best and richest sources of man's early history in Florida is the Windover Site south of Titusville. This area was occupied for at least 1,000 years between 7,000 and 8,000 years ago by the Windover peoples. The Windover Archeological study of their burial ground near Titusville, Florida, has discovered a treasure of artifacts and skeletal remains that date back 6,000 years. The find of textiles there is the oldest represented in the southeast.

Now because of all the millions of years I've written about, I have to digress for a few lines to tell you a fitting story. It's about a man with a certain amount of greed who was talking directly to the Lord. And the man said,

"Lord, is it true that a million years of our time is equal to just one of your minutes?" And the Lord answered, and said, "IT IS TRUE." Then the man said, "Lord, is it true that a million dollars of our money is equal to just one of your pennies?" And the Lord said, "IT IS TRUE." The man thought about this for a short time and said, "Well, Lord, can I have just one of your pennies?" In a short time the Lord answered, "YES, IN JUST A MINUTE."

Think about it.

We all know what a lifetime is and a century and have some understanding of what has happened since the birth of Christ, but beyond that I might just as well say a long, long, time ago.

We shall begin with the Spanish period, 1521 and forward to 1763. In Charlton Tebeau's "A History of Florida" he wrote a detailed account of the early Florida Indians, who they were, and where they lived.

I was very surprised to learn from his information that by the middle of the 1700's, the original Florida Indians vanished - about 200,000 of them. Many of these tribes lived with complex economic, social, and political institutions. They were a class society. Tebeau states that some of these Indians planned and executed large construction projects that required the labor of large numbers of people. I was astonished at this information. I had in my mind (what there is of it) that the early Indians were plumb wild savages. I was wrong. They were intelligent, resourceful people.

In reading DeVane's book "Early Florida History", I began for the first time to understand some of the accomplishments of the Calusa Indians. I could hardly believe the findings of the pre Columbian canals - canals of such size as to stagger one's imagination. One of the earliest notings of these canals was by General Zachary Taylor's engineers in 1839. Their map shows a canal about three miles in length running in a northeast direction toward Lake Okeechobee from what is now LaBelle. Another canal at Fishcating Creek was 1,000 feet long leading to a burial mound. Have you been to Marco Island lately? It's hard to imagine how, but the Indians made canals on Marco Island thousands of years ago. They made two canals traversing Pine Island each three miles in length. There was also a canal on the mainland opposite Pine Island that ran for 14 miles in a straight line toward Lake Okeechobee. A Mr. Ham, who had lived in that area around 1851, told of mounds and canals. He stated that there were four large mounds on the coast. The island is three miles long and traversed by a canal 40 feet wide and 8 feet deep. In Glades County, a man named Scott who was the Glades County Tax Assessor, discovered a canal three miles long, 80 feet wide including embankment and eight or nine feet deep. There are many more. We wonder how, why, in the world did the people make such digs? I have read that small amounts of gold were found in some of the very old burial mounds. These findings have caused some historians to believe that thousands of years ago, maybe even as much as 15,000 years ago, when Florida was about twice the size it is now, the Keys may have been a continuous ridge. Also many of the small islands to the

south could have been connected to each other or at least be large enough in size to offer protection for 20 or 25 foot canoes used by the Central American Indians. If so, it is entirely possible that some of the very advanced Central American Indians, like the Mayan or Aztecs made the Caribbean crossing to the Florida peninsula and met with the Florida Indians. That could explain the pre-Columbian canals built in southwestern Florida and small amounts of gold found in the Calusa shell middens.

As everyone knows, Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. With Spain in desperate financial straits, she was more than anxious to rape and plunder the New World (if there was one) for any kind of riches or spoils. So only 20 years after Columbus, Juan Ponce de Leon landed at Melbourne Beach or maybe St. Augustine, and a new era for Florida had begun. Whatever you read about the Spanish occupation of the Florida Territory, the most significant result of their occupation was that they entirely wiped out Florida's original Indians. They released thousands of cattle, some horses and pigs into wild Florida. These animals bred for 300 years. Each Spanish soldier had been required to bring with him 100 sour root orange seeds. Those seeds began our sour root orange trees. The cattle supported thousands of settlers, and the movement of the cattle began our first roads, and there were no hostile early Indians. They had already disappeared.

I turn now to the Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium 1845-1995 Proceedings published for the Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium held in Kissimmee in November of

1995, to discuss Spanish history as it applies to Florida cattle history. The two are inseparable.

### The Spanish Period - 1521 to 1763

Well, it all started, as I mentioned, with ol' Chris Columbus' first voyage of 1492. Chris made 3 more voyages to the New World. His adventurers brought cattle, pigs, and horses with them each of the 3 voyages, and as their settlements ended, the cattle were set free or they escaped. Also there were many Spanish ships that were wrecked that set animals free. These animals were tough, strong, and smart (smarter than most cows, anyway). They were the Andalusian cattle - small in size with their horns forward. These animals are the forerunners of Texas Longhorns (of course, many, many years later) and Mexico's fighting bulls. With this you can draw a mental picture of these animals. As they escaped into the Florida wilds or were turned loose, they could live off the tough Florida grasses and live in areas where it was almost impossible to get them out. They became as wild as deer but much smarter. On Columbus' second voyage, ambitious Juan Ponce de Leon was among the party of 1,500 men plus animals on seventeen vessels loaded to the gills. In 1493 they established a permanent settlement at Santo Domingo in the Caribbean. Twenty years had to pass (1513) 'til Ponce de Leon started his treasure hunt that landed him in St. Augustine which is where he is believed to have named Florida. A second voyage by Ponce de Leon in 1521, just 29 years after Chris's first voyage, carried some of the Andalusian cattle and other animals. Remember that along with the cattle came horses and pigs.

Florida did not have any native pigs. So St. Augustine became our Nation's first permanent settlement in 1565. (Spanish settlers then fanned out from St. Augustine all the way into Texas by 1583 with their cattle). The Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium pointed out that in order to give you an idea of how much earlier Florida was settled prior to the other States that were to become America, the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth had not even been born yet! We've all seen pictures of Pilgrims, pumpkins, turkeys, and Indians. So where are the pictures of our early people?

As the Spanish fanned out from St. Augustine in the huge Florida territory, they built ranchos across the State - mostly toward Tallahassee. They did not make many maps. The Spanish did not like the interior of rough Florida. Persons born in Florida to Spanish parents were known as criollas. They worked as vacuaros on the ranchos of Florida. Probably the first Cowboy and Indian fight occurred when native Indians attacked the vacuaros and the missions on the Spanish Ranchos in the Indian Revolt of 1647. No one seems to have told Hollywood about this. I'll bet John Wayne would have looked great in a movie battling the Florida Indians - with really smart wild cows; with palmettos higher than your head, and with Diamondback Rattlers! The West, as I see it, was a piece of cake to this setting. The West had submissive cows that walked together in herds on open ground with only some sage and tumbleweeds to cope with.

But, back to the story -

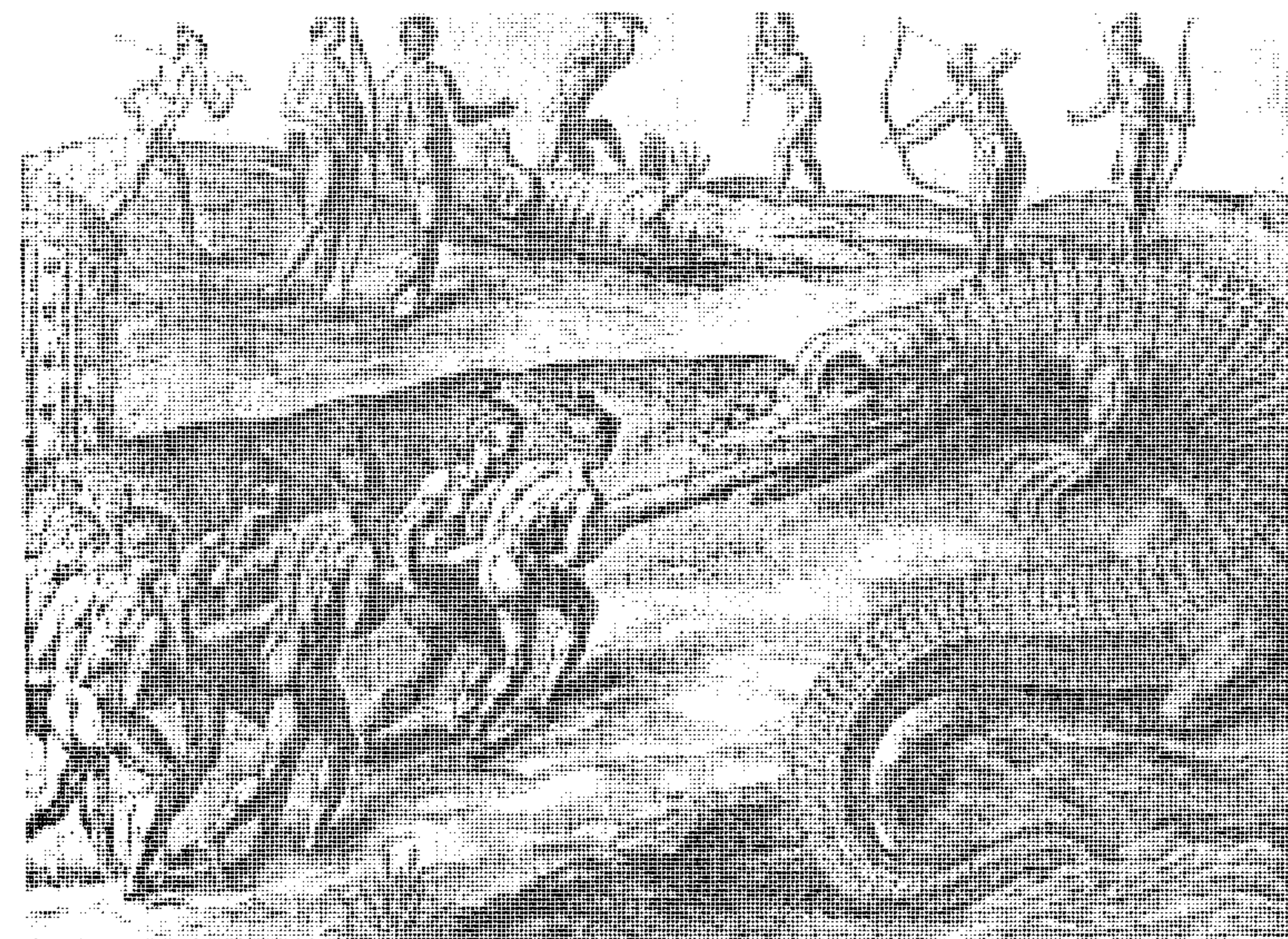
In the early 1700s, Britain, France, and Spain were all vying for control of the peninsula part of our State. The British Governor of South Carolina led a raid into Florida which netted 6,000 head of Spanish cattle and either killed or captured 7,000 native Indians. The Indians of Florida caught "Hell" no matter what power to be came into the State. Remember that when the Spanish period began in 1513 - actually they had two periods, the brief second period was from 1781 to 1821, - the main domination lasted 244 years as mentioned. The Spanish came to Florida for gold and riches. There was no gold, but there were nearly 200,000 native Indians some of whom they caught and sold as slaves - mostly to Cuba, some were sent back to Spain. The rest of the native Indians died from the white mans' diseases. Again just think - in 244 years Spain completely decimated the native Indian population. Remember that the Seminoles were not natives but were comprised of many different tribes which moved into Florida after the destruction of the aboriginal Indians, some of whom were here for over thousands of years. There was also another form of life in Florida of considerable importance. Remember that song "Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam..."? Well, the American Bison crossed the Mississippi River a long, long time ago. In the late 1690s there were huge herds of Bison infiltrating the coastal plains. These huge animals lived east of the Mississippi for several centuries and pushed their way into Florida in search of pasture forage. They came mostly at the time when Spain had destroyed the native Americans in northwest Florida, and the animals were unmolested in the lands deserted by the Indians. There are many stories about groups of Western Plains Indians who moved into

the area and caught and domesticated the Bison. In 1716, Diego Pena recorded a herd of over three hundred cattle and buffalo free ranging in an area around Tallahassee. But by the early 1700s, a deadly combination of Indians, white hunters with new and better firearms, put an end to our buffalo forever. The poor buffalo had no control of the events that destroyed their herds.

In the late 1600s, the Spanish made permanent settlements in Pensacola; and in 1698, a permanent Spanish settlement was made on Pensacola Bay. Then began the long cattle drives from Apalachee to Pensacola. But these drives only lasted until 1704 by which time north Florida was being ravaged by Governor James Moore of Carolina with his English and their Indian allies. This was from 1702 to 1708. As you can see, the Spanish were losing control of Florida territory. With their weakness, the Spanish influence and cattle ranching came to an end when in 1761, the Spanish, through Don Pedro, were foolish enough to threaten the Alabama and Tallapoosa Indians. This started a massive uprising with the Indians robbing and burning the Spanish haciendas killing anyone in their way. They left with all the cattle and other animals the Spanish had established over such a long period. (I wish again to thank Cecil Tucker II for the invitation to the Florida Cattlemens' Symposium from which much of the information about early Florida is taken.)

France was the next European nation to take a crack at Florida. The French Period was from 1562 to 1719. Their interest was in Northwest Florida. In the 156 years, they did many things - among which was to build Fort Caroline

near the mouth of the St. Johns and took Pensacola in 1719. It is in this time period the French Huguenots were believed to have brought the first grapes to our country. Another first for Florida! "What else did the French do?" one might ask, and the answer seems to be they brought "culture." However, in 1563 the French artist, Jacques le Moyne, became the first European artist to come to Florida. He provided the first sketches of the Florida Indians. Thank heaven for Jacques LeMoyne's escape. When the Spanish soldiers attacked and burned St. France's Ft. Carolina at the mouth of the St. Johns River only one other man escaped with him. LeMoyne's sketches were all burned, but this great artist went home and by memory recreated most of his original work. There are copies of 41 of his plates, and they portray the life of the Timucuan Indians in great detail and with detailed artistry.



16th Century Florida Alligator Hunt. Moyres de Morgues

Fort Caroline was the only French attempt to settle on Florida's east coast, and Fort Caroline was short-lived. Built in 1563 or 1564, it was soon to be destroyed by the Spanish soldiers from St. Augustine who were just a short march away. Only a few people escaped. All the others were killed, and the entire Fort was destroyed. (Please see the reproduced picture of an engraving which is included - A Sixteenth Century Alligator Hunt.)

The English period - 1763 - 1783. Great Britain pushed for more power as the Spanish control weakened in their second Period, and they then acquired west Florida in 1763 for 20 years. Great Britain captured Havana during their war with Spain. So in order to regain Havana, the Spanish traded Florida to Great Britain - "even steven". In all, this would seem to have been a very, very poor trade.

When the British inhabited the Territory of Florida, it was so huge that they divided Florida into two sections. The West Florida and The East Florida. The West Florida's western boundary was the Mississippi River and included part of Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. Its eastern boundary was the Apalachicola River and its capital was Pensacola. The East Florida looked very much as our present Florida but with St. Augustine as the capital.

The British Period, although brief, was very important to Florida. The British established many farms and cultivated a great deal of land in addition to livestock. But the British period was also weak, and it ended after only 20 years. So from 1763 to 1783, the British flag flew over Florida. The British did explore and made some fine maps.

A special note should be made of the importance of the King's Road which the British established spanning the distance from St. Augustine to New Smyrna. The Road ended at a dock which is just south of the present South Bridge which now connects New Smyrna to New Smyrna Beach. When the British left, a problem erupted. There were some white settlers who still had sympathy with the English crown and resented the new Florida government. England returned Florida to Spain at the end of the Revolutionary War.

To help establish white communities which would discourage any Indian from straying outside of this new territory, the Congress of the United States passed the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 (often called the Florida Donation). This concept, nearly as old as military conquest itself, was meant for persons willing and able to bear arms against the enemy to establish themselves in essentially armed camps (villages) along the borders of Indian territory. In return, the land which they cleared, improved and planted was to be given them free of charge, as long as they maintained themselves for a stipulated period of time (five years). Therefore, at the war's end, the legislation was in place for the settlers to assume the garrison-like duties of the U. S. Army on the Florida frontier.

I mention again that after the end of the 3rd Seminole War fewer than 200 Seminoles were left, and they were mostly Mikasukis and Creek. I'm glad that this part of history is finished; but note, the Seminoles never signed a Peace Treaty. There was never true closure to the three Wars. There were no aboriginal Seminole Indians. They

were a mishmash of many tribes and bands of Indians and run away black slaves. In 1771 John Stuart, a British Indian agent, called these people Seminolies - meaning "wild people"! Dr. John Mahon, in his book "The History of the Second Seminole War" names many of these tribes and bands of Indians. He speaks of the Apalachees, Yamassees, Calusas, the Upper and Lower Creeks, Muskogean, Tamathli, Mikasuki, Oconee, Apalachicolas, Chiahas, Eufaulas, Yuchis, and the Alachaways. All of those people eventually banded together along with black runaway slaves to form the Seminole tribe.

The then newly enacted Armed Occupation gave a new incentive to settlers to move into Florida by the score. Most were cattle owners, and the stealing of the cattle began again. This war, like the other two, cost many lives and perpetuated hostility between the whites and Seminoles.

The Seminole Indians who came into Florida in the beginning of the 1700s are discussed in the coming pages. (It is interesting to note that the Seminoles entering the Everglades actively pushed the few remaining Calusa Indians into the Sea. I refer to the Seminoles as our Indians - the third time around). The white settlers were just a few years behind the migration of the Seminoles which set the stage for most of the 1800s to be a time of great conflict between the Seminoles and the white settlers. (The three Indian Wars will be discussed).

Dr. Julian Granberry, noted paleontologist and linguist, has found traces that suggest the Seminole people acquired the Mikasuki language from the Hitchiti nation north and



Seminole Indians in Their Native Costumes

west of Florida. These people came down through Florida on the west coast settling in the Everglades area. The Creek Indians (or Muskogee), came into Florida on the east coast. These Creek Indians speak the Muskogee language. Most people we call Seminoles can converse in either language.

The beginning of the white settlers dates as far back as the middle 1700s under the Spanish flag. The Spanish, by killing off the native Indians created a land vacuum, making it possible for white settlers to move out of Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas to find a better way of life. Many of their farms were worked out or maybe they had trouble with the law, but most wanted to live in new wild country to try and find a new and better way to live - and to be Cowboys, cattle people. With them, too, came many

tribes of Indians. Some came from the same areas and some from the west. Many years would pass before the Indian Wars, but in effect the struggle between whites and Indians had already begun - and what a struggle it was!

I will always be glad Dr. John Mahon was kind enough to come to the Ft. Christmas Historical meeting on August 5, 1996 to speak on the Seminole Wars. He explained carefully why the Seminole Indians and the white settlers could never have lived together in peace and harmony. This essentially is what Dr. Mahon shared with us at that program:

The first great reason was the abundance of the now free land or cheap land. The red men wanted just to live on it. The settlers wanted to own it. The red men believed that the land belonged to everyone. The red man's culture thought the land belonged to their dead, to the living, and then to their unborn.

The second great difference was the red man's culture was primarily a matriarchal society. The women were the power in the tribe, and they often decided who the next Chief or leader would be. This was the opposite of the early settlers who gave women virtually no place in their society other than keeping house and rearing children.

The next great division was slavery. Even though the red men often took slaves, the slaves were not treated like the slaves of the white men. Many run-away slaves escaped from their white owners to be again slaves of the Seminoles. But this time they fared much better. The negro slaves

taken by the Indians were used as share croppers and not treated nearly as badly as they had been under their white owners. The whites hated the Indians for harboring their run away slaves. Both the Indians and the whites stole each other's cattle, and the hatred on both sides grew.

There was the religious difference, too. The white man believed in life after death. They believed in Heaven and Hell. The Indians could not accept or understand this type of thinking, as they accepted death as being part of the Great Spirit which was in all life - rocks and everything on earth.

The Indians wanted just to live on the land as it was, and the white man wanted to change it.

All of the above generated deep hate between the two factions and set the stage for the Indian Wars ahead,

and so it began.

The great history of the Seminole Indians in Florida will be covered in detail in a forthcoming book. This book does not have space enough to tell the Seminole history or discuss the outlandish treaties offered by the U. S. government. As the white settlers poured into Florida, there was no way the treaties could have been honored.

After the Creek War ravaged southern Alabama, and General Andrew Jackson defeated the Creeks in 1814, many of the Creeks fled to safety in Spanish Florida. But they were warlike in nature and desperate for food and clothing.

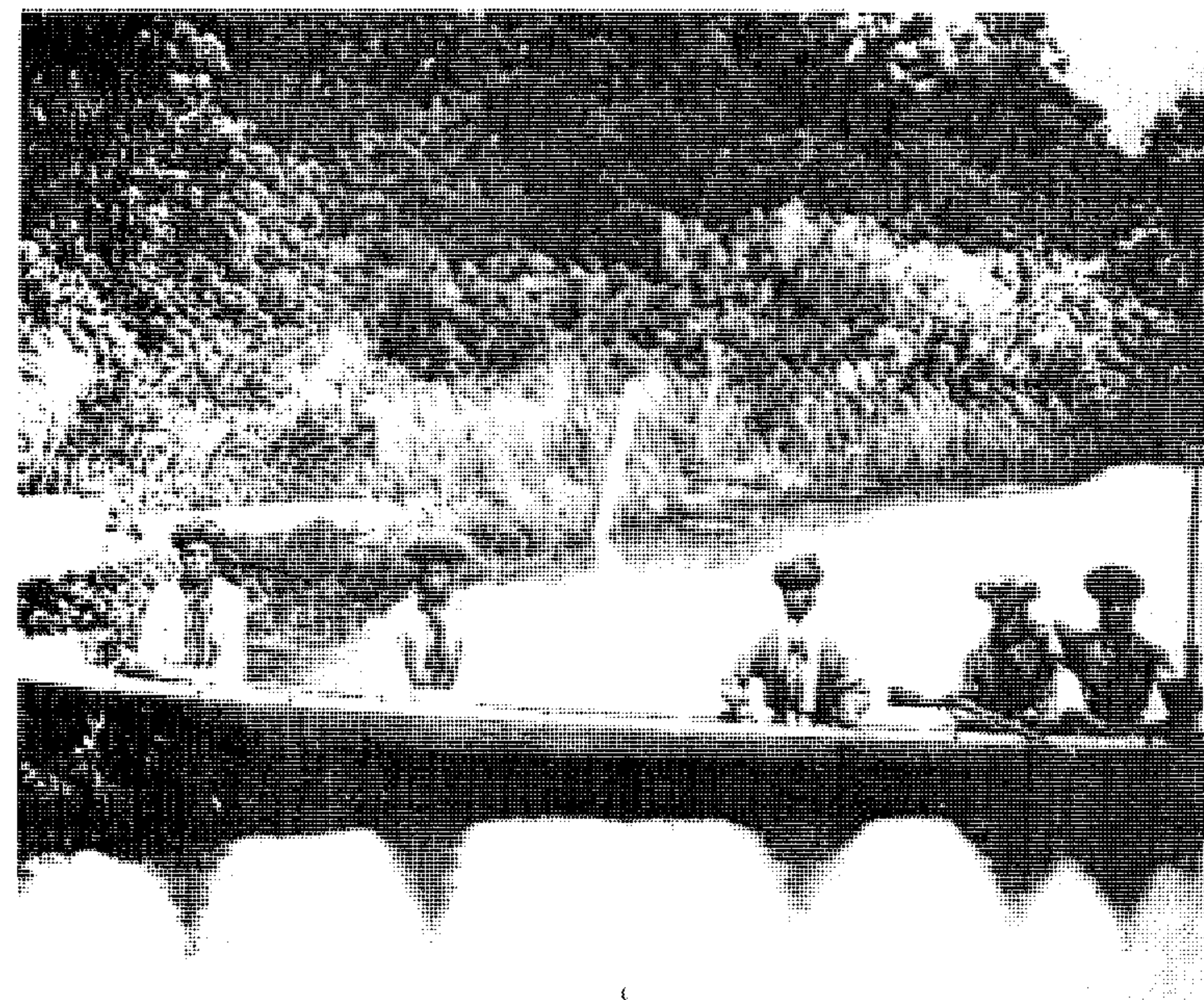


They resorted to plundering both Spanish and American cattle along the frontier. It is interesting to note that the Creeks joined with the British Alliance in the War of 1812.

In 1814 General Andrew Jackson not only defeated the fleeing Indians but captured Pensacola. Dr. John Mahon states that November 21, 1817 was the real start of the First Seminole War. Jackson made an (unauthorized) cattle and slave raid into Florida destroying Seminole and Mikasuki settlements as far south as Alachua. Unfortunately, the few remaining Timucuan Indians also perished - the last of their kind. In the year 1821, after the second Spanish period, the territory of Florida became a Territory of the United States for a \$5,000 claim.

Shortly after the 1821 transfer of Florida to the United States, the Treaty of 1823 was forged. The Treaty of Moultrie Creek was put into place. The Indians were to give up everything they owned - especially all their cattle and move into Central Florida to be fed for 20 years. I can't believe anyone really thought the Seminoles would live with that. I'm sure they had rather join the Big Spirit than live like paupers waiting for handouts.

The First Seminole War erupted in 1818. No matter what losses the white settlers had to suffer, the Seminoles' losses were of more consequence, because there were so few Seminoles left to fight. I don't know how many Seminoles there were during the First Seminole War, but it must not have been over 1,000, because by the Second Seminole War, it is estimated there were between 800 and 900 Seminoles and 300 blacks - period! By the end of the



Third Seminole War, fewer than 200 Seminoles were left alive.

The Second Seminole War was from 1835 to 1842, and anyone interested in this War should purchase Dr. John Mahon's book "The Second Seminole War" which is the bible for anyone who wants to study that War in detail. Earlier Dr. Mahon stated that it was impossible for the whites and Indians to live together, so the Second Seminole War was just a natural progression. It started in 1835 because of the same old thing - white settlers wanted the Indians' land. So the Indians were to be persuaded to give up everything and move across the Mississippi River to Oklahoma. A few went but most were captured and shipped under military guard, and many others escaped into the wilds and eventually to the Everglades.

My little book could not support the reams of information that cover this horrible war. Needless to say, it was a disaster for the United States and the Seminoles. This will be discussed in detail further along.

Remember the War of Independence of 1776 where our militia men hid in the bushes and destroyed the British columns? The British dressed in bright red uniforms and came marching down the middle of the road so only a half blind man could have missed such a target. When a skirmish presented itself, they all clustered together and fired in rows. That was what our trained riflemen hoped for, but - wait - only 59 years later, the U.S. War Department dispatched soldiers and dragoons dressed in blue wool uniforms that had big white strips forming an "X" across



LUCY PIERCE - - BILLY BOWLEGS' III HALF-SISTER

their chests to march down the roads in files and had them fire from a grouped position just like the British! So, the Indians lost very few warriors but dropped the poor U.S. soldiers like flies.

The Army built forts across Florida - one day's march apart for the soldiers. Go read the markers at the sites of these old forts - like "Commandant Mellon died here" (Sanford) or "Capt Maitland was fatally wounded at Fort Maitland." And this went on for about five years until our Generals understood they must fight skirmishes - capture small Indian bands, etc, and listen to this! That horrible 7 years of war may have caused as many as 50,000 deaths from fever, hunger, and gunshot wounds, etc! There were whole families that did not survive. This War is remembered by historians like Dr. Mahon as a war as bad as the Vietnam War, and our soldiers suffered just as much as our soldiers in the rice fields and jungles of Vietnam. That terrible war cost the government over \$20,000,000. It used 3,000 volunteers as well as the Regular Army. Forty main actions were fought. Some of the Generals used were General D. L. Clinch 1836, General Winfield Scott 1836, General R. K. Call, General T. S. Jesup, General Zachary Taylor 1838 to 1840. In all, Dr. Mahon says that many of the Officers who served were to become Generals in the Union Army and in the Confederate Army (75 in all).

And how did the Second Seminole War end? It didn't. It just came to a halt with no victory for the U.S. Troops or the Indians. In 1843 the Commander of American forces in Florida, Colonel William Jennings Worth (for whom

the cities of Lake Worth, Florida and Fort Worth, Texas, are named), just simply declared the Second Seminole War over.

As sad as it was, one more Seminole War had to be fought before it was over. It was from 1855 to 1858 and erupted over U. S. Army surveyors entering their land in the Everglades.

I digress:

The various Treaties done by the whites reminds me of the story about Jeffrey, a horrible little boy. Jeffrey was horrible because he lied about everything. He lied to his mother, he lied to his father, he lied to his school teacher, he lied to everybody. Jeffrey's father tried everything in the world to stop Jeffrey from lying. He yelled at the boy, he spanked the boy, he just did everything he could think of, but Jeffrey just kept on lying.

One day when Jeffrey's father was in his living room reading the paper, he heard Jeffrey screaming, "There's a lion in the yard! There's a lion in the yard!" And with that, Jeffrey burst into the living room and slammed the door. Now Jeffrey's father knew there was no lion in the yard, but he got up and opened the door and looked out, and then he said, "Jeffrey, I am sick of your lying. You know very well that animal in our yard is just our old Collie dog that we got shaved for the Summer. We just left a ring of fur around her neck and a fur ball on the end of her tail, but IT'S NOT A LION! It's just our old dog!"

Jeffrey's father had reached the end of his rope. He said to Jeffrey, "Son, I want you to go up to your room and pray to God that you will stop lying and then wait for God to answer you before you come back downstairs. Now go - and start praying."

So Jeffrey went upstairs - was gone about 30 minutes and reappeared downstairs in front of his father. "Did you pray to the Lord to help you stop lying?" Jeffrey said, "Yes I did." Jeffrey's father asked, "Well, did the Lord answer you?" Jeffrey said, "Yes, He did." "Well, what did the Lord say?" And Jeffrey answered, "The Lord told me that if He had seen that dog outside He would have thought it was a lion, too!"

#### Cow Deal

The farmer had been taken several times by the local car dealer. One day, the car dealer informed the farmer that he was coming over to purchase a cow. The farmer priced his unit as follows:

Basic Cow .....	\$499.95	Automatic Fertilizer Attachment ...	339.40
Shipping and Handling .....	35.75	4x4 Traction Drive Assembly .....	884.18
Extra Stomach .....	79.25	Pre-Delivery Wash and Comb .....	69.80
Two Tone Exterior .....	142.10		
Produce Storage Compartment .....	128.50	Farmer's Suggested List Price ..	\$2,843.38
Heavy Duty Straw Chopper .....	189.60	Additional Dealer Adjustments .....	300.00
Four Spigot High Output			
Drain System .....	149.20	Total List Price .....	\$3,143.38
Automatic Fly Swatter .....	88.50	(including options)	
Genuine Cowhide Upholstery .....	179.90	Tax and Ear Tags .....	418.00
Deluxe Dual Horns .....	59.25	Grand Total .....	\$3,561.38

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## THE EARLY SETTLERS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Remember when I talked about the Spanish period earlier, 244 years, from 1521 to 1763. The Spanish period actually paved the way for our earliest settlers. The Spanish had killed off all the native Florida Indians, many of whom were very war-like. The Spanish had for 200 years released cattle, horses, and pigs into the wilds of Florida. These natural resources along with the vacuum that was left in north Florida caused Indians of many different tribes - some from the West, but most from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, to move into the vacated areas principally to round up the wild animals at the same time white settlers began to settle in northern Florida for much the same reasons. The early white settlers came from all over the Southern States. For the most part they were dead broke, having left farms that were "farmed out". Some of the settlers were running from the law, but no matter why they came, they all shared something in common. It was a chance to have their own land, to gather cattle, and raise the standards of living past mere subsistence for their families. They came by the hundreds. Some walked, some rode horses, some came by horse or oxen pulled wagons. (You need to read Mary Ida Bass Barber's book, "Florida Frontier - The Way Hit Wuz" to get a real feel for how these early settlers lived). Still, the early settlers could never have survived without the wild cows. Those who were brave enough rode into the swamps and chased out the wild cows to eat or to sell or trade. They needed the hides along with the meat. The wild pigs were a real god-send. You could shoot a pig and eat it then; or catch it, pen it up,

and eat it anytime you wanted food - which made the daily work of food-gathering so much easier. Meat was cured in barrels by layering it with salt or smoked in a smokehouse. Salt was expensive and scarce, so hogs were rendered (the fat cooked out) and the hog lard was used to pack cooked meat for months before it spoiled. So life got a little easier. Most settlers planted a small garden, and most all seem to have grown sweet potatoes. These hardy plants will grow where more fussy plants refuse to grow. The sweet potatoes could be stored for a long period (as long as they were dry). They could be boiled, fried, cooked in ashes - or made into pie - so versatile!

When the settlers were able to corral and pen up domestic animals along with planting small gardens of sweet potatoes and greens and sugar cane, scavenging the woods for wild foods decreased some.

Can you see why our early settlers were such strong, great people? It was truly the survival of the fittest.

While I write in some detail about all the native food that could be had by a hungry settler, I wish to insert a story here that makes a point:

Two dog hunters were discussing what they fed their dogs. The first man very proudly said that he fed his dogs the very best and most expensive dog food that he could buy. He then asked the other dog owner what he fed his dogs, and he replied, "I feed my dogs collard greens." The first dog owner was amazed and said, "Why, my dogs would

not eat collard greens!" Then the second dog owner said, "Mine wouldn't either the first two weeks."

The early settlers ate what they had to eat to stay alive. It took many of them years to have a comfortable house and garden and livestock.

I have spent much time studying how these people stayed alive. First, they would need a gun and a mosquito net, and if they foraged from daylight to dark, they had a chance. The further south they traveled, the more prolific the rivers became. Again, wild Florida was full of the Spanish cows, some wild for 200 years. There were some wild horses and many wild pigs (Florida had no native pigs). The river banks were thick with wild grapes in season and trees of big cat-head yellow guavas that grew close to the river. Wild persimmon trees dotted the landscape on the higher ground. They found there were trees of wild sour oranges and dense growths of blackberries. The Spanish soldiers who came to our shores were required to bring with them 100 orange seeds. These were sour stock, which they preferred. These were then spread around the State first by the Spanish and then by the Indians.

The rivers were covered in some areas with the watercress plants which were eaten by the Indians. You could wade on the edges of sandbars in the fresh water rivers barefooted, until you felt mussel shells under your toes. You could then stop and dig up a pail of fresh water mussels in a short time. The rivers were alive with fish. It was easy to spear mullet and bass at night lighting your way with a blazing liter- knot torch (the heart of a pine

tree filled with resin). Nets and fish traps were also used. There was more than a considerable amount of rattlesnakes to use for food. It only takes a few seconds to cut off the rattler's head and pull off the skin. It is almost as easy as peeling a banana. The pure white meat is delicious, fried or baked in a fire. As a matter of fact, most all snakes are edible, the meat being firm and white. Giant bullfrogs lined the rivers' edges, and they could be hit with a stick and put in a bag and thrown over the shoulder until one had a goodly sack-full to take home. Then all you had to do was separate the frog from its legs and toss the legs in the frying pan. You have to watch close while cooking, though, as some of the legs would hop back out of the frying pan! And that's the truth.

There was no shortage of alligators. You hunt them at night. As long as you keep a light in front of you, you can spot a gator's ruby red eyes and move right up to the temporarily blinded gator. If you had a gun, you shot the gator in the middle of his head; or if you dared, you could give him a good whack in the forehead with a sharp axe. You then dragged the gator to the nearest shore and cut off his tail about behind his hind legs and peel off the meat from the hide. Alligators do not skin out easily. If the gator was killed for the hide, you cut off the gator's head and tail and back and kept the soft underside of the hide. You just keep the meat in the tail section for eating. Gator meat can be tough, but it is all white, tastes like fishy chicken, and is an excellent meal. The early settlers did not have fishing rods and reels or the time to sit and fish, so they put out set lines, a short line with a hook and whatever kind of bait they could find, usually mussels or

a piece of fish. The line was tied to a tree limb hanging over the water. The hooks were baited before dark, and the lines revisited first thing in the morning. Most often, you would catch a blue catfish - sometimes a turtle - most prized was the soft shell turtle. They grow to weigh more than 20 pounds and are delicious to eat. When you try to take one off the hook, his neck stretches longer and longer until you wonder where in the world the turtle could have had all that neck inside his shell! After the turtle was finally unhooked, he was placed in a gunnysack to make carrying easier, and so he would not reach around and give you a very good bite! The meat was trimmed out of the turtle's soft but very tough shell. Of all the river food, soft shell-turtle was the favorite.

The rivers were covered with water fowl and most of the river birds were all year around birds. The settlers ate a lot of Curlews or white Ibis, because they were so numerous and easy to kill and had a suitable taste. Migratory Coots also were often taken, because you could get up very close to a raft of Coots, make one shot with a shotgun, and kill a half-dozen birds. Then the Coot was cut open carefully and the very large gizzard was removed to eat. The balance of the bird is discarded. When you cut open the gizzard, it is done carefully so as not to let the contents of the gizzard touch the meat. The gizzard is only fair to eat unless you are awfully hungry. That makes it excellent!

Huge Gar fish swim just under the surface of the water. These prehistoric fish were easily gigged or shot, and when the meat was pulled out of their almost protective shell,

this cotton-like white meat could be cut out and put in a pot to boil with potatoes to make a sort of fish chowder. The settlers learned this method from the Seminole Indians. (I have seen this dish being prepared by some Seminoles).

Along the edges of the swamps near the rivers grow endless number of palmetto palms. Heart of Palm makes a delicious salad, or it can be diced up and put in a skillet with bacon fat and a few onions, salt and pepper. Cooked 'til done. It is delicious. (Swamp cabbage is another name for this food. Only one I knew for years! Hearts of Palm can nowadays be bought in cans in grocery stores and costs quite a bit). To cut the swamp cabbage, you have to take an axe and whack and whack until the young tree falls. Then you chop away the outside covering expertly until just the heart of the palm is exposed. You have to work at this some! It does not just jump out ready-to-eat! The Palmettos also furnished palmetto fans for thatching to use for temporary living areas. The early settlers had no money (or place to go) for hats for protection, so they learned to pull the palmetto fans into small strips and weave them in to a hat. These were Florida's first straw hats! The Saw Palmetto berries were sometimes mixed with other ingredients to make a "home remedy" and could also be picked and fed to the pigs.

The pine trees offered the settlers another very important product. There is not a whole lot to eat on a pine tree, you know, but a pine tree was the next best thing to a drug store, at least the pine resin or pitch was. Turpentine made from the pine pitch was used to treat cuts and wounds and, mixed with other available home medicines, it was an

"all purpose cure". (As you know, as the years went on, the Florida Yellow Pine gave birth to a large turpentine industry here in Florida). The dead pine trees left an inner structure called liter from which the hardest kind of fence posts were cut. The liter knots, full of pitch, were used for torches for outdoor use, as they dripped red hot resin as they burned. The small strips of liter were used for kindling, so you could start a fire with only one match.

The oak trees offered hardwood that burned slowly in a fireplace. The oak leaves give off a tremendous amount of smoke when raked into piles and burned. They learned to burn these smoke fires around the house to keep away mosquitos. The moss that hung from the oak limbs could be pulled down and used to stuff mattresses.

The animal life along the rivers must have been something to behold. They were full of otters that could be taken by traps or hunted by dogs. These animals were taken for furs to trade with for flour, sugar, coffee, etc. Raccoons were plentiful along the rivers, so many hunters made a living just hunting and trapping 'coons and otters. There was a good supply of opossums, too. They were easy to catch at night. Just jerk one out of a tree by his tail, and when he's upside down, he can't curl up and bite you. However, I learned early on that if it is a small 'possum, he can curl up and bite anyhow! The 'possum is an ugly animal with horrible looking very thin fur and a long rat-like tail. His head is small with beady eyes and sharp teeth. He is, however, very good to eat with sweet potatoes - if you don't mind the fat. I could eat a 'possum on about the third day of no food. The hammocks along the rivers

were alive with wild turkeys, but they were not easy to come by unless you found where they roosted in a tree at night and got under them the next morning before they flew down so you could shoot them out of the trees. Deer were not nearly so plentiful as they are now. I imagine the settlers fortunate enough to have good deer hounds got most of the deer.

There were other things to eat along the rivers in season. Every summer blackberries grew in giant clumps. But they have sharp thorns that hold your hand from coming back after you stick it in the bush to pick a berry. Another thing, when the berries drop on the ground, rats come to eat the berries, and rattlesnakes come to eat the rats. So a good berry-picker could pick a sack of berries and might have another sack for a rattlesnake or two.

In the same areas of higher drier ground along the palmettos, there were endless gopher holes - which you could see from some distance, because of the white pile of sand heaped up by the long tunnel dug out by the gopher. Rattlesnakes and gophers often frequent the same hole, so when inspecting a gopher hole for a gopher, it is wise to look for the wide track that a rattlesnake makes as he crawls into the convenient gopher hole! Now gopher turtles are land turtles. They don't look good to eat because of the tough looking skin and dark shell, but they are really delicious to eat. You could dig one out of his hole or you could hunt around his hole and catch him crawling around the palmettos. This docile animal won't bite, so you can put several in a sack and take them back to camp. You could then eat one, and put the rest of them in a pen until

you were hungry. When I was a student at the University of Florida in Gainesville in the late 1940s, I would see stake back trucks loaded with gophers going to Georgia to be sold. They were too easy to catch; now, gopher turtles are a protected species.

The cabbage palms along the rivers were loaded with grey squirrels which were excellent when prepared with a thick gravy. In addition, the upper pine lands had numerous fox squirrels which could often be killed with a stick as they ran from tree to tree. They have a very strong pine taste to the meat. There were also abundant rabbits and the smaller swamp rabbits - excellent when fried.

In addition to the natural animals of Florida, there were wild cows - descendants of the Spanish cows and wild pigs - descendants of the Spanish pigs. These animals could be killed on the spot or captured and fenced in for future use and trade. But again, most settlers would have starved to death if the Spanish had not left the wild cows, horses, and pigs.

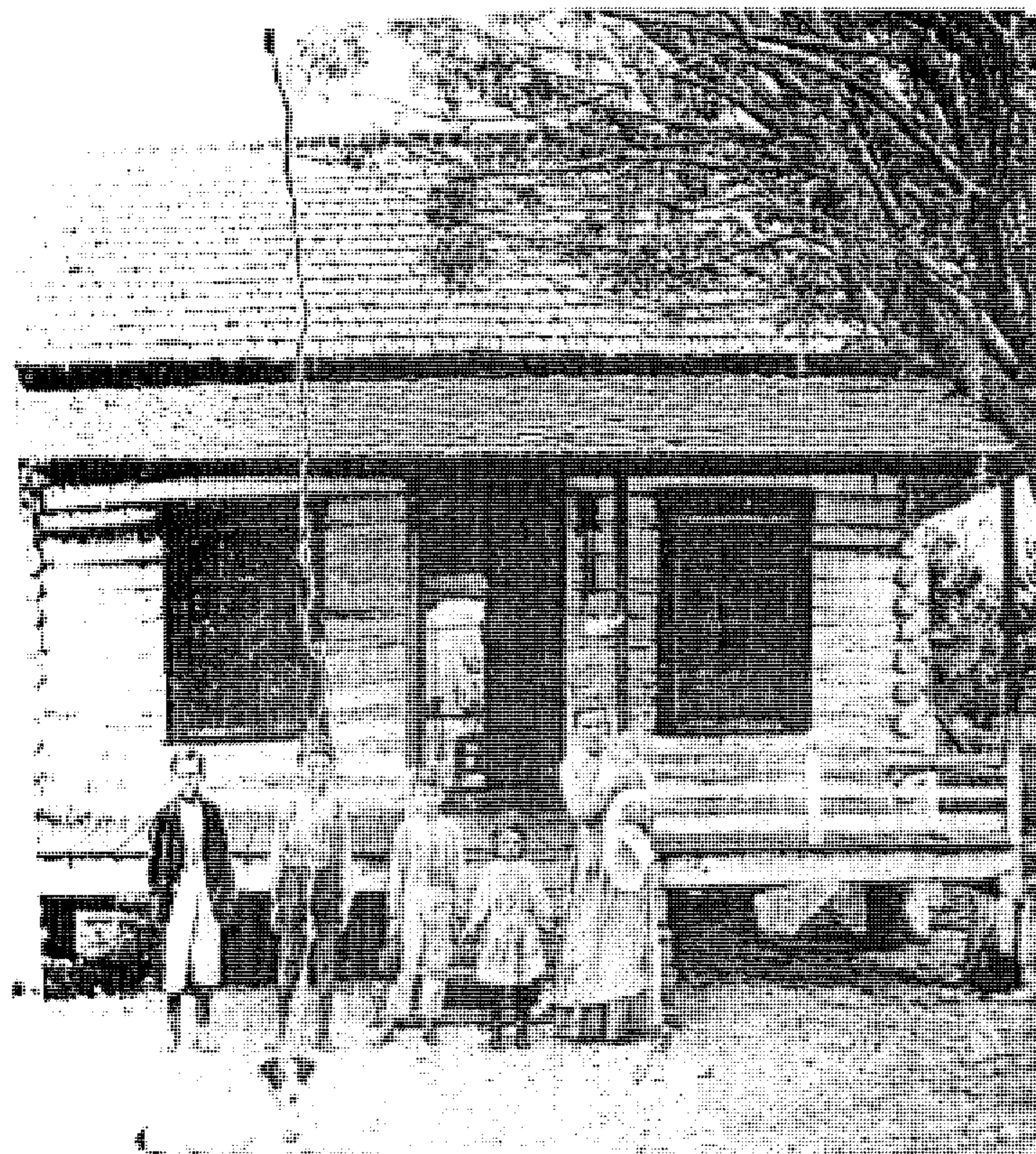
I hope I have not made the Florida experiences sound like a cafeteria - it was not. These early settlers often looked very old and most died young. They worked day and night to stay alive, but the fact was that at least in Florida there was food and a future if you were willing to work for it and pay whatever price to get it - like snake bites and malaria and jungle rot from the mud.

Most of the east coast of Florida was called Mosquito County for a good reason. Even in my lifetime, when

conditions are right, I've seen mosquitos rise from the swamp at dark and literally turn the sky grey and sound like the hum of an approaching airplane. Think of what the mosquitos were like in the early 1700s and 1800s before any of the swamps were drained. The mosquitos also had help from the small yellow deerflys. They are so quick you can hardly hit one after he bites you. The painful stinging bite is much worse than a mosquito's and sometimes will make a small sore.

The early settlers' houses were designed to deal with the heat and the mosquitos. A large clearing was made around the house to help keep the bugs away. There were no lawns. Instead, the "yard" around the house was usually sand that was raked each day. This not only helped keep the bugs away, but if an animal or snake went under the house, a track was made in the raked sand and you could deal with the "intruder". The clearing could also help keep a possible woods fire from getting close to a house.

The house was usually built about three feet above the ground to allow for ventilation. Most old Cracker Houses had a similar type structure. The house was divided by a "dog trot" that provided further ventilation. The various rooms opened off the dog trot. A large open porch was built around several sides of the house and could afford a good sitting place in a comfortable rocking chair and also keep the rain and the very hot sun out of the house. The kitchen was generally built out behind the house, separated from the main house, to avoid the heat of cooking and as a protection from possible kitchen fires.



Typical Florida Cracker House

In the evenings or whenever the mosquitos were bad, a smudge pot was lit or a fire of green wood or oak leaves was made to produce a lot of smoke. It was built on the side of the house that the wind was blowing toward. Smoke and mosquito netting were the only protection from the hungry mosquitos.

You have already guessed that the outhouse was built a "fur piece" from the house as were the barns. The window openings in the early houses had no screens, but a type of shutter was made on hinges over each window. If you wanted the shutter to close over the window, you simply

took out the stick that held the shutter up. It would be neat to write a complete story about the early Cracker Houses. They were special.

But with all these obstacles, they still came, because it was the only place to go. The other States had next to nothing to offer in the way of free food or opportunity.

Incidentally, when I was describing the preparation and eating of the various kinds of wildlife, it was not from a publication. In my younger days, I tried just about every food that I described!

## THE EARLY SETTLERS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

From 1861 to 1865 came the Northern War of Aggression or as some call it the Civil War. Never in memory has a defeated people suffered so greatly. Literally thousands of Southerners from Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina had a choice - to leave for the frontier of Florida or just plain starve. Many of these Confederate men came home to find they had nothing. Many had had their property confiscated, their homes burned, and livestock all killed. I speak of one place in particular - a little town in South Carolina - at a place called Mule Island, near Ehrhardt. The community heard that the Yankee Army was coming, so the farmers for miles around took their horses and mules and hid them on this island. Unfortunately, the Yankee soldiers discovered the island and every animal to the last was destroyed. The river around the island ran red with blood. As cruel as this sounds, the North could not afford to let the farmers keep feeding the Confederate troops! With no farm animals to plow or give them transportation, people just like the Ehrhardt people, packed what they had left and headed for Florida. There was no place in the other Southern states where food was available. Some of these people came to Florida with only a bag on their



shoulders and a stick. I know this through interviews of some old Florida families.

I would like to insert here just one paragraph from Abraham Lincoln's "A Program For Reconstruction" given to Congress on December 8, 1863. This paragraph refers to persons who will not be pardoned for their part in the Civil War:

*"The persons excepted from the benefits of the foregoing provisions are all who are or shall have been civil or diplomatic officers or agents of the so-called Confederate government; all who have left judicial stations under the United States to aid the rebellion; all who are or shall have been military or naval officers of so-called Confederate government above the rank of colonel in the Army or of lieutenant in the Navy; all who left seats in the United States Congress to aid the rebellion; all who resigned commissions in the Army or Navy of the United States and afterward aided the rebellion; and all who have engaged in any way in treating colored persons, or white persons in charge of such, otherwise than lawfully as prisoners of war, and which persons may have been found in the United States service as soldiers, seamen, or in any other capacity."*

You can well imagine how this decree was broadened in application. This decree, however, did bring a whole new class of the South's "finest" to join with the other settlers.

## HOW THE EARLY SETTLERS LIVED

I would like to read some notes about the first white settlers coming into Florida in the middle 1700s. Mostly they were people who had failed as farmers or had problems with the law in other states or very poor people who wanted a better chance in life. The greatest entrance was after the Civil War - 1865. They were all very tough and determined to make a new or better life. Some came to Florida by oxcarts, some came on horse-pulled carts, some came on horseback, and others just walked with only a rifle and a sack on their backs. These hardy people could stay alive with just two things - a gun and mosquito netting that would be used at night. For lodgings, they felled palm trees and used palmetto fronds as a roof; and like the Indians, they probably had a long table as the only furniture. As they progressed, they built simple houses called Cracker Houses about three feet above the ground with an open porch around the house. The roof was covered with handmade shingles. The kitchen was built apart from the house to avoid a possible kitchen fire from spreading and to reduce heat in the house. An open hall went through the middle of the house for ventilation. The open hall is often referred to as a dogtrot. They did not have lawns, but they raked the sand around the house every day so they could tell if a snake or animal had gotten under the house. A distance from the house would be the outhouse. There was no water inside the house, no electricity to furnish lights, no air-conditioning, no screen or windowpanes.

Some distance from the house, a well was dug to lift water from below the ground unless the house was built

near water. As I said before, there was no electricity, no lights, no T.V. For lights, candles were used; and much later, coal oil or kerosene lamps were made available. For hunting at night, torches were made from liter knots (which were the insides of old pine trees that are full of pitch and burn very brightly).

As soon as a garden area was cleared and prepared, sweet potatoes were planted, as they were a hardy plant; and the yams could be fried, boiled, baked, and even made into sweet potato pie. Corn was another crop. Sugar cane came next, and once a year the stalks of sugar cane were cut down and ground in a cane grinder to make syrup, molasses, a very rough brown sugar, and sometimes a candy which was wrapped in corn silk. The early settlers needed only to buy flour, coffee, and salt (to salt down meat) to survive. The rest of their food they hunted or gathered. The Spanish settlements had released thousands of hogs over a 244 year span into the woods and swamps. These animals were a god-send to these early settlers. They could shoot a pig and eat it that day or use their catch- dogs to catch and hold the squealing pig until the settler could tie the pig up, maybe notch the ear to "brand" it, and put it in a wagon to take home where, at some distance from the house, a pigpen was built to hold the pig, and fed scraps and corn until such time as the family would slaughter the pig. That way the family had pork to eat at any time. Remember, there was no refrigeration, so the settlers would slaughter several large hogs, cook the fat into a substance called lard - sort of like Crisco - then cook the pig's meat and pack it into barrels between layers of the lard. This kept the meat fresh for many months. With salt, they could

cut strips of bacon and salt it down to be used as needed. The lard was also used to make biscuits and fry any other food. Lard was the main ingredient in making soap, too - which was done once a year.

Wild Spanish cows could be driven into corrals and sold for cash money or traded. Wild turkeys, deer, rabbits, squirrels, water birds, ducks, raccoons and possums were to be had according to the skill of the hunter. Also available were snakes, turtles, and gophers.

The swamps held the tasty palmetto palm which yields Heart of Palm (swamp cabbage) which is good fried or as a salad. You just needed a good axe to whack the palm down.

Settlers learned from the Indians how to find wild honey. You just followed the direction the bees flew in until you located the bee hive - usually in a hollow tree. Then you started a smoke-y fire, cut down the tree, and scooped out the honey and honeycomb to take home in containers. Honey was a wonderful treat for the whole family, and it could be stored in the pantry for many months and used to spread on biscuits that were served every day. There were a number of uses for the beeswax - one of which was making candles.

There were other sweet treats in the woods also. Blackberries in season were always numerous along the swampy areas. Blueberries grew wild, and grapes in season would hang on vines growing up to 20 feet high in a tree. The clear water streams floated watercress which could be

eaten as a green. Wild persimmons (the green ones make your mouth pucker!) grew on sandy ridges and big cathead yellow guavas grew along river banks.

The palmetto areas produced big gopher turtles which could be caught crawling or dug out of a gopher hole - sometimes along with a big rattlesnake - which incidentally is excellent to eat and only takes a few minutes to prepare. The snake is peeled almost like a banana. Fish were plentiful and could be speared at night using a spear and torch or caught on set lines. The set lines produced large quantities of catfish and occasionally a soft-shell turtle weighing up to 20 pounds. Turtle eggs were plentiful in season along the river banks. You can bake with them. In short, you could live in Florida if you were tough enough and a good enough food gatherer.

If you have been in the woods or as you drive along most any country road, you will see fields of saw palmettos. Our State was covered with dense fields and swamps of these palmettos - making them almost impossible to penetrate, and if you did, the saw edge of the palmetto fan could tear your clothing off. These palmetto patches would turn away anyone except people like our early settlers who cut trails through them. They cut the palm fronds to make roofs for temporary housing, and the women pulled the palmetto fans into strips and wove palmetto straw hats, as the early settlers had no money to buy a manufactured hat. These hats not only protected their heads, but they kept the sun and bugs off their heads and necks. Also, the tightly woven hats could be used to dip up a drink of water.

In addition, they learned from the Indians that the sago palm trees or cabbage palms could be eaten if you had a sharp axe to cut out the "heart of the palm". This could be eaten raw as a salad or cooked with bacon and onions and makes a delicious meal. These very same freshly cut hearts of palm are still sold in areas away from the cities or you can buy hearts of palm in cans in the grocery stores. The palmetto trees were cut and used for logs to build docks or buildings. And finally, the palmetto berries were mixed with other ingredients and used for medicines.

It was an interesting world in which these settlers lived.

## A SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

For a matter of review, I have listed some important dates and events of Florida history:

1513

Ponce de Leon arrives on the shores of what he named "La Florida" - may have been Melbourne

1519-60

Spaniards explore and attempt to settle Florida

1564

French establish a colony near modern-day Jacksonville

1565

Spanish destroyed the French colony at Jacksonville and then established St. Augustine

1600

Priests and Colonists establish missions and settlements in West Florida

1687

Runaway slaves from British America find refuge in St. Augustine

1698

Spanish establish a second town in Florida at modern-day Pensacola

1702-04

British soldiers and their Indian allies raid and destroy the Spanish missions and attack St. Augustine

1719

French saw Spanish weakness and captured Pensacola

1738

The first free black town is established near St. Augustine

1763

Spain cedes Florida to England in exchange for Cuba

1767

English created two territories called East and West Florida

1783

England returns Florida to Spain at the end of the Revolutionary War

1784

Spain regained Pensacola

1818

Andrew Jackson attacked Florida Indians in western Florida for the First Seminole War

1821

Spain cedes Florida to the United States and Florida becomes a Territory with a new Territory government

1824

Tallahassee becomes a Territorial Capitol

1830

Florida Territory had a population of 34,730. Almost half of this number were slaves. Note: our population as of now, 1996, approaches nearly 17,000,000, with promise of more to come.

1835-42

Seven years of Second Seminole War is waged

1838-39

A Constitution of Statehood is drafted

1842

Armed Occupation Act

1845

Florida becomes the 27th State and William Mosely is elected Governor

1855-58

The Third Seminole War takes place

1861

On January 10, Florida left the Union

1860-65

Florida participates in the Civil War

1865

Federal troops took over Tallahassee on May 10

1898

U.S. Troops embark from Florida to fight in the Spanish-American War

1917-18

Florida trains troops for World War I

I thought this was as far as I should go with the dates.

I would like to call attention to the fact that Florida is the only State that has been under five flags:

Spanish	1521-1763	244 years
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French	1562-1719	157 years
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Great Britain	1763-1783	20 years
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Confederate	1860-1865	4 years
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St. of Florida	1845-1996	150 years
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Now just you try to tell me that Florida doesn't have the best history of any State! See, I was right!

## WOLVES IN FLORIDA

In the beginning of this book, I briefly called attention to buffalo which had crossed the Mississippi River and lived for a period of time in our northwest area around Tallahassee. I found that little had been written about our buffalo and even less about our Florida wolves.

From all accounts, the Florida wolves were large animals resembling very large black dogs, and their habitat covered most of Florida. It is thought by some that these wolves had lived in Florida for thousands of years even before the advent of the early aboriginal Indians.

When the Spanish came here in the early 1500s, they lost or eventually abandoned thousands of cows, pigs, and horses - which could lead one to believe the wolf population must have exploded. The Spanish did not like the dense areas of Florida where the wolves lived in great numbers. By the time the white settlers came to Florida in the 1700s and the 1800s, wolves were a serious problem to their livestock; and in some areas where the wolves were so numerous, the early settlers had to abandon these places because of the loss of their livestock to the wolves. In my research on the wolves, I did not find any stories about them attacking people. I can only assume that the Florida wolf probably did live here for thousands of years, but they came to an end about 1915 in the entire State - best I can tell.

*I found in DeVane's "Early Florida History" a wonderful story entitled Wolves which I take the liberty to reprint exactly as it appears in that book. I've also included a picture of a hunter who has just killed a wolf. It is known that Florida had a large population of black bears and Florida panthers.*

### Wolves

The howl of the Florida wolf is no longer heard to break the stillness of the night. Once he could be heard calling his mate for a prowl on a moonlit night. Wolves hunted in packs and were a troublesome menace to pioneer cattlemen and sheep herders. They usually denned up in a very thick scrub or dense hammock, usually far from habitation. In the spring of the year when the new crop of calves were young, they did the greatest damage. Often they would make raids on cattle 15 to 20 miles away from their dens.

The herds of cows, calves, bulls and yearlings usually bedded down for the night in a dry open space which offered them better protection to fight the murdering wolf pack. The calves and yearlings were herded into the center for protection. The older cows and bulls formed an outer ring with heads and horns pointed outward to meet the charge of the pack.

The battle continued until the pack had killed one, two or sometimes three cattle. Then after they had eaten their



fill, they left for their dens, arriving before daybreak. Some of the cows were left with gaping wounds from the fight-to-death battle.

The early and most successful method of killing off the wolf packs was by poisoning with strychnine. But the second and third poisonings were not successful. The wolf was a very wise old animal and through intuition and native cunning he soon learned not to eat any meat touched by human hands. Pioneers had to resort to other methods.

Experienced wolf hunters were hired. Some wolves were caught in log floored pens which had a weighted trap door. Inside the pen a calf or pig was placed. Since the wolf could not scratch under the wood floor, he would pace around the pen and finally, in desperation, would jump on top of the cage-like trap and down he would go into the pen through the weighted door, which would then close. He would make the kill but he was trapped.

Sometimes his mate and as many as three have been caught at one time in a live baited trap. The Fisheating Creek area had perhaps the largest wolf packs during the 1880s and 1890s.

Marion Crews of Lake Placid, now deceased, told me years ago when his father, Charles, lived at what is now Palmdale the cattlemen decided to have a wolf poisoning. They killed a couple of cattle. The entrails were divided and put into four corn sacks and securely tied with a rope about 30 feet long which was tied to the horn of a saddle.

From a selected pond of water, four horsemen dragged the sacks over the ground for several miles in every direction and back to the pond where the bait was poisoned with strychnine. They reasoned that the wolves would cross the trail and turn and follow it to the pond. Then the men returned to the cow camp where they tied up all the dogs and waited until morning to see the results of their work.

When they returned the following morning there were five dead wolves at the edge of the pond, their mouths wide open and all their teeth showing - an awesome sight as expressed by Mr. Crews. After eating the poisoned meat the wolves went for water and, upon drinking, they died instantly.

About the turn of the century someone in Arcadia caught a wolf puppy, raised and trained it. I have found published reference of the wolf and talked to some who remember the animal but have been unable to learn the name of the party who tamed and owned it.

Uncle Ceylon Carlton of Hicora moved to his present home in 1910 (the year of the great hurricane). At that time there were two wolves along the bay galls where the Consolidated Naval Stores has its new citrus planting on Hurricane Creek. In 1911 both were still there but in 1912 there was only one left. Carlton assumed the two survivors were both males. The remaining wolf or his tracks were never seen again. This was the last wolf seen or heard of to my knowledge. If one survived to a later date, I have not heard of it.

I am assuming that the wolf became extinct in Florida on the hills and bay galls around Lake Placid, one of the last retreats of the bear and panther.

Albert DeVane  
1960  
Lake Placid Journal

## PANTHERS IN FLORIDA

I don't suppose anyone could write about our early settlers without mentioning the fear and dread they must have had of the Florida panther. Many, many stories have been written about the attacks of these fierce cats - especially when they were hungry. I expect many settlers lost their lives to the panthers. The loss of livestock to the panthers must have been devastating, too, especially to the settlers with only a limited number of animals. I have included Albert DeVane's two stories about panthers to illustrate why and how these big cats spread so much fear among the early settlers.



Finally, though, as the pressure from humans increased and the big cats lost their territories and were being killed off, they were forced down into the Everglades area. Now it is assumed that are only forty some odd panthers left in Florida. Truly an endangered species.

*Lake Placid, Florida*

*March 1959*

*Dear Mr. McKay:*

*I am enclosing a story of Panthers in the Lake Placid area which happened 37 years ago, when bear and panther were quite numerous in the territory. During this early period I made many bear and panther hunts and experienced many thrills and Billy (Bowlegs) laughed as some new-comer whose bravery ceased when he heard the dogs and the bear tearing thru the swamp, either climbing a tree or leaving his stand for open territory.*

*Sincerely,*

*Albert DeVane*

The late J. W. Farr and Lewis Bostich of Wauchula had a contract to build a graded road 6 miles south of Lake Placid. At the time, mules and hand labor were used for such work. Their road camp on Lake Annie consisted of 24 head of mules and 20 negro laborers. The work was progressing nicely until a panther came into camp. At the time, I was living on the Consolidated Land Company's grove, about 3 miles north of Mr. Farr's road camp.

One morning, about two o'clock, I was awakened by someone knocking on the door and calling my name. I lit a lamp, went to the door, and it was Mr. Farr, almost exhausted. I asked him, "What in the world are you doing out this time of night?" He told this story;

"About midnight, a panther came close to our camp and began screaming. About the second or third scream, the mules broke down the lot fence and scattered into the

woods like wild rabbits. The negros in camp got scared and were making preparations to leave. I told them to keep their nerve, the panther would leave in a few minutes. About that time he screamed again. All the negros piled into model 'T' Fords and headed north.

"He screamed again and I realized I was the only one left in camp. I began to get nervous and decided to leave there also. I had no gun and no way to go but to walk. I opened my pocket knife, took my lantern and left there 'in high gear', hollering and swinging my lantern, expecting every step, the first hundred yards, to have to fight that panther. I didn't hear him again and I'm thankful to be here. Goodness knows where I'll find those mules and get them back on the job."

"They were a week gathering those mules. They were scattered over "90 mile prairie", from Arcadia to Wauchula. Mr. Farr had to recruit almost a complete new crew of negro laborers for the work, which resumed in about 10 days.

It was in the fall of 1878 Jacob Summerlin drove a herd of his cattle from Polk County to the north side of Fishcating Creek (what is now Palmdale) built a crevace and by ox team, hauled in poles and made a set of pole pens.

Capt. E. A. Hendry, Reuben Carlton, (son of Alderman Carlton and brother of Daniel, former governor Carlton's grandfather) and Jim Cross were living at Ft. Thompson (now LaBelle). Dave Waldron was living at the head of

Gator Slough or the old guava grove. Jim Hancock was living at Grasshopper and a small band of Seminole Indians, including Old Micco, Old Nagey Nancy to the whites, (who was a former slave belonging to Emathala Hadjo); Chipco, called by the Indians "Chupco", her 4 daughters, her son, Jim Jumper and Billy Bowlegs 3rd, also Capt. Tom Tiger and family a part of the time, were living about one mile east of new Ft. Center, now known as Guinea Ford. This was the ford crossing on Fisheating Creek on the old government road between Ft. Thompson and Ft. Bassinger.

These were about all the people living in the territory at the time (about 1880) Capt. John Whidden bought Jacob Summerlin's stock of cattle in that area. He also bought out the Indians' hog claim with the understanding they would move to another section.

This territory around Palmdale was known as C-5 camp, Judge Ziba King's beef pasture was south of Fisheating Creek running from Lake Okeechobee to Nickademas Slough, known as the "Stockade Pasture."

In the fall of 1886, Aubury Albritton, Ciscero Platt, Bob Whitten (son of John and Marian Platt who was dodging the sheriff) were on a hog hunt in the area. They had 4 dogs, Bowser and Pug, bull dogs used for catch dogs; Brindle and Bob, cur dogs used for trailing. At Ft. Center, the dogs ran a panther up a large live oak tree. All the guns had been left a camp. Marion had a large knife he carried in a sheath. He tied the knife to a pole with his

buckskin shoe lace and Ciscero sharpened a bay pole about 8 feet long.

Marion climbed the oak with the pole and knife to kill him or knock him out of the tree. He slammed the knife into the cat and out he jumped. The dogs covered him and Ciscero jabbed the sharpened pole into him. The panther disregarded the dogs and made for Ciscero. The two bull dogs got hold of him: Ciscero hollering to Marion to throw the pole down. Aubury grabbed the pole with the knife on it and with the dogs holding, he finished killing him. He was 8 feet long from tip to tip.

They had run bear on horseback, killing them with a knife on the end of a pole but this was their first panther and they were quite proud of this kill. Bob said, "We can't afford to tell anyone about killing this panther with a pocket knife as no one will believe it. Also you know the county division election is coming up and some of us decided to run for office. They'd hold it against us." The story was not told until after DeSoto County was formed in 1887.

Albert DeVane

### Panthers

As there has not been a panther story (or, as the pioneers called them, tigers or painters) I shall tell one I have known for 33 years and which is a true story, having known the woman caught by the panther personally.

The story is the experience of Eli P. Whidden and his wife Lavenia. Eli was born near Tampa in what was then Alachua County, in 1828, six years before the creation of Hillsboro County in 1834. Descendants on Alafia River say he was the son of Maxfield Whidden, Sr., whose wife was Sophie Crews. They moved from Lowndes County, Georgia, prior to 1828. In 1849 Eli married Lavenia Platt, daughter of Peter Platt, who had a large plantation in the Hichipucksassa section, now known as the Midway Community, about five miles northeast of Plant City. His grandson still lives on a part of the old homestead.

After his marriage he moved to the southeastern part of Hillsborough County in the vicinity of Fort Meade. Being a small cattleman and a farmer, also doing some hunting and trapping for the market for a little cash to furnish the few necessities, and being of an adventurous spirit, he was always looking for greener pastures.

During the last Seminole War of 1856 to 1858 he served in Capt. F. M. Durrance's company, having scouted the area from Okeechobee's west side to the Calloosahatchee River, to the Baron River and back up to Fort Myers.

After the war, when Billy Bowlegs and his party left Fort Myers, May 4, 1858, aboard the steamer, Gray Cloud, for Arkansas, he returned home still having a desire to move again farther south. His next move was to what is now called Sweetwater Community, south of east of Wauchula on Oak Creek, having looked the area over while in the service. There he went with his ox team and family to start a new homestead out of the forest.

He built a temporary camp, splitting rails to fence in a small field and cow pens. He cut the logs for his home, dragging them to his homestead, peeling them, having split out his cypress shingles, all being on the site. At the next big church meeting the announcement was made for a log rolling at his place. The neighbors came from far and near. The house was erected, the women cooking a great feast and he had a home - all except the floor.

He began splitting and squaring the logs for a puncheon floor, having only about one half the space floored as the process was very slow, using only an axe, broadaxe and footadz for the shaping.

One day, right after noon, he was taking a nap in the house, his wife was at the spring, his daughter, Laura, 12 years old, was washing the dishes on a table in the yard and her little baby brother, Bob (actually the baby's name was Jim - born in 1870), was playing under the table.

A panther came from the woods and caught the baby by the foot. Laura grabbed the child, tearing it away from the panther, which jumped on her. The screams of the child and her screams brought her mother and father and the two dogs, who attacked the panther, which then released her and ran under the puncheon floor.

Eli grabbed his gun to kill the panther but soon realized he might kill one or both of his dogs which, in those days, were as valuable as any gun. He grabbed the footadz he had been using that morning, the dogs having cornered

the panther under the floor. He raised a puncheon which had not been nailed fast and killed him with the footadz. The only panther ever known to be killed before or since with a footadz.

Laura and the baby were badly bitten and clawed by the panther but soon recovered. She later married Billy Hair, son of Calvin Hair, an Indian fighter. I knew her personally. She died in 1923 at Hen Scratch, the place made famous by Steve Turnbull of the Miami Herald. She was buried in the Whidden cemetery four miles south of Highlands Hammock near Sebring, in Highlands County. One of her daughters, Ida, who married Henry Collier, now lives in Lake Placid, as do many of the grandchildren.

1955

Albert DeVane

Tampa Tribune

Can't help it - just have to tell you the story about the two young men who were exploring the Everglades when suddenly a huge, fierce Florida panther leaped out of the bushes. Both men took off running, but after a short distance, one young man stopped to put on his running shoes. The other young man in amazement asked, "Why in the world are you putting on your running shoes? Don't you know you can't outrun that panther?" The other man quietly answered, "I don't have to. All I have to do is outrun you!"

## Part Two