

FLORIDA'S CATTLE CULTURE:  
ETHOS AND ENTERPRISE  
IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cattle ranching has been of major significance to Florida since the 16<sup>th</sup> century; however, few are aware of the historic, ecologic, economic and cultural influence of this industry. This study investigates the origins and impacts of the traditional customs and practices of Florida's cattle ranchers, who preserve and reinvent this rich heritage today. Ranchers live closely with the land and their animals and, due to the often-uncertain and cyclical nature of the business, must possess resourcefulness and initiative to prosper. The image of the stoic cowboy has long been associated with the American West, yet before longhorn cattle ever crossed the western plains, Florida frontiers were populated with herds of unique "cracker" cows, descendants of cattle left behind by early Spanish settlers. Like the West, Florida experienced conflicts between ranchers and other land claimants, issues that continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Modern ranchers contend with developers, environmental concerns, and increasing regulation, yet they persevere in passing on their cultural heritage. Agricultural lifestyles can be emotionally fulfilling, but stewardship of land and animals can be stressful and labor-intensive. Motivation to continue these customs may be enhanced by identification with cowboys of popular American media, enhanced by physical immersion in a similar setting. Optimal agricultural practices have been well researched; however, anthropology provides a useful lens to examine customs and practices of Florida's cattle ranchers. Anthropologists have long been concerned with the dynamic relationship between human culture and the environment, examining how the physical landscape and ecological niches shape and are shaped by those who inhabit them. As globalized trade markets, technology, and economies expand, influencing agricultural practices and destroying natural habitats, diachronic studies of changing environments, economic and sociocultural influences in geographically bounded locales can be helpful in understanding this process.

However, a key consideration is the fact that culture is not static, but ever changing, thus the most important aspects of tradition and heritage that we choose to retain and reinvent may provide the most telling insight into any society.

In dedication to those who possess the pioneer spirit,  
both of the past and future, in whatever endeavor  
they may be found. Their commitment  
to expanding frontiers provides the  
hallmark of human endeavor.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Cattle ranching has played a significant role in the development of Florida's economy and culture since the introduction of Iberian cattle by early Spanish explorers. Despite the fact that Floridians own over one million beef cattle, with annual sales of over a half-billion dollars, ranking 12th in the nation in beef production, few outside the industry are aware of the historic, ecologic and economic influence of cattle raising (FDA 2007). Those who are involved in the cattle business, whether termed cowmen (and women), cowboys or less frequently, "crackers," live in close contact with the land and their animals, and due to the cyclical and often-uncertain nature of the industry, must possess resourcefulness, self-reliance and initiative, toughness, compassion and a sense of humor (Akerman 1976; Kelton 2005). It can be a life filled with hard work and limited economic reward at times, yet there is a sense of pride and accomplishment achieved with a job well done and satisfaction in fostering the traditions of Florida cattlemen, handed down through generations.

### Thesis Overview

The primary objective of this thesis is to research the origins of the ethos of the cattle culture of Florida, and to answer the following questions: what makes it so appealing for those who continue to preserve and reinvent this rich heritage? Can the rewards, whether subliminal or economic, of such a challenging lifestyle induce future generations to continue the tradition? And how does globalization, urban development, escalating regulation and the availability of new technology affect the industry financially and culturally (Durning 1991; Harris 1978; Rifkin 1992)?

## Background

The image of the stoic, self-reliant and quick-witted cowboy has long been associated with the American West (Billington 1981; Savage 1979). However, long before longhorn cattle were driven across western plains, Florida frontiers were thickly populated with herds of unique scrub or “cracker” cows, small and hardy, uniquely adapted to survive and prosper in swamps, palmettos and pinelands, descendants of cattle left behind by Spanish explorers and missionaries who claimed the state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Like the West, Florida was no stranger to conflicts between ranchers and Indians, gun battles between farmers and free-range advocates, or cattle rustlers (Ackerman 1976; Cunha 1960; Tinsley 1990). In fact, some of these issues have continued, in a different guise, to the present. Today, cattle ranchers contend with developers, environmental concerns, increasing costs and regulation, yet they continue to persevere in their chosen way of life (Morton 2005; Steglin and Simpson 1980). What drives this fierce commitment to the hard work and challenges that are associated with cattle raising? Why are Florida cattlemen and women determined to pass on the cultural heritage and traditions associated with ranching? Living in agricultural settings can provide a great deal of economic reward and emotional fulfillment, but stewardship of the land and animals under one’s care can be stressful and labor-intensive. Possible underlying motivations may be provided by identification with American mores and ethos attributed to the cowboys of the dime novel and Hollywood’s silver screens (Billington 1981; Kelton 2008; Savage 1979). Embodiment of these myths and traditions, enhanced by socially reproduced norms or "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, 1984) and physical immersion in a similar setting (Milton 2005) , could prove a powerful stimulus to ignore economic realities at times. Emerging technologies and global markets may be the key to

preserving and reinventing Florida cattle culture, as well as developing new cultural communities.

While ranchers and various researchers have dedicated a great deal of effort in analyzing breed suitability to Florida's environment, husbandry techniques and optimal agricultural practices, both past and present, the lens of cultural, historic, and ecological anthropology is of particular benefit in examining the appeal and viability of Florida's cattle culture. Anthropologists have long been concerned with the relationship between humans and their environment, raising questions as to how the physical landscape and specific ecological niches influence and are in turn, shaped by those who inhabit them. Though theoretical analysis and applications continue to evolve in the fields of cultural and ecological anthropology, there is no debate regarding a dynamic connection between culture and human environment (Harris 1989; Steward 1955; Leeds and Vayda 1965; Vayda 2009). As globalization of trade markets, technology and economies expand, with subsequent impacts on agricultural practices and destruction of native habitats, further diachronic study of the interrelationships between changing environments, economic and sociocultural influences in geographically bounded locales will aid in understanding this process.

### General Methodology

The questions this study sought to answer were in large part based on the analysis of specific human ethos, or value systems, embedded in, and embodied by a lifestyle centered on cattle production. As a result, the most useful field research methodology proved to be ethnography, coupled with intensive archival and literary research. To be able to discern the ties between Florida ranchers and their environment, as well as the links between modern

manifestations of cattle culture and the more traditional economic and cultural practices, a thorough understanding of the American beef cattle industry is essential. To this end, I attended beef cattle seminars, breed meetings and bull sales, to learn as much as possible about the technical aspects of breeding and marketing beef cattle. These venues also proved fruitful in locating potential participants for this study.

All 29 of the participants in this research project were adults associated with the beef cattle industry in Florida, whether currently or in the past. Participants involved with various market niches and cattle breeds were chosen to provide a representative sample base indicative of the broad spectrum of Florida's modern beef cattle industry. Those who are no longer active in the cattle business were included as they offered particular insight as to past traditions or as to illustrate the often-painful decision to disperse their herd and sever their ties to the land and way of life. The selection ranged from those engaged in small family enterprises to large-scale commercial operations, including those who focus on specialty markets, such as organic or pasture-finished cattle, show or herd improvement prospects.

Identification of fifteen of the study participants was made initially through member information provided by associations such as the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), the Alachua Cattleman's Association, and Florida Cattleman's Association, through contact at cattle auctions, seminars, field days and similar settings in the central Florida area. Some of these participants and others (a total of sixteen) were recruited by virtue of their farm location or a long family tradition of involvement with ranching, while other consultants were chosen by convenience and snowball sampling methods. A particular effort was made to include ranchers residing in or serving the general geographic area of Alachua County, (thirteen in

number), due to the prominent role Payne's Prairie played in cattle ranching throughout Florida history, however, sixteen participants were included from such areas as Marion, Sumter, Levy, and Pasco counties for comparative purposes. As association with a particular breed of cattle or choice of marketing niche has a distinct influence on not only economic, but also cultural practices, a representative sample of various breeds and management styles was incorporated into the study. Figure 1 shows a herd of Florida scrub cattle grazing the lush grasses of Alachua's Paynes Prairie.



**Figure 1 Cattle at Paynes Prairie, Florida in 1932**

Photo AG00250

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

<http://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/62946>

Whenever possible, participants were observed while working with cattle at ranches and auctions, and were questioned as to their decision-making processes, in order to identify commonalities relevant to business practices and lifestyles associated with cattle raising in general, with follow-up interviews conducted in person or by phone.

### Chapter Summary

The focus of this study is to examine the traditional practices of Florida cattle ranchers, in an effort to assess the viability of this unique culture, as the beef industry is reshaped by pressure from globalized markets, public demand, encroaching development, rising feed and fuel prices

and environmental concerns. Due to the historic importance of Alachua County in Florida's cattle culture, a large number of participants were selected from the surrounding area. Others were chosen to represent different management styles and market niches, with the goal of compiling a representative sample.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Overview

To assess the intricate connections between the "social spaces" that humans create (Bourdieu 1987) as a product of their cultural, ecological and economic landscape, one must first determine how that landscape has evolved metaphorically and physically over time. An integral aspect of the ethos of Florida cattle culture is the long and productive relationship between ranchers, their livestock and their environment.

The history of cattle ranching in Florida has long been a popular theme for writers, who have authored works ranging from comprehensive overviews of the industry, featuring prominent or colorful cattlemen from the early settlers of the territory, up to contemporary times. One of the first published references is found in naturalist William Bartram's glowing 1774 eyewitness account of the herds of cattle and horses belonging to the Oconee Indians, (now known as Seminoles), seen grazing on the lush Alachua Prairie near present day Micanopy (Akerman 1976; Anderson 2005). Another visitor to the area, Bernard Romans, estimated in 1775 that these herds numbered up to seven to ten thousand head, or individuals. Both cattle and horses were primarily descendants of the Iberian stock that were imported by early Spanish explorers, settlers and missionaries (Akerman 1976).

Exhaustive technical studies are available regarding best herd management practices, forage supply and analysis, marketing strategies and parasite control programs, both of a general nature, as well as those particularly targeted for Florida environmental conditions. Several anthropologists have addressed the cultural and ecological aspects of cattle raising societies,

perhaps most notably, Marvin Harris in his analysis of India's sacred cattle; others have written on the process of creating identity and community (1965, 1989). However, there are relatively few treatises focusing on the sociocultural aspects of raising cattle in the United States, and fewer still relating to Florida, despite the long history of cattle ranching in the state. The dearth of published literature of this nature serves to illustrate the need for further research.

### Cultural and Historic Literature

Researchers and history buffs alike have no shortage of material to draw on to develop a comprehensive understanding of Florida history. Despite the importance of the cattle industry to the economic and social development of the state, however, one must dig beneath the surface of a plethora of lighthearted works on "crackers" and Conquistadors to get to well-documented and factual sources. An excellent example of this is *Florida Cowman: a History of Florida Cattle Raising*, by Joe Akerman, written in 1976 and produced by the Florida Cattlemen's Association. This is a lively and entertaining, but well-researched overview of the development of the cattle industry in Florida, with a particular emphasis on examining the ways cowmen and their livestock adapted to make the most of their environment. Akerman traces the origins of cattle raising in the state to the introduction of livestock by the Spanish, from the early visits by Ponce de Leon and other explorers, to the establishment of ill-fated, short-lived missions and ranchos. Seminole Indians and a few determined settlers continued raising cattle after Florida was ceded to the United States in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, although due to the wild nature of the free-ranging animals, a better term was "cow-hunting." To urge the wary beasts from dense palmetto thickets,

dogs and bullwhips were used. The sharp cracking of the whips led to the association of the term "cracker" to the cattle, as well as the horses and men who "worked" or tended the herds.

Akerman details the methods used to identify, sort and market cattle, based on extensive historic accounts, and outlines many of the well-known families and distinctive individuals involved in the cattle industry. Cattle were driven to Punta Rassa on the west coast and "Cowford" or Jacksonville on the east, to be transported via ships to Cuba or northern cities; later these drives were to railroad terminals. The effect of conflict on cattle production is examined, for example the Seminole Wars and the Civil War, as well as outbreaks of violence and murder due to wholesale cattle rustling during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, this is an excellent resource for historians, anthropologists and laymen as well.

Works of a similar nature include *Four Centuries of Florida Ranching*, written in 1940 by George Dacy, which is a comprehensive compendium on the state's beef industry. Another excellent reference is James Denham and Canter Brown, Jr.'s book, *Cracker Times and Pioneer Lives*, which is based on letters by Florida pioneers George Gillett Keen and Sarah Pamela Williams, who were affiliated with some of the more prominent families of early Florida. Their letters offer eyewitness accounts of both mundane and historic events, which help to provide background to the socioeconomic aspects of life during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. *Florida Cow Hunter: the Life and Times of Bone Mizell*, by Jim Bob Tinsley is a biography of one of the most experienced and colorful cowhunters to ride the Florida frontier, Napoleon Mizell. "Bone," as he was affectionately known, was an iconic representative of the rugged men who worked the cattle, gathering them from the swamps and woods, sorting, branding and castrating calves, and driving them for shipment to markets in Cuba, Key West and the northern U.S.(1990). Though

he could not read, he could keep a mental account of thousands of individual cattle. He was a trusted and loyal employee of Jacob Summerlin, one of the largest cattle ranchers and exporters in the state, but also had a noted fondness for practical jokes and a bottle of whiskey. He was also the subject of several portraits by Frederick Remington, the noted painter and sculptor of Western life, who found Florida crackers and cowboys fascinating.

More contemporary views of the myth of the American cowboy are provided by historian Richard Slatta, (known as the Cowboy Professor), who details the harsh lifestyle of the western frontier in great detail, contrasting it with the romantic image portrayed in cheap novels and Westerns. He notes that many of the original cowboys of the old West were in fact Mexicanos, African-Americans or mestizos. *Comparing Cowboys and Frontiers* and *Cowboys of the Americas* are two of his books that offer a great deal of insight into the source of terminology, clothing and techniques used by cattle herders on frontiers in North and South America.

Two particularly interesting and useful literary sources were recently published dissertations on the creation of cattle culture as a cohesive identity, authored by Carrie Breitbach and Michelle Kathleen Berry. In *Changing Landscapes of Social Reproduction in South Dakota: Restructuring the Cattle Beef Industry*, Breitbach explores the effect of changes in the beef cattle industry due to globalization and corporate-owned ranches and feedlots at the expense of family-run farms. She uses ethnographic techniques to situate the lived experience of individual cattlemen and women into a changing historic environmental and economic landscape, to determine if the effects on their way of life. Berry chronicles the efforts of cattle ranchers who were trying to preserve grazing rights on federal lands, by building a sense of community through marketing, public events and consciousness-raising in *Cow Talk: Ecology*,

*Culture, and Power in the Intermountain West Range Cattle Industry, 1945-1965*. Both of these works are relevant to the study of Florida's cattle culture, as they contain many of the same variables, though both climate and physical environment are quite different.

Several authors combine the sociocultural, economic and historic aspects of beef production and consumption. *Cattle: an Informal Social History*, by Laurie Winn Carlson, is an interesting overview of humans' association with cattle from prehistoric times, including mythical references, and the importance of women's bond with cattle as a means of autonomy through dairying. More recent developments, like the advent of "tinned" or canned beef, refrigeration and modern production issues are addressed as well as some speculations as to the connection between genetic manipulation of livestock and human eugenics. *Putting Meat on the American Table—Taste, Technology, Transformation*, by Roger Horowitz, concentrates on the more technical aspects of meat production in the U.S. as it evolved from a local enterprise to the widespread networks between consumers, ranchers and farmers, feedlot operators, slaughterhouses and more. Horowitz argues that the demand for tender, yet lean, beef led to many of the practices in use today, including "finishing" cattle on grain and other by-products: holding them in relatively small pens for several months before slaughter, which changes the color and amount of fat, as well as the consistency of the meat. This also increases the need for antibiotic use. Another issue Horowitz raises is the disconnect between consumers and the concept of how beef is actually produced. This concept is further explored in Peter Lovenheim's 2003 book, *Portrait of a Burger as a Young Calf: The Story of One Man, Two Cows, and the Feeding of a Nation*, which was inspired by a visit with his daughters to a local McDonald's for hamburgers. The girls were excited not only to eat burgers with their dad, but at the prospect of

the toys included in their Happy Meal: tiny stuffed cows. Lovenheim, a journalist, was struck by the incongruity of his children being presented with the idea of bovines as cuddly creatures to be loved and cherished juxtaposed with their eagerness to eat the flesh of real cows. He decided to investigate the lives of cattle by buying twin Holstein calves from a dairy farm in his area and documenting their day-to-day existence from birth to death. The book chronicles the practices of dairy farms, veterinarians, auctions and slaughterhouses near his home, as well as his struggles to contemplate their ultimate fate as he grows attached to the calves. Though the practices of dairy farmers are quite different from beef cattle ranchers in many respects, many aspects are the same, including concerns about informed breeding and management decisions, traditions involved with local and family heritage and identification with the land. The afore-mentioned books exemplify a different approach than that used by authors such as Upton Sinclair, who wrote *The Jungle*, a disturbing expose' of Chicago's stockyards and meatpacking houses in the 1900s and a more modern version: *Hanging Tongues: A Sociological Encounter with the Assembly Line* by William Thompson. George Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society* traces the cause of our disjunction as consumers, and in our thought processes, to the concept of mass production conceived by Henry Ford to standardize automobile manufacturing, but now extending to every aspect of our lives, from the burgers we eat to the choices we make on a daily basis.

### Anthropological Literature Sources

There are endless varieties of theoretical lenses in anthropology that are useful in studying cultures, however for this study, the most constructive were those related to creation of identity and agency, both of individuals and communities; the influence of landscape and

environment on cultural and economic expression; the interpretation and reification of tradition or heritage; and those addressing the unique bond between human and non-human Others.

### Ecology, Landscape and Culture

When discussing cattle and culture, the anthropologist who comes most readily to mind is Marvin Harris, for his noted study of in India of *ahimsa*, which translates roughly into "do no harm," in reference to the sacredness of cows. The overarching principal was that cattle were much more important in terms of labor for pulling plows and carts, and providing dung to fertilized fields, as well as producing milk, than they would be if simply killed and used for food, which ultimately led to the religious taboo on eating beef (1965). Harris explained this through his theory of cultural materialism, a more strictly qualitative view of cultural adaptation as a means of transforming resources into energy, through agriculture, animal husbandry and manipulation of the environmental niche. This view, which Harris modified over time, divided culture into three interrelated levels: infrastructure, structure and superstructure, which are determined by, and in turn influence, resources, technology and ideology.

Jared Diamond, in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, expands on this theme, noting that cultures who possessed large animals like cattle were at a distinct advantage: the additional increase in food production via fertilization and plowing led to a more sedentary existence, which ultimately resulted in more complex societies (1997).

These works are an extension of the concept of cultural ecology, introduced by Julian Steward in *Theory of Culture Change*, published in 1955. Steward sought to explain the effect of landscapes or environments on cultures through use of ethnographic methods, identifying

common elements or a "culture core," which he used to compare the different strategies of cultural adaptation in similar settings. Modern ecological and environmental anthropology trace back to this seminal idea, and while more quantitative methods are now key considerations, ethnography remains an essential part of the process (Frake 1962).

The etic perspective in analyzing the human-environment relationship, exemplified by Harris' work, also characterized the research of Anthony Leeds and Andrew Vayda, which emphasized nutrient recycling and energy flow. The ideal of any culture is to maintain a homeostatic relationship between humans and the resources present in local ecosystems, which will enable populations to utilize natural resources without overtaxing the regenerative capacity of their environment (Heider 1972, Leeds and Vayda 1965). *Man, Culture and Animals: The Role of Animals in Human Ecological Adjustments* (1965), is an edited work by Leeds and Vayda, which provides examples of cultural studies that illustrate this idea, including Harris' *The Myth of the Sacred Cow* and Arnold Stricken's *The Euro-American Ranching Complex*. Other informative publications of a similar nature include *Cultural Ecology and Ethnography*, by Charles Frake (1962); Karl Heider's *Environment, Subsistence, and Society* (1972) and Joseph Weinstock's *Social Organization and Traditional Agroecosystems* (1986).

In *Cultural Anthropology*, Robert Netting examines the utility of ecological and environmental adaptations in cultural anthropology (1993). Netting used cultural ecology and ethnographic methods to study rural communities in a wide range of landscapes, from Africa to the Alps. In *Smallholders, Householders; Farm Families and the Ecology of Intensive, Sustainable Agriculture* he champions the successful utilization of more traditional, low

technology, yet intensive approaches to agriculture, as a viable alternative to modern practices of "monocropping" or single, cash crop production (1996).

### Identity, Community and Agency

Pierre Bourdieu's theories are particularly apt for anthropologists seeking to unravel the threads that create the fabric of societies. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, he explains the ways in which individuals internalize the "habitus," or ideations, language, physical mannerisms and techniques of unique social communities, which in turn reinforce the structures that reinforce social cohesion and identity (1977). Bourdieu further expands upon the applications of these principles in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) and *Social Space and Symbolic Power* (1987). Laura Ahearn explores the efficacy of Bourdieu's and other anthropologists' concepts to study human agency in adapting to, or altering social structures (2001, 2012) and Molly Mullin reviews the ways in which our relationships with non-human Others both define us and replicate our connections with other people in *Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationships* (1999). Christopher Tilley examines the role of traditions and environment as a driving force in the creation of self in *Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage* (2006).

### Practical Guides and Analyses of Cattle Production

Florida ranchers have sought ways to improve the efficiency of production for centuries, and this trend has increased exponentially through the years. State and university agencies and livestock organizations such as the Florida Department of Agriculture, the Institute of Food and

Agricultural Sciences, (IFAS), the University of Florida, and the Florida Cattleman's Association have been instrumental in promoting best management practices ranging from selecting breeding stock, parasite control, pasture and foraging issues and marketing. Practical guides from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as MacGerald's *Making the Farm Pay* (1911), *Florida, an Ideal Cattle State* (1918) by the Florida State Livestock Association, or Paul Camp's *A Study of Range Cattle Management in Alachua County, Florida* (1932), clearly demonstrate that the cattle producers' concerns are much the same today. Globalization of markets and new technologies present new challenges, as well as opportunities, which make research and information dissemination key. Examples of literature addressing Florida cattlemen include several authored by Tony Cunha and colleagues in the animal sciences at the University of Florida: *The Present Status and Future of Cattle Industry in Florida*, (1965), *The Growth and Development of the Beef Cattle Industry in the Southeast* (1969). Other examples produced in conjunction with IFAS, the University of Florida and the Florida Department of Agriculture are Brodnax and Eddleman's *Economic and Operational Characteristics of Beef Cattle Ranches in West Central Florida*, (1968), and “No Bull” *Discussion on Genetic Markers* by Dorian Garrick Dorian and Alison Van Eenennaam (2008). These articles are representative of the types of material covered in seminars and short courses that are open to the public. Pamphlets are also used to raise awareness about the industry: two examples are *Beef Cattle in Florida* (1976) and *Florida's Cattle Industry* (2006) produced by the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

*Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida*, by W. Theodore Meador, Jr., and Merle C. Prunty (1976), is an informative study in human geography. This theoretical concept is similar to ecological anthropology, covering the history of cattle ranching in the Florida peninsula,

focusing on the adaptive traits of "scrub" cattle, the effects of open range grazing, changes in market demands and much more. Counties included in this analysis extend from Sumter County to the tip of the state, which excludes the key areas of my own research, and interestingly, omit the historic effect of the Seminole Wars as influencing marketing and production.

An excellent handbook for both neophytes and old hands in the cattle business is *Storey's Guide to Raising Beef Cattle* by Heather Smith Thomas, which covers everything from choosing breeds, genetic inheritance of traits, construction of shelters and fencing, how to handle cattle safely, herd health, reproductive management and marketing (2009). Julius Ruechel's *Grass Fed Cattle* is also a valuable guide to raising cattle, however the focus is on raising and finishing beef cattle on pasture (2006); this is the primary method for feeding cattle in Florida.

#### Chapter Summary

To explore the factors that influence Florida's cattle culture, a thorough understanding of the history, trends and concerns of beef producers, both regionally and as a whole, is necessary. Review of available literature and studies addressing similar issues is essential, not only to identify productive avenues of analysis, but to avoid replication of research. There is an abundance of literature on technical and economic aspects of the beef industry, on Florida history and the cowboy of the Western American frontier; however, there are no anthropological studies currently available on the lifestyles and concerns of cattle ranchers in Florida in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, indicating a need for research in this area.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### Rationale and Background

Pierre Bourdieu stressed the importance for social researchers to examine and disclose possible biases that could potentially skew their findings, which he termed *methodological reflexivity* (1992). In the interests of objectivity, therefore, it seems appropriate to reveal a more personal side to this study: my family has had a history of cattle ranching in Florida, dating back several generations. Today, however, few of my relatives are involved in the industry. Although some of my fondest childhood memories (see Figure 2 below) are of time spent on my grandfather's ranch, helping other family members perform the myriad chores that make up a cattleman's life, as an adult my main exposure to cows consisted of admiring them as part of the scenery, as they grazed in roadside pastures. It took quite a bit of effort to relate those bucolic scenes to the beef I purchased at the grocery store or restaurant, and rarely did the families and individuals who helped make the cattle industry so important economically to Florida ever come to mind. The distancing of consumers from producers has been an intrinsic part of American culture since Henry Ford's invention of the assembly line: hamburger chains have parlayed this into an art form, which Ritzer describes as "McDonaldization" (1983). Due to globalization of markets, this effect on culture and economies is now found worldwide (Matejowsky 2006; Ritzer 1983).



**Figure 2 Corinne Zellner with Silver Domino, champion Hereford bull**

My speculation about the symbiotic nature of landscapes, humans and animals began in earnest several years ago, with the introduction by Sandra Russo into the dialectic relationship of nature and culture, as well as the essentialization and embodiment of, but distancing from, nature by largely patriarchal societies, in her class on ecofeminism. Her organization of boots-on-the-ground research projects on sustainability, social justice and alternative energy sources in rebuttal to a proposed coal-fired electric plant in Gainesville, Florida had a direct effect, I believe, on the eventual deferment of the project by local authorities. This effort, which can be equated to the practice of applied anthropology, brought home to me the importance of field research in influencing public policy, and in turn helping to preserve both urban and rural environments.

In-depth anthropological studies of the permutations of culture and the theoretical approaches deemed useful in teasing out the connections between humans and their surroundings further piqued my interest in this phenomenon. However, what really excited me was what Ruth Behar calls "the beauty and mystery of the ethnographer's quest...to find the stories we didn't know we were looking for in the first place (2003)." To build upon the knowledge of

ethnographic practice and anthropological theory afforded by classes with Rosalyn Howard, laid the foundations for this study of Florida's cattle culture that was further fueled by the realization that many of the area's cattle-filled pastures were rapidly being replaced by development.

### Methods in the Field

To identify potential participants in this study, I attended beef cattle seminars, breed meetings and auctions. This also provided an ideal introduction to the intricacies of raising and marketing beef cattle. Others were chosen based on the location of their farm, their breeding program or marketing niche. This information is available through the state or local branch of the Florida Cattleman's Association, IFAS breed listings, and a number of industry websites. Because of the nature of the research, the study was determined to fit the category of "Not for Human Research," by University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which meant that the study did not require that signed consent forms be obtained; all 29 participants were over 18 years of age, however, family dynamics were observed in the field and discussed with relatives. As per IRB protocol, in confidential interviews participants are identified by pseudonyms, although they may be quoted elsewhere by actual names, if information, interviews or articles about their involvement with ranching has been published previously.

Initial contact with most participants was made via telephone or internet; appointments were made to meet in person for interviews, usually at the farm, auction or other event, such as a cattle auction or bull sale. While at these venues, I was introduced to other prospective participants, who were screened for inclusion in the study, based on size of operation, breed and location. Florida is home to several of the largest cattle ranches in the U.S., most of which are located in the southern part of the state. These ranches are of great importance to the industry and

environment, however, due to their vast size and economic influence, owners are able to ignore many of the concerns of ranchers with smaller holdings. Although the trend in recent years has been to concentrate beef production on large farms, particularly in the Midwest, most ranches in Florida are "cow-calf operations," which specialize in breeding calves. According to the most recent studies, there are over 45,000 cattle ranches in the state, with an average size of around 200 acres, while the average farm size nationwide is around 400 acres (Bailey1991; USDA 2012); therefore, the focus of this study was on farms that would represent the median of 200-400 acres. Other considerations were the inclusion of a representative sample of breeds, or types of cattle, management approaches and market niches, as these factors greatly influence cattle culture and lifestyle, by virtue of the unique communities and practices associated with them (Bourdieu 1977, 1985).

### Cattle Auctions

While weekly auction venues are an ideal setting for an entrée into cattle culture, offering an opportunity to observe cattlemen and women buying and selling a variety of cattle types and ages, as well as to gain an introduction into some of the more arcane aspects of the industry as a whole, there are inherent limitations. Livestock auctions are held at facilities with pens and stalls that are connected by aisles or lanes that enable the animals to enter and leave the sales arena in an efficient manner. The more prestigious, or "select" sales are managed very similarly to thoroughbred horse auctions: the animals must conform to the highest standards set by the breed registry, if a single, purebred breed, or by the sales management if multiple breeds are to be sold. Certain criteria must be met before being accepted to the sale, and once on the premises, the animals are examined by veterinarians or certified livestock inspectors to ascertain their

performance potential. The individual animals are then graded, based on conformation, general health, and scrotal circumference (which is an indicator of fertility) along with other factors, with the lowest acceptable rating at a select sale being B-. In a bull sale, the grade is marked in paint on its back or rump, which normally influences the bidding. Like horse auctions, the bulls are washed and groomed, bedded down in a thick layer of straw or pine shavings, with their pedigrees and notable achievements and connections prominently displayed. Owners are often on hand prior to the sale, to talk to potential buyers and answer questions, with an eye to driving up the price when the bidding takes place. Catalogues are printed and distributed, and listed on websites to attract interest, as in the better sales, the sales are streamed live on the internet with online or phone bidding accepted. In the same style as auctions such as Christie's, the auctioneer begins by extolling the virtues of the animal as it enters the sale ring, with spectators seated in an amphitheatre-like fashion. If bidding lags, the auctioneer reminds the audience about the wonderful qualities of the bull, his ancestors, owners or anecdotal information, keeping the bull in the ring until it is clear no more bids are forthcoming, before the hammer drops, declaring him "sold"! This is a very different scenario from the weekly auction.

Around the country, there are thousands of cattle auctions that have regular, usually weekly or bi-weekly, sessions. In Florida, there are currently nine regular weekly cattle auctions, held in Ocala, Webster, Lake City, Madison, Arcadia, Ellisville and Okeechobee (USDA). Though Gainesville had a very lively cattle market for many decades, there is no longer one in Alachua County. Although there is very little visible difference between these auctions to the untrained eye, different factors contribute to the popularity of one facility over another. The most obvious one is a convenient location, although now that cattle are transported via livestock

trailers rather than railcars, this is not as important today as in the past. Other considerations are a reputation for honesty; good conditions of the facility itself, for both humans and animals, and competent employees. Today, most cattlemen are cognizant of the negative effect of stress on cattle, which can cause them to "go off their feed" or quit eating, lower immune system responses and more, all of which impacts their profit margin. Thus quiet, efficient handling of the animals is appreciated (Ruechel 2006;Thomas 2000). As auctions are paid a commission on sales, it is to their advantage to keep the cows comfortable—at least until they are sold.

The atmosphere of the weekly auction is markedly different from the special or select sales: as the cattle are sold by weight, not pedigree, there is no emphasis on marketing, by either owners or the auctioneer. Instead, the cattle pass through the ring in a steady stream, perhaps spending only seconds in the sale ring. They pass over a scale before entering the ring, with the weight displayed on a screen near the auctioneer; the only thing the auctioneer announces before starting the bidding is the sex of the animal, or if there are a few in a group, the total number may be noted as well. Most buyers have an idea of the size and age range of the calves or adult cattle they are interested in buying, so that information, as sparse as it is compared to the select sales, tells them basically what they need to know. The other information they must judge for themselves by the appearance of the animals. The ability to sum up the condition and age of individual cattle, known as having a good "eye", is a skill that has long been a prized attribute among cattlemen. This talent can only be gained by a great deal of experience and is a very valuable asset, as it enables the possessor to evaluate the potential of an animal on even a cursory inspection. This knowledge has been instilled by often hard-won lessons, for example, from

having likely looking prospects fail to reproduce, or turning out to be much older than they first appeared, thus severely limiting their value.

While in the ring, an attendant uses a flexible prod or cane to get the cattle to move and to turn around, so buyers can view them from all angles. In the brief time it takes for the bidding to be finished, a door on the opposite side is opened, either mechanically or by another attendant, and the animal exits the ring to be housed in the buyer's designated holding pen. The auctioneer announces the winning bidder; if an agent, they will stipulate which group the cow or calf is to be included with: for example: "Smith, Lot X (or Y)." Each buyer must obtain a number or other designation before bidding at the sale, which includes a small pen to hold any animals purchased. Animals customarily must be removed at the end of the day. Since the most popular auctions sell over a thousand animals per sale, they can extend well into the night, after which, transport must be arranged for the cattle.

The row of seats nearest the ring is customarily filled with cattle agents who attend auctions throughout the state to buy large numbers of cattle for a variety of clients usually feedlots based in the Midwest. They often have rocking chairs or comfortable seats provided for them, which are no doubt appreciated by the agents, who spend long hours seated at ringside, or on the road, travelling from one auction to another. Other regulars are state health inspectors, who oversee each facility, checking paperwork and the condition of cattle at each sale. They also must have a good eye, as they evaluate the market trends, based on the quality, weight and sales price of a representative sample of the cattle, preparing a summary each week to be published by USDA (2012). This allows for a certain amount of prediction to be made by cattlemen, not only regionally or nationally, but globally as well. Investors who speculate in

cattle futures on Wall Street base their decisions in part on these summaries, as well as prospective feed costs, which have a trickle-down effect on food prices (Rifken 1992).

Cattle auctions proved to be productive sources of information during this study, although it was challenging to develop an interviewing technique that would not distract buyers from conducting business. Though I was accustomed to horse auctions, it was difficult to get used to the speed in which each sale was conducted. The sale price posted meant little to me, until it was explained that it was listed as "CWT" or price per hundredweight. For example, if a steer was bid up to \$70 CWT and it weighed 600 pounds, the sale price would be \$420 (.70/lb). Regular buyers could mentally calculate prices in the space of few seconds, precisely evaluating when to stop bidding, although I did note several people discretely using the calculator function on their cell phones. For me, it was hard enough to ascertain what type of cattle, age and weight range a participant was interested in so that I could engage them in conversation when animals that were obviously outside of those parameters were on the auction block. This could be tricky in practice, as sometimes the cattle were only in the ring for a few seconds, with the bidding continuing after they had left, with the weight of the next prospect being displayed on the screen, leaving only a short window of time to ask questions. Occasionally, such a good individual or potential bargain would spur an impulse buy as well, which could throw my interviewing off stride. However, this would generally offer an opportunity to elicit more information on decision-making processes, often accompanied by illuminating anecdotes. One such case occurred when a rather unprepossessing cow entered in the ring, and the cattleman I was interviewing, Paul Roberston, who had previously been buying young steers, perked up. He bid on the cow and succeeding in buying her, without much competition. When asked what drew

him to that particular animal, Paul gave me an insight to the "cow sense" that successful cattle ranchers must have. He explained to me how to judge her age by the shape of her face, and though her present condition was a little thin, (thus making her an excellent buy), she was healthy and would be able put on weight in the next few months, maintained strictly on pasture. When I marveled at his ability to assess all of this in a few brief seconds, he laughed, saying that he occasionally was fooled. He revealed that some years earlier, he bought a cow in similar circumstances, congratulating himself for his cleverness in anticipation of the profit he stood to gain. When he got her home, however, closer examination of the cow's teeth revealed her to be quite advanced in age: it would be unlikely for her to make it through the winter, much less have a calf. He decided then and there to put her back in the auction the next week and carefully scraped the sales sticker off her rump. The next week, just to make sure evidence of her previous trip through the ring was concealed, he had the auction staff place the new sticker over the spot of the old one. When she went through the ring, he kept his mouth shut, even when his friend bid on her; there was no time to explain the situation. When his friend ended up the successful bidder, he burst out laughing and revealed how he had been fooled the previous week; now the practical joke was on him. I thought this was rather mean spirited, but apparently it was in keeping with cowboy humor and a good lesson for the buyer to beware. This is an accepted part of gaining an education in the cattle business: while advice may readily be given to newcomers and the younger generations of cattle ranchers, it is generally the lessons that lighten the wallet that make the most lasting impressions. In fact, Paul admitted, his adult son is learning his own lessons in cattle buying this way. "My boy Tom—he's out plantin' rye right now—does a lot of

the buyin' for us now. He's learned from me over the years, but he has to make his own mistakes. I don't say anything when he does, 'cause we've all been through it" (2011).

He gave me another insight to cattle auctions that I never would have learned otherwise: When mature cows are sold at auction, if they have been ultrasounded and found in calf, they are marked on their back with the trimester of pregnancy. If the cows have a zero on them, they were checked and were not pregnant. If there is no marking at all, it means their pregnancy status is not known, so it depends on the buyer's "eye" as to ascertain if they are pregnant or "open." This can mean either not being exposed to a bull, or not pregnant because of fertility problems, or it could mean that the seller elected not to go to the expense of ultrasounding. Considering the fact that this is relatively cheap when done at the auction, this might seem rather odd, except for a little-known practice: when ranchers check the cows for pregnancy at home, if they are not pregnant, they sometimes "bang" the switch or tail hair, meaning they will cut the hair level. They can then tell at a glance which cows are not pregnant, so they will be able to separate them easily from the herd later to be sold. By not being ultrasounded at the auction barn, however, the cows could go through with an "unknown" pregnancy status (Robertson 2011). Those in the know, however, would steer clear of a cow with a banged tail. For the uninformed or less cautious buyer, this would no doubt result in a lesson learned for the future.

An occasional lull in the rapid pace of the sale, caused by a group of recalcitrant calves or changing from one age group to another, gave auction goers a chance to quickly renew acquaintances and make new ones, catch up on news of friends and relatives, as well as exchange information on market trends and feed prices. In the office, while taking care of paperwork, paying for cattle purchase or waiting for a check to be issued, ranchers had an opportunity to chat

for a few minutes as well. At the Webster Livestock Auction, there are two restaurants nearby, which offer cattlepeople a place to unwind for a brief spell. The sale of adult cows and bulls begins shortly before noon, which allows time for sellers to get their cattle sorted and delivered the same morning, especially if they are calves. This is ideal, as when in strange surroundings, stressed cattle often will not eat or drink, which, combined with increased voiding, can lead to temporary weight loss, or "shrink," that can add up to a considerable monetary loss if several head, or individuals are being sold. Once the cattle are safely unloaded in their temporary pens, ranchers can grab a cup of coffee and a quick bite before attending the auction. These restaurants, therefore, are the perfect places to meet cattlemen and women, as well as observe them interacting with each other. Because of the open nature of the restaurants and relatively small size, it is a simple matter to engage others in conversation; when informed of the study and its purpose, people were unreservedly helpful in sharing information or introducing me to friends and relatives. Figure 3 provides an example of a typical auction in action, with the auctioneer seated above and behind the ring, with the weight of the calf displayed on the screen behind him. An assistant keeps track of the buyers, while an agent in the front row bids on a steer. Note the solid barrier inside the ring, where the ring man can quickly step behind if necessary.



**Figure 3 Lake City, Florida Livestock Market**

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program  
<http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/>

#### At the Ranch

Whenever possible, study participants were observed as they interacted with other people and animals, or while working with cattle at their farms or ranches. As I no longer ride, it was not possible for me to watch cowhunters gathering cattle on the largest acreage, which consisted of 1100 acres, much of which was covered in palmetto bushes. However, I did ride in a truck along the perimeter of the fence lines, after the cattle had been worked, to help open gates to allow the herd to circulate freely. That was the way I viewed cattle on most of the ranches, generally with the owner showing me the calf crop, prized bulls and general layout, often while in the process of feeding or moving cattle to different pastures. While pointing out places or animals of interest, I interviewed them to ascertain their general philosophy about the cattle

industry in general, and about Florida in particular; their management and marketing styles, how they got into the cattle business, why they chose their particular breed(s), what their concerns and hopes were for the future and extent of family involvement with the cattle. (See Addendum A for sample questions.) When cattle were being worked or sorted in pens and chutes, for example for worming, vaccinations and ultrasounding, close examination was possible, which enabled me to carefully observe not only the relationships between ranchers, cowhands, friends and family members, but with the animals as well.

### Field days and Seminars

Like their Western counterparts, Florida cattle ranchers have been coming together to share ideas and knowledge about herd management since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Akerman 1976; Berry 2005), with more formal, organized seminars taking place from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (MacGerald 1911). In 1918, the Florida State Livestock Association, the forerunner of the Florida Cattleman's Association, invited a team of well-known Texas cattlemen to visit Florida to assess the climate, economy and status of the state's cattle industry, publishing the findings in a pamphlet entitled *Florida, an Ideal Cattle State*. Although the state's first breed registry was not established until 1954, cattle associations proliferated quickly, a sign not only of the growing interest in improved breeding techniques, but also of ranchers' desire to form communities, and thereby increase agency, based on common interests and goals (Berry 2005; Bourdieu 1985; Meador and Prunty 1976). In Figure 4, a group of exhibitors shows off their prized Angus cattle.



**Figure 4 Exhibiting Angus at the 1921 Florida State Fair**

Photo AG23247

Courtesy of Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program  
<http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/>

Today, open houses or field days are regularly organized by state and local chapters of breed organizations, and seminars are increasing in popularity, due to the influx of new technology, environmental concerns and evolving market economy (Bailey 1991, Mealor and Prunty 1976). These events are not only useful for the information to be gained by attending, but for the chance to network, and form new bonds with people of similar backgrounds, goals and tastes. This serves the inherent human need to create identity and agency (Bourdieu 1987), as well as the opportunity to form networks with other cattlemen and women to increase economic and political clout, (Berry 2005; Breitbach 2006; Mealor and Prunty 1976).

The field day I attended was hosted by a statewide breed registry and was held at the farm of one of the study participants. I had also been trying to interview two other ranching families from the area who were involved in the same breed, but had been unsuccessful at setting

a specific time and date, so I hoped to be able to speak with them there. This was an annual event for members, which featured guest speakers, raffles, an auction for semen straws from popular bulls, (for artificial insemination), a cook out and entertaining activities for youngsters and adults. Not only was I able to interview the prospective participants I had been trying to track down, it was an ideal way to observe a group of cattle ranchers with similar goals and interests, as they reinforced their bonds of community and cultural identity (Bourdieu 1987). Though mundane on the surface, cooking and sharing a meal—especially one as iconic of American culture and beef production as the hamburger—and enjoying conversations with friends and colleagues in a farm setting represents a vital process in constructing and maintaining what Breitbach calls the "landscape of social reproduction (2006)." Bourdieu notes that interactions between those who are on different socioeconomic levels or "social spaces" can take place in physical settings, symbolizing the unity of a group. However, these observed interactions "mask the structures that are realized in them" (1987:16). Tacitly, the underlying subtleties of social hierarchy and power are still present, if not openly acknowledged.

The seminar hosted by IFAS at the University of Florida's Santa Fe/Boston Ranch provided another opportunity to meet with study participant, John Walker, who was active with the Alachua County Cattleman's Association, as well as county land use organizations. As the original owners of Santa Fe Ranch had been prominent, registered Hereford breeders dating back several decades, and were friends of my family, I was also interested in learning more about the history of their ranch, part of which they had donated to the University of Florida. Additionally, while facilitating interaction with and observation of other cattle ranchers from the study locale, the topics to be covered would increase my knowledge of best management practices in various

aspects of the cattle industry. Although IFAS and the UF Extension Office regularly schedule seminars on various subjects throughout the state, this was the first one hosted at the Santa Fe/Boston Unit. Judging by the numbers of people attending the event, there is a keen desire on the part of ranchers to improve their knowledge; topics covered included castration timing and techniques, conditioning of young stock, pasture maintenance, round bale silage and methods to minimize negative impacts on water resources. Inspection of the guest books revealed that in addition to a large number of locals, ranchers came to the seminar from as far as Lake City, Palatka and even from the Sarasota area. People were arbitrarily split into groups that rotated to different parts of the farm, where various speakers addressed diverse topics. After a communal lunch under sheltering live oaks, those who were interested in pasture management and round bale silage techniques (which was most of the audience) boarded several buses to travel to other parts of the ranch. This arrangement allowed attendees ample time to discuss problems and concerns with each speaker, as well as each other, and the close confines of barns and buses made an ideal setting for shared conversations, thus it was possible to ascertain in a short period the broad interests of the group. It was apparent that the level of practical cattle experience ranged from neophytes to old timers in the business; however, they all embraced the idea of learning new ways of doing things, or simply reaffirming that they were already using best management practices.

The event was a successful one in terms of research, as I was able to conduct several interviews, one of which was with Paul Snyder, the nephew of the owner of the Santa Fe Ranch. Two other study participants were women: Anne Jenkins was a young graduate student who conducted one of the presentations; the other was Sandra McCloud, a woman who had recently

taken over her father's farm. He had given her his blessing to use whatever approaches she saw fit, so she had decided to try to implement more ecologically sound methods, such as utilizing several different types of plants, legumes and grasses for forage, which would result in less dependence on petrochemicals. This is an emerging method of recreating the meadows found in Europe and the United Kingdom: the forage plants utilized provide a symbiotic balance of nutrients with much more bioavailability, with less need for tilling or fertilizing and provide habitat for various species as well (Woodcock et al, 2011). Anne Jenkins, the graduate student, was the daughter and granddaughter of local cattlemen, and she too was seeking better techniques to incorporate into her family's management program, while continuing to use traditional cattle handling approaches. Though women have constituted a valued part of the cattle business for decades, both in supportive and leadership roles, it was gratifying to see the same respect and acceptance afforded these two, as would be given their male counterparts.

### Chapter Summary

Potential candidates for this study were initially identified by utilizing USDA and IFAS databases and membership lists of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and various breed registries, as well as cattle marketing publications and websites. Venues such as auctions, bull sales, seminars and field days were ideal for recruiting and interviewing participants, and were productive in terms of facilitating observation of interaction between groups of ranchers, as well as increasing my knowledge base of the industry. Additional field observations took place on individual's farms, supplemented by telephone interviews.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FLORIDA CATTLE RANCHING HISTORY**

### Early Years Characterized by Conquest and Conflict

It is widely believed that the first cattle introduced to North America belonged to Ponce de Leon's expedition to Florida in 1513. Succeeding expeditions of Conquistadors brought some cattle along with them, but it was not until the early 1600s that enough cattle had been imported to establish a viable, productive herd. Around 1627, Francisco Menendez Marques' established a ranch, La Chua, near the grassy savannah of what is today known as Paynes Prairie. (Akerman 1976; Anderson 2001; Hoffman 2002). In the 1640s, conflict broke out between the Spanish colonists and the Apalachee tribes, Native Americans who had populated north Florida by this time. There is some speculation that the destruction of crops by free-ranging cattle and horses owned by the Spanish may have led to the hostilities. Almost two decades later, the rebellion had been thoroughly crushed by Spanish troops; by 1700, 34 cattle ranches dotted the Florida landscape, bringing the total number of cattle owned by Spanish settlers, missions and Indians to around 20,000 head (Akerman 1976).

When war erupted between England and Spain in 1704, James Moore, the governor of the British colony of South Carolina, invaded Florida, massacring and enslaving thousands of Yamassee Indians and driving off 6000 cattle. For the next several years, conflict between the Spanish and British troops and their allied Native American tribes held sway over Florida, effectively ruining the budding cattle industry (Akerman 1976). By the time Florida was officially ceded to Britain in 1763, Seminoles had made their way into the area and had begun building their own herds from the abandoned cattle. According to descriptions by the naturalist

William Bartram, who visited the Alachua savannah in 1774, the herds of cattle and horses he saw there, which belonged to the local Oconee Seminoles, were vast and healthy (Anderson 2001).

Following the Revolutionary War, the Treaty of Paris in 1783 returned control of Florida back to Spain, but the British trading firm Panton, Leslie and Company was so firmly entrenched they were allowed to stay on. They had extensive cattle herds across the state, with hundreds of head being kept at Lake George and Orange Lake. With their fleet of ships, Panton, Leslie and Company could easily export cattle to outside markets. Despite the uncertain fate of the territory, European settlers began to trickle in to Florida, with sporadic bouts of violence occurring between these pioneers and the Seminoles, lasting intermittently from the War of 1812 until the end of the Third Seminole War in 1858. In 1821, Florida was purchased from Spain, and Andrew Jackson appointed governor; he was determined to end the wars that devastated the state by whatever means possible. By 1842, all but a determined band of Seminoles, hiding out in the Everglades, had been forced to resettle on reservations in Indian Territory, near present-day Oklahoma (Akerman 1976; Hoffman 2002; Tebeau and Marina 1999). For the resourceful settler, Florida seemed like the land of opportunity, with land and cattle to be had with the investment of hard work, as long as you did not mind the mosquitoes, snakes, wolves, bears and panthers. James Sterling, who visited Florida in the mid-1800s, put it this way:

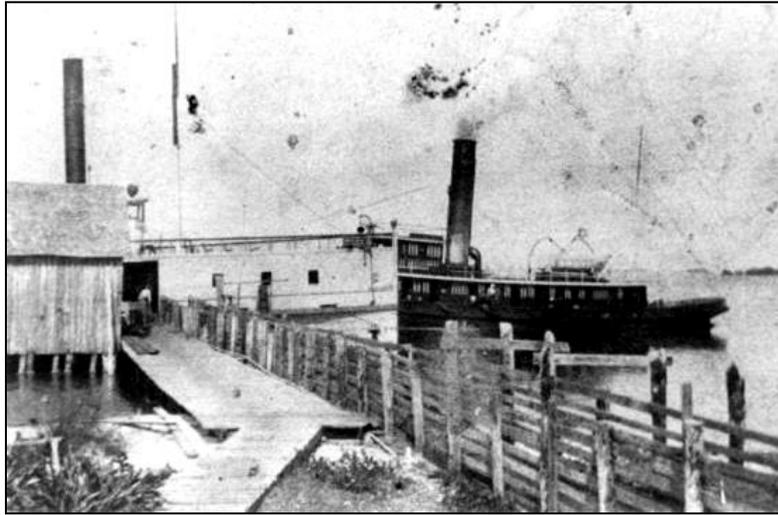
*Having established himself on a land of his own ...[he] may become a grazier at small expense of labour or money. Having bought, borrowed or stolen a few head of cattle; he simply marks them and turns them out into the woods. In the spring he collects the calves and puts his brand on them...catching them when a purchaser appears. In this way some of these Florida squatters accumulated vast herds of cattle without any exertion on their part. Nay, so careless of comfort are they that I am sure there are a few men in these forests owning 5,000 to 6,000 head of cattle who have no even milk to their coffee... (Akerman 1975:58)*

This cavalier mentality, made possible by the mild climate and abundant vegetation, the hardy nature of the scrub or woods cow, combined with free ranges, would characterize the Florida cattle industry long into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite being the third state to officially secede from the Union, Florida was relatively unscathed by the Civil War. One reason for this is the fact that both the North and South needed the cattle to feed their troops. Confederates who were too young or old to enlist joined the "Cow Calvary," which gathered cattle to be herded north to Alabama and Georgia. Northern troops took over a garrison in Fort Myers, where they raided the surrounding area for cattle. The only major battle in the state, at Olustee, stemmed from the desire to block Florida beef from reaching the Confederates, however the Union troops were soundly routed, leaving the supply lines open through the end of the war (Akerman 1976; Taylor 1988).

Following the Civil War, the Reconstruction period was a difficult time for the south. One bright light on the gloomy economic horizon for Florida was the growing cattle trade with Cuba. This exchange had begun shortly before the war with Captain James McKay, Sr. leasing ships to carry cattle from Tampa to Cuba. Things picked up rapidly when hostilities ceased; by 1871, 20,000 cattle had been shipped from Florida (Akerman 1976). A major port was Punta Rassa; cattlemen used the military barracks of Ft. Dulaney, which had been built during the Seminole Wars, for their headquarters (Tinsley 1990). The cattle were loaded on the ships in various ways: in some cases, they were made to swim alongside small boats to the ships, where they were picked up by sling and deposited in the hold; sometimes they were herded to the end of docks, where they were picked up by a block and tackle. If the distance from the wharf down to the steamer was not too great, the steers were simply made to jump off (See Figure 5).

Sometimes the loading went on into the night, with the frightened, wild-eyed cattle lit up by burning torchlights, which must have made for a hellish scene. The average price for a steer? \$15 paid in Spanish gold (Akerman 1976; Tinsley 1990).



**Figure 5 Steamship at Punta Rassa wharf with cattle chute, 1890's**

Photo RC19392

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

<http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/>

Cattle trade with Cuba remained strong, for the most part, until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when larger Venezuelan steers usurped the market. Florida was still an open range state, which offered little incentive for introducing expensive, purebred bulls. During World War I and II, Florida beef was only purchased locally, due to the preference for their larger, beefier Texas cousins. Loss of their market and the increased presence of tick fever would force cattlemen to look for ways to improve the industry (Ackerman 1976; Cunha 1969, Meador and Prunty 1976; Otto 1986).

### Open Range: A Mixed Blessing

For most of Florida history, cattlemen and livestock owners were given the benefit of free grazing rights; not until 1949 and the passing of the Warren Act, or Fence Law, were landowners required to fence their property to keep their animals enclosed. Until that time, if someone objected to stray cattle trampling their garden or flowerbed, it was up to them to fence them out. Not only that, if a cow was injured in the process of removing them, or if hit by a car or train while grazing alongside roads or rails, the cattle owner had to be compensated (Akerman 1976; Meador and Prunty 1976; Otto 1986). While clearly visible in daylight (Figure 6) collisions with cattle could easily occur at night.



**Figure 6 Cattle graze beside a Florida road, 1931**

Photo AG00229

Courtesy of Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program  
<http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/>

While the open range greatly benefited early Florida settlers and cattlemen, allowing them to accumulate large herds without the expense of maintaining pastures, or even owning

land, the freedom of the open range had its drawbacks. While there were some sketchily defined grazing territories, agreed upon by neighboring ranchers, cattle could roam wherever they pleased. The only way to identify the owner was by "mammying-up" or identifying the calf by the brand its mother carried. For ethical ranchers, this was not a problem: cowhands worked together on seasonal cowhunts, gathering the scrub cows from palmetto thickets, swamps and pine barrens, into clearings, where communal sorting, branding and castrating of bull calves took place. As the only interest was increasing the size of herds, not the quality, very few cattle were "culled" or removed from the herd, no matter how poor. The largest bulls were often shipped to Cuba, to be used for bullfighting, along with the steers, or older castrated calves.

For some, the temptation to "rustle" or steal unattended cows was too much. Killing one or two cows on occasion to feed one's family was not the issue, but organized groups of renegade cowboys who systematically poached other cattlemen's herds, branding unmarked calves and forging of new brands from the original ones, were a serious threat. The surge of cattle rustling during the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century also introduced robbers and murderers into Florida's cattle culture, where previously it was common to leave tin cans and flour sacks of gold stashed in a corner, as there were no banks in the region at the time. This trend was so widespread that other ranchers soon resorted to appropriating cattle to make up for their losses. After several years of range wars and shootouts, leading cattlemen met and agreed that this must end if anyone was to prosper (Akerman 1976, Tinsley 1990). Though it might be viewed similarly to the idea of Mafia dons agreeing to divide up "turfs" or rackets, it is also one of the first examples of cattlemen working together toward a common goal.

Cattlemen would face more challenges together over the next decades, the most serious of which would prove to be "Texas Fever," a tick-borne virus that threatened to cripple the Florida cattle business. Although the hardy scrub cows had a certain degree of immunity, they were already small and the presence of thousands of blood-sucking parasites severely weakened them. Other states would ban the export of Florida cattle as well, with Georgia erecting a fence along large stretches of the border. Only a concerted effort to dip all cattle, horses, livestock and dogs in arsenic twice a month would prove to be the answer to this debilitating disease. As the female ticks that carried the virus would drop off once full of blood, laying eggs in the brush, baby ticks would attach to new hosts, perpetuating the cycle. Hundreds of arsenic dipping vats were built at state or private expense around the state. Cattle were driven through, while cowboys stood alongside, armed with a pole to push their head under the solution. The cow was daubed with paint once dipped. Any cattle that could not be caught and dipped were shot and killed. It took several years to bring the disease under control, although there was a reported outbreak as late as 1961 (Akerman 1976).

Another serious pest was introduced into Florida in the 1930s: the screw-worm. This is actually the larva of a screw-worm fly, which lays eggs in open wounds. When the eggs hatch, they burrow into the flesh of the host. The festering wound attracts more flies, which lay eggs, multiplying the effect. Cattle could be killed within a few days. Cattlemen had to examine every animal daily for breaks in the skin, as the flies cannot penetrate the hide. The navels of new calves were an ideal site for laying eggs, although an open wound on any warm blooded animal would serve. In 1957, the Florida legislature approved the Southeast Eradication

Program, which released thousands of sterilized male screw-worm flies from airplanes (USDA 2012). By 1959, the eradication program was declared a total success (Akerman 1976).

The widespread nature of tick fever and the screw-worm, along with the need to introduce better bloodlines, led to the Florida Fence Law, or Warren Act, passed in 1949. This law made it incumbent upon landowners to fence their property to contain their livestock. The Act was not completely accepted at first, with some notable cases of fence cutting and shootouts, but it was time for Florida's open range to be closed (Akerman 1976; Otto 1986; Meador and Prunty 1976; Tinsley 1990). Figure 7 shows Nathan Mayo, Commissioner of Agriculture (far left) and Governor Warren with Brahma bull and owner, Vose Babcock (far right), in the 1950s. The bull had been recently purchased in Texas for \$3,500, at a time when the average family income was \$4,000 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Although some cattlemen had begun improving their herds by introducing purebred cattle before the open ranges were closed, without fences there was a risk of having them stolen or exposed to diseased cattle.

### Chapter Summary

Spanish explorers brought the first domesticated cattle and horses with them to Florida, possibly as early as Ponce de Leon's 1513 expedition, however, it was not until the early 1600s that enough cattle were imported to form breeding herds. From that point until the present, cattle have been an integral part of the lives of successive generations of many Florida families. Native Americans reaped the rewards of conflict between England and Spain over control of Florida, enabling local tribes such as the Seminoles to build large herds from the livestock of abandoned Spanish missions and settlements. In turn, they were displaced by ever-increasing waves of settlers seeking new lives in the Florida wilderness. Territorial conflicts between

countries and cultures continued on local fronts, as ranchers fought over grazing rights and cattle rustling, however the threat of disease from the Texas fever tick and the screw-worm forced ranchers to form a common front to protect their livelihoods.



**Figure 7 Purebred bloodlines were widely introduced after Warren Act**

Photo GV035114  
Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program  
<http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/>

## **CHAPTER FIVE: TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

### The Role of Florida's Environment in Cattle Culture

Florida's unique combination of generally mild climate, abundant rainfall and lush vegetation offer an ideal environment for raising cattle. These same conditions also influenced the development of the small, hardy native scrub or "cracker" cow, which was ideally suited to thrive in conditions that could also be productive of parasites such as ticks, mosquitoes and flies. Before the Warren Act of 1949, the state had no fencing laws, so for the most part, cattlemen were free to graze their herds wherever they liked. Open ranges made it possible for small landowners to own large numbers of cattle, but this also made the job of maintaining, or working, them more difficult. Cowmen would organize seasonal "hunts" to gather free roaming cattle together to brand and castrate calves, as well as to select those to be driven to market. These practices were based on traditions passed on from a variety of sources, particularly Spanish, Scottish and European ranching techniques, which were adapted to fit the resources available and the local landscape (Akerman 1976; Heider 1972; Meador and Prunty 1976; Strickon 1965; Weinstock 1986). These methods are still used today, combined with 21<sup>st</sup> century technology.

### Cattle Work Reflects Traditional Practices

Today, as in years past, a day in the life of a Florida cowhand customarily begins early, but when cattle need to be "worked" or handled in some way, that day often extends long into the night. For example, if cattle are to be sold, they need to be gathered or herded to a smaller

enclosure, called a corral or cowpen, to select individuals that need to be culled, or removed from the herd. This is actually an ongoing process, as cattle are inspected throughout the year, to evaluate which calves will be retained as breeding stock. If purebred male, or bull calves are not of suitable quality to be potential herd sires, they are castrated early in life, as are most bull calves in commercial cattle operations, which produce cattle primarily to be processed for beef. Once castrated, they are referred to as steers. Today, as in centuries past, steers are preferred for beef production, as they gain weight faster and are less difficult to handle (Clark 2011, Thomas 2009). Heifers, or young females, may be kept in the herd as replacement heifers, sold to other ranchers, or designated for beef, although usually at a slightly discounted price.

On large ranches, particularly with limited fencing, where cattle are not accustomed to regular handling, cattle herding techniques have changed very little over the years. Today as in the past, a competent cowhand needs a reliable mount, a well-built, comfortable saddle, a strong rope, rain slicker and a good cow dog or two. If there is a lot of underbrush where the cattle might hide, a bullwhip is a useful encouragement, and if a snake or predator, whether two or four-footed, is likely to be encountered, carrying a pistol is a good precaution. In recent years, this list has been expanded to include a two-way radio or cell phone. When gathering cattle, the cowhands generally ride to the pastures farthest from the cow pen and begin urging the cattle with vocalizations, waving motions of the arm, rope or whip and the watchful presence of the dogs (Ackerman 1976; Tinsley 1990). Unlike the mythic heroics of silver-screen cowboys (Savage 1975), the ideal is to gently but firmly "push" the cattle to herd together, without alarming them unduly, as stress causes them to rapidly lose weight or "shrink." As cattle are generally sold by weight, this has always been an ever-present consideration when working cattle (Akerman 1976;

Camp 1932; Ruechel 2006; Thomas 2000). Occasionally, a brief burst of speed by riders or dogs is required to turn a recalcitrant cow back to the herd, but this is done quickly and without fanfare. In areas with excessive vegetation, such as palmetto, scrub or marsh areas, it can be much more challenging to extricate cows from their hiding places; this is where the cattle dogs really prove their worth, and a judicious crack from a bullwhip helps to move things along. Cattle are social animals and instinctively feel safest in a herd, so once they begin to move together, they will stay in a fairly cohesive group, which makes gathering them easier. This "herd mentality" is what made long cattle drives possible on both Florida and Western frontiers (Akerman 1976; Ruechel 2006; Thomas 2001; Tinsley 1990). Figure 8 shows two Gainesville, FL cowboys in the 1890s.



**Figure 8 Cowboys rest after long cattle drive**

**Photo RC05578**

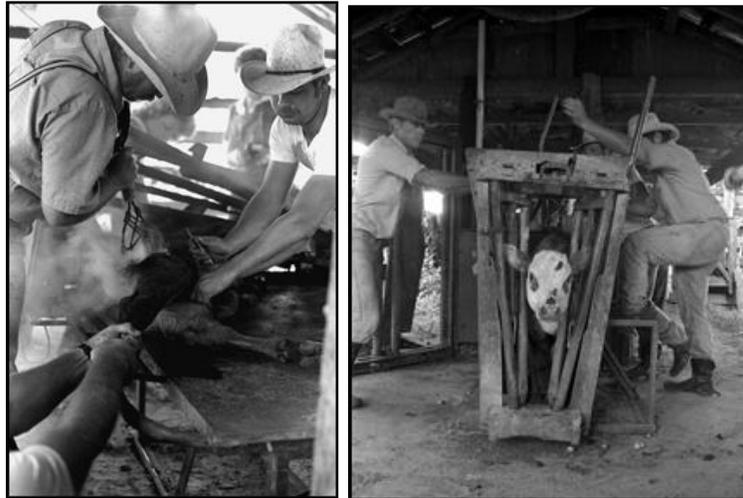
Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

[http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo\\_exhibits/](http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo_exhibits/)

Once the cattle have been penned, the real work begins. The cattle must be sorted into groups, which depend on what needs to be done, whether treating for parasites, vaccinating, branding or weaning. Some individuals may have a wound that needs to be doctored, or an overgrown hoof or horn to be trimmed. Well-planned corral and cow pens make this much easier for humans and animals, as strategically placed lanes of fencing, called "chutes" and gates can be used to separate chosen animals from the rest of the herd.

The first step is identifying which mothers calves belong to, process old-timers refer to as "mammying-up"; in open range conditions, this was the only way to ascertain the owner of the calf (Akerman 1976). The calves are then marked in a way that uniquely associates them with their mothers, or dams, the year of their birth, bloodlines, or owner, which is commonly done by using a hot metal branding iron to scorch the hide. A few prefer to "freeze brand" by spraying liquid nitrogen over a stencil, which permanently and painlessly destroys the skin and hair pigment. The ears may also be notched with a knife, tattooed or tagged as additional identification. Today, most ranchers have "squeeze pens" which are either stationary or portable, where the cow can be immobilized. There is a V-shaped opening at one end, which the cow, believing it to be an avenue of escape, readily places its head into; someone rapidly squeezes the bars that form the V closed to prevent the cow from moving its head. Another barrier, usually a metal bar or sturdy board, is quickly placed behind them so they cannot back up. Then worming agents, vaccines and pesticides can be safely administered, or wounds tended. Branding, castrating or tagging can be done in the squeeze as well, or on a metal "calf table," which tilts flat to form a platform. If chutes and squeeze pens are not available, then time-honored methods are

used, which depend on the size of the animal. Figure 9 illustrates the use of restraining equipment.



**Figure 9 Restraint devices make work easier**

Photo FA0814 and FA0872

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

[http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo\\_exhibits/](http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo_exhibits/)

If large or particularly unruly, the cow's head and heel are roped by one or two people on horseback to immobilize it or if smaller, by the simple expediency of several people grabbing legs, ears or tail of the squirming calf and holding it down (Figure 10). This technique is considerably more stressful for all parties and often results in bruised backsides and egos, as the calves sometimes briefly elude capture. However, at the end of the day, everyone survives, if a little the worse for wear, and the scuffle makes good fodder for good-natured teasing, adding to the camaraderie and sense of community that has hallmarked cattle culture for centuries (Akerman 1976; Kelton 2008; Savage 1975; Tinsley 1990). Everyone helps out, no matter how

young, old or unskilled; records need to be kept, gates need to be opened or closed, and even just an extra hand to hold a syringe of vaccine or wormer is appreciated.



**Figure 10 Traditional branding method**

Lake County cowboys brand a struggling calf in the 1900s

Photo PR01407

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

[http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo\\_exhibits/](http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo_exhibits/)

After the most strenuous work has been done, everyone is ready for a break. If the gathering is a large one, usually a good spread is laid out in a shady spot. Horses and dogs take a well-earned nap, while cowhands relax and get a bite to eat. It is the ideal time for conferring on plans, organizing events and telling tales. After lunch, the last remaining chores are finished and the cows are turned back out to pasture; some calves may be weaned, or separated from their mothers, at this time while others will be loaded onto trailers to be delivered to the auction barn

or other destination. Once there, they will have to be unloaded, fed and watered; once home, the dogs and horses must be cared for before calling it a day (Clark 2011, Nichols 2011).

### Modern Herd Management Practices

Many of the changes in cattle management in the past several decades have been the result of technological advances, but others have been market-driven. American beef consumption has steadily increased since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the tastes of consumers have been fickle. Changes in public demand directly influence not only the type of cattle raised for beef, but the way in which they are "finished" or fed the last few months before slaughter (Horowitz 2005). Due to the temperate climate and availability of year-round grazing in Florida, cattle here are raised primarily on pasture. However, the demand for tender cuts of meat led to the widespread practice of removing cattle from pastures and confining them in feedlots a minimum of 60 days before slaughter. A combination of minimal exercise and a diet consisting of carbohydrate-rich grains, such as corn and barley increases the level of fatty tissue, while the restriction from green pasture removes beta-carotene from the fat, also eliminating the normal yellowish coloring, as well as important nutrients (Reuchel 2006).

In the past several decades, consumers have been interested in eating healthier foods, which included the elimination of excess fat from their diets, but not at the expense of tenderness and flavor. As a result, cattle breeders had to change not only the way that cattle were fed, but also how they were bred, in order to increase interstitial marbling, or layering of fat between muscle tissues, instead of solely under the skin (Horowitz 2005, Parrish 2008, Reuchel 2006, Thomas 2009). New technology and marketing programs based on improved breeding plans

probably represent the biggest transformation in cattle management in recent years, affecting not only the industry, but the culture as well.

## Breeding for Market and Environment

Consumer demand for lean, yet tender beef presented a challenge for cattle breeders, as tenderness and flavor is usually a result of fat deposits. By careful selection of traits over the past several years, owners of purebred cattle have been able to identify characteristics that contribute to the body type and muscling that aid in producing the desired combination. With the development of ultrasound equipment, it is possible to measure the fat or marbling of the ribeye of a live animal, and adding this calculation to a number of other traits, such as small birth weight (to make calving easier), rapid weight gain, maternal instinct and milk production (though relatively small, compared to dairy cattle). These characteristics are kept track of for all animals in a registry so that breeders can maximize the best features of their animals, by choosing a mate that complements their genetic strengths and weaknesses. By tracking these measurements, an individual can be compared to other produce of a cow or bull by using the calculated "expected progeny difference," or EPD. Although the first registry to do this was the American Angus Association, other registries have rapidly followed their lead. Another advance is collection and storage of semen from top-producing bulls, so that breeders can choose from among the most productive or popular sires in any given breed, without having to maintain a bull of their own. This allows small breeders to compete, in terms of quality, with cattlemen owning large operations. With the advent of internet cattle sales, and the presence of online cattle communities via social media such as FaceBook, cattle enthusiasts can choose a sire, or embryo to be shipped and implanted in a donor cow anywhere in the world, although quarantines where communicable diseases are present must still be observed (Garrick 2008).

Florida cattlemen have been interested in developing breeds that perform well in the warm and humid climate, with a high degree of immunity to pests such as flies and mosquitoes. Cattle breeds that can thrive on pasture, gaining weight relatively easily are highly attractive to breeders. Zebu breeds were imported to America in the mid-1800s, to improve heat and insect tolerance and to add size to the smaller British and European breeds, such as Angus and Herefords. By judicious crossing and interbreeding of these breeds, along with others, several new breeds or varieties were created, such as the large, humped, droop-eared Brahma; they were crossed with Angus to establish the Brangus breed, which combines the desirable traits of both. Along with registered or purebred breeds, cattlemen interested in improving their herds resort to out-crossing dissimilar breeds, which result in better performance due to hybrid vigor (Ruechel 2006; Thomas 2009). Although crossbred cattle do not have registries to track EPDs, owners can still keep their own records of birth and weaning weights, as well as ultrasounding the ribeye, which is a useful marketing tool for modern cattle producers.

### Chapter Summary

Florida ranchers today utilize management techniques that have been used for generations, combined with modern methods of breeding, marketing and sales. Traditional ways of working cattle include the use of horses and cattle dogs to drive or gather cows, so they can be sorted for weaning or sales, or for other purposes, such as branding, worming and vaccinating. Alternatively, ranchers today employ mechanized vehicles such as trucks and all terrain vehicles or ATVs, utilizing strategically designed corrals, chutes and squeeze pens, instead of relying on roping and brute strength to restrain cattle. Due to market pressures to standardize production and quality, the cattle industry has increasingly adopted evolving technology such as artificial

insemination, genetic analysis and ultrasound evaluation. Implementation of these practices is changing many aspects of Florida's cattle culture, but traditional skills are still highly valued. One of the most important assets is that of "cow sense," described as having an "eye" for cattle: being able to assess the attributes and weaknesses of individual animals, as well as recognizing the potential for improvement by judicious crosses of bloodlines and proper herd management. This is a skill honed by experience that transcends the boundaries of both traditional and modern technological approaches to cattle ranching.

## **CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### Overview

The primary objective of this thesis is to research the origins of the ethos of the cattle culture of Florida, and to answer the following questions: what makes it so appealing for those who continue to preserve and reinvent this rich heritage? Can the rewards, whether subliminal or economic, of such a challenging lifestyle induce future generations to continue the tradition? And how does globalization, urban development, escalating regulation and the availability of new technology affect the industry financially and culturally (Durning 1991; Harris 1978; Rifkin 1992)?

### Background

. When asked if they identified with the cowboy legends of the old Western frontier and silver screen, they just laugh: Why would they need to look any farther afield to find heroes? They are always present; role models can be found among family and friends. Even a gutsy cow dog, savvy cowpony or tough herd bull can evince a gleam of admiration. One young cattleman, Stan Clark, told me that even though his days are long and often filled with hard work, he could not be happy doing anything else. "People think I'm crazy to want to live like this, but I love it. I might be out working cows from daybreak to early the next morning sometimes, but I guess it gets in your blood. There is really nothing I'd rather be doing (2011)." When questioned about his hopes for his children to continue in the family cattle business, he replied that it was a decision they would have to make in the future. "They'll be exposed to cows, that's for sure, but

I wouldn't try to force anyone into this way of life. If you don't love what you're doing, you'll never be successful at it (2011)." One thing is abundantly clear: while connections to the cattle business may falter in families, there will be new cattle folk to take up where they left off; there was a widespread interest among breed organizations and individuals in helping youngsters who were interested in showing and raising cattle. The willingness of everyone I met on this journey to share their insights with me revealed their desire to pass on the knowledge and heritage that makes Florida's cattle culture unique. The adaptation of new generations of cattle ranchers, by trying innovative methods or different approaches to long standing concerns, is the key to the survival and reinvention of the ethos and economic strategies that have allowed this unique community to prosper despite many challenges. It is a difficult to try to break free of perceptions and ideas that have constituted the fabric of our lives, both consciously and unconsciously (Bourdieu 1987), but Florida cattlemen and women have proven themselves more than able to take up that challenge.

### Building identity and community

The choice of breed, management style and marketing niche brings with it certain ideologies that may embody subliminal cultural markers as well. For example, the American Angus Association has been active in promoting the advantages of Angus beef to consumers for many years. In order to maintain consistent quality, they were among the first registries to adopt systematic ways to determine genetic standardization. As a result, Angus cattle now represent a dominant presence in the industry, with offshoot breeds such as Brangus (a highly heat-tolerant Angus-Brahman cross) being of such demand, mixed bull sales such as the "Black Bull Sale"

annually staged in Kissimmee Florida, are well attended. Ironically, although there is also a red variety of Angus that is identical to the black variety except for color, they do not enjoy the same popularity. Cattlemen and woman who choose to breed Black Angus or other similar black breeds may not only be anxious to capitalize on economic benefits, but social ones as well. There is a certain amount of pride displayed by such ranchers when mentioning their affiliation with Angus breeds and derivative crosses, which was completely devoid of the slightly defensive attitude of others when explaining their choice of alternate breeds. Although almost all of the eighteen study participants who did not raise Angus or their derivative breeds explained in detail why they felt their particular breed was best suited for Florida's environment, or their superiority by virtue of meat-producing characteristics, temperament or easy maintenance, none of the Angus breeders felt compelled to explain their affinity for the breed. Thus, the implication that Angus breeders may be more competent or "savvy" in some sense may be conveyed by association; the popularity of a breed, bolstered by advertising and marketing claims, can aid in perpetuating the process of self-actualization (Berry 2005; Bourdieu 1987). Subtle variations in body language, speech patterns, dress and other mannerisms, or in Bourdieu's words, *habitus*, help to create a sense of identity and belonging (Ahearn 2001, 2012; 1987). In general, a shirt sporting a breed logo or motto from a notable sale or event may supplement the standard attire of jeans and boots, complete with cowboy hat or baseball cap.

As each breed or marketing niche, whether for commercial beef production, grass-fed or organic, has its devoted supporters, like-minded cattle folk will gravitate to the group in which they feel most comfortable. This may be a conscious, economic decision, by a process of prior association with other cattlemen in a specific niche or because their family or friends already are

involved in a specific breed or program. One family in the study, the Nichols, had a number of long horned cows in their herd, which resulted in colorful offspring with wide horns, reminiscent of the scrub cattle that once populated Florida. Although crossed with Black Angus and Hereford bulls to produce the more desirable square body frame associated with beef production, the calves were not as popular at the auctions. Horns can be another drawback, so most steers are dehorned early in life, although not having horns, termed being "polled," is a dominant genetic trait, so crossing with naturally polled bulls, such as the Angus, solves that problem. The market preference today for solid black is so pronounced that the calves were discriminated against due to their spotted coloring. However, because of the protective nature of the cows, and their ability to browse, or eat leaves and shrubs, like deer or goats, these cows were highly prized by their owners because of the dense palmetto shrubs and vegetation where they live. These cattle were the foundation of their now quite large herd, and were purchased initially because they were very affordable. "I don't know why they [the buyers] don't like 'em," Melissa Nichols commented. "Personally I love their flashy colors. The cows are good mothers and producers; I'll miss the old girls when they're gone. I think people are afraid of those horns, but they're actually real gentle. The coyotes won't bother 'em though (2011)."

Cattle dogs, often called cur, cow or catch dogs, are also the subject of a considerable amount of pride, with owners being able to recite several generations of pedigrees, even though most of these dogs are not "purebred" in the conventional sense. Instead, the exploits of the dogs and its relatives are described in glowing terms: how "Bob"—(the dogs usually have monosyllabic names to make it easy to call and direct several individuals at the top of the lungs)—outsmarted a clever cow that did not want to come out of pond, or how it went off alone

and came back with a herd of cows in tow. (Figure 11 shows cow dogs at work.) In very bad terrain, it might be impossible to herd cattle without the help of dogs, who have the engrained "cow sense" necessary to know their job and do it without supervision. However, this also results in the occasional death of a dog by a gator or snakebite, which generates keen disappointment, but few, if any, tears. Instead, their loss will be commemorated in the future by numerous recounting of their skills and exploits, which is traditional for cowboys everywhere (Akerson 1976; Dacy 1940; Kelton 2008; Savage 1975, 1979; Tinsley 1990; Turner 1996). The performative nature of storytelling is a tradition in cattle culture, which serves to build social capital or agency, as well as community (Bourdieu 1977) and Bauman notes that "the performance forms of a community tend to be among the most memorable, repeatable, reflexively accessible forms of discourse in its communicative repertoire (Ahearn 2012:173)." The verbal artistry displayed by study participants as they related various aspects of their experiences not only made the tales memorable, but added a measure of agency for the storyteller as well.



**Figure 11 Cattle dogs help corral cows**

Photo FA0639

Courtesy of the Florida Memory Program

[http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo\\_exhibits/](http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo_exhibits/)

The affinity between cowboy and horse is a key fictive subject of many a Western (Savage 1975, 1979), but this relationship is grounded in truth: for many cattlemen a competent, intelligent horse can be a valuable asset. This is particularly true for "day-workers," or cowhands that are paid by the day to help work cattle, especially on large ranches during spring and fall "gathers," or roundups, as popularly termed by the public. Day-workers usually have a livestock trailer to carry their horse and dogs to the site, and frequently also have portable corrals and squeeze chutes to make it easier to confine the cattle for vaccination, branding or whatever job is required. They often have a group of friends—a crew or "gang"—who work with them. Day-workers are independent contractors, who may have their own cattle, or who just like the work; they may have learned the skill from friends in the business, or from attending events such as

rodeos or team penning, which demonstrate the skills that are commonly associated with cattle ranching. Though they are expected to be efficient at their job, often this proves to be a drawback: their fees are based on the job, or the day's work, (hence the term). If they are exceptionally competent, the job may be quickly finished, which can result in reluctance on the part of the herd owner to pay them the full price. The only assurance day-workers have that they will be paid is the knowledge that their skills are a prized commodity even more today than in the past, as day-workers are becoming less common (Akerman 1976; Clark 2011, Nichols 2011, Tinsley 1990). Melissa Nichols, whose sons often do daywork stated: "Ranchers know that if they don't pay, when they need help working cows next time, they'll be out of luck. Good cowhands are getting harder to come by. When you think about the fact that they bring their own equipment—horses, dogs, livestock trailers and sometimes portable squeeze pens—it's really a bargain for what they charge (2011)."

Other than the shared goals and tools of cattlemen, Florida cow folk do not generally identify consciously with frontier mentality, however there are similar concerns. Out West, ranchers were forced to form communities to prevent loss of grazing rights on government lands, while in Florida, the problems are due to development and the increased expense of or owning or leasing acreage for pastureland. A major point of discussion is the availability of fresh water supplies, which has not been as pressing an issue for Florida cattlemen in the past, but undoubtedly will be as regulations tighten in the future (Berry 2005; Breitbach 2006; Cunha 1965; DiDonato 1998; Florida Livestock Assoc. 1918; IFAS 2011).

Cowboys of the silver screen typically exhibit stoicism and optimism, traits which I observed Florida cattlemen display in varying degrees. This may be attributed to the cyclical

nature of the business: from the annual birth of new calves, nurturing them to maturity for future breeding or raising to a prescribed point to be marketed or processed, along with the *longue durée* phases of supply and demand, said to be 10 years in the cattle industry (Ruechel 2009; Thomas 2006). The inevitable effects of nature: drought, storms, blighted pastures or crops, insects or disease, all have a part in creating a certain mental toughness, or resignation to hardship. Eventually however, rain comes to replenish vegetation, new calves replace those that were lost, reinforcing the realization that this is all part of life, and has been as long as man has been raising livestock, no matter where they live (Carlson 2002; Diamond 1997; Harris 1965; Leeds and Vayda 1965; Kelton 2008; Netting 1993).

Florida cattlemen and women frequently identify with the "Cracker" way of life: early pioneers were often labeled by this derisive epithet, used to refer to disreputable or shabby characters, which had its roots in Britain. In time, the term would be associated with the cracking of the bullwhips used to drive cattle, and by extension, to those who used them (Brown and Denham 2003; Otto 1984, 1986; Meador and Prunty 1976). Though originally meant pejoratively, Florida cowhunters began to embrace the term to represent the tough, capable and independent spirit it conveyed. One of the most influential figures of Florida's cattle industry, Jacob Summerlin, reveled in his unofficial title, "The King of the Crackers." Summerlin amassed great herds of cattle, which he shipped to Cuba from his stockyard and wharf at Punta Rassa. The enormity of this enterprise must have been staggering to behold, as today, over a century later, developers are still finding thick layers of manure dating back to that period. Notwithstanding the fact that he was one of the richest men in the state, he dressed simply and refused to put on airs, believing his true worth was as an astute cattleman (Akerman 1976; Dacy

1940; Hendry 2008; Tinsley 1990). The idea of the Florida Cracker has also become a metaphor for versatility and the ability to thrive in adverse circumstances (Ste. Claire 1998). While study participants, when questioned, did not embrace the term, they did admit that they could relate to the independent spirit attributed to the early Cracker cowhunter. "I don't know if I would call myself a Cracker, but anybody who could make it in Florida in the pioneering days had to be tough, so yeah, I guess we do have something in common," mused Chuck Thompson, a third-generation Florida cattle rancher. "If it wasn't for them, we probably wouldn't be where we are today (2011)." Another cattleman, Ben Saunders, confided he sometimes imagines what it must have been like for early cowhunters: "When I'm out looking for cows in scrub palmettos, or poppin' a whip to keep the cows headin' in the right direction, I think about the way things must have been in the days of open range. It must have been exciting, but kinda' scary too. I mean, you never knew what you might come across. It makes you really appreciate cell phones, that's for sure (2011)."

### Women and cattle

People have been fascinated by cattle for thousands of years, as evidenced by cave paintings in Altamira, Spain and Lascaux, France; however the role of cows as an agent of power and identity for women has only recently begun to be explored. In cultures where women had very little autonomy, they were able to achieve some independence through their skills at dairying, either by milking or converting milk products into cheese and butter, which could be stored and transported, making it a valuable commodity (Carlson 2002).

Over the past several decades, women have been gaining acceptance in the cattle industry on their own merits. The tough conditions of the open range kept women in the background of

cattle ranching, although they have held important supportive roles for years. However, there were isolated cases of women who could herd as well as any man (Akerman 1976), and many instances where they successfully took up the reins of a cattle ranch when a husband or relative died or was ill. One of the most notable of Florida's pioneering cattlemen was Bertha Honore' Palmer, noted socialite and widow of a wealthy Chicago merchant. In 1910, she established the 80,000 acre ranch, Meadowsweet Pastures, near the Sarasota/Tampa area, buying a herd of the native, scrub cattle. She brought in a thousand head of Texas cattle by rail and imported Brahma bulls to improve heat and insect tolerance in her herd. This innovative cattlemaster fenced much of her property and built vats to dip cattle in arsenic, which at the time was the only method to remove the deadly fever ticks, though she faced much resistance from many of the locals, who persisted in cutting the barbed wire fences (Akerman 1976; Black 2007). In 1917, Palmer was named Vice-President of the Florida Livestock Association (Black 2007). This is quite an achievement, when you consider that in America, women would not be granted the right to vote until 1920.

With modern breeding and handling techniques, it is no longer necessary to have brute strength to manage a herd of cattle, allowing women to increasingly come to the fore, both on their own behalf and for the industry as a whole. Despite a decline from a national total of 67,937 cattle ranches principally operated by women in 1997 to 56,757 in 2002, there were 217,000 women running cattle ranches in the United States (USDA 2002). In 2007, cattle farms run by women generated over \$6 billion, representing 4.3% of the total national farm revenue of \$153 billion, on less than half the average acreage: 210 acres vs. 418 (USDA 2007).

Women are often trend-setters in the cattle industry. Dr. Temple Grandin is one of the most influential women in the world, in terms of revolutionizing livestock handling in industrialized countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Her experiences as an autistic person, combined with life on her aunt's cattle ranch, led her to pursue a career in agriculture, something unheard of at the time. Her studies on the negative effects of stress on cattle, combined with practical approaches and improved designs of pens and restraining equipment have left a lasting impact on the business. This has made an enormous difference in feedlots and humane cattle slaughtering, which improves the lives of both cattle and their handlers (Grandin 2008). From the nightmarish, brutal conditions for animals and humans commonly found at abattoirs or slaughterhouses, conditions have steadily improved with Grandin's philosophy and techniques that have been implemented at almost 90% of American facilities in the past few decades (Gouveia 2002; Grandin 2008; Sinclair 1905; Thompson 1983).

Another ground-breaking figure who has been instrumental in promoting the American cattle industry is Jo Ann Smith, a fourth-generation Florida rancher from Alachua County. She has been actively involved in working cattle all of her life, both in her family's farm and later as a partner in with her husband Cedric. Jo Ann has been a member of a number of key agricultural advisory committees at local, state and national levels since the 1970's. Appointments include the Florida Beef Council, the Animal Technical Advisory Committee on Livestock and Livestock Products, Foreign Animal Disease Advisory Committee, and the USDA Meat Pricing Task Force for the USDA, as well as the Governor's Task Force on the Future of Florida Agriculture. In addition to being the president of Florida Cattlewomen's Association, Jo Ann was elected the first female president of the National Cattlemen's Association, in 1985. That

same year, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services named Smith "Woman of the Year in Agriculture." Among countless other awards Smith has garnered, Progressive Farmer magazine has twice voted her, somewhat ironically, "Man of the Year in American Agriculture ." After her tenure as founding chairwoman for the National Cattleman's Beef Promotion and Research Board, Jo Ann was appointed Assistant Secretary to the United States Department of Agriculture in the Marketing and Inspections Division, serving from 1989 to 1993. She also was an appointed member of the US Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations, which increased the quota for beef and citrus exports to Japan, a boon for Florida farmers and ranchers. Today Smith is still actively ranching in Wacahoota, FL, along with her son Marty (Fla. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services 1985).

According to a recent survey by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, a branch of the USDA, 81 percent of women living on farms are involved in daily operations, despite the fact that half of them also have other paying jobs off the farm. In a NASS nationwide survey of 7,500 American farm families, however, only 10 percent of the women characterized themselves as the principal farm operator, while nearly 30 percent were full partners in the business. Another 40 percent were the business managers or helpers. The remainder were not directly involved in the farm operation (Lauer 2001).

A number of participants in the Florida Cattle Culture study were women actively and competently managing cattle operations. Sandra McCloud recently took over the running of the family farm, but planned to change the marketing niche from a traditional commercial operation to a more specialized organic approach, to capitalize on the public interest in more healthy foods.

"This is all new to me, so I'm learning as I go along. I want to try to use more natural, environmentally friendly ways to raise cattle profitably, which means less fertilizer, pesticides and hormones. It's better for the animals and for people too" (2011). A newcomer to cattle ranching, Diane Peterson owns a small herd of registered Santa Gertrudis cattle, which she breeds primarily for heifer and bull replacements. "I got into this a few years ago because my accountant said I should think about putting some cows on my property to save on my taxes. I did some research into the different breeds and decided on the Santa Gertrudis, which is growing in popularity. I didn't intend to get so involved in it, but now I'm obsessed with breeding the best animals I can. I guess I've always been an overachiever! With the availability of frozen semen, I don't have to have a herd sire, which saves money. Every year, I analyze the ideal matches for my cows, buy the semen, and they AI them for free. That way I can have calves from the best bulls in the country" (2011).

One participant, Anita Grainger, has been the wife of a Gainesville cattle rancher for over 35 years; however, she actively avoids participating in ranch activities. When questioned, she explained most emphatically, "Honey, don't get involved with the cows; I don't want any part of that! If you only knew how many times this family has gone without, whenever the cows needed something...! I wouldn't even know where to start... (2011)" A wife's frustration of having a husband who spends most of his time in the saddle, or in the field, while she cares for their children, manages a home, and works part time as well, is clearly in evidence.

### The Family Farm

Although there has been an increasing trend toward large corporate agricultural enterprises in recent years, many of those involved in the study feel that the future of the cattle

business is in smaller, family farms, and the most recent USDA studies would bear that out. In 2010, there were 905,000 cattle ranches in the U.S. with less than 500 head of cows and calves, compared to 29,400 farms with 500 head and up. However, these figures do not include feed lots, which are the eventual purchasers of most cattle destined for market consumption. Florida farms, in total average about 195 acres compared to the national average of 481 acres (2012).

Netting suggests that the traditional family farm or smallholder approach to agriculture is an ecologically and economically sound alternative to massive farming conglomerates. Intimate knowledge of the unique ecosystem that the ranch represents, the livestock and the most efficient, labor- and cost-effective means by which they can be managed in the most productive manner is the hallmark of the family enterprise. "[T]he farmer who makes the most effective use of resources is the one with specialized knowledge of the specific microenvironments on the smallholding (1993:62)."

Despite these advantages, smallholders face issues that a larger ranch can avoid, ranging from pressure from fluctuating prices and encroaching development, to family disagreements. Chuck Larsen, who has been ranching for over 40 years, plans to sell out in the next few years and move to Georgia. When asked what his children think about this, he confided, "I told my girls long ago to get off the farm, to find something to do that is not so hard. Ranching is a hard way to make a living...it's too unpredictable. One year you can make a good profit, and the next year go in the hole. Don't get me wrong, I've been able to make a good living; I raised a family and have even bought a place to retire to, but I don't want my daughters to have to have to worry about how to make ends meet" (2011).

Other participants echoed this sentiment. Jim Barnes and his grandson Mike expressed concern over the increase in residential development surrounding their farm. Jim noted, "The way we're getting crowded out, I don't see how we're going to be able to continue to hold on. I learned about the cattle business from my grandfather and it'd be a real shame if we have to sell out one day." Mike nodded his head in agreement, "I like to help out with the cows, but I'm going to college. I just don't think we'll be able to keep the ranch going long enough for me to count on it down the road" (2011).

In other cases, where development is less of a concern, disagreements between family members can derail daily operations and future plans. In a conversation with the Baker family, who have been prominent in the cattle industry for generations, I asked about the daughter's involvement with Quarter Horses. I had assumed that her focus was on breeding and training horses for the ranch, but her brother Jack quickly dismissed this idea. "Oh, she does her own thing. We don't even ask what she is up to." Her mother, Janice, quickly chimed in, "We don't even need horses to work the cows anymore; we've gotten to the point where we don't take them to sales. We just drive buyers out in the field and they pick out what they want" (2011). This is no doubt a simplification of the process, as the cattle will still have to be separated and penned, prior to be loaded on trailers for transport, but it is indicative of the effect of family dynamics in ranch life. If the property holdings are large enough, a ranch can successfully continue to operate despite friction, however in small farms, conflict can prove the death knell for family traditions.

## Chapter Summary

Most of the research questions in this study are based on the ways in which Florida cattle folk view themselves and relate with each other; for them, cattle culture represents not only a livelihood, but identity as well. The choice of breed, market niche and operational style directly influences the people ranchers will regularly be associated with at sales and promotional events, as well as the way cattle will be raised and sold, potentially affecting many aspects of ranch life. Other unique factors shaping personal identity and community are expertise in working cattle, as well as training and handling of cattle dogs and horses. Women and families provide a stable platform for the future of cattle ranching in a variety of ways. Historically, women managed the home front, keeping family and ranch hands fed and clothed, but today their role has expanded to full partner or chief operator, or even industry spokesperson. Families engaged in cattle operations foster traditional methods of working cattle and managing the land, providing labor, expertise and a sense of duty to pass on their heritage to future generations.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PLANS**

### Concluding Thoughts

The goal of this research project was to assess the viability of Florida's cattle culture: could the economic and emotional rewards encourage future generations to continue the traditional methods and lifestyles historically associated with ranching. A related question was whether pressures such as globalized markets, urban development, escalating regulation and the availability of new technology would dramatically alter or even eradicate time-honored beliefs and practices—the ethos and economy—of a lifestyle whose genesis was informed by the unique physical and sociopolitical environment which fostered several centuries of cattle ranching.

Based on the participant's dedication to cattle ranching as a way of life, there is little question that Florida's beef industry will continue for many generations to come. However, the practices that have traditionally been a part of cattle ranching have already begun to change. New methods of breeding, such as artificial insemination and embryo transfer are allowing smallholders to compete, in terms of quality of livestock, with larger, well-established operations. Genetic analysis of reproductive potential, coupled with ultrasound assessment of muscling characteristics is rapidly becoming the industry standard, changing the ways cattle are raised, handled and marketed. These changes, which represent the industry's response to the public's tastes and an increased demand for standardization of production, may alienate traditional ranchers, who feel challenged by the new status quo. Jacob Nichols, the patriarch of a Florida ranching family, disdainfully dismissed a fellow rancher's comments about genetics:

"You can't taste genetics! When you take that hide off, they all taste the same. (2011)" Yet when asked about his breeding goals, he carefully delineated the benefits of the F1 outcross program he used in his commercial herd, which was based on proven benefits of hybrid vigor resulting from breeding to unrelated, but complementary breeds. Though Jacob rejected the genetic rhetoric, he embraced, albeit unknowingly, the practice of improved production through scientific selection, a goal shared by past generations of ranchers. Today, as in years past, cattlemen and women are keenly interested in developing livestock that can thrive in Florida's typically hot and humid climate, conditions which not only encourage year-round pasturage, but mosquitoes and parasites as well. Similarly, they are anxious to try innovative techniques in cattle handling, pasture management, and ways to minimize negative impacts on water quality, as well as new ways of establishing both real and virtual communities.

However, cattle ranchers also have a great deal of respect for individuals—whether humans, horses or dogs—who possess "cow sense," and dependability, traits that are indispensable in rough going. They also value honesty, strong work ethics and determination, characteristic attributes of the mythical American cowboy of the Western frontier, but also of the very real men and women who both create and reinvent Florida's cattle culture.

Anthropologists are often frustrated in their attempts to define a culture, but in reality, cultures, like traditions, are not static, but respond to both internal and external pressures and influences. However, there is satisfaction in the knowledge that in providing a snapshot of a particular culture at a moment in time, we can offer future generations knowledge of their heritage. The Miriam-Webster dictionary defines tradition as "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior; a

belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable (2012)." At present, Florida's cattle culture is a balancing act, with one boot firmly planted in the past, and the other striding toward the future. Some traditions will inevitably be swept aside and others rediscovered or newly invented, but they will be always be a reflection of the values, hopes and goals of this unique community.

### Future Plans

This study will act as a platform for my doctoral research, in which I plan to examine the viability of incorporating more environmentally sensitive, historic land uses that have been utilized successfully in Florida in the past. In our state and across the globe, as populations rise, development encroaches further upon rural and natural landscapes. Potable water and petroleum use increases, while new sources become harder to find, which represents a problem for future generations (Leeds and Vayda 1965; Netting 1993). I was intrigued by the idea of reintroducing multiple types of plants and grasses to create meadows instead of the rather sterile, monocropped pastures that are the norm today (Woodcock et al 2011), as well as exploring the viability of managing pine plantations in such a way that they can be used for multiple purposes. In the past, cattle were grazed in Florida pine barrens productively; now that pines are being planted to replace citrus, this is a subject of economic and environmental interest. Currently IFAS at the University of Florida is working with a cattlegwoman and her daughter to see if silvopasturing, or using forest areas for pasture, is a practicable program for the future (Nowak, Blount and Workman 2002).

One issue that must be addressed is that of the pervasive disconnect between the stewards of the land, represented by farmers and ranchers, and the consumer. This one of the results of

"McDonaldization" of production, not just of our food, but also of culture, affecting the way we think and our belief systems. Humans around the globe are learning to seek "sameness" or standardization of thought, which can be symbolized by their food choices (Harris and Ross 1978; Horowitz 2005; Lovenheim 2003; Matejowsky 2006; Ritzer 1983). The cattle industry responded to changing consumer demands by improving, but also standardizing, their product, which plays into the same pitfall. What I believe is necessary is that people need to be more informed about where their food comes from and honor both the people and animals that make that possible (Gouveia 2002; Grandin 2008; Leeds and Vayda 1965; Lovenheim 2003). Farmers and ranchers need to engage in cooperative dialogues and mutual endeavors to raise awareness in the public, regarding not only the source of their foods, but also how consumer choices affect the chain of supply. In the mid-1800s, the increased availability of beef arose both from refrigeration techniques and improved production systems which made it affordable for the average household, but marketing campaigns by both Swift's and Armour's packing houses were necessary to make it popular with the consumer (Harris 1978). If consumers' tastes could be influenced toward grass-fed beef, proponents argue, the large feedlots that rely on crops such as corn and barley, as well as daily consumption of antibiotics could be eliminated (Ruechel 2006). The rapid growth of global markets makes investigation of matters such as this of increasing importance, requiring initiative on the part of producers and consumers as well. A striking example of the interconnectedness of markets is the appearance and spread of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as mad cow disease that is deadly to cattle and humans alike. Though the United Kingdom was the most severely affected, with over 14,500 cattle being infected in 1995, outbreaks were reported in Canada and the U.S, resulting in a

virtual shutdown of the beef industry. Quick action was taken to address the problem worldwide, with the result that only 11 cases were reported last year (CDC 2011). One offshoot of this is the development of implantable microchips that can be used to track the origins and history of each cow. In the past several years, Texas fever ticks have been making a comeback in western states, especially along the Mexican borders; cattlemen are rallying together to control this outbreak before it spreads. Associated issues such as the prevalent use of monocrops, genetically modified plants and destruction of critical ecosystems can also be productively addressed through collaborative efforts at increased public involvement.

#### Final Summary

Generally stated, my goal for the future is to help people find a balance between reinterpreting traditions and preserving cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations, particularly in agricultural communities. I believe, like many individuals in this study, that the ideal steward of the land can be found in the rural smallholder, to use Netting's term (1993). Their familiarity with the economic and environmental landscapes in which they live, along with their compassion and concern for non-human Others, as a reflection of our relationship with each other, and ourselves represents the greatest hope for our future (Harris 1965; Heider 1972; Leeds and Vayda 1965; Mullin 1999).

**APPENDIX A:  
SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

**Florida's Cattle Culture:  
Ethos and Enterprise in the Sunshine State  
Sample Questions**

1. How did you become involved in the cattle industry?
2. What made you choose the type of cattle or market niche you are in?
3. Do you feel you are continuing a traditional lifestyle? Explain what this means to you and your family.
4. Is there a particular individual or group in the cattle business you model yourself on?
5. What aspects of your lifestyle do you find most and least appealing?
6. What do you consider to be more traditional cattle raising techniques? Explain their advantages and disadvantages.
7. What new technologies are you using or plan to use with the cattle or their marketing? What benefits or drawbacks will result from this?
8. What concerns you most about your own farm in the future?
9. What do you think is the potential of the beef cattle industry for Florida?
10. If someone asked your advice about entering the cattle business, what would it be?
11. In your opinion, what advantages and drawbacks does Florida have for cattlemen?
12. How does it make you feel when others do not appreciate or understand your way of life?
13. How do you in particular and the industry in general, benefit Florida and/or others?
14. When you need help on the farm, who do you turn to and why?
15. What proportion of your friends and acquaintances are in the cattle business?
16. What is the difference between cattlemen (or women), cowmen, cowboys or Crackers?
17. Do you think cattle ranching represents American values? If so, how?
18. Is there any other career you might choose, given the opportunity? Explain.

**APPENDIX B:  
STUDY MEMBERS'  
PARTICIPATION IN  
RANCH ACTIVITIES**

## Characterization of Study Members' Participation in Ranch Activities

Level of Ranch Work Involvement	Male- Age 20 to 35	Male- Age 36 & up	Female- Age 20 to 35	Female- Age 36 & up
<b>Owner/Manager</b>	1	12	0	3
<b>Manager</b>	1	2	0	0
<b>Family member; actively involved</b>	1	1	1	2
<b>Family member; minimally involved</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>No relation; actively involved</b>	2	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	5	15	2	7

**Note:** This table follows USDA protocol in listing only one person as owner/manager per ranching operation. However, some individuals may act as manager and decision-maker for different aspects of farm activities, while in other cases options may be chosen jointly by family members and/or employees.

**APPENDIX C:  
ARCHIVAL IMAGE RELEASE**



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**RICK SCOTT**  
Governor

**KEN DETZNER**  
Secretary of State

March 20, 2012

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