COWKEEPER'S LEGACY

A SEMINOLE STORY

COWKEEPER'S LEGACY

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Photo by Carlton Ward Jr.
Courtesy National Geographic

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photo courtesy Seminole Tribune

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INDIAN COWBOY DREAMS

A Poem by Moses Jumper Jr. (Snake Clan)

Eddie Shore, Josiah Johns, and Frances Osceiola
on a platform above cattle pens.
Photo by William D. Boehmer
Photo courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Catalog number 2009.34.1643

As a young boy I stood in awe, as I watched these rugged men of old

They were dark with their jet black hair, topped with "ole Stetson hats," and

faces that were bold!

Their jeans were worn as were the faded long sleeve shirts they wore with pride···

The boots, the spurs, they had it all, even to the horses they would ride···

I knew these men before I'd heard of Gene, Roy, and Wayne,

I didn't know these movie cowboys stood for a way of life that would cause our people so much pain!

The Indian Cowboys I knew were for real! And something told me, that's what I needed to be,

Big Morgan Smith cracking the whip, and riding along with old Samson Dixie···

Those were the days of the big roundups, the family feast and the long cattle run,

There were no one day shows or being late, and you stayed til the work was done!

I would spend the nights at the Morgan's Camp lying under the ole tin roof while having my Indian Cowboy Dreams,

Awakening to the sounds of the squeaky old army saddles and feeling the coolness of the morning fog as the men would have

that important coffee and cream···

I loved it all and for a boy of nine, it was all I wanted to be,

The wet season, the hanging moss, the Big Cypress Swamp it was a place where a young boy could really be free!

The names are etched in my mind of these Indian Cowboys of yesteryear:

Charlie Micco, Naha Tiger, Josiah Johns, true cattlemen who knew no fear!

Braided bull whips, Mexican spurs, and high in the deep seated saddle they sat,

These were "real men" from the tip of their boot to the top of their "Tom Mix Hat"···

I would play in the "Ole Red Barn," and wait as the bullets in my toy gun I would load,

I would listen and from far off I could hear the horse's hooves, as they walked on the shell rock road···

These men stood for a way of life that I'm sure once again, we would all like to see,

Good Cow Dogs, Cracker Cattle, a good horse and the glades where a man could really be free···

These men were my Heroes, and their names you won't hear on TV,

But to those of us who remember, their names will always be a part of our history···

And as long as there is a horse to ride, a steer to rope, and a bunch of good dogs that work as a team,

I'll remember back to those days when as a boy, I slept under the "Ole Tin Roof," as these men rode tall in my Indian Cowboy Dreams...

COWKEEPERS

The first domestic cattle arrived in Florida in 1521. They were brought here by Spanish conquistadores who hoped to take land from the Calusa, ancestors of the modern Seminole Tribe of Florida. However the Calusa were prepared for the invaders, and they drove the first colonization attempt back to the sea. The Spanish left behind their supplies, including a cattle herd they had brought with them from Spain.

While the cattle were new to Florida, the ancestors were very familiar with their relativies, the buffalo which lived in the northern and central areas of the peninsula in those times. The men and women of Florida had worked the buffalo since time immemorial, and knew how to maintain the land to keep the buffalo around. They found that these same techniques worked even better with these new domesticated European cattle, and the herd grew and spread, quickly becoming a part of Native foodways and of Native culture.

Cattle and the cattle culture remain an integral way of life for their descendants, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, throughout the tumultuous centuries that have passed. There is a vast story, often untold outside of the Tribe, which leads from these first cattle to the modern operation. The story comes from the spoken histories of the Tribe, from the written words of history, and from the artifacts of the past unearthed by Tribal archaeologists. It is a story of growth and hardship, of peaceful trade and open war, and most of all of endurance. It is a story of the first American cowboys and the modern day Seminole cattlewomen. It is a story of the Seminole cattle legacy, and we welcome you to share in it.

The Smith Family cattle drive.
Photo courtesy Seminole Media Productions.

SEMINOLE CATTLE HISTORY

Buffalo grazing at Paynes Prairie State Park.
Photo Courtesy Florida State Parks.

Ancestral Times

The first people to set foot in Florida were the ancestors of the Seminole, who arrived over 14,000 years ago. Since that time, their communities grew and spread through the peninsula. By the 15th century there were Native people living throughout Florida. Many in Northern Florida were part of the Mississippian culture, a culture and language that spread throughout the southeast, from the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains, as far north as the Ohio River, and all the way up to Mississippi itself. American Bison were found throughout the region, and the people of Florida learned to hunt them, working the land around them to draw in the bison herds. Bison meat and leathers were an important aspect of Mississippian life.

1492-1700

Life in Florida was changed forever with the arrival of Spanish ships. The first to arrive in Florida were under the command of the conquistador Ponce de Leon. The Calusa people of southern Florida, who had learned about the brutality of Spanish conquests in the Caribbean, attacked de Leon's forces when he landed. In their retreat, the Spanish left behind a cattle herd they had brought to feed their army. These became the first cattle of Florida. The Spanish made more attempts to establish a colony in Florida after this, but did not succeed until 1565 at St. Augustine.

As part of their goal to assimilate the people of Florida, the Spanish established trade and a system of Catholic Missions. Missionaries taught Spanish ranching techniques to the Native people of Florida who allowed them into their communities. The use of cattle then spread beyond the Spanish influence through trade, theft, runaway cattle, and gifts. Many Native towns used their traditional knowledge of bison, and found the domesticated European cattle easier to work with.

1700-1811

As the use of cattle spread among Ancestral communities, the other effects of European contact were taking their toll. Between 1500 and 1700 the combination of new diseases, warfare, and slave raids led to the loss of over 90% of the Native population of the Americas. This led to the collapse of many Native societies, and Florida was one of the hardest hit areas.

The colonizing powers used this time to press further into the Americas, pressuring other northern native groups to move further south to get away from the expansion, merging with the surviving populations in Florida. During this time the Spanish had begun calling the indigenous people who they didn't control "*Cimmaroñes,*" a term that came from the Taino people in Cuba and was often translated as “runaways” or "wild." This word was later adapted by the growing Creek Confederacy in the north to describe the Florida groups, as "*Seminoli*." And they would pass that to Americans who pronounced it "*Seminole*."

Lone buffalo at Paynes Prairie State Park.
Photo Courtesy Florida State Parks.

AHAYA: THE COWKEEPER

The town of Alachua was settled in central Florida in the 19th century by Ahaya, a leader from the town of Oconee on the lower Chatahoochee River. Sitting between the Spanish and English colonies, he became a veteran of wars both with and against the colonizing powers. Seeking a more peaceful life, Ahaya and his people took their cattle herds south to a region they had known to be prosperous before war and disease had taken their toll, south into the Florida penninsula to what is now Payne's Praerie. This new community was soon joined by the survivors of other Florida people, who taught them the skills needed to survive in the unique environment. This knowledge allowed Alachua to grow and prosper.

The Alachua people soon had to defend their herds from the Spanish, a threat that led Ahaya to promise that he would kill one hundred Spaniards to protect his stock. This oath along with the size of his herd, which was said to be in the thousands by this point, led the English to call him “Cowkeeper.” It’s said that at the end of his life, his one regret was that he had only killed 86.

Ahaya’s successor, his nephew Payne, established a more diplomatic relationship, and the area around Alachua came to be called Payne’s Prairie. By the end of the 18th century, the Seminole had gone from fighting the Spanish to defend their stock, to becoming the primary supplier of beef to the Spanish Colonies.

Map: The Coast of West Florida and Louisiana, 1775
by Thomas Jefferys

1812-1858

By the 19th century the Seminole had towns, farms, and pasture land across northern and southern Florida. The success of these lands caught the eye of farmers and plantation owners in the southern United States. This, along with Spanish Florida being a refuge for people escaping American slavery, convinced many in the South to try and seize Florida.

The first attempt began in 1812, when a collection of southern militias with US military support invaded Florida. It was called the Patriot War of East Florida, but for Florida Natives it was the beginning of the Seminole War that would define the next half-century. American militias attacked Alachua, stealing cattle and burning homes. The attack took the lives of many in Alachua, including King Payne.

In 1817, American forces returned under the command of Andrew Jackson. Jackson's army destroyed Seminole towns and seized Seminole farms and pastureland before taking Pensacola. After the United States claimed Florida, the Seminole were told to give up their developed lands in the north, and move to a reservation south of Ocala.

When Andrew Jackson became president he signed the Indian Removal Act, ordering the deportation of all Native people east of the Mississippi River. Agents attempting to enforce the Act on the Seminole instructed the Tribe to sell all of their cattle, as they would not be allowed to take them. One Tribal leader announced he sold his village's stock and was prepared to go. This led to a meeting of Tribal elders who declared him a traitor, and sent the warrior Osceola to execute him. Osceola scattered the money that had been given for his cattle over the man's body to signal that the Seminole would not be bought.

Faced with the Seminole resistance, the US Army was ordered to Florida to "remove" the Seminole by force. Nearly 3,000 Tribal members were killed or taken from their homes during the War. As part of the war strategy, U.S. Army General Jesup ordered the burning of Seminole crops and the seizure of Seminole cattle and horses. When the war officially ended in 1858 there were only a few hundred Seminole remaining in Florida. The remaining Seminoles followed the Medicine Man Abiaki, who led them to a refuge deep in the wetlands.

"Three Seminole Scouts"
Painiting by Noah Billie
Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Seminole man herding cattle, 1903
Photo by Julian Dimock
Photo Courtesy STOF THPO Collections

1859-1927

The decades following the Seminole War were a time of remote isolation for most of the Tribe. The few cattle herds they kept were carefully maintained and looked after, and began to regrow over time. By the 1870s, Seminole communities began to appear in both the Big Cypress area and around Fisheating Creek north of Lake Okeechobee. In the 1880s, the Seminoles began to feel threatened as their claim on the land was not recognized by the State of Florida and, consequently, some ranchers attempted to purchase the cattle.

Around the turn of the century, the leaders of the Tribe decided to stop raising cattle. The herds continued to draw outside attention, and were seen as more of a threat than a benefit. In 1911, there was a steep decline in Seminole herds, with approximately 100 head still in Seminole ownership. In 1927 Ada Tiger, owner of the largest individual herd, which contained 40 heads of cattle, sold them off when she and her family moved to Dania. The age of the Seminole cattle tradition seemed to be drawing to an end.

Contributed by Dave Scheidecker.
Dave Scheidecker is the Senior Research Coordinator for the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

MORGAN SMITH

The first thing many people noticed about Morgan Smith (Bird Clan) was his size. According to Billy Bowlegs III, Morgan Smith was the largest Seminole alive, and one reporter referred to him as "a gargantuan man," standing around six and a half feet tall and weighing as much as the horse he rode.

Morgan Smith was there for the first transfer of government owned cattle to Seminole Tribal ownership as one of heads of the Seminole cattle program. A career cattleworker, he worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to transfer the cattle from federal ownership to the Seminole, not as a gift, but as a loan that would be paid back by an increasingly sucessful business. He was elected the Chairman of the Cattle Board, and was instrumental in the development of the program on the Big Cypress Reservation.

He made his main home near the Big Cypress Red Barn, the center of the cattle program and most activity on the reservation, but later established another camp near the Kissimmee Billie Slough, to watch over his herd. In an unprecedented move, he bought a pre-made home from a catalogue and had it shipped to the reservation and moved out to the slough, the first non-traditional home in Big Cypress.

Morgan Smith was a forward thinker, and helped bring veterinary science, new ranching techniques, and business sense to the newly rebuilt cattle progam, ensuring it and the Seminole Tribe's future.

Morgan Smith with Frank Billie and Junior Cypress
(Colorized)
Photo courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Catalong Number GRP781.1

REBIRTH OF THE LEGACY

In 1935 the Seminole Tribe was once again engaging with the United States government, but this time it was on friendlier terms. Work to economically boost the tribe's fortunes was underway, and the Seminole once more looked to cattle.

Rebuilding the Seminole cattle tradition over a century after its height was a daunting task, and the world had changed greatly. Five men headed up the new program: Frank Shore, Charlie Micco, Naha Tiger, Willie Gopher, and Willie Tiger. All five had previous experience from working with local ranches that aided their traditional knowledge. They worked with an Agricultural Agent from the government, Fred Montsdeoca, to learn the newest methods in modern ranching.

The United States Government purchased 547 head of cattle to rebuild the Seminole herds. These new cattle came from the western states, bought from ranches that had been devastated by the Dust Bowl, in the hope that Florida could provide better grazing land for them. The herd was shipped east by railroad to the newly formed Brighton Reservation, north of Lake Okeechobee.

Fred Smith (left) learning from Charlie Micco (Right)
Photo courtesy State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

Unfortunately the harsh conditions of transport combined with the new and vastly different environment and poor grazing conditions of the Brighton reservation caused incredible health problems for the herd. Only an estimated 200 head of cattle survived at the end of the first year. The next year, the work began to develop and expand the land. They built mineral boxes to add nutrients to the grazing pastures, windmills all across the reservation to pump clean water, planted higher quality grass, and installed fencing and sink wells.

All of this effort paid off, and in 1939 there were over a thousand cattle in Brighton. Until this point the U.S. Government had maintained ownership of the cattle program, but in 1940 they shifted to leasing the cattle to the Seminoles on an eight-year contract at $75 a head. The Tribe took over operations, forming the Brighton Indian Cattle Enterprise, with Charlie Micco, John Josh, and Willie Gopher as the first trustees. Shortly after the Big Cypress Cattle Enterprise was created on the southern reservation, with Morgan Smith as the head.

The cattle program continued to grow, proving to be an economic success, bringing in money to the reservations that was desperately needed. American settlement had taken the land the Tribe had hunted and gardened for their food and trade, leaving people in need of work that could only be found outside the reservations. The return of cattle allowed tribal members to work for themselves, and not be dependent on the whims of segregation-era Florida employers.

Still, the U.S. Government retained ownership of the Seminole program. This finally changed in 1966 when the operation was formally turned over to the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Board of Directors, who brought together the separate reservation programs. By the end of the next year the return of the cattle tradition was finally complete with thousands now once more property of the Seminole. The herd on the Brighton Reservation alone had more than 3,600 head.

Today, the Seminole's herds are a staple of the Tribe and part of a proud legacy. Cattle are once more part of Seminole life, culture, and the tribal identity. The mix of traditional knowledge with modern techniques and technologies has brought prosperity. The Seminole cattle industry is now one of the five largest cow/calf operations within the State of Florida, and of the 25 largest within the United States. The program continues to grow and expand, with new grazing land added as the Seminole purchase new lands and ranges that were their traditional land. As the late Councilman Max Osceola Jr. said in 2006, "they have taken everything away from us in the past… we're going to buy it back, one hamburger at a time."

Contributed by Dave Scheidecker.
Dave Scheidecker is the Senior Research Coordinator for the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

ADA TIGER

Ada Tiger (Snake Clan) was one of the last traditional cattle ranchers and independent cattle owners among the Seminole. She maintained her cattle on her own, her only aid coming from two dogs she had raised and trained as "cow-chasers." Like her ancestors, she had no fences or pens to keep the herd contained. Instead she kept them well fed with corn grown by her family, and worked the area around the camp to ensure it was the kind of place that the cattle would want to remain in.

Ada had become a cattlewoman in unfortunate circumstances. Her herd had been inherited from her three brothers, each of whom had succumbed to tuberculosis or pneumonia within five years between 1914 and 1919. She took on the job of managing the family's stock, and by the mid-twenties her herd was the largest owned by any Seminole.

Twice a year she would walk into the market at Indiantown, Florida, leading a herd of cattle. Accompanying her were her dogs who helped guide the herd. In town she would sell some of the cattle, have the rest treated for ticks and fleas, and buy some essential goods. Then she would walk her herd the ten mile trip home to her camp out by Lake Okeechobee.

In 1928, conditions forced Ada Tiger, who was now mother to a five year old girl named Betty Mae, to leave Lake Okeechobee for the Dania (now Hollywood) Reservation. The cattle were sold to pay for the move. In Hollywood she took up making crafts and souvenirs for the tourist trade, and raised her two children: Betty Mae and Howard Tiger, both of whom would grow up to become leaders and elected chairs of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Ada Tiger, February 1951
Photo by Ethel Cutler Freeman
Photo courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum 2005.27.398

SEMINOLE CATTLEWOMEN

The Seminole People have always worked cattle in their way, in line with their values. The Tribe, and their ancestors, have a matrilineal and clan-based culture, and so Seminole women have always held important roles in cattle ranching. This legacy would be carried on into the 20th century by women such as Ada Tiger, who was said to have managed the largest Seminole herd, numbering well into the hundreds in the 1920s.

As the Seminole cattle industry modernized, the cattlewomen of the next generations organized. Following Ada Tiger, women such as Ada Pearce, Lena Gopher, Arlene Johns, and Ada Tiger's daughter Betty Mae Tiger Jumper took the reins. While some had inherited cattle from their fathers, brothers, or husbands, other women applied for grazing leases and purchased their own herds. When the Seminole Tribe organized a formal Cattle Association in 1954, these women were equals in a time when that equality was rare in the United States. They owned their own herds and took care of all the responsibilities necessary to maintain them, from buying feed to working the trail.

Their legacy continues today. In the summer of 2009, they formed a chapter of Florida CattleWomen, Inc. as the Seminole CattleWomen's Association, and later re-established in the fall of 2018 as Florida Seminole CattleWomen, Inc. This chapter serves as a vital voice for Seminole women in the beef cattle industry. Together the Seminole CattleWomen work to educate, involve, and support each other in building and maintaining the herds. It is a lifestyle and a heritage that has been passed down, from mother to daughter, through the generations.

Contributed by Lucy Bowers (Snake Clan).
Lucy Bowers is a former president of
Seminole CattleWomen's, Inc.

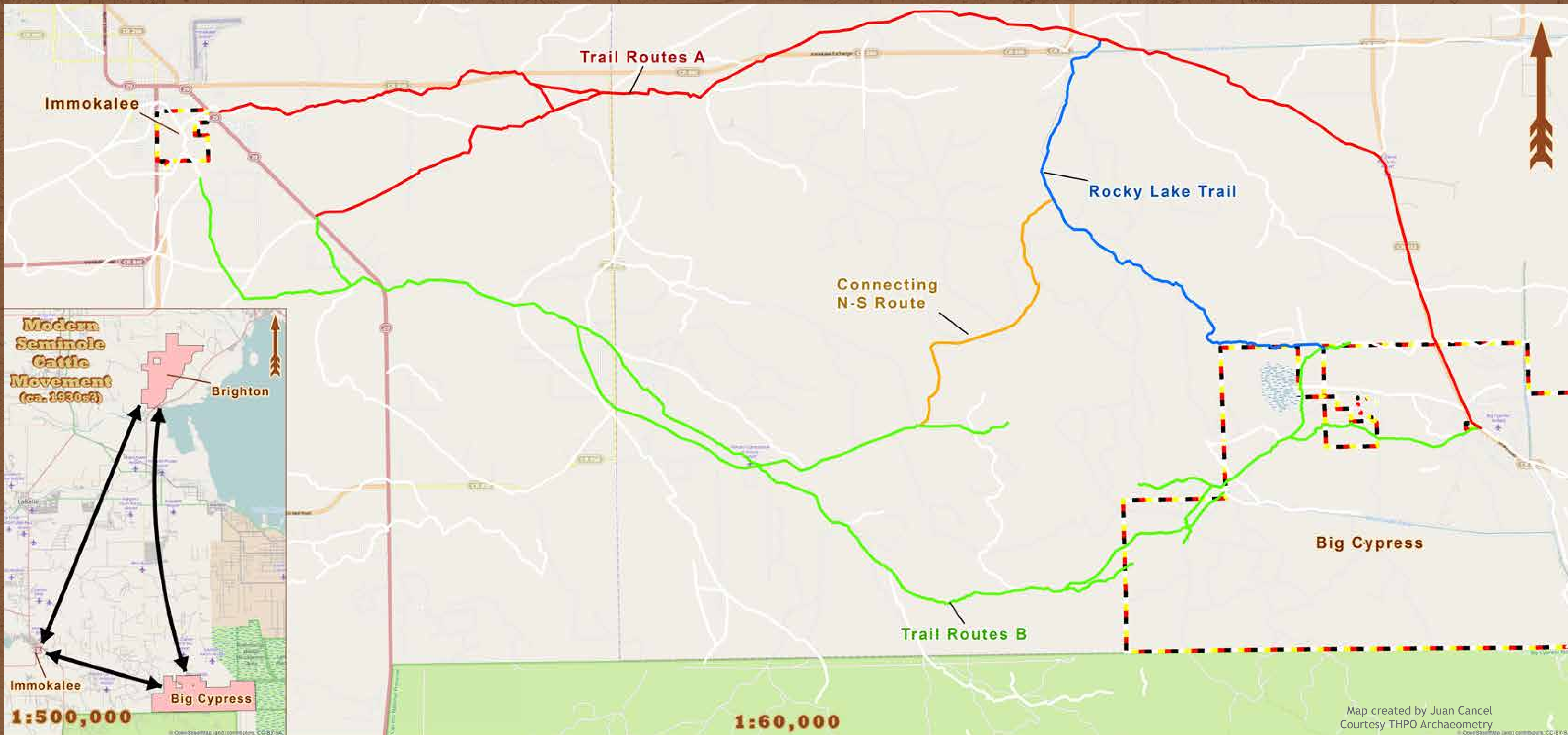
Cattle owner Janice Osceola poses in her Big Cypress pasture with grandchildren Martha Osceola-Turtle and Ariel Osceola-Turtle, and some of her herd.
Photo by Beverly Bidney
Photo courtesy Seminole Tribune.

Above: Seminole women on a cattle round up on the Brighton Reservation, ca 1955.
Left to right: Lorene Bowers, Agnes Johns, Arlene Johns (standing,) and Susie Girtman.
Photo by Irvin Peithmann
Photo courtesy State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

Below: Members of the Seminole Cattlewomen's Association gather for a portrait before a meeting in Brighton in 2019. Left to right: Carla Gopher Rodriguez, Emma Urbina, Martha Jones, Wendi Riley, and Lucy Bowers.
Photo by Beverly Bideny
Photo courtesy Seminole Tribune.

HISTORIC CATTLE TRAILS

In 2015 The 19th Annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo was held in Big Cypress. As part of the commemoration, a cattle drive recreated part of the historic cattle routes used by the Tribe. The THPO Archaeometry section created this map to show these historic routes.



RED BARN

Photo of the Red Barn circa 1942
Photo by William D. Boehmer
Photo courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The Red Barn stands in the heart of the Brighton Reservation, a symbol of the Seminole Tribal cattle program's beginnings, and of the change that came with it. Built around 1941, the Red Barn is one of the oldest standing structures on any STOF reservation. Originally the construction included not only the Red Barn itself, but a water tower, a pole barn, and two concrete water troughs for the horses. Today only the Red Barn itself remains.

The Red Barn was the center of the Brighton cattle operation at its beginning, housing the horses needed for the cattlekeepers and importantly serving as the central meeting place for the cattlekeepers. Charlie Micco, the first cattle foreman of the Tribe, kept his camp directly north of the Red Barn so he could be on hand at all times if needed. Just to the east could be found the camp of John Josh, a learned cattle worker who helped start the program. He was elected one of the first three Seminole cattle trustees for the Tribe, alongside Charlie Micco and Willie Gopher. It was in meetings at the Red Barn that the structure of the Seminole Cattle Program was created, a structure that became the foundation for the modern democratic government of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

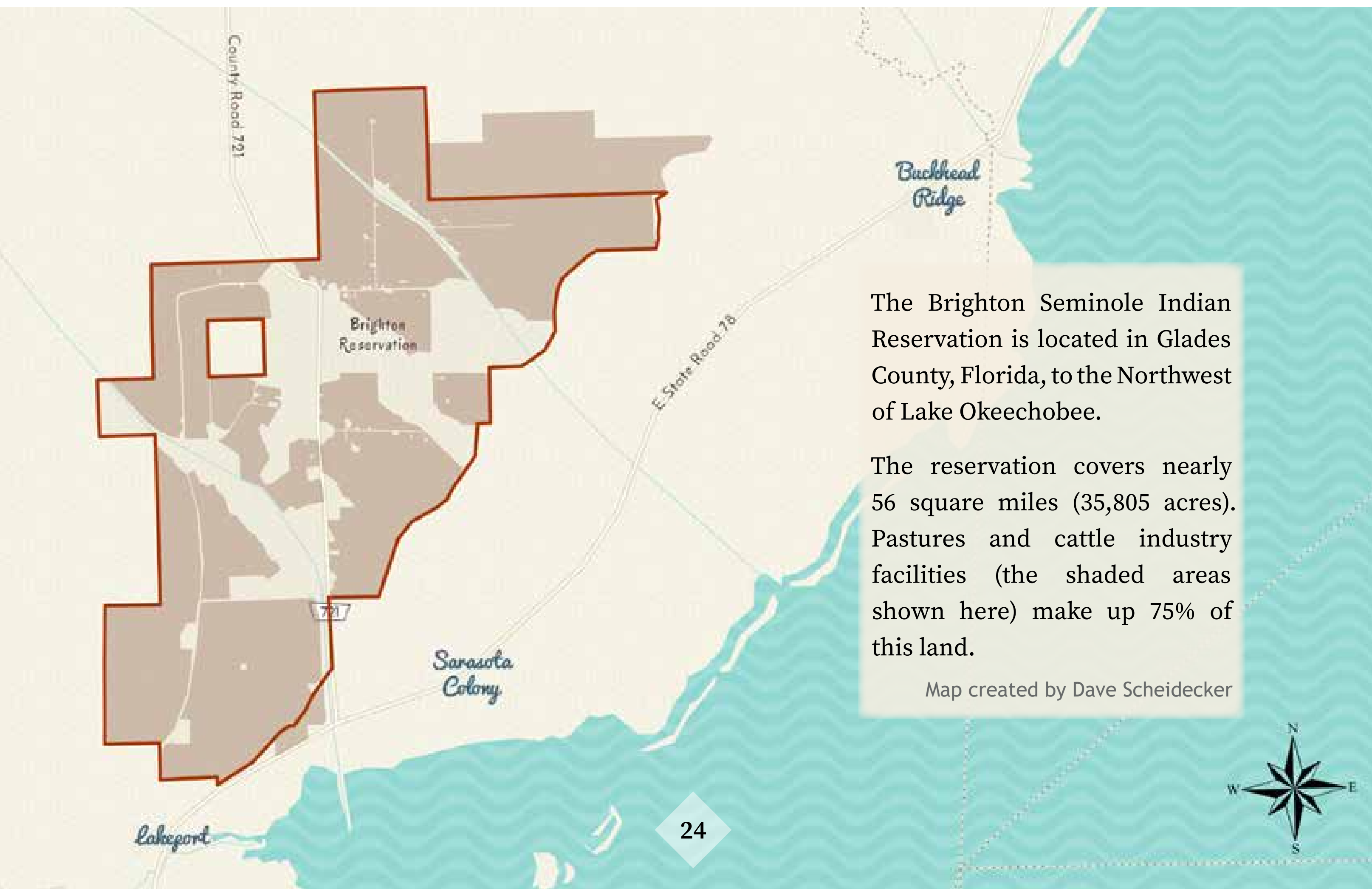
By the 1960s changes in technology and ranching methods had made the barn obsolete, and the cattle program had moved to its own offices. But while it was no longer needed for its originaly purpose, the Red Barn quickly became a central meeting ground for the Brighton community. Now open for both formal and informal use, the barn soon hosted tribal meetings, family reunions, birthday parties, and many other functions, continuing its role in Brighton life. It was one of the first sites listed on the Tribal Register of Historic Places, and in 2008 was named to the National Register of Historic Places for its place in Seminole History.

Contributed by Dave Scheidecker.
Dave Scheidecker is the Senior Research Coordinator for the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

BRIGHTON & THE BOWLEGS COW PENS

The cattle industry can now be found throughout Seminole lands, both on and off the reservations. However the modern operation was born in Brighton. The Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation is located in Glades County, Florida, near the northwestern shore of Lake Okeechobee, and is the second largest reservation of the Seminole Tribe of Florida in both population and land, covering an area of 35,805 acres (56 square miles). Three quarters of that land is devoted to the cattle industry and pastures.

One piece of the infrastructure that helps tell the story of the Seminole cattle program is the Bowlegs Cow Pens. These were built in the early 20th century with a simple post and rail construction and a pole barn. The pens took their name from the nearby camp of Billy Bowlegs III, who was a prominent Seminole figure and historian for the Tribe, and many of the early cowhands stayed there. The pens became a central location for cattle herding, and were one of the on-reservation facilities chosen to have an arsenic dip vat installed, intended to promote the cattle's health by killing ticks.



The Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation is located in Glades County, Florida, to the Northwest of Lake Okeechobee.

The reservation covers nearly 56 square miles (35,805 acres). Pastures and cattle industry facilities (the shaded areas shown here) make up 75% of this land.

Map created by Dave Scheidecker

Above: Seminole cattlemen lined up along a wood plank fence. Each of the men is holding out a branding iron. From left to right are: Willie Gopher, Joe Henry Tiger, Jack Smith, Frank Huff, Andrew Jackson Bowers, John Josh, Naha Tiger, Toby Johns, Frank Shore, John Henry Gopher, Lonnie Buck, Charlie Micco, and Harjo Osceola. ca. 1950
Photo by William D. Boehner
Photo courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Catalog Number 2009.34.1599

Below: Modern Brighton catle owners recreate the photo from above, August 1, 2019
From left to right are Sidney Gore, Donnie Gore, Norman Johns, Andrew Bowers Jr., Joletta Carney, Patty Waldron, Buster Baxley, Perrie Whiddon, Alex Johns, Reno Osceola, Emma Jane Urbina, Shane Buck, Stanlo Johns, Theresa Johns Urbina, Billy Joe Johns, Wendi Bowers Riley, Carla Gopher Rodriguez and Beulah Gopher.
Photo by Damon Scott
Photo Courtesy Seminole Tribune

As transportation advances changed the needs of the cowhands, the Bowlegs camp and therefore the pens stopped being used regularly, and were eventually abandoned. Between disrepair and storm damage, much of the pens eventually collapsed over time. However one remnant of the pens, the arsenic dip vat, remains. Similarly to the pens, these dip vats are engrained into the history of the cattle industry, though they now have a dire impact on the land. In many instances, the arsenic that was once housed in these dip vats has spread into the ground, leaching through the soil and into the natural wetland water systems.

Contributed by Maureen Mahoney, Roberto Luque, and Patricia Durius
Maureen Mahoney is the Tribal Archaeologist for the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office. Roberto Luque is the former Environmental Specialist for ERMD. Patricia Durius is the former Environmental Protection Coordinator for ERMD.

The Bowlegs Cow Pens today.
Photo by Maureen Mahoney

CHARLIE MICCO

When the modern cattle program began in Brighton, Charlie Micco (Panther Clan) already had decades of experience under his belt as a ranch hand, working outside of the reservations. With his knowledge and experience he was a natural leader in bringing the new techniques to the community. When the new venture received funding from the BIA, Charlie Micco became the first cattle foreman, and in this capacity trained a new generation of Seminole cattlemen.

He was never far from his work, making his camp next to the Brighton Red Barn that served as the center of operations, and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He and his wife Emma (Bird Clan) kept their garden within easy reach, always having food ready for visitors. Charlie was known to be always ready if he was needed.

In 1939, when the Seminole took full control of the program, a vote was held to elect the first cattle trustees. Charlie Micco was elected by the tribe to become one of the first three trustees, a position that would establish many precedents that would shape the future Tribal government. With his knowledge, practical mind, and experience he would help to shape the future of the cattle program and the Tribe.

Charlie Micco, 1960 (Colorized)
Photo by William D. Boehmer
Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Catalog Number 009.34.1266

STANLO JOHNS

Few people could ever know the Seminole cattle program as well as Stanlo Johns (Panther Clan).

For nearly four decades he served as the Cattle Foreman for the Tribe, from 1964 until his retirement in 2003. During this time he also served as the secretary of the National American Indian Cattle Association, and as president of the Glades County Cattlemen's Association. His influence and guidance within the program was instrumental in its success.

The Johns family can trace their lineage back to Cowkeeper and part of the long cattle legacy within the Seminole Tribe of Florida. When Stanlo Johns was born in 1935, it was only one year before the modern program would begin. As a child he became one of the first Tribal members to attend an American school, and would later serve in the US Army, earning the Specialist 4 rank. After returning home he joined the modern Seminole cattlemen, purchasing a small number of cows from other Tribal members.

Stanlo became the primary translator in the program, working with Fred Montsdeoca, the Okeechobee County Agricultural Agent who helped the Tribe start the cattle program. The two established the uniquely co-operative system of the program, working to bring all of the Tribal cattle owners to the table. When he was appointed the Cattle Foreman for the tribe in 1964, it was not only a recognition of his knowledge and work, it let him continue to guide and build up the Seminole program for the rest of the 20th century. Soon after he took on the job the Tribal program became fully independent from the federal government, and would grow to become the 12th largest cattle program in the United States.

IN MEMORY OF STANLO JOHNS (1935 - 2021)

Photo by Peter Gallagher

TICKS, DIP, & ARSENIC

The return of cattle brought many positive changes to the reservations. Income, stability, and pride were all products of the cattle trade. Unfortunately one of the newest developments in ranching would end up poisoning parts of the land.

One of the most serious dangers that cattle herds in the southeast faced came in a small package: ticks. These tiny insects could carry what the ranchers called "Cattle Fever," a blood parasite (Babesia) that would weaken and eventually kill any cattle it infested. Researchers were developing new techniques to fight the tick problem in the early twentieth century, but in the long run the cure they applied would prove to be even more dangerous: Arsenic.

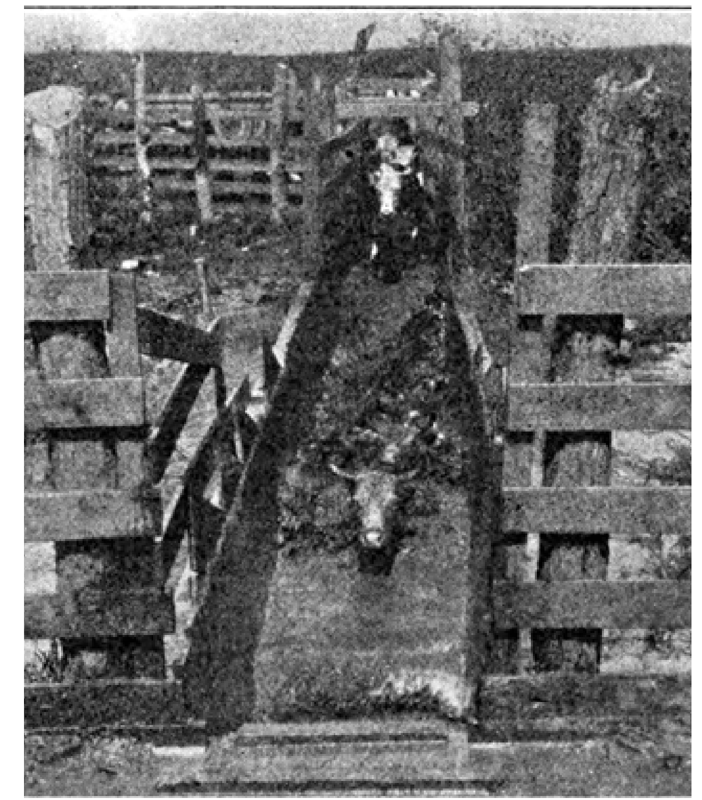
Arsenic is a naturally occurring element that has historically been used in many ways. However, it is now known that arsenic is incredibly toxic to both humans and animals. Human activities from industry, storage of chemicals, and pollution can cause additional arsenic to enter the soil and groundwater and reach dangerous levels. In the United States the use of arsenic on livestock has been well documented, and was an integral part of preventative care to protect cattle against fleas and ticks through the use of dip vats.

Left: Black and white photographic print of school children watching cattle dipping. The children are standing on either side of the chute. The people in the left side of the chute are identified left to right as Morgan Smith (man in the hat), Cody Micco, unknown, Laura Mae Jumper, Lois Jumper, and France Jumper. The children on the right side of the chute are identified left to right as Storeman Osceola, Jack Micco, and Leoda Jumper. Photo by William D. Boehmer
Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, 2009.34.188

A dip vat is a large concrete pool filled with an arsenic solution that cattle would wade through to get protection against ticks. Unfortunately, these vats would leak the chemical into the ground contaminating the surrounding soils. At the Bowlegs Cow Pen, it was discovered that a nearby archaeological site had been affected by the arsenic leaching into the ground, which might have impacted the site's artifacts. When the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) discovered that the Bowlegs Cow Pen site once contained a dip vat, the Seminole Tribe had to investigate to see if any of the artifacts there had been contaminated. This was an important safety issue for the THPO collections, as chemicals from toxic artifacts can leech into bare skin and cause arsenic poisoning.

Arsenic can enter the human body by drinking contaminated water, breathing in dust and soil contaminated with arsenic, and by skin contact with soils and water that contain arsenic. Arsenic affects nearly all organ systems and the length and amount of exposure can influence the body in different ways. Contact with the skin may cause patchy reddish spots that can become thick and scaly and can even cause skin cancer. Drinking contaminated water may cause damage to the brain, heart, and digestive system, and may also cause liver and/or kidney failure, or cancer. Breathing in dust and soil contaminated with arsenic over time can cause lung cancer. Human activities can also increase the risk of arsenic exposure. Sawing, sanding, or burning arsenic-treated wood could cause

MEDICINE TO KILL TICKS.



Right: Excerpt from *The Story of the Cattle Fever Tick: What Every Southern Child Should Know About Cattle Ticks*, US Department of Agriculture, 1917'

David M. Sonders from Key Engineering Solutions-US performs arsenic testing on artifacts for the THPO lab.
Photo by Domonique deBeaubien.

inhalation of arsenic sawdust or smoke. Living within former agricultural areas increases the risk for soil and groundwater to have higher levels of arsenic due to previous pesticide usage. Drinking water or irrigation water wells may be contaminated which puts even more people at risk.

Since arsenic is a naturally occurring element, the THPO was able to use a special technology called portable X-Ray Fluorescence (pXRF for short). The pXRF shoots an x-ray beam at an object, causing the object's atoms to emit a return fluorescence that is unique to each element's composition. By zapping each potentially contaminated object with the pXRF, the device would alert if arsenic is present. The THPO tested different objects from the archaeological site for arsenic, mostly animal bone, shell, and glass fragments. Of the 38 objects tested, 7 returned trace amounts of arsenic contamination. In order to keep the researchers safe, all objects were given brightly colored labels indicating that trace arsenic had been identified, and to only handle with gloves. With care, the Seminole Tribe is still able to house and learn from the Bowlegs Cow Pens artifacts, while also keeping the Collection and staff safe.

Contributed by Domonique deBeaubien, Roberto Luque, and Patricia Durius. Domonique deBeaubien is the Collections Manager for the THPO. Roberto Luque is the former Environmental Specialist for ERMD. Patricia Durius is the former Environmental Protection Coordinator for ERMD.

Above: A drilling rig is used to collect samples for arsenic testing.
Photo courtesy STOF ERMD.

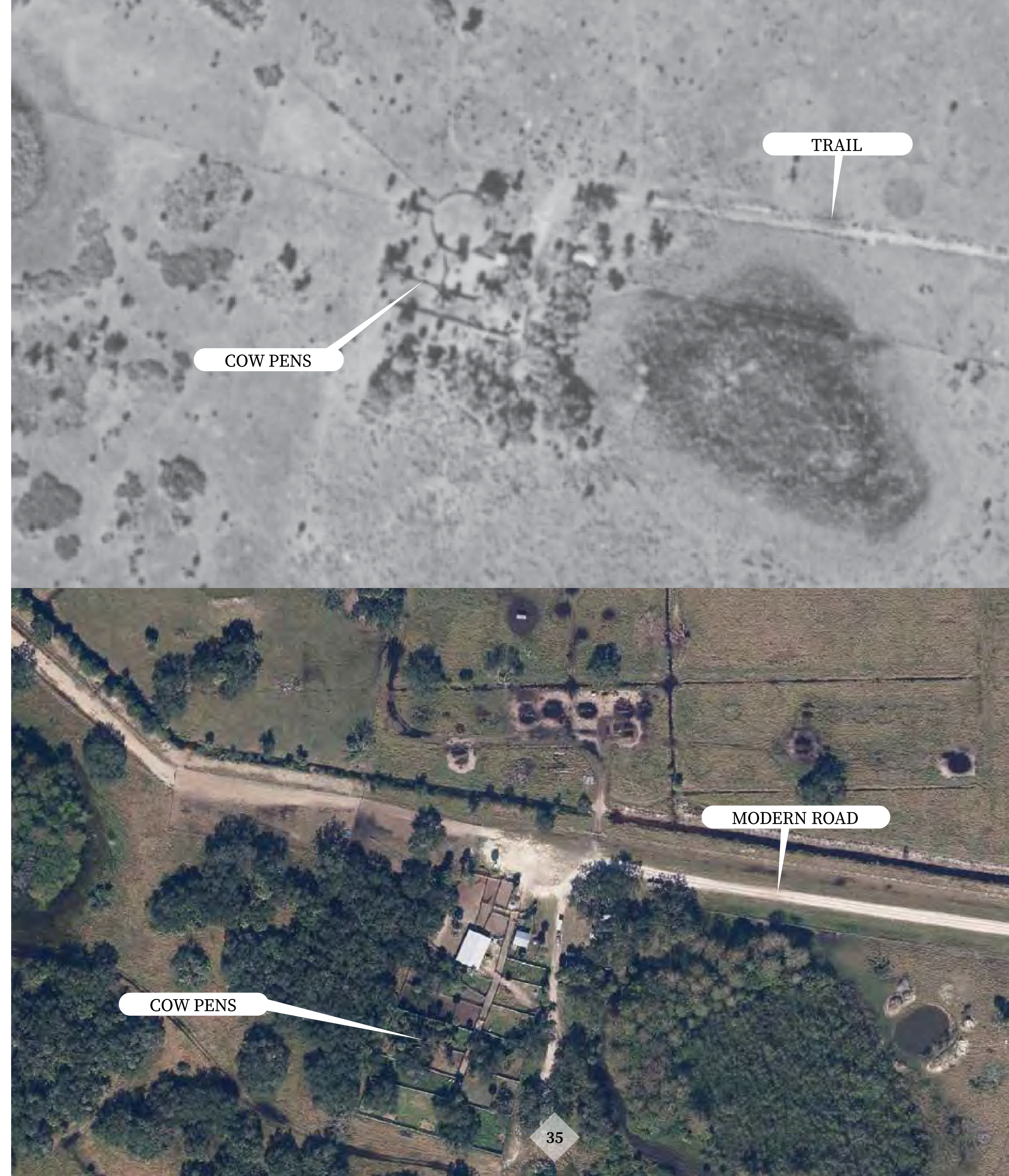
Below: Workers wearing protective gear remove arsenic contamination by removing the toxic soil.
Photo courtesy STOF ERMD.

COW PEN ARCHAEOLOGY

The Tribal Archaeology Section (TAS) conducts various types of surveys across all of the Seminole Reservations. Depending on the type of project, the TAS uses three types of surveys to determine the presence of Seminole cultural items: shovel testing, pedestrian survey, and metal detection. At times, these survey methods have revealed remnants of the early cattle industry on STOF Reservations in some form or another. Some have been preserved and restored as historical sites, such as the Red Barn, and some were upgraded over the years and are still in use, like Marsh Pens. Some surveys lead to the discovery of smaller indicators of the cattle industry such as historic glass soda bottles, tractor parts, and medicine bottles used for cattle and horses.

Whenever the TAS conducts a shovel tests survey, a pedestrian survey is also completed. A pedestrian survey consists of walking the survey area and checking the ground surface for any evidence of human activity. The majority of both of these surveys are typically conducted inside oak and palm tree hammocks. This is where the THPO often finds items such as old tractor parts from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, like tires, wheels, seats, and engine components. One of the most common items found during pedestrian surveys are historic soda bottles. Typically, a large amount of historic glass bottles and jars are found near historic Seminole Camps, but when the THPO finds these soda bottles in small quantities in areas where no camps are located, it is more likely they are associated with cattle workers who had stopped for a break and discarded their bottles when they were finished.

Facing Page: Aerial photos of the Marsh Pens showing the change over time. The upper photo was taken in 1948, while the lower one is from 2018.
Aerial Imagery taken from the THPO GIS database



Above: A 1940's tractor seat found during a 2020 THPO survey.
Photo by Shawn Keyte

Below: A Patio soda bottle from the 1950's found by TAS archaeologists during a 2018 THPO survey.
Photo by Shawn Keyte

Another way the TAS identifies evidence of the Seminole cattle industry is by using historic aerial photos. Cow pens, historic trails, Seminole camps, gardens, and gathering places, are often visible in aerial photographs dating back to the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. Cow pens are especially easy to identify by their distinct shape and size. There are also multiple trails that come from all over the reservation that end up at the many of the cow pens. Some of these trails were originally created by the U.S. Military during the Seminole War period and are still used to this day by Seminoles. The TAS performs metal detection surveys along these trails in search of any artifacts related to the U.S. Military and the Seminole cattle industry.

Contributed by Shawn Keyte.
Shawn Keyte is the Archaeology Crew Chief for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

Facing Page Above: An aerial photo of the Red Barn, Cow Pens, Historic Trails,and the Charlie Micco Camp and Garden from 1962

Facing Page Below: The Cow Pens behind the Red Barn in 1948.
Photos from THPO GIS Database

WHAT IS COWKEEPER'S LEGACY?

The modern cattle industry stems from a rich cattle tradition. Jack Chalfant is a Tribal member, archaeologist, and cattle owner. Jack sees the history of the cattle program daily and strives to carry the tradition that his family started forward. Jack is a 4th generation cattle owner, whose great-grandpa Charlie Micco was one of the original cattle trustees and who had a camp next to the Red Barn, highlighting that structure's significance. Jack's family always stressed the importance of cattle and told him that it was a part of Seminole culture and traditions since they were first introduced by the Spanish. Jack began working with cattle when he was four or five years old and still carries on the family tradition today on the Brighton Reservation.

As an archaeologist within the THPO, Jack has noted the history of the cattle industry through archival research, fieldwork, and interviews with Tribal community members and has seen how it has changed over the years. He has gone from retrieving calves from the dip vats as a child to understanding the danger that arsenic has on people and the land. By documenting the presence of these dip vats, cow pens, cattle trails, barns, and camps, Jack has seen how much the cattle industry has changed, with positive results. For example, when cows were driven to one of four cow pens on the Brighton Reservation, the calves would lose weight from the stress and the cattle owner would lose income. In comparison, calves are today hauled by truck and trailer, which results in better efficiency and less weight loss.

Jack is one of 40 individual cattle owners on the Brighton Reservation. This number has expanded since Jack's great-grandpa was a cattle trustee and will most likely continue to grow in the future. With the purchase of Parker Island, Rio Ranch, and McDaniel's Ranch, the cattle industry within the Tribe will most likely increase. As part of this future, the Tribe has a 4H activity that includes a heifer program, where students will learn how to raise calves. As someone who's been working cows for over 40 years, Jack hopes that the next generation goes further and higher than what he and the current cattle owners have achieved in terms of quality and production. With the increase in land, cattle, and the 4H program investing in the youth, the future of the cattle industry is looking brighter and surpassing his great-grandpa's vision.

Contributed by Dave Scheidecker.
Dave Scheidecker is the Senior Research Coordinator for the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

Facing Page Above: Watching a rodeo in Okeechobee.
Left to Right:John Henry Gopher, Henry Gopher, Lonnie Buck, Charlie Micco, and Jack Smith Sr. in foreground, November 1949.
Photo courtesy State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

Facing Page Below: Richard Bowers (left) and Morgan Yates (center) ride inThe 18th Annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive, March 22, 2014.
Photos courtesy Seminole Tribune

The Big Cypress Cattle Drive 2015
Photo courtesy Seminole Tribune

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