

Florida Cracker Trail 28th Annual Cross State Ride

Keeping History Alive "Every Step of the Way"
110 Miles from Bradenton to Fort Pierce

February 14th - 22nd 2015



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THE 2015 ANNUAL CROSS-STATE RIDE IS DEDICATED TO



MONROE THE MULE (1991 - 2014)

There is no doubt about it, Monroe was one special mule. Monroe was bred by Julie Hinote from her palomino, mare, Blondie, to Paul Sullivan's mammoth jack, Bob. Monroe was special right from the start. To say that Julie and Monroe made an impressive sight going down the road is an understatement. Tall of stature, kind of heart with a strong stubborn streak, mule and owner shared many characteristics.

Monroe made the Cross-State Ride 18 times, totaling 2,160 miles. His first trip on the Cracker Trail was in 1994. From then on, he made the trip every year until he came up lame in 2012. Monroe carried Julie and quite a few others across the State without missing a beat.

Monroe was a true and faithful mule. He was steady as a rock, unless a semi-trailer was coming up. On his first Cracker Trail, an impatient tractor-trailer loaded with grapefruit came along side of Monroe. Right as the truck came up to Monroe the driver released the air brakes, smoke was belching and grapefruit came tumbling out. It was hard to tell if it was the brakes or the tumbling grapefruit that unnerved Monroe but in either case, he looked more like a bucking bronc than a mule. From that day on, Monroe could spot a semi two miles off. When he did, you had better hold on.

Monroe followed Julie around like a puppy dog. Most of the time, Julie did not even bother to tie him up. Monroe carried Julie all across the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. It was a sad day in 2014 when Julie accepted that nothing could be done to cure Monroe of his ailments. With a heavy heart, she knew it was time to send Monroe to the green pastures above, where the road is always free of glass and there are no tractor-trailers. The Florida Cracker Trail Association pays tribute to Monroe the Mule.

Happy Trails, Monroe.

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Wranglers

Reagan Park

Makayla Harrison

Abigail Hamsher

Isabella Park



Hello to Everyone!

Thank you for your interest in joining the Florida Cracker Trail Association (FCTA) and the FCTA's Annual Cross State Ride.

The FCTA is a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to the mission of "Keeping History Alive", by educating through demonstration, the Old Florida Cracker Pioneer ways of agriculture, animal husbandry, respect for the land as well as the hardships and joys of life on the original frontier. The Annual Cross State Ride serves to preserve the importance of the role of the State of Florida in the introduction of horses and cattle by the Spanish Explorers into the New World and the birth and continuance of the cattle and horse industries by its future settlers and their descendents and to support related causes.

On November 20, 2000, the Florida Cracker Trail was selected as a Community Millennium Trail. Millennium Trails is a partnership between the White House Millennium Trail Council, the Department of Transportation, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the National Endowment for the Arts and other public agencies and private organizations. The goal of the Millennium Trails is the creation of a nationwide network of trails that protect natural environment, interpret history and culture, and enhance alternative transportation, recreation and tourism.

We are excited that in 2015, the Annual Cross State Ride will be our 28th Anniversary! We will begin in Manatee County on Saturday, February 14, and commence with a parade through Ft. Pierce, Florida on Saturday, February 21, with camping on the beach! We will complete approximately 110 miles when we have finished the ride. Each day we will cover approximately 20 miles, some days less, some days more! The ride is as much "on road" as "off road". We are escorted by county law enforcement as we ride through 5 counties and through private cattle ranches, Florida State parks, and South Florida Water Management areas. As we move across the State, we will camp in a different location each night. We break for lunch around noon each day and have a bus company that will transport rig drivers from the lunch stop each day back to the previous night's camp to retrieve the rigs and drive them to the night camp. The bus will then transport the rig driver back to the lunch stop to finish the afternoon ride. Horse water and port-o-lets are provided by the FCTA and are available throughout the ride, in camp, at lunch, and at water breaks.

The FCTA has chosen Pat's Bar-B-Que of Lake Placid as our Caterer this year. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Myers have done an excellent job on past rides and they make every effort to be prompt, professional, courteous, and provide great food! Morning and evening meals will be hot and freshly prepared. Lunch on the trail will be served as a box lunch for "on the go". Morning and afternoon snacks and beverages will be provided during water breaks.

In addition, we publish a Commemorative Ride Program Book in which you can place an advertisement or picture of you or your family or business. We will have a Saddle raffle and an Auction that supports our Scholarship Funds. We have entertainment in camp each evening and children's games planned each day.

The Annual Cross State Ride is strictly limited to members of the FCTA. The Membership Form and all other forms can be found on our website: www.CrackerTrail.org and on www.FlaHorse.com on the Club page. Join or renew your FCTA membership today to be "in the loop" to receive up-to-the-minute information on the Ride.

Let's make history!

Lynn Carlson, President



Welcome to the 28th annual cross state ride with the Florida Cracker Trail Association.

We are honored that you have joined us this year to celebrate our Florida heritage. If you are a returning rider, then the history and comradery have obviously grabbed ahold of your heart. If this is your first ride with us, be ready to surrender to the call next year!

I am excited to be the Trail Boss this year. One of my passions is riding horses and not much makes me happier than being able to share that passion with others. I would like to extend my gratitude to Jennifer Osterling for her dedication and outstanding work paving the way for me as the previous Trail Boss and to the board of directors for the vote of confidence in my ability to lead everyone safely. I look forward to serving you to the best of my ability and more with the help of my Assistant Trail Boss, Robert Wolfe.

Since you are reading this letter I know you have a ride book. Please be sure to read your ride book and refer to it often for important information. It can answer the majority of your questions plus it's full of interesting tid bits and awesome ads from our sponsors. The book will also tell you who your Outriders and Wranglers are. These outstanding volunteers are here to help me ensure that the ride goes smoothly and that every rider and every horse stays safe. To avoid unnecessary and unpleasant confrontation, please familiarize yourself with the ride rules. They are designed for everyone's comfort and safety. Violation of these rules could result in your removal from the ride without refund. Once again, refer to your ride book for loads of information like camp locations, meal schedules, youth activities, special entertainment, daily mileage and much, much more. Still need answers? The lead wagon with Marilyn and her mule, Clyde, will be pleased to offer assistance. They will be easy to locate in camp so be sure to look them up. You will be glad you did.



I encourage you to be good stewards of the land that we are privileged to camp on. Please be respectful and clean up after yourselves before leaving. Some landowners have special rules or requests while we stay on their property. Be sure to listen for these kind of announcements and instructions on the bus or at our daily riders meetings in the mornings. For example, there will be absolutely no alcohol or whip cracking allowed on the Bar Crescent S Ranch. (Saturday night, all day Sunday)

Finally, please keep in mind that this ride is a historical celebration. There will be occasional off road riding but the majority of the ride will be roadside. There will also be frequent whip cracking while on the ride, especially when spectators are present. If your horse is not confident around such noise please contact an Outrider to assist you until your horse can be desensitized.

Keeping history alive!

Suzanne Park, Trail Boss

"Your attitude is the difference between an adventure or an ordeal."

Ride Schedule and Directions



Friday the 13th Kibler Ranch

From I-75 take 64 East approximately 15.5 miles, camp will be located on the left. From Zolfo Springs take State Road 64 West approximately 27.6 miles, camp will be located on the right.

Saturday the 14th Bar Crescent S

From I-75 take State Road 64 East approximately 29.2 miles to Sidney Roberts Road. From Zolfo Springs take State Road 64 West approximately 14 miles to Sidney Roberts Road. Continue 1.5 miles, camp will be located on the left.

Sunday the 15th Layover at Bar Crescent S.

Monday the 16th Parker Place/Krause

West from Zolfo Spring approximately .5 miles on State Road 64 – west side of Peace River turn north on Florida Avenue, the camp will be located on your right.

Tuesday the 17th Kahn Ranch

From Zolfo Springs approximately 14.2 miles east on State Road 66 turn left on South Hammock, go .5 miles, camp is located on the left. From US 27 take State Road 66 approximately 10.2 miles to South Hammock, turn right. Go .5 miles, camp will be located on left.

Wednesday the 18th Stokes Ranch

11 miles east of US 27, turn right onto Cowhouse Road. Go .8 miles, camp will be located on the right.

Thursday the 19th Bass Ranch

From Okeechobee go west on Highway 98 approximately 14.2 miles to CR 700A. Go .5 miles, camp will be located on the left. From Sebring take US 98 East approximately 27.1 to CR 700A. Go .5 miles, camp will be located on the left.

Friday the 20st Adams Ranch

From Okeechobee US 44I North to CR 68 turn right (east). Camp is approximately 5 miles down on the left. From Fort Pierce, I-95 approximately 14.5 miles. Go west on CR68 (Orange Avenue).

Saturday the 21nd Parade and Camping in Fort Pierce at Harbor Pointe or Frederick Douglas Beach

(Please see Fort Pierce Terminus page for directions and more information).

Florida Cracker Trail 2015

Annual Cross State Ride Rules

These Official Rules were developed over time for the safety of all participants, landowners, and animals and apply to any FCTA camp-out, ride or function, and the Annual Cross State Ride.

1. All participants do acknowledge and agree that each and every aspect of their participation is by Florida law, an equine activity, and the FCTA, their agents, licensees, landlords, invitees, landowners, and permittees are all individually and cumulatively deemed Equine Activity Sponsors and not subject to liability under the Florida Statute.
2. All participants must comply with the Laws of the State of Florida and FCTA Official Rules.
3. The designated Trail Boss and Outriders are here to assist you and your animals. Give them your utmost respect and attention and be courteous and respectful of your fellow riders. **All participants are under the direction of the Trail Boss. The Trail Boss will enforce these rules singularly and exclusively in line with his/her responsibility for the overall safety of all participants.** Any deviation in behavior from the Trail Boss' authority will be grounds for immediate expulsion from any camp-out, ride or function, or from the Annual Cross State Ride. If you have a concern or a problem while in camp or on the trail, please notify the Trail Boss, an Outrider, or a Board of Director.
4. WARNING: Under Florida Law, an equine activity sponsor or equine professional is not liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities. (Florida Statutes 773.01-773.05)
5. **In support of "Nicole's Law", the FCTA requires that ALL children under the age of 16 must wear a certified helmet AT ALL TIMES while participating in the Annual Cross State Ride or in any FCTA event. This includes ALL riding in camp or on the Ride, with the exception of the parade in Ft. Pierce.** The law states that "any parent or guardian of a child under 16 years of age may not authorize or knowingly permit a child to ride without a certified helmet, therefore, anyone under the age of 16 riding without a helmet will be removed from the Annual Cross State Ride, no exceptions. (Chapter 2009-105, House Bill # 169)
6. Every participant (rider or camper) must be an FCTA member in good standing to participate in the Annual Cross State Ride.
7. The Annual Cross State ride is open to advanced riders and trained horses. All horses in camp or on the ride must be able to handle traffic, noise, bridges, water, parades, whip cracking, etc. Do not plan to condition your horse or to train your horse on the Annual Cross State Ride.
8. THE OFFICIAL RULES OF THE ANNUAL CROSS STATE RIDE WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED ON THE RIDE. NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN AFTER THE START OF THE RIDE IF YOU CANNOT COMPLETE THE ANNUAL CROSS STATE RIDE OR IF YOU OR YOUR HORSE ARE REMOVED FROM THE ANNUAL CROSS STATE RIDE.
9. **No whip cracking after dark unless in designated areas. Designated areas to be picked daily and will be announced.**
10. There will be a Mandatory Rider's Meeting on Friday night at 6:00 p.m. around the camp fire and a Mandatory Rider's Meeting every morning before ride-out. Registration is an absolute MUST if you plan to ride on ANY DAY.
11. All persons in camp or on the Annual Cross State Ride must be registered and must sign a Contract for Release and Indemnification. This includes all riders, campers, guests, ride staff and entertainers. It is the responsibility of the participant to maintain their event identification with them at all times.
12. Any riders or campers under the age of 18 must be accompanied and supervised by their natural parent or legal guardian AT ALL TIMES, in camp or on the Ride. Natural parent or legal guardian

must become a member in good standing of the FCTA and MUST complete a notarized Contract for Release naming the responsible accompanying adult.

13. A record of negative test for equine infectious anemia (COGGINS) conducted within 12 months is required. This 12-month period must be good through the dates of the entire ride. An agricultural inspector will be present at all camp locations to inspect your animals.
- 14. All riders MUST stay behind wagons, unless otherwise designated by the Trail Boss.** Only riders assisting the wagons are allowed alongside the wagon teams.
15. When riding along the roads, the grass right-of-way is the designated trail. Do not ride on the pavement unless obstacles dictate or as directed by the Trail Boss. Do not cross to the other side of the road unless supervised by the Trail Boss or Outrider.
16. The FCTA will provide water for horses in camp and on the trail. Do NOT crowd wagons at watering sites. Wagon horses are to drink first. For safety, stay mounted when watering your horse. Do not mount or dismount or tie your horse to the horse wagons, pick-up wagon, port-a-potty wagon, water wagons, or logo wagons. The FCTA does not provide water for human consumption or bathing or showering purposes.
17. Glass containers are prohibited on the trail. Do NOT dispose of your garbage on the trail, in campsite or at the water breaks. Dispose of trash in the appropriate receptacles. Do not take your trash to the Caterer. There will be dumpsters provided along the trail at designated night camps.
18. No unnecessary running past other riders.
19. Refrain from riding close to pasture fences, where livestock is kept, especially loose horses. NO running through pastures or land on the way into campsites where there are or might be pastured cattle or horses. **DO NOT CHASE LANDOWNER'S LIVESTOCK.**
20. Stay off people's lawn and out of citrus groves. Do not pick fruit or vegetation along the trail.
21. If you or your horse has a problem, notify the Trail Boss or an Outrider. Drop to the rear if you need to load on the pick-up wagon. Horses showing undue stress will be pulled from the ride. The pick-up trailer is for the relief of the distressed animals and riders only, and it must be made available for true emergencies and distress situations.
22. All horses must have bridles, reins, and saddles while on trail. No riding in a halter, no double-riding, no pony-ing of un-ridden horses, no bareback riding on the trail, no stallions allowed.
23. All riders must be dressed appropriately for riding. No sneakers, sandals or bare feet, no bathing suits or inappropriate apparel, (shorts, flip flops, etc.), or clothing with inappropriate or offensive language on the trail.
- 24. No dumping of holding tanks (grey or black) in camp or anywhere on the trail. Use legal dump stations.**
25. Horses known to kick, or horses that begin kicking on the trail, must wear a red tail ribbon at all times.
- 26. Quiet time is designated as 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.** No unnecessary loudness or activity at this time. No generators running in quiet time, except in the vicinity of cook wagons. While in camp, be courteous to your neighbors and fellow campers.
27. All pets must be confined to the owner's camp site. No pets allowed on the trail, lunch or water breaks, or in food areas. Be a responsible pet owner. In camp, dogs must be kept on a leash.
28. No firearms of any kind.
29. No equine that stands less than forty-two inches (42") at the withers will be allowed to participate in the Annual Cross State Ride.

Daily Activities & Events

Ride Registration begins 2pm Friday at the Logo Wagon

Breakfast – 6 AM to 7 AM

Lunch on the Trail

Dinner – 6 PM to 7 PM

Changes to the schedule occur at the discretion of the Trail Boss. Listen for daily announcements on the bus & posted on the announcements board located by the Chuck Wagon.

Friday

Meet and Greet; an opportunity to see old friends and make a few new ones.

Saturday - approximately 16 miles of riding

Mandatory rider's meeting 9 am. Kids Meeting with Chelsey Knutowicz after group meeting. There is absolutely no cracking of whips per the landowner.

Sunday

FCTA Fundraising Auction. There is absolutely no cracking of whips per the landowner.

Monday - approximately 20 miles of riding

Whip cracking allowed in designated areas. Quiet night in camp.

Tuesday - approximately 21 miles of riding

Authentic Western Wear Day-- no tee shirts

Wednesday - approximately 24 miles of riding

Be patriotic, it's red, white, and blue day so be sure to show your colors! In the evening there is a cow whip popping contest by the Cook Shack-- open to all ages.

Thursday - approximately 20 miles of riding

Authentic Wear Day, kids need to finish essays and turn into Chelsey Knutowicz

Friday - approximately 22 miles of riding

Rider awards and saddle drawing

Saturday

Parade through downtown Ft. Pierce, beach ride, waterfront camping, pubcrawl through Ft. Pierce



I hope everyone has had a great year and is ready to ride their hearts out and have fun doing so. If this is your first time we are so glad you came! Be sure to join us at our meeting to go over all the awesome things we have planned.

Schedule

Saturday (14th): Kids Meeting: Be sure to join us after supper by Duck's Cabin to see all the great things we have planned this year to do during our ride! Please make sure to wear your helmets this year, anyone under the age of 16!

Sunday: Game Day: Last year's games were awesome and we all had lots of fun! This year is going to be even better, hope you can make it to our Game Day in the afternoon, we have some exciting new games this year.

Monday: Historical Costume Day: During the ride today be sure to fix you and your horse up in your favorite historical character costume to win a prize.

You've all had a long ride today clean yourselves up, take a rest, and maybe a swim!

Tuesday: Where's Bessie and Craft Day: Everyone loves to play Where's Bessie during the ride. For those of you that are new, ask around on the trail "Where's Bessie," in hopes of finding our little cows to win a prize for who found the most Bessies.

After the ride for some fun bring your creativity to the cook shack (Pat's Barbecue) to make exciting memories! Be sure to sign up for the Whip Cracking Contest at the Logo Wagon or during the craft fun!

Wednesday: Scavenger Hunt and Whip Cracking Contest:

Be Patriotic! It is Red, White & Blue Day so wear your colors for the parade across SR 27, at about noon.

During the ride today, pick a partner and find a person that matches all of the items on the list! You can get your list from Chelsey at breakfast or before we head out. Make sure you keep your findings a secret to get ahead of the game!! The winners will get a prize.

After supper is our Cow Whip Cracking Contest by the Cook Shack, open to all ages. Sign up before hand at the Logo Wagon or find Chelsey Knutowicz!

Thursday: Essay/Art Pieces and Obstacle Day: Authentic Historic Wear Day. Be sure to finish your essays or art piece for the little ones on Cracker History. Turn them into the Logo Wagon or Chelsey before the next day!

Before dinner join us for our Obstacle Day to have fun seeing if you can make it through!

Friday: Rider and Essay or Art Piece Awards. Enjoy the dance!

Saturday (21st): Parade Today: Dress your best, clean up them dirty boots and wear your best hat. Today is the day you show you lasted through the hard trail the Cracker Cowboys rode!

Thanks! Chelsey Knutowicz (Hamsher)

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Florida Cracker Trail Museum
Florida Agricultural Museum
Florida Cracker Horse Association
Florida Cracker Cattle Association
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**We also fund two college scholarships
each year. Information about our
scholarship program can be found at
our website www.crackertrail.org.**

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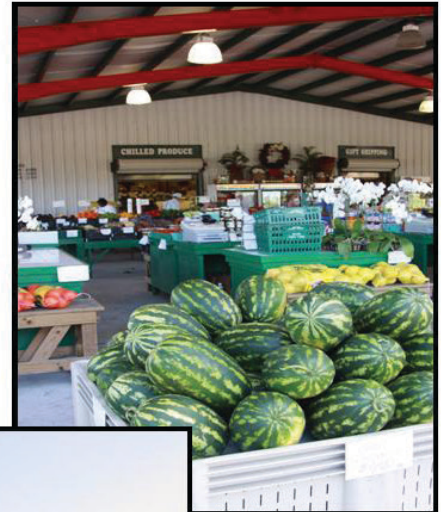


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Famous Florida Crackers

ABBY MARION – WINNER OF THE AGRICULTURE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



The term Cracker began to be used in Florida when settlers would herd wild cattle all over the state in the early days of Florida's history. These settlers used whips that popped or cracked when trying to round up the animals for sale or food as a living. Unlike what many think of when they think of the word Cracker when used to refer to a person, a Florida Cracker is a term that refers to a person who is a native born Floridian that commonly raises cattle or horses and lives an agricultural lifestyle. The term is still actively used today to refer to the many farm and ranch families that settled in, have called Florida their home for many years, and continue to do so today.

There have been many individuals that have been proud to call themselves Florida Crackers. From governors, commissioners, and senators to entrepreneurs, cowboys, an individual who lives to tell the Florida Cracker story, and an astronaut, numerous individuals have gone on to be successful that make up the diverse history of the Florida Cracker. Although the majority of these individuals are just as happy and successful living as ranchers, farmers, or businessmen and are just as important as those explained in this essay. They are important to Florida's history and most importantly Florida Cracker history because these famous Florida Crackers are who have pioneered and preserved to make Florida what it is today, and without them, we would not be as diverse influential state that we are today.

Agriculturally, since the original Crackers were cowboys, it is only fitting to start off with one of Florida's most famous Cracker cowboys—Mr. Morgan Bonaparte "Bone" Mizell. Bone Mizell lived in Manatee County in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where his family was prominent in the cattle industry. While he wasn't formally educated, Bone began to learn the ins and outs of the cattle industry for his father and other cattle tycoons. Cattle rustling was also very common, and he was often accused of this and eventually sentenced to prison for it, where he was then pardoned of wrongdoing, and lived out the rest of his life in Southern Florida where he died of illness in Desoto County, and still serves as a successful example of Florida Cracker cowboy history today. It is also worth noting of agricultural Cracker history in Florida that our current Commissioner of Agriculture, Adam Putnam, is not only one of the most famous agriculture industry leaders in Florida, but also a Florida Cracker as well.

Moving towards another side of Cracker history in Florida, there is another area that perhaps just as many famous Florida Crackers have been a part of as agriculture: politics and government. From local leaders to the state governor, many Florida Crackers have found their success in politics. Seven of Florida's past governors were Florida Crackers. Doyle Carlton, son of a Florida Cracker and cattlemen, practiced law, was a U.S. senator, and served as our 25th governor from 1929-33. Fred Cone from Columbia County served as Lake City's mayor, a Florida senator, and as our 27th governor from 1937-41. Spessard Holland served after him as our 28th governor from 1941-45, and created the Florida Game and Freshwater Commission (now Fish and Wildlife). Our 30th governor from 1949-53 was Fuller Warren, who served in the military, as a city councilman, and as a state representative. LeRoy Collins was also a state representative and senator, and served as our 33rd governor from 1955-61. Finally, Lawton Chiles, infamous for his trail and 1,000 mile walk across the state, served as our 1991-98 and went on to be involved in national politics.

There are a few other famous Florida Crackers who have made their mark in Florida's and Florida Cracker history over the years such as Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Griffin was a successful businessman with his business with an original citrus operation that expanded further into agriculture and eventually got him named as one of Forbes' richest Americans in 1989. Ben Hill Griffin Stadium at Florida Field at University of Florida in Gainesville, also his alma mater, is also named for him from his large financial contributions to the university that still last today. Another unique Florida Cracker is Mr. Bill Nelson, who most notably served as a U.S. representative and senator, also flew in space as a payload specialist aboard Space Shuttle Columbia in 1986.

Finally, there is another group of famous Florida Crackers that are definitely important to Florida Cracker history: those who work to preserve it through their jobs, hobbies, and daily lives such as storyteller Butch Harrison, and organizations such as Cracker Country at the Florida State Fairgrounds and the Florida Cracker Trail Association. Butch Harrison is known as a "Cracker storyteller" who speaks and records stories of Florida Crackers and history in South Florida. Cracker Country at the Florida State Fair is a unique, living Cracker settlement that preserves and displays life of early Florida history for all to see with buildings, farms, and reenactments. In addition, the Florida Cracker Trail Association is a group who conducts an annual cross state trail ride in honor of and to preserve Cracker cowmen history.

In closing, it can truly be said that without famous Florida Crackers, our state would not be as diverse and influential as it is today. Crackers have come a long way from just raising cattle and growing citrus. From cowboys to businessmen to senators and even an astronaut, these and all of the hardworking Florida Crackers at home on their farms and ranches make up a rich and diverse part of Florida history and their own unique piece of history, Florida Cracker History, that has made our state what we have become today, and, all are proud to call themselves Florida Crackers.

MAKAYLA HARRISON - WINNER OF THE WRANGLER ESSAY COMPETITION:



Dear Florida Cracker Trail Association:

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Makayla Harrison. I started participating in the Cracker Trail Association when I was eight years old. I am now sixteen. This February will be my eighth year of riding the Cracker Trail. I feel the Cracker Trail is a very important part of the history of Florida. The generations before me have kept this organization alive and as I am getting older I see myself stepping up to continue the legacy. The Cracker Trail is a very important part of my life. I hope to be picked as a Wrangler because it will start the beginning of my legacy with the Cracker Trail. When I turn eighteen, I hope to then step up to be an Outrider. I will do what I can to help keep the Florida Cracker Trail Association here for many years to come, for the next generation of riders after me.



I look forward to participating every year in all that it entails to be part of the Florida Cracker Trail Association. It has given me a life time of memories.



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Florida Cracker Trail History & Highlights

When the riders of the Florida Cracker Trail Association step off to reenact an early cattle drive, they are near a special memorial, thanks to the efforts of the City of Bradenton. The city-owned park is called Manatee Village Historical Park. It's not only a landmark of the early Florida Pioneer life, but it also depicts the setting for the earliest settlement in Manatee County through its displays and buildings. County officials lease the land to the City to merely a dollar a year.

Manatee County

This park is truly a community project; the paths and courtyard are made of hand laid bricks donated by the City of Palmetto and bricks for the walk were donated by the City of Bradenton. The Gazebo was a gift from the Eaton foundation and the lighting in the park once stood at the city pier. On the land sits the city's first Court House built in 1860. The land designated Court House Square was where the first settlement in Manatee was started and remained the county seat until 1866 when a new seat was established in Desoto County. The first Court House was moved to its present location on December 4th and 5th, 1975 and was completely restored as a Bicentennial project. The Stephens House also located in the park was built in 1912 and is a style known as "Cracker Gothic." The last building of note contained in the park is the historic church. Started in 1877, and finally completed in 1889 after the yellow fever epidemic brought about the deaths of Pastor JR Crowder and most of the congregation.

In one of the cattle pastures on a ranch or residence east of the park, riders gather for a week

long ride and begin their trek across the State of Florida, much like early cattle barons and other cattlemen did, to reach sea-side ports where cows could be sold and then shipped to places such as Cuba and South America.

The first significant crossing of water the riders encounter along the route known as State Road 64 comes as the picturesque Manatee River. Further east, the riders will be crossing the historic Peace River and later, Charlie Creek, all while following what was once an early wagon trail.



Hardee County

As they near the junction of State Road 17 at Zolfo Springs, there is another museum and landmark which heralds the pioneer cattlemen and women as well as remarks upon the Seminole War, Revolutionary War, and the War Between the States. The Pioneer Park Museum houses artifacts and photos to these historical events. There is also an early homestead and other buildings relating to the history of Hardee County. Visitors are more than welcome to camp here, use the picnic facilities, and visit a zoo.

Another "must see" in Hardee County is the "Cracker Trail" Post Office in Ona, it was named thus by the USPS in the early 1990's when building was first completed.



Highlands County

Entering Highlands County, the riders often stop at the Cracker Trail Elementary school. It is named for the Association's efforts to preserve the area's history. This county is also home of the former Hendricks Field of WWII, now known as the Sebring International Raceway. Also included in the county are Avon Park and Lake Placid—the city of Lake Placid has received many awards and recognition for the historic murals painted along the walls of businesses.

Riders cross the busiest highway, U.S. 27, around noon escorted by local law enforcement for safety. One of the highlights of Highlands County is the crossing of Arbuckle Creek, midway through the county. This site is the birthplace of famed Seminole Chief Billy Bowlegs during a hunting trip to Lake Istokpoga. During his later years, Chief Bowlegs returned here to die.

The Florida area is next and features a passing a school building that was first constructed in 1926 and later

worked on during the 1930's after the school was damaged by a hurricane. It is now owned by the South Florida Community College Foundation and they are used for holding classes for people living in the area. The riders typically camp overnight at one of the historic ranches in the area.



The next notable point on the ride is the turn into Hickory Hammock. The facility and trails here were prepared for public use through a cooperative agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Cracker Trail Association. As riders pass through Hickory Hammock they will traverse along the relatively newly restored marsh lands of the Kissimmee River. The Kissimmee River Project was funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Florida Water Management, and several other state and federal agencies. In the first

phase of the project, twenty-two miles of back-filled canals were dug in the 1960's for flood protection. This project begins just a few miles south of Lake Kissimmee and ends just south of the State Road 98 crossing. This restoration project has held much attention and is a front runner for ideas for many other restoration projects including the Everglades.



Before the crossing of State Road 98 and the Kissimmee River, the riders stop briefly at the historic Pearce homestead believed to have been one of the earliest cattle ranches located along the river. This homestead was once a landing for a ferry to cross the river and hosted a small supply stop for settlers and steam boats. The late Edna Pearce taught in a school here located on the Pearce homestead that was built by her father, the late John Pearce.

Water stops and meal breaks are routine along the trail ride and

many bridges are crossed but the crossing of the Kissimmee River Bridge with horses, mules, and wagon is truly something to see. Once across the bridge, riders enter Okeechobee County and head towards another landmark—the Bass Family Ranch. They will camp for the night and more likely than not, enjoy an evening of poetry presented by one of their own talented members. Bass Ranch encompasses much of Basinger. There you can find the origins of an old trail that heads north to the St. Cloud area named the Peavine Trail, much of this trail passes through is now known as the Kissimmee Prairie State Preserves.

Okeechobee County

As the trail continues on State Road 98 and the then turns east on CR 68, it passes through one of the last remaining strands of Blue Cypress trees in the area—Chandler Slough. This strand is named after the family that settled there many generations ago. The ride continues on along CR68 and then turns north again on State Road 441. This section of the route is flanked by countless dairies making this area one of the largest producers of milk in Florida. Okeechobee County is also home to the Livestock Auction, which has an average 1,600 head of cattle sold



per day. The market is open Monday and Tuesday of every week and is the largest market of feeder cattle east of the Mississippi River.

Saint Lucie County

Making its final turn east, the route continues along State Road 68 into Saint Lucie County. The riders will stay one final night at the ranch owned by the Alto "Bud" Adams Family. Here

there they will celebrate with a ceremony and dance. The following morning they will trailer into the Fort Pierce area for their final appearance, parading through the restored downtown area to the Port area. Riders will stop at a gazebo in the park area just a mile north of the site of Fort Pierce, built in 1867, on the Military Trail that passed north and south on this coast of Florida from St. Augustine to the Keys.

The streets will be lined with spectators, whips will be cracking and horses will be



prancing as the Florida Cracker Trail Riders, nearly 100 strong not including horses, mules and wagons, will parade on horseback through downtown Ft. Pierce on Saturday, February 21st at approximately 10:30 AM. The parade celebrates the end of the annual 110 mile trail ride commemorating Florida's settlers and their rugged cattle raising heritage. The parade begins on

North Indian River Dr. and Seaway Drive and travels south to Orange Ave. The parade turns east on Orange Ave. and will wind its way through the Farmer's Market. It will then turn east to Indian River Drive and eventually end at Cobb's Landing, located at the traffic roundabout on North Indian River Drive. Frozen drinks for the riders and troughs for the horses will be waiting for you.



Ft. Pierce's historic P.P. Cobb Store, built in 1882 and located just adjacent to the parade's end, figured prominently in the historic cross-Florida cattle drive. It served as a trading post for almost the entire territory along the coast from Eau Gallie on the north, to Jupiter on the south; Okeechobee, Fort Drum and Basinger to the west. Each day, as the cattle massed west of town, Cobb's store ran five wagons and a crew of 25 men, day and night, taking supplies out to the cattlemen and their herds as they prepared for the month long journey. Since the coastal settlements could be reached via the Indian River by sailboat and by cart and wagon along the Flatwoods trail, the mail was handled through Cobb's Store. Cobb did a thriving business in hides, fur and fish. His slogan was "Everything to Eat, Wear and Use".



Following the Cracker Trail Riders Parade, riders are encouraged to meet the public at Cobb's Landing while they partake of some much-needed refreshments after the long dusty trip. The public is wildly enthusiastic to learn about the cross state ride, the Cracker Trail Association and to get to pet the horses and perhaps even get their child's picture taken aboard a horse or mule. A special area will be designated for whip popping. This last stop is a wonderful opportunity for ride participants to act as ambassadors for the Cracker Trail Association as well as to sell souvenirs from the Logo Wagon.

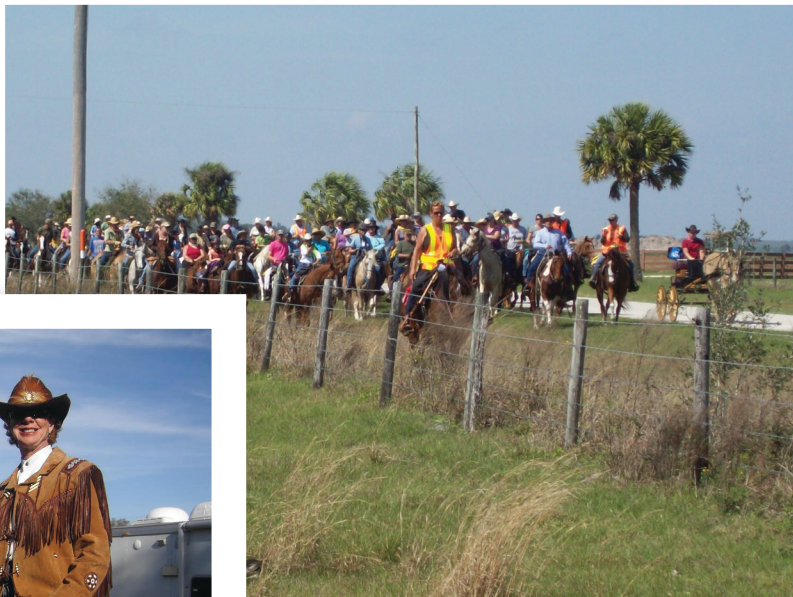
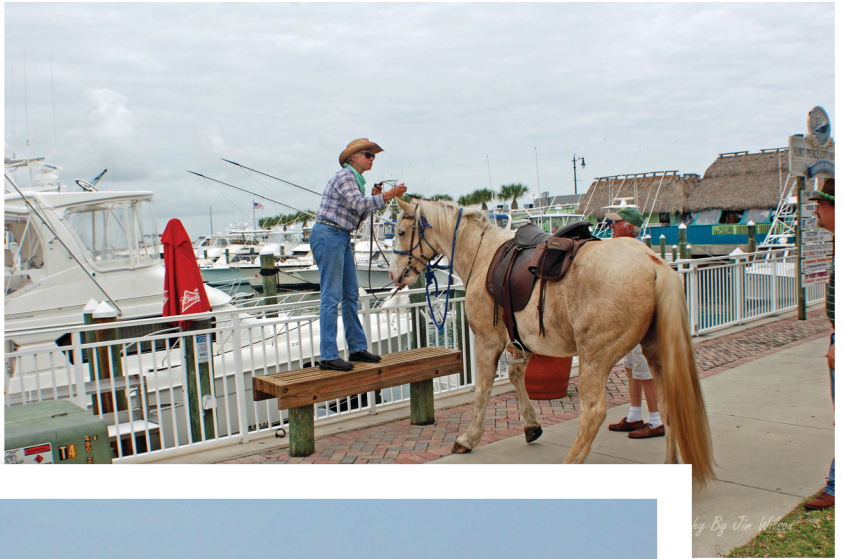
Fort Pierce offers ride participants an opportunity to camp along the Intra-Coastal Waterway at Harbor Pointe Park or along the Atlantic

Ocean at Frederick Douglas Park. You may also choose to day ride along the ocean at Frederick Douglas Park and camp at Harbor Point Park, which tends to be less windy and have less no-see-ums.

Fort Pierce welcomes the Cracker Trail Riders and their good-natured shenanigans with open arms. In addition to a nationally famous farmer's market with an amazing assortment of locally grown and prepared foods and a large arts and crafts market place, Fort Pierce offers a wide variety of open-air dining and imbibing establishments which are horse friendly or at least horse tolerant. Admission to the A.E. Backus Museum is free to Cracker Trail Riders.

Welcome to Ft. Pierce, where the historic Florida Cracker Trail begins and ends.






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Vickie Elaine (Hazellief) Murphy

November 10, 1956 - September 7, 2014

Born the daughter of a Florida Cowhunter, Vickie Murphy grew up with horses and loved to ride. She learned to ride before she could walk and would often go with her daddy, FCTA Hall of Fame inductee Doyle Hazellief, when she was a small child, riding for pleasure or for work. As she had learned to ride bareback, that was her favorite mode of riding...no need to saddle the horse, just bridle up, hop aboard and ride. In fact, her daddy

had to force her to start using a saddle!

Her daddy and brothers were rodeo competitors as well as cowmen, and so Vickie had the dream of being a barrel racing champion as a young teenager. She loved the thrill of running the cloverleaf at breakneck speed, but a serious injury to her left leg when she was 16 and the meandering way that life often goes as people grow up left that dream unfulfilled.

Although her varied occupations through the years were outside of agriculture, she rode every chance she got and in the last 15 years, had horses of her own and became a partner in her family's small cattle operation. Vickie cherished every time the family cattle were worked, as her husband, nieces, nephews, brothers, sons and her daughter were on hand to work as a family.

Vickie became associated with the FCTA through her daddy and her sons and made The Ride at every opportunity, even if it was only a couple of days. She rarely missed her son Doyle Rigdon's performances of cowboy poetry each year at the Thursday night's camp and several times, she made The Ride with several family members, enjoying every step. One of her proudest possessions was her 10 year Cracker Trail membership hatpin, which she always wore on her hat.

Vickie loved children, having three of her own, and riding with them on many occasions and enjoyed introducing her grandchildren to the world of horses. She also loved The Lord, giving her heart to Jesus Christ when she was 14 years old. Vickie didn't just claim Christianity, she lived it. She often told people, "Christianity isn't a religion, it's a lifestyle."

There's an old hymn called 'Let Others See Jesus in You'. Vickie let others see Jesus through her.

Vickie left this world at 2:30 pm on Sunday, September 7, 2014, succumbing to heart troubles complicated by diabetes after having open heart surgery four days earlier. She left behind her high school sweetheart and husband of 19 years, Ronnie Murphy, two sons, Doyle and Cliff Rigdon, daughter Margaret Williams, and numerous family and friends.

When The Lord called, Vickie was ready to go. Are you?

Fort Pierce Terminus

Route into Fort Pierce

- S.R. 68 (Orange Avenue) east approx. 20 miles
- Turn left onto U.S. #1
- 4 blocks -Turn Right onto Seaway Drive (Just past the McDonalds)
- Over Railroad tracks – go 100 feet to North Second Street
- Turn Left onto Second Street
- **DO NOT GO OVER THE BRIDGE!**
- Continue up N. 2nd Street over 1st set of railroad tracks.
- After 2nd set of railroad tracks turn right onto dirt road into Harbor Point
Plenty of trailer parking at Harbor Point.

Parade Route

- Go out of Harbor Point heading south on N. 2nd Street
- Turn left at Fisherman's Wharf Rd. and go one block to N. Indian River Drive.
- Turn Right onto N. Indian River Dr.
- Cross over Seaway Drive and stay on Indian River Drive
- Continue straight past the round about to Orange Avenue
- DO NOT STOP AT COBB'S LANDING!
- Turn LEFT on Orange Avenue at the Stop Light
- Turn left onto Melody Lane and Go through the Farmer's Market (along river)
- Turn left and head back towards the round about
- Turn right onto Indian River Drive
- Parade ends behind Cobb's Landing at the traffic circle

Anyone who chooses to stay in Ft. Pierce after the parade must clean up after their horses themselves

Beach Directions for Camping & Riding

Frederick Douglass Beach , 3500 S. A.1A

- Leave Harbor Point and travel south on 2nd Street to Seaway Drive.
- Turn left on Seaway Drive and follow it over the bridge until you come to the stop light at Ocean Drive.
- Turn right on Ocean Drive and travel south approximately 3.8 miles. Frederick Douglass Beach will be on your left.

There is limited parking at the beach. They do have water and a public bathroom at the beach. The no-see-ums can be intense at the beach, especially at sundown and sunrise



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