



**1987-2017**

# **FLORIDA CRACKER TRAIL ASSOCIATION**

**30th Annual Cross State Ride**

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



## 2017 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

# Robert Ray Smith

Robert Ray Smith was born on March 22, 1927, in Bowling Green, Florida. He was one of six children to Hoyt and Annie Smith. The Smith's were one of six original homesteaders who settled east of Peace River.

As a youngster he was able to participate on two cattle drives from Frostproof to the Babcock Ranch which was quite an experience.

His first job was breaking colts. He had the opportunity to work for Doyle Carlton, Jr. on his ranch as a cowhand. Mr. Doyle and Ms. Mildred had a great influence on his life. Not only did he learn a lot about the cattle business from Mr. Doyle, but he also learned many life skills which he has tried to pass on to his children and grandchildren.

Robert Ray served in the United States Army during the Korean War. His time of service was from January 1951 until January 1953 when he received an honorable discharge.

He married Doloris Jo Taylor in 1953. They had two children, Cathy Jo and Robert Ray, Jr. (Bobby).

During the 50's, he ran a cow-calf operation and also sold steers. Later he worked for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Beverage Agency chasing "moonshiners".

From 1957 until 1970, he owned and operated a bulk station and furnished fuel throughout the county. Many of his customers were cattle ranchers. He still had a goal of being a cattle rancher or working in the cattle industry in some form. It wasn't long before he and Russell Farmer became partners in the Hardee Livestock Market. Russell later retired and Doyle Carlton, III became his partner. Once again he was working with the Carlton Family. Eventually, he bought out Doyle, III and the market was solely his.

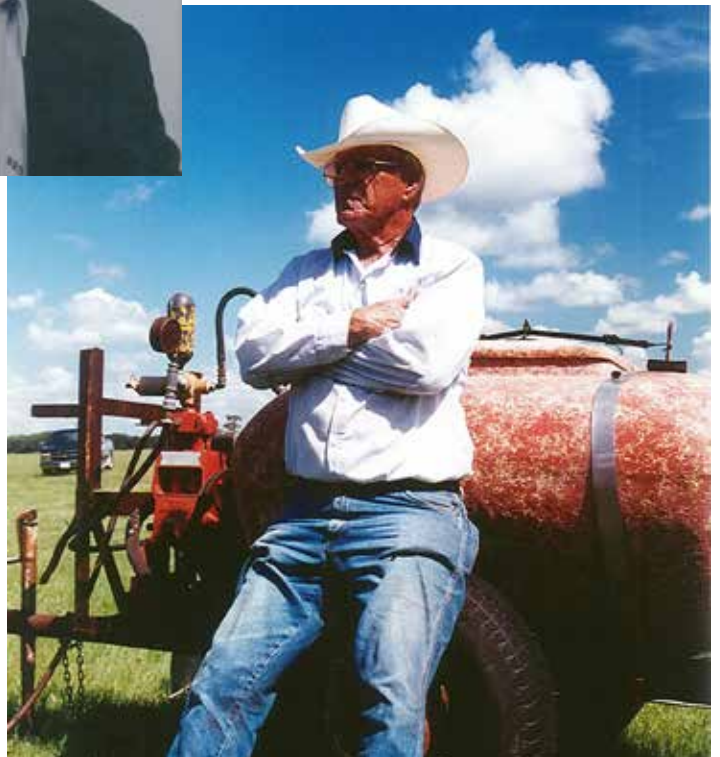
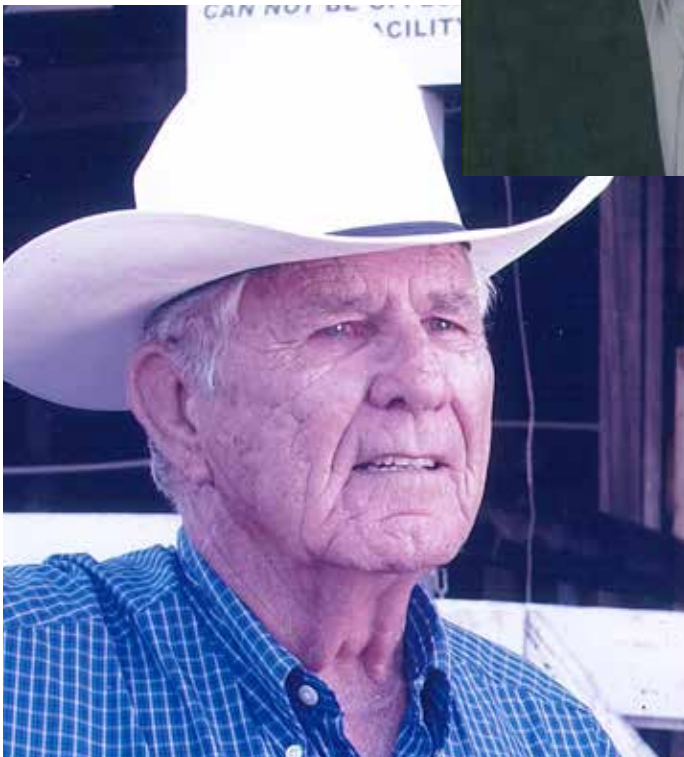
It was a family business where both Bobby and Cathy worked along with Robert Ray. There were many others over the years who were an important part of running the market: J. H. Hall, Curtis Hall, Lewis Chancey, Nancy Craft, Mrs. Beck, Jan Platt, Tammy Norris, Betsy Batey, Howard Hosey and Judy Albritton who still today is his secretary for his ranching business.

He purchased his ranch 20 years ago and still enjoys being in the cattle business today. Over the years he has had cattle in Desoto, Glades, Hardee and Polk County.

In his younger days, he enjoyed hunting, fishing and roping calves. He spent many hours with his cowboy friends at the arena roping as well as on weekends at rodeos all over the state of Florida. He continued to spend weekends with his children at rodeos when they were old enough to participate themselves.

He has served as President of the Hardee Cattlemen's Association and was on the Executive Board of the Florida Cattlemen's Association.

He has had many experiences in the cattle industry from his childhood working along side his Dad and cousin, the late King Kong Smith, to a man raising his family in the business he dreamed of. Today, he is not able to ride a horse with the other cowboys when it is time to bring the cattle to market, but you will find him there riding along in his truck and at the cowpens making the important decisions. He is still living the life he dreamed of as a cattle rancher and proud to be able to leave his children and grandchildren something that provided his family a good life.



## **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Michael Harrison – President**  
**George Masengale – Vice President**  
**Chelsey Knutowicz – Secretary**  
**Kathleen Kinney – Treasurer**  
**Suzanne Park – Trail Boss**

### **Directors at Large**

**Courtney Bailey**  
**Billy Biggers**  
**Moose Johnson**  
**Slim Landress**  
**Earl Lindsey**  
**Reagan Park**  
**Paul Park**  
**Michele Slaggy**  
**Michael Strickland**  
**Kevin Webb**  
**Robert Wolfe**

## **OUTRIDERS**

**Robert Wolfe - Assistant Trail Boss**  
**Slim Landress, Alan Kemp**  
**Reagan Park, Don Hamsher**  
**Michael Harrison, George Masengale**  
**Jeff Masengale, Josh Knutowicz**  
**Michele Slaggy, Lee Browning**  
**Billy Biggers, Bo Bowman**  
**Makayla Harrison**

## **YOUNG GUNS**

**Isabella Park**  
**Anabelle Coleman**  
**Sarah Hamsher**  
**Abby Hamsher**

## **2017 TRAIL RIDE COMMITTEE**

**Ride Secretary - Chelsey Knutowicz**

**Pickup Wagon - Todd Park**

**Water Wagon - TBD**

**Logo Wagon Managers - Velma Gillett, Dorothy White & Sandy Masengale**

**Sanitation - Grover Johnson**

**Commemorative Ride Book - Kathleen Kinney**

**Children's Activities - Abby Hamsher**



First let me say a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated Florida Cracker Trail Association Board, thank you to the Executive Board for the countless hours you've had to put in to make our Annual Ride a realization. Thank you to all past and present members alike, old and new. Your membership is greatly appreciated. Without your concern and membership we cannot achieve our mission statements.

This year's ride will be as tough as all previous rides. This is no easy task! You and your horse will experience a way of life you may have never experienced before. You and your horse will be keeping history alive by riding across the state on the Florida Cracker Trail historical cattle route. From the time of the local Indians to the Spaniards who used this route to deliver cattle to Mexico, you are becoming a part of keeping that history alive. Only a handful of people and equines have done what you will be completing on this year's ride.

Your Cracker Trail Board, Outriders and Young Guns (our Junior Outriders) are here to help you under the leadership of our excellent Trail Boss Suzanne Park and her assistant trail Boss Robert Wolfe.

There are countless volunteers who will help you in this experience but remember these are all volunteers to give a helping hand, not a hand out. So please be as courteous as possible and respect the Crackers in charge. Our goal is to get you across the state as safely as possible with as much southern hospitality as you can handle with the wish that you will fall in love with the Florida Cracker Trail as we have. It will either get in you or on you. You'll have to decide for yourself.

We are thankful for your participation in the 2017 Annual Cross State Ride. I also want to give thanks to Katie Kinney and Chelsey Knutowicz for taking such care in registering all members, riders, and valued volunteers. Also much gratitude goes out to Dorothy and Velma for their years of dedication to the Logo Wagon. You are a blessing! Also I'm thankful to George Masengale for his thirty years of dedication to our association. To Lester Masengale for all his time spent volunteering as well.

Also you will acquire an appreciation for the sanitary engineer Mr. Grover and his grandson Jackson. To quote Mr. Grover-"he will be your number one man in your number two business." You and your horse will also be appreciative of your water wagon driver (to be announced) fairly early into our ride.

Please remember if you haven't paid for the catering by Pat's BBQ then you haven't a right to receive from Pat's BBQ. Once again thank you to all volunteers from start to finish. Also I cannot end this welcome without a big thank you to the Lord for sparing our aspiring pick up wagon driver Todd Park! And for the land owners and law enforcement officers who help us put on this grand event.

And last but not least I am thankful to my wife, Vickie Harrison, who has heard more Cracker Trail thoughts than anyone else and still loves me.

Sincerely your President and fellow Cracker,

Michael Harrison

# Welcome to the 30th Annual Cross State Ride with the Florida Cracker Trail Association.

Welcome to the 30th Annual Cross State Ride with the Florida Cracker Trail Association. We are honored that you have joined us this year to celebrate Florida's rich agricultural history and heritage as we journey along one of the most popular old routes the cattlemen used.

While some of our ride will be through pristine ranch lands, much of our ride will be right along the road that used to be a simple cow path. Please keep in mind that this ride is a historical celebration and not just a simple pleasure trail ride. There will 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 or Wrangler to assist you until your horse can be desensitized.



Please be sure to read your ride book and refer to it often as it can answer many questions you may have 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. They will be wearing distinctive safety vests during the ride. These outstanding volunteers are here to help ensure that the ride goes smoothly and that every rider and every horse stays safe. Treat them with respect and they will do likewise.

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, daily themes, 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 by being respectful of others and cleaning up after yourselves before leaving each property, including water breaks and lunch stops. 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 before ride out. For example, there will be absolutely no alcohol or whip cracking allowed on the Bar Crescent S Ranch. (Sunday evening and Monday am)

Finally, I am honored to be your Trail Boss. I consider it a great honor to be entrusted with this small endeavor to preserve our Florida heritage and share it with you. One of my passions is riding horses and not much makes me happier than being able to share that passion with others. Please introduce yourself to me and let me know if there is anything I can do to help you during the ride. I look forward to serving you to the best of my ability and more with the help of my Assistant Trail Boss, Robert Wolfe.

Keeping history alive!

Suzanne Park, Trail Boss

# Night Camp Locations and Directions

There will be FCTA signs posted at camp entrance turns and roads. When you arrive in camp, please go directly to registration and Coggin's check-in. All riders, horses and non-riders, and campers must be an FCTA member and registered while in camp.

## **Friday, Saturday night, 2/17 & 2/18** **Kibler Ranch, East Manatee County**

From the West; Approximately 15.5 miles east from I-75 on SR 64 from Bradenton to camp on left. From the East; approximately 27.6 miles west of US 17 on SR 64 from Zolfo Springs to camp on right.

## **Sunday night, 2/19** **Bar Crescent S Ranch, West Hardee County**

North from SR 64 on Sidney Roberts Road, then 1.5 miles to camp entrance on left. To Sidney Roberts Road: From the West; approximately 29.2 miles east from I-75 on SR 64 from Bradenton to Sidney Roberts Road on left. From the East; approximately 14.0 miles west of US 17 and SR 64 in Zolfo Springs to Sidney Roberts Road on right.

## **Monday night, 2/20** **Parker Place, Zolfo Springs**

Just on the west side of the Peace River on the north side of SR 64 off Florida Avenue. From the West; approximately 43.2 miles east from I-75 on SR 64 from Bradenton to camp on left. From the East; approximately 0.5 miles west of US 17 and SR 64 in Zolfo Springs to camp on right.

## **Tuesday night, 2/21** **Kahn Ranch, East Hardee County**

North from SR 66 on South Hammock Road, then approximately 0.5 miles to camp entrance on left. To South Hammock Road: From the West; approximately 14.7 miles east from US 17 on SR 66 from Zolfo Springs to South Hammock Road on left. From the East; approximately 10.2 miles west of US 27 and SR 66/US 98 near Sebring to South Hammock Road on right.

## **Wednesday night, 2/22** **Hickory Hammock, Highlands County, Florida**

On the north side of US 98, approximately 7.7 miles west of Kissimmee River. Look for signs for Equestrian Center entrance, not hiking or day area.

## **Thursday night, 2/23** **Bass Ranch, West Okeechobee County, Basinger**

North on CR 700a from US 98 then approximately .5 miles to camp entrance on left. To CR 700a: From the West; approximately 27.1 miles east from US 27 on US 98/SR 66 near Sebring to CR 700a on left. From the East; take SR 68 west from US 441 approximately 10.6 miles to US 98 then turn right, continuing west on US 98 for approximately 1.5 miles to CR 700a on right. From the East; take US 98 west from US 441, approximately 14.2 miles to CR 700a on right.

## **Friday night, 2/24** **Adams Ranch West, East Okeechobee County**

On the north side of CR 68. From the West; approximately 5 miles east from US 441 on CR 68 near Ft. Drum to camp on left. From the East, approximately 14.5 miles west on CR 68 (Orange Avenue) from I-75 near Ft. Pierce to camp on right.

Please see Fort Pierce Terminus Page for Parade Directions and Beach Camping Information.

## **FCTA Ride Rules & Regulations**

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

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.

All participants must comply with the Laws of the State of Florida and FCTA Official Rules.

The designated Trail Boss and Outriders are here to assist you and your animals. Give them your utmost respect and attention. 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 (including the Annual Cross-State Ride) or function. If you have a concern or a problem while in camp or on the trail, notify the Trail Boss, an Outrider or Board Member.

**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)

**WARNING:** In reference to helmets, the Association will NOT be held liable per "Nicole's Law" as an "Agricultural Practice or Pursuit, Historical Reenactment, or Parade" (Chapter 2009-105, House Bill #169, Section 4(c), Section 6(a)).

Every participant (rider or camper) must be a valid FCTA member to participate in the Annual Cross State Ride.

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 or train your horse on this ride.

**THE OFFICIAL RIDE 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, EVEN IF YOU CANNOT COMPLETE THE RIDE OR IF YOU OR YOUR HORSE IS REMOVED FROM THE RIDE.**

No whip cracking after dark unless in designated areas. Designated areas to be picked daily and will be announced.

There will be a Mandatory Riders' Meeting on Saturday morning at 9:00 AM before ride-out.

Registration is an absolute MUST if you plan to ride on ANY DAY.

All persons in camp or on the Cross State Annual Ride must be registered and must sign a Contract for Liability Release and Indemnification. This includes all riders, campers, guests, ride staff and entertainers. It is the responsibility of the participants to maintain their event identification with them at all times.

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. The natural parent or legal guardian MUST become a member prior to the start of the Annual Ride and MUST provide a notarized Contract for Release naming the responsible accompanying adult.

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 entire ride. An agricultural inspector will be present at all camp locations to inspect your animals.

All riders MUST stay behind wagons, unless otherwise designated by the Trail Boss. Only riders assisting the wagons are allowed alongside the teams.

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.

The FCTA provides water for horses in camp and on the trail. Do NOT crowd wagons at watering sites.



## FCTA Ride Rules & Regulations

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

Wagon horses are to drink first. For safety, stay mounted when watering your horse. Do not mount, dismount, or tie your horse to the horse wagons, pick-up wagon, port-o-potty wagon, water wagon or logo wagon. The FCTA does not provide water for human consumption or bathing or showering purposes.

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.

Consumption of alcohol during ride hours is prohibited. Refrain from excessive use of alcohol at camp. Public intoxication will NOT be tolerated.

No unnecessary running past other riders.

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.

Stay off people's lawn and out of citrus groves. Do not pick fruit or vegetation along the trail.

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.

All horses must have bridles, reins and saddles while on the trail. THERE WILL BE NO: Double riding, Halter-only riding, Ponying of un-ridden horses, Bareback riding on the trail, Stallions allowed,

All riders must act and dress appropriately for riding. NO: Alcoholic beverages while on the trail, Sneakers, sandals or bare feet, Wearing of bathing suits or inappropriate apparel (shorts, flip flops, etc.), Wearing of clothing with inappropriate or offensive language

No dumping of holding tanks (grey or black) in camp or anywhere on the trail. Find and use legal dump stations.

Horses known to kick, or horses that begin kicking on the trail, must wear red tail ribbons at all times.

Quiet time is designated as 10:00 PM to 5:00 AM. No unnecessary loudness or activity during this time. No generators running during quiet time, except in vicinity of cook wagons. While in camp, be courteous to your neighbors and fellow campers.

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.

No equine that stands less than forty-two inches (42") at the withers will be allowed to participate in the Annual Cross State Ride.

The Bus is for RIG DRIVERS ONLY. All others (spouses, children, etc.) must wait at the lunch stop.

At each day's lunch site, a bus awaits the rig drivers to transport them back to their rigs

Drivers are served first and must board the bus immediately

Rigs must be packed and ready to move prior to ride out in morning

Rigs are moved to that night's camp site

Upon arrival at night camp, do not setup or build camp

Drivers board the bus immediately to be returned to the lunch site

All others (spouses, children, etc.) must wait at the lunch site

If not riding in the afternoon, notify the bus driver and/or other riders, so departure is not delayed by waiting on non-riders

## Daily Events & Schedule

### Saturday

Group of riders ride in from Bradenton, Heritage Festival, 5 PM Rider's Meeting.

No riding, no catering, no nothing today-- you are on your own!

### Sunday

Hall of Fame presentation following dinner, no cracking of whips per landowner.

After we arrive at Duck Smith's place we will have lunch, AND THEN move our rigs following lunch.

### Monday

Whip cracking allowed in designated areas. Quiet night in camp. This morning you must move your rig - be ready at Parker Place by 8:30 sharp! Be ready or be left, there are no half day provisions, feel free to make your own.

### Tuesday

Authentic Western Wear Day-- no tee shirts! Billy Joe Harrelson Band performs this evening.

Today we will move rigs during our lunch break as usual.

### Wednesday

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.

Today we cross US 27 and visit the Cracker Trail Elementary school!

Moving rigs during the lunch break today! Today is a LONG DAY (30 miles) if you aren't up for park your rig at the lunch break (Rocking Cross). It's important, that we reach Hickory Hammock before dark so we will keep a steady pace all afternoon.

### Thursday

Authentic Wear Day, kids need to finish essays and turn into Abby Hamsher, during the afternoon there will be speed games open to all ages and Doyle Rigdon (Cowboy Poet) joins us this evening!

Morning rig move today! Be ready at Bass Ranch by 8:30 AM. If you are only riding a half day you may park on the sideroad at Edna Pierce Lockett. Do not block the gate you will be towed. Be ready by 8:40 AM at the roadside for bus pick up.

### Friday

Rider awards and saddle drawing, dance the night away!

Another morning rig move! Be ready at Adams Ranch at 8:30 AM, please be by the road at front gate for pick up. For a half day, park at Davis Ranch. Be ready at 8:40 AM for bus pick up.

### Saturday

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

### Meals

Breakfast – 6 AM to 7 AM

Lunch on the Trail

Dinner – 6 PM to 7 PM

### Ride Registration

*Available at the Logo Wagon*

Saturday: 10AM - 2PM, 1-6PM

Sunday-Thursday: 5:30PM-6:30PM

If unavailable please call: 941-889-8001

# Kid's Schedule for the Week

## **Sunday: Kids Meeting**

Be sure to join us before supper 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!

## **Monday: Cowmen and Seminole Indians Costume Day**

During the ride today be sure to fix you and your horse up in a costume to win a prize. You've all had a long ride today clean yourselves up and take a rest!

## **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 Abby 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 Abby Hamsher!

## **Thursday: Essay/Art Pieces and Game 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 Abby Hamsher before the next day!

Before dinner join us for our 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 before dinner, we have some exciting new games this year!

## **Friday: Rider and Essay or Art Piece Awards.**

Enjoy the dance!

## **Saturday: 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! Abby Hamsher, Isabella Park, Anabelle Coleman, & Reagan Park



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*Many thanks to the many first responders, fire and police, who lay their lives on the line to keep us safe...*





*Pictures like these bring back a lot of memories don't they...*

## **BIG DONALD AND LITTLE DONALD**

*also known as*

*Donald E. "Duck" Smith and Donald  
Mixon*

When this picture was taken it was actually quite by accident. A photographer wanted to capture an image of Duck Smith with the mini mule but instead snapped this photo.

Big Donald and Little Donald...you be the judge.

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# Florida Cracker Trail Highlights & History

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 for 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 high-way, 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 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.

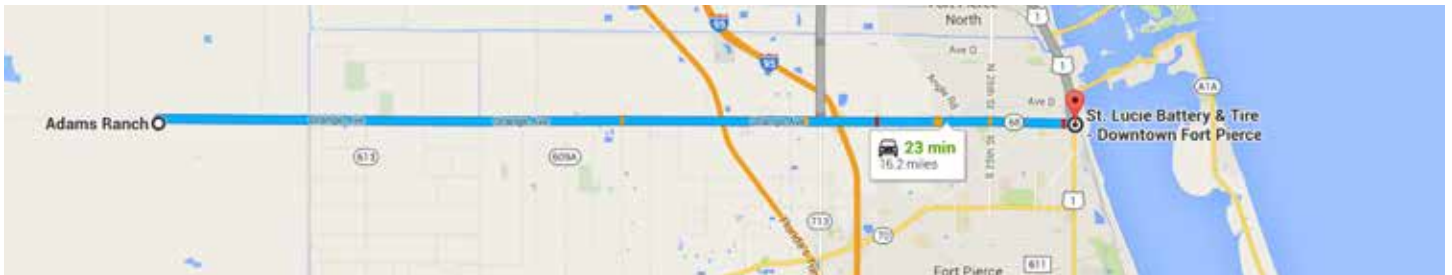
# Ft. Pierce Terminus Parade Directions & Beach Camping

After departing Adams ranch, continue east on SR68/Orange into downtown Ft. Pierce. Go south on US1 to Boston Avenue and take a left into the parking lot.

The parade begins west of US 1 on Orange Ave, continues on to the Marina, thru the Farmers' Market and ends at the traffic circle by Cobb's Landing.

Due to construction at Harbor Point, camping is not available. Beach camping is allowed at Frederick Douglas Beach. This is an excellent opportunity to ride on the Atlantic beach. Overnight parking is permitted at the parade parking area and will be policed.

## Directions from Adams Ranch



## Directions to parking and parade route



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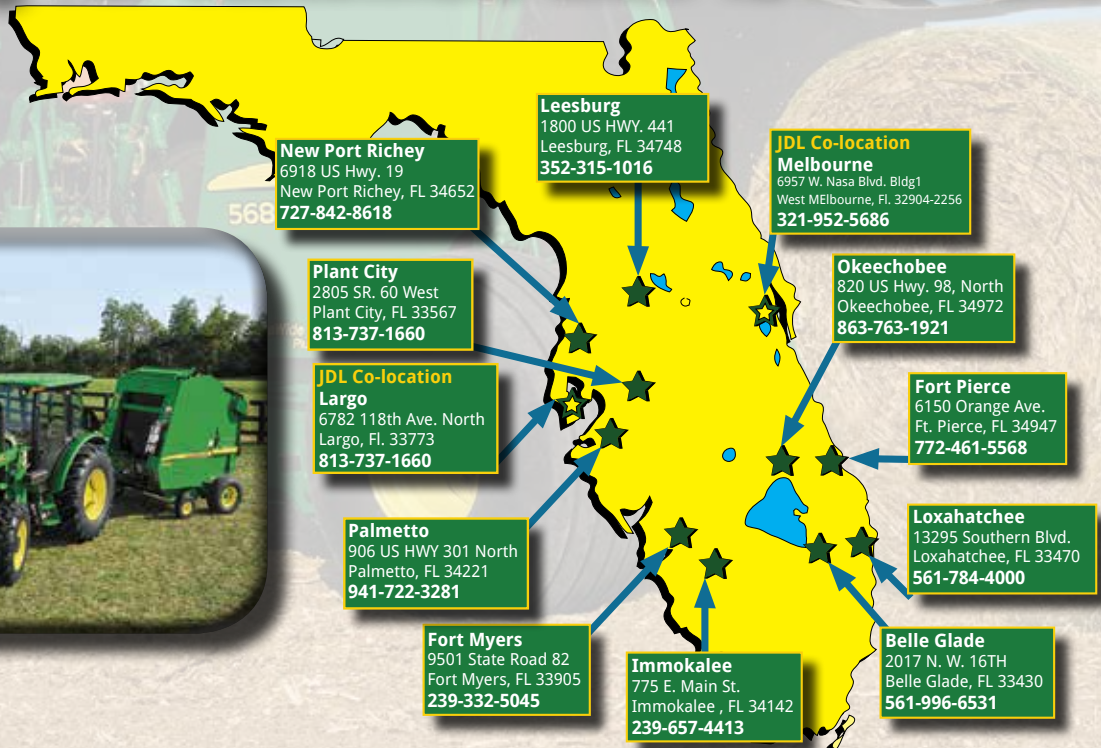


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