

1985

Florida's Cattle-Ranching Frontier: Manatee and Brevard Counties (1860)

John Solomon Otto



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Otto, John Solomon (1985) "Florida's Cattle-Ranching Frontier: Manatee and Brevard Counties (1860)," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 64 : No. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol64/iss1/5>

FLORIDA'S CATTLE-RANCHING FRONTIER: MANATEE AND BREVARD COUNTIES (1860)

by JOHN SOLOMON OTTO

IN 1860, the eve of the Civil War, the southern edge of settlement, which delimited the "settled" areas with more than two persons per square mile from the "frontier" areas with fewer than two inhabitants per square mile, stood in central Florida. With the exception of a settled area along eastern Tampa Bay, the southern half of the Florida peninsula was a true frontier. South Florida, in fact, was the largest remaining frontier east of the Mississippi River.¹

South Florida attracted few antebellum settlers, because much of the land was "pine barrens"—one of the most forbidding environments in the Old South. "One who has never traveled through the pine barrens can have little idea of the impression of utter desolation which they leave upon the mind," for nothing "is to be seen in any direction but the tall straight columns of the pine, with here and there a pond or lakelet." On the lower, poorly-drained "barrens," appropriately called "flatwoods," there were only pine trees, saw palmettos, and seasonal grasses. On the higher, excessively-drained "barrens," commonly called "rolling pine lands," there was little more than pines and scrub oaks. Both the rolling pine lands and the flatwoods shared sandy, leached soils which possessed little inherent fertility.²

Although the infertile pine barrens dominated the south Florida landscape, there were some scattered stands of magnolia and live-oak trees, which denoted more fertile soils. Bordering

John Solomon Otto is research associate, Center for American Archeology, Kempsville, Illinois. He wishes to express his appreciation to Kyle VanLandingham of Okeechobee, and Myrtice Watson of the Manatee County Courthouse for their aid. The research for this article was funded by an NEH grant.

1. Charles O. Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (Washington, 1932), plate 77.
2. Eugene W. Hilgard, *Report on Cotton Production in the United States. Part II: Eastern Gulf, Atlantic, and Pacific States* (Washington, 1884), 22-23.

the rivers were strips of lowland magnolia forests, or "low hammocks," whose moist, humic soils proved suitable for cash crops such as sugarcane. In addition, there were upland live-oak copses, or "high hammocks," whose well-drained, humic soils proved ideal for sugarcane as well as cotton.³

Hammock lands were well suited for cash crop agriculture, but many of the hammocks were too isolated to be profitably cultivated. In south Florida, there were no railways, and the only land transportation was by ox-drawn carts over sandy, seasonally-passable roads. Several small rivers drained south Florida's hinterland, but they were shallow streams that were navigable only at their mouths.⁴ One notable exception was the Manatee River, a broad, deep stream that was "navigable for a distance of ten miles from its mouth for vessels drawing [up to] 8 feet of water."⁵

Since the navigable Manatee River was also lined with low hammock lands, this stream possessed the two prerequisites needed for successful cash crop agriculture: access to reliable transportation and fertile soils. Not surprisingly, the Manatee was one of the few areas in south Florida that proved attractive to cash crop planters. By 1850, the Manatee River settlement counted five sugar-planters: Robert Gamble, Jr., William Craig, Dr. Joseph Braden, G. H. Wyatt, and Josiah Gates. In that year, they produced a total of 535 hogsheads of sugar (535,000 pounds), which was valued at over \$30,000. From their loading docks along the Manatee River, the planters exported sugar to New Orleans and imported plantation supplies.⁶

3. *Ibid.*, 24; "Florida, as Compared with Texas," *DeBow's Review*, XXVIII (May 1860), 603; Victor E. Shelford, *The Ecology of North America* (Urbana, 1963), 63, 77.

4. Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg, 1950), 128; Rodney E. Dillon, Jr., "The Civil War in South Florida" (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1980), 1-3.

5. George Franklin Thompson, "Journal of Geo. F. Thompson, as Inspector, Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands, on a tour of Central Florida and lower West Coast-Dec. 1865," 66, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, Box 24, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

6. Michael G. Schene, "Sugar Along the Manatee: Major Robert Gamble, Jr., and the Development of Gamble Plantation," *Tequesta*, XLI (1981), 70, 76; John Solomon Otto, "Hillsborough County (1850): A Community in the South Florida Flatwoods," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LXII (October 1983), 182.

At this time, the Manatee River settlement was a part of Hillsborough County, whose county seat was located at Tampa. Sensing their isolation from the Tampa area, the Manatee planters led a movement to create a new county with Manatee settlement as its county seat. Legally established in 1855, the new county of Manatee ran from Piney Point on the north, to Charlotte Harbor on the south, to Pease Creek on the east. The Seminole Indian reservation lay to the east of Pease Creek, a tract set aside at the end of the Second Seminole War in 1842.⁷

Though they led the movement to create Manatee County, the sugar-planters were in decline. Since it cost between four to six cents to produce a pound of sugar, and since sugar prices averaged only six cents per pound during the 1850s, planters found it increasingly difficult to operate on this narrow margin of profit. By 1858, Robert Gamble, Manatee's leading sugar planter, had been forced to sell his operation to two Louisiana planters, John Cofield and Robert Davis, for \$190,000. Included in the sale were 3,450 acres of land and 144 resident slaves as well as all the equipment. Other Manatee planters either sold their lands and slaves, or lost their property to creditors. By 1860, only John Cofield and Josiah Gates were still planting sugar along the Manatee River. In that year, Cofield's 190 slaves produced 200 hogsheads of sugar, and Josiah Gates's eleven slaves processed only thirty hogsheads. The two planters claimed virtually all of Manatee's total production of 231 hogsheads of sugar.⁸

Ten years earlier, the Manatee settlement had led the state of Florida in sugar production; by 1860, Manatee County's 231

-
7. Grismer, *Tampa*, 127; Geo. B. Utley, "Origin of the County Names in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, I (October 1908), 33; John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1967), 315-16 and endpaper map.
 8. Schene, "Sugar Along the Manatee," 76; Lillie B. McDuffee, *The Lures of Manatee: A True Story of South Florida's Glamorous Past* (Nashville, 1933), 103-04; U. S. Census Office, *The Eighth Census of the United States: 1860* (Washington, 1862); manuscript returns of the Eighth U. S. Census, 1860, Schedule 1, Free Inhabitants, Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, and Schedule 4, Agriculture, on microfilm at the National Archives, Washington, and the Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee (hereinafter cited as Eighth Census, 1860, with appropriate schedule numbers).

hogsheads ranked second behind Marion County's 238 hogsheads of sugar. Manatee County also ranked second in numbers of cattle. By 1860, Manatee counted 3 1,930 cattle, a total surpassed only by Hillsborough County's 37,820.⁹

Unlike sugarcane, which could be grown only on prized hammock lands, cattle could be raised successfully on nearly worthless pine barrens. Since Florida law permitted citizens to range their stock on unclaimed public lands without charge, ranchers turned out their cattle to graze on the unfenced flatwoods and rolling pine lands. Grass and browse was so sparse in the pine lands, however, that a single cow needed to roam over as much as 100 acres during a year in order to find sufficient native forage. Fortunately, flatwoods comprised most of Manatee's land surface, and the flats contained a variety of seasonal grasses. Twenty acres of flatwoods could support one cow during the year.¹⁰

Despite the extensive flatwoods range in Manatee County, few cattle-ranchers arrived before 1855, because of the county's proximity to the Seminole reservation. Occasional conflicts and rumors of Indian raids discouraged settlement of the hinterland. As late as 1855, only a few cattle-ranching families lived west of Pease Creek, the western boundary of the reservation.¹¹

Most prominent among Manatee's early cattle-ranchers was William B. Hooker, who had acquired over 1,000 acres of land near Fort Hamer by 1853. Clearing hammock land, he planted sea island or long-staple cotton, a delicate variety that commanded a higher market price than the more common short-staple cotton. Though he achieved limited success as a cotton-planter, his primary pursuit was herding cattle on the flatwoods.

-
9. Otto, "Hillsborough County (1850)," 193; U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 18, 21. The total number of cattle in Manatee and Hillsborough counties was determined by adding those listed as "milch cows," "working oxen," and "other cattle."
 10. Hilgard, *Report on Cotton Production*, 22; Leslie A. Thompson, *A Manual or Digest of the Statute Law of the State of Florida* (Boston, 1847), 135; W. Theodore Meador, Jr., and Merle C. Prunty, "Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, LXVI (September 1976), 361, 363-64.
 11. Jean Plowden, *History of Hardee County* (Wauchula, 1929), 16; Lieutenant J. C. Ives, "Military Map of the Peninsula of Florida South of Tampa Bay" (Washington, 1856), P. K. Yonge Library.

By 1855, Hooker owned thousands of range cattle, which were branded with his distinctive "Heart H" logo.¹²

Hooker's agricultural pursuits were interrupted by the Third Seminole War (1855-1858). During the conflict, he commanded a company of Manatee and Hillsborough volunteers, who defended outlying white settlements against Seminole forays. Mustered out of service in 1856, Hooker sold his Manatee property the following year to his son, William J. Hooker, and his son-in-law, Benjamin Hagler. Included in the purchase price of \$35,095 were 6,000 cattle with the "Heart H" brand.¹³

By 1858, the United States Army had deported most of the surviving Seminoles, thus opening their reservation to white settlement. Between 1858 and 1860, dozens of cattle-ranching families entered Manatee County, penetrating as far south as the Caloosahatchee River and as far east as the Kissimmee River.¹⁴ Their occupation was facilitated by the generous federal land policies of the late antebellum period. The Preemption Act of 1841 allowed settlers to purchase up to 160 acres of public land for only \$1.25 an acre. The Military Bounty Act of 1855, in turn, permitted veterans of America's wars, including the Seminole conflicts, to claim homesteads of up to 160 acres from the public domain. As a result, ranchers could buy or claim small homesteads and then range their cattle on the unclaimed public domain.¹⁵

-
12. Kyle S. VanLandingham, "William Brinton Hooker 1800-1871," *South Florida Pioneers*, V (July 1975), 8; Jerrell H. Shofner and William Warren Rogers, "Sea Island Cotton in Ante-Bellum Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XL (April 1962), 373-75.
 13. Richard M. Livingston, ed., "William B. Hooker's Company, Seminole War of 1856," *South Florida Pioneers*, II (October 1974), 27; Van Landingham, "William Brinton Hooker," 8.
 14. Florence Fritz, *Unknown Florida* (Coral Gables, 1963), 66; James W. Covington, *The Story of Southwestern Florida*, 2 vols. (New York: 1957), I, 132-33; Kyle S. VanLandingham, *Pioneer Families of the Kissimmee River Valley* (n.p., 1976), 4-5. By 1860, Manatee County incorporated all of modern Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, DeSoto, and Hardee counties, as well as portions of modern Lee, Glades, and Highlands counties. See Richard M. Livingston, ed., "County Development in South Florida 1820-1890," *South Florida Pioneers*, VIII (April 1976), 24.
 15. John T. Schlebecker, *Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972* (Ames, Iowa, 1975), 62-63; Mealor and Prunty, "Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida," 362.

By 1860, the Manatee hinterland had attracted so many cattle-ranchers, that they now comprised the majority of the county's agriculturalists. About sixty-four per cent of the county's 120 farm operators owned eighteen or more cattle, the minimum definition for a commercial cattle-rancher.¹⁶ As a group, the ranchers held only thirty-eight per cent of Manatee's 7,863 acres of farm land, but they possessed over ninety-six per cent of the county's 31,930 cattle. On the average, each cattle-rancher owned a homestead of only thirty-nine acres, but he claimed about 400 head of cattle.¹⁷

The typical Manatee cattle-rancher, or "cowman" as they called themselves, was southern-born. Over seventy-five per cent of Manatee's cowmen were natives of four southern states: Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida. They had migrated southward along the coastal plain, moving before the advancing line of settlement. Cowmen gravitated to the frontier areas because their open-range ranching required an abundance of unfenced land. Since each cow needed twenty acres of unfenced range in order to find sufficient forage during the year, a herd of only 400 cattle required more than 8,000 acres of range land. Given the need for so much range, cowmen sought out the sparsely-settled frontiers, where most of the land was unclaimed and unfenced. When farmers and planters moved into the area, they claimed public lands, fenced in fields, and encroached upon the unfenced range. As fenced acreage expanded at the expense of unfenced range, this jeopardized the ability of cattle to find native forage, so the cowmen moved on to the next frontier.¹⁸

16. Eight Census, 1860, Schedule 4. Eighteen cattle would have furnished the average antebellum family with a work ox, a bull, two milk cows, six breeding cows, and at least eight steers for market. See Kenneth D. Israel. "A Geographical Analysis of the Cattle Industry in Southeastern Mississippi From Its Beginnings to 1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1970), 78.
17. The cattle-ranchers' total wealth and the arithmetic means of their holdings in land and cattle were computed from data in the Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4.
18. Joe A. Akerman, Jr., *Florida Cowman, A History of Florida Cattle Raising* (Kissimmee, 1976), ix-x; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4; Mealor and Prunty, "Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida," 361, 364-65. Several of Manatee's "cowmen" were actually "cow-women." They included Rebecca Daniels with twenty cattle; Ann Driggers, 500; Ellen Addison, 100; Lucy Addison, 300; Eleanor Rawles, 120; Harriet Rawles, thirty; and Ellen McNeil, 500 cattle.

It was common for a cowman to move several times during his lifetime, seeking out new range for his cattle herds. A notable example of this migratory pattern is provided by Willoughby Whidden, a Manatee cowman who moved at least ten times during his lifetime. Born in Montgomery County, Georgia, he moved with his parents to Camden County before 1820. Marrying in 1827, Whidden and his wife settled in Ware County, Georgia, near the Florida line. By 1833, Whidden was living in Columbia County, Florida, but six years later, he was residing again in south Georgia, in Thomas County. By 1840, he was back in Ware County. Three years later, he moved to Hillsborough County where he claimed a homestead near Warm Springs. By 1850, Whidden was living at Simmons Hammock in Hillsborough County. Before 1856, he moved once again to southern Hillsborough County, and by 1858, he had entered Manatee County.¹⁹

Arriving in Manatee County, a frontier community which embraced almost 5,000 square miles, Whidden located in the Fort Hartsuff settlement, a dispersed rural neighborhood composed of several related ranching families. Among his neighbors, Willoughby counted his married son, Maxwell Whidden, as well as his five sons-in-laws— J. D. Green, Alford Sloane, Henry Langford, David Brannon, and Ephraim Thompson.²⁰ Though each homestead in the Fort Hartsuff settlement was located several miles apart, so cattle could graze in the intervening flatwoods, Whidden could call on his scattered kinsmen and neighbors for aid in cattle-ranching and farm work. By being able to call on family and neighbors for casual labor, the cowmen did not need to acquire slaves. They could thus invest their capital in livestock and homesteads. By 1860, Willoughby Whidden owned 600 cattle and thirty acres of land but no slaves.²¹

Whidden was typical of Manatee's cowmen, for eighty-one per cent of the county's ranchers owned no slaves. Of the slaveholding cowmen, only William J. Hooker, the co-owner of eleven slaves, held more than ten bondsmen.²² Owning few if

19. Richard M. Livingston, ed., "Willoughby Whidden 1799-1861," *South Florida Pioneers*, XI (January 1977), 8-9.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Mealor and Prunty, "Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida," 363; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 2 and 4.

22. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 2 and 4.

any slaves, and thus dependent on their neighbors for labor, the cowmen relied on agricultural techniques that saved labor and time.

Manatee cowmen raised "scrub" cattle, the small but acclimated beasts that were descended from cows introduced by the early Spanish colonists of Florida. Immune to endemic stock diseases and able to subsist on coarse native forage, scrubs required no veterinary care and no supplementary fodder. Though they devoted little attention to their stock, cowmen burned the flatwoods range in late winter to curb the ticks that plagued the cattle and to reduce the dead growth that shaded out grasses. Within a few weeks, the blackened flatwoods gave rise to a carpet of fresh grass that sustained the cattle during the spring months. After the steers had fattened on the spring pasturage, cowmen called on their neighbors, forming communal work groups to collect steers for market.²³ Cowmen drove steers to the Atlantic coastal ports or to Tampa for shipment to Cuba. By 1860, Manatee cowmen were also trailing steers to the navigable Manatee River for transport on schooners bound for Key West and Nassau.²⁴

Since scrub steers could be raised with little labor and sold for a clear profit, there was no need to produce labor-demanding cash crops to obtain money for property, taxes, and consumer goods. In 1860, Manatee's cowmen cropped only two bales of long-staple cotton and one hogshead of sugar. Most cowmen, however, raised sweet potatoes and corn for home consumption. Confronting sandy soils in Manatee County, cowmen often grew their food crops in "cowpen" gardens. They cleared a few acres in the well-drained rolling pine lands, penned some cows to enrich the sandy soil with manure, and then planted potatoes and corn. This labor-saving technique generally yielded

23. See John E. Rouse, *The Criollo: Spanish Cattle in the Americas* (Norman, 1977), 186-87; Joe G. Warner, *Biscuits and Taters: A History of Cattle Ranching in Manatee County* (St. Petersburg, 1980), 30-32; Mealor and Prunty, "Open-Range Ranching in Southern Florida," 363.

24. D. B. McKay, "Pioneer Florida: Story of Mrs. Blount Recalls Rugged Days," *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, September 26, 1948; "A New Era in the History of Tampa," *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, July 28, 1860; Richard M. Livingston, ed., "Manatee County: Early Cattle Shipments 1856-1860," *South Florida Pioneers*, XII (April 1977), 2.

enough potatoes and corn to feed the family and to fatten some range hogs for home butchering.²⁵

By growing foodstuffs in cowpen gardens and by raising scrub cattle on the open-range, the Manatee cowmen met their household and cash needs with relatively little expenditure of labor and time. And by relying on their labor-saving agricultural techniques, cowmen successfully adapted to the sandy pine barrens of south Florida, a forbidding environment with little agricultural potential. By 1860, scrub steers had become Manatee County's most valuable agricultural commodity.

If the Manatee cowmen routinely marketed a tenth of their 30,785 cattle in 1860, this should have yielded about 3,079 steers. And if each steer was worth about \$15.00 a head at market, then Manatee's 3,079 beeves may have been valued as much as \$46,185.²⁶ This far exceeded the estimated value of Manatee's sugar production. At 1860 prices, Manatee County's 231 hogsheads of sugar would have earned only \$18,942 on the New Orleans market.²⁷

Manatee's cowmen not only produced the county's most valuable export, but they also owned ninety per cent of the county's \$194,000 worth of livestock, forty-one per cent of the \$97,095 worth of farm land, and sixteen per cent of the 253 slaves. Also, the cowmen and their families comprised sixty-one per cent of Manatee's 601 free inhabitants.²⁸ Given their numerical and economic significance, it is not surprising that cowmen dominated the Manatee County government by 1860.²⁹ All three

-
25. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4; Warner, *Biscuits and Taters*, 37; L. Glenn Westfall, "Oral History Interviews in Manatee County-Hillsborough County-Ruskin Area," typescript, P. K. Yonge Library; Sarasota County Agriculture Fair Association and Sarasota County Historical Commission, *A History of Agriculture of Sarasota County Florida* (Sarasota, 1976), 16.
 26. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4; William Theodore Meador, Jr., "The Open-Range Ranch in South Florida and Its Contemporary Successor" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1972), 40; "List of Produce etc. Shipped from the Port of Tampa, during the past Season," *Tampa Florida Peninsular* (December 3, 1859).
 27. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), II, 1033.
 28. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4; U. S. Census Office; *The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, 1872), 19.
 29. The names of Manatee's county officials in 1860 were supplied by Myrtice Watson, records librarian, clerk of the circuit court, Manatee County Courthouse, Bradenton.

Florida Historical Quarterly Vol. 64 [1985] No. 1, Art. 5
 TABLE 1: AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF MANATEE COUNTY (1860)

Sugar-planters*	2 per cent	80 per cent	47 per cent	36 per cent	3 per cent	7 per cent
Cattle-ranchers**	64 per cent	16 per cent	38 per cent	41 per cent	96 per cent	90 per cent
Other agriculturalists	34 per cent	4 per cent	15 per cent	23 per cent	1 per cent	3 per cent
	120 farm operators	253 slaves	7,863 acres of farm land	\$97,095 worth of farm land	31,930 cattle	\$194,400 worth of livestock

*Includes John Cofield (200 hogsheads of sugar) and Josiah Gates (30 hogsheads).

**Includes farm operators owning 18 or more cattle.

Source: U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture in the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 18-21, 225; Manuscript returns of the Eighth U. S. Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4, on microfilm at the National Archives, Washington, and the Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

TABLE 2: AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF BREVARD COUNTY (1860).

Cattle-ranchers*	55 per cent	76 per cent	56 per cent	75 per cent	99 per cent	96 per cent
Other agriculturalists	45 per cent	24 per cent	44 per cent	25 per cent	1 per cent	4 per cent
	31 farm operators	21 slaves	2,227 acres of farm land	\$23,340 worth of farm land	7,714 cattle	\$45,780 worth of livestock**

*Includes farm operators owning 18 or more cattle.

**Correct value of livestock computed from Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4.

Source: U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 18-21, 225; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

county commissioners were cowmen: John Platt, J. G. Williams, and N. P. Hunter. By 1860, Platt, a native of North Carolina, owned twelve acres of land, no slaves, and 350 cattle. In turn Williams, a Georgia-native, held six acres of land, no slaves, and 125 cattle. Hunter, originally from Kentucky, was the owner of five acres, no slaves, and forty cattle.³⁰

Though southern-born cowmen claimed all of the commission seats, Manatee's county officers came from more varied backgrounds. Yet, every county officer owned more than eighteen cattle. The treasurer and justice of the peace was Josiah Gates, a native Carolinian, who founded the Manatee settlement in the early 1840s. By 1860, he owned 240 acres of land, eleven slaves who cropped thirty hogsheads of sugar, and 306 cattle. Manatee's probate judge was Ezekiel Glazier, a Massachusetts-born carpenter, who possessed 242 acres of land, no slaves, and 150 cattle. The clerk of the circuit court was Edmund Lee, a Vermont-born minister and merchant, who owned ninety acres, one slave, and fifty cattle. The English-born James Cunliffe, who served as Manatee's coroner, owned 240 acres of land, one slave, and 500 cattle.³¹ Manatee's sheriff was Georgia-born William Whitaker, a fisherman-cum-cowman, who resided at Sarasota Bay. He settled at Sarasota in the early 1840s and caught mullet in the bay, which he sold for one penny each to Cuban traders. By 1847, he had saved enough to buy ten cattle, which he branded with a "47" logo. Thirteen years later, Whitaker owned 3,000 cattle with the "47" brand as well as twenty acres of land and five slaves.³²

Manatee County's state assemblyman was also a cattle-rancher. Elected in 1860, John Parker, a North Carolina native, owned eighteen acres of land, held five slaves in trust, and claimed 3,008 cattle. Parker, whose large cattle herd was surpassed only by William J. Hooker's 9,000 cattle, was a fitting choice to represent Manatee's interests in Tallahassee. By 1860, cattle-

30. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

31. McDuffee, *Lures of Manatee*, 21-22, 107; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

32. Karl H. Grismer, *The Story of Sarasota: The History of the City and County of Sarasota, Florida* (Sarasota, 1946), 29-34; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

ranching had become so prevalent in Manatee County, that there were thirty-seven cattle for each person. Containing 31,930 cattle and only 854 people, Manatee had the highest cattle to person ratio of any county in Florida.³³

Manatee's cattle to people ratio was rivalled only by that of Brevard County. By 1860, Brevard counted thirty-one cattle for each inhabitant. In that year, census-takers enumerated 7,714 cattle and only 246 people living within Brevard County.³⁴ The county was named for Theodore Brevard, Florida's comptroller from 1853 to 1861, and contained only a few dozen inhabitants when created from St. Lucie County in 1855. In addition to a tiny population, transportation was poor. The only land transportation was provided by seasonally-passable paths such as the Capron Trail, a military road that had been blazed to link Fort Capron on the east coast to Tampa. The only navigable waterway was the Indian River— a saltwater channel that paralleled the Atlantic Ocean from Cape Canaveral to the St. Lucie River. Although several inlets allowed access to the Atlantic Ocean, only small skiffs and sloops regularly entered the Indian River.³⁵

Given the inadequate transportation facilities, by 1860 cash crop agriculture was virtually non-existent in Brevard County. In that year, the county produced only two hogsheads of sugar, no cotton, and no rice. One Brevard agriculturalist, John Herman, listed his occupation as a "fruit [citrus] farmer" in the 1860 census, but the census-takers failed to record the amount or value of the citrus produced in the county.³⁶

-
33. Notices in Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, October 6, 1860, and December 8, 1860; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4; U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 18; U. S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 54.
 34. U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 18; U. S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 54. By 1860, Brevard County incorporated all of modern Indian River, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, and Martin counties, as well as much of modern Brevard, Osceola, Polk, Highlands, Glades, and Palm Beach counties. See Livingston, ed., "County Development in South Florida," 24.
 35. Utley, "Origin of the County Names in Florida," 30; L. C. Lofton, "Brevard County: Its Families and History," typescript, Cocoa Public Library, Cocoa; Dillon, "Civil War in South Florida," 1-3.
 36. U. S. Census Office, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 19-21; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

Despite its miniscule cash crop production, Brevard County had become a major exporter of cattle by 1860. About fifty-five percent of the county's thirty-one agriculturalists owned more than eighteen cattle, the minimum qualification for a commercial cattle-rancher. If Brevard's cowmen marketed a tenth of their 7,695 cattle in 1860, this would have yielded about 770 salable steers. And if each steer fetched about \$15.00 a head at market, Brevard's 1860, steer "crop" may have been worth as much as \$11,550.³⁷

Brevard cowmen drove steers on the hoof to the Atlantic coastal cities, and by 1860, to Tampa for shipment to Cuba, following the Capron Trail.³⁸ Since steers provided their own transportation to market, Brevard's physical isolation posed little problem for cattle-ranchers. And within isolated, sparsely-settled Brevard County, cowmen found the best range lands in all of south Florida. To the west of the Indian River lay expanses of flatwoods that were intersected by the St. Johns and Kissimmee rivers. These meandering waterways flowed through seasonally-flooded marshes and prairies, which were exposed when floodwaters receded.³⁹ One antebellum observer recalled the grazing potential of Brevard's prairies, which were "so large that the eye could not reach the opposite side, and all covered with the most luxuriant grass, waist high, making it the finest cattle-range in the world."⁴⁰

Settling in Brevard's hinterland after the Third Seminole War, cowmen grazed their herds on the unclaimed prairies and flatwoods. By 1860, Brevard cowmen and their families comprised thirty-seven per cent of the county's 225 free inhabitants. All of Brevard's cowmen were southern-born, and most were natives of Georgia. As a group, they owned fifty-six per cent of Brevard's 2,227 acres of farm land and ninety-nine per cent of

-
37. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4; Meador, "Open Range Ranch in South Florida," 40.
 38. Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 40; Georgiana Green Kjerulff, *Tales of Old Brevard* (Melbourne, 1972), 15, 29.
 39. Robert Campbell and Wesley Keller, eds., "Range Resources of the Southeastern United States," *American Society of Agronomy, Special Publication No. 21* (Madison, Wis., 1973), 59-60.
 40. W. L. Perry, *Scenes in a Surveyor's Life* (Jacksonville, 1859), 31-33.

the county's 7,714 cattle. On the average, each cowman held seventy-four acres of land and 453 cattle.⁴¹

Despite the influx of the cowmen and their families, Brevard's population was too sparse to support a formal county government. Susanna, a small settlement located below Fort Pierce, had been designated as the county seat in 1855. No county courthouse, however, was constructed during antebellum times, and no county officers were elected until 1862.⁴²

Though Brevard lacked an organized county government, the community elected as state legislator in 1860 Needham Yates, a Georgia-born cowman, who owned eighty acres of land, no slaves, and 1,300 cattle. Yates, whose sizable cattle herd was surpassed only by Sam McGuire's 1,504 and James Johnson's 2,000 cattle, represented the interests of Brevard's cowmen, who owned seventy-five per cent of the county's \$23,340 worth of farm land and ninety-six per cent of the \$45,780 worth of livestock.⁴³

By 1860, both Brevard and Manatee counties were represented by cowmen in Tallahassee. In each county, cattle-ranchers comprised the majority of the farm operators, and they owned the bulk of the agricultural wealth. Raising scrub cattle on the unclaimed pine barrens of south Florida, the cowmen had successfully adapted to an isolated frontier which possessed little agricultural potential. By the eve of the Civil War, Brevard and Manatee cowmen were exporting thousands of scrub cattle to the Atlantic coastal cities and to the Caribbean. And during the Civil War, Manatee and Brevard cowmen drove scrub steers to the embattled Confederate armies, helping to sustain southern soldiers through four years of conflict.⁴⁴

41. The wealth of the cattle-ranchers and the arithmetic means of their holdings in land and cattle were computed from data in the Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

42. N. W. Jorgenson, "The Story of Susanna" (Fort Pierce, n.d.), n.p.; Lofton, "Brevard County, "; Kyle S. VanLandingham, "Early History of the Lower Kissimmee River Valley," *South Florida Pioneers*, VII (January 1976), 3; Brevard County commissioners, *A Brief Description of Brevard County, or the Indian River County* (Titusville, 1889), 3.

43. Election returns in Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, November 24, 1860; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

44. The south Florida cowman's contribution to the Confederate war effort is discussed in Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 85-95.