

#9 Pineapple Era



It's the year 1905 and you are surrounded by pineapple plants. In fact it seems like an endless sea of pineapples. You can't believe this is the quiet little fishing village of Jensen Beach!

"Ain't nothing quiet here," hollers the crew foreman. "I know you're new and all, but ya need to get to pickin'. I got a thousand crates promised to be rollin' north before sun-down."

Jensen Beach, at the onset of the 20th century is known as the "Pineapple Capital of the World." The ancient sand dune bordering the Indian River Lagoon appears one continuous pineapple plantation. Jensen Beach is a hub of activity.

But by 1920 a once prosperous pineapple industry comes to an end. Fortunes were made and lost. Cheaper fruit from Cuba, plant diseases, several bad freezes and the strain of World War I ended the Pineapple Era. The ancient sand dunes of the Atlantic Ridge were slowly reclaimed by native flora.

Our time travel resumes with a note of concern— a Hurricane Warning has been issued for South Florida.

#10 Hurricane of 1928

The date is September 26, 1928. You find yourself among a small group of Atlantic Storm forecasters stationed in Miami. A "Hurricane Warning" has been issued from Miami to Daytona Beach. A massive Category 4 hurricane has crossed the Bahamas and is now on a forecasted track straight for West Palm Beach.

Early on September 17th the storm makes landfall. Destruction and flooding in West Palm Beach is devastating. The storm rapidly moves inward toward Lake Okeechobee. Repeatedly, the group of forecasters has warned those living around the lake to evacuate.

Members of the Brighton Seminole Reservation evacuated early after witnessing wildlife hurriedly moving toward higher ground.



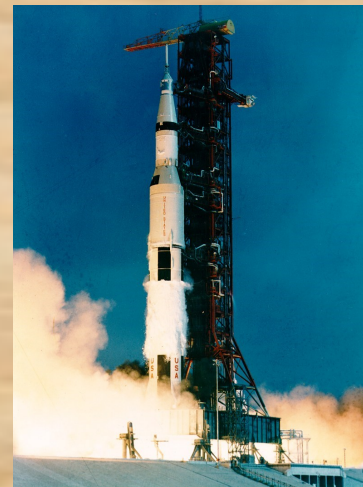
Of major concern is the potential failure of the mud dike surrounding the lake. The worst of those fears become a reality. Dikes at both the south and north ends of the lake are breached. Extensive flooding is immediate. Homes and businesses are destroyed and swept into the Everglades. The loss of life is horrendous. At least 2,500 individuals perish in the tempest.

The aftermath of the hurricane results in the construction of floodway channel control gates and major levees along the Lake Okeechobee shores. The project, known as "The Hoover Dike," was completed in 1961.

Leaving the 1928 hurricane in the respectful hands of history you find yourself traveling north to Cape Canaveral.

#11 Apollo Moon Launch

It is the morning of July 16, 1969 and you have just arrived at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral. Arrangements have been made for you to join the press corps covering the launch of Apollo 11. Gazing out through the morning mist toward launch pad 39A, you see the Saturn V rocket with the manned Apollo space craft atop.



In 1961, President John F. Kennedy set an ambitious goal of sending an American safely to the moon and back within the decade. You realize with enormous pride that you are witness to President Kennedy's vision.

The launch count down is now t-minus 10 seconds and counting. At the 4 second mark, all five main engines ignite followed by a deafening roar as Apollo 11 lifts off and begins its journey to the moon.

During lunar orbit on July 20th astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin leave astronaut Michael Collins alone aboard the command module. Boarding the lunar module "Eagle" they uncouple the two crafts and initiate their descent toward landing on the moon.

Mission control on Earth is at first relieved then overjoyed to hear the words "The Eagle has landed." Soon after, with the world watching and listening, Neil Armstrong steps onto the surface of the moon declaring, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

On July 24th all three astronauts return safely to Earth.

The celebration at mission launch control fades into history as you find yourself traveling south to Fort Pierce.

#12 The Oxbow

Our time travel adventure has now returned to present day. The sun is out, the sky is clear and you find yourself kayaking on the North Fork of the St Lucie River. Kayaks were launched from Richard E. Becker Preserve. Your companions are a local scientist and two young scholars with their teacher. Their mission today is to monitor wildlife along the river. Rounding the first bend, you come upon a Great Blue Heron and several White Ibis on the shoreline. Once in danger of adorning ladies' hats, they are now iconic Florida wildlife.

The conversation revolves around Florida's preserves and history. You learn that the St. Lucie County Commissioners, aided by citizen groups, have been active in protecting over 10,000 acres of natural areas, many along the river. Many of the protected preserves being important to Florida's history, you look forward to visiting some of the sites mentioned.

Suddenly an alligator sunning itself along the bank catches everyone's attention. You can't help but grin thinking some old Florida Cracker would be thinking "looks like grits and gator for supper tonight."

Unfortunately, marker #12 brings this Heritage Trail to an end. Good news though, the trail's end makes for your next trail's beginning.

Throughout Florida there are heritage stories to be told. Seek out these trails, recognize your heritage and become part of the "storied" legacy for future generations to discover.

Jump Aboard — Your Adventures Await!

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The Oxbow's Florida Heritage Trail was conceived, written and installed by an amazing Oxbow volunteer. A Florida native who grew up fishing, boating and playing along the Treasure Coast, this volunteer wanted to preserve and share Florida's storied history for future generations. We are forever indebted to him for this wonderful gift and legacy.

Florida Heritage Trail at the Oxbow Eco-Center

*Welcome to the Florida Heritage Trail.
At each post, pause and use your imagination
as you read the Florida historical narrative.*

*Try to imagine the time period,
setting and what was happening.
Aided by Oxbow's natural landscape
and your imagination Florida's colorful and
storied past will come alive.*

Jump Aboard — Your Adventure Begins!



Our time travel adventure starts about 7,000 years ago in Florida.

At the time five to seven million people inhabited the Earth, Europeans were learning to grow and raise their own food, and in Mesopotamia and India the wheel was being invented.

#1 The Archaic People

You find yourself overlooking Windover Pond, approximately 100 miles north of your current location in present day Titusville. You are witnessing a group of early Floridians, the Archaic Peoples, performing a burial ceremony. The deceased, wrapped in woven sabal palm and saw palmetto fibers, is being buried deep in the peat and muck on the pond's bottom.

Due to the amazing preservation qualities of the peat, modern day excavations of the pond have provided an incredible view into the lives of these very early Floridians — what they looked like, the food they ate, and the tools they used for hunting and fishing.

EMERGENCY! It has now become urgent that we quickly depart from this time period. The loud humming sound and low dark cloud headed our way is not a rain storm, but rather thousands of very hungry mosquitos.

#2 Juan Ponce De Leon

We have jumped forward in time to the early 16th century. More precisely March 3, 1513. You find yourself aboard one of three sailing ships under the command of Juan Ponce de Leon. Anchors are raised and the ships depart Anasco Bay, Puerto Rico on a compass course of North by Northwest.



Overhearing crew grumbings, you come to understand the ships are sailing into uncharted waters. Suddenly from high atop the main mast, the lookout has spotted a deep-water channel. All three ships change course due west, passing south of present day Great Abaco Cay in the Bahamas.

On April 2nd land is spotted and the ships' anchors are lowered eight brazes (forty-four feet of water). You gaze upon a low-lying land with a back drop of many large and beautiful trees. The coastal area sighted is near present day Melbourne Beach. Granted formal permission to go ashore you witness Ponce de Leon taking formal possession of the land for Spain, calling it La Florida.

Our scene grows dim as our time travel is again underway.

#3 Jonathan Dickinson

The date is now September 24, 1696. You find yourself on the coastal shoreline of what will one day be Hobe Sound. A fierce storm has caused the vessel "Reformation" to break apart and become grounded on an offshore reef.

Safely hidden behind the tree line you observe the ship's survivors surrounded by an angry group of Jobe (Hoe-bay) people. The survivors' leader, Jonathan Dickinson, is trying to convince the Jobes that the shipwrecked crew and passengers are helpless and in need of reaching the Spanish settlement of St. Augustine.

On the trek north by foot and small boats to St. Augustine, the survivors encounter both Ais and Timucua native peoples. Recent bad encounters with British soldiers give these native people cause to treat the survivors harshly.

After many delays, Jonathan Dickinson and party finally arrive in St Augustine. Dickinson wastes no time telling the Spanish about the long and arduous journey north after being shipwrecked. The party asks for assistance and eventually arrive in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Reformation's original destination.

Jonathan Dickinson's journal gives a vivid description of the experiences and hardships endured by survivors of the shipwreck along Florida's east coast near the turn of the 18th century.

Our next stop will afford us the opportunity to reflect back on early Florida and its indigenous people.

#4 Florida's Indigenous Peoples

Gaze upon the Oxbow's natural surrounding and imagine early Florida and its many indigenous peoples who lived in Florida for more than 12,000 years prior to the first contact with Europeans. A conservative estimate of 250,000 native peoples lived throughout Florida when Spanish conquistadors first set foot ashore. By 1746 all of Florida's original indigenous peoples had disappeared. Such historically rich groups as the Ais, Apalachee, Calusa, Hororo, Mayaca, Timucua and Tocobaga were gone forever. Disease, war and enslavement ended a long heritage in Florida.

These early Floridians lived off the abundance of Florida's native flora and fauna in a land of much beauty. One could say they lived in paradise, very similar to what surrounds you here and now.



Jump aboard, our adventure continues.

#5 Florida's Crackers

"Whoa mule, let's camp right over there Ma! Let the catch dog run, might just live up to his name and catch us suppa. A nice plump possum sounds mighty tasty."

The year is 1868 and you now find yourself in the Florida scrub, befriended by a settler family. Yep, by gosh, Florida Crackers. A mule-drawn wagon, three children alongside Ma and Pa. You quickly realize you are in the company of very self-reliant, independent minded folk. Don't own much, other than necessities of life and most are happy that way.

Sure enough you have 'possum, along with corn bread and swamp cabbage for supper. You learned you were eating 'high on the hog.' You being an honored guest, the Crackers used the last of their cornmeal.

After supper and a few tunes of the fiddle, all bed down under the stars. It was a good day. You learned that Florida Crackers belong to that long ago Florida frontier. A time of no air conditioning or bug repellent. A time when one accepted life on a daily basis, seldom planning for tomorrow.

Waking from a restful sleep, you find the Crackers have moved on and so must you.



#6 The Open Range

The year is 1895 and doggone if you aren't in the saddle atop a Cracker horse, known as a marshtackie. Your companions are Florida cowmen. Ya'll are responsible for moving a herd of Cracker cattle across a vast expanse of Florida prairie.

Suddenly, you're startled by the loud crack of a cowman's whip. He gruffly tells you "it ain't a whip, this here's my drag." A second crack of a drag is heard far across the prairie. It's a signal to let the herd graze and meet up at the cow camp.

Sitting around the campfire you learn that Cracker cattle are a hardy stock. Bulls and cows were originally bred by the Spanish to withstand tropical heat, insect bites and to forage on native vegetation. At trail's end in Punta Rassa the herd will be sold.

Dinner is standard trail grub: grits, biscuits and very black coffee (the latter to ease the night's chill). Joining the cowmen, you bed down early. The trail boss plans to push hard toward Arcadia come sun up.

#7 A Florida Legend

Time travel has slowed now to just a few days. The herd is peacefully grazing outside Arcadia. You joined the cowmen in town last evening. All had quite a time "whoopin' it up."

Several of the cowmen had too good a time, hence you find yourself in Arcadia's courthouse trying to help out. When up and behold Bone Mizell struts into the courtroom. Bone is known from one end of the state to the other as the most famous of all Cracker cowmen. The judge promptly fines Bone \$20 for wearing a hat in his courtroom. You find yourself grinning from cheek to cheek as Mizell casually counts out forty dollars. "Your Honor, I walked in with my hat on and I mean to walk out the same way."

Morgan Bonapart Mizell (Bone to friends) 1863-1921 rests lovingly in Joshua Creek Cemetery in Arcadia. He was a most colorful part of old Florida and the way of the Florida range. Even to modern day cowmen Bone Mizell is a legend. Around campfires he is remembered for his generosity, quick wit and the ability to outride any cowman in Florida. The herd is headed west to Punta Rassa. You'll be heading east to a small island just north of present day Wabasso, Florida.

#8 Pelican Island

The date is March 14, 1903. You find yourself gazing upon Pelican Island in the Indian River Lagoon. You are part of a small group of local folks and area Audubon members celebrating Pelican Island becoming America's first National Wildlife Refuge.



Earlier in the day President Theodore Roosevelt met with key advisors and asked, "Is there any law preventing me from declaring Pelican Island a Federal Bird Reservation?" The answer was a decided 'no.' "Very well then," Roosevelt said, "I so declare it."

With those few words the devastating plume-hunting industry that supplied feathers for ladies' hats was soon to meet its end. Birds such as the Roseate Spoonbill, Snowy Egret, and Great White Heron were now protected by federal law.

You feel proud in knowing that Pelican Island stands in testament to America's commitment to conserving natural places.

Leaving the celebration behind, you find yourself travelling south through Fort Pierce to Jensen Beach.

