

# MORNINGSIDE NATURE CENTER

# Living History Farm

*Interpreting North Florida's Rural Heritage 1865—1872*

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### THE REGION

May, 1865. The bloodiest war in U.S. History, claiming more lives than nearly all other U.S. wars combined, has just ended. Lee's surrender and the assassination of President Lincoln is a month in the past. Hard as life has been for most Southerners, it is about to get harder. Most larger towns and cities are heavily damaged or totally destroyed. The most important factories and rail yards are demolished, and tens of thousands of farms and homes are in ruins. The entire commercial, political and social fabric of the south is disrupted. Confederate currency is now entirely worthless, mail has not been delivered for more than a year in many locations, and local police and fire brigades no longer function. Court cases cannot be heard, and even simple things such as probating wills, bank transactions, or recording deeds are impossible. The labor upon which the entire economic foundation of the South no longer exists, and in some areas, no adult males -black or white- remain. The most important ways of moving goods inland—railroads and waterways—are disrupted by destruction of railroads and bridges. Occupying Union troops declare martial law. By the end of the year, Federal soldiers instruct local government officials—where they exist—to continue their duties under military supervision. Restoration of order slowly spreads.

Toward the end of 1866, former Confederate States elect new state and local governments. But these are virtually identical in personnel and policies to the pre-war

governments that had taken these states out of the Union. An angry Congress passes the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which repudiates these elections, reimposes martial law, and declares that no Southern state government may take power until it grants voting rights to former slaves. The Act also removes voting rights and rights to hold political office from most of the South's pre-war business, military, political, social and religious leaders. Control of the South falls to radical Republicans determined to make the South pay for the war. These facts color every facet of the time period—1865 through 1872—that we interpret.

### FLORIDA

Florida is largely spared the disruption from which much of the South did not completely recover until the 1960s! Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and especially Virginia, are hardest hit. In addition to the physical destruction already detailed, many public records are lost and the labor and capital to return farm land to productivity is gone. For many, starting over looks pretty daunting. In Florida, though, things look better. The ports are intact because they were captured early in the war. Only one major battle was fought inland, so the inland bridges, houses, farms, railroads, and towns are mostly intact. One major problem is decreased population. In 1860, the year before the War, the entire state has only 140,424 people, the least of any state east of the Mississippi. Fully 1/3 of the soldiers Florida sent to war never return and by war's end, population is further reduced. Although Florida's internal

transportation network is largely intact, the network to the immediate north, in Georgia and Alabama, is not. Transportation of goods is slow, prices affected, and goods are in shorter supply than Florida's physical condition warrants.

Florida quickly recovers from the effects of the war, though. Not only does its mostly intact public records make land transactions easy, but the undamaged condition of its farms, towns, and transportation systems provide numerous start-up opportunities, not only for southerners who have lost everything, but also because it has been "discovered" by Northern troops and sailors who had served in the state, and those hearing of its abundant land and mild winters.

### ALACHUA COUNTY

Already among the most populous parts of the state, Alachua County (which includes modern Gilchrist County) is especially well-equipped to prosper after the War. Its principal city, Gainesville— with more than 200 of the county's more than 8,000 inhabitants— is the terminus connected to the port of Cedar Key by Florida's longest railroad.

In May, 1865, Gainesville is occupied by Federal troops. By November, local officials resume their duties under military supervision. And by year's end, postal service is restored for the first time since interrupted by war. The number of Gainesville stores—15— is nearly twice the pre-War number. The Savage-Haile store, one of the largest, has sales of \$23,000 in 1865; it purchases nearly all the cotton in the entire state between

1865 and 1867!

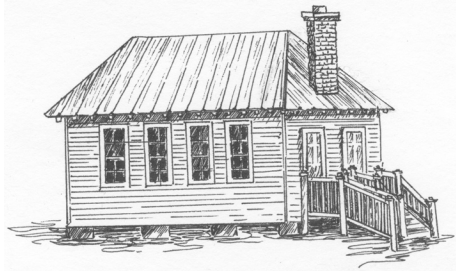
Gainesville incorporates in 1866, which allows creation of a police force, needed to control nightly shoot-outs near courthouse square. Prosperity continues through 1866. Alachua County's cotton crop is the state's largest that year: 3,000 three-hundred-pound bales worth \$630,000.

The following two years are disastrous for Alachua County. Rains are so heavy all summer and fall that cottonseed is washed from the fields or rots in the ground. Large numbers of livestock starve because the principal grazing area—Payne's Prairie— is completely flooded. In September, a plague of caterpillars destroys the little cotton remaining. 1867 ends with an economic depression caused by the failure of the cotton crop. Pessimism is further increased by passage of the Reconstruction Act. The following year, under the new state government that comes to power under provisions of the Reconstruction Act, Florida adopts yet another constitution. Because the former postwar government has been dissolved, Gainesville is forced to re-incorporate. In Alachua County, as throughout the south, the rule of law and order reaches an historic low.

The next four years see steady growth, and although 1871 ends with a yellow fever epidemic that kills 3% of Alachua County's population, the volume of business is greater than 10 times the prewar level. After 7 more years of turmoil, in 1878, the last Federal troops to occupy a southern state march home; Reconstruction is over!



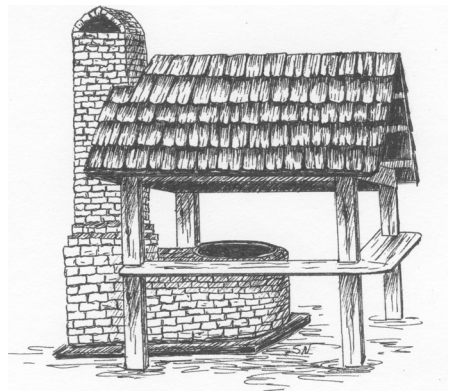




1. THE HALF MOON SCHOOL was built 1938-39 in the community of Half Moon near Archer. It is typical of early one-room schoolhouses from the late 1800's to 1950's. Children of many ages would have been taught together in the same room by a single teacher. The School is being restored for Depression-era interpretation.

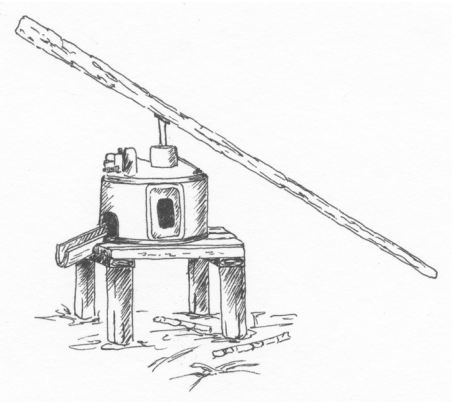
2. SUGAR CANE FIELD- Europeans introduced this giant Asian grass to the New World. Sugar cane provided "cane syrup" that was the only source of sweetener in cooking and for eating.

3. THE CASH CROP FIELD was a larger area worked by the men and older boys of the family. In this field crops that were needed in large quantities, such as corn for animal and human feed, were grown. Other crops grown here were intended for sale to earn hard-to-come-by cash. Crops grown in this field might include peanuts, cotton (one of the most important crops in Alachua County).



4. THE SYRUP KETTLE is used to boil down the sugar cane juice (sap) into cane syrup. Syrup making, which occurs near the first frost, marks the beginning of winter. It was also a major social event. About fifty, 6 ft. tall cane stalks are needed to produce 10 gallons of juice, which boils down into 1 gallon of the flavorful, brown syrup.

5. THIS SUGAR CANE PRESS, called a "grinder" by locals, is used each year during late fall



to early winter. Animal labor turns the long pole which crushes stalks fed into the opening. The pressed sugar cane stalks, produce cane juice, which is then boiled down to make cane syrup. It is as popular in the South as maple Syrup is in the North. Our annual "Cane Boil" is on the last Saturday of November.

6. SPLIT RAIL FENCING, found around the cabin, crop areas and the barnyard, is easily constructed by placing split "lighter'd" pine logs on top of one another in a zigzag or "worm fence" pattern. This technique enabled the farmer to quickly fence former barnyard space for planting.

**PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH ANIMALS IN THE BARNYARD, AS IT MAY MAKE THEM MORE DIFFICULT TO HANDLE.**

**PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS. THEY ARE ON SPECIAL DIETS AND TREATS WILL MAKE THEM VERY SICK.**

7. THE COW is a dairy breed called 'Jersey'. Dairy breeds are specially bred to produce milk. The family would depend on this "milch" cow for milk and dairy products. Cracker cattle were a semi-wild breed allowed to roam the woods and rounded up when needed for beef and leather.

8. HORSES were an important source of power for the farm. It would pull the plow at planting or a wagon into town, drag downed trees, and turn the cane press. It was also the only means of transportation besides walking. Mixed breed

"grade" horses or cracker horses were common. Mules, a cross between a horse and a donkey, were also prized as work animals. They were stronger than most horses and could survive on poorer and less feed.

9. HOGS were the most important animals on the farm because they provide most of the family's meat. They provide bacon, sausage, ribs, and chops for the family. Their fat is an important ingredient of the lye soap made each fall. Bristles from hog's hide could be used to make brushes for hair, teeth, or scrubbing. Our red Durocs are one of the earliest American breeds, popular for their fast growth. Improved hogs like the Durocs would have been penned and looked after. 'Piney Woods' hogs were turned loose in the woods most of the year to feed themselves. In the fall, they were "penned" for butchering.

10. SHEEP are a source of meat (mutton), wool, and leather. The wool is shorn once each year, usually in the spring. This breed of sheep called 'Tunis' is one of the oldest breeds of sheep kept in America. Both Thomas Jefferson and George Washington kept Tunis sheep. Tunis were almost wiped out by soldiers during the Civil War, but some flocks survived.

11. CHICKENS provide meat, eggs, and feathers (used to fill mattresses and pillows). Chickens were often turned loose in the garden to eat insects. Our chickens are multi-purpose breeds that produce both meat and eggs well. The black and white barred chickens are "Dominickers" They were one of the first breeds developed in America. The other various colored chickens are Dorkings, a very old breed brought by colonists. Our free range chickens are game birds able to roost high in the trees and avoid predators.

12. THE TWIN CRIB BARN was originally built in Levy County



by Samuel Jefferson Clyatt, sometime in the 1880's. It is a double "crib" (a room with space between the logs for ventilation) design using round logs and "saddle" notches at the corners. It houses the feed and fodder (hay) for the many barnyard animals. Its large overhang provides shelter for animal pens as well as storage for tools. The barn's open rafters also provide shelter for wild animals like snakes, and owls, who prey on rats or mice that might eat the animals' feed. The heavy pine poles used in construction of the barn helped to keep out large predators such as bears, who prowled the farm looking for food.



13. SHILOH FORGE BLACKSMITH SHOP is a reconstruction from an example in Cades Cove, Tennessee. It was built with pines harvested from an area infested with Southern pine beetle in 2002. Construction of the shop was funded by a grant from the Junior League of Gainesville. The shop was furnished with tools donated by the Florida Artisans Blacksmith Association (FABA).

14. SINCE THE WINDMILL is a 1925 Aeromotor, it is slated for relocation. The pump is used to get water for the family cooking and cleaning, the animals, and the garden.

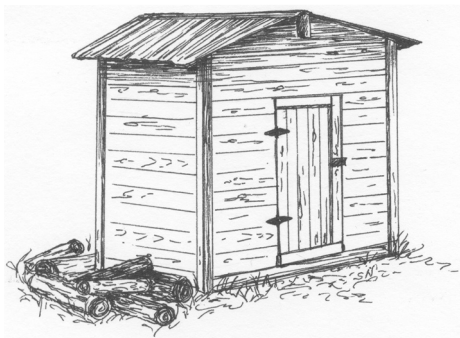
15. THE FRUIT PATCH provides crops the farmer can consume or barter. Many fruits thrive in North Florida's climate, giving the farmer profitable "cash crops."







16. THE COMPOSTING PRIVY or “outhouse” is another way to recycle energy. Each of the two chambers holds a year’s waste, which, combined with sawdust and wood chippings, breaks down into safe, odor-free compost after about 6 months. This is used on fruit trees or non-vegetable crops. The crescent moon on the door signified “women”, while a star shape indicated “men.”



17. THE SMOKEHOUSE is a small, completely enclosed building used for curing, smoking, and storing meats. Curing is treating meat with salt to preserve it without refrigeration. Smoking dries meat, keeping it free of insects and bacteria and adds flavor.

18. THE ASH TROUGH is where ashes from the wood stove

and fireplace are collected. Boiling water poured over the ashes filters through to produce potash (potassium carbonate) which seeps out of a spigot at the end of the trough. The potash “tea” is then cooked with animal fat and the resulting liquid soap is poured in molds to harden. Soap is traditionally made in the fall, when fat is available from animals being butchered for winter food supply.

19. THE CLARK KITCHEN is typical of a detached kitchen that was added after the original cabin was built. It is constructed of “board and batten” (two wide boards with a narrow board covering the gap) indicating lumber produced by a local sawmill. This structure is separated from the main cabin by a “dog trot” (a covered walkway). Kitchens were detached to reduce the hazard of fire consuming the entire dwelling and because woodstove cooking created a lot of heat. The kitchen has a small pantry, a cooking area with wood stove, and a dining area.



20. HOGAN’S CABIN, was built in the mid 1800’s by an Irish immigrant, Michael McCarroll,

on a site between Micanopy and Cross Creek. It is crafted of hand hewn Longleaf Pine heartwood logs and measures approximately 26 feet by 15 feet. The floor plan is a type called a “single pen” which means it was originally a single room. The builder used certain design techniques to take advantage of the Florida climate. For example, doors and windows were placed to give cross ventilation, a shaded porch was placed on at least one side and the floor was set high off the damp ground. Logs were notched at the corners with a single “dovetail” design to channel water away from the walls. Windows lacked glass or even screen but could be covered by shutters during extreme weather. The chimney is comprised of flint-pocked limestone and “chink,” a mixture of clay and ashes hardened by the sun and heat from the fireplace. A loft above the main room served as a bedroom for children and for storage. This upper “room” consisted of a plain floor and had no windows for light or ventilation. Furnishings were limited to “pallets” (straw filled bags) on the floor for the children’s beds. The roof is covered with cedar “shakes” which swell when rained upon to form a watertight roof.

21. THE KITCHEN GARDEN is used to grow heirloom vegetables as grown in the

1870’s. These vegetables have a different appearance and flavor than modern varieties. Due to Florida’s temperate climate, our garden produces constant harvests, with plants varying by season. Many insects in the garden are beneficial, feeding on others that harm crops. Hand picking insects, and baiting or spraying with natural materials (pepper juice or garlic) are ways to control garden pests.

## Welcome to Morningside Nature Center

Morningside Nature Center is a 278-acre nature park on the east side of Gainesville. It is a sanctuary for the Longleaf Pine ecosystem, including over 130 species of birds, such as the brown-headed nuthatch, 225 species of wildflowers, and populations of amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Five miles of trails and boardwalks lead through longleaf pine and cypress habitats. All plants, animals and artifacts in the sanctuary are protected.

Morningside was developed from a plan devised by the National Audubon Society’s Nature Center Planning Team, who surveyed the city’s newly acquired property in 1967. The Living History Farm, part of the Audubon development plan, was a bicentennial project of the Gainesville Junior League, with a grant from the Florida Bicentennial Commission and an in-kind contribution from the City of Gainesville. The farm exhibit opened July 4, 1976 with donations of buildings, animals, and furnishings from local residents and organizations.

Environmental and Cultural Education is a vital part of Morningside. Over 6,000 students from Alachua and surrounding counties visit the park each year. Environmental programs involve the sanctuary and introduce students to native plants and animals and science concepts. Farm programs provide an opportunity to experience the lifestyle of a rural family in North Central Florida in the post civil war reconstruction period. Timucua programs explore pre-Spanish Florida.

This publication was produced by Nature Operations Staff, with fonts and formatting modeled after the “New Era”, the newspaper published in Gainesville in 1870, which later became the Gainesville Sun. Line drawings by Susan Nassif.

