

Florida Folklife

Traditional Arts in Contemporary Communities

Historical Museum of Southern Florida



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Stephen Stuempfle, Editor

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

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Exhibition Tour

Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami

September 25, 1998 through January 3, 1999

Orange County Historical Museum, Orlando

January 12, 1999 through March 25, 1999

Museum of Florida History, Tallahassee

April 8, 1999 through August 15, 1999

Museum of Science and History, Jacksonville

September 11, 1999 through January 9, 2000

Tampa Bay History Center, Tampa

January 21, 2000 through May 7, 2000

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Acknowledgments

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From the start, this project has been a collaboration between the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and the Florida Folklife Program at the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. Special thanks are due to state folklorists Tina Bucuvalas and Teresa Hollingsworth, who have contributed immeasurably to all aspects of this endeavor. We are also indebted to the many researchers who have worked with the state folklife program in the past. Jeana Brunson, Robert McNeil, Kieran Orr and Brent Tozzer at the Museum of Florida History offered much assistance with artifact loans; while Beth Golding and staff at the Florida State Archives provided photographs and other documentary materials. Artifacts were also loaned by the American Primitive Gallery, the Key West Art & Historical Society, R.M.S. Marine Supply, the Department of Anthropology and Genealogy of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida, Tina Bucuvalas and Robert Stone.

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Florida ■ Counties and County Seats



Reprinted from *Atlas of Florida*, University Press of Florida, 1992.

Introduction

Stephen Stuempfle

This catalog and the accompanying exhibition of the same name constitute an introductory overview of the traditional material culture of Florida. Though produced by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, the project has its genesis in the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. Folklorists associated with the Division have been traveling through the state's cities, towns and rural areas since 1976, in their effort to document the diverse forms of traditional expression often referred to as "folklife." In 1996 the Division suggested the idea of a major exhibition that would highlight the results of this documentary work for people throughout Florida. In short, the exhibition would survey Florida's folklife and travel to several cities around the state. The Historical Museum of Southern Florida proposed that it would execute the project, based on the work of its own folklife program, which had been established in 1986. Though new fieldwork was carried out for the *Florida Folklife* project, this exhibition and catalog, in essence, represent the fruition of many years of research by both state and Historical Museum folklorists.

Folklife encompasses cultural practices that are learned informally within communities. A community, in turn, can be thought of as a group of people who engage in face-to-face interaction and share a regional, ethnic, religious or occupational identity. In locales around Florida, one can find many types of folklife, such as Seminole storytelling, African American spirituals, Haitian dance styles, Cuban festivals, Hindu rituals, Greek foods, cattle ranching equipment, and fishing and hunting techniques. This exhibition, however, concentrates exclusively on material culture—the objects made by communities. After all, it is compelling objects that move and challenge visitors at museum exhibitions. Moreover, Florida's folk traditions are so vast that they all could not possibly be surveyed in a single exhibition. Though our focus is on objects, these objects do allow visitors (and readers) to explore more intangible forms of folklife. Music can be examined through musical instruments, for example, and religious beliefs through ritual artifacts.

This exhibition also has limitations in terms of its geographic and ethnic comprehensiveness. Though an effort was made to include as many regions and ethnic groups in Florida as possible, many gaps remain.

Florida, of course, is a very large state and is a place where new communities are continually taking shape. Much more field research needs to be conducted to more fully document the many traditions that now constitute our cultural heritage. Even cultural groups for which there is extensive documentation are represented here with only a few objects, due to the space restrictions of the exhibition. Limited space also prevented us from displaying one of the most prominent types of material culture: traditional architecture.

Though the exhibition is far from comprehensive, a fairly wide sampling of artifacts is included. There are boats, nets and fishing flies; saddles and cow whips; garments, quilts, baskets and wood carvings; decorated Easter eggs, piñatas and Carnival costumes; drums and guitars; and many other objects. What all of these objects have in common is that they are made by hand in accordance with traditional, community-based designs. The individuals who make the objects learned their skills through participation in particular communities. They may have learned from members of their families, through working as apprentices with master artists, or simply by observing local traditions and experimenting on their own. In any case, they have appropriated shared artistic designs and techniques to produce objects that a community recognizes as its own. These objects, in short, constitute the material culture created and controlled by members of a community, as opposed to the many mass-produced objects that are also part of people's lives but that, typically, originate outside the community.

Exhibitions of traditional material culture often inspire debate as to whether the objects on display belong to the realm of "art" or "craft."¹ Such a distinction is of little relevance to most of the people who make these objects. Almost all of these objects have utilitarian functions—they are made to help people accomplish particular life tasks. However, the quality of the appearance of the objects is also generally evaluated by community members. People desire boats that are not only stable and leak-proof but that look good. A drum must not only produce proper sounds but be attractive in its design. Though traditional objects vary in terms of the emphasis placed on their aesthetic qualities, all are the expression of the artistic principles and intentions of

their makers. No matter how practical an object may be, it is typically fashioned with precision and attention to form. Traditional artists identify closely with the objects they make. Their objects are often perfected over a period of many years and, in time, come to represent central dimensions of their life experiences. In addition, objects often embody key values, beliefs and achievements of a community and, thus, symbolize a sense of social identity.

Given the orientation toward communal or shared designs in traditional arts, outside observers sometimes overlook the fact that these arts are all practiced by particular individuals. We can talk about "Seminole patchwork" or "African American basketry" in the sense that these art forms reflect traditional aesthetics. Actual objects, however, are produced not by superorganic social groups but by individual artists with specific life histories and creative goals. Though artists follow traditional patterns, they also introduce innovations in design and technique, some of which may themselves become traditional. In other words, different basket makers from the same tradition will typically have their own styles, and some of their stylistic variations may, in time, become standard practices that other basket makers follow.

The *Florida Folklife* exhibition gives particular attention to individual traditional artists. All objects displayed are examined in the context of the careers of the people who made them, as well as in terms of broader cultural patterns. We try to provide some sense of the artists' perspectives on the creative process and the significance of their objects in their lives. The artists featured vary considerably in their relationships to traditional aesthetics. Some are very conservative, in that they construct objects that closely resemble traditional models. Others make objects that, through based on a tradition, reflect substantial innovation. Several of the artists operate at the boundaries of traditional art. For example, Rene Latour, a retired sheet metal worker, fabricates highly imaginative metal sculptures of humans, animals and geodesic spheres. Though there is an occupational tradition of sheet metal sculpture, Latour's creations are unlike those of any other artist. What this diversity of artists suggests is that there is no simple category of "folk artists" but a range of ways in which individuals pursue aesthetic visions within traditional frameworks. It should also be

noted that, while all of these artists have learned their skills through informal methods, a few have also studied art formally. Concepts and techniques from formal studies are sometimes used to reinterpret traditions in unusual ways.

Along with outlining the careers of individual artists in this exhibition, we also examine how the artists are grounded in particular places in Florida. An immense range of natural environments and cultural worlds are apparent. There are the shrimp and oyster workers of the Florida panhandle, African American basket makers of the forested region around Tallahassee, cast net makers in the old Minorcan settlement in St. Augustine, diving helmet and musical instrument makers in the Greek sponging community of Tarpon Springs, equipment artisans for the ranching industry north and west of Lake Okeechobee, frog hunters and Seminole clothing artists of the Everglades, Cuban and Haitian drum makers and religious specialists in Miami, and lobster trap makers and festival artists of the Florida Keys. In these and numerous other communities around the state, traditional objects have been a means by which people have adapted to diverse natural environments and created meaningful ways of life. Most of these traditions of making objects originated outside Florida. As people have arrived here from other parts of the United States, the Americas and the world at large, they have perpetuated or reconstructed their traditions in ways that enable them to continue to achieve their economic, social and expressive goals. The traditional objects with which they surround themselves are both tools for accomplishing practical tasks and vehicles for creating a sense of belonging in particular places. Through traditional objects people connect with their pasts, but in ways that continue to make sense in their present lives.

Though traditional objects are embedded in particular geographic, ethnic, religious or occupational communities, it is misleading to suggest that communities are discrete, self-contained entities. Generally, people participate in or have contact with multiple communities. Moreover, some types of folklife are traditionally performed *between* communities. Similarly, objects and their designs sometimes move between communities. Consider the case of Seminole sweetgrass baskets. Though Seminoles had a tradition of woven

cane and palmetto stem baskets, by the 1930s they were also regularly making coiled sweetgrass baskets, perhaps due to the influence of a similar African American basketry tradition. Seminoles made these sweetgrass baskets not for their homes but to sell to tourists. At present, the tourist market continues to be the force behind the production of these objects, which are perceived and valued as distinctively "Seminole" by both their makers and buyers.² Such trade in traditional objects, in general, has become increasingly common during the twentieth century with the growing interest in handmade folk art. While the objects included in the *Florida Folklife* exhibition continue to have significance in the communities in which they are made, several types of objects are also regularly purchased by private collectors and museums outside the communities.

The *Florida Folklife* exhibition itself is part of the ongoing process in which traditional objects are displayed in new contexts and interpreted for new audiences. Both the Florida Division of Historical Resources and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida have been collecting traditional objects for many years. These two collections provided a foundation for the exhibition. In addition, a team of fieldworkers carried out research throughout the state, in order to learn more about these objects and to contact many other traditional artists who were not represented in the two collections. Fieldwork consisted of interviews with artists, photography of them at work, and the acquisition through loan or purchase of additional objects. Among the issues addressed by the fieldworkers were the life histories of the artists, crafting processes, elements of the artists' styles, and the use and significance of the objects in community life.

Objects in the exhibition and this catalog are organized in terms of four broad functional categories, that is, in terms of how they are used. A section titled "Maritime, Marsh and Ranching Traditions" includes objects associated with a range of marine and fresh water industries, as well as with cattle ranching. Though there are other types of occupational folklife in Florida, aquatic and ranching industries have generated particularly rich

material cultures. "Domestic and Decorative Traditions" features primarily objects that are used to adorn the human body or the home. Decorative objects also appear in "Ritual and Festive Traditions," but these pieces are employed during special occasions in community life. Some of these objects also have spiritual significance. "Musical Traditions" includes a sampling of musical instruments that are made in Florida. Altogether, there are more than 180 objects made by over 80 artists. Also displayed in the exhibition are photographs of the artists at work, along with the profiles of their careers that are presented in this catalog. Our overall goal in this project is to communicate to a general audience something of the beauty and meaning that these objects have in the communities in which they are made and used. Educational programs at the various museums that are hosting the exhibition will contribute to this objective, by enabling audiences to meet some of the artists who have participated in the project.

It is our hope that this exhibition will reveal something of the cultural diversity of Florida and of the variety of experiences that particular individuals have had in the state. Surely, audiences will find that folklife cannot be reduced to traditions that are antiquated, unsophisticated or restricted to rural areas. With a handful of exceptions, all of the individuals featured in this exhibition are alive today and continue to practice their art forms. Many live in cities and towns; all are highly skilled in their fields of endeavor. As is the case with other types of art, years of study and experimentation are required to become exceptional practitioners of these traditions. These artists continue to perfect their skills and many are passing on their knowledge to younger people. Though much of our material culture is now mass-produced, handmade objects retain a significant place in our lives. Through traditional objects we can encounter dimensions of human creativity and expression that often remain submerged in a society dominated by large institutions and mass markets. These objects are part of more intimate worlds and point toward alternative realms of cultural knowledge and practice.

The Landscape of Florida Folklife

Tina Bucuvalas

Florida looms large in the popular imagination. Many who do not live here view the state as a reward—a refuge in the sun and sea from harsh daily realities or life's hard work. Some perceive it as a haven from political harm. It is a place where life is softer and things will be better. We who are lucky enough to call it home bask in its tropical ambiance daily and marvel at its cultural complexity.

Florida possesses physical and cultural characteristics that have combined to create patterns of traditional life unlike those of any other American region. Though the state is geographically and culturally diverse, several common characteristics bind its peoples together: change, water, climate and the experience of living in multicultural settings. It is in the context of these factors that Florida's traditional material culture and other forms of folklife are best understood.

In comparison with many other regions of the United States, Florida is new and constantly changing. While some Floridians can trace a long family lineage here, most have arrived within the last 50 years. According to the 1990 census, only 29 percent of the total population was born in the state. Even Florida's Native Americans are new. Although several native peoples inhabited the region at the time of European contact, by the late eighteenth century they had died out from disease, warfare and enslavement. Florida's largest contemporary native groups, the Seminole and Miccosukee, are descended from native peoples who did not coalesce as a distinct nation until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹

Perhaps because the majority of Floridians have arrived recently, the state often seems more responsive to new trends. Two of Florida's most important economic resources, tourism and high technology industries such as aerospace, thrive on new ideas, people and initiatives. They provide a source of jobs that attract a steady stream of new residents; they also produce their own cultural traditions. Historically, tourism has been particularly significant to Florida, and today it provides a larger economic base than agriculture. In 1874, 33,000 tourists enjoyed America's "tropical paradise." The numbers swelled to almost 2 million by 1926, 7 million by 1958 and 40 million by 1991.

Another feature that defines life in Florida is its intimate connection to water. Geographer Edward Fernald

notes: "Every aspect of the Floridian's life-style depends on water. Florida is often called the Sunshine State. The argument could also be made that Florida is the Water State."² As a peninsula, Florida shares a closer relationship with the surrounding sea than with the rest of the United States. Florida has 1,197 miles of coastline, with 14 deep water ports. Throughout our history, fishing, shipping and boat building have been prominent economic endeavors, while seafood has been an important part of our diet. Moreover, almost 5,000 square miles of Florida are covered by water, including thousands of creeks and streams, and more lakes than any other state in the nation. Lake Okeechobee is the largest lake in the Southeast, covering 730 square miles and providing South Florida with most of its water. Florida's two major wetlands are the Okefenokee swamp, located on the border with Georgia, and the Everglades, which encompass millions of acres of marsh in the southern portion of the state.

In addition to its abundant aquatic resources, Florida includes the only subtropical region in the continental United States. This environment not only provides unusual materials for traditional life but is an impetus for certain types of activities. Our hot and wet climate has affected traditional occupations, such as cattle ranching, and folk architectural styles, such as the Seminole *chickee* and the Cracker cottage. Distinctive clothing styles have evolved, like the Seminole women's long skirts and capes, which provide protection from the piercing sawgrass of the Everglades. Floridians have also created various recreational activities, such as saltwater fly fishing, and enjoy a number of seafoods and fruits that thrive in a subtropical environment: lobster, stone crab, grouper, mullet, avocado, guava and mango. Over the years, knowledge of this environment has been considerably enhanced by the immigration of many people from tropical countries.

The diversity of peoples who have made Florida their home is a final crucial determinant of the state's traditional culture. In 1990 Florida's population was 12 percent Hispanic, 13 percent black, 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islanders, and .3 percent Native American. Certain counties, however, are far more diverse. The 1990 population of Dade County, for example, was 49 percent Hispanic and 21 percent black. Florida's minority

The Landscape of Florida Folklife

populations differ from those in many other states. Caribbean and South American Hispanics, especially Cubans, have a markedly different complex of cultural traditions than Meso-Americans. Moreover, Hispanic integration into the social and economic mainstream has been more extensive here because of the middle and upper class backgrounds of many immigrants. Meanwhile, Florida's black population has a strong Caribbean component, including Haitians, Bahamians, Jamaicans and other groups. People from a variety of European countries have also settled in Florida; the southeastern portion of the state has the second largest Jewish population in the nation.

Florida: North to South

Despite many shared characteristics, there are significant differences between Florida's regions. North Florida stretches from the panhandle to the Atlantic and extends at least 75 miles into the peninsula. For the most part, its geography and culture differ little from Georgia and Alabama directly to the north. It was the region of Florida first settled by Europeans—Spanish, French and British—along with Anglo-Celtic settlers from southern states who came to be called "Crackers." During the late eighteenth century, British settlers in east Florida brought enslaved Africans to work on their large plantations. Today North Florida is still heavily rural, with farming, horse raising, cattle ranching and logging remaining important economic activities.³

Though part of the South, there are aspects of North Florida's history and culture that distinguish it from neighboring states. Spain ruled Florida from 1513 to 1763, and from 1783 to its acquisition by the United States in 1821. Many residents of St. Augustine, founded in 1565 and considered the oldest city in the United States, still trace their ancestry to Spanish colonists or to the Minorcan, Greek and Italian residents of the New Smyrna colony during the British period (1763-1783). St. Augustine was particularly diverse: by 1786 the population was 50 percent Minorcan, Italian or Greek; 31 percent free African; 9 percent British; 5 percent Spanish or Spanish colonial; and 5 percent Native American. Another group unique to North Florida were the "Black Seminoles." While some free blacks (generally Africans who had escaped from slavery in nearby states) chose to

live in St. Augustine, others associated with the Seminoles. The Black Seminoles usually maintained separate villages near Seminole settlements; they raised cattle and crops, and gave a portion of their harvest to Seminoles in exchange for protection. Some also worked as translators and advisors to Seminoles.

To the west, Florida's Gulf Coast shares a semitropical environment and a history of colonial development with the Caribbean islands. Pensacola, like New Orleans and Mobile, has a heritage that includes significant Spanish, French, African and Caribbean elements. The Spanish first visited the Pensacola area in the early sixteenth century and were impressed by the harbor. In 1559 they returned with 1,500 settlers and soldiers, but the colony eventually failed. They came back again in 1698, just in time to discourage the French, who turned west and established a colony in Biloxi. From there the French continued to colonize the Gulf Coast from Mobile to New Orleans. They held Pensacola from 1719 to 1722, before returning it to Spain. After the brief British period, Spaniards from Spanish Louisiana and the Canary Islands and French Creoles from the Caribbean settled in the area. Although the French remained in the majority, by 1796 one third of Pensacola's population consisted of black or mulatto slaves. Like St. Augustine, Pensacola became American when Spain relinquished Florida in 1821.

Subtle reminders of this heritage remain in Gulf Coast folklife and distinguish the region from the rest of the South. Distinctive Gulf Coast vernacular houses, with their low pitched roofs, central dog-trot hallways, tall foundation pillars and detached kitchens, still survive in old Pensacola. A few boat builders still make *bateaux*, which derive their name and shape from their French origins. Religious patterns also distinguish this region. Although more than 80 percent of Gulf Coast church members are Baptist or Methodist, Catholics are prominent in places where settlers came from the Caribbean. As a result, Mardi Gras, the culmination of the Carnival season preceding Lent, is observed in New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola.

As one moves from North to Central Florida, the land gradually changes from soft rolling hills with lush woods and moss-draped trees to a terrain with more flat and open tracts of land. This terrain, combined with a mild

climate, contributes to Central Florida's prominence as a farming area. It produces more than half the vegetables and citrus fruits in the state and a substantial portion of the cattle. In recent decades, major tourist attractions and high technology industries have also influenced Central Florida's cultural character. Especially in the Orlando area, these industries have precipitated tremendous growth and the influx of diverse peoples with exceptional talents in the arts and sciences.

On the north side of Orlando is the small town of Eatonville, which has earned national fame as the home of Zora Neale Hurston and is the subject of several of her works. It is also the oldest surviving incorporated black municipality in the country. Many of Eatonville's current citizens are descendants of the families that settled the town with Hurston's forbears in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They perpetuate aspects of the traditional life depicted in Hurston's works and proudly maintain the governance of their community.

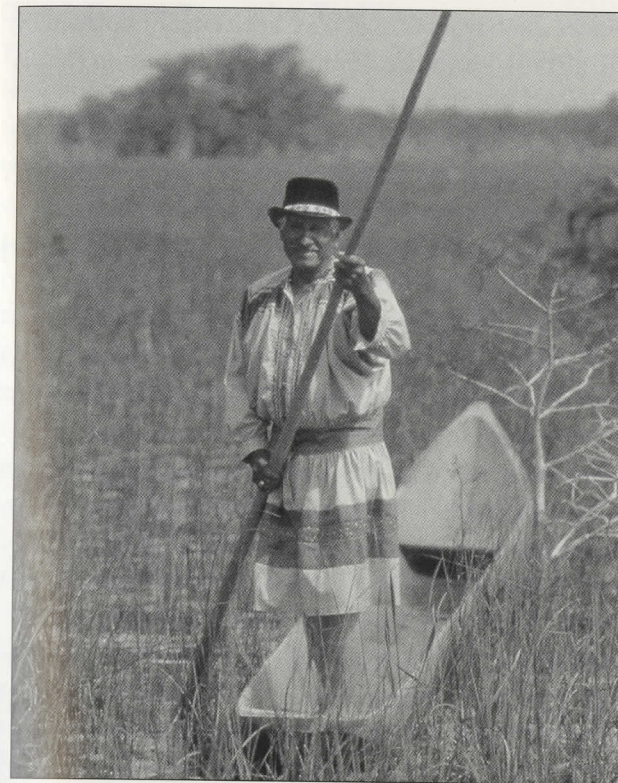
On Central Florida's west coast, Tampa and Ybor City owe much of their development to Latin American and Caribbean influences. In the mid-1880s, several cigar manufacturers from Key West moved to the Tampa area in order to avoid strikes. The transplanted industry flourished, with thousands of white and black Cubans working in the cigar factories or related industries by the turn of the century. In 1892 the U.S. Consul to Cuba Ramon Williams noted: "The people here [in Cuba] look upon Florida as so much a part of their own country. . . . Between Key West and Havana people go as between Albany and New York."⁴ The Cubans were joined in Ybor City by large Spanish and Italian populations. Today this cultural heritage remains strong, though there has also been substantial migration from the North and Midwest. In addition, areas such as St. Petersburg Beach and Masaryktown include large Eastern European communities.

South Florida, the state's most tropical region, contains the majority of its population. Although most live in urban areas, South Florida still possesses vast wetlands, farming and ranching areas, as well as Seminole and Miccosukee reservations. In this southernmost agricultural region in the continental United States, Dade County's Redland yields a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. As early as the 1890s, settlers raised mangos,

guavas, pineapples, coconuts and other tropical fruits. Today they also grow yuca, malanga, boniato, carambola, litchi, mamey and other tropical vegetables and fruits, in order to supply both the demand of South Florida's Latin and Caribbean residents and the current national interest in these products.

South Florida's population is the most diverse of any of the state's regions. Lightly settled by pre-contact Native Americans and then by colonial Spanish, the modern settlement of the area did not begin until the Seminoles were pushed south by land-hungry Americans in the early nineteenth century. A trickle of hardy American and Bahamian settlers arrived around the same time. Many were Crackers from Alabama, the Carolinas, Georgia and North Florida, whose Celtic heritage flourished in the region's wilderness. In addition, Bahamians, Cubans, Europeans and Americans from northern states struggled to eke out a living from the land and sea. During the mid to late nineteenth century, many Bahamian and southern blacks came to trade or work on the railroad. The subsequent completion of the railroad stimulated tremendous population growth. A land boom during the 1920s attracted both permanent settlers and seasonal tourists from the North. During World War II hundreds of thousands of soldiers were trained in South Florida's military stations; a substantial number returned to live after the war. Large numbers of retirees, many of them Jewish, moved to southeast Florida during this same period.

From the early 1960s to the present, there has been extensive migration from northern states, the Caribbean and Latin America. Hispanics, who currently account for over half of Dade County's population, have contributed to Miami's emergence as a major Latin American commercial and cultural center. In addition, sizable non-Hispanic Caribbean communities, such as Haitians, Jamaicans, Bahamians and Trinidadians, link the region to those island nations. South Florida has a rapidly growing Asian population, composed of Japanese farmers who came around the turn of the century, armed forces wives, Chinese (from China and the Caribbean), Indians (from India, the Caribbean and Africa) and many other groups. As a result of these migrations, Miami, Florida's largest city, has developed a unique way of life which synthesizes aspects of a variety of cultural tradi-



Henry John Billie in a Seminole canoe on the Big Cypress Reservation.

tions. Miamians will, for example, share a café cubano on their way to a bar mitzvah, where they may kiss each other on the cheek in greeting and dance to reggae music.

Further to the south are the Florida Keys, a chain of limestone and coral islands that extend in a curve to Key West, more than 100 miles out from shore. Key West, the southernmost city in the continental United States, lies with the Gulf of Mexico to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the south and Cuba only 90 miles away. It is hypothesized that the Keys were originally inhabited by Arawak and Carib tribes, who were later driven out by the Calusa. In the eighteenth century, the Spanish used the Keys as a base for fishing, pirates hid in the islands' coves and channels, and Bahamian wreckers salvaged cargo from ships that were destroyed on the coral reefs. The Keys were variously owned by Spain, England, the United States and private American citizens. By the mid-nineteenth century, they were inhabited by a mixture of Americans, Cubans, Bahamians and Spaniards. The wrecking, sponge and cigar industries employed most of the population in Key West, while fishing and farming were

prevalent on the Upper Keys. Long periods of isolation had a formative effect on the people of the Keys, often called "Conchs." Many never left the islands until the railroad was completed in 1912. In recent decades, the rapid development of the Keys and the influx of outsiders threaten to overwhelm the old Keys folklife.

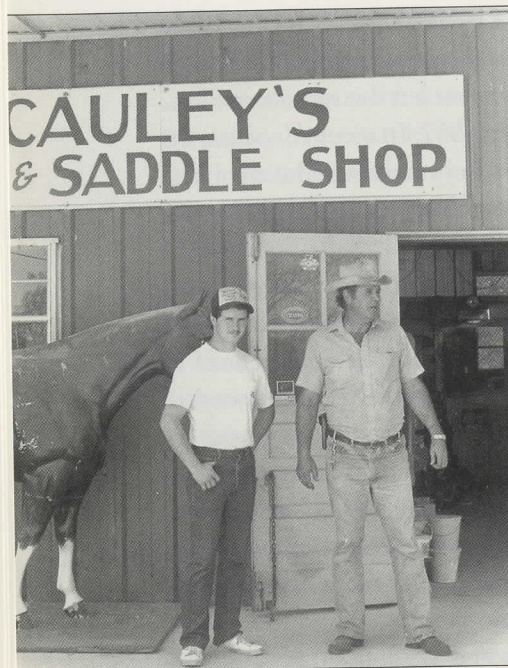
Florida's Traditional Arts

Florida's unique geography and history have shaped the many forms of traditional culture that are practiced in the state today. Among these forms are shared ways of making objects, such as maritime and ranching equipment, domestic and decorative items, ritual and festive material, and musical instruments. The individual men and women who produce these objects are often greatly admired in their communities. Their creative work both facilitates the accomplishment of practical tasks and expresses communal values and aesthetics.

Maritime, Marsh and Ranching Traditions

Rooted in Florida's diverse regional environments are a variety of traditional occupations and skills, including boat building, fishing, frogging, farming and ranching. All such occupations involve specific material objects, as well as customs, gestures and narratives shared by workers during their daily activities.

Florida's extensive aquatic environments—marine, marsh, swamp and riverine—have encouraged many economic and recreational pursuits. Numerous local craftspersons supply the necessary equipment, such as boats, sails, nets, traps, fishing rods and flies. In each region, these artisans have made distinctive adaptations to local conditions and needs. The warm coastal waters of South and Central Florida, for example, are the only place in the United States where sponges grow. Though synthetic sponges now dominate the market, natural sponges are preferred for certain industrial and cosmetic uses. Floridians have been gathering and processing sponges for over a hundred years. By the 1890s hundreds of sponge boats operated by Americans, Conchs and Bahamians were active from Miami south through the Keys. After the sponge blight in the mid-twentieth century, Cubans in Miami rebuilt the industry by providing equipment and boats to sponge fishermen throughout the region.



J.D. Cauley (right), with his nephew David Cauley, at his saddle shop, Lakeland.

Sponge fishing also commenced in Tarpon Springs, northwest of Tampa, during the 1880s. By 1905 companies began to hire Greek divers from the Dodecanese islands of Kalymnos, Halki and Symi to gather sponges off Tarpon Springs and along the coast to the north. Tarpon Springs has remained a sponge diving center with a strong Greek character. Among the many residents still involved in the industry, diving helmet maker Nick Toth

stands out as a superb traditional artist dedicated to Tarpon Springs' heritage.

The South Florida wetland system spans a number of overlapping, yet distinct sub-regions and communities. Anglo "gladesmen," Seminoles and African Americans still travel the region's interior glades and mangrove fringes to fish and to hunt alligators, deer, turtles and frogs. Since the early nineteenth century, Cuban and Bahamian fishermen have been plying the waters along the west coast's remote Ten Thousand Islands. The people who settled South Florida developed unique modes of transportation to navigate the wilderness. The Seminoles built dug-out canoes and Anglo gladesmen created the glade skiff and similar forms of boats pushed with poles. These boats and the skills necessary to make them have all but vanished today. Glen Simmons of Homestead may be the only remaining builder of traditional glade skiffs, though local boat makers recognize the skiff's practical design and sometimes use it as a model for fiberglass versions. Likewise, Bobby Henry of Tampa and Henry John Billie of the Big Cypress Reservation are among the last Seminoles who make dugout

canoes. Both types of craft have been largely replaced by the airboat—another South Florida invention that is now used in wetlands worldwide.

Fishing and hunting sometimes involve traditional objects designed to imitate or seduce nature, including hand-tied flies, carved wooden duck decoys and elaborate bird traps. Unlike its older freshwater sibling, saltwater fly fishing is a relatively new recreational activity, having developed during the post-World War II era in South Florida. Several individuals, such as Chico Fernandez and Frank Oblak, have become well-known for their skill in tying saltwater flies. In the northern part of the state, Michael Berg carries on a family tradition of carving utilitarian duck decoys in cork. Many other traditional artists produce equipment for types of fishing and related pursuits that are unique to Florida. For example, Norman Padgett, who has hunted alligators and frogs in South Florida since he was a youth, fabricates frog gigs and airboats, and makes his living as a frog hunter. Charles Pennycuff of Eastpoint constructs oyster skiffs and other boats, while Harry Hernandez of St. Augustine continues the tradition of making Minorcan cast nets.

Among the variety of agricultural and livestock industries in Florida, cattle ranching has developed one of the more unique sets of cultural practices. Indeed, Florida is one of the leading cattle producing states east of the Mississippi. Originally derived from British cattle raising practices rather than the Spanish/Mexican traditions dominant in the West, Florida's ranching techniques have been specially adapted to the state's subtropical climate. The tough scrub cattle of earlier years were a blend of Spanish Andalusian stock brought in the sixteenth century and British breeds from the Carolinas. During the twentieth century, Indian Brahman cattle have been introduced and crossed with other breeds to improve the cattle's resistance to the hot and wet climate. In order to guide the cattle's movement, Florida cowmen use dogs and crack whips in the air. This cracking sound may account for the use of the term "Cracker" in reference to the state's Anglo-American settlers. J.P. "Curley" Dekle and George "Junior" Mills are two of the state's most renowned weavers of cow whips. Master craftsmen like Michael Wilder and J.D. Cauley make saddles that are both suited to Florida's terrain and aesthetically pleasing.

Domestic and Decorative Traditions

Home is at the core of our existence; it is where we first learn to weave the fabric of our lives. A large part of traditional knowledge concerns our domestic life. Among the many traditional arts practiced in the home are needlework, personal adornment, furniture making and food preparation. In Florida a remarkable range of objects are made using only the rudimentary materials of needle, thread and fabric: Seminole patchwork and Ghanaian clothing; Palestinian, Greek, Norwegian and Hungarian embroidery; Puerto Rican bobbin lace; African American, Anglo-American and Hawaiian quilts; Jamaican antimacassars; and Lithuanian and Guatemalan Mayan weaving. A few artists, such as Robert Rudd of Bronson, continue to build cypress furniture, which was once a common craft in Florida and other southern states.

Before the advent of inexpensive manufactured containers, basketry and related arts served important practical functions. Today such items are woven primarily for decorative purposes. Alphonso Jennings of Lamont still constructs white oak baskets in the way that his grandmother, Lucreaty Clark, taught him. Connie Palmer of Altha makes Creek coiled pine needle baskets; while Nhang Bui of Pensacola practices the art of Vietnamese basketry. Jacksonville's late Margaret Garrison wove African American coiled sweetgrass baskets in the style that she learned in her native South Carolina. Just south of St. Augustine, Ada Mickler continues to make palmetto Cracker farm hats, as she has done for most of her 90 years. Though most Seminoles now produce sweetgrass baskets, Marian Bowers weaves old-style palmetto stem baskets on the Brighton Reservation near Lake Okeechobee.

Play is another important element of domestic life, and often includes the fabrication of toys. Multi-talented South Florida artist Jan Sebon! maintains two arts forms from his childhood: Haitian *grandou* kites and *fanals*, lanterns made for the Christmas season. Miami's Manuel Vega builds both traditional Cuban six-sided kites and Chinese-Cuban style kites. Kazuko Law of the Pensacola area and Miekko Kubota of Miami delight children with Japanese *origami*, fanciful figures constructed from squares of colored paper.

Like other realms of folk culture, decorative arts result primarily from the shared traditions of a group rather



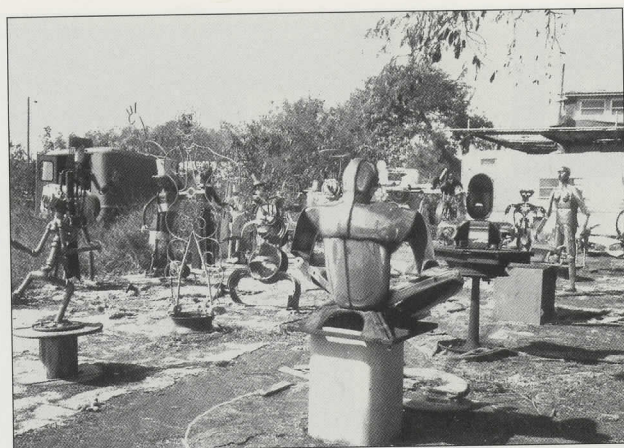
Nadia Michael (center) and friends making Palestinian cross-stitch, Jacksonville.

than from an individual artist's idiosyncratic vision. Rene Latour, Stanley Papio and Mario Sanchez are remarkable artists whose creations are purely aesthetic yet derive from traditional skills. LaTour and Papio were both employed as metal workers, which led to the use of this medium in their playful sculptures. Sanchez started carving wooden fish to serve as signs for a local fish store, but soon expanded his repertoire to include scenes of Key West's traditional life. His painted carvings serve as cultural icons for many who live in Key West today.

Ritual and Festive Traditions

Florida's diverse religious and ethnic groups practice a wide array of ritual and festive traditions. Families and communities celebrate important events through their interpretations of traditional patterns of belief, custom, verbal expression, music, dance and foodways. Material objects are often important components of celebratory practices, particularly those of Catholic and Orthodox groups. There are the elaborate Eastern European Easter eggs decorated by Ola Kryway (Titusville) and Violet Cimbora (Spring Hill), Puerto Rican *santos* (religious statues) carved by José Orta (Miami), Filipino

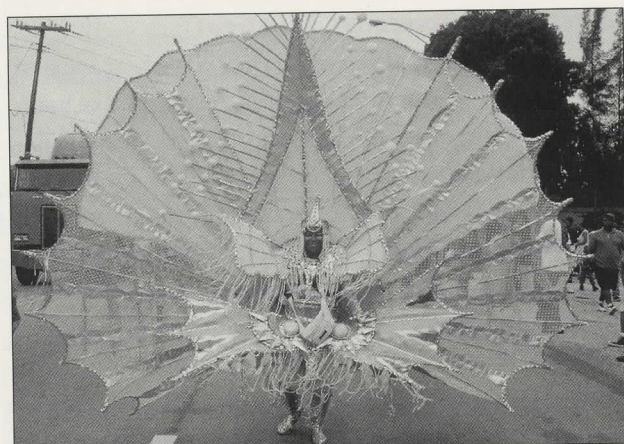
The Landscape of Florida Folklife



Stanley Papio's yard of metal sculpture, Key Largo.

parols (star-shaped Christmas lanterns) constructed by Reinaldo Manzo (Tallahassee), Days of the Dead altars created by Catalina Delgado Trunk (Orlando) and Russian icons designed by Alexander Jasiukowicz (Orlando). The material culture of Caribbean religions, a synthesis of African and Catholic elements, include such items as the Haitian Vodou *pakèts kongo* of Carole Demesmin (Hallendale) and the Cuban Orisha or Santería crowns of Antonio Salas (Miami).

Objects are also associated with "rites of passage," events that mark significant transitional points in the life cycle. Baptisms, birthdays, puberty ceremonies (such as *bar* and *bat mitzvahs*, *quinceañeras*, Sweet Sixteen parties and debutante balls), marriages and funerals all indicate an individual's movement to a different status in the community. Observances often include a combination of sacred and secular expressions. *Ketubot* (marriage contracts) designed by Honey Pearlman of North Miami Beach are rich in Jewish sacred symbolism and personal artistic expression. In Latin American countries quinceañera celebrations mark the transition from childhood to womanhood and are considered one of the most meaningful events in a woman's life. Cubans in South Florida lavish a great deal of time and thought on preparations for these events, including quince gowns such as those confected by Miriam Alvarez. Piñatas are a festive accompaniment to various Latin American celebrations, but are associated particularly with children's birthdays. In Florida there are several traditions of piñatas, including the Nicaraguan type



Masquerader at the Caribbean Carnival in Miami, 1996.

made by Chony Gutiérrez (Miami) and the Mexican style of Victoria Grimm (DeLand).

The diverse backgrounds of Floridians are similarly apparent in their secular festive traditions. The members of the Bahamas Junkanoo Revue make extraordinary costumes for Junkanoo celebrations in Miami and other cities. Trinidadian-style Carnivals are held in Miami and Orlando and feature costumes designed and constructed by numerous artists, like Marion Shaw of Miami. Florida also boasts a variety of *comparsa* groups in those areas with the greatest Cuban populations—Miami, Key West and Tampa. Attractive costumes for the Cayo Hueso Comparsa Dancers of Key West are made by Emelia Fernandez.

Musical Traditions

Florida possesses a great diversity of musical traditions that flourish side by side, often influencing and enriching each other. Although many traditional musicians play mass-produced instruments, a few craftspersons persist in making instruments by hand. Creating an instrument is a painstaking and complex process which requires intimate familiarity with the needs of musicians and the effect of different materials on sound quality.

Traditional African American musical instruments are based on a variety of ideas, forms and techniques derived from Africa. Growing up in Georgia during the 1950s, Eddie Osborne learned about washtub basses and other instruments with African roots from family and friends. This contributed later to his interest in Af-

The Landscape of Florida Folklife

rican instruments, such as marimbas, *sakara* drums and gourd *shekerés*. Since 1971 Osborne has lived in Miami, where he has made African instruments for many local musicians.

Caribbean music is widely performed and enjoyed in Florida, especially in the southern portion of the state. Among the popular West Indian styles, which combine African and European musical elements, are Jamaican reggae, Trinidadian calypso and soca, and Haitian *konpa*. A number of West Indian instrument makers can also be found in the state. Michael Kernahan fabricates Trinidadian steel *pans* in Miami, Romeo Ragbir covers Trinidadian *tassa* drums (which have East Indian roots) in the Ft. Lauderdale area, and Cathelious Laguerre and Joseph Senatus cover Haitian Vodou drums in Miami.

Though Floridians enjoy a variety of Hispanic musical styles, Cuban musical forms dominate and, indeed, have had a tremendous influence on music throughout the world. Among the many styles are the *son*, *danzón*, *conga*, *rumba*, *guaracha*, *chachachá*, *salsa* and *songo*. African-derived music and dance styles have been especially well-preserved in Cuban religious traditions, such as Orisha worship. Such forms are supported by artists like Ezequiel Torres, who is one of the few *batá* drum makers in the country.

Asian musical styles are also performed in Florida. For example, a number of Hawaiian musicians and dancers are active in the Orlando area. Ancient Hawaiians developed great skill in creating objects from wood, bone, shell and other available materials. Woodcarvers, who were afforded a high status, created drums (*pahu*) for both the temple and the hula dance. Some of this ancient knowledge has been maintained in the work of contemporary craftspersons, such as Henry Ohumukini, Jr. Ohumukini practices a variety of traditional Hawaiian crafts, including the construction of drums and other instruments used to accompany the hula.

As part of their southern heritage, many Floridians perform or enjoy old-time fiddling, a blend of Anglo-Celtic dance music and early popular music styles, including country, blues and ragtime. Fiddle maker Clayton Raulerson of St. Cloud has gained great respect for his work among the state's fiddlers; in his earlier years he served as a fiddler for teams of cowmen working on the ranges. Floridians also excel in a variety of musical



Batá ensemble led by Ezequiel Torres (right) at an Orisha ceremony, Miami.

traditions centered in European ethnic communities. Paris Banchetti is well-known for his impressive guitars, many of which are played by musicians involved in Spanish or Latin American musical traditions. The late Elias Maris of Tarpon Springs not only taught his son and grandson Cretan regional music but passed on the tradition of making the Cretan *lyra* (a 3-string lute-like instrument). Nikitas Tsimouris, also of Tarpon Springs, may be the only *tsabouna* (Kalymnian bagpipe) maker in the United States. Yossi Gansburg, from the Ft. Lauderdale area, makes the Jewish *shofar* from animal horns and is currently instructing young people in this art form.

Florida: State of the Future

Florida's environment and cultural heritage have together produced distinctive complexes of traditional life. Many cultural practices brought from other countries and American regions have developed characteristics here quite unlike their parent traditions. Florida is also continually changing. The rapid influx of peoples from north and south, from Hispanic, Caribbean, African American, Asian and European cultures, profoundly affects the way we live. Although there may be tensions when different groups encounter each other, old and new residents usually become neighbors and friends in time. We share our foods, languages, values, fears, hopes and children. Through our shared lives, our cultural traditions continue to merge into new folkways. In this regard, we are a land of the future, as well as a reflection of the past.

Maritime, Marsh and Ranching Traditions



Glen Simmons in a glade skiff near Homestead (Dade Co.).

Florida's extensive coastlines, lakes, rivers and wetlands have generated a particularly rich material culture. A wide range of equipment is fabricated for both the economic and recreational use of these aquatic resources. Though much of this equipment is machine-made and mass-produced, there is also substantial demand for artisans who can create items that are customized to meet the specific requirements of their users. There are specially made oyster skiffs and tongs for working the waters along the Florida panhandle, traps for baiting lobsters in the Florida Keys, gigs for the nighttime spearing of frogs in the Everglades, lively artificial flies for tricking fish in streams and bays, and metal helmets for diving for sponges in the depths of the sea off Tarpon Springs. The indi-

viduals who craft these and similar objects are highly respected in their communities for their ability to adapt traditional designs to contemporary environmental conditions.

The personal customizing of occupational equipment is also prevalent in another of Florida's prominent industries: cattle ranching in the lowlands to the north and west of Lake Okeechobee. Cowmen need saddles, spurs and cow whips that enable them to effectively work their herds in this hot and wet region. Each ranch also has a variety of branding irons for identifying its cattle, which have been specially bred for survival in a subtropical climate. Florida cowmen take great pride in their unique ranching tradition, which extends back to the Spanish colonial period.

Nick Toth ■ Diving Helmets

Men of Greek descent have been diving for sponges on the floor of Florida's warm Gulf of Mexico waters since approximately 1905. The center of this pursuit is Tarpon Springs, located just northwest of Tampa. Though today most of the divers use modified scuba gear, a few still wear the traditional canvas and rubber suit topped with a heavy helmet made from copper, brass and plate glass by Nick Toth.

Toth's grandfather, Antonios Lerios, was born on the Greek Island of Kalymnos. As a boy he moved to Istanbul, Turkey, where he worked in the shipyards, eventually becoming a master mechanic and machinist. He came to Tarpon Springs in 1913, when he was 21, and soon became known as the best diving helmet craftsman. Over the years he continually refined his design, making the helmet more comfortable, improving air flow and increasing visibility.

Toth admired his grandfather's skills and ability to solve mechanical problems. As a young man, he began to learn the machinist trade and to absorb much of his grandfather's knowledge. Before Lerios passed away at age 100 in 1992, Toth had assumed the family machine shop business and was continuing the tradition of crafting diving helmets that are among the finest found anywhere.



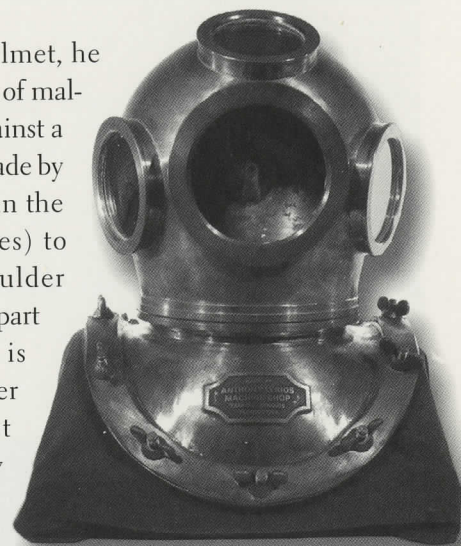
To begin a helmet, he hammers a sheet of malleable copper against a cast iron form (made by his grandfather in the teens or twenties) to fashion the shoulder piece. The main part of the helmet is spun from copper to Toth's exact specifications by another shop. He machines the openings in the helmet, fabricates all of the other parts—from the precision air valves down to the smallest wing nut—and completes the assembly in his shop. The result is an expertly crafted helmet that should survive 30 or 40 years of daily use.

The heyday of Florida's sponge diving industry occurred during the 1930s and 1940s. For most of Toth's youth, the industry was in decline, due to red tides and the increased use of synthetic sponges. But, in the 1980s, the sponges in the Mediterranean died, and the Florida market recovered. Florida's tough, soft sponges are considered to be some of the best in the world and are purchased for both industrial and domestic use.

Though Toth continues to make helmets for a few local divers, he is currently exploring new markets. Divers who work in the colder, rougher waters off the California coast are particularly impressed with his heavy helmets. They appreciate the custom design of the helmets and find that they outlast other manufacturers' products. Toth also receives orders worldwide from diving clubs and individuals who want to display his helmets as works of occupational art. He feels fortunate that this expanded interest is enabling him to continue his family tradition.

—Robert Stone

Top: Sponge diving helmet made by Nick Toth. Loaned by Museum of Florida History. **Left:** Toth fabricating a helmet in his shop, Tarpon Springs.



Charles Pennycuff ■ Oyster Skiffs

Charles Pennycuff builds oyster skiffs in a grassy area next to his bait shop in Eastpoint, a small fishing village in Franklin County on the Florida panhandle. Shrimp boats, crab boats and oyster skiffs dot the surrounding seascape. While most of the boats used in the area are manufactured commercially out-of-town, oyster skiffs are made locally from cypress planks or plywood.

Skiffs are specially built for "tonging" or harvesting oysters from the bay. While standing on his boat, a worker pulls oysters from the beds below with a long pair of tongs. Typically, these craft are flat bottomed or what locals call "low-wooded." This design allows the sides of the skiff to be closer to the water, which facilitates the process of pulling the oysters onboard.

Pennycuff worked as an oysterman himself for 23 years. He began building boats on a part-time basis, after repairing several local craft that were damaged by Hurricane Agnes in 1972. While constructing his first oyster skiff, he obtained assistance from Joe Lolley, an older builder in Eastpoint. Lolley, in fact, influenced many of the local boat builders and helped them get started in the trade. Today Pennycuff is considered one of the master boat builders in the community. Along with other types of boats, he has constructed more than 40 oyster skiffs and continues to experiment with different designs.

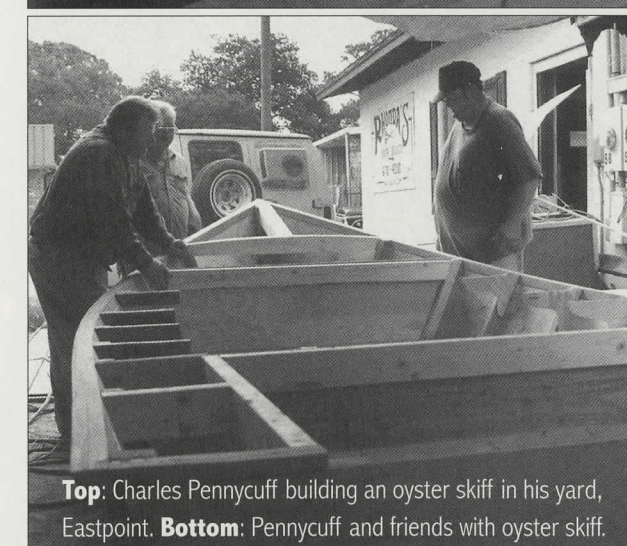
Like other boat builders in the area, Pennycuff assembles an oyster skiff from "scratch." Rather than working from a set of blueprints, he has an in-depth understanding of the proportions, angles and formulas to follow. As he proceeds, he makes subtle adjustments to a basic design in order to create the specific craft that his customer desires. Traditionally, the average skiff was between 21 and 23 feet long. Today, however, much smaller boats are used, since government regulations have restricted the size of an oysterman's daily catch.

In years past skiff builders would pull two to three hundred year old cypress logs out of the Apalachicola river bed. Boat builders continue to prefer this old "dead head" cypress, because its durability and flexibility make it "good to work." But, since the government has stopped all "dead heading," cypress planks have, for the most part, been replaced by plywood in skiff construction.

Though boat building technology has changed over the years, Pennycuff believes that "there will always be

a need for wood boats" in the Eastpoint community. Since each oysterman has his own specific requirements, custom skiff building remains essential. Moreover, given the solitary nature of tonging, oystermen tend to become attached to their skiffs. Pennycuff comments: "A boat is like a person. If a person owns a work boat and gets rid of it, it is like losing a companion."

—Jonathan Kay



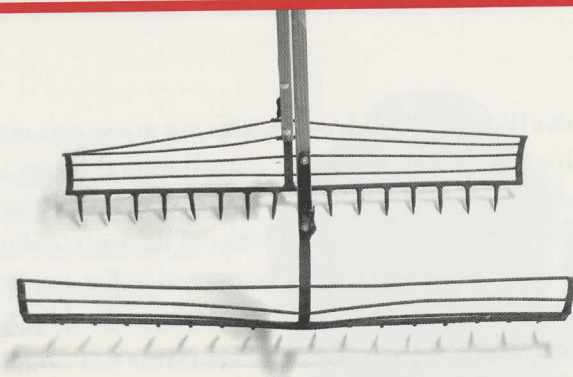
Top: Charles Pennycuff building an oyster skiff in his yard, Eastpoint. **Bottom:** Pennycuff and friends with oyster skiff.

Charles Golden ■ Oyster Tongs

Along the gulf shore, surrounding Eastpoint, generations of oystermen have harvested this popular seafood with long wooden tongs, a special tool that resembles two rakes connected to each other. The handles or “sticks” of the tongs range from 10 to 16 feet in length and hinge together like scissors. With this device, oystermen are able to “tong” oysters from their beds along the gulf floor.

Charles Golden was raised in this community that makes its living from the sea. His father, Buford Golden, made shrimp nets and his brother, John, has continued the family net business. Charles, however, decided to become an oysterman. In the late 1970s he made his first set of tongs for his personal use. Then he started making tongs for friends and other local oystermen. Eventually, he quit oystering altogether and began making tongs full time.

Since there were several oyster tong makers in the Eastpoint area, Golden wanted his tongs to be different from those made by others. Though he drew on the traditional design of local craftsmen, he developed a personal style. Rather than attaching the teeth or “brailles” squarely to the head of the tongs, he rotated each tooth a quarter turn. This strengthened his tongs



and increased their popularity with oystermen. Eventually, several other local tong makers copied Golden's unique design.

Golden makes the best set of tongs he can, knowing that the tool will be worked hard for a couple of years. He gives as much attention to his handles as to the tong teeth. While most oystermen prefer ash handles, Golden only uses pine, due to the expense and limited availability of ash. However, he carefully selects each piece of pine. He accepts only tight dark grain wood, since it usually produces particularly sturdy handles. Out of 100 boards that he might inspect, he typically selects only 12 to 15.

Golden tries to work year-round at his craft. Nevertheless, tong making is inextricably linked to the local oyster business. The work ebbs and flows with the economic tide. “If they're making money, then you're going to make money,” he comments.

Over the years Golden's market has expanded far beyond that of the Eastpoint area. He ships his tongs to South Florida, Louisiana and Texas. This is the only way he can make up for the shrinking population of local customers. Though once the Eastpoint area supported four tong makers, at present Golden is the only person producing tongs commercially. The nearly 1,500 oystermen who once worked the surrounding coast have dropped to less than 300. The remaining workers attribute this decline of the oystering tradition to government regulations. Limited hours for tonging, expensive licenses, and the requirement to bag and ticket one's catch have pushed many oystermen to find employment in other fields.

—Jonathan Kay

Top: Oyster tongs made by Charles Golden (detail).
Loaned by Charles Golden.

Left: Golden with oyster tongs outside his shop, Eastpoint.

John Golden ■ Shrimp Nets

In a long wooden frame building in Eastpoint, John Golden continues a family tradition of making shrimp nets. His father, Buford Golden, first learned to make shrimp nets during the 1940s, while working for Standard Hardware in Tampa. In the 1960s Buford Golden moved to Eastpoint, where he established Golden's Net Shop. Today John Golden operates this family business, with assistance from his brother James and nephew Danny.

According to Golden, shrimp net making is “not a highly competitive business.” The closest commercial net makers to the area are hundreds of miles away in Tampa and Mobile. Nevertheless, Golden takes great pride in his work: “I like to say that I build every net as well as I can.” Perhaps this is why the family has made nets for local shrimpers for so many years.

The average life of a net is two or three years. However, some shrimpers change their nets annually, while others use the same net for as long as ten years. Golden's Net Shop does not advertise; it relies on repeat business and attracts new customers by “word of mouth.” Through an informal network of shrimpers, Golden has reached customers as far away as Texas and California.

Golden constructs his nets from large sheets of machine-made nylon netting. With an electrician's knife, he cuts a pattern to suit a customer's specifications. Then

he pieces the net together with nylon line and a small flat tool called a “shuttle” or “needle.” With the help of his brother and nephew, Golden is able to produce as many as eight large nets a week.

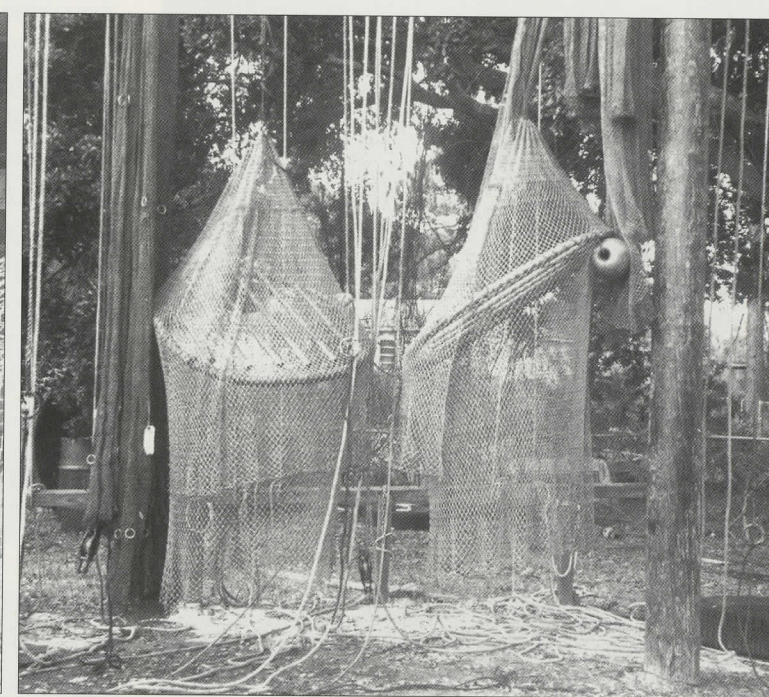
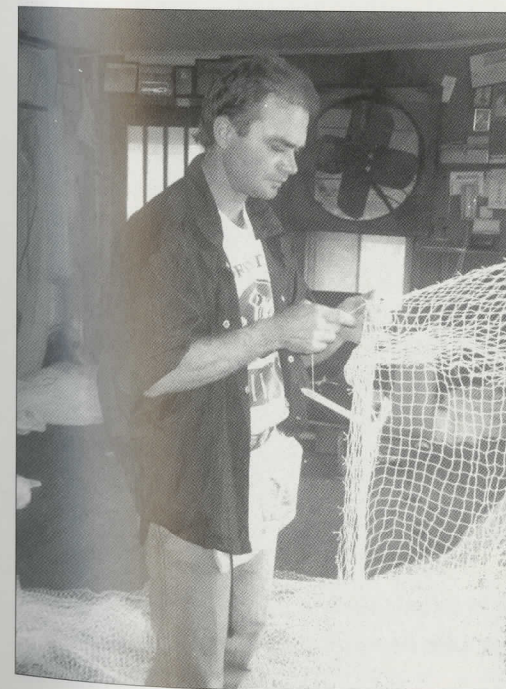
A good portion of Golden's business is repair work. Jagged rocks and debris in the sea periodically rip holes in nets. Golden says that he enjoys sewing up the torn nets more than making new ones. The complexities of the repair process are more challenging to the mind than the sewing of straight seams for a new net.

For years Golden's Net Shop has been an integral part of the cultural landscape of the Eastpoint fishing community. Shrimp boats, oyster skiffs, bait shops and fish markets line the surrounding shore. Nearly everyone around Eastpoint is linked both economically and culturally to the gulf. Golden notes that most of the people he went to school with stayed in the area and found employment in the commercial fishing industry. While the area is slowly changing with an influx of tourists and new residents, Golden's Net Shop remains a vital community institution.

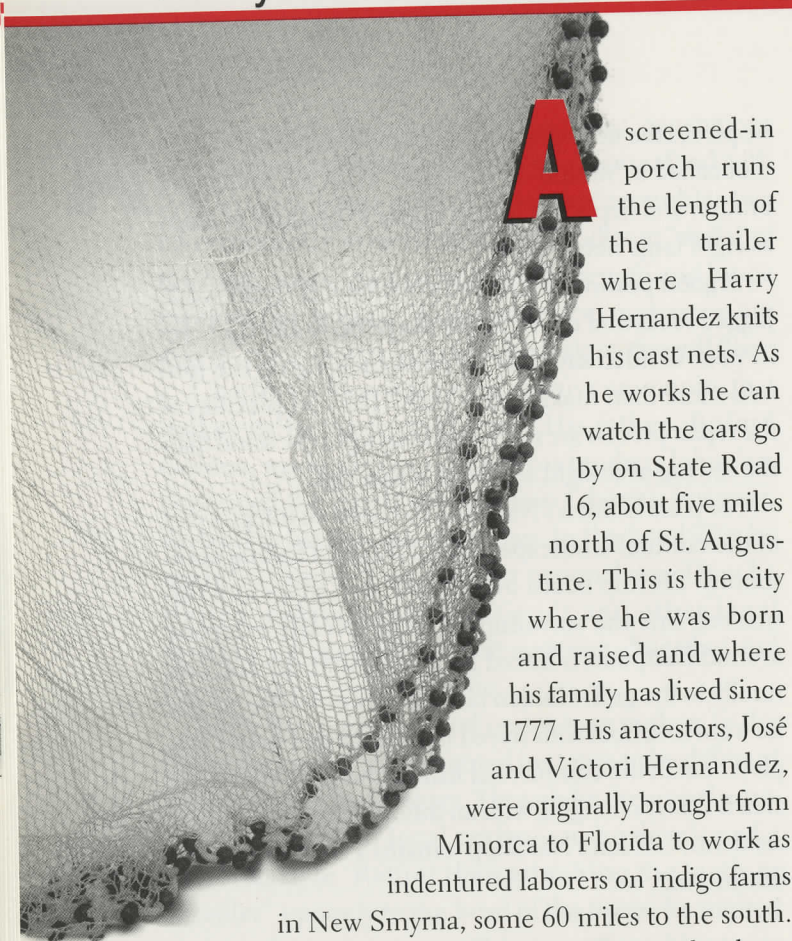
—Jonathan Kay

Left: John Golden making a shrimp net in his shop, Eastpoint.

Right: Shrimp nets hanging outside Golden's shop.



Harry Hernandez ■ Cast Nets



The Minorcan tradition of making cast nets has been handed down from father to son and preserved as it was originally practiced on that Spanish island.



A screened-in porch runs the length of the trailer where Harry Hernandez knits his cast nets. As he works he can watch the cars go by on State Road 16, about five miles north of St. Augustine. This is the city where he was born and raised and where his family has lived since 1777. His ancestors, José and Victori Hernandez, were originally brought from Minorca to Florida to work as indentured laborers on indigo farms in New Smyrna, some 60 miles to the south.

Hernandez's interest in cast net making began when he was about nine or ten. "We lived on Rohde Avenue, and Dad would sit there by the hour and do his knitting." Hernandez's first net was just four feet long, small enough for him to handle as a boy. At 79, he continues to make the nets, both the finer mesh ones for shrimp and ones with wider spacing for mullet. The construction of a cast net requires using what is known as an "over-and-under knot" or a "sheepshank knot." The materials needed include the shuttle (which can be carved wood or molded plastic), spacers to produce mesh of a uniform size, cotton thread twine, weights and lines, and a ring of iron or horn. The average net is about 7 feet long and has 2¾ pounds of lead weights sewn into its bottom. The largest nets are 14 feet in length.

Hernandez says that it usually takes about two weeks to knit the finer nets used for shrimping. Like other seasoned net throwers, he states that handmade cotton nets are superior to the commercial nylon ones. He claims that the cotton twine absorbs the water and sinks faster than the nylon, which repels water.

Cast nets remind Hernandez of picnics at night on the beach, when his family and their friends would gather together. The bigger kids would walk out into the surf with a net and pull in all kinds of fish. Then everyone would gather around a big frying pan, about two feet wide, and cook the fish over an open fire. "This was back when the St. Augustine beach was a mile wide."

While traveling during a 21-year career in the Air Force, Hernandez shared his cast net making skills wherever he was stationed. He returned to St. Augustine in 1981 and is now a member of the Minorcan Cultural Society. He often demonstrates net making for cultural events sponsored by the City of St. Augustine and, for the past two years, has given classes at the St. Augustine Textile Guild.

—Elizabeth Higgs

Top: Cast net for shrimp (detail) made by Harry Hernandez. HASF collection. **Left:** Hernandez knitting a cast net in his home, St. Augustine.

Max Dooley ■ Cast Nets

With a cigar clamped firmly between his teeth, Max Dooley works patiently at a bench under a live oak in his back yard in Lakeland, east of Tampa. Tethered to the tree is his latest project, a cast net he is carefully crafting, one knot at a time. He has been making cast nets by hand for 60 years. He uses them to catch mullet—served smoked or fried—for the family table.

For centuries Floridians have thrown cast nets to catch mullet and bait fish. Most contemporary net makers assemble cast nets from panels of machine-tied mesh, but Dooley hand ties every piece the way he learned from a family friend in the late 1930s. When Dooley was growing up, making a cast net was a household project. "We entertained ourselves by making nets," he recalls. "If you had a few minutes, you tied a few knots." One of his 10-foot diameter nets contains over 26,000 knots and takes about 50 hours to complete. According to Dooley, the extra effort put into tying a net by hand is well worth it. He says his nets spread better and catch more fish than ones pieced together from machine-made mesh. "My nets are full, like a woman's skirt," he explains. "The store-bought nets are flat, like a pizza."

A cast net consists of a circular piece of net rimmed with a rope called a "leadline," which is threaded through small lead weights. The leadline is connected at

the center to another rope, or "handline," for retrieving the net after it has been thrown. A ring or "horn," which is made from 1½" or 2" PVC pipe, is sewn into the center of the net. In times past, the horn was made from animal horn or brass. Dooley has incorporated the modern plastic material into his nets because it is unbreakable and will not corrode. The handline passes through the horn and attaches to numerous smaller "brail lines," which are tied at regular intervals along the leadline. When the handline is pulled in, the brail lines draw the outer edge of the net to the center, forming a purse around the fish. A cast net may be thrown from a boat, dock or shore. Throwing the net accurately is a skill that takes considerable time to master.

Although plastic monofilament is the most popular material for contemporary manufactured nets, Dooley prefers to make his out of nylon twine. The rougher surface of the twine allows him to tie a simpler, quicker knot than the one required for monofilament. He also finds twine to be a lot easier on his fingers, enabling him to work longer without stopping. Dooley's nets will last a long time, if properly cared for. "If you find a tear, fix it right away before it becomes trash," he suggests. "I've had nets for 20 years."

—Robert Stone



Left: Max Dooley (on right) advising apprentice Reginald Reis in knitting a cast net, Lakeland. **Above:** Dooley knitting a cast net.

Wayne Sherrod ■ Crab Traps

Driving through Panacea, on the gulf coast south of Tallahassee, one passes two small trailers with a sign in the front yard that simply says “Crab Traps.” This is where the Sherrod family has made their home and built traps for more than 40 years. Wayne Sherrod’s father brought the family to Panacea from Georgia in 1956. The family crabbed for a few years, but soon became full-time trap makers. Sherrod recalls: “It started out as a family operation, my dad and us kids. Then, later on, it became just us kids.” Sherrod learned the process of trap making by watching his father and examining traps made by other craftsmen. “That’s the way we’ve all learned,” he says, “by looking at one and taking it apart, and trial and error.”

A crab trap is essentially a wire cage. Crabs are attracted to food that is placed in the bait well in the trap’s center. They enter the device through funnels and first land in a compartment called the “upstairs” or “baffle,” before dropping into a lower compartment. Larger crabs are unable to escape from this chamber. In constructing

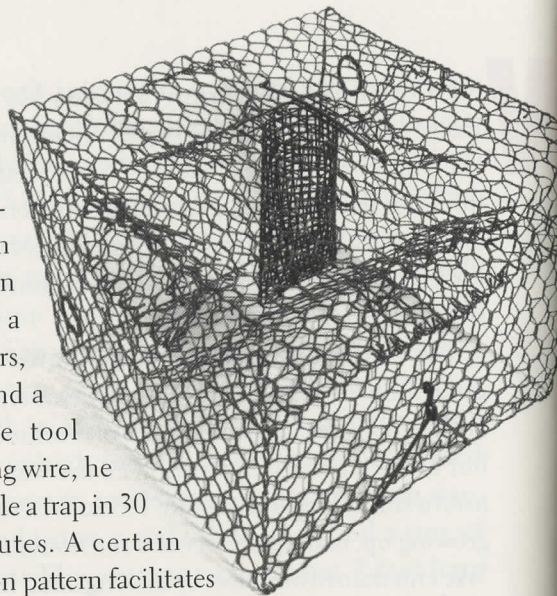
his traps, Sherrod uses a salt-water-resistant version of chicken wire. With a pair of pliers, a stapler and a homemade tool for wrapping wire, he can assemble a trap in 30 to 45 minutes. A certain construction pattern facilitates his work: “Like building a house, you start at the bottom and work up.”

Different styles of crab traps reflect the distinct preferences or aesthetics of crabbers. In addition to the popular Standard Two Shoot and Four Shoot, Sherrod builds the Louisiana Easy Dump, an imported design with an easy-to-release door for removing the crabs. On some traps he attaches a zinc bar, because of a belief among trappers that it “cuts down on electrolysis” and helps the traps to last longer. In the past the Sherrod family built traps only for local crabbers, but now Sherrod makes traps primarily for R.M.S. Marine Supply, a wholesale company in nearby Crawfordville that supplies traps across the state and beyond. In fact, R.M.S. has shipped Sherrod’s traps as far away as Colombia and Bolivia.

In spite of his skill in crab trap making, Sherrod sees little future for this family tradition. Since the sale price has not kept pace with the general cost of living, he and his brother Charles will probably be the last members of the Sherrod family to build crab traps. He asserts: “When the two of us are gone, our family will be out of it. I’ve got a son, but I sure as hell wouldn’t want to see him make a living doing this. It would be hard to try to raise a family with this kind of work.”

—Jonathan Kay

Top: Crab trap made by Wayne Sherrod. Loaned by R.M.S. Marine Supply. **Left:** Sherrod with crab traps in his yard, Panacea.



Ken Teeple ■ Lobster Traps

Ken Teeple, a commercial fisherman, lives on the island of Islamorada in the Florida Keys. He makes his living by fishing for lobsters (locally known as “crawfish”) and stone crabs. Although lobster and stone crab fishing is regulated by season, repairing and replacing broken and lost traps keeps Teeple busy throughout the rest of the year. At present he has approximately 1,800 lobster traps and an additional 1,000 crab traps. This year he is making 600 traps to replace ones that became un-moored and lost during the past season or broken beyond repair. When not in the water, the traps are kept stacked in towering piles in an open field along U.S. Highway 1. Teeple works in a makeshift shop, set up under a bright red awning in the trap yard. A generator rests in the back of his pick-up truck and runs the pneumatic tools that he uses for building and repairing traps.

According to Teeple, “everyone makes the traps a little differently.” His lobster traps are constructed from wooden slats, which are pre-cut and bought at the fish house where he sells his catch. The slats are held in place with staples. A plastic funnel is set into each trap’s top to serve as an entrance for the lobsters. In order to weigh a trap down in the water, concrete is poured onto some tar paper and laid on the trap’s bottom. Teeple uses different types of wood for his traps, generally taking

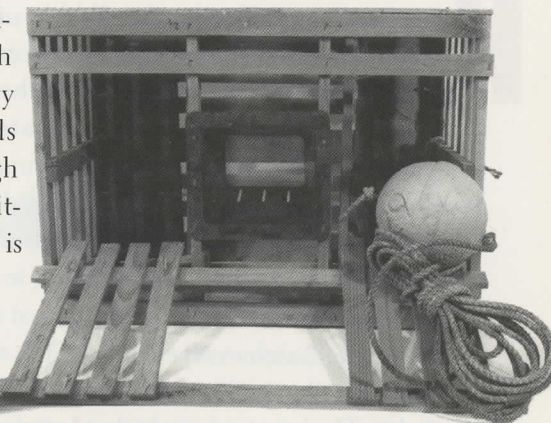
whatever is available at the fish house. Heavy tropical woods are best, though pine is also suitable. The wood is pressure-treated. Teeple explains that a wooden trap must remain underwater for a few weeks before it is “cured” enough for the lobster to accept it.

It takes about a week for Teeple to lay out all his traps for the upcoming season. The traps are placed underwater in a straight line at depths up to 100 feet. He uses a global positioning system (GPS) on his boat to plot the locations for laying the traps. Removing the traps from the water takes close to a month, since the accumulation of muck, slime and barnacles are scraped clean from each trap before it is loaded into the boat.

Lobster fishing is highly regulated in South Florida, where the waters that surround the Florida Keys are mostly within the National Florida Marine Sanctuary. A fisherman is required to buy a certificate and register the traps that he uses at a cost of \$70 each. Registration tags must be attached to every trap.

Teeple grew up in Miami and lived there until about ten years ago. He entered the lobster business after fishing commercially for shark for several years. Turning to lobster (and crab) trapping was natural to him, since, he notes, he had been around the lobster business all his life.

—Laura Ogden



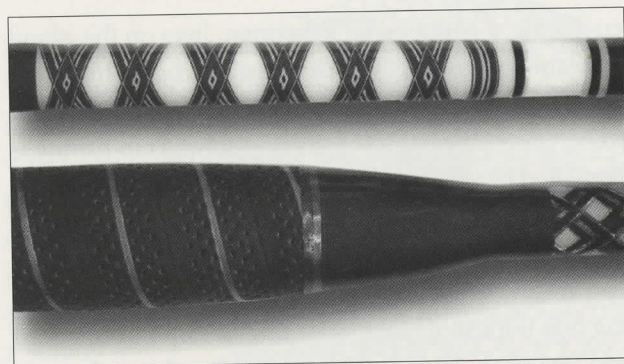
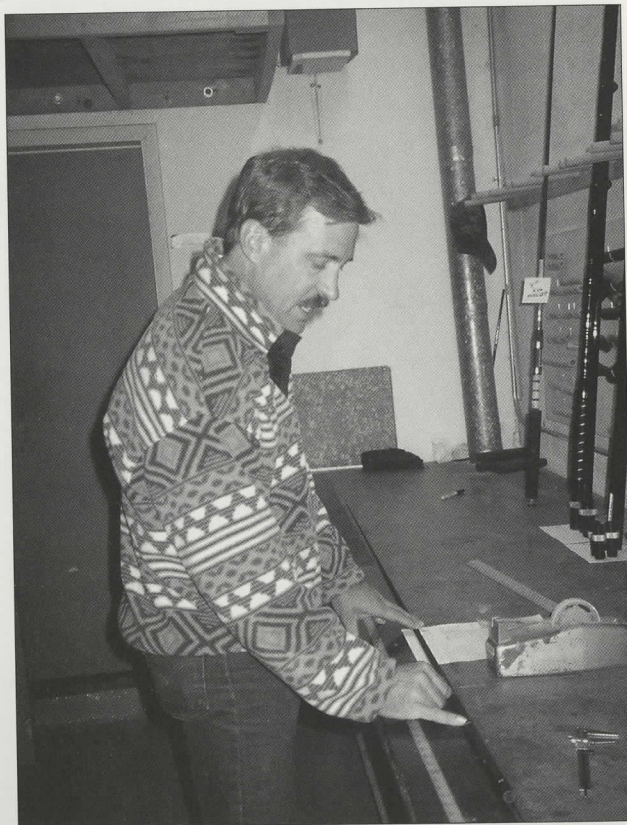
Top: Lobster trap made by Ken Teeple. Loaned by Ken Teeple.

Left: Teeple inspecting a lobster trap in his outdoor shop, Islamorada.

Ken Carman ■ Fishing Rods

Ken Carman and his brother Eddie run Biscayne Rod Manufacturing, a custom fishing rod company that was founded by their grandfather and father in 1948. What began as a small business operated out of their grandfather's garage is now located in a busy district of auto repair shops, small factories and coffee shops in Hialeah (Dade County). Though the location has changed, the family's commitment to quality has not. Carman states: "The principle of what dad and grandfather started, we haven't changed. The only thing that has basically changed is the equipment that we are using today. The exact principle that I studied and design by today, I can't take credit for it. My grandfather and father were doing it 40 years ago."

The family began the business by researching all of the fishing equipment that was available at the time and, most important, talking to the area's top anglers about what kind of rods they wanted for fishing South Florida's salt waters. The motivation for starting the business grew out of their love of the outdoors and a desire to give something back to the fishing industry for which they have so much pride. The Carmans remain avid anglers today.



At Biscayne Rod work is carried out in the midst of wooden tables and shelves that date back to the late 1940s. The Carmans and their employees assemble the component parts of fishing rods (such as the blank, the reel seat, the guides, the grip and stops) and then customize the rods to meet anglers' specific requirements. This customization process involves much handwork, such as cutting the blanks to the right length, tooling the hickory bushings to ensure that the chosen grips fit snug, wrapping the rods and, finally, coating them with a protective finish. The work is also time consuming. For instance, the coating process involves applying four or five layers of finish. Each coat takes 24 hours to set, and a rod must be turned for approximately 4 hours during the initial drying period to avoid dripping. This attention to detail sets the Carman shop apart from companies that rely on a more mechanized process. While Biscayne Rod only manufactures about 25 rods per day, more mechanized shops can produce as many as 1,000 rods per day. In addition to producing their own rods, the Carmans have also designed custom rod components, including KC Blanks, KC Leather Grips and KC Flocked Grips.

While the component parts of the Carmans' rods are manufactured elsewhere, the assembling and customizing of these components is a specialized craft that has been passed down through the generations of the family. Fishing has always been a critical part of Florida's allure and tourist industry. The Carmans' long-term involvement in the evolution of the sport has made them an important part of the state's heritage.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Fishing rods made by Ken Carman (details). Loaned by Ken Carman. **Left:** Carman preparing a fishing rod in his shop, Hialeah.

J. M. "Chico" Fernandez ■ Fishing Flies

J. M. "Chico" Fernandez, a world-class fly fisherman, began practicing this sport as a young man in Cuba, where he was born in 1939. He was introduced to fly fishing by an American captain, Don Roban, who worked on his family's yacht. Fernandez explains that "while I was teaching him

about the snook and the tarpon, and the mouths of the rivers and creeks, he taught us fly fishing. And I was enamored with it. It is a very romantic thing. Poetry in motion." Like many fly fishermen, Fernandez also began designing fishing flies.

After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Fernandez's family sought immediate asylum in Miami. While attending the University of Miami, he became a junior member of Miami's famous Rod and Reel Club. At the time, saltwater fly fishing represented a very small margin of the sport fishing community. He suggests that, because of the sport's small size, he was able to learn from some of the fly fishing masters of that era, such as Joe Brooks. Some of his original designs for saltwater flies date back to this period.

In fly fishing, according to Fernandez, the "whole thing's about presentation." Presentation refers to the fisherman's ability to convince the fish that the fly being used is actually its natural food. So the angler tries to move his fly on or under the water to look like a shrimp popping, a smaller fish gliding or a crab diving. For instance, bonefish feed on small crustaceans and shrimp in very shallow water. To catch bonefish with a fly rod, the fisherman might choose a fly that mimics the movements of a small crab or bait fish. Fernandez designed one such fly over 30 years ago, calling it the "bonefish special." The fly is still popular and recognized as a "Chico Fernandez." Other flies that he has designed include the "sea-ducer," "golden shrimp" and "glass minnow." A "crystal shrimp" was designed in collaboration with his son.

Saltwater flies, like their freshwater counterparts, include a witch's brew of materials—some synthetic, some natural—which seem to transform themselves under water. Among the components are feathers from blue

jays, pheasants and roosters; fur from seals and deer; and synthetic hair. In general, saltwater flies are larger than freshwater ones. This allows the saltwater angler to catch large fish, such as sailfish, marlin and redfish.

In the 40 years that Fernandez has been fly fishing, he has broken several world records. His most notable catch was the largest redfish ever taken with a fly rod—42 pounds, 5 ounces. His long-term involvement in saltwater fly fishing represents a link to an earlier era, when only about 500 people in the world practiced the sport. As a teacher, he has passed on the tradition to many, including his son.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Saltwater fishing flies tied by Chico Fernandez. Loaned by Chico Fernandez. **Bottom:** Fernandez tying a fly in his home, Miami.

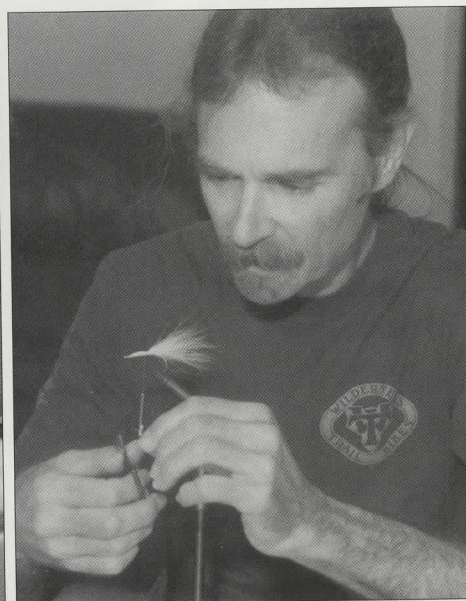
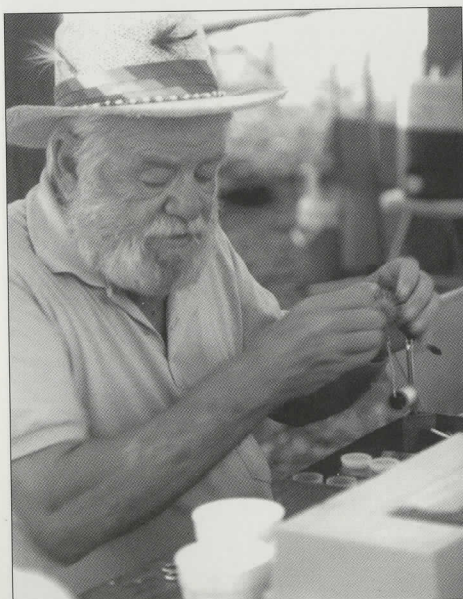


Carl Hanson and Frank Oblak ■ Fishing Flies

For years, Tuesday nights were the time at which a variety of people gathered at Carl and Esther Hanson's house in St. Petersburg (Pinellas County) to practice fly tying and casting. Amidst bird feathers, animal fur, chenille scraps and fishing hooks, the group members bantered and exchange stories. Besides basic skills, Carl Hanson passed on knowledge about hooks, casting subtleties for different types of fish and other "secrets" of fishing culture. His purpose in life was "to create fishermen, particularly fly fishermen." He wanted his knowledge to remain after he died as his "legacy to the world." Sadly, he passed away in June 1998.

Hanson was born in 1914 in Saginaw, Michigan, and grew up in Rockport, Massachusetts, a fishing community in which his father and grandfather were commercial swordfish harpooners. His grandfather taught him to tie his first flies in 1919, and he was hooked on all types of fishing ever since. After moving to St. Petersburg in 1950, he worked in a variety of sporting goods stores and held fly tying and casting "clinics."

Hanson distilled fly casting and tying into basic skills. The two key casting motions he taught were how to "drive a nail," the motion used to draw back the fly rod and then "drive" or cast it, and how to "handle the loop." Basic to fly tying is the "nail knot," which Hanson said anyone who could "walk and chew gum" could do. For the most part, he taught by example and encouraged his students to help each other.



Although saltwater fly fishing arose in South Florida only a few decades ago, there has been a tremendous development in techniques and equipment. Like their freshwater kin, saltwater flies are beautiful, delicate creations of feathers, fur and synthetic materials, wound with thread onto a hook and held in place by layers of waterproof glue. They must closely resemble insects or small fish to deceive the discerning eyes of saltwater fish. Delicacy and natural appearance are difficult qualities to achieve in both saltwater and freshwater flies.

Like many South Florida boys, Frank Oblak grew up with fishing, surfing and boating. Unlike others, he has made a career of building and selling fishing gear and has sustained a lifelong dedication to the sport. Oblak explains: "I started fly fishing because other types of fishing had lost their challenge. The fly tying came because I couldn't afford or find the quality of flies I needed. Most of my family doesn't understand the time I put into this without monetary rewards. It's the most satisfying thing I do." As part of the fly fishing community, Oblak trades his knowledge with others who love the sport. Over the years he has learned to tie flies from some of the most respected people in the field and is now considered to be a master of the art.

—Robert Stone

Top: Fishing flies tied by Frank Oblak. Loaned by Museum of Florida History. **Far left:** Carl Hanson tying a fly, St. Petersburg. **Near left:** Oblak tying a fly, Miami.

Tom Bremen ■ Sails

Tom Bremen works with his wife Jill in their sail making loft in Miami, right off the Miami River. The loft occupies the upstairs of a long building and is graced with a clean wooden floor. Un-screened wooden shutters around the room allow for sunlight and a steady breeze. On the walls are framed pictures and posters of sailboats.

Bremen's father, Fred Bremen, Sr., learned sail making after World War II as an apprentice at the world-famous firm of Ratsey and Laphorn in City Island, New York. In 1962 Fred, Sr., opened his own sail making loft in Miami. Over the years both of his sons joined the business. Tom explains his involvement as a "natural progression" from working at the shop during the summers, while growing up. The entire family are avid sailors, which he feels is necessary for being a good sail maker.

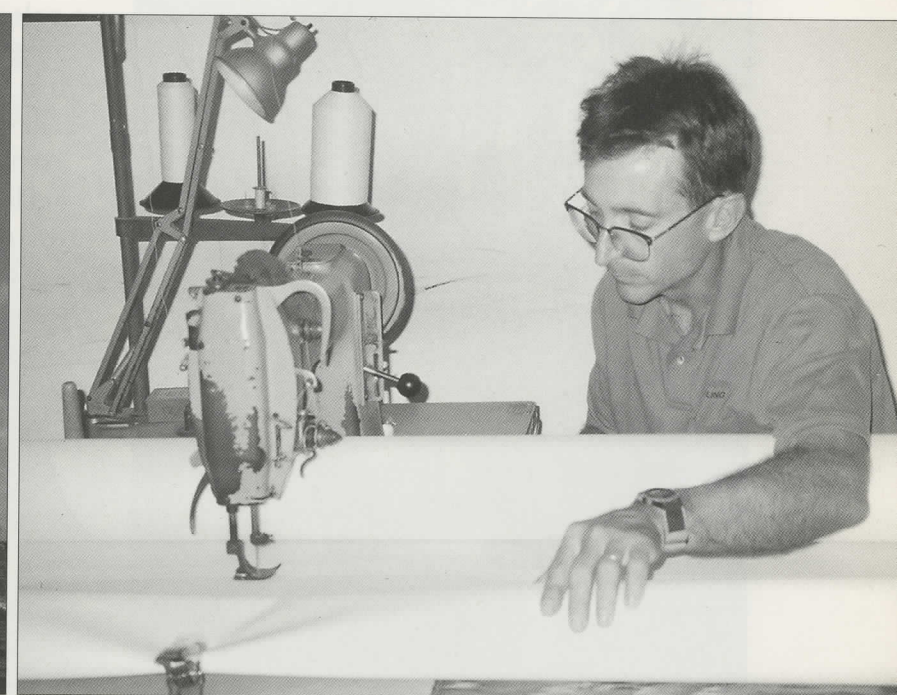
Sails at the Bremen shop are designed and made by hand, unlike the larger mass-produced sails that are designed with computers at other establishments. When designing a sail, Bremen first measures the mast and rig of the customer's boat and then sketches his design on a drafting table. After he has worked out the details of the sail, he draws its pattern on the wooden floor. He inserts small posts into the floor, measures the length of each side of the sail and links a string to each post. This line can be adjusted, so that draft can be built into the sail. The sail's layout is then chalked on the floor.

When the pattern is established, Bremen begins to lay panels of fabric (such as dacron) across the pattern and then cuts the pieces. This is the complicated part, since the fabric panels are cut with curves to allow sail draft. As Bremen explains, "when a curved edge meets a straight edge, there's nothing to do but for it to give." For him, this is where the "art" comes into sail making. After the fabric panels are cut, they are stitched together on industrial sewing machines. Some completed sails can weigh as much as 500 pounds, which makes sewing the final panels together very difficult. When the stitching of the panels is completed, all of the grommets and other hardware are sewn onto the sail by hand, in contrast to the use of machines for this process in larger shops.

In explaining his attention to detail in his work, Bremen states: "sails are dynamic. It's not about just completing an item and doing a good job. It's about how it performs." Making sails by hand is labor intensive, in that it can take three long days to complete even a simple sail. But Bremen says that he enjoys his work and remains committed to serving the sailing community.

—Laura Ogden

Left: Sails made by Tom Bremen on a 32-foot frigate built by George Luzier, Sarasota. **Right:** Bremen preparing sail fabric in his shop, Miami.



Bobby Henry ■ Dugout Canoes

As recently as 30 years ago, Bobby Henry and his father traveled by canoe during alligator hunting trips into the Everglades. At the time the craft was essential to the Seminole way of life. Like many other Seminole customs, however, hunting in the Everglades from canoes has largely died out, for reasons ranging from conservation laws to changing economic practices. As a result, the ability to fashion dugout canoes is disappearing.

Henry learned this art from his father and from tribal elders. There are two sizes of Seminole canoes: a smaller craft to carry one or two men on hunting trips and a less common, larger boat used by whole families. To begin making a hunting canoe, Henry finds a tree six to seven feet wide at the trunk and about four feet wide at the top. Using an ax, he cuts around the tree, about five feet above the ground. This "ringing" process causes the tree to die. Eight to twelve months later, when the wood has dried out, he fells the tree.



Once down, the tree is cut to a 15 to 20 foot log and the bark is stripped off. Henry begins to shape the log by burning out the inside. He uses mud or wet clay packs to confine the fire and to keep the wood from getting too hot. After burning as much as possible, he hollows out the rest of the log. An ax is used for chopping and an adz-like tool for the final shaping and smoothing. Throughout this process, he repeatedly floats the canoe to be sure that the chopping is even and the craft sits level in the water.

The finished canoe is approximately 36 inches wide, 15 inches deep and 15 feet long. The sides of a well-made canoe are no more than an inch thick. The bow is pointed to enable it to move efficiently through the marsh and swamp vegetation, while the stern is somewhat rounded. Both bow and stern have flat areas big enough for a person to stand and propel the craft with a 15-foot cypress pole. Pushing on the marsh bottom with a pole is the most efficient way to move a canoe through the shallow "river of grass." Older Seminoles tell of poling 70 miles from Dania to Big Cypress in a single day.

Within Henry's lifetime, dugout canoes have gone from being traditional conveyances to symbols of Native American history and identity. Henry has made them for cultural interpretation displays as well as for personal use. Today he fashions miniature canoes for the tourist trade. These items are expertly crafted reminders of a time when dugout canoes were a principal means of transportation for Florida Seminoles.

—Robert Stone

Top: Miniature canoe (length, 25 in.) made by Bobby Henry. Loaned by Museum of Florida History. **Left:** Henry with full-size canoe in his Seminole museum, Tampa.

Glen Simmons ■ Glade Skiffs

Glen Simmons builds "glade skiffs," the traditional flat-bottomed boats once used to negotiate the shallow waters of the Everglades' sawgrass marshes and mangrove swamps. Before motor-driven air boats became popular (and prior to the establishment of Everglades National Park in 1947), locals used these skiffs to reach the fishing and hunting camps that were scattered throughout the region. Born in 1916, Simmons has spent much of his life in the glades, alone or with other gladesmen, hunting alligators, deer and turtles, as well as fishing. His family, like most poor farmers and settlers in the region, lived "from hand to mouth" during the depression years that followed South Florida's land boom collapse in 1926. For these people, survival often depended on what could be reaped from the rich bounty of the Everglades—for the glades provided meat and fish, as well as pelts and hides that could be sold or traded. And the glade skiff represented a crucial component of this life-style.

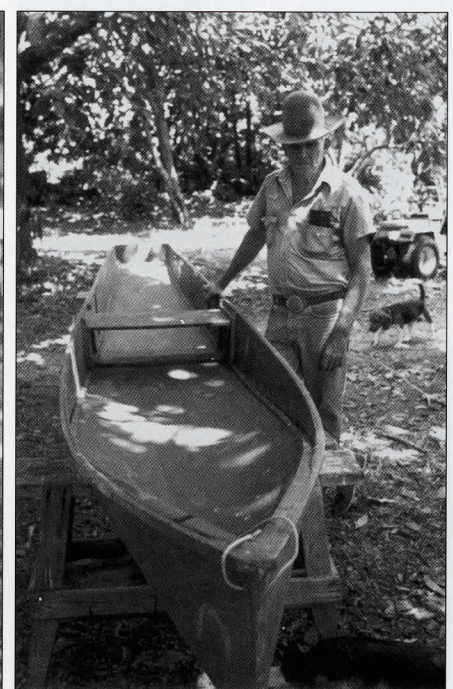
Simmons's glade skiff is designed to measure 16 to 18 feet long and just over 2 feet wide, with a flat bottom that enables it to be poled through very shallow water. The bow is pointed, allowing the skilled poler to ease the boat through dense sawgrass thickets with relatively little effort. The stern is square and affects a slight uplift, which allows it to be pushed backward when the poler finds

himself mired in a tight spot. The poler usually stands toward the middle of the boat, or on a poling platform, and slowly pushes the boat through the glades, while scanning the horizon for game and alligator holes.

Early skiffs, made with cypress planks and sixpenny nails, were stiffer and heavier than the ones Simmons currently builds out of marine plywood. Using a single piece of plywood for the bow and bottom, he painstakingly manipulates the wood by splitting it and soaking it in water. He then uses clamps to bend the wood until it buckles up and meets, thereby forming the skiff's unique pointed bow. The bow is held together with pieces of copper wire. Simmons fashions the boat's gunwales and transom out of cypress or redwood planks. Finally, he finishes the boat with a fiberglass resin.

Since the age of 12, Simmons has built these wooden boats to hunt and fish in the Everglades. He explains how he began constructing the boats: "When you're growing up in a country and see all the men with glade skiffs, you knew you wanted to build one. They were a simple boat, just wedge shaped. But you took pride in the way they looked." Simmons has been recognized by the Florida Department of State's Folklife Program as one of the last glade skiff builders in the region.

—Laura Ogden



Far left: Glen Simmons with partially completed glade skiff in his yard, Homestead. **Near left:** Simmons with glade skiff.

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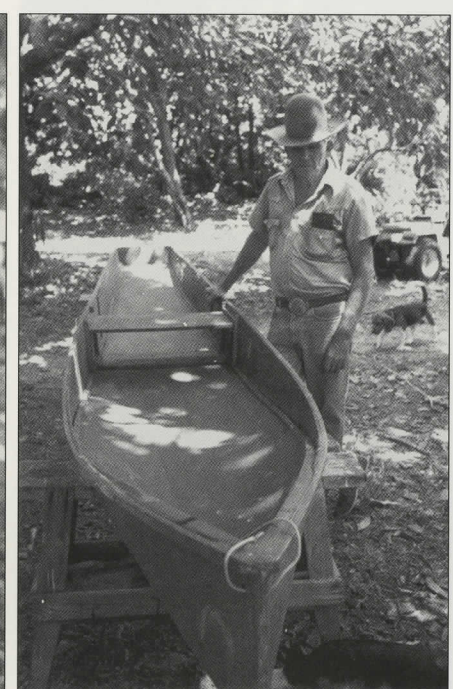
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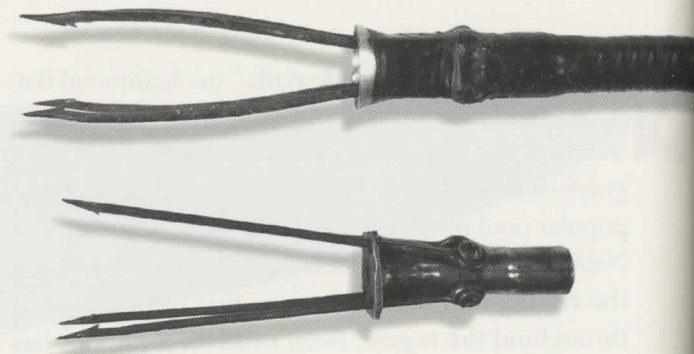
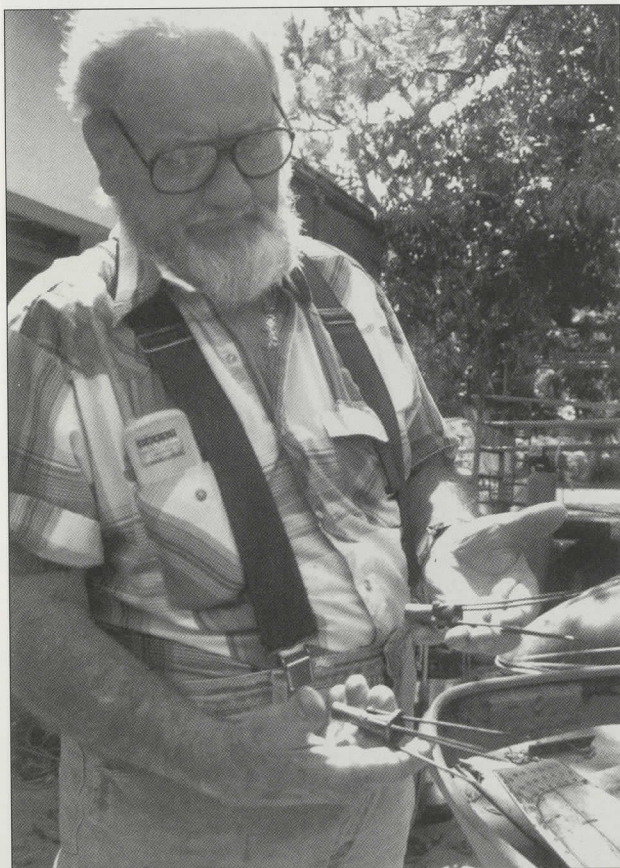


Far left: Glen Simmons with partially completed glade skiff in his yard, Homestead. **Near left:** Simmons with glade skiff.

Norman Padgett ■ Frog Gigs

At night Norman Padgett cruises through the Everglades in a high-powered air boat, illuminating the eyes of frogs with his search light. "You work that light ahead of you as you're traveling," he explains. "Slow, back and forth. And look for that little sparkle." To successfully hunt frogs, one has to have a keen knowledge of the creatures' habits and of the complex Everglades environment. Equally important is a properly constructed frog gig, a long pole with four straightened fish hooks mounted on its end. Padgett and his fellow frog hunters have been perfecting the design of gigs for over 50 years.

Padgett was born in 1922 in Bell, near the Suwannee River, but was raised on Lake Okeechobee. He grew up fishing with his mother and her family on the lake and, after World War II, moved to West Palm Beach. By this point he was spending most of his time hunting alligators, while doing a little frogging on the side. During the mid-1960s he shifted to frogs as his main source of income, due to prohibitions against alligator hunting. His career change was facilitated by the growing demand for frog legs from restaurants.



Frog gig technology has evolved with the boats that are used to navigate the Everglades. Before World War II wooden pole boats and canoes were the standard craft employed by game hunters. Frog hunters typically attached a gig to one end of the Calcutta cane poles that they used to push their boats through the shallow marshes. By the 1940s hunters were increasingly turning to airboats, given their greater efficiency. This South Florida invention consists of a flat-bottomed boat with an airplane propeller attached to an engine mounted on a frame. The boat skims the surface of the water and is guided by one or two metal flaps behind the propeller. With an engine propelling his boat, a frog hunter could now use his pole exclusively for spearing his prey. Padgett, who has been building airboats himself since the early 1960s, notes that fiberglass fishing poles became the preferred implement.

Meanwhile, hunters altered the design of the frog gig itself. Early gigs were made with pieces of wire. Eventually, straightened fish hooks were introduced, as was the use of metal tubing to hold the hooks. Today the standard gig consists of a piece of stainless steel tubing, to which the eyes of four large-size hooks are attached with screws. Over the years the precise angling of the hooks has been adapted to provide more effective penetration of the frogs. When asked about innovations in frog gig construction, Padgett responds: "It was passed on down. Necessity, the need for things, caused us to use our own imagination. Different hunters would try different things. Whatever worked out best, usually most of us adopted that."

—Stephen Stuempfle

Top: Frog gigs (one on pole) made by Norman Padgett.

Loaned by Norman Padgett.

Left: Padgett with frog gigs in his yard, West Palm Beach.

Michael Berg ■ Duck Decoys

In the tradition of his maternal grandfather and great uncle, Michael Berg has carved countless duck decoys. As a child in Indiana he remembers his grandfather's home filled with decoys and the many family stories

associated with them. Berg's grandfather and great uncle worked as tool-and-die makers in Michigan. During the Depression they supported their families by carving decoys for professional hunters and hunting clubs. Berg began to pursue carving himself during a visit to his great uncle, after graduating from college. Although essentially a self-taught carver, he credits his grandfather as a source of inspiration and notes that his great uncle provided him with technical advice.

Berg carves utilitarian decoys from cork and basswood. Though the use of cork is rare among contemporary carvers, he prefers to use the traditional materials of his grandfather and great uncle. He also follows their example in his choice of simple tools: carving knives, a plane, files and rasps. Cork is used to create the buoyant body of the decoy, while its head is formed from basswood. Tails and other embellishments are often made of teakwood or mahogany. Berg uses oil-based paints to give color and texture to his work. Because his carvings are utilitarian, he usually water-tests them when they are finished.

Berg's decoys can be recognized by his signature use of rusted spark plugs as anchors. They are also distinguishable by their high eyebrows and the distinct shoulders that roll into the trunk of the duck's body. In reflecting on his evolution as a carver, Berg states: "There's never a piece of wood or a piece of cork that carves the same. I learn something new on every decoy that helps me with the next one."

Duck hunting is pursued by many sportsmen in Florida. Most hunters, however, do not invest in hand-carved decoys because of the availability and lower cost of synthetic, mass-produced decoys. Although he seldom hunts anymore, Berg draws from the time that he spent in duck blinds in the woods: "I hunted first. That's prob-

ably why it wasn't difficult for me to carve, because I'd handled so many ducks. I know how they feel. Your eyesight is one thing, but your hands are also your sight. You don't look at something when you want to know something's right, you feel it."

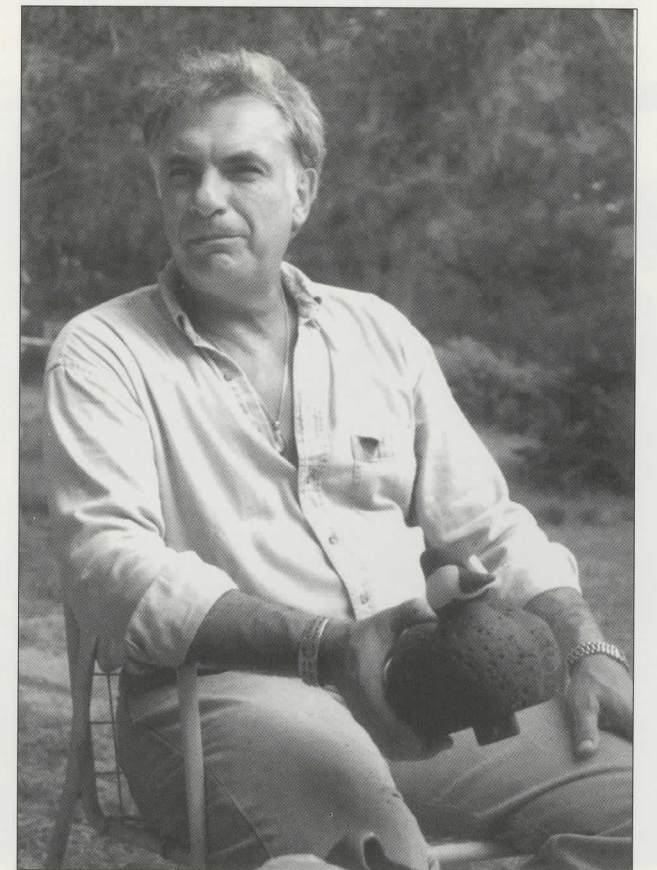
Berg sells the vast majority of his decoys to collectors or donates them to non-profit organizations to auction at fundraising events. In addition to demonstrating decoy carving at festivals and community events, he has offered numerous instructional workshops. A long-time resident of Jacksonville, he currently makes his home in Tallahassee, where he continues his carving "as a little bit of my grandfather's legacy."

—Teresa Hollingsworth

Top: Duck decoy carved by Michael Berg.

Loaned by Museum of Florida History.

Bottom: Berg with duck decoy in his yard, Tallahassee.



Michael Wilder ■ Saddles

Florida is one of the top-ranking states in beef cattle production, east of the Mississippi. The heart of the state's cattle ranching country is the lush subtropical lowland north and west of Lake Okeechobee. Working in a shop behind his home outside the small rural community of Kenansville, about half way between Okeechobee and Orlando, burly seventh-generation Floridian Michael Wilder has earned a reputation for making well-designed saddles that will last for years. Most of them are unadorned "tools of the trade," put to use by local working cowmen, ranchers or rodeo cowboys.

Wilder learned the basics of saddlemaking at J. M. Saddlery in South Dakota in the 1970s, then returned to his home state. Over the next 20 years, he honed his skills and adapted his designs to suit the conditions of Florida ranching: heat, humidity, rain and sand. He was a full-time working cowboy for many years, while his saddlery business was developing.

Today Wilder still "day works" as a cowboy when business gets slow or he "just needs to get out of the shop for a few days." He feels that his cowboy experience is essential to understanding the needs of his customers. He also does a considerable amount of repair work on saddles

made by others, which gives him the opportunity to note the weak points of a variety of designs and avoid such flaws in his own products. According to Wilder, a good saddle fits the horse and rider properly, is well designed, constructed of the finest materials and fitted with high-grade hardware.

Each of Wilder's saddles is made to order. The first step in the saddle-making process is to determine the client's needs: basic saddle type, size of the horse, size of the rider, intended use, type of decoration and specific hardware. Many of his customers know exactly what they want, while others require extensive dialogue to work out the specifications. Once the basic design is determined, Wilder selects an appropriate rawhide-covered wooden "tree," the saddle's foundation. He then designs patterns for the leather pieces that will be fitted together to make the saddle. After cutting the pieces from stock, he sews them together with either machine or hand stitching, as the pieces require. Because most of his saddles are used by working cowmen and ranchers, the degree of decoration is usually minimal—typically a simple stamped design, or none at all. He softens and protects the finished saddle by rubbing rice oil into the leather. His goal is to make every saddle comfortable, appropriate for its intended use and durable.

Wilder is an important figure to south-central Florida's cattle ranching community. Through his occupational art, he provides the state's cowboys and ranchers with saddles they can depend on to accomplish a tough job and make a day's work a little easier.

—Robert Stone

Top: Saddle made by Michael Wilder. Loaned by Michael Wilder.
Left: Wilder inspecting a saddle in his shop, near Kenansville.

J. D. Cauley ■ Saddles

J.D. Cauley was born in Georgia and has lived in Florida since he was seven. When he was twelve, he found an old saddle at a dump and, since he did not have one of his own, decided to take it home and "fix it up a little." His minor repair project turned into an almost complete transformation, and a lifetime career in the repairing and building of saddles. He has never been to saddle-making school or worked for any length of time with another maker. When he was getting started, however, he did visit a number of regional craftsmen. During this time he was greatly impressed with the work of the late Floyd Lingles, a well-known saddle maker from Kissimmee. More recently, Cauley has picked up pointers from Troy Mast of Lakeland, whose work he regards very highly.

Cauley began to develop his business by repairing saddles for the central Florida ranching community. He earned a reputation as an expert repairman and quickly outgrew the cramped corner workspace in his feed warehouse. "The next thing you know, I was walking on saddles," he recalls. Today he operates from a fully equipped shop and employs an apprentice to help with the work load.

Cauley's interest and involvement in Florida ranching is extensive. As a young man, he worked for about two years as a cowman on ranches in the Okeechobee area. For years he operated a feed sales business. At present he continues to work cattle on a couple hundred acres at his home near Lakeland, east of Tampa.

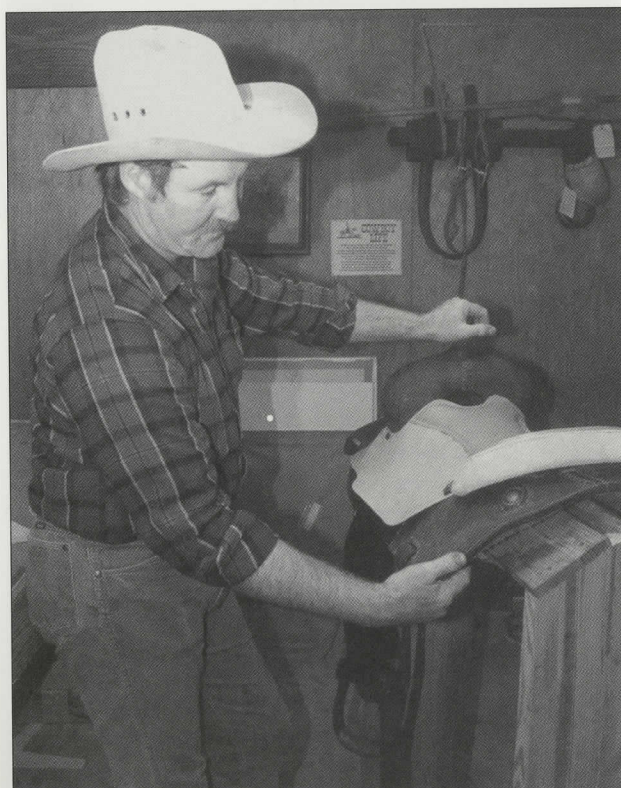
Most of his clientele are working cowmen, whose specific needs he meets by customizing each saddle. He has learned, for example, how and where to build up a saddle's seat to fit a particular customer, and that radial truck tire tubes are best for wrapping the horn to protect it from rope burn. "Comfort and durability are what I

strive for," he explains. The massive hybrid cattle raised on many ranches present him with a challenge for saddle durability. "Some of these cowboys," he says, "if it's a freight train they've got to put a rope on, they'll put a rope on it."

The environmental conditions on Florida ranches make for unique cattle-working methods. For instance, the state's cowmen rely on dogs trained to retrieve cattle from swamps, palmetto thickets and dense hammocks. This practice can be traced back to the days before range lands were fenced. "I'd rather have a good dog than two good men," Cauley quips. He recalls an experienced cowboy from Montana who came into his shop looking for "day work." He referred the visitor to a local ranch that was hiring. About a week later, the man returned, saying "these cowboys and the cows are crazy." He had had his fill of the swamps, snakes and cow dogs, and was returning to Montana.

—Robert Stone

Left: J. D. Cauley and his nephew, David Cauley.
Right: Making a saddle in their shop, Lakeland.



Robert Dellis ■ Carved Leather

Leather worker Robert Dellis, who has been practicing his craft since 1947, enjoys an international reputation as an expert carver. He does not advertise. People seek him out to carve his designs in boot tops, saddles, saddlebags, belts and other ranch gear. His clients have included Hollywood cowboys Gene Autry and the Lone Ranger (Clayton Moore), country music star Randy Travis, movie director Rob Reiner, rodeo cowboys and cowgirls, and everyday ranch hands.

Dellis began his career in leather carving at age 19, when he studied under Ray Pohja, master carver at the N. Porter Saddle Company in Phoenix, Arizona. During the following years, he worked at saddle shops throughout the West, picking up more knowledge and skills at each stop. Periodically, he would quit leather carving. He worked as a ranch hand and tried his luck at bareback bronco and bull riding in rodeos. But he always returned to the thing that he did best: carving graceful designs in leather. Eventually, he settled in Florida's cattle ranching country, first in Okeechobee, then in San Antonio (north of Tampa).



Dellis creates his own unique designs. He believes that the most difficult part of leather carving is to make designs that are flowing, well-balanced and work well with the shape of the piece. Unlike most stamped leather products that are mass-produced by machine, all of his work is carved, beveled, stamped, and dyed or painted by hand. To execute his designs, he chooses from his collection of over 300 tools, typically using a dozen or more on one piece of leather work. He acquired many of these instruments during his apprenticeship over half a century ago. All of them were made by hand-filing a piece of steel, frequently a bolt or large nail.

Over the years his leather business has changed. Ever since some of his carved boot tops appeared in a coffee table book, Dellis has had a continuous stream of orders from boot makers. "I bet I've made 250 to 300 pair since 1992," he says. In recent years he has done a brisk business in fancy covers for legal pads and notebooks, as well as in belts and handbags that fine silversmiths fit with expensive hardware and ornaments.

Dellis says that despite an increasing demand for hand carved saddles, saddle bags, belts and boots, leather carving is a dying art. "There are a lot of people who want to be carvers," he states, "but I can count the good professionals on one hand." He believes that this is partly due to the fact that, nowadays, few people want to take the time to master the craft. "It's not a fast process," he explains. "It takes years and years to learn." Motivated by his concern about the diminishing number of expert carvers, Dellis has self-produced a 19-hour series of instructional video tapes and has sold over 750 sets.

—Robert Stone

Top: Leather hat box carved by Robert Dellis (height without handle, 14 in.). Loaned by Robert Dellis. **Left:** Dellis carving a leather belt in his shop, San Antonio.



George "Junior" Mills and J. P. "Curly" Dekle ■ Cow Whips

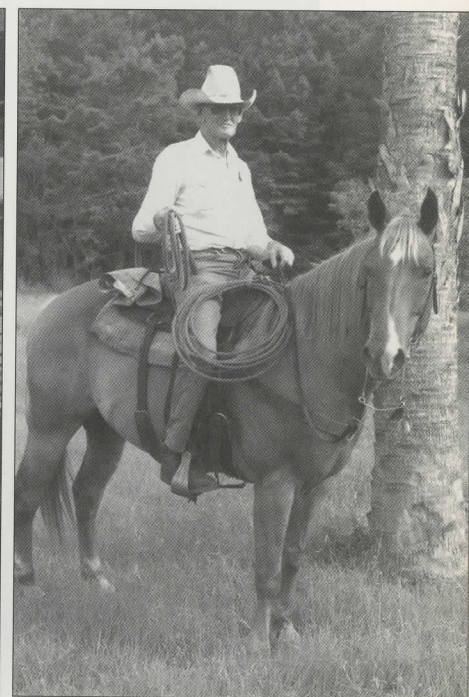
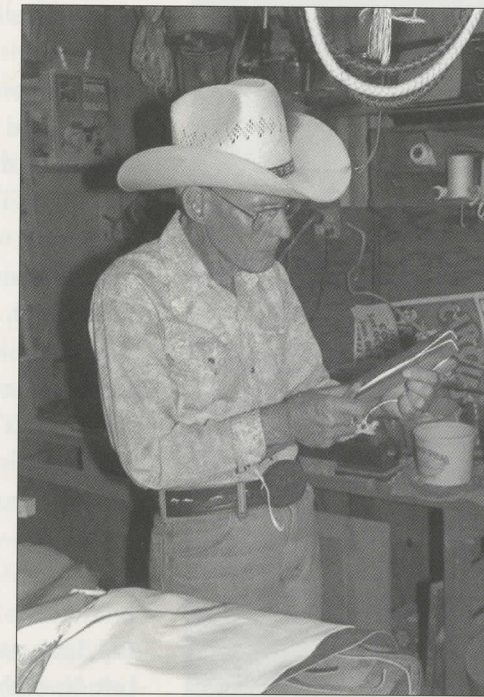
Florida cowmen use braided leather whips to control the movement of cattle, though the whips seldom actually touch the animals. The cattle respond to the loud "crack" of the whip, without having to be struck. Some people say the name "Florida cracker" derives from the sounds of cowboys cracking their whips while driving a herd. The Florida Cracker whip is characterized by the way the whip body attaches to the hollow wooden handle by means of a leather thong. Junior Mills and Curly Dekle both make cow whips, but their methods of construction and their use of the whips differ.

Okeechobee cowboy Mills has been working cattle on Florida ranches since he was 14. He began teaching himself to make whips at 15. As fellow cowboys began to value his handiwork, whip making became a supplement to the wages he earned as a cowboy. Currently in his seventh decade of whip making, Mills estimates that he has crafted hundreds of utilitarian whips. Today he painstakingly fashions whips from buckskin by first cutting the "strings" from tanned hides and then plaiting several layers in a carefully controlled taper. To achieve a smooth taper, he is exacting about the dimensions to which he cuts the strings and is careful to plait them under just the right amount of tension. The "belly," or thickest part of the whip, consists of four layers. At the end of the whip, he ties a thin piece of deerskin, about a foot long, called a "cracker." It is this component that is responsible for the loud noise. He protects his finished whips from sun, sand, rain and abrasion by coating them with a mixture he makes by heating beef tallow, beeswax and pine rosin.

Dekle, who lives in the northeast Florida town of Macclenny, learned to braid whips from his father, "Judge" Dekle, while growing up on a farm near Lake Butler. His father taught him the basis for two refinements in whip construction that he says greatly improve balance, accuracy and loudness. First, he weights the belly of the whip with BB pellets rolled in a strip of duct tape. Second, unlike most other whip makers (including Mills), he braids the outer layer of leather from the tip toward the handle, so that there is no final knot at the tip to interfere with the cracking action. Dekle became adept at cracking whips and is renowned for his whip acts performed at rodeos and festivals throughout Florida and other southern states. Over the years he has refined his act, which includes plenty of country humor and audience interaction. Highlights of his presentation include whipping Styrofoam straws from the mouth of an audience volunteer and firing a rifle by striking its trigger with his whip.

—Robert Stone

Top: Cow whip made by Curly Dekle. Loaned by Museum of Florida History. **Bottom left:** Dekle making a cow whip in his shop, Macclenny. **Bottom right:** Junior Mills with cow whip near his home, Okeechobee.



Billy Davis ■ Spurs

Like several previous generations of his family, Billy Davis has spent his life working cattle in south central Florida. Today he is the foreman for the Crescent-J Ranch, near Kenansville. While overseeing the business of the ranch occupies him during the day, he has also gained a reputation among cattle workers as an outstanding spur maker. His home shop is just down the Kenansville Road from the saddle shop of Michael Wilder.

Davis notes that he has always had an artistic bent: he used to enjoy whittling wood while talking with friends on the ranch and developed an appreciation of metal through crude welding, or what locals call "dirt dobbling." His skill at crafting spurs grew out of a long-time interest in antique versions of these implements, as well as in old bridles and stirrups. In his spare time, he would look at the vintage ranching tools in his collection and think of "the stories they could tell." He decided to experiment with making spurs by hand, as an alternative to the mass-produced items that are prevalent today.

Davis's first sets of spurs were reproductions of nineteenth-century pieces from his collection and old Sears

and Montgomery Ward catalogs.

At present he continues to work with patterns of spurs made between 1890 and 1940, a period that he refers to as "the golden age of ranching." However, he adapts these older designs to create spurs that are functional and aesthetically pleasing to contemporary ranch hands and other horse riders.

Spurs are essentially tools employed to help guide the movements of horses. When used properly, they are not abusive but necessary for the protection of the rider, a cattle herd and the horse itself. A spur consists of three basic pieces of steel. The "heel ridge" is a band that wraps around the heel of a boot. The "shank" protrudes from the heel ridge, while the "rowel" is the disk with teeth that spurs the horse.

Davis customizes his spurs to meet the requirements of individual horse riders. For example, the length of the shank is varied in accordance with the height of the customer. Providing a taller rider with a longer shank enables him to spur a horse with less movement. At the same time, the primary attribute of all good sets of spurs is balance. The weight of the rowel and shank must be compatible with the weight of the heel ridge. If the shank and rowel are too heavy, they cause the spur to ride up on the boot.

After building more than 35 sets of spurs, Davis has become a master of the art. Horse riders throughout Florida's cattle region continue to contact him for carefully crafted spurs that are both reliable tools and objects of beauty.

—Jonathan Kay

Top: Spurs made by Billy Davis. Loaned by Billy Davis.

Left: Davis fabricating spurs, Crescent-J Ranch (Osceola Co.).



Lee Kesner ■ Branding Irons

Lee Kesner, a mechanic and welder on the Adams Ranch in St. Lucie County, states: "I was born and raised on the ranch. It's just in me. There's no way its going to come out of me." Indeed, Kesner, who was born in Kissimmee in 1952, learned how to handle cattle from his father, a ranch foreman.

As soon as he graduated from high school, he obtained a job on the 60,000 acre Adams Ranch. There, making branding irons is just one part of a busy schedule that also includes fabricating propane-heated branding iron pots, building fence gates, repairing equipment and assisting with the cattle herd.

The Adams Ranch was established in 1937 and, after World War II, began cross-breeding Hereford and Brahman cattle. While the Hereford line provided a high meat content, the Brahmans, like the old Spanish scrub cattle, were more suited to the hot and wet Florida climate. By the early 1950s the Adams cowmen had developed the Braford breed, which is now known internationally. While some of the cattle are sold at the livestock market in Okeechobee, many end up on feeder lots in central and western states.

Cattle brands play a key role in the identification and management of a herd. The Braford breed of the Adams Ranch is identified with a "Cross Seven" brand. In addition, separate brands are used to mark the five Braford families: "Muscles," "Forwards," "Tropicals," "Rocks" and "Massives." Each calf is also marked with its year of birth and a unique number brand. In late winter or early spring, ranch hands mark the young calves with the Cross Seven and year brands. When the calves are weaned in the fall, the family and number brands are added.

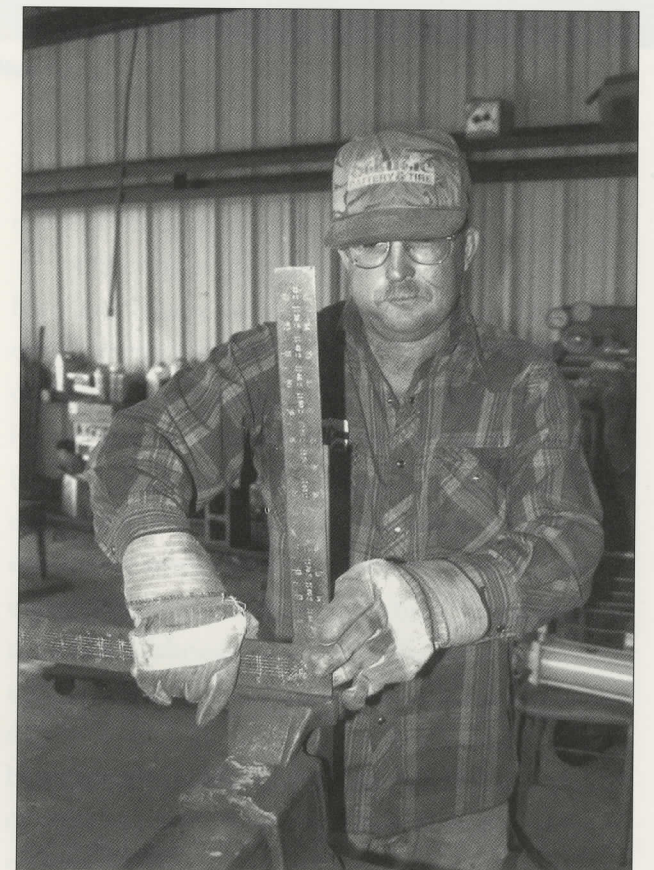
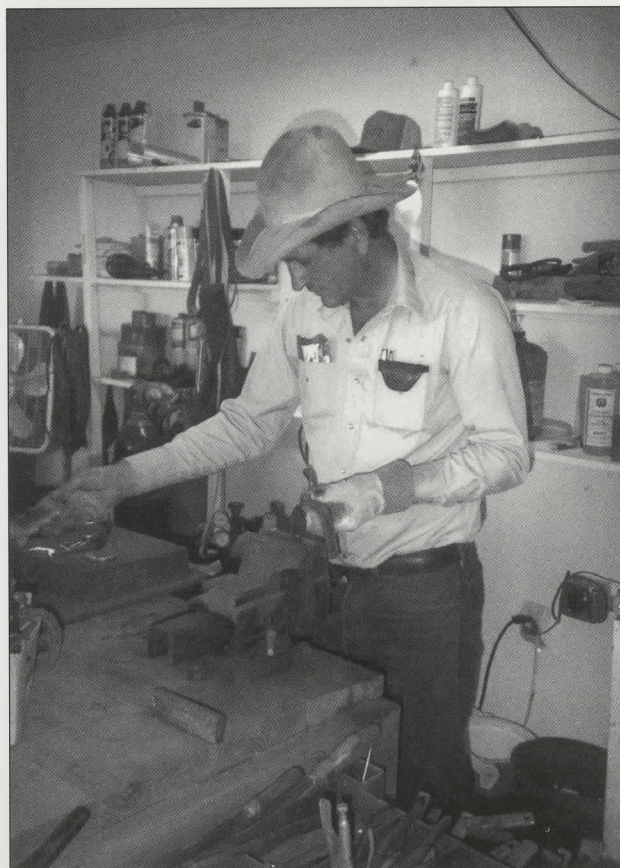
Kesner picked up the art of making branding irons on his own. His materials include pieces of flat bar steel for the brands themselves and cold roll steel rods for the handles. To make a Cross Seven brand, he uses a vise and an acetylene torch to bend a bar of steel into the shape of a "7," with specific dimen-

sions. He then repeats this process with a second bar and cuts the bars to the proper length with a metal saw. After cutting notches in each bar, he welds them together to form a cross. Finally, a handle is welded onto the brand. When the branding iron is completed, he heats it and tests it on a piece of wood.

It is important that the brand be balanced and clear. Kesner notes: "If I don't like the number, then I will redo the brand. Because that number is going to show up on that cow, on your livestock. So, you want it to look good on your livestock." He adds: "You want to be able to read it and, a lot times, read it from a distance."

—Stephen Stuenkel

Top: "Cross Seven" branding iron made by Lee Kesner. HMSF collection. **Bottom:** Kesner measuring a piece of steel for a branding iron, Adams Ranch (St. Lucie Co.).





Sally Jones with a quilt outside her home, Swift Creek (Hamilton Co.).

The human body and the home inspire the creation of an immense array of objects that are both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Handmade clothing in Florida ranges from brilliantly colored Seminole patchwork skirts to Anglo-American palmetto stem hats and complexly patterned Ghanaian garments that carry proverbial messages. In homes around the state, there are African American, Anglo-American and Hawaiian quilts; and intricately embroidered tablecloths and framed wall pieces in Norwegian, Hungarian, Palestinian and other traditions. Baskets are made from white oak splints, sweetgrass and pine needles. Some domestic items that were once utilitarian are now primarily decorative. Baskets, for example, are no longer a common form of container but are popular items of beauty both in the communities that produce them and among

collectors of handmade objects.

Other types of items found in homes and yards have traditionally had a decorative purpose. Domestic environments provide spaces in which individuals can express their aesthetic visions and talents. Japanese homes may be graced with folded paper designs (*origami*), balls laced with colored threads (*temari*) and elaborate flower arrangements (*ikebana*). Animals and symbols of community life are carved in wood in various cultural traditions. In their spare time, metal workers sometimes fabricate sculptures that represent their unique views of the world. Decorative items vary in the degree to which they are based on artistic models shared by a community. All, however, are intended to be forms of expression within the interpersonal relationships of community life.

Mary Waggerby ■ Patchwork Clothing

Mary Waggerby lives at South Florida's Big Cypress Seminole Reservation, on a shady piece of property about five miles outside of the "village" area, just down the road from the Billie Cypress Swamp Safari tourist attraction. Her yard is filled with large oak trees and abuts pasture land and cypress swamp. A grandmother many times over, the walls of her home are covered with pictures of her large family. She is a soft-spoken woman with an infectious laugh and seems most comfortable speaking her native Mikasuki language.

Waggerby was born in 1930 near the community of Deep Lake in southwestern Florida. In 1934 she moved with her family to a Seminole community founded by Junior Cypress, in an area that is now part of the Big Cypress Reservation. At the age of eight, her cousin, Mary Francis Cypress, began to teach her how to sew.

At the front of Waggerby's property, there is a large trailer that serves as her main sewing area. A long table fills one of the front rooms of the trailer and is covered from end to end with samples of patchwork that Waggerby has made over the years. In a separate room are two sewing machines and shelves filled with bolts of cloth. The bolts are organized by color, with the ascending shades of blues, yellows, greens and reds stacked together. Baskets of fabric scraps and half-completed



patchwork strips rest on the floor near the sewing machines.

While sewing, Waggerby's hands move quickly, ripping the fabric and sewing the pieces together at an incomprehensible speed. A patch is made by first sewing together numerous vertical strips of cloth of different colors. Next the strips are cut into pieces and recombined at angles to produce a square patch. The patches are then sewn together to form a band that is incorporated into a skirt, blouse or cape. When working, Waggerby often has a soap opera playing on the television set opposite her sewing machines. Sometimes her family gathers around and talks.

Waggerby is considered one of the best seamstresses in the Seminole Tribe. Her style includes using different shades of the same color in the same patch, so that it looks like a color sampler from a paint store. She is also known for incorporating contemporary fabrics into her skirts and capes, and adding printed fabric within the patch designs. Her exceptional artistry is apparent not only in the intricate patterns that she has developed but in the close attention to detail that she gives to each patch. Every seam is carefully trimmed and straightened. Some skirts that she has sewn for her own use are made with shiny, iridescent fabrics. The effect of seeing these fabrics against rows of traditional patches is breathtaking—an unsettling and brilliant collision of the new and the old.

—Laura Ogden

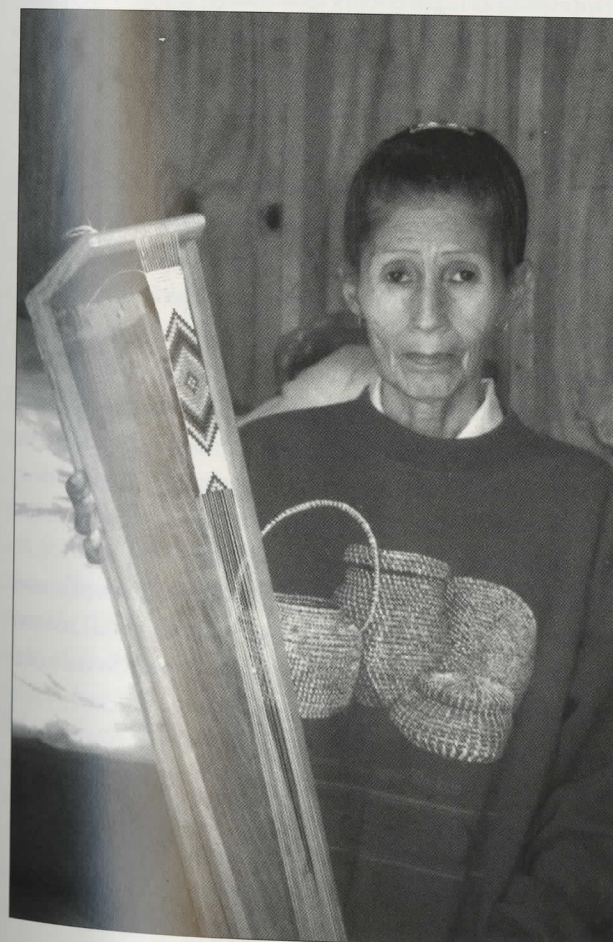
Top: Patchwork skirt made by Mary Waggerby (length, 40 in.).
Loaned by Mary Waggerby. Left: Waggerby sewing patchwork at her home, Big Cypress Seminole Reservation.

Frances Teele ■ Beadwork

Frances Teele has worked at Billie Cypress's Swamp Safari tourist attraction for over six years. At the Safari she demonstrates Seminole beadwork to visitors, while helping with the upkeep of the facility's rented cabins. Her beading demonstrations are held in a shady courtyard at the Safari; groups of school children gather around a thatched-roof chickee while she carefully explains her art form in soft-spoken tones.

Teele was born in 1946 and initially lived along South Florida's Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41), where many Mikasuki-speaking Seminole people settled in small communities prior to the establishment of the reservations. At the age of 14, she moved to the Big Cypress Reservation to attend school. Meanwhile, she learned the intricate methods of beading from her mother. Today she lives about 30 miles north of the reservation.

Teele beads with two handmade wooden looms, of the same style that her mother used. The looms are narrow and approximately one foot and two feet in length.



A flat wooden board serves as the base, with two vertical boards extending from each end. Grooves are cut into the tops of the vertical boards to hold threads in place while weaving. To begin weaving, Teele extends heavy white sewing thread along the length of the loom to form the warp. She then runs a threaded needle across the warp threads and attaches beads to it to form the weft. The beads are pushed on top of or under the warp. A row of beads is secured in place by pulling the needle and thread through them.

Teele uses size-10 glass beads that she orders from New York. The geometric patterns of her pieces follow Seminole tradition. Diamond shapes are particularly popular. To achieve symmetry in her designs, she has to keep careful count of the number of beads across the rows and the total number of rows.

Beadwork, like many of the traditional Seminole crafts, is produced both for personal use and for sale to tourists. In the eighteenth century, Seminoles bartered hides and pelts for consumer goods and cash, including glass trade beads that were worn as necklaces. This tradition evolved into the beadwork that is made today and sold at local crafts shops and festivals throughout the state. Although Teele wears the beaded barrettes and bracelets that she makes, she primarily produces beaded necklaces, headbands, bracelets and key chains to sell to tourists at the Safari gift shop. Seminole beadwork can be considered an example of how the use and meaning of Native American traditional objects change as they become popular consumer items for tourists, who wish to participate in an "authentic" Indian experience.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Beadwork woven by Frances Teele, on loom.
Left: Teele with beadwork, Big Cypress Seminole Reservation.

Jimmie O'Toole Osceola ■ Leatherwork and Clothing

Jimmie O'Toole Osceola lives at the Hollywood Seminole Reservation, on the edge of Ft. Lauderdale, where he sews traditional Seminole leather moccasins, chaps and ceremonial clothing. His house sits only a few miles off the Florida Turnpike and the busy Hollywood Boulevard. A healthy, handsome man in his 70s, Osceola lives and works alone in rooms filled with Seminole artifacts and photographs of tribal members and family.

Osceola recalls his early life in the Big Cypress area, where his father's camp had three chickees, the traditional thatched-roof houses built by Seminoles. To support his family, his father hunted for "food and money," earning income through the selling and trading of hides and pelts. The family also had two vegetable gardens, which kept the children "always busy with it." For fruit they would collect the pond apples, wild grapes and saw-palmetto berries that were plentiful in the region.

After the death of his mother, Osceola's aunt taught his two sisters and him to make their own clothes. In 1951 he began making Seminole patchwork clothing to sell to tourists. Although he has been sewing since he was a child, he did not begin to pursue such work full-time

until retiring from a job as a manager for a tribal senior citizen program. At present he makes traditional coats and long shirts in the style worn at the turn of the century, as well as leather moccasins and chaps or leggings. The style of his clothing pre-dates the more intricate patchwork designs that are popular today. Both the clothing and leatherwork have ceremonial value, in that they are worn primarily for dances and festivals, rather than in daily life.

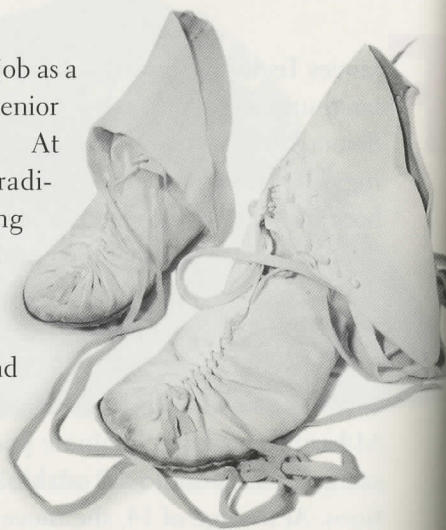
Osceola learned to make leather moccasins in the late 1950s from Morgan Smith, a Creek Seminole, who demonstrated leatherwork at a tourist attraction. Like Smith he uses commercially tanned leather for his moccasins, since it is soft and pliable. He buys either deer or cow leather from tanneries or from other tribal members. His moccasins have a fairly simple design, with the shoe sides hand-stitched to the flat bottom. The moccasins are held in place by wrapping two flaps around the ankle and tying them with attached leather cords.

Osceola's design for his leather chaps is based on a pair of Seminole chaps that he saw on display in a craft shop. His style is more elaborate, however, with decorative fringes for dancing. He prefers deer leather for his chaps, since it is more comfortable. As is the case with his moccasins, he assembles the chaps by punching holes into the leather and lacing the pieces together with thin strips of leather and heavy waxed thread.

Given the exceptional quality of his leatherwork and garments, Osceola is recognized by both tribal members and collectors as one of the premier Seminole artists in Florida.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Moccasins made by Jimmie O'Toole Osceola. Loaned by Museum of Florida History. **Left:** Osceola with chaps and moccasins in his home, Hollywood Seminole Reservation.



Florencia Diaz ■ Weaving

Florencia Diaz demonstrates traditional Guatemalan weaving at the Miccosukee Indian Village on the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41), west of Miami. Though Diaz herself is a Guatemalan Mayan, the Miccosukee Indian Village provides a forum for indigenous craftspeople from throughout the Americas to show their work. Diaz began working at the Village in 1987, after moving to Florida to join her sister, who had been working at the same facility for 18 years. Though she speaks Spanish, her native language is Cacha-quel, which is spoken in the village of Santa Catherina Barahoni where she was born. Today she makes her home on the Miccosukee Reservation.

To enter the Village, one walks through a crowded gift shop, where Native American arts and crafts are sold, into a shady outdoor compound. In the compound are a number of thatched chickees, where demonstrations are held. Also present are a dugout canoe on display, a concrete ring where wary visitors can see alligator wrestling in action and a small museum at the back. The walls of Diaz's demonstration area are filled with brightly-colored hand-woven wall hangings, clothes and belts.

Weaving on hand looms has been an important part of the Mayan culture for hundreds of years. The art form is practiced by both men and women. Like many Maya growing up in the small villages of Guatemala, Diaz learned to weave as a young girl. At the age of five, her grandmother and mother began to teach her to use the traditional Guatemalan loom. The top of the loom is attached to a rafter or post, while the bottom is tied around the waist with a thick leather strap, which resembles a weight-lifter's belt. At the village Diaz sits on the floor of a chickee, with her knees resting on a mat. The most difficult part of learning to weave, she states, was getting used to sit-

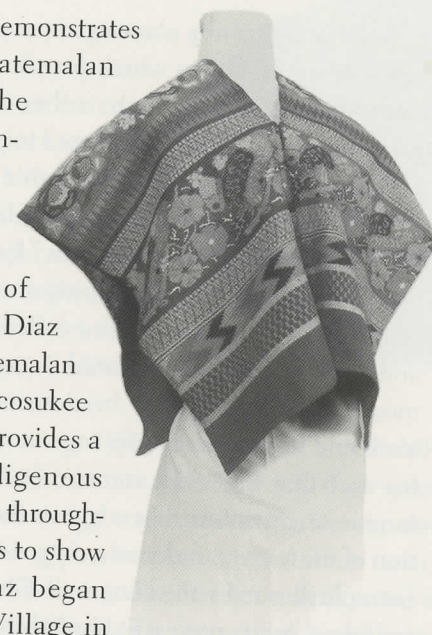
ting in a kneeling position for many hours at a time.

Diaz refers to this style of weaving as *tehido a mano* (hand weaving). To weave the intricate patterns into the cotton warp, the lengths of material that hang down from the chickee's rafters, she uses a *avuja* (needle) made from the leg bone of a deer. Her cotton yarn is purchased in Guatemala and kept ready in a basket beside her mat. The cloth that she weaves is used to make wall hangings, blouses and ponchos. The images woven into the cloth, as well as the colors, have symbolic importance to the Maya, reminiscent of the ancient hieroglyphs found on the walls of Mayan temples. One of Diaz's favorite designs is the *quetzal*, the national bird of Guatemala.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Poncho woven by Florencia Diaz. HMSF collection.

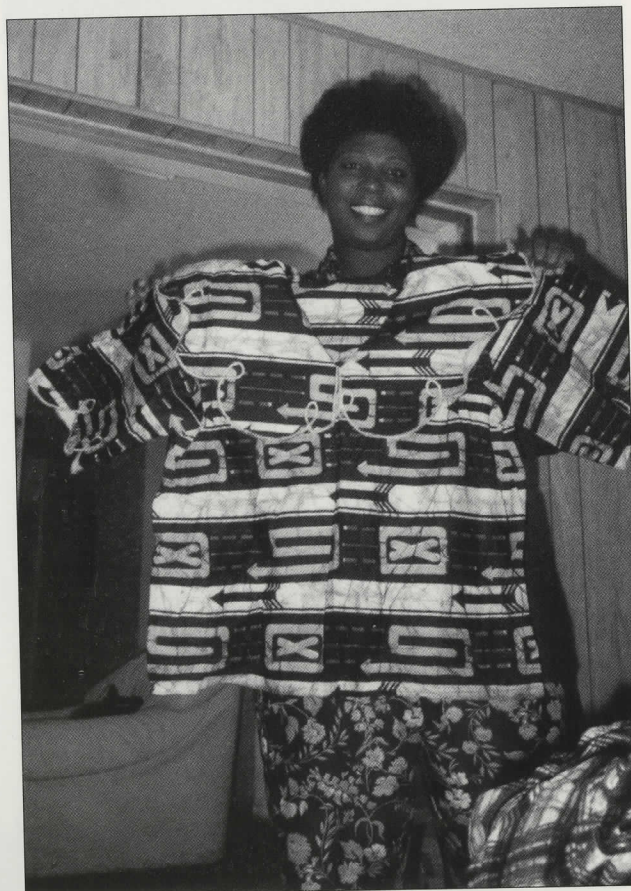
Bottom: Diaz weaving fabric at the Miccosukee Indian Village (Dade Co.).



Amma Essandoh ■ Blouses and Skirts

Amma Essandoh is a seamstress who makes clothing traditional to Ghana. Her grandmother and mother taught her to sew when she was a child, growing up in this West African country. While she now lives in a neighborhood adjacent to Joe Robbie Stadium on the north side of Miami, she continues to sew the brightly patterned blouses and skirts of her homeland for other African immigrants living in South Florida.

Sewing is often an oral tradition in which children learn by watching and listening to their elders, rather than by taking classes or reading books. In Ghana women do not use the type of sewing patterns that are sold at fabric stores in the United States. Essandoh states: "Ghanaians do not use patterns, because of our lifestyle. We always talk, we always do things in the same ways." In her own work, Essandoh takes a person's measurements and then cuts out the fabric accordingly. The clothes that she makes are quite complicated, with gathered sleeves, full multi-layered collars, waist inserts, ruffled flounces and quilted yokes.



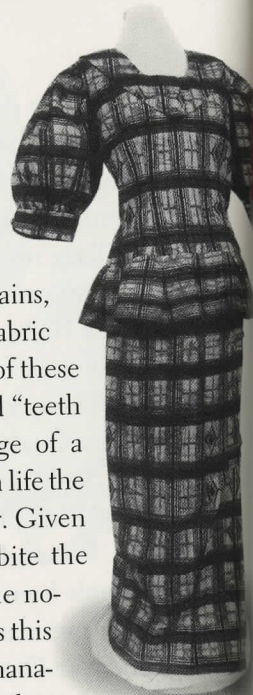
In Ghana clothing plays an important role in the way in which people communicate with each other. Brightly patterned fabrics are used to tell different stories that people in this culture understand. As Essandoh explains, "Ghanaians like to talk in proverbs." Fabric prints, in turn, act as a visualization of these proverbs. For instance, a print called "teeth and tongue," with a repeated image of a mouth, symbolizes "unity," because in life the teeth and tongue are always together. Given the fact that the teeth sometimes bite the tongue, the print further suggests the notion of unity even under adversity. As this example illustrates, the designs on Ghanaian fabric prints represent proverbs whose meanings are very complex, often expressing profound ideas about the nature of love, friendship, hope, courage, the bonds between families, the transience of money and the pitfalls of marriage.

Fabric prints and their symbolic meanings are an integral part of Ghanaian social interactions. Essandoh explains that Ghanaians express themselves using the prints, because "in our culture it's not polite for woman and woman fighting, or man and woman fighting on the roadside." She adds: "what they do is communicate themselves in fabric." So, instead of confronting a person who has caused anger or hurt, a Ghanaian typically will wear a particular print to express her or his feelings. The receiver of this message may then change into a garment with a different fabric pattern to offer an apology or other reply.

Essandoh learned the origins and meanings of these fabric prints from her grandmother. Since immigrating to the United States in 1995, she has continued to fashion clothing out of such patterns, thus providing an important link to her homeland for herself and the Ghanaian community in South Florida.

—Laura Ogden

Top: Blouse and skirt made and loaned by Amma Essandoh. Message: "Before you marry, know what you are getting into."
Left: Essandoh with blouse in her home, Miami. Message: "What happens to me today, could happen to you tomorrow."



Ada Mickler ■ Palmetto Hats

Ada Mickler lives in a large two-story wood farmhouse just off U.S. Highway 1 near DuPont, in Flagler County. Large airy porches run the length of each side of the house. Piled under a wooden table on one of the porches are the dried palmetto leaves which Mickler turns into traditional "Cracker farm hats."

Mickler was born in 1907, the youngest of ten children of Lenora and Cornelius DuPont. On their farm the DuPont family raised sugarcane, corn, sweet potatoes and "anything you wanted to eat." This farm, where Mickler still lives today, has been designated a pioneer farm by the Florida Department of Agriculture. It was here that Mickler, at the age of six or seven, began to learn to braid palmetto hats from her mother, who would turn to this craft after completing her housework.

For weaving palmetto hats, Mickler prefers to use the leaves of the bud of a tall cabbage palmetto, before the bud opens into a fan. She softens the palmetto by soaking it for a few hours in a bucket of water. To strip the palmetto, she uses a simple sewing needle. The actual construction of the hat begins with weaving strands of palmetto into a braid about ten yards long. Normally, it is not possible to make a braid this long in one sitting. Mickler then coils this braid, which she calls "regular cord," and uses white cotton thread to sew it into a hat. For the hat band, she uses hem facing—a strip of white cotton cloth. She says that, when she was growing up, mostly women made the hats, but both sexes wore them for work or "to go to town."

According to Mickler, a well-made hat is constructed of good palmetto with an even light brown color (no green streaks). In addition, the palmetto must be very malleable, with no signs of breakage or splitting. Palmetto hats can be dampened occasionally to keep the fiber from becoming brittle and breaking. Mickler says that quality-made palmetto hats last longer than the "regular straw hats" that farmers wear.

Mickler also knows how to make the hand-tied cast nets commonly used by Cracker farmers for mullet



fishing. She says that she raised hogs to make the money needed to travel to St. Augustine to attend high school and adds that, of course, she also knows how to hitch up a mule for plowing and for pulling the sweep of a three-wheel sugarcane grinder, used for squeezing cane juice for syrup. These skills, along with the palmetto

weaving, were essential for all "farm girls" around Pellicer Creek and Moses Creek, the early place names associated with this area where Mickler has lived throughout her 90 years.

—Elizabeth Higgs

Top: Palmetto hat made by Ada Mickler. HASF collection.

Bottom: Mickler (left) and Donna Roberts with palmetto hats, DuPont.

