

Farm Life History Kit

Thank you for selecting this history kit to use in your classroom. This kit and others from Heritage Village are designed to help you enhance your students' studies of Florida and Pinellas County's rich and diverse history. The information below combined with the artifacts and photographs will give you the tools that you need to set up a classroom exhibit and create a variety of hands-on learning opportunities.

Pinellas Farm Life of the Past

Throughout the Pinellas peninsula today, there is little evidence to show how agriculture played a tremendous role in the history of the county's development through time.

When we think of Florida farm life, we quickly associate Florida to citrus, but there is a variety of other crops and types of farming that have contributed to both Florida and Pinellas agricultural heritage. Overtime, the agricultural industry in Pinellas gave way to tourism and commercial development. Listed below are many of the agricultural pursuits that were a major part of the Pinellas lifestyle and now its history.

Cotton: From 1850 - 1870 homesteaders in Pinellas were growing high quality Sea Island cotton, sugar cane, tobacco, corn, cabbage, sweet potatoes, watermelons, tomatoes, cucumbers, and establishing their citrus groves of oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, lemons and limes.

Cattle: Cattle and other livestock played an important role for the farmer. Early settlers acquired small and large homesteads. To help grow their herd and provide a living for their families: cow pens were constructed to protect calves and milk cows; food crops were cultivated in old cow pens; cattle and hogs grazed on unfenced range; flatwoods were burned to improve cattle grazing; annual cow hunts were organized by neighboring cattle ranchers to collect their herd for market; new calves were paired with their mother cow, branded and released to graze. The open-range cattle industry survived in some areas of Florida until 1949. Other livestock such as mules, horses and oxen helped the farmer with heavy work, transportation and the cultivation of land.

Citrus: Almost every homestead planted citrus. The grove owner attended to the planting, cultivation, pruning, spraying and fertilizing the grove. Early citrus trees were planted by seed and took 5 – 10 years to produce a crop. Local farmers grew varieties of citrus including oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons and limes.

Crops and Vegetables: Each homestead grew a variety of crops throughout the year: sugar cane, tobacco, corn, cabbage, sweet potatoes, watermelons, tomatoes, cucumbers. "Truck farming" brought extra crops and vegetables to market helping to serve the needs of the community and earning cash for the farmer. Most early



homesteaders were self-sufficient, growing the crops they needed to feed their families and their livestock. Any surplus was sent to market or bartered and traded for goods they needed.

Dairy: Many farms and ranches had their own small dairy operation. Milking cows, churning cream to butter and making cheese were just a few of the chores and products of a dairy farm.