

In 1875, Captain John Pearce settled west of Kissimmee River at Ft. Basinger. There he established his home and after his death his widow built the house which is now occupied by their granddaughter, Mrs. Edna Pearce Lockett. Captain Pearce and his family were very active in the cattle business.

Also in the 1870's, William Alderman of Manatee County began to herd cattle in the Basinger area. He stayed for a short time but moved back to Pine Level, once again returning as a permanent resident in 1888. He established his home at Micco Bluff, on the Kissimmee River, about eight miles north of Basinger.

Another early settler of Basinger was Shadrach Chandler. During the 1880's, Jeremiah Walker and William Underhill also moved into the area. Jeremiah Walker had 12 children, six sons and six daughters. William Underhill had ten children. There was extensive intermarriage among the early families, especially among the Walkers, Underhills, Chandlers and Aldermans.

One day in 1895, young Rabun Raulerson, son of Noel, and grandson of the elder Rabun, was working in the fields and became ill. He died shortly thereafter and was buried at Basinger. His father gave the land around which his son was buried to the community for the purpose of becoming a cemetery. Among the other early graves are those of Edward Campbell who died in 1896, Henry Morgan in 1897, Shadrach Chandler in 1898, India Lesley in 1898 and Jeremiah "Jack" Walker, infant son of James Walker, in 1898. Another early grave is that of Annie (Hilliard) Willingham, widow of William H. Willingham of Fort Meade. While visiting her daughter, Ellen Parker, in Basinger, she died - April 24, 1901.

Among the other early settlers of Bassinger were James Thomas, Eli Morgan, Raiford Durrance, John Lofton, Alfred Campbell and others.

Raising cattle was the occupation of most of the Basinger and Fort Drum pioneers. The area was all open range, but in the late 1880's, a 25 mile barbed wire fence was constructed which divided the Fort Drum-Bassinger range from the Whittier-Lake View grazing area. The Pine Island Cow Pens were located along the fence. It is reported that the fence was cut open on a number of occasions, reducing its effectiveness.

Often cooperative roundups were held by neighboring cattlemen. The cows were marked and branded, then driven to the west coast where they were shipped to Cuba and other ports. Pioneer cattleman Teet Alderman, son of William Alderman, often recalled the many horseback jaunts he would take, often to be gone for several weeks at a time. They were equipped with saddle bags of biscuits and potatoes and other "grub", and wallets of corn for the horses. He also remembered that at one time a crew was building a set of cowpens at Indian Town Hammock, when they killed 37 rattlesnakes during the work period. "All in the day's work".

The Cow Creek Seminole Indians lived in the Kissimmee River valley and travelled throughout the area, often staying on the grounds of isolated ranches. Most notable of the Cow Creeks was Pollie Parker, who took her name from the pioneer Parker family. Pollie, known as the Evangeline of the Seminoles, was captured by troops in 1858 and was on her way to deportation to the west when she escaped along with a number of other Indians. They made their way back to south Florida, where they remained unmolested. Billy Bowlegs III was another member of the Cow Creek Seminole tribe.

Today, Fort Drum and Basinger are small communities, far away from the bustle of urban Florida. Here, the same pioneer families still raise cattle on their ranches just as their ancestors did a century ago.