



FOLKLIFE AREA

2001: THE SPACE COAST

Florida's Atlantic Space Coast is a region of great natural beauty in which many of Florida's oldest traditions are juxtaposed with the new. The area encompasses the Atlantic coast from Ormond Beach in the north to Sebastian in the south, and extends inland about twenty miles. With its proximity to the water, many Space Coast residents engage in such traditional activities as fishing, boat building, surfing, and windsurfing. Inland from the coast, cattle ranching and horse raising continue to foster such traditional practices as saddle making, roping, and horseshoeing. In the area around Cape Canaveral, the space industry has developed associated traditions such as model rocket clubs and narratives concerning unusual events. Daytona Beach is a center for car and motorcycle enthusiasts, who detail their vehicles in unique ways and create equipment to suit their special needs. The people of the Space Coast represent a wide variety of ethnic groups, with many maintaining their heritage through such artistic forms as embroidery, music, and dance.

Maritime traditions

Floridians have historically maintained a close relationship with the sea as a source of both sustenance and recreation. All along Florida's extensive coast, fishing communities continue to flourish and foster many traditional occupations that reap a rich harvest and facilitate enjoyment of its recreational possibilities. Numerous local craftspeople supply necessary equipment, such as sails, surfboards, fishing nets, and boats. In each region, they have made distinctive adaptations to local needs and conditions. Space Coast waters are celebrated for some of the best surfing conditions and recreational fishing in Florida.

Surfing

Although surfing has been historically associated with Hawaii and California, Florida is a major East Coast center for surfing and surf culture. Florida surfing hotspots include the state's Atlantic coast from Fernandina Beach to Stuart as well as the Panhandle's Gulf Coast. Many top surfers are Floridians, including Kelly Slater of Cocoa Beach, who won his sixth world championship in 1998.

The state's surfboard makers have developed an international reputation for shaping top quality, high-performance boards. Most modern surfboards are made from molded plastic foam blanks that are painstakingly shaped by hand, then laminated with fiberglass and plastic resin. Often the boards are decorated with airbrush paint,



George Robinson

inlaid with brightly patterned cloth, or painted with colored markers. In contrast, master surfboard maker **George Robinson** (Melbourne) continues to make surfboards out of balsa wood. He is a master artist in the 2000-2001 Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

Windsurfing

Windsurfing (also called boardsailing or sailboarding) combines elements of both surfing and sailing. While South American Indians long ago used moveable masts on raft-like boards on the Amazon, modern windsurfing can be traced to

the 1930s when a surfer who was tired of paddling experimented with a mast, sail, and foot-controlled rudder to propel his board. However, it was not until the 1960s and 70s that the sport became popular and the equipment updated.

Today, windsurfing equipment consists of a free-sail system that allows the mast, boom and sail assembly to move in all directions around a universal joint. The board is made from a durable ABS plastic and measures about eight to ten feet long. The sails are usually made from clear monofilm ranging from 1.5 square meter training sails to 10-11 square meter racing sails. Windsurfing was a demonstration sport in the 1984 Olympics, and has been a competitive event in subsequent games.

Florida has many excellent windsurfers and windsurfing schools. The recent Sydney Olympics windsurfing training site was in Melbourne, Florida. Windsurfing enthusiast and teacher **Bob Uhlar** runs **Windsurfing St. Augustine**, the only windsurfing instructional facility in north Florida. Uhlar started windsurfing in his early twenties, but it has become his business since he moved north from Ft. Lauderdale several years ago. Uhlar has seen tremendous advances in equipment in his twenty years practicing the sport.

Boats

Since most Floridians live close to the water, water craft are important to us for recreation and commercial fishing. Though the vast majority of boats are mass-produced, many Floridians continue to produce regional boat styles for themselves or as part of a small business. These boats are built to suit local waters, weather conditions, and activities. In recent years, boatbuilders have expanded their construction practices to include the use of fiberglass, marine plywood, waterproof glues, and other modern materials.

Born in Key West, **Walter Bruce Crouse** (New Smyrna Beach) watched his schoolteacher father, Russell Crouse, make boats when he was a boy. As a teenager he helped his father restore an old wooden boat. In his early thirties, Crouse decided to study boatbuilding in Maine. Among his teachers was Ralph W. Stanley, the National Heritage Award winner from Southwest Harbor. When Crouse returned to Florida, he



Bob Uhlar

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Bruce Crouse

worked with veteran wooden boatbuilder Bob Sherbert of Daytona Beach Marina & Boat Works. Since Sherbert's retirement, Crouse has been teaching boatbuilding at New Smyrna Beach High School and filling orders for custom boats. He is currently finishing a flats boat destined to navigate the shallow coastal waters in search of bonefish or snook.

Castnets

Although fishing with castnets does not provide a major source of income, people in maritime communities often use the nets to fish for food. The basic castnet design has remained relatively unchanged since the Spanish first introduced it to Florida. The castnet consists of a circular piece of net rimmed with a rope called a "headline," which is threaded through small lead weights. The line is connected at the center to the "headline," for retrieving the net after it has been thrown. When

thrown properly, the net spreads to a full circle and traps fish within its perimeter as it settles to the bottom. As the fisherman pulls it in, it forms a bag that holds the fish. Spanish castnets differ from the English type in the way they are rigged to work when retrieved. Fishermen must learn how to throw the castnet and to read the natural signs that indicate good weather conditions and fishing sites.

Members of the Minorcan communities scattered between St. Augustine and New Smyrna are descendants of families who brought their Mediterranean maritime traditions with them in the eighteenth century. **Stuart Pacetti** (St. Augustine), from a Minorcan fishing family, preserves the tradition of making Spanish castnets by hand. He is responsible for innovations in the materials used in making the net, such as the introduction of PVC pipe to create the "ring" or "horn" through which the handline passes. Also of Minorcan heritage, **Darrell Colee** (St. Augustine) learned to fish with castnets from his father. Through the 2000-2001 Folklife Apprenticeship Program, he is learning net making from Pacetti and plans to pass this knowledge on to his children.

Ranching traditions

The Space Coast includes extensive rural areas where people raise cattle and horses. Florida is one of the largest cattle producing states east of the Mississippi, with over 42,000 head of cattle in Volusia and Brevard counties alone. Florida ranching traditions are unique in that they are derived from British cattle-raising practices rather than the Mexican/Spanish traditions dominant in the West. For instance, Florida cow hunters or cowmen still use whips and cow dogs to control a cow's movements in thick scrub. The sharp crack of the whip may account for the term "Cracker." Florida ranching traditions and techniques have also been adapted to the tropical climate. Our tough scrub Cracker cattle were a blend of Spanish Andalusian cattle brought in the sixteenth century and British

breeds from the Carolinas. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Indian Brahman cattle have been introduced and crossed with other breeds to improve resistance to the tropical climate. Horse breeding and training are also important in Florida, both for ranching and for racing. Floridians make a variety of objects used for ranching and, in many instances, imbue them with a high level of aesthetic excellence.

Before roads were improved for trucking, cattlemen drove cattle to market on horseback, letting them graze for food and resting at night in "cow camps" or "pens" a day's ride apart. Professional cowman **Wormy Wasserman** (Christmas) conserves the skills of the cow camp he experienced through the 1970s. He relies on first-hand knowledge of the everyday life of cow hunters: their foodways, stories, and tools. Wasserman teaches Cracker culture informally in such events as the Florida Citrus Festival, the State Agricultural Fair, and the Doyle Connor State Rodeo and Jamboree.



Charlie Dean

Among the cowman's most important equipment is his saddle. One early variety, the McClellan saddle, was available as inexpensive military surplus after the Spanish American and First World Wars. Florida riders embraced them because their A-shaped construction, called a slick fork, benefited both horse and rider in the hot, humid climate. Although the McClellan saddle has no horn for a rope, early Florida ranchers preferred the whip to the lasso. Western saddles, featuring a horn and swelled fork, became commercially available in the 1920s. Florida ranchers gradually accepted them, as the horn allows ranchers to hold roped cattle to treat them for tick fever and screwfly disease.

Handmade saddles are built on a wooden stand called a tree, and many are customized for the



Stuart Pacetti and Darrell Colee

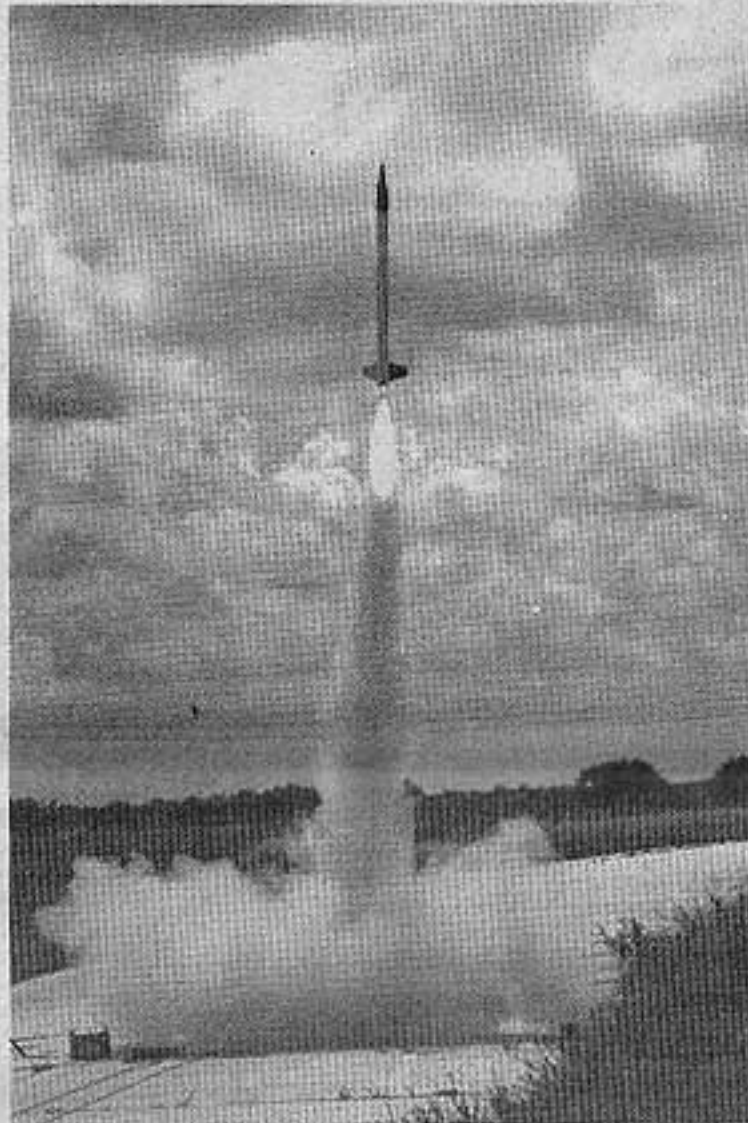
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depth of the seat and the bulge of the fork. **Charlie Dean** (Oak Hill) was originally trained to make saddles for the U.S. Cavalry. Although he still restores antique cavalry saddles, he now builds custom Western saddles with a "ground seat," shaved down to fit perfectly. Since Space Coast motorcycle riders create a market for handcrafted leather accessories, Dean also makes a variety of motorcycle bags.

Many other traditional skills are associated with horsemanship. A farrier, for instance, is a craftsman who shoes horses. Most horseshoes are prefabricated and put on "cold." **Randy Minger** (Pierson) is one of the few farriers in the state who makes custom horseshoes with blacksmithing techniques in order to correct the gait of horses or fit unusual sizes. Minger also makes branding irons shaped into skillful designs to identify cattle the old-fashioned way. His daughter, **Jacque Minger** (Pierson) learned many ranching skills as she grew up. As a teenager, she won roping championships and a rodeo scholarship.

Canaveral in the 1950s, has generated a body of narratives about the significant people and events in its history. In addition, customs have evolved such as model rocket clubs or the celebration of successful launches with a traditional bean lunch.



Model rocket launch

The Space Program appeals to the universal human need to experiment, innovate, and explore. Along the Space Coast, professionals in the space program and hobbyists, young and old belong to model rocket clubs in order to share their knowledge and enthusiasm and to test new ideas for rockets. **Bill Baldwin** (Waldo) began by acquiring a kit as a Christmas present for his son. Baldwin moved to Florida twenty years ago after a career in the army, and has been a rocket enthusiast for seven years. The Baldwins have frequently pursued their hobby as members of national and local groups such as the **Spaceport Rocketry Association** (SRA), a local chapter of the National Association of Rocketry.

As a member of the Army's 9th Infantry Division in Germany during WWII, **Norris Gray** (Melbourne) became familiar with the German V-2 missile—which was one origin of the U.S. space program. Gray worked in NASA's Fire Protection and Rescue

Office and retired as Office Orbital Subsystem Manager for the Orbital Program. Now in his 80s, he is the President of the NASA Alumni Club and a part-time volunteer for NASA Public Affairs. His interviews, recounting the incredible history of the space program, appear in the Florida Space Coast Oral History Project at Florida State University. Through the **NASA Aerospace Education Services Program**, educator **Les Gold** (Kennedy Space Center) explains the space program's influence on modern culture and makes its research relevant to students.



Norris Gray with astronaut

Motorcycles

Both motorcycle and automobile racing are emblematic of Daytona Beach, where racing on the beach commenced at the turn of the 20th century. The city has been home to Bike Week since the first Daytona 200 took place on a beach and road course in January 1937. The motorcycle race was eventually moved to the Daytona International Speedway in 1961. Today, hundreds of thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts flock to Daytona Beach's spring Bike Week and fall Biketoberfest. Many visitors and residents alike take the opportunity to purchase handmade leather goods or motorcycle detailing by local artists.



Randy Minger

Space Industry

Although many people equate it with old-fashioned ways, folklife is always developing and changing in response to new ideas and practices. The nation's space industry, which began in Cape

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Leather garments

Tom Massa (Daytona Beach) grew up in Brevard County. Twenty-seven years ago he started making sandals at his downtown Daytona Beach shop, a family business, but changed to leather clothing and accessories in response to the demand from motorcycle enthusiasts. Most of Massa's work consists of hand-made halters, vests and chaps. Leather motorcycle chaps protect the legs from accidents and the elements. Unlike horseman's chaps, leather motorcycle chaps fit closer to the leg, with leather pieces called, "shot guns."



Carol Kahle

Motorcycle airbrush painting

Born in Dusseldorf, Germany, **Gudrun Weller** (Daytona Beach) uses an airbrush to personalize motorcycles with elaborate designs. Riders usually describe the type of imagery they would like, then Weller creates and applies a design that enhances the aesthetic qualities of the motorcycle body. Her favorite decorative elements include images of fire, wild animals, or Native American designs. Motorcycle owners prize the results.



Gudrun Weller

Ethnic Traditions

As in all parts of Florida, both old and new residents mingle in the Space Coast. Some of the oldest residents are the Minorcans, whose ancestors worked on a British colonial settlement on the Mosquito Inlet. However, the contemporary Space Coast tourism and technology industries depend on the constant influx of new people and ideas. Among the important new population elements in the area are Asian and East European groups.

Chinese Zheng Music

Chinese traditional music is played on a variety of instruments relatively unknown to Westerners. The *zheng*, a type of large zither with 18 to 21 strings, is played like a horizontal harp. In ancient times, it was considered a sign of great learning and culture to play this instrument. The *zheng* is one of the oldest indigenous musical instruments in China, where literary references to it can be traced back to the third century BC. It originated in Shaanxi Province, and several stylistic schools gradually evolved over the centuries.

Julia Leryong Edge (Palm Bay) attends fourth grade and enjoys participating in the swim team at her school. With the encouragement of her mother, who is from China and loves Chinese traditional music, Edge began studying with world-renowned *zheng* artist Ann Yao several years ago. Though the *zheng* takes many years to master completely, Edge knows many traditional tunes and performs them at special events in her community.



Julia Leryong Edge

Hungarian Embroidery

Budapest native **Margaret Horvath** (Port Orange) is part of a strong Hungarian American community in the Space Coast region. Horvath began learning centuries-old traditional embroidery techniques and patterns from her parents when she was five. Her father would draw the designs, and her mother would embroider them. From the beginning, she was exposed to two different embroidery traditions: the Mezockovesd



Marta Zsemberovszky, Margaret Horvath & Barbara Blair (left to right).

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style from her father's side and the Transylvanian tradition of her mother's family. When Horvath started school, her training continued since the local style of embroidery was taught in the public elementary schools. As an adult she studies regional Hungarian embroidery traditions and has become a master of many of these styles.

Through the 2000-2001 Folklife Apprenticeship Program, Horvath has been teaching **Barbara Kurian Blair** (Ormond Beach) the techniques and styles of Hungarian embroidery. Blair initially learned such Hungarian arts as embroidery and cooking from her mother. Under Horvath's tutelage, Blair is now perfecting her embroidery skills and learning new ones.

Serbian Social Dance

Although **Robert Lasic** (New Smyrna Beach) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, he spent six years living in Serbia when he was a boy. Lasic started learning Serbian traditional dances at the age of nine, and was influenced by Dragan Kovacevic of the Serbian National Folklore Federation and the Kolo Ensemble of Belgrade. Lasic and his wife **Irina** are members of the St. Petka Serbian Orthodox Church in Lake Mary, where they lead a church dance group called the **Srpska Kruna**



Robert Lasic

(**Serbian Crown**) in order to maintain a connection with their Serbian heritage. The group performs primarily social dances.

African American Blues and Jazz

Musical traditions are part of the community arts of a changing cultural milieu like the Space Coast. The Daytona Beach area is a training ground for successive generations of professional musicians, among them Ray Charles, The Allman Brothers, Floyd Miles, Alex McBride, Leroy ("Duke") Gainous, and Charles Atkins. Contemporary music often draws on traditional roots, and both rhythm and blues (R&B) and jazz have developed from African American traditional music and verbal folklore.



Noble "Thin Man" Watts

Born in 1926, **Noble "Thin Man" Watts** (Deland) played piano, violin, and trumpet until finding his voice on the tenor saxophone. He toured with dance bands as a teenager, and played in the Florida A&M University marching band together with famous jazzmen Nat and Julian "Cannonball" Adderly. His illustrious career as a band member, featured musician, and band leader brought him back to Deland in 1983. He regularly plays hot R&B standards and cool jazz classics in the Daytona Beach area, Europe, and throughout the U.S.

Conclusion

Like the rest of Florida, the Space Coast is continually changing. The rapid influx of new peoples and ideas profoundly affects the region's traditional culture. Although there may be tensions when different groups first encounter each other, old and new residents usually become neighbors and friends. Through their shared lives, their cultures also gradually merge to develop new folkways, which express a synthesis of traditions. In this way, the Space Coast is both the land of the future as well as a reflection of the past.

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Florida Folklife Program, Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. Further information is online at <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/folklife/>

Maritime Heritage Trail, Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. This web site describes the cultural geography of Florida's coast at <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/maritime/>



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