

Cuban Fishing Ranchos of the Florida Gulf Coast

Bibliography and Graphics

Uzi Baram
March 2022

The Cuban Fishing Industry on the Florida Gulf Coast consisted of fishermen from Cuba setting up camps, first seasonal and then year-round, on the Gulf shores to fish its mullet, pompano, sea trout, redfish, and sharks. Known as the rancho fishing industry, the ranchos (*pescadores ranchos*) exploited the marine resources for the Havana market, starting around 1765 with the industry expanding during British rule (1763-1783) and ending by 1840 during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). The ranchos were profitable, complicated communities of diverse peoples. The legacies of that era are found with geographic names throughout the region. The below bibliography is focused the region between Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay.

I entered the study of the Cuban Fishing Rancho from maroon archaeology. There is increasing interest in the history and heritage of this era and its people. If this list proves useful for your research, I will appreciate acknowledgement

Bibliography:

Almy, Maranda 2002 Skeletal and Historical Analysis: Southwest Drive Burial Site (8SO2617), Sarasota, Florida. *The Florida Anthropologist* 56(2):125-139.

Baram, Uzi 2013 Pre-Explore for the Sarasota Bay Rancho Video Games
<http://sites.ncf.edu/baram/HeritageStudies/sarasota-bay-rancho-video-game>

Baram, Uzi 2013 Another Way to Inspire: Digital Natives and the Peopled Past of Florida. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Florida Anthropological Society, St. Augustine
https://www.academia.edu/4181332/Another_Way_to_Inspire_Digital_Natives_and_the_Peopled_Past_of_Florida

Baram, Uzi 2014 *The Historical Archaeology of Looking for Angola at 8Ma103: Excavations and Public Outreach by the Manatee Mineral Spring, Manatee County, Florida*. Report on the Public Anthropology Program Looking for Angola as an Update to 8Ma103. Prepared for Reflections of Manatee, Inc., available at the Florida Master Site Files

Bell, Gregory J. 2014 "An Island in the South": *The Tampa Bay Area as a Cultural Borderland, 1513-1904*. PhD Dissertation, e University of Cincinnati
https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ucin1396454119&disposition=inline

Covington, James W. 1954 A Petition from Some Latin-American Fishermen, 1838. *Tequesta* 14:61-65

Covington, James W. 1959 Trade Relations between Southwestern Florida and Cuba – 1600-1840. *Florida Historical Quarterly* 39(2):114-129

Dodd, Dorothy 1947 Captain Bunce's Tampa Bay Fisheries, 1835-1840. *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 25(3):246-256

Edic, Robert F. 1996 *Fisherfolk of Charlotte Harbor, Florida*. IAPS Books, Gainesville

Hammond, E.A. 1973 Spanish Fisheries of Charlotte Harbor. *Florida Historical Quarterly* 51:355-360

Holmes, Jack D. L. 1965 Two Spanish Expeditions to Southwest Florida, 1783-1793. *Tequesta* 25:97-107

Holmes, Jack D. L. 1983 Spanish Interest in Tampa Bay during the 18th Century. *Tampa Bay History* 5(1):7-24

Kaczor, Matthew 2021 A spatial analysis of 18th and 19th century Cuban Ranchero Fishing Sites in SW FL <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/807859b268c64c89987524e58a90ba5a>

Knight, Adam 2021 Rancho Reality: Interpreting a Lost Latinx Identity. *Legacy: Magazine of the National Association for Interpretation* November/December: 8-10

Palov, Maria Z. 1999 Useppa's Cuban Fishing Community. In *The Archaeology of Useppa Island*, edited by William H. Marquardt, pp. 149-170. Institute of Archaeology and Paleoenvironmental Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville.

Peters, Thelma, editor, 1952 William Adeel Whitehead's Reminiscences of Key West. *Tequesta* 25:3-42.

Schober, Theresa and Corbett Torrence 2002 *Archaeological Investigations and Topographic Mapping of the Estero Island Site (8LL4), Lee County, Florida*. Cultural Resource Management Program, Florida Gulf Coast University. To the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Report on file with the Florida Master Site Files

Schwadron, Margo 2002 *Archaeological Investigations of De Soto National Memorial* South East Archaeological Center (SEAC) Technical Reports No. 8

Stack, Margaret 2011 An Archaeological and Archival Appraisal of "Spanish Indians" on the West Coast of Florida in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Masters Thesis, University of South Florida <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4558&context=etd>

Svekis, Sherry 2005 *Hidden Histories A Historical Archaeology Approach to the The Tabby House Ruins at Desoto National Memorial Park*. Honors Thesis, New College of Florida, Sarasota

Worth, John 2004 A History of Southeastern Indians in Cuba, 1513-1823. Paper presented at the 61st Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, St. Louis <https://pages.uwf.edu/jworth/WorthSEAC2004.pdf>

Worth, John 2012 Creolization in Southwest Florida: Cuban Fishermen and "Spanish Indians," ca. 1766-1841. *Historical Archaeology* 46(1): 142-160

Zacks, Michelle H. 2013 *From Table to Trash: The Rise and Fall of Mullet Fishing in Southwest Florida*. Doctoral dissertation. American Studies. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



Cuban Ranchos Chronology

1513



1763



1700s



1783



Ponce de Leon names La Florida

British Florida

Fishermen from Cuba would come to the Florida Gulf Coast and set up temporary fishing camp to collect the rich marine resources of Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, and Charlotte Harbor. The fishing industry season lasted from September through March, allowing the fishermen to return to Havana for the beginning of Lent and before hurricane season.

The primary fish caught with nets were mullet, redfish, pompano, and sea trout. Sharks were captured and their livers processed for oil.

Second Spanish Period

José de Eula surveyed the Gulf Coast of Florida in 1783 and provided the names of ranchos in Tampa Bay.

By the first decades of the 19th century, fisherfolk, with diverse households, resided in these Florida ranchos, voyaging to Cuba to sell their catch or to bring family members for Catholic lifecycle rituals. Huts, fields, and storehouses marked the ranchos.

1821

1828



1834

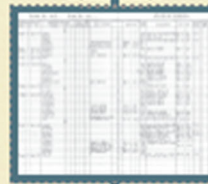
1835



1840



1842



United States of America takes Florida

After the USA took Florida, a Lands Claim Commission decides property rights

Land claim by Jose Maria Caldez and Joaquin Caldez for land by the Manatee River rejected.

The fishing industry continued to flourish. William Whitehead, as collector of customs for the Port of Key West, traveled the Gulf Coast and recorded the ranchos of Charlotte Harbor. At the Caldez rancho Whitehead wrote of more than a dozen dwellings and storehouses and of more than two dozen Cuban men, half-dozen Native American women, and many children.

In 1834, William Buncie, from Baltimore, established a rancho at the mouth of the Manatee River, with 150 men; in 1836 moved the rancho to Palm Island in Tampa Bay. Archival sources mention and maps show cabins for Felipe Bermudez, Antonio and Quintina Pasheco, Manuel Olivella, among others on Sarasota Bay and the mouth of the Manatee River.

Second Seminole War (1835-1842)

With the Second Seminole War, though, the rancho fishing industry collapsed.

The US Navy destroyed the Buncie Rancho in October 1840. Eight years later, the US Congress paid restitution to his estate.

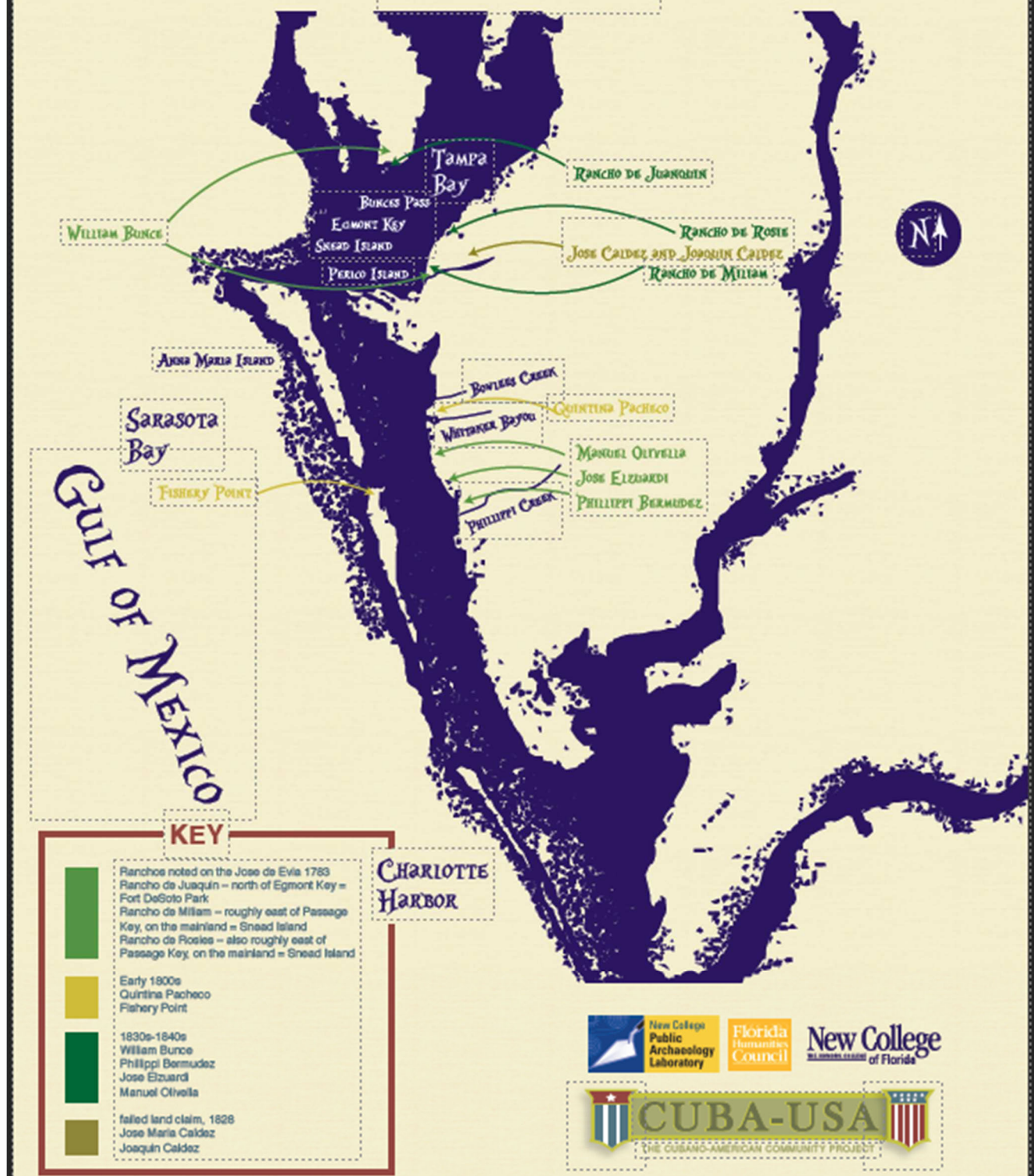
Armed Occupation Act

With the Armed Occupation Act, Anglo-American settlers came to the Manatee River and Sarasota Bay. Three Cuban fishermen - Manuel Olivella, Perico Pompon, and Philippi Bermudez - are credited with showing Josiah Gates and his brother-in-law cleared fields by a spring on the south side of the Manatee River. Josiah Gates homesteaded what became the Village of Manatee, today the eastern part of Bradenton, and William Whitaker pioneered Sarasota, at Yellow Bluffs. These men and their wives and children knew the fishermen - Gates' children called Bermudez Uncle Philippi.

Legacies of the Rancho Era

Today locations on the Sarasota/Manatee coast include Perico Island, a reminder of Perico Pompon and Philippi Creek derives from Felipe Bermudez, shadows cast by the people from the rancho era.

Cuban Ranchos



Quilt, Friendship Knot Quilt Guild 2001
curated at the New College Public Archaeology Lab



Mound House Rancho Exhibit
Photographs, Uzi Baram October 2022



Palmetto thatched hut houses

Image number RC01936

Photoprint - b&w, circa 1870

State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

<<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/25793>>, accessed March 2022



Fisherman's palmetto shack

Image number PR12536

Photograph of a postcard, 1910

State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

<<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/10942>>, accessed March 2022

Fisherman's Palmetto Shack, Florida.

