



They came by covered wagon and oxcart, bumping along the Kings Road from Georgia, filtering down from the Carolinas and Virginia.

They came too by sailboat or sloop, or simply in a jammed-packed canoe.

For most, all of their worldly goods were with them: two or three chairs, a table, pots for outdoor cooking or boiling the wash, some china and pewter ware, bedding and a few clothes.

Books? Yes, the Bible. And thinking of life to come, it was Mother who brought the seeds, the bulbs or cuttings for fruit trees and flowers. Frontier life had its own faith and beauty.

But there were others who came too, better dressed than most; usually alone and riding in on a good-looking horse. This traveler sought out a home site, made friends and kept his eyes open. Perhaps he even built a sturdy and attractive log house before bringing his family down to live.

Different in social and economic

standing, the new settlers may have been; still, they were the same. All shared a common bond: the search for a new home in a new land.

There never was any doubt that a town would some day be born at the river crossing, now that it was a part of the United States. Gone were the European struggles for the New World; gone was the border warfare between Georgia and Spanish Florida which had long prevented peaceful settlement.

It was 1821, the year the American flag first beckoned new settlers to come to Florida. And with that flag, the bitter struggles for the land seemed far ago.

Here at the Cow Ford, the river crossing of the Kings Road, the British had built a ferryman's house and a tavern in the 1770's for the convenience and entertainment of travelers along their newly built highway. This was Florida's first road for the Spaniards had used trails or the natural waterways which were faster and relatively safer from attack.

Too soon did any hopes for peaceful settlement vanish for the American Revolution brought skirmishing soldiers right down to the river's edge at the Cow Ford and the first buildings on the future site of Jacksonville were burned. Only the road and its name, the Kings Road, remained on the land.

And the lodestone remained: the lodestone of the narrow crossing. So, like the British, the Americans provided a ferry and the more farsighted built small stores, a hotel of sorts and a few homes along the road.

A goodly number of settlers had lived in peace with Spain and had established plantations and lumber mills along the river, or had sought protection near the Spanish fort, St. Nicholas, on the South side of the river. There were fully 250 people up and down the river in Northeast Florida who called themselves "Inhabitants of the St. Johns" when Spain's rule ended in 1821.

The land at the Cow Ford, on the North side where Jacksonville was to grow, was owned by Lewis Z.