



Okahumpka Depot Train Exhibit Script

Welcome to Cracker Country's Okahumpka Train Depot. The depot was moved here from the community of Okahumpka, located in Lake County near the city of Leesburg. Built in 1898, this depot was part of the Henry B. Plant Railroad System. The Plant Railroad System was created from many short lines that stretched from Savannah, GA to Tampa, FL.

You are standing in the freight room portion of the depot. This room houses a 500 square foot model train layout depicting rural Florida at the turn of the 20th century. This layout uses 027 gauge Lionel trains running on 444 feet of track. A 027 gauge train layout utilizes a scale of 1/4 inch per foot to accurately depict the original equipment and buildings. This display took over 4,000 hours to build and is still growing.

This display shows rural settings as they may have appeared using models of the buildings in Cracker Country. All buildings in this display are scale models of real structures or have been recreated using photographs from library collections. All our models depict authentic buildings and equipment. Cracker Country's staff conducted over 400 hours of library research before beginning construction on this display.

The community of Okahumpka has been recreated from a photo taken in the early 1900s. It stands in the center of the display in front of the control console. Two of Florida's early industries, cattle and horses, are depicted on the far right and left

of the display. Florida still ranks as one of our nation's leading producers of both cattle and horses. These industries arose from a meager introduction of cattle and horses brought to Florida by the Spanish hundreds of years ago. To the right rear of the console, the orange grove represents another major industry--citrus. Also note that grapefruit, lemons, limes and tangerines are placed around the two story Carlton House. This represents all major varieties of citrus fruit grown in Florida at the time. To the left of the console you can see a model of the Cosme' fruit packing house. Florida continues to be the major citrus producing state in the U.S.

Other industries are depicted on our display board. The red brick Hav-A-Tampa cigar factory that stood in Ybor City is shown on your left near the back of the display. On the front left is the Lewis turpentine still which was located near Bristol, FL. It was one of the state's largest and was in operation from 1900 until 1930. To the left of the turpentine still is a replica of a lumber saw mill that stood 20 miles west of Arcadia. To the far left, the large grey structure sits beside an open pit phosphate mine modeled after one once located in the Gainesville area. There workmen dug the ore with picks and shovels. They were paid \$.25 per cubic yard for their efforts. It would take 6 to 7 days to fill one of the railroad gondola cars you see alongside. Today, large draglines in Polk County mines can fill 15 gondola cars with one scoop of their mammoth buckets. You'll see the palm thatched Native American Seminole chikees to the right rear of the phosphate mine. Villages such as this can be seen along the Tamiami Trail south of Ft. Myers. Our display could not

be complete without a model of a late 1900's fair and animated displays depicting many traditional trades of the period.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour of our model train layout of turn of the 20th century Florida. To learn more about what life was like back then, visit Cracker Country's other living history exhibits and relive rural Florida's past for yourself.