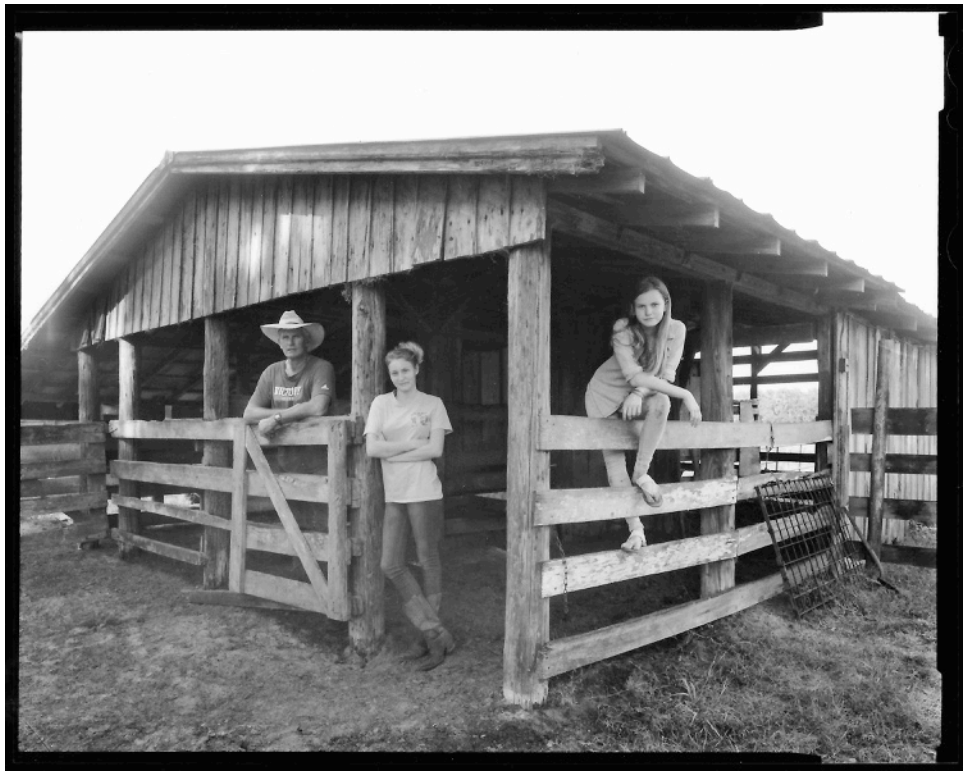


# Sidetracked: Travels Across the Undiscovered South

**Steve, Hannah, Rachel Malphurs**  
**Putnam County: Pomona Park**

**Steve:** It was like paradise growing up around here. My dad's family has been in timber their whole life. We had about 1500 acres when my grandmother came here. When she died, my uncle got half and my dad got half. We have about 800 acres here. We have cattle and timber and we also have fernery close by. My mom is from this area too. All of her people were near the St. Johns River. They left to fight the Civil War from right here. They've been here a long time. They were with some of the Spanish that first settled the area.

Pulp, lumber, plywood — all were segments of our production, We had a good outlet for it. But the plywood mill closed. So, now you have a lot of pulp wood, and that's why trucking gets so important.



We're so far south in the whole scheme of the timber industry that we don't have a lot of options. In Georgia or northwest Florida, you have a lot more options with different companies. Down here, well, you're not going to drive 40 miles to save a nickel. You've got to be a price taker instead of negotiating. The thing that hurts us is the transportation. So much of its logistics in the cattle and timber business.

In agriculture, as soon as you start making money, you better start saving some of it, because it never lasts too long. We're not a big operation here. With the cattle, we're not as concerned with the day-to-day price. If you were borrowing money for your operation, you'd be right up on all the prices. But, there's not a lot we can do about it here.

We have about hundred head right now. We used to run a lot more than that but we try not to get too adventurous. You start having to feed them and it can go south real quick. We're still working cows on horseback and with dogs.

We like where we are right here. The doctor in St. Augustine is a 40-minute ride. If they want go shopping in Jacksonville, it's an hour away. We're an hour and 15 minutes from anywhere that we need to be. If a car breaks down the side of the road... I had a buddy of mine coming through Satsuma the other day and he broke down. My mom saw him and pulled off. Other people pulled off because they saw my mom's car. You wouldn't find that the big city.

It was nice growing up around here. It was just a dead-end dirt road. You didn't have people going up and down the road. Today, I don't let my kids ride their bicycle up and down the road. People drive too fast. Everything changes — some for better, some for worse. We won't have the issues, say, if we were a cotton farm with the amount of chemicals that go into cotton farming. We'd be very concerned about that. But with cattle we don't.

I have enough friends that live in town and I see them enough, so we've not lost anything by living out here. The kids like going to the clothing stores in town, but everybody likes coming home at night. We don't like the traffic. We're used to waving at people. People are nice here in the country. We might have a skewed view of it, but we like living in the woods.

**Rachel** You don't get as many opportunities as you would've a bigger town, but you know everybody.

**Hannah** It's nice living where you know everybody. There are so many stories about our family. Everybody knows my dad, so when you go to school, everybody asked me, "How he is doing?"

**Steve.** Years ago, if you needed a loan, you could just go to the bank and tell the person, "I'm thinking about doing this or that," and he would be, "Get started. I know your grandfather, I know your dad. Just get going and when you find out how much is going to be, we'll open an account and drop \$40,000 dollars in it. When you know what it is, come in and we'll do the paperwork. "

It's still really nice around here, but there are more people moving in and you know less and less people. Crime has picked up a little bit. You didn't use to leave anything locked. Nothing was stolen. Up until I was 20 years old, we never locked anything. You could leave your wallet right up on the dash of your truck. Nobody would bother it. You miss that to a certain degree. Someone was always looking out for someone else. You don't have that connection with people that you did.

**Hannah:** I'm in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. After school, I'm thinking about taking a couple months to really experience everything around here. I'll go to college. But, I want to be able to wake up and not worry about school and homework and just go out ride horses, pen some cattle, train some dogs, and really get to know where I live.

**Rachel:** I'm in eighth grade. After school, I want to start college right away. Then, I want to travel. My dream it is to go to all the major tourist attractions: Paris, Rome, London. I want to go see *The Leaning Tower of Pisa*; *Big Ben*; *The Coliseum*. I just want to go everywhere and see the world. I want to see what other people experience. I want to go and see what other places look like. But, I like where I live because you can just go outside and it's real peaceful. In big cities, you can't go outside for a second without worrying about cars. We have fireflies out here at night. You can just sit down and look up and the stars are clear. The fireflies are out.

It's nice living here. Your friends are living right down the road from you. They can help you with a project or an essay.

**Steve:** You're familiar with what you're used to. This is all we've ever known. You don't really make a call and get pizza delivered here. There are conveniences you'd have if you lived in a city. But as far as trading it for the noise, the congestion and everything that comes with that, it doesn't bother me to travel to a restaurant for pizza.

**Hannah:** When I was little, daddy would come into my room and sit with me before I went to sleep and I would always ask for stories. He'd tell stories about Papa. There were stories about dogs bitten by gators and old cattle stories where they would drive them through the woods. Those were always my favorite kind of stories.

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