In the late 1800s, resort areas were developed throughout the state of Florida. It became a haven for those who were in need of a vacation and a place to recuperate from illnesses. Because of the state's warm weather and mild winters, it began attracting a variety of people, including the rich and famous. Two of the better-known individuals who came to Florida were Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. They later built their own winter homes in the Fort Myers area. The city of Miami also grew and soon was connected to the railway system.

The citrus industry became important during this time. Because the state had railroads that could quickly transport fruit to other states, the citrus industry became a staple of Florida's economy. This industry boomed until the winter of 1894 when two freezes destroyed crops in the northern and central parts of the state. In contrast, southern citrus growers were unaffected, and the citrus industry continued to boom in the southern part of the state. Using the lessons learned from the freezes, citrus growers developed frost-resistant fruit and renewed citrus groves throughout the state.

Central Florida was home to many. The cattle ranches were not close to ports and so the cattle had to be driven to ports. By using long whips that made a loud cracking noise, these cowhands became known as "Crackers." The cattle business became very popular and many cattle ranch owners became very rich.