As a follow-up to my article in the December 2002 Friends newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 4), I’m pleased to report that during my most recent research trip to Cuba, I was finally able to examine ecclesiastical records that may shed light on the fate of Calusa and other Florida Indians after their migration to Cuba in the 18th century.

My trip was associated with an ongoing archaeological collaboration between archaeologists in Cienfuegos, Cuba, and in Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida relative to a remote Spanish-contact era Cuban Indian site along the Arimao River near the Bay of Jagua on Cuba’s southern coast. As part of renewed fieldwork at this site, I will be exploring the ethnohistory of the earliest stages of the Spanish conquest of Cuba, which prompted the flight of at least one group of native Cuban Indians to South Florida, where the Calusa paramount chief permitted them to settle.

Also during this trip, I was allowed to conduct research in the original parish records of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in the community of Guanabacoa near Havana, where many immigrant Florida Indians, including some Calusa people, settled during the 18th century. During my recent trip, I was able to examine all baptism, marriage, and death books for non-white individuals dating between 1679 and 1776, including some books dating as late as 1796 and 1807. I learned that a number of Indian families lived in Guanabacoa during the late 17th and 18th centuries, including not just those from Florida, but also immigrant Mexican Indians and their descendants, and possible descendants of indigenous Cuban Indians, all of whom commonly intermarried with local individuals of African or mixed African ancestry.

Many “Keys Indians” or natives of “Cayo Hueso” (Key West) appeared in the parish records, presumably including Calusa refugees who fled to the Florida Keys by about 1710. However, only one unmarried woman, named Leonor de Sayas, was specifically said to be a native of “Carlos,” and thus presumably Calusa. Two of her infant daughters were baptized in Guanabacoa in 1729 and 1731. She died there in 1766, but there is presently no further trace of her daughters. It is possible that they survived and had children of their own.

More work will be needed to follow up on these and other discoveries in Cuba and elsewhere. Thanks are once again due to Dr. David Noble for his financial support of this second Cuba voyage.
During the late summer and fall, the Randell Research Center has finally witnessed a flurry of activity associated with the construction of the teaching pavilion complex and parking area, as well as the relocation of a number of coconut palm trees to restore the old historic roadway to the early 20th-century packing house at Pineland. The photos below will update readers on our ongoing progress.

Australian pines along Waterfront Drive are removed by Treeland Solutions, Inc. of Pine Island. (Photo by Sydney Cosselman)

Coconut palms are removed from the front of Randell Mound to provide an unobstructed view of Pine Island Sound from atop the mound. Work donated by PalmCo, Inc. of Pine Island. (Photo by John Worth)

Pavilion Partners Needed

Costs for the pavilion complex are $577,000. So far, we have $408,000. In order to complete and equip the classroom, where our school programs and public lectures will take place, we must raise an additional $169,000. Please consider a special donation to the building fund. Make checks payable to Randell Research Center, and send to PO Box 608, Pineland, Florida 33945. Gifts in any amount are welcome, and are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by federal law. For more information, contact John Worth at (239) 283-2062.

Protective plastic barrier sheets are applied over archaeological sediments in the area of the new teaching pavilion complex. (Photo by Sydney Cosselman)
First load of base dirt is dumped at new entranceway to the Pineland Site by Bill Mullen of Williams-Mullen Trucking. (Photo by Sydney Cosselman)

Wooden piles were driven for the teaching pavilion structure by Island Piling and were cut by Gatewood Custom Carpentry. (Photo by Sydney Cosselman)

View of palm-lined roadway near RRC teaching pavilion construction site, restored by Mark Dean of PalmCo., Inc. (Photo by Sydney Cosselman)

New and Renewing Friends of the RRC as of November 15, 2003

(Please let us know of any errors or omissions. Thank you for your support!)

Supporting Members ($1,000-$4,999)
- Dr. David A. Noble

Sponsoring Members ($500-$999)
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- Rosanne C. Weber
- Susan Zell
Utility Pole Artwork Focuses On Calusa Canal
by Diane Maher

Keeping with the unique tradition of adorning Pine Island’s utility poles with artwork by local island artists, recently painted poles honor the Calusa Indians by depicting scenes from their culture. Located on Stringfellow Road, just north of the Pineland cut-off, two poles mark the Calusa canal that originated in Pineland and spanned the entire width of Pine Island to the Indian Fields area of Matlacha Pass.

One pole features images of Calusa Indian ceremonial masks and the other contains a representation of Calusa men with a dugout canoe and paddles. A woodpecker painted above the men is thought to be speaking, as expressed by four circles that may represent the four directions.

RRC volunteers Diane and Dick Maher, Marty Kendall, and Debbie Cundall painted the poles.

A second pole shows Calusa masks like those found at Key Marco in the 1890s. (Photo by Debbie Cundall)

In Appreciation continued from page 1

John Cauthen of Forestry Resources, Inc. donated additional services to haul off the debris. Ann Cordell donated a punchbowl, glasses, plates, cups, saucers, and a blender. Rosemary Squires donated a gas grill. Based on an original design by Louie Campbell, Dick Maher built sifter screens for our new archaeological excavation season. Dave Hurst refinished the library table that sits in the entryway of the headquarters house. Thank you, one and all, for your great support of the Randell Research Center.
Dear Friend,

You are cordially invited to join, or renew your membership in, the RRC’s support society, Friends of the Randell Research Center. (Current members can find out when their memberships expire by looking at the address label on their newsletter.)

All Friends of the RRC receive a quarterly newsletter. Supporters at higher levels are entitled to discounts on our books and merchandise, advance notice of programs, and special recognition. Your continuing support is vital to our mission. It means more research, more education, and continued site improvements at the Randell Research Center.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John E. Worth, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Research Programs and Services
Randell Research Center

Please check the membership level you prefer, and send this form, along with your check payable to Friends of the Randell Research Center, to:

Membership Coordinator • Randell Research Center • PO Box 608 • Pineland, Florida 33945

- Individual ($30) and Student ($15): quarterly Newsletter
- Family ($50): Newsletter + advance notice and 10% discount on children’s programs
- Contributor ($100-$499): The above + annual honor roll listing in newsletter + 20% discount on RRC publications and merchandise
- Sponsor ($500-$999): The above + invitation to annual Director’s tour and reception
- Supporter ($1,000-$4,999): The above + listing on annual donor plaque at Pineland site
- Sustaining Members ($5,000-$19,999), Benefactors ($20,000-$99,999), and Patrons ($100,000 and above) receive all of the above + complimentary RRC publications and special briefings from the Director.

Please use my gift to obtain matching funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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The Randell Research Center is a program of the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida.
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