

Friends of the Randell Research Center

Vol. 6, No. 3

September 2007

Bringing Back the Gill House

Restoration Continues on Hurricane-damaged RRC Headquarters

by Bill Marquardt



Work has begun to restore a venerable structure of the Pineland community. Owned by Lee County and leased in 2001 to the Randell Research Center for use as its headquarters, the Ruby Gill House was severely damaged by Hurricane Charley in 2004. Re-roofing of both the house and the post office next door were funded by the Florida Museum shortly after the storm. In 2007, Lee County historic-preservation funds, a grant from the Arts and Attractions Committee of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, and private donations have helped us stabilize both buildings and begin the restoration process. A new heating/air-conditioning system and new wiring are also partially completed. Additional work on the Gill House will include architectural and engineering assessments, external structural work, and interior restoration.

Historically the Gill House and the Pineland Post Office are closely

Structural Engineer Bob Rude (left) confers with Dale Schneider about the roof on the Gill House. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

connected. In 1922, Ruby Vance Gill, then age 35, moved to Pineland with her husband Percy. The Gills bought several acres of groves and built the two-story house. In 1924, Ms. Gill succeeded James Wheeler as postmaster. Soon after, a storm swept away the tiny post office, which was then on the waterfront. Ms. Gill built a new post office next to her home, where it still stands today. Here, she was postmaster until 1957, serving 33 years. Early on, she operated a small store in the same building. She also served on the county electric board and was instrumental in bringing electricity to Pineland in 1941. In 2005, the Gill House was listed as a Lee County historic resource.

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From left to right, Gladys Schneider, Karen Walker, and architect Linda Stevenson confer about the interior of the Gill House, now being renovated. Gladys wrote an architectural history of the house, and Gladys and Karen worked together to provide measurements to aid Linda in completing detailed drawings to document the structure. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

We Need Your Help

We would like to see old photographs and newspaper articles concerning the Gills, the Gill House, the Pineland Post Office, and the Pineland community. Volunteers are also needed to help with carpentry, painting, native plant landscaping, and gardening. Please phone (239) 283-2062 if you are interested, or write to RRC, PO Box 608, Pineland, FL 33945.

Recent Donations of Funds and Services to the Gill House Project

Lee County Historic Preservation Board
 Arts & Attractions Committee,
 Southwest Florida Community Foundation
 Baker's Heating and Air Conditioning
 Nisus Corporation
 Pine Island Pest Control
 Bob Rude Structures
 Perry Roofing
 Dale Schneider
 Gladys Schneider
 Linda Stevenson
 Jeff Mudgett
 Karen Walker

Contribute to the Building Fund

Funds are needed to restore the walls, floors, and ceilings. When completed, the building will be open for viewing by the public. All contributions are welcome, and are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to Randell Research Center, identify as "building fund," and mail to PO Box 608, Pineland, FL 33945.



Architect and RRC advisory board member Jeff Mudgett (left) confers with contractor Dale Schneider about the new double flashing Dale installed to stop the leaks around the upstairs window at the Gill House. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

Visit Us in Matlacha



Temporary RRC headquarters are located at 4130 Pine Island Road in Matlacha, about 8 miles from Pineland. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

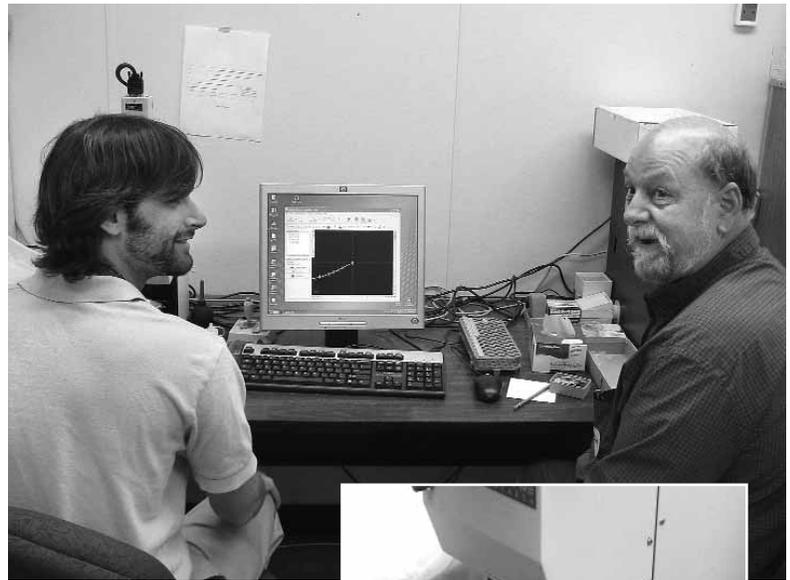
While we renovate our house, the RRC office has moved to 4130 Pine Island Road in Matlacha. Please visit us there for information and free literature about archaeology, history, and ecology, or to learn about volunteer opportunities, group tours, etc. Our office phone number is the same: (239) 283-2062.

Research Update: Useppa Analysis Nears Completion

by *Bill Marquardt*

Analysis of the materials excavated from Lot III-17 at Useppa Island (see *Friends Newsletter* volume 6, no. 1) is nearly finished. Radiocarbon dates show that the entire deposit accumulated about 3,000 years ago, over perhaps a 100 to 200-year period. Michelle LeFebvre and Meggan Blessing have identified the shells and bones contained in two samples, finding that an abundance of oysters and scallops were eaten, as well as clams, certain conchs and whelks, and sea urchins. Fish taken in nets included herring, shad, grunt, pigfish, and mullet.

Meanwhile, Irv Quitmyer and Doug Jones will soon finish their report on the seasons in which people lived on Useppa some 3,000 years ago, and on the climate as revealed by the water temperatures in which the clams lived. For example, the shells of surf clams (*Spisula solidissima*) record annual changes in the concentration of the stable isotopes of oxygen ¹⁸O/¹⁶O in seawater. The ratio of these two isotopes is strongly temperature-dependent and thus the shells represent a record of seawater temperature. The yearly variation is discovered by isotopic analysis of tiny samples taken from the ancient shells. Irv will also determine what times of the year the Indian people collected the clams for food by measuring growth bands in cross-sectioned shells. Like tree rings, these growth structures have a predictable annual progression and can be used to interpret the seasons in which the clams were harvested.



UF student Matt Funderburk (left) discusses lab procedures with zooarchaeologist Irv Quitmyer. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)



Close-up of the microdrill being used by Matt to collect minute samples from individual growth rings of surf clams from the Useppa Island midden. Here Matt uses an Exacto knife to collect the material he has just drilled. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

New and Renewing Friends of the RRC from May 16 through September 22, 2007

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

Sustaining Members (\$5,000 - \$19,999)

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Native Plants Transform RRC

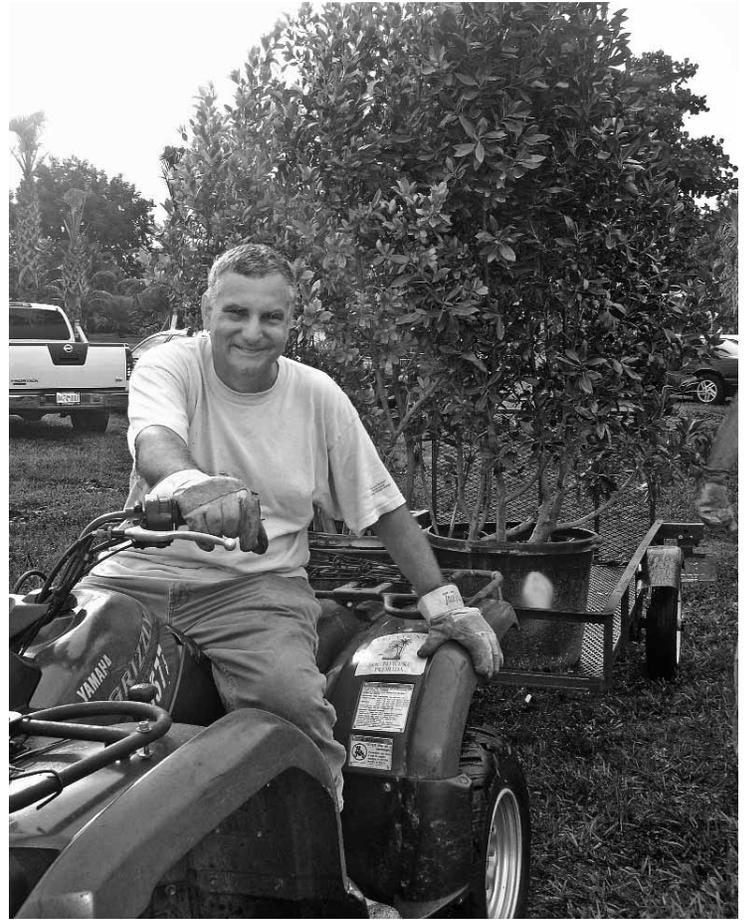
Invasive Exotic Plants Are Being Replaced with Florida Natives

by *Bill Marquardt*

Thanks to a generous grant from the Florida Division of Forestry, the Randell Research Center will soon have over 900 new native trees, including a variety of tropical hardwood species and nearly 200 cabbage palms. As of the middle of September, 285 palm trees and 160 hardwoods had been planted, and we are hoping to have all trees in the ground by the end of October.

Trees are being planted both at the Gill House property and at the larger property where the pavilion/classroom is located. Our ultimate aim is to eliminate invasive exotic vegetation and encourage trees native to the southwest Florida coastal zone. A new walking trail northeast of the pavilion will be focused on native plants and their uses. We also plan a native-plant demonstration area at the Gill House/post office property that will provide a pleasant place to visit as well as to learn about natives that can be grown successfully in Southwest Florida.

With John Worth's departure, Karen Walker has taken over as project director of the reforestation project. She has been ably assisted by experts



Bob Repenning (above) delivers tropical hardwood trees to their planting sites. (Photo by M. Nanney.)

Chris Browning (left) of Browning's Nursery and Landscaping places a palm tree in hand-dug holes near the RRC teaching pavilion. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

A team effort (below) is called for when planting the trees. From left to right, Tylar Samuels, Jessica Malone (with shovel), Clark Rhodes, Ed Chapin, and Mark Chargois. (Photo by M. Nanney.)





from Lee County Parks and Recreation (especially Tylar Samuels and Jeff Anderson) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (especially John Aspiolea and Annette Nielsen), who have been very generous with their time. Rick Joyce and Bob Repenning have served as certified arborists for the project, while Brady Vogt of Pelican Nursery, John Cauthen of Forestry Resources, Rad and Betsy Hazen of Pine Island Growers, and Dale Norton of Busk and Associates have volunteered time and loaned machinery, water tanks, and other equipment. Margi Nanney, Carolyn Murphey, and Michael Wylde have been especially faithful helpers, but there have been many others, including members of the RRC advisory board, the local Coccoleba chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, the Pine Island Garden Club, and the Calusa Land Trust.

Volunteers have been participating since August, watering the steadily increasing number of new trees. Our need for volunteers will not end with the planting of the final tree in a few weeks – we will need to nurture the trees for many months, watering, fertilizing, and mulching. Mulching will help to conserve water, and this will be particularly important if the predicted La Niña this winter and spring leads to dry conditions in South Florida as expected. If you are interested in joining the effort, please call our office at (239) 283-2062.

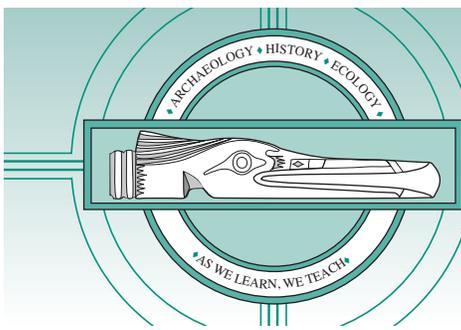


Pat Hagle (above) waters the newly planted palm trees next to the RRC classroom.
 (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

RRC staff member Michael Wylde takes notes while volunteer Alan Gruber (center right) excavates a shovel test. The test excavations ensure that the trees we plant do not inadvertently disturb archaeological deposits. (Photo by K. Walker.)

Volunteers Stephanie Malone, Jessica Malone, and Roberta Gerber (bottom right) pause among recently planted cabbage palms at the Gill House property.
 (Photo by M. Nanney.)





Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • September, 2007
Phone (239) 283-2062 E-mail: randellcenter@comcast.net

Dear Friend,

You are cordially invited to join, or renew your membership in, the RRC's support society, *Friends of the Randell Research Center*. All Friends of the RRC receive a quarterly newsletter and free admission to the Calusa Heritage Trail at Pineland. 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,

William H. Marquardt
Director
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 and free admission to Calusa Heritage Trail
- Family (\$50):** The above + 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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Seasonal Address (so we can send you your newsletter while you are away)

Name

Address

City / State / Zipcode

Use my seasonal address from _____ to _____.
(date) (date)

RRC Hires New Maintenance Specialist

by *Bill Marquardt*

We are pleased to welcome Mark Chargois as our new Maintenance Specialist. Mark will be responsible for upkeep of the grounds and buildings of the RRC's 60-acre campus in Pineland. A resident of Pine Island for more than 35 years, Mark has worked as a commercial fisherman as well as in construction and landscaping. He can operate heavy equipment and boats up to 80 feet. Most recently Mark was Maintenance Specialist for Lee County Parks and Recreation. He has also served



(Photo by W. Marquardt.)

as a store clerk at the Harbor Hideaway Marina in Bokeelia, as a carpenter for Don Gessman Custom Homes, and as a cook for three different Pine Island restaurants. He has worked as a landscaper for a local nursery, and has done exotic plant removal on Cayo Costa. Mark has many varied skills needed for the challenging job of maintaining and improving the Randell Research Center's facilities, and we are glad to have him on our team.

Pineland's Mounds are Up for Adoption!

by *Karen Walker*

The RRC will begin a new volunteer program this winter that involves groups of people "adopting" a particular mound at the Pineland Archaeological Site and thereby becoming stewards of that mound. Mound stewards will learn what archaeologists know about the mound and will care for it by removing exotic invasive vegetation (by both clearing and herbicidal treatment) and maintaining the mound surface. Mounds in need of adoption are Brown's Mound 1, Brown's Mound 2, Randell Mound 1, and Old Mound. Other, non-mound adoption possibilities include sections of the Calusa Heritage Trail, the Pine Island (Calusa) Canal, our front entrance and pavilion area, and our fences. Stewards can be organizations (e.g., Garden Club, Boy Scouts) or groups of individuals. Contact Karen Walker at kwalker@flmnh.ufl.edu or 352-215-3111, or call the RRC office at 239-283-2062 if interested.

Calusa Workshops New This Winter

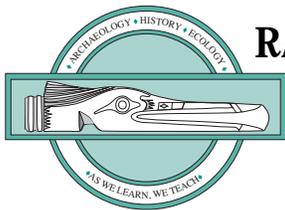
by *Dick Workman*

The RRC is initiating a series of docent-training workshops that are "hands-on" activities relating to skills mastered by the Calusa for fishing, hunting, and foraging. Topics include fiber identification and processing; net making; knapping flint and flint-like materials; weaving wood/basket-making; shell tools and implements; and aboriginal music. Workshops will take place at the RRC pavilion/classroom. Dates will be announced later.

RRC
news

Editor:
William Marquardt
Writers:
William Marquardt
Karen Walker
Dick Workman
Production:
GBS Productions

Send questions or comments to:
William Marquardt
Randell Research Center
PO Box 608
Pineland FL 33945-0608
Telephone (239) 283-2062
Fax (239) 283-2080
Email: randellcenter@comcast.net
Website: www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC/



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