

# Friends of the Randell Research Center

Vol. 8, No. 3

September 2009

## New Excavations on Mound 5

### *A Preliminary Report*

by Michael Wylde

**In late December 2008**, the Randell Research Center was offered an opportunity to examine Mound 5 of the Brown's Mound Complex on property adjacent to the Randell Research Center. Brown's Mound 1, the largest mound on the Pineland site, is thought to have been surrounded by five other mounds, forming a six-mound "complex." Mound 5 is indicated on a map drawn by archaeologist Frank Hamilton Cushing in 1895, before twentieth-century land modifications began. The map was discovered in an archive in California in 2002. A home was built on the mound in the 1920s, a common practice at the time. The house is still standing and is the property of popular author Randy Wayne White, who granted permission to dig.

After some initial complications, we proceeded with our investigation by opening a 2-x-2-meter excavation on the northeast side of the mound. Upper layers held a good deal of historic material in the form of glass spice bottles, majolica pottery, fine china, bottle glass, pearl buttons, animal bones, car parts, nails and other metal objects. The early twentieth century inhabitants of Pineland didn't have trash pick-up any more than the Calusa did, so they disposed of their refuse in middens as well. After excavating to 40 cm from the surface (Level 83), what looked to be intact Calusa midden material began to be exposed. Dense shell deposits left from food and tool production, charcoal and fish bones in abundance, and a variety of indigenous pottery types have been found.

Initial examination of the pottery shows a diverse assemblage of types from Lake Okeechobee, Tampa Bay, and the St. Johns River basin, as well as locally produced wares. Locally produced pottery such as Sand-tempered Plain and Pineland Plain were not of the highest quality or durability due to the poor quality clays available. By the first century A.D. the Calusa began to seek out and acquire better quality pots from other parts of Florida. The wide variety of trade ware in Levels 83-86 may suggest that these midden layers date to an exciting period of expanding Calusa influence in the

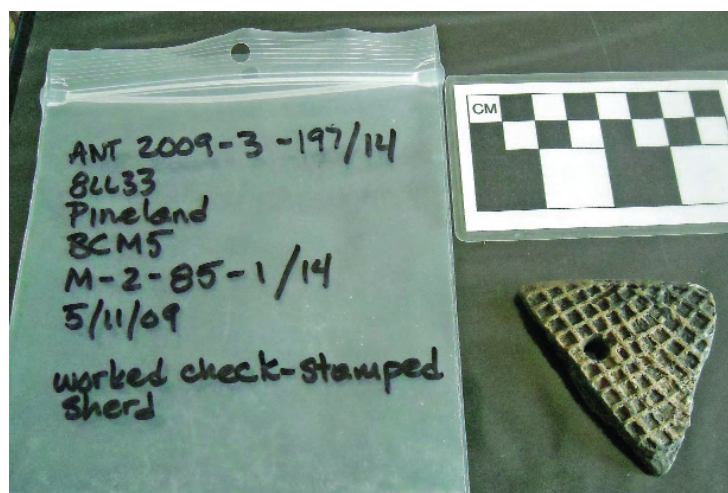


Michael Wylde at work in a test pit in Mound 5. (Photo by K. Walker.)

Florida peninsula. We know that by the sixteenth century the Calusa had established wide-ranging contacts through their system of trade and tribute. Part of the story of Mound 5 may include evidence of how and when the Calusa came to rule much of South Florida.

At the end of last season, we had dug down 90 cm from the surface of Mound 5. We hope to be able to excavate our 2-x-2-meter square down to the base of the mound, which may be as far as two meters below the mound surface. We plan to continue our exploration of Mound 5 in

November, when cooler temperatures and our dedicated volunteers begin to return to Pineland. For information on volunteer opportunities in field and lab work, please feel contact me at 239-283-2157, or e-mail [rrcmichael@comcast.net](mailto:rrcmichael@comcast.net).



A rim sherd from a St. Johns Check Stamped ceramic vessel found in the 2009 Mound 5 excavations. In our area, such pottery is not found in contexts older than A.D. 1200. (Photo by M. Wylde.)



# Recent History of the Pineland Community

Part 1 in a series – A recent inquiry to our web site asked for more information on the history of the Pineland community. We will provide this in several installments. Here is the first.

by Bill Marquardt

**At the beginning** of the twentieth century only three dozen people lived on Pine Island. The main land use was agriculture, predominantly citrus groves and vegetable gardens. The Pineland archaeological site – today's Randell Research Center – remained much as it had appeared when the Calusa Indians were forced to abandon it in 1710. By 1900, gardens had been planted in the low areas, some muck had been dug for fertilizer, and wagon roads meandered between the great mounds.

In 1900, the Glover family sold 19 acres to Henry and Minta Martin. This property probably included some, if not all, of the Brown's Mound Complex. Minta Martin established the "Pineland" name and its first post office in 1902. As early as 1899, Harro Harrsen began to acquire properties that would ultimately include several of the mounds. Harrsen's later subdivision of the elevated Brown's Mound and Randell Mound parcels would establish the configuration for subsequent home construction.

Thomas Stafford became the postmaster in 1905. Stafford (1841–1910), father of Minta Martin, had moved to Pine Island in 1901, having lost his groves in Citrus County due to the great freeze of 1895. He purchased about 19 acres from Elizabeth Glover for one hundred dollars. Containing part of the Pineland site, this property was described as having "ten acres or more of tillable land."

The year 1911 witnessed the arrival of the Frank and Mary Adams family from Fayette County,



Pennsylvania. They farmed, planted groves, and built a large home, which still stands today on a sand and shell mound adjacent to the Pine Island Canal. According to Elaine Jordan, in the 1920s Frank Adams and John Smith built a sawmill at what is now the corner of Pineland Road and Robert Road.

Until 1917, the Pineland post office was located in a small building on Mound 5, across from where the Tarpon Lodge driveway is located today. At the time, only a wagon road existed, and we assume the post office was adjacent to that road. It was surely no coincidence that the post office was moved off of Mound 5 in 1917. According to the recollections of Ted Smith, in that year a new road winding around the mounds (today's Waterfront Drive) was completed.

**In this photo, the home built on top of the Randell Mound is shown, probably about 1917–1925. The house burned down in 1927. (Photo courtesy W. Hanson.)**

The post office remained along this shore-line road until 1925, when a storm washed it away. The postmaster at the time was Ruby Vance Gill, who in 1922 at age 35 had come to Pineland with her husband Percy. They had bought several acres of orange groves and built a two-story house adjacent to Pineland Road. Ruby Gill built a new post office next to her home, where it would be more protected by the mangrove forest that shielded the Gill property.

In the photo below, we see the first version of the post office operated by Ruby Gill. It was located immediately south of the Gill home, which can be seen to the right. The post office building is reminiscent of Florence Hiltbrand's description, published by Elaine Jordan: "It looked like it had been built for a movie set; you could see the daylight all the way through it." However, it is unclear whether she was describing the post office pictured here, or the one that had been lost in the 1925 hurricane. The year of construction of the current Pineland post office building is unknown. It is now located next door and west of the Gill house. Ruby Gill was postmaster from 1925 until 1957 (see *Friends* newsletter, June 2009).

R. D. Wainwright, who visited Pineland in 1917, describes today's Randell Mound as a large, water-front shell mound, 25 feet high, with a "large residence"



**This photo shows the Pineland post office in about 1925, situated adjacent to the home built by Ruby and Percy Gill. (Photo courtesy W. Hanson.)**

*continued on page 4*



# Tree Sponsor Signs Installed

by Bill Marquardt

**Long-time friends** will recall that we offered the opportunity to sponsor a native tree at the Calusa Heritage Trail, Randell Research Center, for a donation of \$200. If you donated this amount during any single year in the interval 2005-2008, then you should now have a permanent sign next to a tree at the site. Each sign shows the tree's common name, its scientific name, and the sponsor's or honoree's name. On this page are shown signs for a seven year apple sponsored by Bob and Mary Rude, a soapberry planted in memory of Jack Gaddy, and a cocoplum sponsored by Elaine McLaughlin.

Next time you are in Pineland, please look for your tree, or ask Michael Wylde to help you find it. If you sponsored a bench (\$2,000 gift) or an interpretive sign (\$10,000 and \$15,000), we did not also make a tree sign for you because your name is already displayed at the site. Otherwise, if you think you should have been included in the tree signage and don't see your name on a tree, please let us know right away, and we'll get your sign made too.

We are extending the tree-sponsorship program, so if you would like to sponsor a tree at the site, or honor the memory of someone with a sign, a gift of \$250 is requested, with the proceeds going to the RRC endowment fund. If you would like to sponsor a tree, please fill out the form below. Your donation at this level also includes a year's membership in Friends of the Randell Research Center, and entitles you to four issues of the newsletter, a 20% discount at the RRC gift shop, and free admission to the Calusa Heritage Trail. Thank you for your support.

Yes, I would like to sponsor a native tree at the Randell Research Center. I am enclosing a check for \$250 made out to UF Foundation. Mail check or money order to Randell Research Center, PO Box 608, Pineland, FL 33945.

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## New and Renewing Friends of the RRC, May 16 through August 15, 2009

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

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on it. According to Ted Smith, the large house was built for Harro Harrsen. It was probably during this building episode that the western (waterfront) side of the mound acquired its terrace. The terracing of the mound is clearly visible in the photo (top of page 2).

Ted Smith was born in 1910 and grew up at Pineland. He stated that around 1916-1917, substantial parts of several mounds were taken down and used to lay a "base" for Pineland's local road from the Pineland post office all the way around the waterfront and back east to the old Spicer place where it meets Bokeelia Road. The photograph shown on page 2 dates to about 1917-1925, not long after the partial removal of these mounds for road fill. The fill would have been mostly whelk and conch shells, and Smith said that the pointed columellas of the shells punctured automobile tires until additional sediment was placed on top. The shell was hauled by wagons pulled by two mules, and it was necessary for the mules to wear special boots to protect their feet from the shells.

Harro Harrsen is the landowner most likely responsible for removing Mounds 3 and 4 and part of Mound 1 of the Randell Mound complex for road-building material. Prior to Harrsen, owners were mostly of the absentee type. By 1909, Harrsen owned much of Pineland, having either bought or inherited property from his father Ferdinan in 1899. Additionally, in 1902 and 1909 he bought property from the Martins. He subdivided and sold most of his properties in 1921 and 1922 and sold his remaining one, presumably Randell Mound 1, in 1930. So, the likely time frame for the road-building is consistent with his ownership. In addition, Harrsen's good friend Harry Stringfellow is credited for building Stringfellow Road, along with Harrsen's house on Mound 1. It stands to reason that Stringfellow and Harrsen were involved in building Pineland Road, Waterfront Drive, and Caloosa Drive in the late teens and early twenties.

*(To be continued.)*

## **UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS AT THE RRC:**

### **Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival**

**[www.calusabluewaypaddlingfestival.com](http://www.calusabluewaypaddlingfestival.com)**

**At the RRC in Pineland**

**October 31, 2009**

### **Music at the Mounds**

**All-Day Music Festival for the Whole Family  
January 30, 2010**

### **Fifth Annual Calusa Heritage Day at Pineland**

**March 13, 2010**

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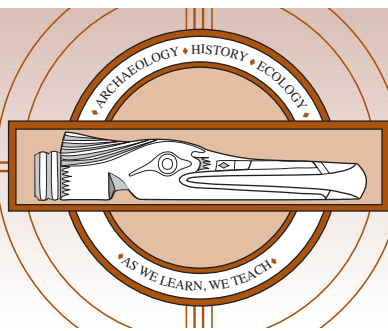
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# Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • September, 2009

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 with credit card information or check payable to U. F. Foundation, 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

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