

Friends of the Randell Research Center

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Gill House Reopens

Rehabilitation Project Completed

by Bill Marquardt

May 11, 2010, was "Ruby Tuesday" for the Randell Research Center, but this had nothing to do with the old Beatles song or the contemporary restaurant chain. On May 11, we began moving our furniture, desks, and lab equipment back into the Ruby Gill House, after an absence of nearly 6 years. Readers of this newsletter already know the sad history of Hurricane Charley's destructive visit on Friday the 13th of August, 2004, which left the Gill House flooded and structurally compromised. It was a long road back, but now the house is open once again: stronger, safer, and more pleasant than ever before.

Following a preservation and rehabilitation plan created by historical architect Linda Stevenson and the recommendations of structural engineer Bob Rude, contractor Dale Schneider and his team of expert craftsmen and subcontractors rehabilitated the house with loving detail. The results are obvious in the photos, and even more dramatic in person. Please stop in next time you are in the area to see the result of this transformation.

Once again, we express our deep appreciation to the many dozens of people who donated money, materials, and time to this cause. In addition to the many who helped with personal gifts, we are grateful to the Department of Natural History of the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Director of the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Lee County Historic Preservation Board, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners, Lee County Parks and Recreation, the Florida Division of Forestry, Lee County Tourist Development Council, and the Arts and Attractions Committee of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation.



The Ruby Gill House, viewed from the east.



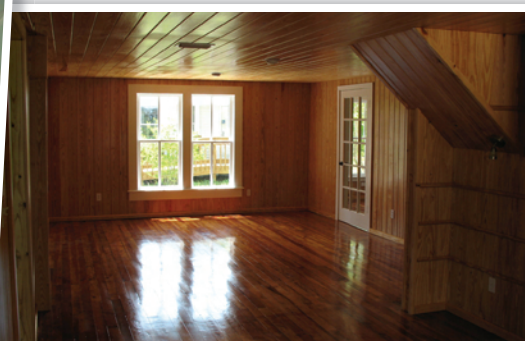
Recycled heart-pine was used by Dale Schneider to create kitchen counters. Since this photo was taken, we have purchased a refrigerator. Eventually, we would like to add a stove, cabinets, and shelves. Contributions toward these items are welcome.



The renovated bathroom is now wheelchair-accessible, as is the entire first floor.



The enclosed front porch has a new tile floor and energy-efficient windows.



Original heart-pine floors have been restored throughout the house. The great room will be used as a library and conference room.



Recent History of the Pineland Community

Part 4 in a series

by Bill Marquardt

A recent inquiry to our web site asked for information on the history of the Pineland community. Here is next installment, this one focusing on archaeology at Pineland.

In spite of its prominence, the Pineland Site Complex did not attract the attention of twentieth century archaeologists for over five decades after Frank Cushing's published 1897 description. In the early 1950s, limited archaeological reconnaissance work was accomplished by John Goggin and William Plowden. By the early 1970s, Donald and Patricia Randell had recognized the historical significance of the archaeological site, and they deserve much of the credit for protecting it. Pineland was first listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 when much of the property was under the ownership of the Randells. The Randells assembled approximately 80 acres of Pineland property and kept it in agricultural use. They kept a small herd of Santa Gertrudis cattle, tended and encouraged the citrus trees still growing on Citrus Ridge, and cultivated a vegetable garden. It was this pleasant, bucolic ambience that we first came to know during our work at Pineland in the 1980s and 1990s.

Previous to our work, the Randells had welcomed the interest of archaeologist George Luer, who first visited in 1980. Luer focused on Pineland's historical resources and the Pine Island Canal, the latter in collaboration with Ryan Wheeler.

Our own history of archaeological work in southwest Florida dates to the 1980s. I first visited the Pineland site in 1983, met the Randells, and mapped the Josslyn Island archaeological site, then owned by them. Subsequent fieldwork included archaeological investigations at Buck Key, Galt Island, Cash Mound, Josslyn Island, Horr's Island, Useppa Island, Mound Key, and other locations. Funded in part by the National Science Foundation, we also undertook geological coring near archaeological sites to gather baseline environmental data, created archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological comparative collections, and collected marine specimens in order to study paleoclimate and paleoseasonality. The results of these studies have been reported in books, monographs, articles, videos, theses, and dissertations.

With the enthusiastic encouragement of the Randells, Karen Walker and I undertook preliminary testing of the Pineland Site Complex in 1988 and 1989, assisted by students and volunteers. In 1989, we began an ambitious archaeology/education project in cooperation with the Lee County School System, Nature

Center of Lee County (now known as the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium), and the Fort Myers Historical Museum (now known as the Southwest Florida Museum of History). The project, called "The Year of the Indian," was funded mainly by grants from the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project featured three extensive excavation seasons (two of these – 1990 and 1992 – at Pineland), with over 25,000 hours of volunteer assistance; two local museum exhibits; a summer program for children; a multimedia slide show; a speaker series; hands-on classroom demonstrations and site visits for elementary school students; teacher training; curriculum development; and artifact replication research. Our findings contributed to a permanent exhibit at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, as well as two traveling exhibits, two web sites, and books for the lay public.

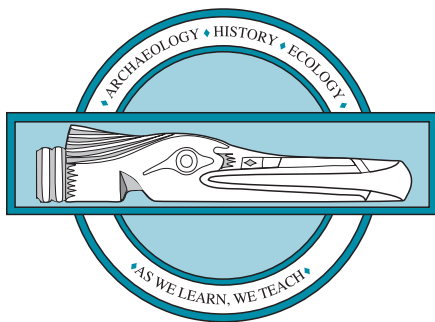
(To be continued.)

Daily visits by school children were a feature of the "Year of the Indian" project in 1990 and 1992.



Archaeological test pits being opened by volunteers in 1989.





Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • June 2010

Phone 239/283-2062 • Email: 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



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Recent Activities at the Randell Research Center



The second Saturday of May is always International Gator Day, when University of Florida alumni all over the world perform service projects in their local communities. We were pleased to have the local chapter of the Gator Club visit the Randell Research Center for a day of vegetation clearing on top of Brown's Mound. Taking a break from the heat are (left to right) Mary Ann Graff, Linda O'Connell, Tommy O'Connell, Melissa Oertel, Gary Fielland, Brian O'Connell, and Amber Beckwith. Not pictured: Pete D'Alessandro.



Elise LeCompte (left) presented a program at the RRC on March 6 entitled "Preserving Your Family Heirlooms." Audience members were invited to bring cherished items that they wish to preserve, and Elise offered tips on care, preservation, storage containers, and display techniques. Here she poses with Mary Ann Hight, who brought a 1917 tea cozy to the event. (Photo by K. Walker.)



During Calusa Heritage Day, fresh papaya was available for tasting, along with examples of many other foods eaten by the Calusa. Archaeological research shows that Pineland residents were eating papaya by about A.D. 200, or 1800 years ago. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



Children enjoyed making pots during Calusa Heritage Day. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



Rui Coelho and Joana Fernández de Carvalho answer questions about the Florida Museum's research program on sawfish during Calusa Heritage Day, March 13, 2010.



Florida Museum staff and students discuss archaeological and environmental findings with visitors on Calusa Heritage Day. (Photo by M. Nanney.)





Randell Research Center

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Send questions or comments to:

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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