



## Friends of the Randell Research Center

March 2014 • Vol. 13, No. 1

### Calusa Heritage Day 2014

by Cindy Bear

**Mark your calendars** and plan to attend the Ninth Annual Calusa Heritage Day on Saturday, March 15. This festival takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Calusa Heritage Trail, 13810 Waterfront Drive, Pineland. Admission is free for RRC members and children under 12, and for all others admission is \$5. Free parking including handicapped parking will be available on the grounds.

*Victor Thompson*, known for his archaeological work at Pineland, Mound Key, and Fort Center, will be the 2014 featured speaker. Thompson, Director of the Center for Archaeological Science at the University of Georgia, will talk about "Crafting the Ancient Landscapes of South Florida and Beyond" at 11 a.m. in the Speaker's Tent and at 3 p.m. in the Classroom. Continuing the landscape theme, at noon *Nathan Lawres* will give a talk entitled, "Reconceptualizing the Landscape: Changing Patterns of Land-use among the Seminole Indians." Nathan is an advanced graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Florida. At 1 p.m., *William Marquardt*, Director of the Randell Research Center, will invite visitors to think about how seemingly mundane things can make important contributions to our understanding of the past, in his discussion of "Shells, Animal Bones, and the Stories They Tell." Finally, at 2 p.m., *Michael Savarese* will discuss his current research on the effects of environmental change on oyster reef ecology. Dr. Savarese is Professor of Marine Science at Florida Gulf Coast University.



Peter Sottong and other artists will show and sell their art.  
(Photo by C. O'Connor.)

Captiva Cruises and RRC will offer a narrated archaeological tour through Pine Island Sound from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. as part of Calusa Heritage Day. Tickets can be purchased inside the festival or in advance by calling Captiva Cruises at 239-472-5300. It's \$30 for adults and \$20 for students.

Artists at Calusa Heritage Day will share their work with attendees. *Marty Haythorn* makes pottery and other art, primarily reproductions of works by pre-Columbian artisans. *Felix Macaguani Rodriguez* will display his wood carving and bone implements inspired by early people of the area. *Peter Sottong* creates museum-quality reproductions of Calusa masks and figurines. *Nolberto Gillespie* is known for his colorful depictions of Calusa people and his tool replicas. *Olde Tyme Crafts* will be on hand to demonstrate historic-era crafts, and will sell kits that will help you get started making your own creations.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the *Florida Public Archaeology Network* will host Calusa tool and weapon demonstrations. *Dick Workman* and *Robin Brown* will teach how to make cordage from various plants and will be joined by special guests who will demonstrate basket making. *Dave McDonald* of the Indian River Archaeological Society will share his shell tool replicas and information about the Ais Indians of the Florida's east coast. *Roger Hostelier* will demonstrate flintknapping.

From 12:30 to 2:30 you can sample foods eaten by the Calusa, including papaya, oysters, and fish, flavored with chili peppers if you like. The oldest papaya seeds recovered in North America were excavated at Pineland, and chili pepper seeds dating to about 2,000 years ago were unearthed here too.



Florida Museum staff member Donna Ruhl shows artifacts to visitor Karen Nelson. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

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Florida Museum experts will show exhibits in the classroom from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., including displays on current archaeological projects. Other participating organizations include The Mound House, J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Manatee Park, Calusa Land Trust, Port Boca Grande Lighthouse and Museum, Lee County Conservation 2020, Cape Coral Historical Museum, Friends of Cayo Costa State Park, SW Florida Museum of History and Imaginarium Science Center, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Back Ten Feet. Activities for young children will be available throughout the day.

Guided tours of the Calusa Heritage Trail will take place every half-hour beginning at 10:30, with the last at 2:30. Or, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., take part in a specialized tour to learn about native plants and their uses by indigenous people. These tours are family-friendly and walking is involved.

You may also arrive at Calusa Heritage Day by boat, by participating in an Eco-Heritage boat tour with Captiva Cruises. The boat will depart McCarthy



Robin Brown demonstrating Calusa crafts. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

Marina at 10 a.m., and will feature a narrated tour of the harbor, including the fish and ice houses. Then enjoy lunch across the street from the festival at the Tarpon Lodge. After a two-hour stay at the festival, the boat will return passengers to Captiva. Fare for the boat ride, tour, and festival admission is \$45 for adults, \$35 for children; lunch is not included. Reservations are required by calling Captiva Cruises at 239-472-5300.

Food will be on sale by Pine Island favorites *Little Lilly's Island Deli* and *Mel Meo's Fish Wagon*. Free water will be available throughout the grounds, and we encourage you to bring your own refillable water bottle, wear comfortable clothing and shoes, and plan to stay the day! Still have questions? Feel free to call us at (239) 283-2062 or 283-2157 or check the website at <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/rrc/>. 

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November 1, 2013 to February 15, 2014

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# A Tour of the Islands of Pine Island Sound: A Geological, Archaeological, and Historical Perspective

## Part 8: Punta Blanca and the Fish Houses of Pine Island Sound

by Denége Patterson

### In its geology and history,

Punta Blanca Island is closely related to Cayo Costa. For example, an 1855 map presented its outline as a peninsula attached to the northeastern part of the barrier island. In 1868 a pass separating the two islands appeared on a navigational chart. Like Cayo Costa, Punta Blanca today is part of the Florida State Park System.

The island is 1.5 miles long and 600 feet wide at its north end. Its narrow beach faces east over Charlotte Harbor. Boaters find a protected anchorage among red mangroves on the west. Its south shore faces Useppa Island less than a mile away.

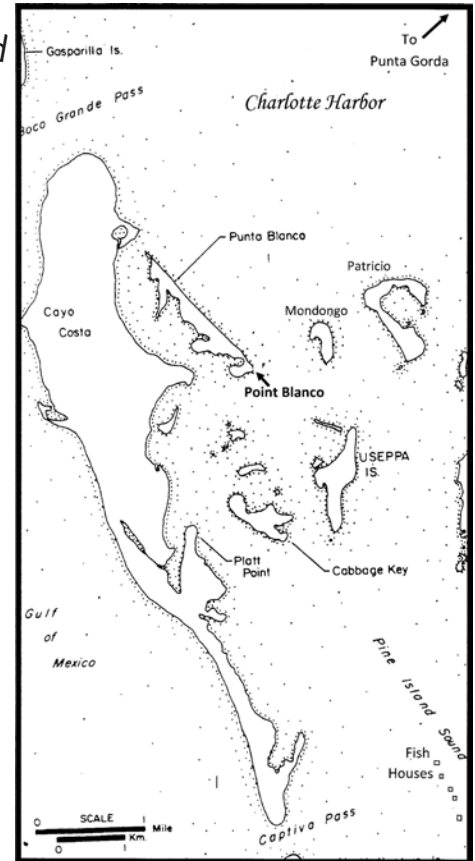
No archaeological sites have been recorded although its name in Spanish means “white point” and may derive from the Cuban Fishing period (1763–1835), according to archaeologist John Worth. Some historians say it was named after a fisherman named Blanco. According to Marci Townley Hallock, great-granddaughter of Philip and Mary Santini (listed on the 1860 census of Cayo Costa), the name “Blanco” appeared three times in her great-grandparents’ diary and could refer to a place, a person, or a boat: “1870 April 4 ... left from Cayo Costa for Blanco....

1871 March: Blanco came from Pea Creek ... 1871 June: Blanco went by.”

From 1861 to 1865, the island faced on its northern end a Union blockade of Boca Grande Pass and to the south, a Union stronghold on Useppa. After 1865, a second wave of Cuban commercial fishermen established ranchos, using sloop-rigged boats, to net and salt mullet.

The end of the 1800s brought a new technology that changed the fishing industry forever: ice factories. At the mouth of the Peace River in the new town of Punta Gorda, two ice factories produced 40 tons of ice per day. In 1896, 3.6 million pounds of fish from Charlotte Harbor were brought to the Punta Gorda docks, iced, and loaded on trains.

In 1897, the Punta Gorda Fish Company (PGFC) was founded, and along with its competitors such as the Chadwick Fish Company of 1901 and the West Coast Fish Company, constructed ice storage houses on pilings with associated fish houses (living quarters) for fishermen and their families throughout Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island Sound, and Estero Bay. Fisherfolk could stay rent-free as long as they brought their catch to the ice house owned by the same company that built the fish houses.



Punta Blanca Island with Point Blanco, and the fish houses at Captiva Rocks. (Adapted by D. Patterson from a map drawn by W. Marquardt.)

The ice house at Point Blanco was constructed by the PGFC “before 1930” according to the National Register of Historic Places. A photo courtesy of Nellie Spearing Coleman shows a 1928 version consisting of three roofed structures including bunk houses on pilings and a “run boat.” Her oral history and that of other islanders from the early 1900s appear in *Fisherfolk of Charlotte Harbor* by Robert Edic.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, fish company “run boats” serviced the ice houses. From the journal of Harry “Pete” Goulding, a director of the PGFC: “Run boats could carry thousands of pounds of ice or fish. They left Punta Gorda at 7 am on



“The Ice House at Point Blanco” circa 1928. (Photo courtesy Nellie Coleman, from R. Edic, *Fisherfolk of Charlotte Harbor, Florida*.)

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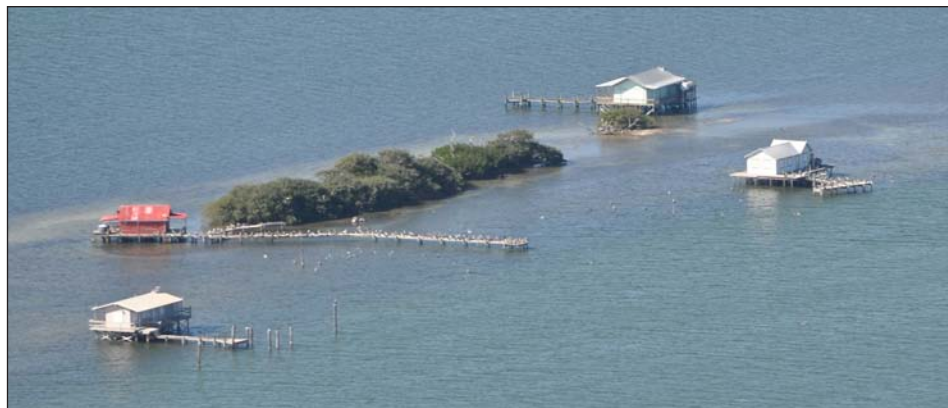


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Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; stayed overnight at the farthest ice station; and returned to Punta Gorda by 1 pm on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The men came home Saturday afternoon and drew their earnings at the fish house for which they worked."

Barron G. Collier, owner of the nearby island Useppa with its 1918 grand hotel, "The Tarpon Inn," purchased Punta Blanca Island. On the southern part of Punta Blanca Island, Collier built cottages for his workers, a boat repair facility, a general store, rooms, and a community dock. The Ice House at Point Blanco co-existed with Collier's structures. In 1930 his workers dredged a channel for his 100-foot yacht *Baroness* around the south end leading into a cove. In 1928, courtesy of Collier, a new Punta Blanca Schoolhouse replaced the old one on Cayo Costa. PGFC run boats transported children from other islands to school on Punta Blanca, along with fish, ice, mail, and supplies. The school operated until 1949.

A destructive hurricane hit Pine Island Sound in September 1926 with waves of eleven to twelve feet over Sanibel and Captiva. On Punta Blanca, Dorothy Hall (Goodwin), the daughter of run-boat captain Francis Hall, lived in a cottage with her parents and three siblings. Her father, as usual, had taken the run boat to Punta Gorda when the hurricane struck. Her mother huddled the children together as the cottage rose off its foundation with each wave. Back at Punta Gorda, her father was told they were all dead. When he finally made it back to Punta Blanca he expected to



Looking northwest at four of five Fish Houses at Captiva Rocks located one mile east of Captiva Pass. The ice house is the small one near the mangroves. (Photo by J. Hopkins.)

collect the bodies—and they were all alive! (She told me this on April 11, 2000.) According to data on hurricanes compiled by Karen J. Walker in *The Archaeology of Pineland*, Pine Island Sound was intersected by serious hurricanes at least nine times between 1910 and 2004. Lesser tropical disturbances occurred 88 times between 1900 and 1955, according to Edic.

At North Captiva Island, "The Ice House at Safety Harbor" was constructed in 1924 with at least two associated fish houses south of Captiva Pass. Kristie Anders, Education Director of the Sanibel-Captiva Foundation, frequently stayed there as a guest of the Stevens family of Punta Gorda.

Anders was there when the State of Florida designated all of the fish houses "squatters," and again in the 1980s when the Department of Natural Resources began to burn them, calling them navigation hazards and a threat to sea grasses. Walter Stevens, then-owner of the Ice House at Safety Harbor, learned of the National Register of Historic Places. He decided his ice house should qualify as "an example of early 20th century commercial fishing" and submitted an application.

The owners of the nearby "Ice House and Fish Houses at Captiva Rocks" applied as a group. Some only had a weathered piece of paper from the PGFC as evidence of ownership but this was acceptable proof of purchase. The fish houses were inspected, approved, and will remain on the register provided they appear the same on the outside and can be reconstructed like the originals.

Anders recalled other ice houses in Pine Island Sound, noting one at St. James City at White Rock Shoals, others east of Boca Grande (Island Bay Area), and at least four fish houses in Tarpon Bay on Sanibel Island. Ralph Woodring, son of Esperanza Woodring (a granddaughter of the Padilla family of Cayo Costa) remembered a fish house as far away as Punta Rassa.

Anders continued, "...And a guy named Peg Leg Dugan owned a fish house on pilings in Tarpon Bay on Sanibel. After a hurricane in the 1940s, his wife found his artificial leg washed up on shore, thinking he was dead, but some people found him alive lying on the shore, having spent the night on the roof of his house which had blown off. They gave him a big swig of the hard stuff and he came alive."

The PGFC run boats stopped running around 1959. The company was officially "dissolved" in 1977, the same year that the Florida State Park System acquired ninety acres on the south end of Punta Blanca from Robert K. Hughes of New Hampshire. In 1985 the Federal Government transferred to the State of Florida forty-eight acres on the north end of Punta Blanca Island.

The Ice House at Point Blanco sold in 1980 to private owners. It burned on July 1, 1995, just after a state constitutional amendment went into effect banning the use of entanglement nets. Today only the tops of the pilings can be seen at the southeastern end of Punta Blanca, slightly charred, and often crowned by pelicans and cormorants.



Fish Cabin at White Rock Shoals (used ca. 1920–1941) near St. James City, as it appeared in 1960. (Photo courtesy of Marci Townley Hallock.)







## Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • March 2014

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### 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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Photo by A. Bell





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# Cabbage Key – The Handwriting on the Wall

by Denége Patterson

**"It's a giant** bag full of dollar bills!" exclaimed Cindy Bear, Coordinator of Programs and Services of the Randell Research Center (RRC). In 2013, more than eleven thousand "ones" from the walls of the Dollar Bill Bar and Restaurant at Cabbage Key were donated by Robert A. Wells, Jr. on behalf of his customers for the purpose of expanding educational opportunities at the RRC.

Cabbage Key is a popular bar and restaurant located in Pine Island Sound not far from the Randell Research Center. It has long been a custom that visitors to Cabbage Key autograph a dollar bill and tape it to the wall (see <http://www.cabbagekey.com/overview/snapshots.php>). As a result, the walls, ceilings, columns -- everything eventually becomes covered with dollar bills, sometimes layers of them. Periodically, the restaurant staff peels off the bills and Rob donates them to a worthy cause. We are honored that this year the dollar-bill bounty came to the Randell Research Center.

Wells stated, "We are extremely happy to support the Randell Research Center at Pineland on behalf of our customers. Historically speaking, the RRC is an extraordinary property with thousands of years of rich history. Specifically, we're proud to support their educational tours. We love watching the kids who visit the site while on school field trips. They spend a few hours learning the history of this place in which we live. It's truly remarkable and, as local business owners, we're proud of the Center and its mission."

Autographed dollar bills are literally *the handwriting on the wall* at Cabbage Key. For decades, daily visitors have posted autographed dollars alongside those of famous people: politicians, movie stars, newscasters, sports personalities, and musicians. Patrons know their dollars are destined for good causes.

Cindy Bear gathered RRC volunteers at the Ruby Gill House to sort, count, remove tape from the currency, find mates for the torn pieces, and bundle them to be deposited in the bank. Each dollar bill had a handwritten message. Volunteers read some of them aloud.

"It's the best day ever!" proclaimed



one. "D-lightful" echoed another. Someone printed "Cheeseburger in Paradise," a tribute to Jimmy Buffet, who strummed his guitar at Cabbage Key and left his signature on a dollar bill.

A boat captain logged, "A great sailing trip with family, couldn't be happier." Another summarized, "Happy times—happy life—happy family—happy wife." One group of visitors wrote with this European accent, "Vi Lovve Thiss Place."

A pleased little boy signed himself "the handsome 9 year old." Another declared, "I like dirt bike riding." Young James wrote, "I like Math." Girls printed, "Olivia luvs horsez!" and "Viv loves dogs." A nature lover stated, "Animals Rule!!!"

"Let's swim all day because Florida rules!" proposed one. A tattletale told, "Garret peed in the ocean!!" Someone offered, "REPRIEVE!"

A very young child printed "GRANDAD" as each successive letter grew in size. Another greeted lovingly, "Dear Papa—(heart shape)—I miss YU."

"LUCKY ME" observed an artist, drawing a funny face on his dollar bill. Cartoonlike speech emanated from the mouth of George Washington. "I am dead!" declared one bubble. Another, "Blah blah blah!" and a third, "HA HA!" Folks from the UK drew curly hair and a crown on George's head. Canadian dollar bills displayed the smiling Queen. A Chinese five-Yuan bill showed pastel colors.

At election time over the years, voters celebrated. "Bush won Florida!!" "Obama Rules!" "Sic Semper Liberalu!" Someone replaced the words "United States of America" with: "The United Clowns of America." "Peace," stated another. A solemn dollar bill commemorated, "God Bless the USA, 9-11!" A smiley face accompanied "Jesus Saves." The "Flying Tigers 1939-1945" identified them-

A happy child's drawing taped to the wall at Cabbage Key. (Photo by D. Patterson.)

selves. "The Elite Team was here." "Angels Off Duty."

Advice from the walls: "Go with your gut," and "Don't count on anyone but yourself"

Lovers came to Cabbage Key and told their story. "Will you marry me? —Yes!" "WE GOT ENGAGED TODAY!" wrote Brandy and Dan. Other romantics asked, "What are you doin? We're snook-snookie!" A mysterious miss wrote, "I was the girl with no shirt!" and she signed it "Hottie" with a smiley face. Someone affirmed, "She is a sexy beast!" Dollar bills showed "Honeymoon!" and "Just Married" accompanied by hearts with arrows. "Love" was written on many dollar bills. "Lou and Carol Celebrated 50 Years." "Barb and Elmer" signed in '02. "Happily Ever After" mused another. "Let's not wait 8 years for next vacation!"

According to Rob Wells, education is a most important mission. "If you can read this...thank a school teacher," affirmed one dollar bill. "Besides the educational program at the Randell Research Center, patrons' dollars have supported the American Marine Institute (AMI), a school serving at-risk youth with programs in seven states including Florida, including a facility at Fort Myers Beach. Three out of four youths completing the AMI-Kids program stay out of the court system and lead productive lives.

Donors may be reassured their "Most Important Dollar Donated" always goes to a good cause. "It's a win-win situation for our patrons," said Rob Wells. "They have fun AND do good for the community all at the same time." 🍀





## Randell Research Center

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