



# Friends of the Randell Research Center

September 2017 • Vol. 16, No. 3

## A Visit to Fort San Antón de Carlos

*Spanish mission and fort were founded  
450 years ago on Mound Key*

*by Bill Marquardt*

*“Deep within my heart lies a melody — a song  
of old San Antón. Where in dreams I live  
with a memory, beneath the stars all alone.”*

So begins one of the best known songs of the American West, written and first played by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys in 1938. A romantic tale of lost love, it has been recorded by many artists and is still a featured tune of Western swing bands today.

This song refers to San Antonio, Texas, of course, but few Floridians know that their state had its own San Antón, a fortified mission and garrison built 450 years ago in the Calusa capital town located on today's Mound Key. The full name was Fort San Antón de Carlos, because the Spaniards referred to the capital (and its king) as “Carlos,” not Calos or Caalus as it was more properly pronounced.

Why “San Antón?” In the Catholic religion, Saint Anthony (*San Antón* in Spanish) is the patron saint of lost things. The initial voyage of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Southwest Florida in 1566 was motivated in part by his desire to find Spanish shipwreck survivors rumored to be captives of King Caalus. According to written accounts, Menéndez “had many masses said to Saint Anthony, so that he should intercede with Our Lord so that they might find the port where those Christians were, and the Christians



*Visitors look on while excavators expose post stains. Yellow flags indicate location of posts for wall of structure. (Photo by Karen Walker.)*

themselves” (trans. by J. Worth). When Menéndez located the town of Calos and found some of the captives, he named the settlement in the saint's honor. The name was also extended to the sister of King Caalus, who was named “doña Antonia.”

As reported in the March 2015 *Friends of the RRC Newsletter*, we had previously located both the king's house (on Mound 1) and the much larger area of the Spanish fort and Jesuit mission (on Mound 2) using a combination of remote sensing, coring, and archaeological excavations. We returned to Mound Key May 8 through June 1, 2017 to explore what appeared from ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to be one or more linear structures. We thought these might be walls of the fortified mission, first built in the fall of 1566 and garrisoned with some 35 men early in 1567. Our suspicions were confirmed.

We opened a 3-x-3-meter excavation on the highest flat elevation and another 2-x-2-meter square downslope, where GPR had indicated structures. No more than a foot beneath the surface, stains of posts were clearly visible in both excavations. In many cases, these dark soil stains were surrounded by a crude tabby (a concrete made by burning oyster shells to create lime, then mixing this with water, sand, ash, and broken shells). Tabby is known from other early Spanish structures in the Carolinas and Florida, and it was later adopted by the English. The tabby walls at Mound Key are among the earliest known in the New World. We found only a few artifacts, principally Spanish ceramic sherds and beads, but that is not surprising because historic documents indicate that items of value were removed when the fort was abandoned in 1569.

In spite of its brief occupation, San Antón de Carlos witnessed the tragic clash of two cultures that neither side could win. The Calusa refused to be converted and conquered, and the Spaniards



*One of the post stains, about 5 inches in diameter. Light colored material around circular post is tabby. (Photo by Victor Thompson.)*

*Continued on page 4*



## Sear Family Endowment Sponsors Field Trips to Pineland

by Cindy Bear

**F**or students from impoverished homes, school field trips may be their only access to the community beyond their neighborhoods. Research shows that educational field trips increase student engagement and help teach facts and concepts. Research on the value of learning outdoors has demonstrated benefits as varied as greater concentration and higher levels of "happiness" among students of all ages.

But field trip costs can be a significant barrier that prevents teachers from getting students to places that connect and extend classroom teaching. In Florida's social studies curriculum, grade 4 is the time when students are being introduced to Native Florida people, and the Calusa Heritage Trail is an ideal destination for supporting those studies. However, while teachers face financial barriers, we face a barrier of too few staff to instruct students, especially since it is most cost effective to have two classes of students travel on one bus, meaning fifty or more students for each field trip!

Enter Judith and Tim Sear, RRC supporters with a keen interest in insuring that students have access to quality learning opportunities regardless of financial situation and who both hold an appreciation for archaeological research and preservation. In school year 2016-2017, Judith and Tim funded a pilot program that covered costs for all fourth graders of three local schools identified as being Title One schools. At Title One schools, a high percent of students live in poverty. The funds paid for bus transportation and allowed us to hire part-time instructors and prepare student materials. The schools had to be within a 30-minute

drive because field trip buses are only available between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. and we needed adequate time for the activities.

Teachers at the identified schools applied for the opportunity and all fourth graders from Hector Caferrata, J. Colin English, and Caloosa elementary schools participated. Throughout the day they took part in hands-on activities exploring how archaeologists use excavated fish bones to learn about past environments, climbing midden mounds to learn how they were constructed, making their own inferences about how tools were used by examining replicas, and using the illustrated trail signs as portals to the past to see Pineland as the busy town it once was.

The dozens of thank you notes we received were rife with evidence of how much the trip meant to the students. Eleana from Ms. Lally's class at Caloosa Elementary wrote, "Before I only knew a few things about the Calusa, I learned a lot. I saw how to make a net. I was amazed how they did it." Matthew added, "It was a very neat experience there was a lot of nature around me." and Kyle added, "I am so grateful for this trip." The RRC staff and volunteers noted benefits too, including building partnerships with area schools and being reminded of the creativity of children.

With firm evidence that the program was a success, and with the pieces in place for it to continue, Judith and Tim have established the Judith and Tim Sear Family Endowment, which will generate income in perpetuity for these field trips to targeted student groups. Like Kyle, we are so grateful!

Dear Ms. Bear, you taught me so much about the Calusas. I had so much fun! I also loved walking on the mounds! I learned the Calusa people would eat tiny animals in shells. I will come back with my family next time!

Thank you so much!

I love having fun and learning history so this was the best field trip ever!



We acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of the great staff at the Lee County School District's Transportation North, in particular Jennie Boling. At the district's administrative office, Lucy Best helped with accounting and Dr. Teri Kinsey with the Grants Office helped smooth the way. RRC volunteers Maddie Stewart and Gayle Sheets assisted with every field trip and Diana Stockbridge and Zach Diamond were our trusty, able, instructor assistants. We appreciate all teachers and look forward to hosting many this school year!



### Harbor History Tours

**Narrated by Dené Patterson, author of *A Tour of the Islands of Pine Island Sound, Florida: Their Geology, Archaeology, and History*:**

Tuesday, December 26 / Tuesday, January 16 / Tuesday, February 20 / Tuesday, March 20

Time on the Water: 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m., check-in at the Calusa Heritage Trail at 12 noon

\$35 per adult / \$25 per child; to register, call Captiva Cruises: (239) 472-5300

As visitors who have taken a walking tour with Dené Patterson or have heard her speak at a local event will attest, her knowledge about the islands of Pine Island Sound is equaled only by her enthusiasm and

passion for sharing those tales. Now, we are excited to partner with Captiva Cruises to offer "Harbor History" tours through northern Pine Island Sound with Dené narrating the journey. Her expertly researched tales dispel some pirate and other myths and highlight the true stories of the people who have called the islands home for thousands of years. Learn about the surprises encountered when Wilson's Cut was dredged, discover why the stories of Useppa Island are a metaphor for all the islands, hear how Captiva got its name, explore how geologic processes worked to create the rich estuary we marvel at today, and be joined on your journey by an array of the Sound's wildlife. There is no other place in the world like Pine Island Sound!

The tours will take place on Tuesdays, December 26, January 16, February 20 and March 20 only, and seats on The Santiva, our boat for these tours, will fill quickly. To make reservations, call Captiva Cruises soon, 239-472-5300.





## News from the Calusa Heritage Trail

### Three new interpretive signs installed

by Cindy Bear



Cindy inspects the new 2-x-5-foot sign at the Smith Mound. (Photo by Charles O'Connor.)

**A**s we reported in our last newsletter, on March 25 at Calusa Heritage Day we opened an extended Calusa Heritage Trail allowing visitors to view the intact portion of the Smith (burial) Mound, see a portion of the Calusa-excavated waterway that encircled the mound, and walk to Low Mound, a midden-mound dating to 300 AD. Now, thanks to funding from the Florida Humanities Council, interpretive signs have been created and were installed in June. Merald Clark created the illustrations which, along with photographs and text from archaeological research and historic documents, provide information about Pineland's people and their landscapes.

At the base of the Smith Mound, we share the story of Captain John Smith who in 1926 saved the portion of the mound seen today from destruction and we show a photograph of the intact mound taken in 1895 by Frank Hamilton Cushing of the Smithsonian Institution. It reminds us we can all be preservation heroes. Once inside a gate and adjacent to a bench dedicated "In Memory of the Calusa People," Clark's artwork and the words of Spanish priests are included on a sign reminding us that death, loss, grief and related cultural practices are universal for all people. At Low Mound, located farther inland and near an ancient shoreline, we describe how



Interpretive sign at path approaching the Low Mound. (Photo by Charles O'Connor.)



View across the waterway surrounding the Smith Mound. White objects in distance are bench and interpretive sign. (Photo by Charles O'Connor.)

archaeological research informs us about the landscapes of the second century, how sea level rises of the past are different from those we are experiencing today, and why we are concerned about those changes. If you have not walked the extension, we hope to see you at the Trail soon and when you go please provide your comments so we can continue to improve our interpretation.



## New and Renewing Friends of the RRC

May 16, 2017 to August 15, 2017

Please let us know of any errors or omissions. Thank you for your support. \* = donated goods and services.

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*Field school students brush loose sand from tabby wall in 2-x-2-meter square, possibly the outer wall of the fort. (Photo by Victor Thompson.)*

refused to act as Calusa allies in their conflicts with other Native groups. Hostilities between Europeans and the Natives of South Florida became the rule rather than the exception throughout the region. King Caalus plotted to overthrow the Spaniards, but – betrayed by his cousin – he was killed by them. Hostilities intensified, to the point that early in 1568 Spanish forts at Tocobaga (modern-day Tampa Bay) and Tequesta (modern-day Miami) were abandoned. The remaining Spaniards from Tequesta were moved to a reinforced Fort San Antón in April, 1568. Upon the death of Caalus, his cousin Felipe became king. But Felipe was ultimately unable to walk the uneasy tightrope between Spanish demands and pressure from the Calusa nobles and met his end at the hands of the Spaniards in 1569. Following Felipe's assassination, the Calusa abandoned their

town. With no one left to convert or govern, and no one to provide them labor, the Spaniards dismantled the fort and left the island in June, 1569.

Our 2017 excavations uncovered substantial remains of what may be an outer defensive wall or gate, as well as

narrower walls of an interior building of unknown function. If only walls could talk, they might shed more light on the Calusa people and their responses to changes in the world around them. Obviously this work has revealed only a small sample of a vast structure, and much more can be learned from future work on Mound Key. As it is, with each new set of findings, we learn more about Florida's "old San Antón."

We are again grateful to Tim, Ted, and Todd McGee for permission to use their dock and to excavate on their property.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Worth, John E., editor and translator. (2014) *Discovering Florida: First-Contact Narratives from Spanish Expeditions along the Lower Gulf Coast*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Thompson, V., W. Marquardt, A. Cherkinsky, A. D. Roberts Thompson, K. J. Walker, L. A. Newsom, and M. Savarese. (2016) *From Shell Midden to Midden-Mound: The Geoarchaeology of Mound Key, an Anthropogenic Island in Southwest Florida, USA*. *PLOS One*. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0154611

Field work was performed by University of Georgia archaeological field school students (Ian Berrigan, Kate Ganas, Rachael Horton, Hannah Iocovozzi, Nicole Oster, Sarah Refuss, and Sidney Reynolds) under the supervision of Professor Victor Thompson and graduate assistants Kat Napora and Isabelle Lulewicz. They were joined by Karen Walker and Bill Marquardt of the Florida Museum of Natural History/ Randell Research Center. This work is supported by a collaborate research grant from the National Science Foundation.



## RRC News

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# Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • September 2017

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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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- ☐ **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.

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Photo by A. Bell



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