

# Friends of the Randell Research Center

Vol. 1, No. 4

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## Tracking the Calusa Overseas *RRC Begins Archival Research*

by John Worth

**It's perhaps** amazing to realize that the historical "tracks" of the Calusa reach well beyond Florida, not just to Cuba where the last remnant Calusa people settled in the 18th century, but also across the Atlantic Ocean to Spain, where the collected documentary record of the Spanish colonial effort in Florida is held at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Historians have studied an impressive range of documents, adding to our knowledge of Calusa culture in ways that archaeology simply cannot address. But many potential sources for new information have yet to be explored.

To this end, this past summer I was fortunate enough to make two trips overseas in search of documentary sources about the Calusa. The first was a month-long research trip to the archives in Seville, where I delved into a wide range of documents, from letters and dispatches by governors and bishops in Florida and Cuba to detailed financial accounting records from Havana. I was pleased to find quite a bit of material that has been overlooked or under-utilized by Florida scholars.

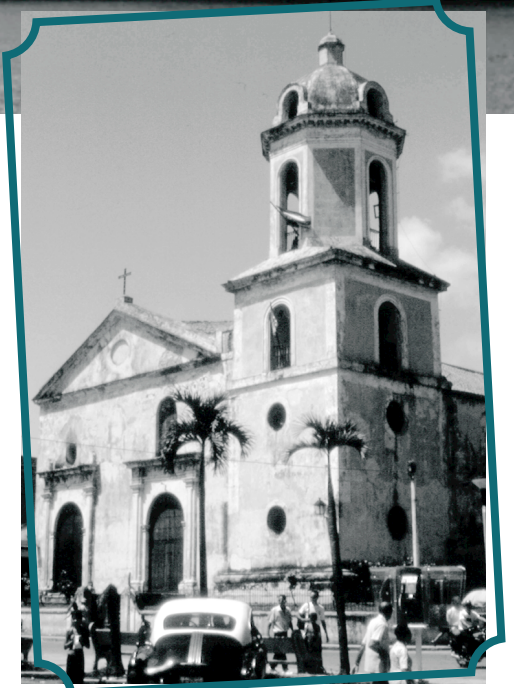
One fascinating package of materials is the 1569 lawsuit by Captain Francisco de Reynoso demanding payment for his promised salary during three years stationed at Fort San Antón at the Calusa capital on Mound Key. In addition to the original 1566 order dispatching Reynoso with more than 50 soldiers to construct the fort (signed by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés himself), the papers include signed testimony by witness Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, the famous shipwreck survivor and ex-Calusa captive who had served alongside Reynoso throughout the fort's three-year existence.

View across harbor from Havana, showing 16th-century fort of El Morro (to left, with modern lighthouse), and 18th-century fort of San Carlos de la Cabaña (to right on bluff)

I also ran across new information on the disposition of 270 refugee Calusa and other South Florida Indian people who fled to Cuba in 1711, and quite a bit of new information on their final years in Florida. After years of devastating raids by immigrant Creek Indians, just over 60 South Florida Indian people departed for Cuba in 1760, settling at a place called "La Cabaña" across the bay from downtown Havana. After the 1763 construction of a new stone fort named San Carlos in that location, many or all of these refugees may have joined Florida's 89 remnant mission Indians in the nearby church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in the suburb of Guanabacoa.

Some of the most intriguing new material I found relates to the early Cuban fishing industry in Southwest Florida, and the commonplace transport of parties of Seminoles from Tampa and Sanibel to Havana for meetings and gifts during the 1780s and 1790s. The dominant presence of these immigrant Creeks/Seminoles across South Florida can be documented as early as the 1750s, and at present there seems no reason to suspect that there were any remnants of the Calusa in Florida after 1760.

My second trip was a week in Cuba, establishing contacts with Cuban archaeologists studying the earliest Spanish presence there, and laying the groundwork for future archival research trips. A highlight of the trip was a visit to the Asunción church in Guanabacoa, and Fort San Carlos de la Cabaña in Havana (see photos),



Early 18th-century church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Guanabacoa, Cuba

both sites where remnant Calusa settled. Sincere thanks are due to Dr. David Noble in Decatur, Georgia for his generous support of this trip, and also to Dr. Vernon J. Knight at the University of Alabama for inviting me on the expedition. In future trips, I hope to delve deeper into Cuban archives to learn more of the Florida-Cuba connection, and how it relates to the decline of the Calusa and the emergence of the Seminole.

The new archival research does not mean that we will not be doing archaeological work at Pineland. Quite the contrary — we will begin new excavations here in 2003. But the Spanish writings are already adding exciting new information to the Calusa story as well as to the 18th-century history of Southwest Florida.

# Report of the Coordinator

by John Worth

**Fall** has come and gone, and the cool, dry season is in full swing. Although weekend tour visitors are still sparse, we've had quite a few school groups visit the Pineland site so far, and thanks to the efforts of our docents, we're increasingly able to accommodate week-day tours. We've had a lot of activity at the RRC this fall, including the design and construction of seven walking trail signs with information about important features of the site. Thanks go to Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse of Cape Coral for their donation of materials and sawing, and to the many volunteers who helped build and install the signs (see p. 4). We've also set up table displays at several seasonal events in our area, staffed by RRC volunteers, as well as a month-long display at the Port Charlotte Public Library in Charlotte County. The RRC has been well represented in public presentations to a variety of local organizations and venues, including the Museum of the Islands, the Pine

Island Kiwanis Club, the Cape Coral Yacht Club, and the Cape Coral Library.

The biggest news is that we are finally nearing the start of the long-awaited pavilion project.

The federal and state permitting process is nearing completion, and a county zoning application has been filed, so we currently anticipate groundbreaking early next year. Over the winter and early spring season, we should see the construction of the teaching pavilion with indoor and outdoor teaching spaces, storage facilities, a book and gift shop, restrooms, and a parking lot. Although the facility won't open before the end of peak season this year, visitors should begin to see changes in access and schedules over the course of the next year.

The Pineland site will take a giant step toward increased access to the public, from local schoolchildren to out-of-town visitors. As always, we hope our members will be able to visit and see our progress as it happens. ➤

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## In appreciation

**Among** the many who have recently contributed to the progress of the RRC are the following. Julie Hancock and Pat Blackwell created a set of permanent displays and labels for a month-long exhibit at the Port Charlotte Library. Dick Owens and Gary Edwards have worked tirelessly to repair and maintain the RRC tractor. It is now being used for a variety of tasks, not the least of which is pulling vehicles out of the mud on the site. Betty Anholt donated several items of furniture for the RRC office, including a desk and printer stand, and a flotation tank originally built by Reed and Barbara Toomey for Pineland. Pat Blackwell donated two shelving units, which were assembled by Gary Edwards. Steve Tutko and Chuck Hostetler donated a number of back issues of *The Florida Anthropologist* and *The Florida Historical Quarterly* for the RRC library. Joan McMahan donates current issues of *Archaeology* and *American Archaeology*. Don Swearingen worked on the design and initial construction of the trail signs. Lana Swearingen worked with Lowe's on their donation of materials and sawing. Dick Owens helped with the final design and construction of the signs and the posthole excavation, and Dave Hurst and Christopher Worth helped install them. Jack McCoy (Lee County Natural Resources) assisted in capping the corroded flowing well on the Pineland site, which was carried out by Parker & Sons Well Drilling. Kevin Watts (Lee County Hyacinth Control) provided several treatments to control the duckweed in the Pine Island Canal. Scott Mitchell used his personal boat to carry geochemist Donna Surge and RRC staff and volunteers on a clam and water sampling expedition, and Parke Lewis donated his time both on that trip and on another to locate an undocumented archaeological site in Matlacha Pass. Ernie Estevez of Mote Marine Laboratories, Sarasota, invited the RRC to participate in Mote's annual symposium on Charlotte Harbor research, and is working with the RRC to generate a bathymetric map west of the Pineland shoreline. Ed Chapin (Calusa Land Trust) piloted the boat that brought Bud House, John Worth, and Alan Gruber (Archaeological Conservancy) to view several sites on the northern side of Pine Island. Pat Hagle has also generously provided boat transportation to and from Useppa Island and other locations for RRC staff. Last but not least, we would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the rest of our regular volunteers not singled out above, including Colby Croshaw, Debbie Cundall, Marty Kendall, Diane Maher, Karen McKee, Meghan and Suzanne McPhee, and Barb Thomas. Our apologies in advance for anyone we have inadvertently omitted. ➤



Author at the monument to José Martí at the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana, Cuba (photo by Jim Knight)



# Hall of South Florida Opens

by Bill Marquardt

**On October 5**, the Florida Museum's Hall of South Florida People and Environments opened to an enthusiastic crowd. The 6,050-square-foot hall focuses on the people who have lived in South Florida through time and the environments that have supported them. The \$2 million exhibition is the Museum's first-ever permanent hall on South Florida. Bill Marquardt served as curator, Dorr Dennis as lead designer, and Darcie MacMahon as project coordinator.

The exhibit features new knowledge about South Florida, largely based on the museum's extensive archaeological and ecological research at Pineland and elsewhere since 1983 ([www.flmnh.ufl.edu/sflarch](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/sflarch)). Key to the story are the Calusa Indians, who prospered from the immense bounty of their coastal environment to such an extent that they controlled the southern half of Florida when Europeans arrived in the 1500s.

Galleries in the exhibition include display cases featuring some of the most rare and fragile artifacts in the Florida museum's collections; a boardwalk through a full-scale mangrove forest; a hands-on natural history gallery; a 12-times-life-size underwater scene filled with marine creatures; a gallery devoted to 6,000 years of fishing traditions on Florida's Gulf coast; a recreated mound with a Calusa house and family; a house of the Calusa leader at the time of European contact; the story of what happened to the Calusa; and a gallery about the Seminole and Miccosukee people who live in South Florida today.

.....  
Display case with conserved wooden artifacts from Key Marco site.



Richly detailed full-size diorama portrays the Calusa leader and his retinue.

The exhibit is in Powell Hall, located near the intersection of Southwest 34th Street and Hull Road on the University of Florida campus, just 2 miles from Interstate 75, exit 384. Admission is free. Hours are Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays and holidays from 1 to 5 p.m. (closed Thanksgiving and Christmas). For more information, call (352) 846-2000 or visit [www.flmnh.ufl.edu](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu).



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# Students Have a Field Day

by Lana Swearingen

**The Calusa** would have stared in wide-eyed wonder at the sight. Long, yellow and rolling toward them — what were these aberrations? We know them as school buses. And to docents Diane Maher, Gary Edwards, and Lana Swearingen, they became a familiar sight, as the RRC scheduled up to 4 student tours a week from September through November. Elementary school students from Lee and Charlotte counties eagerly scrambled off the buses, eager to learn about the Calusa Indians during their 2-hour tour. The varied activities held the children's interest and prompted many questions. They sat quietly as the story of 13-year-old Hernando de Escalante Fontenada unfolded, and thought it was neat that he lived with the Indians. They were happy, though, to hear that he was rescued and got to go home in the end.

As with all children, the students found the hands-on activities exciting, and enjoyed weaving palm leaves and twining palm fiber. They also gained a better understanding of archaeological techniques, and learned that fieldwork involves much more than digging for artifacts. The students could easily relate to the Calusa "recycling" shells to make tools. Some of the 4th and 5th grade



**Students enjoy a lunch break under the gumbo limbo trees alongside Brown's Mound**

students took careful notes for future reports, and one class even had their student photographers take pictures for the school newspaper. The docents' enthusiasm matched that of the children, and energy levels remained high throughout the tours.

Very satisfied children and their adult chaperones ended the day with lunch under the shade of the gumbo-limbo trees. Even then, some could not resist hefting the shell hammer one last time, or trying their hand at twining palm fiber. As the youngsters lined up to board those big yellow buses, the teachers assured the docents that they would return next year. But best of all was one young boy's parting comment. "The Calusa are my friends," he said with a grin and a wave good-bye.

## New Grant Will Match up to \$200,000 toward RRC Endowment

by Bill Marquardt

The National Endowment for the Humanities has approved the University of Florida's Challenge Grant application on behalf of the Randell Research Center. This federal grant will match one dollar for every four dollars we raise from non-federal sources toward our endowment fund, up to \$200,000 in federal funds. For example, your \$800 gift will become \$1000 with an NEH match of \$200. Your gift of \$4,000 will be matched by \$1,000 for a total of \$5,000, and so on. Contributions in any amount are welcome and will be matched.

Income from the RRC endowment will support archaeological research, humanities staff and public programming, dissemination of information, and maintenance of facilities at the Center. Building our endowment fund is the best way to ensure that the Randell Research Center will always be here, and that our learning and teaching programs will never falter, even in lean financial times.

Please consider a special gift today toward the RRC Endowment Fund. Donations may be pledged now and paid over a four-year period. Make your check payable to the Randell Research Center, indicate that you want it to be matched by NEH, and mail it to PO Box 608, Pineland, Florida 33945-0608.

*Thank you for your support.*

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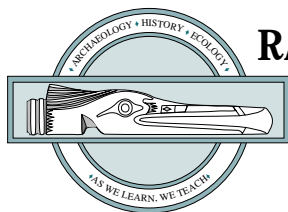
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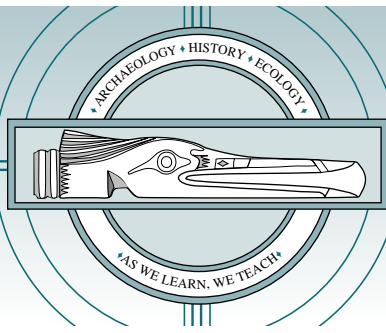


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# Friends of the Randell Research Center

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Sincerely,

John E. Worth, Ph.D.  
Coordinator of Research Programs and Services  
Randell Research Center

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