

Friends of the Randell Research Center

Vol. 4, No. 2

June 2005

The Pineland Site and Calusa-Spanish Relations, 1612-1614

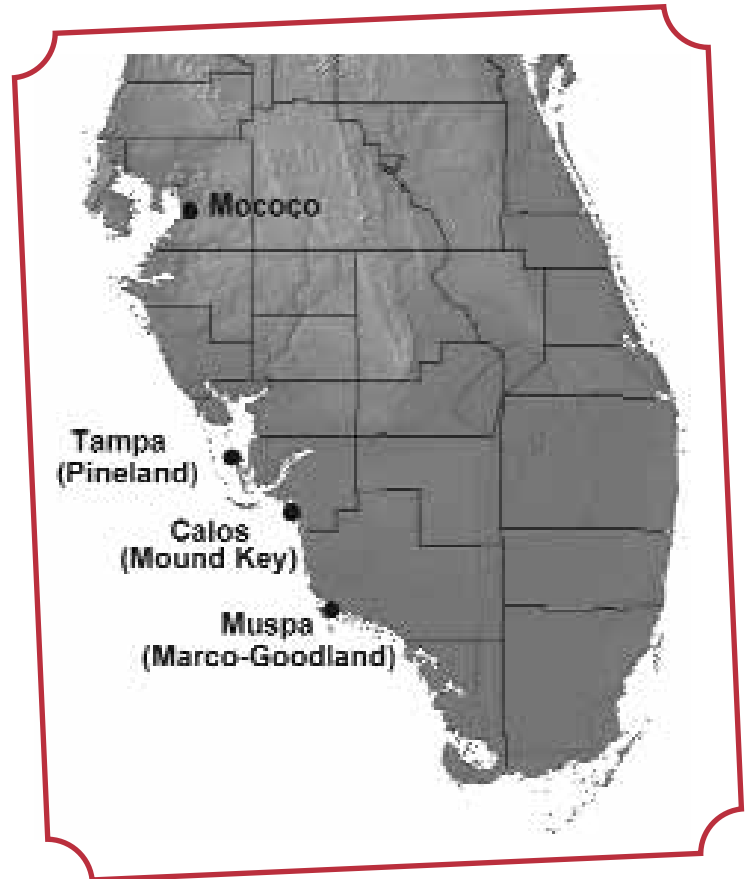
by John Worth

The identification of the Pineland site as the likely remains of the important 16th-18th-century Calusa community of Tampa (see June, 2002 *Friends* newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 3) along the northern Calusa frontier lends new significance to documentary evidence regarding Calusa-Spanish relations between 1612 and 1614, and suggests that Pineland was not only visited, but perhaps even attacked, by Spanish forces during this little-known period.

The 1611 murder of 17 Christian Timucua Indians near the mouth of the Suwannee River sparked Spanish military retaliation against the culprits, the Pohoy and Tocobaga Indians along the middle Florida Gulf coast. The swift execution of their chiefs evidently prompted the Calusa chief to acquiesce to a Spanish diplomatic mission from St. Augustine during the summer of 1612, during which a launch led by Ensign Juan Rodríguez de Cartaya traveled south along the Gulf coastline to present-day Boca Grande, entering the “River called Tampa” there and proceeding southward through Pine Island Sound and San Carlos Bay to the Calusa capital at Mound Key in Estero Bay. Pineland may even have been one of the “large settlements of Indians” along the way that initially received the Spaniards and provided “fish and other things” upon orders from the Calusa chief.


Although the Calusa chief received the Spanish emissary in peace, exchanging gifts and promising peaceful relations, in March of 1614 — less than two years later — the new Spanish governor of Florida issued a military order to Rodríguez recounting that the Calusa chief had recently sent 300 war canoes to the province of Mocoço along the southern Spanish frontier near modern Tampa Bay, killing some 500 men, women, and children in two towns there. The chief had sent a dozen survivors north to St. Augustine with threats to all other Spanish-allied Indian groups, and had even warned the governor that any Spanish soldiers he might send in retaliation would also be killed. Ignoring this warning, the governor dispatched two vessels to converge on the Calusa domain and “exact the greatest punishment possible” on the Calusa chief.

Further documentation is scarce, but financial records from early June of 1614 indicate that the launches *San Martín* and *San Pedro* (each



Locations of Mocoço, Tampa (present-day Pineland), Calos, and Muspa in the seventeenth century. (graphic by J. Worth)

probably carrying a crew of 25) were outfitted with munitions and supplies for an expedition that summer. Later military service records refer to the “the war that was made in the Cove of Carlos, Tanpa, Tachista, and [M]uspa” during this period, suggesting that contact was made, probably including the Pineland site. Since the expedition leader survived and was later promoted, it seems likely that his mission was at least partially accomplished. Given typical Spanish military tactics of the era, even if Pineland had been abandoned in advance of the Spanish force, it would likely have been torched in retaliation for the Mocoço province massacre.

Spanish documents are often maddeningly silent on details of Calusa-Spanish relations during the colonial era, but this little-known military action in Southwest Florida during 1614 provides a tantalizing glimpse of human events that might eventually provide more information about Pineland and its neighbors within the Calusa domain. 

Life Returns to the Calusa Heritage Trail

by Craig Timbes, RRC Operations Manager



Since Hurricane Charley slammed the west coast of Florida (see September, 2004 *Friends* newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 4-6), life has re-emerged in a spectacular way on the Calusa Heritage Trail. One area that is immediately recognizable is the native vegetation that has returned on the grassy landscape after years of cattle, citrus, and other outside intrusions that restrained the natural spread and abundance of vegetation. Sea oxeys have bloomed all over the area where bahia grass had been growing for so long, and within a few years the area should be returned to some semblance of its pre-modern vegetation. Wildflowers and ground-cover vegetation are also prominent, adding to the food supply for bees, insects, mammals, and birds.

Ospreys have returned with a vengeance, seemingly in defiance of what Mother Nature threw at them. Within a few days of completing the construction of their nests, the females laid eggs and began the hatching process of about six and a half weeks. We are happy to announce the birth of three baby ospreys in the main nest on the Pineland road side, at least two baby ospreys over by the Ibis Pond, and at least two more in the Australian pine at the beginning of Citrus Ridge, for a total of seven new residents along the Calusa Heritage Trail. Four Carolina wrens have hatched on the back porch of the RRC headquarters.

Earlier I mentioned bees. These bees have been through the worst of what happened after Hurricane Charley. One Australian pine that was removed as an exotic invasive housed about forty thousand bees that had

View from Brown's Mound (above) toward Ibis Pond and grassy landscape beyond.

(photo by T. Pierce)



Proud parent. (photo by T. Pierce)

made a home in a hole at the top of the tree. This was realized only after the tree was brought down, and it was discovered that they were residing in the treetop. The hive was dropped about sixty feet and slammed into the ground, completely shaking the honey all over the nest. The tree was put on a wood pile to be chipped, but the nest portion was removed with the Blue Dawg (our field vehicle) and a chain and set aside, hoping the hive would survive. Unfortunately all of the honey rotted and the hive was abandoned after a period of time. However, I put out a jug of sugar water for the bees to feed on because the flowers had not bloomed and the honey was unusable. The part of the tree that was preserved has now resumed its position in nature, and a hive of bees has returned to re-claim its former place along the Trail. Although the original nest was completely destroyed, it was soon cleaned out by raccoons and worms (with a little human help, including the retrieval of beeswax and the honey comb). I've also supplied some protection for the bees from wildlife and water intrusion, both to ensure the safety of the hive, and for pollination of the beautiful flowering plants that are enjoyed by our visitors.

The Winds of Change

by Charles Holmes

For well over a year, I have been involved in a survey to locate and catalog the prominent vegetation on the grounds of the RRC. It would have been completed somewhat sooner were it not for the “big winds.” Actually, three factors have caused the original survey to be considerably revised to capture a truer image of how the vegetation appears at this time.

Factors one and three — the erection of a perimeter fence around the RRC and the clean-up after the big blow — caused some disruption because heavy equipment, inherent destroyer of vegetation, had to be used in a few cases to get the jobs done. Other than some minor terrain disruption in a few areas, those necessary projects caused little real damage in the final analysis. On the other hand, let someone else tell you about how much of that fence had to be re-erected because of factor number two.

Factor two was the “big wind” itself — Hurricane Charley. Nothing much has been written about how much the RRC lost in terms of trees, shrubs, and smaller plants. But, before getting too drastic, keep in mind that nature has superlative resilience. Almost all that was cracked, knocked down, or blown away shortly will be partially or even fully restored by nature.

Upon first impression two days after the storm, the typical response was “Wow! What a huge mess this is.” Large numbers of the taller, bigger trees, both native and non-native, were defoliated. I am glad to report that new leaves are already showing themselves. The principal factor that is still missing is the shady, “tropical” canopies caused by aggressive vines reaching into the highest locations of the massive gumbo limbos and royal poincianas on the western slope of Brown’s Mound and the northern and southern slopes of Randell Mound. Most of the locations that were shaded are now open to an unusual flood of sunlight. We can expect big differences in the near future because of this change.



View from Brown’s Mound toward Calusa Heritage Trail. Gumbo limbo trees lost some limbs, but are sprouting new leaves. (photo by T. Pierce)

Enormous branches of the “soft wood” trees that flex too much under such overwhelming pressure — the gumbo limbos, the royal poincianas, the tropical almonds — were torn off and thrust to the ground; only a very few were actually uprooted. New growth is already beginning to appear, even though these elderly masters of the landscape may now be only half of their former selves.

A few of the trees with shallow root systems, like the despised Australian pines, were actually uprooted or blown over. We took the opportunity to cut the pines down and chop them up. Unfortunately, the stumps produce new growth that has to be harshly dealt with.

So, where do we stand now? Nature will soon heal almost all the wounds. It will be interesting to observe what comes next, as the vegetation continually changes under the control of natural forces.

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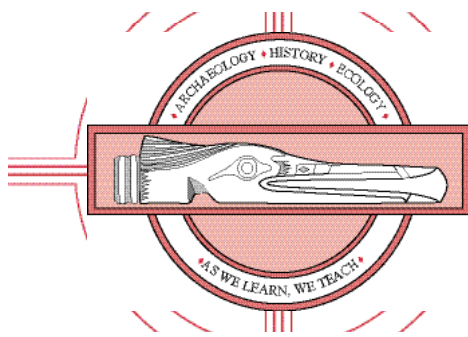


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Pineland, Florida • June, 2005

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Sincerely,

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

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