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Return to Battey's Landing

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Even Frank Cushing was impressed. The controversial Smithsonian anthropologist had seen it all. He had studied Indians and artifacts since he was a teenager, had lived for years among the Zuni of New Mexico and been adopted as a member of the tribe. Within months he would begin excavation of southwest Florida's most famous site — Key Marco.

But now it was May 30, 1895, and Cushing's small boat floundered on the shoals at a place called Battey's Landing,

northwestern Pine Island. A man and several dogs came out to greet him, happy to have a visitor in their sparsely populated corner of the world. But Cushing's attention was already drawn to what was behind them.

What he saw was a Calusa Indian village and shellwork site that covered over 100 acres. It had enormous flat courts, imposing mounds, and a long straight canal that crossed the entire width of Pine Island.

Ninety-four years later only about 20

acres of the vast Indian town remain, most of it owned and vigilantly protected from further disturbance by Don and Pat Randell of Pineland.

The site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the Randells have put up a historical marker across the road from their home, perched on pilings above the site that so amazed Frank Cushing nearly a century ago. The marker invites the casual visitor to pause and reflect on the now vanished kingdom of the Calusa — a sophisticated

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