

Friends of the Randell Research Center

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June 2009

Ruby Gill House Rehabilitation Begins

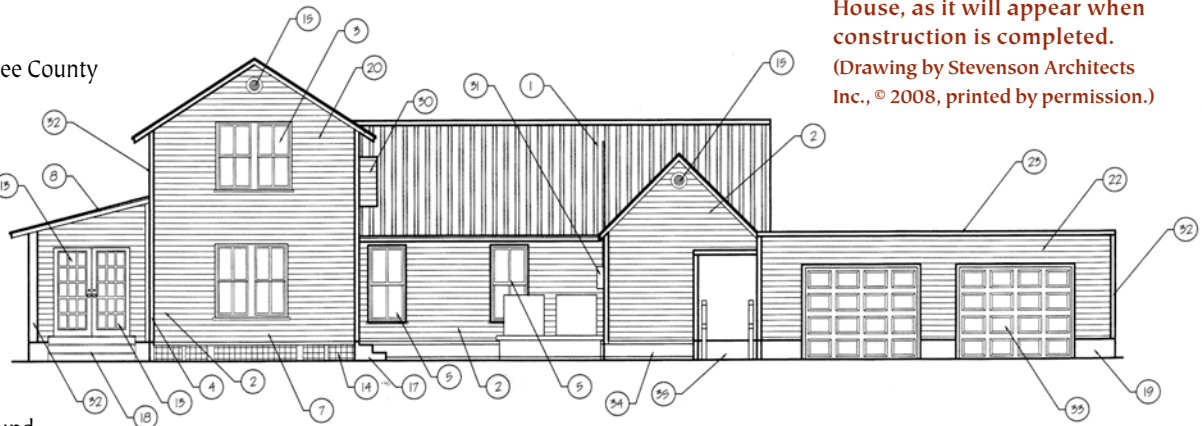
County Grant Provides Remaining Funds Needed

by Bill Marquardt

On April 14, 2009, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners approved the Historic Preservation Board's recommendation for a grant of \$35,766 to help rehabilitate the Ruby Gill House in Pineland. This money was added to other grants from the Tourist Development Council, Southwest Florida Community Foundation Arts and Attractions Fund, and donations of many private citizens, finally allowing construction to begin. Lee County previously provided funds for a master plan and detailed construction drawings and specifications, which were completed by Stevenson Architects in 2008. Construction work began in May, 2009, and the project is scheduled to be completed this fall.

The Gill House was damaged by Hurricane Charley in 2004, rendering the house unstable and forcing Randell Research Center staff to work elsewhere. First we rented a construction trailer, then later moved the offices to 4130 Pine Island Road, Matlacha, in office space made available to us at-cost by Mike and Joan Shevlin. When the work is finished, the Gill House will not only resemble more closely its early-twentieth-century origins, it will also be fundamentally more stable, healthier, and safer for our visitors and staff. It will be wheelchair-accessible for the first time.

A list of donors of time, materials, and money is found elsewhere in this newsletter. We appreciate everyone's support, and we look forward to welcoming you all to the refurbished building later this year.



East elevation of the Ruby Gill House, as it will appear when construction is completed. (Drawing by Stevenson Architects Inc., © 2008, printed by permission.)

Who Was Ruby Gill?

Ruby Gill and her husband Percy came to Pineland in 1922 after purchasing several acres of citrus grove. That year they built the house we now call the Ruby Gill House. She became postmaster at Pineland in 1925, and had the current post office built at that time, next door to her house. A temporary structure located immediately south of the Gill home served as a post office while the current one was being built. In the early years, Ruby operated a small general store out of the post office to serve the community's needs. She was a prominent member of the community. A member of the Lee County Electric Cooperative, she was instrumental in having power extended to Pine Island.

Ruby Gill was postmaster until 1957. She died in 1969 and was buried next to her husband in the Ft. Myers Cemetery. Today the home and post



Ruby Gill (right) and Evelyn Kelly pose in front of the Pineland post office in 1957 on the day when Ms. Gill retired and Ms. Kelly became postmaster. (Photo courtesy Gina Poppell.)

office are landmarks to local residents and a scenic part of Pineland Road as it winds through the Indian mounds to the waterfront. In 2001, Lee County bought the house and leased it to the Randell Research Center for use as its headquarters. The RRC occupied the house until Hurricane Charley struck in August, 2004.

New Butterfly Garden Installed at Teaching Pavilion

by Bill Marquardt

In April, thanks to the volunteer efforts of Martha Kendall, ably assisted by Mark Chargois and Michael Wylde, some two dozen native plants favored by Florida butterflies were planted near the RRC classroom and gift shop. Marty, as she is known, is a certified Florida Master Gardener and long-time friend of the RRC. For the record, the garden is already a success, because several butterflies have been seen making themselves at home on the new plants. Mulch and native rocks have been placed along the path leading from the parking lot to the classroom, and small interpretive signs will soon be installed near each plant to identify them.



Marty Kendall installs native plants in the RRC's new butterfly garden. (Photo by B. Marquardt.)



A portion of the new butterfly garden, looking from the classroom toward the parking lot. (Photo by B. Marquardt.)

Gators Pitch In International Gator Day at the RRC



International Gator Day is a day when alumni and friends of the University of Florida come together to volunteer. Each year on the third Saturday of May, Gators worldwide join forces to volunteer in their communities. Gator Clubs from Key West to New York to Seattle to Japan and beyond participate in this international day of service. This annual event enlists the strength and size of the Gator Nation to help organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, food banks, and clean-up/beautification projects.

On May 16, the Southwest Florida Gator Club helped clear invasive vegetation from the top and sides of Brown's Mound at Pineland. Fifteen

International Gator Day volunteers pose in front of the mound they cleared of invasive vegetation. Left to right, front row: Emily Baron, Chris Spiro, Chelsea Spiro, Noelle Casagrande, Marianne Graff, Jennifer Roberts; second row, Karen Walker, Tony Clark, Caryn Clark, Bebe Roosa; back row, Dale Wagner, Mark Chargois, Bill Turner, Richard Roosa, Brice Castillo, Brian O'Connell, Linda O'Connell, Tommy O'Connell. (Photo by B. Marquardt.)

Gators joined Bill Marquardt, Karen Walker, Mark Chargois, and RRC volunteer Dale Wagner for an intensive work day, greatly enhancing the appearance of the mound's surface. Fun was had by all, and all took pride in the work that had been accomplished.



By the time the Spaniards arrived in the 1500s, Pineland was the second largest of the Calusa towns. It is interesting to speculate about gatherings and ceremonies that must have taken place there during its 1500-year history. From its modest beginnings in the first century A.D. to its sixteenth-century grandeur, the Pineland site has surely witnessed hundreds of weddings. On May 9, on top of Randell Mound overlooking Pine Island Sound, a Native American wedding was held once again. The happy couple is Dana Lynn Sweeney of Sebring and Wayne Douglas Brackins of Geneva, Florida. Dana is Cherokee, and the officiant, Pine-Island resident Marti Repic, is Choctaw. Dana and Wayne, we wish you many years of happiness and peace, and we hope you return to Pineland again and again.

Volunteer Profile:

An interview with Diane Maher

by Michael Wylde

Michael Wylde (MW): How long have you lived on Pine Island?

Diane Maher (DM): We moved here ten years ago, but had discovered Pine Island a few years before. We crossed the bridge and found a house in Matlacha, so when retirement time arrived we were already home.

MW: Where did you live before coming to Florida?

DM: We actually moved six times through six states. My husband, Dick, and I moved here after five years in Allentown, PA; but we also lived in Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, and New Jersey. Florida was our choice, but we loved each of the moves and brought some of each place with us.

MW: From watching you at work, it looks like you have a background in education.

DM: I taught school in every state in which we lived, mostly middle-school science. Many of the interests and skills I developed in teaching, I have been able to use and cultivate at the Center. I enjoy talking to visitors of all

ages, including school tours. I also enjoy the science of archaeology and the integrity of the work. I'm always learning!

MW: Why volunteer for us, when there are so many other organizations?

DM: When we moved here, I was "Calusa Clueless," but I always loved archaeology. When I realized there was a major historical/archaeological site within seven miles of my home, I was totally hooked! Aside from the wonderful activities I have been able to do, working with really fantastic professionals and volunteers has been remarkable. I have felt fortunate to be involved with such extraordinary people.

MW: What do you do at the Center?

DM: In my nine years at the Randell Research Center I have done anything and everything that was needed. As the needs changed, I was happy to do whatever was most helpful at the time. I have worked in the field and lab, helped in the gift store, in the office, and at special events. It has always been interesting and fun.



MW: Why do you think the Center is important to you, and to the community?

DM: I believe the Center is and should be a source of great pride to the community. Certainly the efforts of many over many years have been inspiring, and confirm the importance of the site. Ultimately, for me, it is about the Calusa. I know visitors come with curiosity but leave with a greater knowledge and appreciation for a fascinating and powerful people. The RRC and Calusa Heritage Trail provide a face and voice to the history that was lived out right here so many years ago. I really love being a part of doing that!

New and Renewing Friends of the RRC March 5 through May 15, 2009

(Please let us know of any errors or omissions. Thank you for your support.)

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SAVE THE DATE!

**Fifth Annual
Calusa Heritage Day
at Pineland**

March 13, 2010 • Details to follow.



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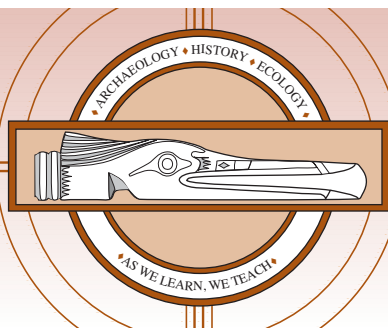
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Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • June, 2009

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Sincerely,

William H. Marquardt
Director
Randell Research Center

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by Darcie A. MacMahon and William H. Marquardt, U. Press of Florida, hardcover \$39.95

Sharks and Shark Products in Prehistoric South Florida

by Laura Kozuch; Monograph 2, softcover \$5.00

The Archaeology of Useppa Island

edited by William H. Marquardt; Monograph 3, hardcover \$35.00, softcover \$20.00

New Words, Old Songs: Understanding the Lives of Ancient Peoples in Southwest Florida Through Archaeology

by Charles Blanchard, illustrated by Merald Clark; hardcover \$19.95, softcover \$9.95

Fisherfolk of Charlotte Harbor, Florida

by Robert F. Edic; hardcover \$35.00

Florida's First People

by Robin Brown, Pineapple Press, hardcover, \$29.95

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by John H. Hann, U. Press of Florida, hardcover, \$35.00

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by Jerald T. Milanich, U. Press of Florida, softcover, \$27.95

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Song of the Tides

by Tom Joseph, a historical novel about the Calusa, Univ. of Alabama Press, \$19.95

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by Holly Moulder, a historical novel for young readers, winner of the silver medal in young adult fiction from the Florida Publishers Association, White Pelican Press, \$ 8.95

The Crafts of Florida's First People

by Robin Brown, step-by-step guide to making Florida Indian tools and containers (for ages 10 and up), Pineapple Press, softcover, \$9.95

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