

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

www.calusalandtrust.org

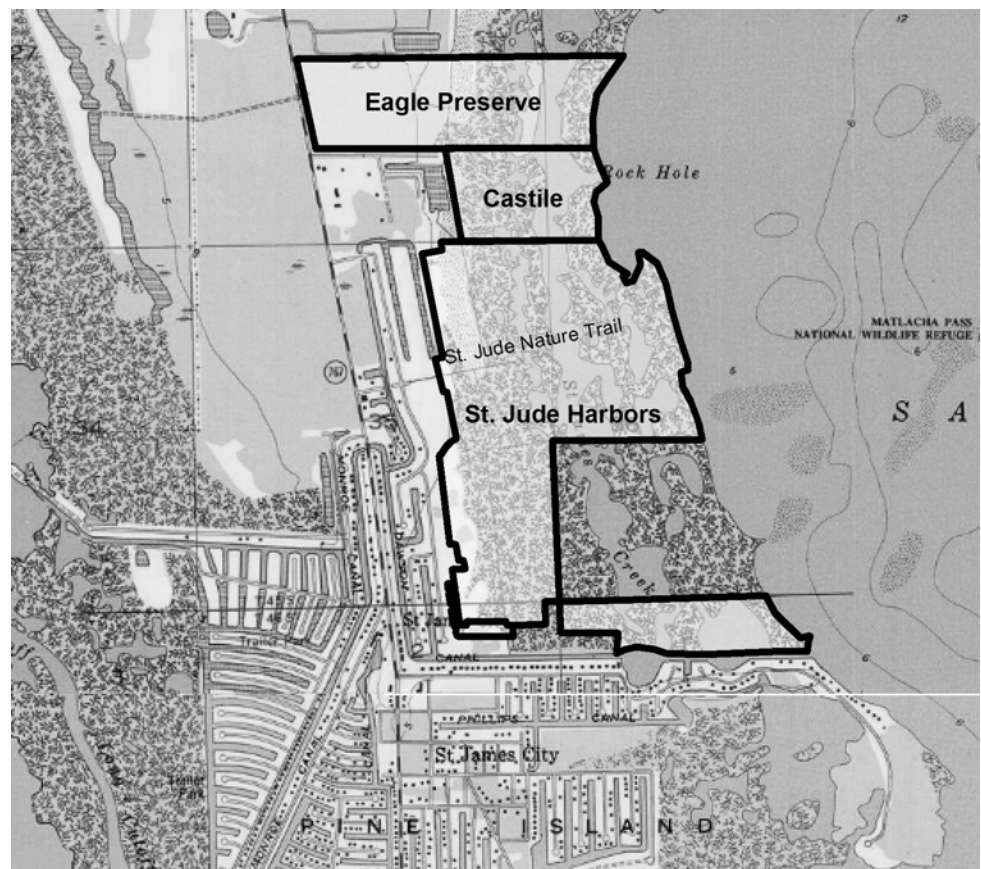
March 2004

St. James Creek Preserve

by Bill Spikowski (334-8866)

During the past year the Calusa Land Trust has continued to expand one of its flagship preserves, the St. James Creek Preserve. Many people have visited this property by walking the St. Jude Nature Trail, which bisects the preserve from Stabile Road in St. James City, all the way to the open waters of St. James Creek. Before explaining the latest expansions, here is how this preserve began.

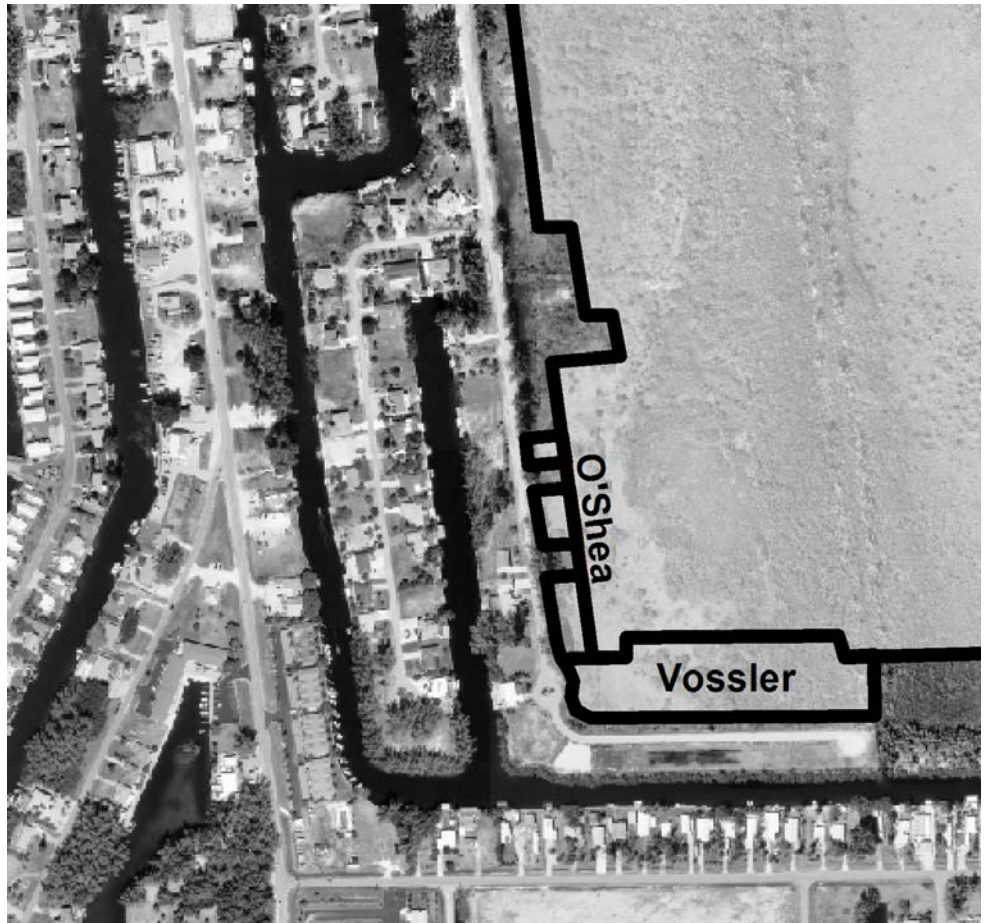
The heart of this preserve was acquired in 1991 and 1992 when the land trust purchased about 300 acres of mangrove wetlands and high marsh just east of the St. Jude Harbors subdivision. This property was acquired from the original development company through a series of bargain sales and donations. Most was already protected from development by a conservation easement held by Lee County. However, without actual ownership by a public or nonprofit organization, public access was not permitted.



In years to follow, the Calusa Land Trust managed to enlarge this preserve twice. One was the purchase of about 50 acres of wetlands at the end of Castile Road. The other was the 100-acre eagle preserve north of Castile Road; the land trust donated its option on that property to Lee County, which purchased the entire eagle preserve using major funding from the state of Florida.

There are only a few opportunities for further expansion. Just south of the St. Jude Nature Trail is Cussell Drive, which runs between private homes and the wetlands (see map below). A single row of lots on the east side of Cussell separates the public street from the preserve. Lee County has designated these lots as unbuildable because the elevation falls quickly from the street to the marsh. However, as long as these lots remain in private ownership, no public access is allowed, and the land trust is not able to remove exotic vegetation that threatens the stability of the preserve.

This past year the land trust has been able to buy six of the lots near the south end of Cussell Drive. The seller was Beatrice O'Shea of Massachusetts. Ms. O'Shea is the daughter of Elmo Bracci, now deceased, who was one of the original investors in St. Jude Harbors. Bracci Drive, one of the streets in the subdivision, was named after him. Realizing that these lots were not buildable, Ms. O'Shea sold them to the land trust at a very favorable price, \$1,000 for all six lots.



Since these lots slope quickly from Cussell Drive to the wetlands, this narrow strip of land is prime habitat for Australian pine trees, which are not only hard to contain but are also blocking the view of the marsh and wetlands. In the coming years, we will be removing these exotics and creating a beautiful vista along nearly 500 feet of Cussell Drive.

A second addition to this preserve occurred earlier in the year. Further south on Cussell Drive, just past the bend, is a 4.78-acre parcel of pristine wetlands. This parcel was donated to the land trust by R. Pete Vossler, a Nevada resident who formerly owned other property nearby. This donation was facilitated by local attorney Timothy Bruehl. The Calusa Land Trust is grateful to both of these gentlemen for helping to expand this preserve at no cost whatever to the trust.

Both of these acquisitions will allow residents and visitors a better opportunity to view and appreciate a significantly larger tract of pristine marsh and wetlands.

Annual Meeting

by Alison Ackerman, Newsletter Editor

Our annual meeting was held on January 18, 2004, at the Fishers of Men Lutheran Church in Pine Island Center. About 80 members and friends attended to hear about our activities of the last year and talk about ideas for the future. After the reports from all the committees (see details below), elections were held for the Board of Directors. Alison Ackerman, Harold Bruner, Brian Cotterill, Bill Spikowski, and Rubye Woodhead were reelected, and two new board members, Brenda Anderson and Gene Tolman, were elected to serve two-year terms.

At the end, everyone was invited to stay and view a Calusa Canal slide show put together by Bud House and to discuss various issues concerning land acquisition and preservation. The Board of Directors later talked about how beneficial this open forum seemed to be for everyone and decided to make this a regular part of each annual meeting. Next year the plan is to have specific questions that need attention, with board members or other knowledgeable members facilitating the discussions at designated tables.

Web Site Report

by Ken Keller (283-4587)

Our website (www.calusalandtrust.org) is celebrating its second year with new features including aerial views of ten of our preserves along with a new color-coded map of our major holdings and other public lands. By the time you read this, we should also have maps and descriptions of the Great Calusa Blueway (described below by Brenda Anderson) plus all of our canoe and kayak trails. Read the Events Calendar page to learn about upcoming social and fundraising events along with dates for work parties and canoe trips.

We have also beefed up our list of “links” to other regional sites. This is the quickest way to connect to a broad range of environmental sites with maps and things to see and do in the Pine Island and the greater Charlotte Harbor area. Snowbirds will also find land trust and environmental news for their hometowns up north.

In the coming months, our website will contain some helpful information on the benefits of land donations, bargain sales, and conservation easements. You can help directly or you can put friends or acquaintances with lands to protect in touch with us. Many of our preserves began with recommendations from members and friends.

Music Events

by Ed Chapin (392-0090)

Music on Pine Island: The Music of Pine Island series has begun again we enjoyed listening to the Blue Angels on February 15. We had wonderful weather and the music was excellent. There are two more Sunday events planned for March 14 and 28, both starting at 3:00. These concerts benefit music scholarships for Pine Islanders at Edison Community College. They are held at Fritts Park, weather permitting; the alternate site in case of bad weather is at the Fishers of Men Lutheran Church at Pine Island Center.

Open Mike Jam: We have started a new music event at Fritts Park. So far two Open Mike jam sessions have been held at Fritts Park, one on January 11 and the other on February 8. The first one was well attended with over 30 musicians and observers coming out despite poor publicity. The second one unfortunately was not so lucky – again no publicity and many other activities competing. The next event will be held in March.

Tours & Trails Report

by Brenda Anderson (283-1878)

A new Tours & Trails Committee has been formed with Brian Cotterill and myself serving as co-chairs. The committee will be responsible for:

1. Marking and clearing our canoe and kayak trails
2. Creating and maintaining our hiking trails
3. Identifying various trees and other plants along the trails
4. Organizing and conducting interpretive tours of both the water and hiking trails (to include the current Peter Ordway Water Tours)

Great Calusa Blueway: If you remember from our last newsletter, Lee County Parks and Recreation is sponsoring an extensive canoe and kayak trail which will extend from Estero Bay up into Pine Island Sound. Five of our preserves, Back Bay, Fritts Park, Underhill Creek, Smokehouse Bay, and Big Jim Creek Preserve will be featured in this trail. A special Blueway subcommittee of our Tours & Trails Committee has just finished marking the first three with blue buoys hanging in the mangroves at strategic points. The last two trails still need to be done and we need your help. If you are interested, please contact me at the phone number above or by e-mail at Brenda1040@hotmail.com. These trails will be described in the Blueways Trail brochure and photos will be posted on the CLT website.

Peter Ordway Water Tours: On December 13 we had to change our scheduled trip from Fisheating Creek to Smokehouse Bay due to low water at Fisheating Creek. There was a good turnout as usual with 15 people and 11 boats. Ed Chapin led the way as we explored the Smokehouse Bay area and went around Indian Field Island.

On Sunday, January 25, we had our largest group to date, with 30 people and 19 boats showing up to enjoy our newly marked Back Bay Canoe Trail on the southeast corner of St. James City. It was a beautiful sight seeing all those canoes and kayaks meandering through still waters. The weather was absolutely perfect and no one tipped over!

We have two more trips planned, on Sunday, March 21, to Calusa Island (noon until 3:00) and Saturday April 24 to Underhill Creek (1:00 PM until 4:00 PM).

Featured Tour or Trail: As a regular segment of this committee's report, I will highlight individual trails or water tours that merit attention. The St. Jude Trail in our St. James Creek Preserve is our showcase hiking trail. Bill Spikowski's article in this newsletter summarizes the history of how we acquired and then expanded this preserve. Over the years with the help of many CLT volunteers, we have successfully cleared the exotics off the high ground that had been planned for a roadbed and planted native trees and shrubs that are now thriving. A spectacular boardwalk and observation deck at the end make the trail truly special. If you have not yet visited, follow the map in this newsletter and give it a try. It is well worth a trip.

Looking to the Future: We are now in the process of identifying other suitable areas for hiking trails within our preserves. First we need to plan the routes and then go out and actually create them. We are also interested in finding other trails on Pine Island for interpretive hikes. If you have any suggestions, ideas, or a little time and would like to be involved in this process, please contact Brian Cotterill at 283-1876 or by e-mail at briancotterill@earthlink.net.



Ranger/Stewardship Report

by Ed Chapin (392-0090)

Work Parties: On Saturday, December 6, our volunteers worked at Fritts Park trimming the vegetation along the road and doing some weeding within the park. We also had crews at the Baxley and the Calusa Canal Preserves working on invasive exotic plant control: Brazilian pepper, melaleuca, and Australian pines being the main targets, as usual.

On Saturday, January 3, three crews went out. At Fritts Park, Joan Culver, John Clement, Richard Little, George Alexander, and I thinned the Australian pines on the northeast corner. Jack Worthington, Brenda Anderson, and Terry and Susan Clement did follow-up melaleuca control at the Peter Ordway Tropical Hammock; they report that more is still needed. At the Calusa Canal Preserve, Bud House and Gloria Andrews tackled melaleuca as well, pulling up sprouts.

On Saturday, February 7, volunteers again spread out and worked on three different preserves. I took a group to York Island to “mine for gold” (pick up trash). “Miners” joining me included Ken Keller, John Clement, and two high school students who are working on community service projects. And we had no trouble finding gold! Although there was nothing to actually sell, we hauled back a small pick-up load of unsightly trash in two canoes. Back at Long Cut Preserve, Al and Barbara Moxon did follow-up invasive plant control and more trash cleanup. And at the Calusa Canal Preserve Bud House, Harold Bruner, Bill Mantis, and Terry and David Clement cut down and burned a slash pine that had been killed by borer beetles. That fire will prevent these beetles from traveling to nearby trees.

Our next work party is the Saturday April 3 from 9:00 AM until noon. We will meet at Tropical Point and split into two groups, one to work on McCardle Island and the other to cross Matlacha Pass to Underhill Creek. I invite anyone who would like to help to come out. We can use every hand.

Mote Marine Juvenile Fish Study: The study of juvenile fish populations has been on hold this winter. We plan to get active again in March and continue through the summer and next fall. We could still use more volunteers to help get this important study going. Please give me a call at the number listed above.

Plant a Pine For Pine Island: We still have potted slash pines available. A donation to the land trust for one or more of these trees would of course be welcome but is not required. As you drive up and down the island, it is plain to see we have lost much of our native pine flatwoods habitat to development and farming. We need to begin replanting the statuesque pine trees that gave our island its name.

ELAC: I have served on the Environmental Lands Acquisition Committee of Charlotte County for the past five years. This committee has been advising the Charlotte County Commissioners on environmentally sensitive lands that should be targeted for public acquisition. The Commissioners voted in early February to allow a referendum to go on the November 2004 ballot asking the voters for a tax at a millage rate still to be determined (suggested 0.5 mil). The money raised would be used to buy and protect environmentally sensitive lands in Charlotte County, similar to Lee County’s Conservation 20/20 program. If you know folks in Charlotte County, encourage them to support this important issue. The air and waters of Charlotte Harbor do not recognize county boundaries that run through Charlotte Harbor!

Ranger Council Meeting: We will be having an important Ranger Council Meeting at Fritts Park on Monday, March 8 at 6:30 P.M. This is our twice-a-year meeting to discuss stewardship issues and lay out the next six months of work parties. All are welcome to come out and help us plan the future.

<u>WORK PARTIES</u>		
Saturday, April 3	9 to 12	McCardle Island, Underhill Creek (meet at Tropical Point)
Every Sunday	11 to 1	Meet at Fritts Park for brunch first
<u>PETER ORDWAY MANGROVE WATER TOURS</u>		
Sunday, March 21		Calusa Island
Saturday, April 24		Underhill Creek
<u>RANGER COUNCIL MEETING</u>		
Monday, March 8	6:30	Fritts Park

Fund Raising Projects

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

Endowment Fund: Our new Endowment Fund, started at last year's annual meeting, has a total of over \$3,900 of the nearly \$8,000 pledged. You may remember that this special fund is only to be used for land management in future years — long after we are gone. In order to make this fund truly practical, many more pledges are needed. Although each donation does not constitute a membership, please consider making a commitment now. You can contribute any amount you choose and match it each year for ten years or just make it a one-time donation if you wish.

Poker Run: The 11th Annual Poker Run on the water, sponsored by the Pine Island Boat Club, was held on December 7. Despite poor weather, 845 hands of poker were played, prize money of over \$2,000 was awarded and the land trust netted nearly \$4,000!

Rubber Duck Race: The 6th Annual Rubber Duck Race will take place on March 13 at the Double Nichol Pub in St. James City. Tickets are \$5/duck. Festivities start at 8:00 AM with a marine flea market. A steel drum band starts at noon, a hog roast is planned for lunch, and there will be raffles and a limbo contest. Some time around 3 or 4 o'clock, 2000 rubber ducks will hit the water and frantically start swimming for the finish line. There will be many wonderful prizes as usual for the owners of the fastest swimmers. Why not make one of them yours?

St. Jude Trail Boardwalk: We continue to carve names in hand rails and memorial benches. To date, we have added 647 names for well over \$32,000 in donations.

Rummage Sale: Last year's rummage sale, sponsored by the House family, netted \$1,347 for Calusa Land Trust. The next one will be held on March 27. See details below and start saving your treasures!

Annual Rummage Sale

by Shirley and Bud House (283-3493)

For the thousands of Calusa Land Trust members (well, it seemed like a thousand!) that have made inquiries about the 2004 Rummage Sale, it will be held at Fritts Park on Saturday, March 27. Items to be donated should be delivered to Fritts Park on Friday, March 26 between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. The actual sale will take place from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM the next day. All monies collected will be placed in the land trust's PROJECT X fund, which is set aside to help pay for the next land purchase.

In order to make the sale a success and help PROJECT X, many volunteers will be required. For those unfamiliar with Fritts Park, it's a delightful place to meet and hold events. Its entrance is just south of the Pink Citrus Trailer Park in Bokeelia. Please come out and give us a hand. If you have any questions or comments, just call Shirley at 283-3493.

Membership Report

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

We presently have 814 members, with 475 (58%) current in their dues. As I have said many times, each and every membership donation is vital to the survival of this organization. Yes, we have some terrific fundraising events, but it is our yearly renewals which really keep us going. Look at the address label on your newsletter – if you find a little asterisk “*” after your name, please consider renewing or sending another donation. Thank you.

You may also notice a strange new number on the first line of the mailing label. It is your member number and is only there to help us in preparing mailings.

We now have 306 e-mail addresses out of our 814 members. If you would like to receive announcements that we make between newsletters, send your e-mail address along with your next donation or just e-mail it to me at GoldenPond@CalusaLandTrust.org.

Many members are electing to use credit cards (MasterCard or VISA) to make their donations. If this is more convenient for you, then by all means do so. Records of card numbers are shredded after posting.

Upcoming Board of Directors' Meetings

The Board of Directors holds regular monthly meetings at the Elks Lodge at Pine Island Center. The next three board meetings are scheduled for March 16, April 20, and May 18. These meetings, held on the third Tuesday of each month, begin at 6:30 and usually run no longer than 7:45. All are welcome to attend and listen, as well as share ideas.

The Calusa Canal Story

by Bud House (283-3493)

I have had a few requests to write some history about the Calusa Canal and how we came to acquire a few pieces of this marvelous part of the past.

The first realization that there was an Indian canal on Pine Island was disclosed in the writings of Frank Hamilton Cushing. His conclusions were based on his visits in 1895 and 1896 to Battey's Landing, now known as Pineland. He wrote that the canal extended to the east and was about 30 feet wide and 4 feet deep. Florida is one of the few areas of the western hemisphere with transportation canals (Ortona and Naples also had these; unfortunately the one in Naples no longer exists). Other aboriginal canals, such as the ones in Arizona and Peru, were used primarily for irrigation.

In 1979, George Luer from Sarasota began to investigate the remnants of the canal, and in 1981 he used a backhoe about a half mile east of Harbor Drive to examine a cross-section of the original canal. He published the results of his investigations in *Florida Anthropologist*, Vol. 42 No. 2, June, 1989. George also discovered aerial photographs from 1953 that clearly show the path of the canal as it traversed Pine Island.

In July 1995, George invited archaeologists Ryan Wheeler and Annette Snapp, plus Rick Moore (CLT Board member at the time) and myself, to visit a section of the island that he believed held evidence of the canal and could possibly be preserved. We proceeded up Harbor Drive to Meadow Lane, and realizing that recent storms had made Harbor Drive impassable by car, we walked the remaining distance in water that was ankle to knee deep. When we arrived at the canal site, we immediately noticed that the water was even deeper. In fact, it was easy to see the path of the entire canal as it traversed the meadow and disappeared to the east.

After George showed us other portions of the canal, we decided that the Meadow Lane parcels were the logical candidates for preservation. There were six contiguous lots, each one acre or more in size, all unoccupied. In February, 1998, after another heavy rainstorm, the canal's path was so distinctive that Peter Ordway and Richard Little launched canoes. We decided that they were the first canoeists in the canal in the past 350 years!

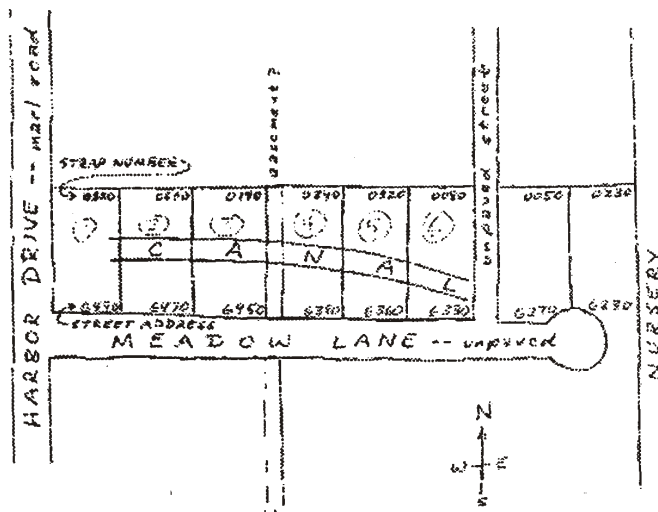
Further investigations by George, along with Dr. Ryan J. Wheeler, resulted in the publication of an article entitled "How the Pine Island Canal worked: Topography, Hydraulics, and Engineering" in *Florida Anthropologist*, Vol. 50, No. 3, September 1997. They concluded that

the Pine Island Canal was not a simple or casually-dug ditch. With each end at sea level and with the center of the island more than 12 feet above sea level, careful planning went into its placement on the landscape and intensive effort went into its construction and maintenance. They also concluded that there could have been as many as fourteen segments of the canal to provide for sufficient water in each segment to allow for uninterrupted canal travel. This would have necessitated earthen or log-type dams to keep the water within its banks in each segment.

In 1997 the CLT Board of Directors voted to pursue the Meadow Lane lots using a Calusa Canal Fund that would be kept separate from the General Fund. The land trust's Archaeological Committee decided to try the \$1,000 one-year option method to reserve lots while raising the required funds. Using this method, the parcel at 6450 Meadow Lane was purchased in 1999 for \$12,000. Following that purchase the same method was used to buy the second parcel at 6330 Meadow Lane for \$15,000. In April, 2002 the owners of the parcel at 6360 Meadow Lane offered to sell their one acre parcel, also for \$15,000. For this third lot, CLT signed a contract with the Archaeology Conservancy for their purchase of the property. After the CLT raised the money, the Conservancy transferred the title.

In the meantime the CLT rangers have been busy eliminating exotic plants from the three lots. With the bush hogging finally stopped on the lots, many baby pine trees, both longleaf and slash, have started to grow. It is our intention to bring back the species that were native to this area. We have erected signs identifying each parcel, along with signs that point out the native vegetation on each site. If you visit, look for gopher tortoise burrows – there is at least one on each site.

The CLT hopes to preserve additional portions of the canal for further archaeological investigations. We invite all interested folks to join us in looking for other sites, helping maintain the ones we already own, or donating funds for our next purchase. Call me any time.



Memorials

Few tributes are so lasting as a memorial gift that helps preserve Pine Island's heritage for future generations. We in the land trust are privileged to carry on our work in the memory of individuals so honored. Memorials may consist of cash donations in the name of a departed loved one, a memorial carving on the St. Jude Trail in a rail or bench, or even a memorial planting of a tree in one of our preserves.

Edward J. Abramoske	Margaret Foster	Edward J. & Amanda Lever	Larry & Nancy Savage *
Martin Adamaszek *	Michael David Fox	Roy F. Lippmann, Sr. *	Chevy Schutz *
Johan C. F. Andersen *	Phil Freeman *	Russell Little *	Dorothy Seeling
Josephine Anderson *	Carl H. Frost *	Hector Magnuson *	Murray & Edith Seyler *
Melvin Atkin *	Frederick O. "Pop" Gabriel *	Doug Mac Elroy *	Phil Shaw *
Arthur L. Augenstein *	Joyce Gasow *	Neil & Ruthie MacIntyre *	William Sherwood
Vesta Bailey *	Jack Gates *	James W. Mahaffey *	Dan Shockley *
"Tootsie" Barnes *	Carolyn George *	Dorothy M. Maloney *	Carl H. Shupert *
John David Bawcom	Nancy Gilmore	Earl J. Maloney, Sr. *	Ronald L. Shupert *
Ralph & Ruby Beabout *	Loren "POP" Gowan *	Lewis W. McAllister *	William Sloane
Larry Behrens *	Anne Grace *	Marie Maraviglia *	Agnes Jane Snyder
James G. Beriault	Robert "Bob" Griest *	Gertrude C. Martin *	Eugene Spatz *
Lyllal Beving *	Alfred Woodhull Guibord *	Stella Martin *	Florence Stark
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Marge Borton *	Betty Gutowski *	M. Kathleen Mellon *	Raymond W. Stober *
Barbara Bosley *	Richard J. Haberle Sr. *	Donald Meng *	Francis Sullivan
Betty B. Bouwes *	Robert Hallen *	Helene Mierendorf	Barry Swanson *
Ralph Brimacombe *	Ash Hallett *	Edwin Mierendorf	Don Szuminski *
Don Burr *	Joe Hanson *	Robert H. Miller *	Frank Taugner, Sr. *
Margaret L. Burman *	Bill Harmon *	John Moran	Kay Taugner *
Richard R. & Ruth Callahan *	Steven Patrick Hart *	Thelma Mufich *	Dave Thomas *
Jack Campbell	Lois Havener *	Robert Musgrave	Jim Thomas *
John M Campbell *	Grace Heatherington	Donald N. Muske *	Robert Tutza *
Ruth B. Campbell	Raymond W. Heidorn *	Arthur & Ida Newberg	Glenn P. Twigg *
Rev. Cam & Helen Carmichel *	Pamela Marie Heimann *	Edward Newton	Doris C. Twigg *
"Hanni" Carver *	Charles J. Heimann II *	Frank Nine *	Dan Tynan *
Terez "Terri" Carver *	Mike Herbert *	Mildred V. O'Brien *	Leonore M. Vondervor *
Arnold S. Celmalnieks *	R.E. "Pap-Pap" Hohing *	Paul Olding *	Patricia Ann "Pat" Waite *
Antonette Cerny	Jo Holmes *	Peter Ordway **	Hazel Ward *
Tony Cerny *	Bennie R. Hook *	Earl Ott *	Harriet L. Watson *
Ray Cherry *	Wyatt Hooks *	Richard Palmtag	William Webster *
C. F. "Chuck" Clark *	Minnie & A.B. Hoover *	Gertrud Palmtag	Wayne Weeks *
Jack Clyburn	Earl Hord *	Sally Parisi *	Dorothy Welch
John B. Cook *	Allen Houglan *	Fred Patterson *	Bert & Mildred Wildman *
Ben Counselman *	Jack Houis *	Mary Grace Peloso *	Edith Williams *
Sylvia & William Czewski Sr	Ken Houpt *	Charlie Perry *	"Fishin" Bud Williams *
George Darnell	Robert Howell *	Charles & Anna Perry *	Richard Williams *
Doyle Davison *	E.S. (Red) Ingram *	Donald R. Peterson *	George Williams *
Jon Davison *	Lezlee Jean Ingram *	Mabel Phillipson *	Bernard Willoughby *
Nellwyn de Funiak *	Dotty Jennings *	Barbara Plourde *	Margaret L. Wilson, M.D.
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Woodie Dillon *	Belmont Kappmeyer *	Pete Polverari *	Bruno & Theresa *
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C. Frank Estelle *	Jack Kirmer *	Gertie Rudd *	
Dr. Ambrose C. Estes *	Therese Kirmer *	Doc Salisbury	
"Hap" Everdell *	Jim Kiser *	Mr & Mrs Sherwood Sampier *	
Linwood T. Ford III *	Fredda Lashley *	Reese Sarda *	
Linwood T. Ford IV *			

*Indicates name on the St. Jude Trail Memorial Observation Deck or Memorial Bench or in Fritts Park Memorial.

CALUSA LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS:

_____ \$ 15	Individual Member	_____ \$500	Angel
_____ \$ 25	Family Member	_____ \$ ____	Endowment Fund
_____ \$ 50	Donor or Organization	_____ \$ ____	_____
_____ \$100	Contributor	_____ \$ 50	Plunk-a-Plank <i>(fill in lettering below)</i>

CREDIT CARD #: _____ **EXPIRATION DATE:** _____

SIGNATURE (for credit card only): _____

Your Name _____

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Second Address? _____

Second City, State, Zip? _____

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**Calusa Land Trust & Nature Preserve
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