

**1. Requested Motion:**

**Meeting Date: October 7, 2013**

Approval of a packet to be submitted to the Florida League of Cities for entry in the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Florida Municipal Achievement Awards Program.

**Why the action is necessary:**

The action is necessary so that Parks and Recreation may have approval and recommendation on behalf of Council to submit the Mound House for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Florida Municipal Achievement Awards Program.

**2. Agenda:**

☒ Consent  
☐ Administrative

**3. Requirement/Purpose:**

☐ Resolution  
☐ Ordinance  
☒ Other

**4. Submitter of Information:**

☐ Council  
☒ Town Staff  
☐ Town Attorney

**5. Background:**

This year's Municipal Achievement Awards Program will focus on activities designed to celebrate our city's history – honoring the heritage, people and historical events that make our city unique. The awards program will provide municipalities the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for their efforts. We chose the category Teaching Your City's History and Heritage. We believe the Mound House exemplifies this category with the wide range of educational opportunities provided to the community.

**Attachments:**

- Florida League of Cities Guideline and program description.
- Teaching your City's History and Heritage Narrative
- Additional supportive documents

**6. Alternative Action:**

None

**7. Management Recommendations:**

To approve and recommend The Town of Fort Myers Beach entry in the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Florida Municipal Achievement Awards Program.

**8. Recommended Approval:**

| Town Manager                                                                        | Town Attorney | Finance Director | Public Works Director | Community Development Director | Parks & Recreation Director | Town Clerk |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
|  |               |                  |                       |                                | R.N.                        |            |

**9. Council Action:**

☐ Approved   ☐ Denied   ☐ Deferred   ☐ Other



# FLORIDA

2013

## MUNICIPAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

### Celebrating the Great History of Florida Cities

The Florida League of Cities is pleased to announce the fifth annual Florida Municipal Achievement Awards Program. In commemoration of Juan Ponce de Leon's arrival to Florida in 1513, this year's program will be themed:

**"History Happened Here: A Celebration of the Great History of Florida Cities"**

This year's awards program will focus on activities designed to celebrate your city's history – honoring the heritage, people and historical events that make your city unique. The awards program will provide municipalities the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for their efforts in the following categories:

- Teaching Your City's History and Heritage
- Re-enactments, Performing Arts, Festivals and Tours
- Florida's Natural History: Your Parks and More
- Measured Success: Communicating Your City's Celebration

**Entries can be either a new project or event or an existing project or event that has been adapted to celebrate your city's history during the Viva 500 commemoration.**

**ALL NOMINATION ENTRIES ARE DUE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2013.**

Winners will be announced in December 2013.



# 2

## Application Process ▶▶

The Florida Municipal Achievement Awards program is open to city, town or village governments that are members of the Florida League of Cities. The application process is as follows:

▶▶ A city may submit only one nomination. Choose from one of the following categories:

- Teaching Your City's History and Heritage
- Re-enactments, Performing Arts, Festivals and Tours
- Florida's Natural History: Your Parks and More
- Measured Success: Communicating Your City's Celebration

▶▶ For the category you selected, please complete the enclosed nomination form, along with TWO SEPARATE NARRATIVES: 1) For judging purposes, a 1,200-word or less narrative focusing on the award criteria; and 2) For the best practices publication, a 150-word or less narrative summarizing your entry.

▶▶ **VERY IMPORTANT:** A letter of recommendation on behalf of the mayor and council/ commission must accompany each nomination. **Nominations without this letter cannot be accepted.**

▶▶ Please include additional supportive materials, such as newspaper clippings, photographs, letters from constituents, or other items that help document the nominated program.

▶▶ No more than 15 pages (on 8 ½ x 11 paper, one-sided only) of supportive material can be accepted.

▶▶ Please use presentation folders or claw clips to bind the materials together. **Only one video presentation not exceeding 15 minutes in length will be accepted (i.e. DVD, CD or PowerPoint presentation).** Please do not email these video presentations to the League. Copies must be included in each of the seven packets that you submit to the League for judging.

▶▶ Please note that these types of media do not replace the 1,200- and 150-word narratives requested above. They will, however, replace one page of the 15-page supportive material that will be accepted. **(NOTE: Absence of a DVD, CD or PowerPoint presentation will not hurt or be counted against your entry – nor will they carry any more weight than written documentation.)**

▶▶ Seven copies of your nomination packet are required. Each one must include:

1. A completed nomination form (please put this form on each of the seven copies);
2. Up to 1,200-word narrative for judging;
3. Up to 150-word narrative for best practices publication;
4. Up to 15 pages of supportive material, which can include a DVD, CD or PowerPoint presentation. Absence of electronic material will not count against your nomination; and
5. A letter of recommendation on behalf of the mayor and council/commission.

**Nominations that do not include seven copies of the packet cannot be accepted.**

## Judging ►►

Judging will be based on the written entry and supportive information. Judging will be conducted by an independent panel of judges with considerable expertise in either municipal government, Florida history, arts, parks, education and communications. **ALL NOMINATION ENTRIES ARE DUE ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2013.** Winners will be announced in December 2013.

## Special Publication: "History Happened Here: A Celebration of the Great History of Florida's Cities

Each nominated program will be included in a special publication that will highlight the innovative projects entered into this year's awards program. The 150-word narrative summarizing your program will be used in the publication, which will be included in an issue of our *Quality Cities* magazine and also be made available on our website.

## Announcement of Winners

- Winners will be announced in December 2013 – with special recognition and media blitz in each recipient's hometown and statewide.
- Winners in each category will also receive a special beautifully designed trophy.
- Winners will be spotlighted in a special publication that will also be an insert in *Quality Cities*.
- Winners will be featured in a separate article in the League's magazine, *Quality Cities*, and be featured in articles in statewide publications (through press announcements and through various websites and social media).

The judges reserve the right to not award a winner in every category.



## Background Information ►►

Florida has reached a momentous milestone: The 500th anniversary of Juan Ponce de León's arrival on Florida's east coast. To honor Florida's rich heritage and diverse cultural history throughout this landmark year, the State of Florida has launched an 18-month commemoration called Viva Florida 500.

As a partner in the Viva Florida 500 commemoration, the Florida League of Cities has launched the **"History Happened Here"** campaign to educate Florida residents and visitors alike about the rich history of Florida's cities. This year's awards program is part of that effort. Here is more:

Our multifaceted campaign includes everything from a clickable Florida map on the Viva Florida 500 website, which allows visitors to click on any city to learn about its history, to a campaign kit to help your city localize the Viva Florida 500 and "History Happened Here" initiatives. This kit will enable you to boost your residents' awareness of local history and promote history-related tourism. By utilizing these resources, your city can join in honoring the Florida we live in today! In addition to applying for a Florida Municipal Achievement Award, you can also download a copy of the League's Viva 500 kit to further help your city celebrate its rich history. To download your kit, visit <http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/News.aspx?CNID=9324>.

## Categories and Award Criteria ►►

In the narrative and supportive materials for your nomination, please include how your city's project was/is: innovative, effective, successful, engaged the local community and utilized various city partnerships and/or enhanced local tourism efforts.

### **Teaching Your City's History and Heritage:**

This category focuses on a city as it creates educational opportunities and forums where the city's history is taught, shared and celebrated. Possible partners include: libraries, schools and colleges, historical societies, and civic organizations. Examples of programs or activities include, but are not limited to: city history materials in the schools, essay contests and guest speakers, or any city-themed or focused historic educational presentations developed in conjunction with your municipality.

### **Re-enactments, Performing Arts, Festivals and Tours:**

This category recognizes cities and their partners that have created historic events presenting your city's history. Possible partners include, but are not limited to: historical societies, civic organizations, churches, museums, libraries, schools, colleges and others. Examples of events include: a pageant with storytellers; tours and exhibits of city history; a re-enactment or a history fair covering events that have shaped your city's history.

### **Florida's Natural History: Your Parks and More:**

This category recognizes the role that natural resources play in your city's history. In addition to their beauty, historic parks, heritage trails and preserves can be a looking glass into the geographic and cultural history of a community. They offer unique opportunities for commemorating Viva 500. Possible partners include, but are not limited to: national and state parks, county and municipal parks, historical societies, trail organizations, colleges and others. Examples include: interactive exhibits, a docent's stories making a historical site come to life, tour guides sharing the historical significance of a heritage trail, as well as the use of a mobile application or QR codes to tell the story.

### **Measured Success – Communicating Your City's Celebration:**

This category recognizes a city's communication efforts developed to engage the local community in your History Happened Here events, as well as how successful the city's communication efforts were in attracting participants to those events. Possible partners include newspapers, radio and television (including cable access channels); social media outlets; community partners; local and regional magazines. Examples include: creating dedicated "event" social media pages/accounts, local news coverage and/or published articles featuring the events, use of the city's existing communications channels, community outreach efforts (religious, civic, cultural), and video or digital presentation of the city's multi-media historical campaign.

# 2013 Florida Municipal Achievement Awards

## "History Happened Here: A Celebration of the Great History of Florida Cities"

### NOMINATION FORM

#### **CATEGORY** (Please Check Only One)

See Award Criteria for more information. Please print or type. A city may only submit one nomination. Your city cannot submit in multiple categories.

#### ☐ **TEACHING YOUR CITY'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE**

Name of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

#### ☐ **RE-ENACTMENTS, PERFORMING ARTS, FESTIVALS AND TOURS**

Name of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

#### ☐ **FLORIDA'S NATURAL HISTORY: YOUR PARKS AND MORE**

Name of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

#### ☐ **MEASURED SUCCESS: COMMUNICATING YOUR CITY'S CELEBRATION**

Name of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

#### **Contact Person**

Please print or type (the contact person below will be listed as the contact person in the special publication and must be an elected Florida city official or Florida city staff person).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Government \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

[OVER]

## Narratives ►►

In the 1,200-word narrative, please be clear and concise, using the Award Criteria to support the selection of your nominated program. Please type up to 1,200 words, double-spaced on white 8-1/2 x 11 paper.

Please include a word count:

---

(Number of words)

In the 150-word narrative, summarize your program for use in the special publication. The contact person listed in the publication will be the same as the one listed on this nomination form – unless otherwise stated in the word summary.

Please include a word count:

---

(Number of words)

.....

## Additional Instructions ►►

The Florida Municipal Achievement Awards themed: **History Happened Here – A Celebration of the Great History of Florida Cities!** is open to Florida cities, towns and villages that are current members of the Florida League of Cities.

Send all entries to (No faxes or emails please):

Gail Dennard  
Florida League of Cities, Inc.  
Attn: Florida Municipal Achievement Awards  
301 S. Bronough Street, Suite 300 (32301)  
P.O.Box 1757  
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757

**Refer all questions and inquiries to Jenna Titcomb at [jtitcomb@flcities.com](mailto:jtitcomb@flcities.com) or Sharon Berrian at [sberrian@flcities.com](mailto:sberrian@flcities.com) or call either at (850) 222-9684.**

Checklist of required materials:

►► Seven copies of your nomination packet are required. Each one must include:

- ☐ 1. A completed nomination form (please put this form on each of the seven copies).
- ☐ 2. Up to 1,200-word narrative for judging.
- ☐ 3. Up to 150-word narrative for best practices publication.
- ☐ 4. Up to 15 pages of supportive material, which can include a DVD, CD, PowerPoint presentation. Absence of electronic material will not count against your nomination.
- ☐ 5. A letter of recommendation on behalf of the mayor and council/commission.

**ALL NOMINATION ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2013.**

Winners will be announced in December 2013.



Florida League of Cities, Inc. • P.O.Box 1757 • Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757

[www.floridaleagueofcities.com](http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com)

## Teaching Your City's History and Heritage

The Town of Fort Myers Beach occupies a unique place in the Viva Florida 500 commemoration. At the south end of Estero Island lies Big Carlos Pass, named after the Calusa chief whose capital was situated on nearby Mound Key. At the north end of the island is Matanzas Pass, named by the Spanish after the battle that took place between the Calusa and Ponce de Leon in 1513. For Fort Myers Beach, history truly happened here.

The Mound House is the Town's archaeologically and historically significant property with a 2,000 year history of occupation including a Calusa Indian shell mound, a Cuban fishing rancho, and continuous American occupation from the mid-1870s to 1994. Situated on Estero Bay, the site is accessible by boat and motor traffic and visitors are encouraged to picnic on the park grounds and enjoy the beautiful view. As part of the Viva Florida 500 commemoration, Mound House provides an expansive sampling of 500 years of Spanish influence in "La Florida" as part of our tours and educational programs.

In commemoration of Viva Florida 500, our goal has been to emphasize the past 500 years of history on our island as part of Cultural Resources educational programs offered by the Town. Our Town employs staff with backgrounds in anthropology, history and biology who work with over 20 volunteers and highly trained docents to provide the highest quality learning experience for visitors, students and residents. The Mound House hosts over three thousand visitors each year who participate in a variety of programming. Tours are offered for visitors of all ages with educational programs for students focusing on the 4th through 6th grade curriculum.

Staff and volunteers utilize the innovative exhibits at Mound House to provide visitors with insight into the Spanish influence on Southwest Florida. An underground shell mound exhibit features an educational video on the archaeology of the Mound House site as well as the history of the Calusa including their interaction with the Spanish. The Plants and People Trail showcases over 120 species of plants and tells the stories of their use throughout history. Spain financed voyages to the New World in search of valuable spices. Bird Pepper and Allspice are two plants known to past Mound House inhabitants that were of great interest to the Spanish. The Calusa cultivated bird pepper and used it in their recipes. The Spanish viewed Allspice as a valuable spice and named it pimento. Cubans used it to brew a popular drink for treating indigestion. Both are included in the Plants and People Trail at Mound House.

In addition to onsite programming, Mound House participates in local cultural and ecological festivals, seminars, volunteer continuing education at Newton Park and guest speaking engagements. Community outreach raises awareness of our rich island history to our audiences, including families, school teachers, civic organizations and potential volunteers.

Mound House enhances local tourism efforts by offering a high quality cultural heritage experience in an attractive historic setting. Some of the notable historical events related to our Town's history are

Ponce de Leon's first contact with the Calusa here in the waters of Matanzas Pass, the San Antonio de Carlos mission on nearby Mound Key, and of the Cuban fisherfolk who built on and utilized the Mound House site as a "fishing rancho". Our Island's name, Estero, is Spanish for estuary and denotes the favorable conditions, abundance of resources and natural beauty that still draw so many people to this island even today.

#### SPANISH HISTORY AT MOUND HOUSE

Juan Ponce de Leon's voyage of 1513 is the first documented European visit to southwest Florida. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1513 Calusa warriors met de Leon's flotilla near what is now known as Matanzas Pass at the north end of Estero Island. In the ensuing battle five canoes and four Indians were captured, and many others killed. The following morning, the flotilla was again confronted by a force of over 800 Calusa warriors. This show of force was enough to convince the Spaniards to leave the Calusa domain. When Ponce de Leon returned in 1521, he was mortally wounded by the Calusa.

The Calusa resisted Spanish insurgence for 200 years including the failed mission attempts on Mound Key from 1567 to 1569 and again in the fall of 1697. Despite the Spanish failure to establish a permanent presence with the Calusa, the existence of Spanish missions in other parts of Florida began to affect the Calusa. Diseases brought to the New World disrupted Calusa hereditary lineages. The influx of exotic European trade and wealth items may have encouraged subordinate chiefs to challenge the authority and threaten the power of high ranking chiefs causing further social disruption. But the ultimate demise of the Calusa would come at the hands of other Indians.

By the 1600s, the Spanish had established a line of missions across North Florida, separating the Spanish and British Domains. The British saw the missions as an easy source of slaves and outfitted Yamasee and Creek Indians with guns and sent them raiding into the missions. As the missions were destroyed, the Creek and Yamassee Indians pushed further south into Florida, the Calusa fled southward into the Keys and some boarded onto boats to Cuba with Spanish sympathizers. By 1740 the indigenous tribes of Florida had all been displaced by the new inhabitants.

From the seventeenth to the mid -nineteenth century, in the vacuum left by the Calusa, and due to the depletion of the fisheries off Cuba, Cuban fishermen began plying the waters off Southwest Florida. Some of the Cuban vessels were guided by Calusa refugees familiar with their homeland waters. At first, Cuban fishermen set up small seasonal fish camps from August to March, but by the late eighteenth century, established permanent settlements known as Ranchos, often situated near or on existing Calusa mounds. Here they would salt, dry, or smoke their catch of mullet, pompano, mackerel, and turtles, which would then be shipped back to Cuba.

Life for the Cuban fisher folk, like their Calusa predecessors, and ultimately those that came after, was focused on the estuaries. Families lived in simple palm thatched huts, and established active trade between Cuba and other Florida Indians.

In 1821, Spain formally ceded Florida to the United States and following the Second Seminole war, the US adopted a policy of non-settlement which brought the Rancho period to a close.

During archaeological excavations at Mound House in 2002, a number of artifacts were recovered that provide evidence for a Cuban Rancho at the site from approximately 1780 to 1834. These artifacts included gun flints, transfer ware, lead shot and fishing weights.

## History and Education at Mound House

Mound House is a significant archaeological and historic site owned by the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Educational programming hosted by Mound House serves an important role in Town's Viva 500 commemoration. The 2.77 acre park has an extensive history with the construction of a Calusa shell mound 2,000 years ago and continuous occupation since then with evidence of a Cuban fishing rancho and American presence since the mid-1870s. Mound House utilizes staff and a highly trained, dedicated corp of volunteers to teach our Town's history and heritage to thousands of visitors each year. The Town reaches a diverse audience through a variety of programming including guided tours of the "Plants and People" trail, shell mound exhibit and Estero Bay via kayak. Spanish influence is always an integral component of our story and gains additional significance as part of the Viva Florida 500 experience.

## Stories Beneath Our Feet:

### Shell Mound Exhibit



The 44' long, life size mural depicts a Calusa village at the time of Spanish contact.



Entrance to the shell mound exhibit with the historic William H. Case house in the background



Visitors have the opportunity to learn about Calusa history and view the layers in the mound that serve as walls of the exhibit.



Students use flashlights to explore the shell mound during a tour led by volunteer docents.



Volunteer docents explain Calusa Indian technology with replicas of tools and artwork.

## Plants and People Trail

The Plants and People Trail showcases over 120 species of plants that have connections with Mound House residents through history. As visitors follow the winding path through the grounds, docents share the stories of plants in the medicinal garden, fruit crop orchard and Florida native garden.



Visitors learn about the goldenrod plant. Thomas Edison utilized goldenrod to produce rubber and the tires on the Model T given to him by Henry Ford were made of goldenrod.



A volunteer docent points out Florida pineapple and bananas in the fruit crop orchard.



A school group meets their tour guides at the outdoor classroom area beneath the 150 year old strangler fig.



During a tour, visitors learn how the Calusa used parts of the Cabbage Palm to weave cordage for making fishing nets and jewelry.

## Community Involvement



Fort Myers Beach Art Association members during one of their Paint Outs at Mound House



Volunteers embarking on an environmental training session via kayak



Filming for a Chamber of Commerce video to promote Mound House programming



Calusa Crafts at Mound House; students learning about Florida history through hands on activities



Staff visit St. Augustine for a cultural heritage networking event

# Learn island history while paddling kayaks

March 27, 2013

By BOB PETCHER (rpetcher@breezenewspapers.com), Fort Myers Beach Bulletin, Fort Myers Beach Observer

The Town-owned Mound House property has lots to offer.

Many folks have witnessed the historical site's educational tours, such as the Plants & People Trail and The Stories Beneath Our Feet exhibit. There is also an Introduction to Paddle Boarding, Paddle Board Yoga and two different kayak trips that leave from the property landing and explore the "back country" mangrove creeks.

Last Friday, Town Cultural Resources Environmental Coordinator Parke Lewis took a small group of people on the more experienced of those paddling adventures. It was roughly a four-mile tour from Mound House across Matanzas Pass into the shallow sea grass flats of Hell Peckney Bay to Dog Key and then through a narrow tidal creek before returning to the 451 Connecticut St. location.

The group learned some paddling tips before embarking on a 3-1/2 hour trip that circled back. Along the way, kayakers may encounter numerous species of schooling fish, wading birds, dolphin and manatee. They can also learn about the three different types of mangroves, other native trees, shells, oysters, clams and the history that ties all marine habitat and plant life together with early settlers of the islands, such as the Calusa Indians.

Lewis, a biologist, offered insight on the trip while being the lead paddler.

"These mangrove islands form naturally from the red mangroves along the water," he said.

"The black mangrove is different from the red mangrove in that it doesn't have prop roots."

As the paddling trip curved into Hell Peckney Bay, Lewis led them to Dog Key, a state-owned shell mound island roughly 20 acres in size that is open to the public to traverse on foot.

"This key is a good example of a mangrove island in an estuary system that has all the different species of mangroves," he said. "It has an ample supply of native vegetation you could find in a coastal strand or habitat."

The key does not boast posted signs. There have been concerns about looting.

"All archaeological sites in the state of Florida are protected," said Lewis. "You cannot take anything off of them."

A shell ridge runs parallel to the shore on Dog Key, which is above the high tide mark. The initial survey of the island occurred on 1878.

"These are frequently occurring natural events. Shell gets sifted out of the mud, like

panning for gold, and ends up in these tiny shell ridges," said Lewis. "Based upon

archaeological record, these tiny shell ridges became the foundation for mound complexes

that the Calusa and archaic Indians before them would build up over time."

Lewis spoke about sea grape trees, jelly made from the grapes, stoppers and the

buttonwood tree twigs and limbs that could be used for smoking fish.

"The green buttonwood twigs are very popular for grilling and smoking fish down here," he said.

The tour then paddled into a creek that meanders through a mangrove forest and is only accessible at high tide due to shallow water. Due to this

writer's ability to duck below mangrove branches, the waterway was aptly named "Limbo Creek."

Once the paddlers exited the creek, they were led back into Matanzas Pass where Mound House could be easily viewed on top of its property hill.

The next kayak tour trip is an introduction to kayaking and a shorter trip on April 13. The next Estero Bay Guided Tour is set for April 26.



BOB PETCHER

The paddling group curves around a waterway that leads to Hell Peckney Bay.

# Council accepts worthy Mound House donation

March 20, 2013

By BOB PETCHER (rpetcher@breezezenewspapers.com), Fort Myers Beach Bulletin, Fort Myers Beach Observer

Mound House, the Town-owned historic property at the end of Connecticut Street, received a contribution in the form of a financial arrangement to develop a room within the oldest standing structure on Estero Island. The donation will aid in getting the full property open sooner and the mission in restoring the home to its original 1921 grandeur using Florida's historic preservation standards.

On Monday evening, former Town Mayor Dan Hughes was recognized for offering to cover the costs in the construction of a period room.

"He made a very generous offer," said Stewart. "We pledge to honor the accomplishment of this based upon the very generous donation. It is an extremely kind gesture."

It was reported that the contribution is worth more than \$10,000 monetarily.

"This gift reflects my dedication to the enhancement and development of the Mound House as a coastal education historical site," said Hughes, who was mayor when Mound House was acquired.

Hughes praised the current Council and the most recent Council for their vision to expedite the Mound House project, one that has taken 13 years.

"You have really moved things along," he said. "I commend you on your effort to complete the renovations."



BOB PETCHER

Former Beach Mayor Dan Hughes (front row, blue shirt) takes a photo with members of Friends of Mound House, Town Parks & Recreation staff and current Council members. His large contribution will create a period room in Mound House.

## The Calusa Canoe



Of course, as a means of transportation, the canoes of the Calusa were a vital component of their culture, providing transportation and a means to conduct trade throughout south Florida and the Caribbean.

The dugout canoes utilized by the indigenous people of South Florida were long and narrow shallow draft boats, crafted from the trunks of pine or cypress in which fire was used to burn into the trunk, sculpting out the hollow interior of the canoe which would then be finished to a smooth surface with hand tools.

As a sophisticated maritime culture with a network of over fifty villages up and down the coast of southwest Florida, the ability to travel and fish the rivers, creeks and estuaries meant life itself.

Known by their neighbors as the "fierce people", the Calusa maintained a large and powerful warrior class that employed war canoes, enabling them to reign over a vast area and collect tribute from numerous other tribes while effectively defending their realm for over 2,000 years.

When Ponce de Leon encountered the Calusa for the first time in 1513, he and his men were attacked in force by hundreds of warriors in large canoes which were lashed together and protected by interlocking shields. As one can easily imagine, the ability to assemble and deploy large numbers of warriors in

After being closed since the late 1570s, in 1699 Spain reopens "legal" trade between Cuba and Florida and contemporary historical records rather casually observe that "Glades Indians" in dugout canoes were commuting between Key West and Havana, travelling in a 24 hour crossing to conduct trade. They brought furs, plants and fish, and quite interestingly, willow cages containing live song birds such as cardinals and mockingbirds which were sold to the cigar factories and wealthy homeowners to provide musical entertainment.

Paddling at least 90 miles across the Gulf of Mexico in a dugout canoe is an amazing feat by any modern measure, that this was something done on a regular basis to conduct trade is an indicator of remarkable physical endurance and navigational skills.

## Mound House Happenings

canoes gave the Calusa a significant tactical advantage.

**Parke Lewis**  
Environmental Educator  
Town of Fort Myers Beach

### Florida and The Gulfstream



As visitors to the Mound House will learn, in 1513 Ponce de Leon was the first European to explore "La Florida" and it was in that same year that he and his men landed very near to this location and first encountered the Calusa. But before even making landfall, Ponce made another important discovery that would affect trade and exploration of the New World for centuries. Although its existence was known to a few others, it was also during this same voyage that Ponce discov-

ered the vitally important the Gulf Stream and according to Ponce: "A current such that, although they had great wind, they could not proceed forward, but backward and it seems that they were proceeding well; at the end it was known that the current was more powerful than the wind".

A river of seawater averaging 6 miles wide and over 3,000 feet deep, the Gulf Stream originates in the straits of Florida and is driven largely by wind stress as it travels across the southern tip of Florida, turning northward and into the Atlantic, extending along the eastern coast of North America and then turning again eastward into the North Atlantic and Europe. The Gulf Stream is a rapidly traveling current moving at as much as 5.6mph. This conveyor belt current gave sailors a tremendous advantage in sailing back to Europe from the New World. Fighting its current could add as much as two weeks to a transatlantic crossing from Europe.

As Deputy Postmaster of the British American Colonies, Ben Franklin assembled the knowledge of Nantucket whalers and was the first to publish a map and be the first to name the Gulf Stream in 1770.

Moreover, the proximity of warm Gulf Stream waters to the peninsula of Florida not only warms the air of our State during the cold winter months but also the British Isles and coastlines of Northern Europe.

## Visitors' Comments

"History is vital to learning. Please continue to support this project."

"Answered all of our questions. Very informative!"

Tour guide was excellent!! Very knowledgeable and entertaining. His talk was one of the highlights of our trip to Florida."

"This is an excellent example of Florida history from earliest times to recent development. One of the best archaeological and historical explanations I have heard anywhere in this country."

"Excellent program for all ages. Definitely learned a lot about the island and will come back for more programs."

"Thank you Fort Myers Beach for sharing this wonderful piece of forgotten history."

"Very important history lesson. Much needed and very important site to be preserved. Tour guide was very knowledgeable."

"This historical site is a GEM! I will recommend this tour to two other couples this week and anyone in the area."

Quotes taken from Client Satisfaction Surveys completed by Mound House visitors

Dear Regan and Park,  
 Our Shell Point group completely loved our trip to the Mound House yesterday and so much of their wonderful experience can be attributed to the terrific job you both did!! All day today residents have come by just to thank me again. What you did and how well you do it sure touches the lives of others! Thank you so very much,  
 Bev Chandler

Thank you note from staff at Shell Point Retirement Community

Dear Parke, Regan and Becky,  
 Thank you so much for teaching us about the Calusa Indians. It was super fun. I loved the activities, especially the pots and the necklaces!! You guys are the best!!  
 Thank you again.

Sincerely,  
 Savannah

Thank you note from a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student

September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Florida League Of Cities

Attention : Florida Municipal Adjustment Awards

301 S. Bronough Street Suite 300

P.O Box 1757

Tallahassee, Florida 32302-1757

Attention Gail Dennard

As a docent conducting tours at The Mound House, which is the oldest standing historical structure on Fort Myers Beach, Florida, we commemorate Florida's extraordinary history with each visitor or group who visit each week.

The Mound House now represents the date of 1921 but includes a structure of a Tudor of 1909 vintage which sits high atop this 15' 2000 year old Calusa Indian Shell Mound overlooking the Aquatic Preserve on Estero Bay

Our docents share the history starting 2000 years ago that evidences a Calusa mound constructed between 100 BC and 700 AD This includes a walk showing plants and trees of possible usage that the Indians used for food and tools which leads into a 15' excavated underground mound showing a video of how the mound was constructed. During this time the story of Ponce de Leon's arrival in the vicinity of our San Carlos Bay in 1513 is told as well as his return in 1521.

This narration is followed by the early homesteading history of our barrier island and the stories of the early families from the late 1800 through present time. This includes not only the Calusas, the Koreshans, early settlers but the Cuban Fisherfolk.

Many exclaim they have only thought of our State known for it's water, weather and beaches not realizing it's amazing history.

We certainly have a lot of History for Florida to celebrate.

Sincerely Ceel Spuhler Docent at the Mound House

*Ceel Spuhler*

September 20, 2013

Gail Dennard  
Florida League of Cities, Inc.  
Att: Florida Municipal Achievement Awards  
301 S. Bronough Street, Suite 300 (32301)  
P. O. Box 1757  
Tallahassee, Fl. 32302-1757

Dear Ms. Dennard:

Fort Myers Beach is a barrier island that is seven miles long and ½ mile wide at it's widest point.

We are fortunate enough to have two archaeological/historical features on our beach. The Mound House is the oldest surviving structure on Fort Myers Beach, and sits on top of a Calusa Indian shell mound.

We docents/tour guides present tours to the public in which we speak of Calusa history and the arrival of Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 and that Ponce actually named our state-La Florida. We also speak of when Ponce returned to our area in 1521.

Tours are given to the general public, to church groups, to school children, and many other interested groups.

Visitors love our site and will often return with family members, or friends, to view our wonderful site.

Sincerely,

Kelly Leary  
Mound House volunteer/docent