



# Pine Island Knots

Newsletter of the Pine Island Preservation Society  
Number 52  
December 2025

## Rainbow at Sams House



Rainbow at Sams House: October brought more than 18 inches of rain to Merritt Island ---and several chances to spot rainbows like this one over Sams House on the morning of October 3.

*Photo by Shannon Steele*

### *General Membership and Volunteer Recognition Reception*

*Friday, January 2, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.  
Sams House*

*6195 N. Tropical Trail, Merritt Island*

*Join us for the 13th annual general membership  
reception for friends and volunteers of the Pine Island  
Conservation Area (PICA) and Sams House.*

### *Refreshments - Music - Silent Auction*

Please rsvp by December 29 to alexandra.schilling@  
brevardfl.gov, or dhunt125@aol.com

Donations for the silent auction are welcomed. Please drop off items  
to the Sams House by Dec. 30.

## Sams House Participates in 6th Annual Holiday Historic Homes Tour



Sams House is one of eight of the Museums of Brevard where the 6th Annual Holiday Tour of Historic Homes will take place on December 5, 6, 7 and 12, 13, 14 from 10 am to 2 pm. A limited number of tickets are available for \$40. Tickets entitle guests to visit four of the homes.

Other Holiday Tour locations include: The Pritchard House, Titusville; Field Manor, Merritt Island; Cape Canaveral Lighthouse; Lawndale, Rockledge; and Rossetter House and Green Gables, Melbourne, and Bensen House, Grant.

Sams House decorating was done by members of the Pine Island Preservation Society, the Spade and Trowel Club

To purchase tickets,  
Scan QR code,  
or click and visit:  
Sales Starts Nov 1st



<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/holiday-tour-of-historic-homes--2025>



The decorating team for the Holiday Home Tour included Sams House PIPS members, staff, and members of the Spade & Trowel Club: Vivian Shay, Patricia Ryan, Sandra Bruins, Barbara Millner, Shannah Trout, Rick & Jennifer English, Martha Pessaro, Josie Neal, Brenda LaRoche, Alex Schilling and Darleen Hunt. We thank them for their beautiful hard work!

*we*  
**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**  
*we*

**14TH ANNUAL  
PIONEER DAY FESTIVAL**  
Sams House and St. Luke's  
Saturday, February 7, 2026



# New Program at Sams House “Touch Tables”

By Robert Lane, EEL Naturalist and Certified Interpretive Guide



Sensory “touch table” with a variety of natural items of different textures and shapes for guests to touch.

A new educational program has been introduced at Sams House named sensory or “touch tables.” On the first full weekend of the month, Saturday and Sunday, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., join Sams House naturalists to explore the natural world using your senses. Guests are encouraged to touch, look, and sometimes smell some of the unique items on the table displays. Each month a different and interesting natural theme will be featured.



“Touch table” with Native American tools, artifacts and information.

## Students Return for Frontier School Sessions



Frontier School families return to Sams House each month for more fun and learning. Students are pictured above studying nocturnal animals and using maps and compasses on a clue-finding adventure around the grounds of the nature center. Frontier School is a monthly Sams House homeschool program offering different nature topics. Participants receive a pin for each class and take-home material with additional information.

Photo and caption by Shannon Steele, EEL Naturalist



# Florida Pioneer Christmas'



At Sams House history is shared about Pioneer life and how things were done back in the late 1800's, including how early day pioneers might celebrate the Christmas season.

We tend to think that Christmas has always been a holiday for us. Historically, several states had declared Christmas a legal holiday, and finally the Florida Legislature did so in 1881.

In Florida, it was a time when many families and friends lived a few miles apart and it could take hours to ride a horse, or wagon, or boat to come together for special occasions. Community gatherings were referred to as "frolicks." Festive meals were often followed by music and dancing.

Gifts exchanged were mostly handmade or grown items including fruit, cakes, and nuts, sewn items, or carved wooden objects.

Christmas trees were local pine or cedar, and decorated with homemade and natural ornaments like palmetto frond, magnolia branches, citrus fruit, paper and popcorn chains, and lit candles for lights. (which were dangerous and had to be monitored carefully).

Our Mattie's Diary has short references about Christmas in Chapter 3. "Uncle Jim and family stayed at Eau Gallie tho, his older sons worked at the syrup making. But we did not go till after Christmas. Mamma and Sister had a tree for us. Sister made candles from wax from a wild beehive, and Mamma made a little present for each of us." Mattie also added about visitors: "The boys' mothers came also, and how delighted they all were with our little tree" "And Henry Casper said it was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. Mamma and sister also made candy and cookies with syrup as we had no sugar."

Another way to reflect on Pioneer Christmas is to attend the 47th Annual Cracker Christmas festival in Christmas, FL this December 6 & 7. Martha Pessaro and Denise Christopher, PIPS board members, will staff a PIPS/EEL display promoting Sams House. Exhibitors for this fun-filled pioneer festival will feature: weaving, cane grinding, syrup making, spinning, wood carving, lace making, broom making, blacksmithing and more. An event similar to our Pioneer Day currently planned for February 7.

## Ongoing Activities at Sams House and PICA Please call for reservations 321 449-4720

● **Saturday Bird Walks at Sams House** - Every Saturday 9:00 -10:00 am. Join the Naturalist Staff (weather permitting) to look and listen for birds around the nature center. From beginner to expert, all levels of birders are welcome. Bring your own binoculars (a limited number are available for loan). Meet in front of the cabin and the white house.

● **Scavenger Hunt** - Every Sunday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Stop by the 1888 house to pick up your nature hunt. Enjoy the afternoon exploring the grounds.

● **House and Cabin Tour** - Every Thursday and Saturday at 3:00 pm. Tour the inside of Brevard County's oldest standing home (1875) and the adjacent (1888) Florida vernacular-style home to learn about the Sams Family.



## Kashanian Scholarship

A 5th Annual Masoud R. Kashanian Memorial Scholarship is now being offered. **The deadline to apply for the \$1500.00 scholarship is April 30.** An application is available on the PIPS Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pineislandpreservationsociety/>, and should be listed on Brevard School Foundation's site..

It is offered to a graduating High School Senior who is furthering their education in environmental or related fields at an accredited Florida college.

## Brazilian Peppertree Eradication



The Brazilian peppertree is native to South America. It was introduced to Florida in the 1840's as an ornamental plant and often used for Christmas decorations due to its attractive foliage and red berries.

However it has become an aggressive, invasive species especially in Florida where it disrupts ecosystems.

The seeds consumed by wildlife, especially birds, spread new plants to natural areas taking over native tree hammocks, pine flatlands and mangroves.

An eradication program will take place on the Pine Island Conservation Area. The Central Region has been awarded over \$100,000 through the USDA Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project to help with Brazilian peppertree management efforts. This will cover a little over 283 acres around the north lake of PICA. The project is projected to begin in April 2026.

You are encouraged to work on Brazilian peppertree eradication in your area.

## Contact Information

David DeMeyer, EEL Land Manager for Central Region; Connor Wong, EEL Land Management Specialist; Alex Schilling, Education Center Coordinator, Shannon Steele and Rob Lane, EEL Naturalists at Sams House. All be reached at (321) 449-4720.

[www.facebook.com/eelbrevard](http://www.facebook.com/eelbrevard)

*Volgistics, this website which allows volunteers to sign up for shifts or projects online, as well as record volunteer hours, is located...at:*

<https://www.volgistics.com/vicnet/53695>

*The Docent Desk computer is set up for entry as well.*

Website: <https://www.brevardfl.gov/EELProgram/Sanctuaries/SamsHouse>

<https://www.facebook.com/pineislandpreservationsociety/>

[www.nbbd.com/godo/sanctuaries/SamsHouse/](http://www.nbbd.com/godo/sanctuaries/SamsHouse/)

PIPS Website: <https://pineislandpressoc.org> or scan QR Code:



Pine Island Knots editor: Darleen Hunt, 321 452-8433, [dhunt125@aol.com](mailto:dhunt125@aol.com)

The purpose of PIPS is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Pine Island Conservation Area and to provide assistance to the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program. PIPS is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are deductible under Sec. 170 of the IRS Code.

### Pine Island Preservation Society

#### Board of Directors

Rick English, President  
Shannah Trout, Vice President  
Jeff Thompson, Secretary  
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Diane Stees  
Jerry Stubbs  
Elaine Williams

## Check Out The New PIPS Website



<https://pineislandpressoc.org>  
or scan QR Code

## President's Thoughts...



*Our Florida winter is just around the corner, hurricane season has ended and cooler weather is in the forecast. It's a wonderful time to get outside and visit the Pine Island Conservation Area (PICA) and the Sams House. Also, come and enjoy the holiday decorations at the Sams Cabin and House. As noted on page 3, tours are available on Thursday and Saturdays at 3:00 pm.*

*Two of PIPS largest events of the year are noted on page 1 of this issue of the Pine Island Knots. The General Membership Meeting is on Friday, January 2nd, and the Pioneer Festival is on Saturday, February 7th. The membership meeting is held to inform the membership of plans and activities of PICA and the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program, and to elect board members for 2026. There will be refreshments, live music, and a silent auction.*

*These events, and lots of other information, are now available on our new PIPS website. The address and QR code are available just to the left of this message. Please take a few minutes to explore the website and let us know how you like it at: [contact@pineislandpressoc.org](mailto:contact@pineislandpressoc.org).*

*PIPS purpose and mission is to support the Sams House and the Pine Island Conservation Area. This is made possible by our new and continuing memberships and our dedicated volunteers. If you haven't renewed or joined yet, please take a few moments and fill out the form below and send it in. Volunteers are the heart and soul of PIPS, so please take the opportunity to attend the events in January and February, or just visit to walk around and enjoy the area.*

*Happy Holidays and may good fortune be yours in the New Year!*

***Rick English***

President, Pine Island Preservation Society

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership is open to any individual or organization willing to support the Pine Island Preservation Society in its activities to assist the Pine Island Conservation Area, including the historic Sams House, and the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program of Brevard County, Florida.

*Your contact information will be handled as private data and will not be shared with anyone.*

PLEASE PRINT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CHECK CATEGORY OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: ☐ New ☐ Renewal

<input type="checkbox"/> Senior (55+)	\$10	<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$10	Corporate Memberships	
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Couple (55+)	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Horseshoe Crab	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Sams Descendants	\$10	<input type="checkbox"/> Gopher Tortoise	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> Barred Owl	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Couple Supporting	\$75	<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Eagle	\$1000
				<input type="checkbox"/> Mastodon	\$5000

*Please make check payable to Pine Island Preservation Society or "PIPS" and mail check and membership application to Pine Island Preservation Society, Inc., 6195 North Tropical Trail, Merritt Island, FL 32953*