

Pine Island Knotes

Newsletter of the Pine Island Preservation Society
Number 53
March 2026

A Perfect Day for the 14th Annual Pioneer Day Festival



Photos left to right, top to bottom: Pioneer Clad paraders walk past vendor booths; Period dressed attendees pose in front of Main House prior to parade; Confederate Sons rifle firing demonstration; Seminole hunt camp exhibit; Wool spinning demonstration; Calligraphy names drawn free for guests; **All photos above taken by Chris Minerva.**



Above: St. Luke's "Cemetery Quest" where attendees searched for historic answers to receive a prize. **Photo by Marcia Lambert.**

Professional photographer, Chris Minerva, graciously documenting this Pioneer Day Festival (again) with 131 photos depicting every exhibitor and vendor and activity. Photos can be viewed on www.nmihoa.org

Participants at the 14th Annual Pioneer Day Celebration at Sams House and St. Lukes enjoyed a beautiful day filled with entertainment, activities, music, exhibitors, and vendors commemorating the history of the pioneers who settled this area in the late 1800s. Diane Stees and Shannah Trout organized activities at Sams House and Joyce Young led efforts at St. Luke's with participation from dozens of members and volunteers from throughout the community.

Sorry, No Mango Festival

We are sad to report that due to unprecedented freezes in February that killed all the mango blossoms and very likely most of the thousands of trees on Merritt Island, there can be no mango festival this year at Sams House. Temperatures dropped in the 20s for two days in a row killing most tropical trees and plants including palms and mangos. Photos to right show mango trees in full bloom in December, then same trees with frozen blooms and brown leaves in February. :-)



Mango trees in full bloom.



Same Mango trees after the freezes.

Photos by Mary Matta

Clay Bead Making Session



(L) David McDonald demonstrates clay beadmaking.

(Below) Clay Beads debossed with Native American art.



A popular item sold in the gift shop are clay beads. David McDonald, Indian River Anthropology Society, shared his bead making skills with PIPS members so they can continue to provide them in the gift shop. McDonald developed his passion for Indian artifacts when he was raised on land now Kennedy Space Center. He makes many different types of Native American items and tools and teaches and displays his art and history in numerous venues including at our Pioneer Day event.



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.

Saturday Birding Walks with Rob and Shannon



Fourteen birders began the 2026 New Year with Sams House Naturalists, Rob Lane and Shannon Steele, for their weekly Saturday 9:00 a.m. bird walk. On January 3rd, 34 species were observed with highlights including Barred Owl, Bald Eagle, American White Pelican, Roseate Spoonbill, and 4 warbler species.

Jack Ratterman Memorial Bench



A bench at the entrance to the Island Pioneer Trail off off Hall Rd. was ceremoniously dedicated in January "In Memory of Jack Ratterman, NMI Resident, Advocate and Friend." Ratterman, a PIPS member, was instrumental in the creation of the Trail, which is one of the Brevard County Parks and Recreation sites.

Scouting America Troops Camp at Sams House



Photo by Darleen Hunt

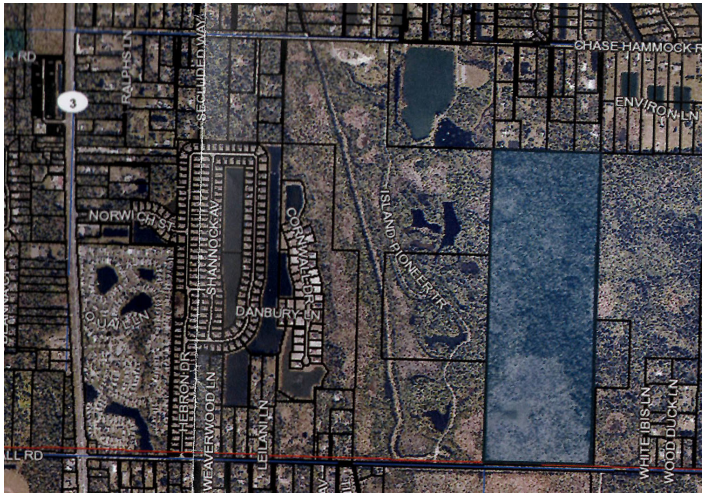
Scouting America Troops 448 and 4448 (boy and girl units) from Salisbury NC camped for a week in early January at Sams House on the grass area behind the main white house. In all there were 30 scouts and 7 leaders. They enjoyed taking part in activities at Sams House and around the County. A special treat was a late night launch of a rocket that they witnessed from their camp site!



Photo by Shannon Steele

Twelve scouts from Troop 224 in Melbourne made the most of a recent rainy weekend at Sams House. The wet weather, combined with a burn ban, turned out to be a great learning opportunity. Instead of relying on a campfire, the scouts gained hands-on experience using a camp stove and practiced important skills like properly waterproofing their tents. What could have been a soggy setback became a valuable and productive weekend!

Hall Rd. Parcel Added to EEL



E. Hall Rd.

As part of a complicated legal settlement with Waters Mark LC, the County has acquired a 120-acre parcel off of Hall Rd. on North Merritt Island to be added to the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. However, Waters Mark will first have to remove invasive plants and trees as part of a mitigation agreement.

The main part of the Waters Mark settlement with the County is the ability for them to move forward with development plans for 109 acres off of N. Tropical Trail, south of St. Luke's and across from the F.I.N.D. site. It could bring as many 84 single-family units and a residential marina.

Brevard County will acquire 25 acres on the south end of the subject property to be used for stormwater outfall to reduce pollution runoff into the lagoon. This will provide much-needed stormwater drainage to the W. Crisafulli basin and areas along N. Courtenay Parkway; an additional 2.2-acre peninsular parcel acquisition will be designated for EEL preservation

The County Commission approved a tentative agreement to settle the dispute and next it will have to be approved by the Brevard Circuit Court.

Holiday Historic Home Tours



The parlor at Sams House was one of the Holiday Historic Homes featured at eight locations on the Museums of Brevard Tour. Sams House provided 40 tours on two weekends in December.

Outreach Activities Continue

By Martha Pessaro, PIPS Board Member, and Alex Schelling, EEL Education Coordinator

The Pine Island Preservation Society and the EEL Staff continue to stay active with the MOB (Museums of Brevard, made up of 8 historic venues throughout Brevard).

--On Feb. 27 we were part of the MOB all day information display in "Every Day is Veteran's Day" at One Senior Place. Estimated attendees: 500.

--The MOB will have a table display at the Grant Seafood Festival March 7-8.

--Martha Pessaro will represent the MOB to discuss grant writing in late March at the Sands Space Museum in Cape Canaveral.

--Provide an information table at the Field Manor Founders Day, Saturday April 4th.

--Provide an information table at Blue Origin, Space Commerce Way, for an Earth Day event on April 22.

--Provide an information table at a Scouting America Riverside Dist. Kickoff at Melbourne Church of Christ on March 19.

--Establish a corner display at the Space Coast Tourism Visitor Center, Cocoa Beach, during March and April.

Upcoming Activities at Sams House

Please call for reservations 321 449-4720

● **Sams Garden Spring Clean-Up**-Saturday, March 14, 1:00-3:00 p.m.--Join the Sams House Naturalists as they beautify the gardens and grounds. We will be doing general cleanup and pulling weeds/invasive plants from a few of the gardens. Please wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate outdoor attire. This event is best suited for ages 12 and up. Bring your own work gloves if you like, or we have a limited supply that guests can use. Registration required. <https://GardenClean.eventbrite.com>. Get dirty for a good cause!

● **Frontier School: Budding Biologists** - Flora-Friday, March 20, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.--Learn how each part of a plant functions. Find out how native plants were used in the past and how important they still are today. Recommended for students ages 6-12. Registration Required. <https://FSFlora.eventbrite.com>

● **Throw and Grow Seed Balls**-Sunday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.--Spring is Here! Stop by Sams House and make your very own seed balls. Toss and watch them grow in your very own garden.

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

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/

PIPS Website: https://pineislandpressocorg or scan QR Code:



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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
- Darleen Hunt, Treasurer
- Denise Christopher
- Brenda LaRoche
- Joe Matta
- Josie Neal
- Martha Pessaro
- John Schantzen
- Vivian Shay
- Diane Stees
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- Elaine Williams

Dues are Due

This is a friendly reminder that Pine Island Preservation Society membership was due on February 1. Please fill out the application below and mail or deliver to the Sams House. Thanks for your continued support! To check on your membership status, please contact membership chair, Jerry Stubbs, jeraldstubbs@earthlink.net



President's Thoughts...



This year, our usual mild winters took a bad turn. Instead of a green spring, much of our local flora is a sad shade of brown. The weather, however, has returned to our warmer days and clear skies. Daylight Saving Time is upon us, too. The better weather and extra sunshine hours will provide us with great opportunities to get outdoors and enjoy the wonders of the Sams House Education Center and the Pine Island Conservation Area. Hiking, fishing, birding, kayaking and many other adventures are available for your enjoyment.

For the 14th time, as noted on the front page, Sams House and St. Luke's hosted Pioneer Day, a celebration of the early pioneers on north Merritt Island. The exhibitors, vendors and musicians provided an interesting day for all who attended. The weather was great, too. Be sure to put this on your calendar for next February.

If you know of a deserving high school senior who is headed to a Florida college or university to major in fields related to environmental science, land or wildlife management, please show them the Kashanian Memorial Scholarship article on page 2. This \$1,500 scholarship is in recognition of the contributions of Mr. Kashanian to the PICA and specifically to the Sams House Education Center as a volunteer.

Any organization like PIPS can only succeed in supporting PICA and prosper through the efforts of our volunteers. Thanks to all of you who have given your time, skills and talents through the years. We all want to see the work of PIPS continue to grow. Please encourage your friends, neighbors and family members to join and experience the fun and service opportunities.

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