

Time Sifters

October 2013



A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 6:00 PM

Selby Library, Downtown Sarasota

Sherry Robinson Svekis, Time Sifters President **The History Beneath Our Feet** **Archaeology and the Manatee River Communities**



Until the early 20th century, the Manatee River, a waterway that extends 50 miles inland from its mouth near the entrance to Tampa Bay, was an important resource in the development of this region. In the 1840s and 50s, the village of Manatee became a thriving community while Sarasota was still a scattering of individual homesteads. Major plantations grew on both sides of the river, and large sailing ships carried timber and molasses to markets on the Gulf and up the east coast. Community histories and descendant family lore, personal diaries and letters, military reports, newspaper clippings, maps, and photographs tell many stories that have become familiar touchstones of community pride. Yet the Anglo-American settlement of the area is only the most visible element of our local history. There were peoples living along the Manatee River long before American settlement, groups whose histories have been obscured by the success of the people who took their place. For the Native Americans whose

mounds lined the river's banks, the maroons (free Blacks) who found freedom here in the 1810s, and the workers of the Cuban fishing ranchos who gathered their catch each winter from these shores, we must look to the tools of archaeology for evidence of their lives here. My talk will recount some of the archaeological investigations that have been performed along the river over the years, and how fragments of pottery and pipes, stone points, shells and shark teeth help reveal the story of people whose names are lost to time.

About Sherry Robinson Svekis

I have always been fascinated by history and archaeology, but did not pursue it formally until a mid-life career change. I applied and was accepted into New College and received a BA in Anthropology and History in 2005. My thesis took a historical archaeology approach to the tabby ruins at De Soto National Memorial and inspired me to continue to work with communities to raise the visibility of the multiple histories of our area. In addition to being president of Time Sifters Archaeology Society, I am Vice President of Reflections of Manatee, Vice Chair of the City of Sarasota Historic Preservation Board, and a board member of Florida Anthropological Society and Trail of Florida's Indian Heritage. Val and I have two great kids, Liberty and Thatcher, both out of college and each pursuing their own path.



Notes from a Time Sifter

Every day there is news of Syria, a small nation in the Middle East that is wracked by a civil war that threatens the peace of the entire world. Recently, members of the news media noted that most Americans could not find Syria on the map, a surprising suggestion because civilization in this area of the world dates back to before 5000 b.c.e.

The modern state of Syria is not yet 100 years old, created by the French in 1920 along with its sister state, Lebanon, the result of a compromise made according to the Sykes-Picot agreement at the League of Nations meetings in Versailles after World War I (Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914–1922* (1989). Most people who live in Syria speak Arabic, one of several Semitic languages. DNA shows that the people of Lebanon are descendants of the ancient Phoenicians (National Geographic, October, 2004) but no such study has been done on modern Syrians.

The name “Syria” was given to this place by the first century Romans, but before that it was part of a great empire called “Assyria.” In the 10th century, b.c.e., the Assyrians ruled over an empire that included present day Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Egypt and part of Turkey. Their writing system was used as the official writing system of the entire area. They conquered and expanded great cities like Nineveh, whose ruins attest to its history as the largest city in the world in the 7th century b.c.e. Their capital city, Damascus, is believed to be the oldest continually occupied city in the world (Burns, *Damascus: A History*, 2007, Routledge). It was on the road to Damascus that Paul the Apostle had his conversion experience (Acts, 9:1).

The Assyrians documented their own history well, but we also find evidence of them in other sources, like the Bible, where they are depicted as brutal. They were brutal, slaughtering their enemies and piling severed heads along the road, but all people were brutal at that time. War has been endemic in this area from the beginning of history, and control of the area has been contested hundreds of times. Assyrians attacked their neighbors and were responsible for the disappearance of the “ten lost tribes” of Israel (2 Kings, 17:34). Lost, because 2700 years ago, the King of Assyria conquered Samaria, the capital of ancient Israel, taking the important citizens to Assyria. They have not been heard from since. Assyria also suffered attacks. The Hittites weakened Assyria, Egyptians were able to gain independence, and the Babylonians eventually conquered Assyria, but then the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. Wars continued over two millennia. Syria was conquered by the Romans, the Byzantine Christians, the Muslim Arabs, the European Crusaders, the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols and the Ottoman Turks. In 1918 Damascus was captured by Arab armies led by “Lawrence of Arabia” and was made into a French controlled mandate. The mandate did nothing to alleviate war in that region, in fact it intensified hostilities because the Europeans disregarded the differences within local populations. Sadly, there is no indication that the situation will ever improve but we all, especially archaeologists, should at least be able to find it on a map.



Partners in Search of History

Uzi Baram, Director of the New College Public Archaeology Lab and Professor of Anthropology at New College of Florida

In 2004, Time Sifters Archaeological Society helped to launch Looking for Angola, the search for material remains of an early 19th century maroon community in southern Tampa Bay. Time Sifters volunteers have helped with public events, archaeological excavations, and the inventory and analysis of artifacts for the archaeological search for Angola, the name for a settlement that lasted from the late 18th century to 1821 on the Manatee River. The challenge of locating material evidence for people who sought freedom in southwest Florida was great, with many obstacles; some challenges radiate from the nature of the search and are others due to the specifics of archaeological research in Bradenton. But after years of public outreach, sustained research, and patient analysis, the results are surprisingly positive. In large measure, the success comes from Time Sifters’ partnership with Looking for Angola and then the New College Public Archaeology Lab, which was created in 2010. The partnership deserves acclaim, and Time Sifters members deserve an early look at the findings.



Read the full article about the partnerships and the search for Angola at www.timesifters.org



www.ReflectionsofManatee.org
www.facebook.com/ReflectionsofManatee

YOU ARE INVITED TO:

“The History of Manatee Flows from this Spring” interpretive walkway public dedication and Pioneer Picnic at Manatee Mineral Spring

WHEN: October 19, 2013 11am – 3pm

**WHERE: Manatee Mineral Spring, 1312 2nd Ave East,
two blocks North of SR 64, off 14th Street East, Bradenton, FL 34208**

COST: Free event

Reflections of Manatee invites you to celebrate the unveiling of “The History of Manatee Flows from this Spring”, a new interpretive pathway that honors all the groups of people who have used the Manatee Mineral Spring over the centuries. The new pathway wends its way around the Manatee Mineral Spring site and the signs explore different facets of the area’s history, including Native Americans, the maroons of Angola, Early Pioneers, The Third Seminole War, The Civil War, and much more. The non-profit Reflections of Manatee developed the interpretive signs in consultation with area scholars and community descendants, with funding from the Florida Humanities Council.



Local organizations, scholars, professional re-enactors, and community and New College student volunteers will be on hand to celebrate the history and archaeology of Florida’s past peoples. New College Professor Uzi Baram and University of Central Florida Professor Rosalyn Howard will be on hand to announce new insights into Angola, the early 19th century maroon (escape slave) community.

Reflections of Manatee will be serving a picnic that celebrates the foods of Manatee’s early pioneers including smoked mullet and turkey, homemade cornbread, fruit cobbler, and much more. Recommendation donation for the lunch is \$5.00.

- 11:30am: Official dedication of the walkway, with brief remarks
- The twelve interpretive signs will be “hosted” by volunteers who can share more information and answer questions.
- 12:00pm: Pioneer Picnic
- 12:15pm: Presentation by re-enactor of Spanish official Vincente Folch y Juan
- 1:15pm: Presentation by re-enactor of a Black Seminole
- Activities include traditional games and skills for both adults and children including coins in the haystack, hoop rolling, and frying pan toss. Children’s activities continue throughout the event.

This is a registered event in collaboration with National Archaeology Day. www.nationalarchaeologyday.org

Call or email with questions:
941-746-2035
reflectionsofmanatee@msn.com



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

October 19th

National Archaeology Day Celebration and Pioneer Picnic 11am - 3pm

Manatee Mineral Spring Park 1312 2nd Ave. East, Bradenton

11:30 - Speakers and the dedication of a new walking path with interpretive signs that tell the history of the peoples who have used the Manatee Mineral Spring over the centuries.

12:00 - Pioneer Picnic featuring smoked turkey and mullet, cornbread, fruit cobbler and much more. Donation requested.

Call/email Sherry for more information. ssvekis@gmail.com

Membership

Individual:	\$20
Family:	\$30
Sustaining:	\$50
Student:	\$10

Pay online at:

TimeSifters.org

Or mail checks to:

Time Sifters, Inc.

PO Box 5283

Sarasota, FL. 34277

2013 MEETING CALENDAR

October 16, 6pm: Sherry Svekis: The History Beneath our Feet - Archaeology and the Manatee River Communities **Selby**

November 20, 6pm: Julie Langford, Roman Imperial Women as Propaganda **Selby**

December 11, 6pm: Holiday pot-luck and party

Selby Library: downtown Sarasota, Central Ave and 2nd Street

Go to www.TimeSifters.org
for more information!

We're on the Web!

www.TimeSifters.org

Your renewal date is above; please remit if due.
Please contact us if you think there is an error.