

# Time Sifters

May 2014



**A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society**

PO Box 5283, Sarasota FL 34277

Editor: Sherry Svekis • [ssvekis@gmail.com](mailto:ssvekis@gmail.com) • (941) 504-7130

## NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, May 21, 2014, 6:00 PM  
Selby Library, Downtown Sarasota

**John Jaffer and Valerie Jackson Bell**

## **The Search for the Synagogue of Gargzdai, Lithuania, Lost in 1941**

John Jaffer became interested in Gargzdai, Lithuania when he discovered that many ancestors and relatives had lived there. He first visited the town in 2001. He then began a website, hosted by Jewishgen.org, about its history. He has since returned twice. His most recent visit was in 2009, having been invited by the Gargzdai Area Museum to attend events commemorating the Jewish history of the town, and to address a gathering there.

His research has included investigating the synagogue complex which was destroyed during World War II. He is working to identify and describe the buildings of the former Jewish community, using recollections, written histories, maps, wartime aerial photos, satellite photos, and building plans.

In this presentation, he will give an introduction about the town, its history and Jewish population. He will then discuss his findings regarding the synagogue and related buildings, and the uses of technology in his research.



John Jaffer by wooden building, identified by several Gargzdai residents as built on footprint of former synagogue.

Following a short break, he will then briefly describe the Holocaust in Gargzdai. In the summer of 1941, virtually the entire Jewish population was killed, in events which are regarded as the start of the Holocaust. He will discuss the monuments at the three shooting sites, as well as other sources of information.

John is a long time member of Time Sifters, as well as a former board member and newsletter editor. He is an attorney practicing in Sarasota. The website is located at <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/gargzdai/>

(continued on page 3)

## Notes from a Time Sifter

Archaeologists uncover artifacts and try to put them together with other evidence to decide what they mean. Often the meaning is not clear so we end up with mysteries and hypothetical assumptions. Some of these “mysteries” and their explanation can be exciting enough to draw public interest. Unfortunately, many of these exciting mysteries turn out to be myths. Three of these mysterious myths that have recently been debunked relate to the Nazca Lines, Stonehenge and Tutankhamun.



The geometric figures in the southern Peruvian desert were discovered in the 1920s and have since been one of the most mysterious of these myths. Named the Nazca Lines, they are huge enigmatic patterns built by the Nazca people more than 1000 years ago. Mostly zoomorphic images, it was believed that they were astronomical maps or charts and could only be seen in their entirety from the air, so assumptions were made that somehow the ancient Nazca people had developed some kind of flying apparatus from which they could lay out the patterns; or, as Eric Von Däniken suggested, that these patterns were constructed by beings from outer space. But a little over ten years ago, an international team of archaeologists, computer scientists, and geologists joined to study the entire area. Their findings show that the images could, in fact, be viewed by observers on neighboring hillsides and plateaus, and that the lines were formed by people frequently walking in single file along the lines. Stone platforms and vestiges of postholes were found at the ends of some of the lines along with broken pottery, textiles and animal bones that appear to be the remains of sacrifices. Archaeologists found no temples in the Nazca towns and so concluded that the lines themselves were Nazca temples, and that the people who walked on the lines were engaging in valley-wide religious rituals that could be observed by worshippers who viewed from afar (Archaeology, May/June 2009).

Another mysterious myth is the common assumption that thousands of years ago, the 30 enormous stones that make up Stonehenge were brought by human transport to Wiltshire from as far as 25 miles away. That would mean that the builders possessed an advanced technology that most scientists did not think possible, and so the myths were created. Stories such as the one that claims that Uther Pendragon, King Arthur’s father, ordered the wizard, Merlin, to build Stonehenge; or that an Irish woman sold the stones to the Devil and he built the circle; or, more recently, it was built by aliens as a landing pad for space ships. Geologists have now joined archaeologists in the study of how these megaliths arrived in southwest England and concluded that, although humans set them upright, the huge stones likely were carried to the site by the Irish Sea Glacier that flowed southward across Wales during the Ice Age (Rob Ixer, UCL Institute of Archaeology, Richard Bevins, National Museum Wales and Nick Pearce, University of Aberystwyth).

One of the juiciest mysteries was the myth surrounding the death of Tut, the boy king of Egypt, who died at the young age of 19 or 20. Tut’s mummy shows that he had a severe head wound. The previous Pharaoh, Tut’s father, Akhenaton, had put emphasis on a minor deity, the Aton, instead of the traditional major deity, Amun, a move that was not popular and was ended when he died. Evidence from Tut’s tomb shows that his original name was Tutankhaton but was later changed to Tutankhamun giving rise to the assumption that the young king was forced to return to traditional worship when his father died and was murdered when he refused to cooperate. However, new studies of his mummy reveal that he died from accidental injuries from a fall, most likely from a chariot accident, not murder (Cranfield Forensic Institute).

New technology helps uncover new facts but these stories indicate that scholars of all disciplines must cooperate, need to have open minds and must continue to study evidence, both old and new.

(The Search for the Synagogue of Gargzdai, Lithuania, Lost in 1941 continued from page 1)

Valerie Jackson Bell is an archaeologist and retired museum curator who has worked on historic sites in Arizona, New York State, St. Augustine and Manatee County Florida; an early Paleolithic site in southern France; an early agricultural site in eastern Turkey and Late Paleolithic and Bronze Age sites in Spain.

She has co-authored articles on Late Paleolithic cave sites in Spain and authored an article on the historic salt industry of Central New York. She has presented papers at professional meetings in New York and Florida in addition to many talks to the general public and students.

Valerie accompanied John Jaffer to Gargzdai, Lithuania in 2009 and assisted in determining the location of the synagogue site and other sites of importance to the history of the Jewish community of Gargzdai.

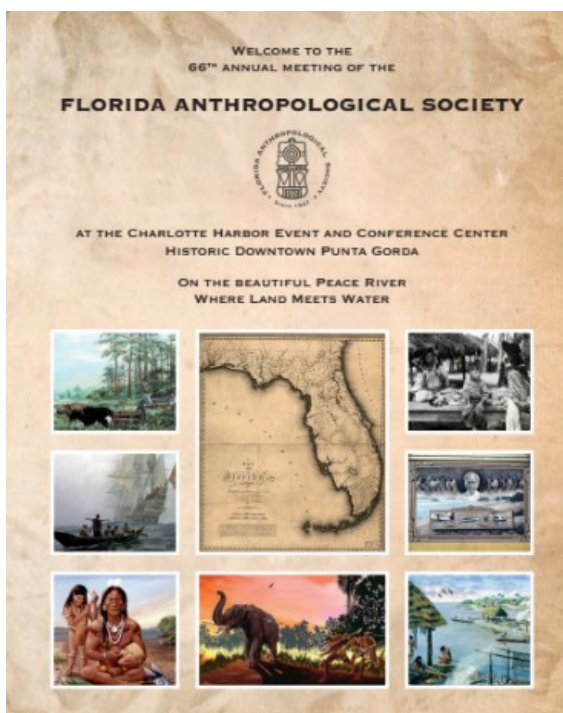
**66th Annual Meeting  
Florida Anthropological Society,  
May 8-11, 2014**

**It's not too late! You can register on-site.**  
Even if you only attend the Saturday sessions,  
you'll hear lots of interesting presentations from  
archaeologists working all over the state.

**Warm Mineral Springs/Little Salt Spring  
Archaeological Society**

is hosting the meeting, which will be held in Punta Gorda at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center that overlooks the scenic Peace River. The schedule is available at :

[http://www.fasweb.org/FAS2014\\_PROGRAM.pdf](http://www.fasweb.org/FAS2014_PROGRAM.pdf)



Punta Gorda is a quaint historic city rich in local and regional history located just south of, and at the mouth of, the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor. There is a beautiful downtown historic district that was revitalized after the devastating effects of Hurricane Charlie in 2004.

Time Sifters members may be interested in the many papers presented during the day on Saturday, the banquet Saturday evening featuring Dr. John Gifford, and archaeological tours on Sunday morning. Time Sifters will be hosting this conference next year, so anyone attending is encouraged to take notes and give our board feedback as we start to work on this important event.

**Accommodations & Banquet**

Local hotel options within walking distance include the Wyvern Hotel at (941) 639-7700 and the Punta Gorda Waterfront Hotels and Suites at (941) 639-1165. Mention the Florida Anthropological Society when making reservations.

The venue selected for the banquet is Laishley's Crab House, also right on the river. So, it will be a river-walk kind of meeting. The historic downtown district is only a block away from the hotel and all within walking distance.



## 2014 MEETING CALENDAR

**May 21, 6pm:** John Jaffer and Valerie Jackson Bell - The Search for the Synagogue of Gargzdai, Lithuania, Lost in 1941

The May meeting is our last until we resume in September.

*Selby Library: downtown Sarasota, Central Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street*

Go to [www.TimeSifters.org](http://www.TimeSifters.org)  
for more information!

### 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

---

We're on the Web!

**[www.TimeSifters.org](http://www.TimeSifters.org)**

---

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