

Time Sifters

September 2014



A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, September 17, 2014, 6:00 PM

Selby Library, Downtown Sarasota

Alison Elgart, Ph.D.

Bioarchaeology of a Prehistoric Burial Mound from Sarasota

Alison A. Elgart is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Florida Gulf Coast University. She received a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Binghamton and a Ph.D. in Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University. Her interests focus on the health and disease of precolumbian Florida populations and dental anthropology of humans and non-human primates. She has excavated several burial sites in southern Florida, and has studied the dentition and crania of numerous skeletal collections in our state as well.

Osteological analyses of populations in the Southeastern U.S. have generally focused on large inland burial mounds associated with historic and proto-historic farming populations. By contrast, relatively little osteological information has been generated on small coastal pre-Columbian hunter-gatherer populations. In this presentation, I will provide information on such a population through the analysis of a salvage collection from the Yellow Bluffs Mound (8SO4) on Sarasota Bay, Florida. This burial mound was excavated in 1969, but the human remains were never fully analyzed. The goal of this project was to determine the minimum number of individuals (MNI), and to assess the health and demographics of the small coastal fishing population that interred their dead in the mound during the early middle of the Manasota Period (185-60 cal B.C.). We found an MNI of 24 individuals, but there may be as many as 47. Their health was generally good, and comparisons were drawn from our results to other pre-Columbian hunter-gatherer populations in southern Florida.



Alison Elgart at work.



"April 1969. Henry Sheldon holds a shovel ... and Doris "Dottie" Davis wears a hat." *Florida Anthropologist*

Notes from a Time Sifter

It is September and students in the U. S. are going to school. People have been educating the young for at least 5,000 years. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of formal schools dating all the way back to the first cities of ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) after the invention of writing by the Sumerians (ca. 3000 B.C.E.). Students were not kings or princes but sons of elite families who would become scribes. Scribes were essential because the Sumerian writing system had over 2000 symbols, so to be literate, one had to study for many years at the edubba (“tablet house”). A “head master” was the professor in charge at each edubba with an assistant professor and several other faculty members who oversaw things like attendance and discipline (Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians*).

Ancient Egyptian children went to school also. Egyptians provided at least a few years of basic education at village schools for children regardless of their social status, but reading and writing were reserved for the elite who could attend the “House of Life”, an area of a temple precinct that served as a library and school where students studied to be scribes or priests. Here, instruction in things like mathematics and record keeping was given by specialists who, like modern teachers, complained about students’ laziness (Rosalie David, *Life in Ancient Egypt*).

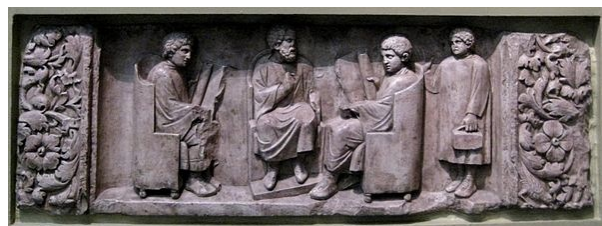


The ancient Chinese developed a private school system where teachers were philosophers like Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.), but during the Han period (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) the Chinese government recognized the need for educated officials and set up a system that



identified the most intelligent boys to be taught government procedures. From these beginnings, the Chinese developed a university system that boasted 30,000 students by the 3rd century C.E. India also developed a private school system, beginning with teachers like the Buddha (5th century B.C.E.) but most of the population was Hindu and their social structure prevented education to all except the upper classes. Nevertheless, the system led to the eventual development of early universities organized during the Gupta Dynasty (320-550 C.E.) (Edgar, *Civilizations Past & Present*).

The goal of all these schools and early universities was narrow, aimed to produce citizens prepared to enter specific professions such as scribes, priests, or government officials. It was the Athenians of Classical Greece (500-323 B.C.E.) who broadened education to include critical thinking. Socrates taught young men rhetoric, ethics and metaphysics, and encouraged students to question, research, analyze and debate, all hallmarks of real education. His famous pupil, Plato, added to this system by establishing the Academy of Athens which was followed by Aristotle’s Lyceum that offered lectures and advanced studies (David Sacks, *The Ancient Greek World*). The Greek system was adopted by the Romans who carried the system to their distant provinces making education available to a great



number of students. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 C.E.), education in Europe declined, kept alive only in monasteries. It was reborn in the Middle Ages as degree-granting institutions. The system spread worldwide and became the universities of today to which students still return.

Two opportunities of note in the community:

- Are you interested in historic preservation? The City of Sarasota is looking for someone with a background in archaeology or history to serve on the Historic Preservation review board. Meetings are once a month and the term starts in December. Contact me if you have questions about this as it is my term that is expiring. Sherry
- Are you invested in volunteering on a dig? Our county archaeologist, Ryan Murphy, has asked Time Sifters to help sift the remains of a shell midden that was disturbed at a project in Osprey. We don't have a date yet for the project, but if you are interested in participating, let me know.

What's up at the New College Public Archaeology Lab?

Time Sifters continuing collaboration with NCPAL brings great hands-on workshops to our members. The first one of the year is the evening of October 21st. Come out and have fun!

ARCHAEOLOGY WORKS: POTTERY

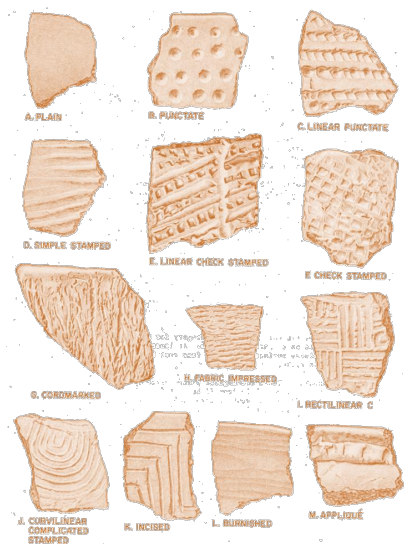
What can baked bits of clay teach us about prehistoric people?

Come out to the New College Public Archaeology Lab to learn to identify different types of prehistoric pottery found around Florida and about how archaeologists use these clues to learn about people in the past.

Where: Public Archaeology Lab
New College Bayfront Campus
5800 Bay Shore Rd
Sarasota

When: Tuesday, October 21st
6:00 – 8:00 pm

For more information: Contact Aric at
Aric.Archebelle-Smit@ncf.edu





2014 - 2015 MEETING CALENDAR

Membership

Individual:	\$20
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September 17, 6pm: Dr. Alison Elgart, *Bioarchaeology of a Prehistoric Burial Mound from Sarasota*

October 15, 6pm: Dr. John Kantner, *Chaco Canyon: From the Outside Looking In*

November 19, 6pm: Hermann Trappman and Elizabeth Neily

January 21, 6pm: To be announced.

February 18, 6pm: Dr. David Overstreet, *Northern Limits of Maize Cultivation as Evidenced from Menominee Indian Reservation Remains*

March 18, 6pm: Dr. Birgitta Wallace, *Vikings in North America*

April 15, 6pm: Student grant winners