

FEBRUARY - 2026

PRESERVE ♦ EDUCATE ♦ RESEARCH ♦ INSPIRE

Dear Member:

We had to shuffle our speakers because everyday life gets in the way of well laid plans. Our February speaker has swapped places with our May speaker. This allowed us to not lose two really talented speakers.

Please join us at the "Sarasota History in the Park" at Phillippi Estate on **Saturday February 7th**. If you would like to volunteer, please drop me a line.

Also be sure to sign up for "Landscape Character Assessment". Contact Dr. Uzi Baram to sign up and help with this project.

Darwin "Smitty" Smith, President
hmsbeagle22@gmail.com

Historical Trivia

Where was the first Neanderthal skull found??



Answer on page 4.

February 18th - at 5:45 PM at the Selby Library in downtown Sarasota



"Calusas, Aztecs, & Conquistadors: Research and Writing - Facts and Fiction"

Will Granger
Best Selling Author

Will Granger will talk about "When Royal Heads Are Hunted", his new historical fiction novel about the *Calusa Indians, Aztecs and Spanish Conquistadors*. Extensively researched over four years, Granger visited historic sites throughout Florida, connected with scholars and archaeologists, and gathered more than 100 sources on the three groups featured in the novel. Granger will discuss his research and focus on what he learned about Calusa history, culture, lifestyle, and influence.

The plot begins in the 16th century when Spanish Conquistadors invaded the Aztec nation in modern day Mexico and the powerful Calusa empire in southwest Florida.

Will Granger is an author, Air Force retiree with 20 years of service, and English teacher with experience at the university, high school, and middle school levels. Besides his recent novel "When Royal Heads Are Hunted", he has written two others, "Ordinary Hero" and "Reluctant Hero". He has also written for several local and international newspapers and aviation websites. He holds a B.B.A. in International Business from James Madison University and M.A. in English Education from the University of Central Florida. A Florida resident since 2002, he lives in Venice, Florida with his wife Monique.



Photos: Will Granger & floridamuseum.ufl.

In The News

Soii Havzak, Zerafshan Valley, central Tajikistan: Ancient Human Settlement Dating Back 150,000 Years

By Smitty. **Sources:** SciTechDaily, Ancient Pages & Cambridge University Press (Antiquity).

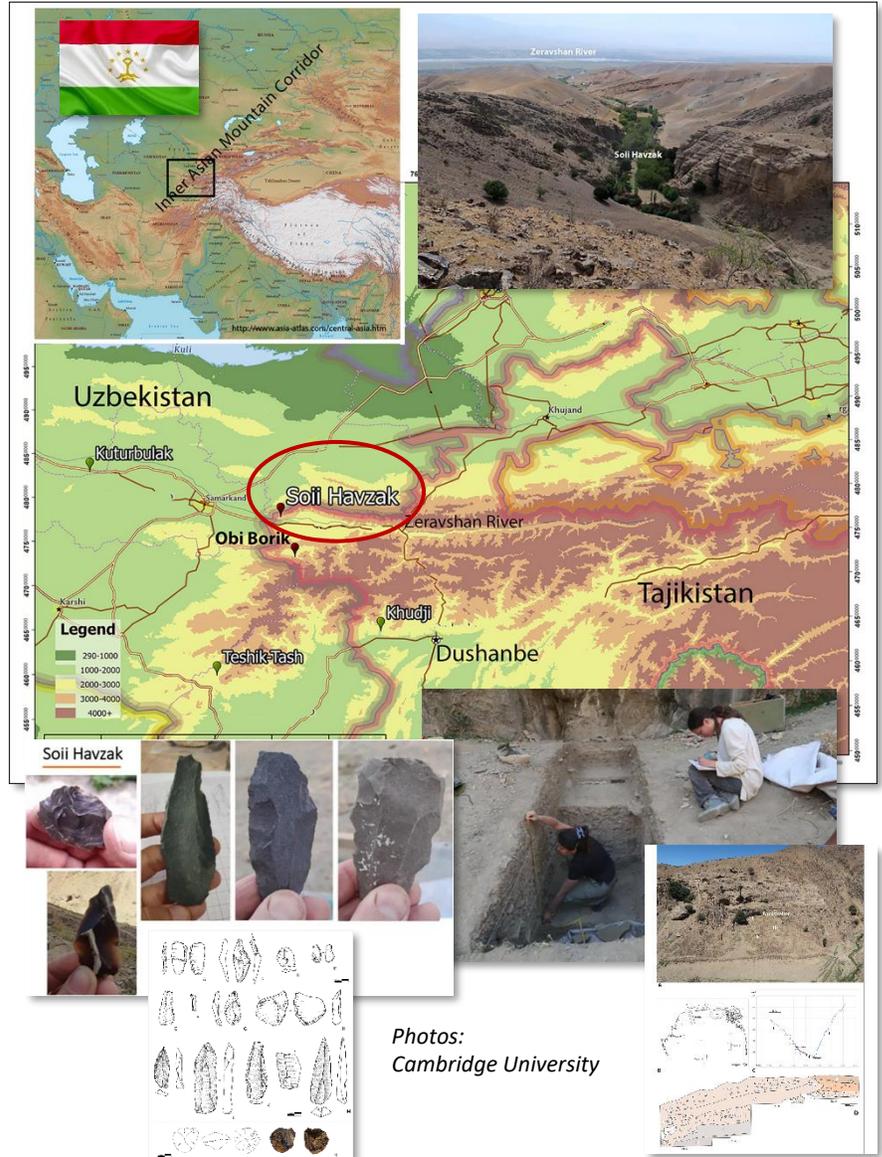
Recent excavations in Tajikistan's Zerafshan River Valley uncovered a site dating back as far as 150,000 years. The site, known as Soii Havzak, yielded key evidence of Central Asia's crucial role in the migration and development of early humans.

Soii Havzak is a small tributary of the Zerafshan River, about 6.3 miles north of Panjakent. The site is a rock shelter/overhang carved into a cliff face about 132 feet above the stream. The sediment that had accumulated under the overhang formed an extensive talus composed of rock debris and other material sloping towards the lower terrace of the stream.

A team of archaeologists from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan has discovered a multi-layered archaeological site offering new insights into early human settlement in the region.

The team uncovered a vast array of stone tools, animal bones, and ancient vegetation that date back to various periods between 20,000 and 150,000 years ago. The valley is known primarily as a Silk Road route in the Middle Ages but was a key route for human expansion long before that. It served as a migration route for several human species, such as Homo sapiens, Neanderthals, and Denisovans, which may have coexisted in this area. The research focuses on identifying the specific human populations that inhabited Central Asia and understanding the nature of their interactions.

The study, recently published in *Antiquity*, describes the archaeological team's excavation of three areas at Soii Havzak, each unearthing layers of human activity. The well-preserved remains offer valuable clues to the



Photos: Cambridge University

ancient climate and environment, as well as the potential for discovering human remains that could identify which human species inhabited the region.

The team has identified the Soii Havzak location in the mountainous corridor as a potentially crucial transition point for human populations. This site may have played an important role in facilitating the spread of early humans across extensive regions, contributing to our understanding of human migration patterns.

Excavation at Soii Havzak will continue, with plans to explore deeper layers and analyze findings further.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

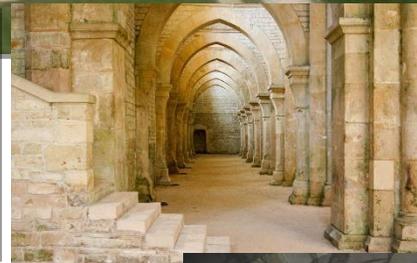
#165 - Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay (France)

By Smitty, Time Sifters Board Member. Sources: Wikipedia, World Heritage Site



The Abbey of Fontenay, was founded by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux in 1119, and built in the Romanesque style for the Cistercian Order, a spinoff of the Benedictine's. Built between 1139 and 1147 by Abbot Guillaume thanks to the generosity of Ebraud, Bishop of Norwich, the Abbey of Fontenay was consecrated by Pope Eugene III, a Cistercian and former disciple of St Bernard. By 1200 the monastic complex was complete and able to serve as many as 300 monks.

It is one of the oldest and most complete Cistercian abbeys in Europe. The original complex comprising church, dormitory, cloister, chapter house, caldarium, refectory, dovecote and forge, all remain intact except the refectory, which was destroyed in 1745. Within its enclosing wall, the Abbey still retains other communal buildings: monks' day room and dormitory, warming room, guest house, bakery and iron



Photos: orangesmile.com, Wikipedia, wideangleadventure, allfreephotos

works. This last building, dating to the end of the 12th century, recalls the part which the Cistercians played in the technological progress of the Middle Ages, and is one of the oldest industrial buildings in France.

In 1906 Edouard Aynard, an art-loving banker from Lyon, bought the abbey and commenced its restoration which was complete by 1911. Edouard's

descendants continued to work on the abbey, and it remains in the Aynard family to this day.

In 1981 the abbey became UNESCO World Heritage Site #165.

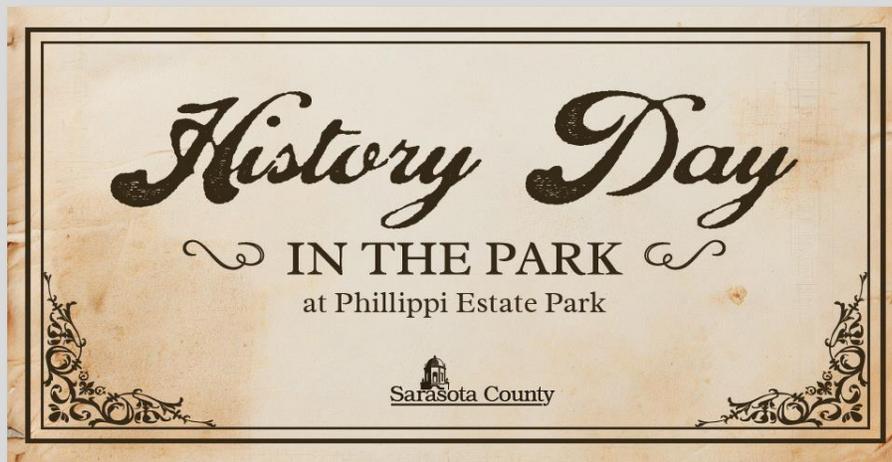
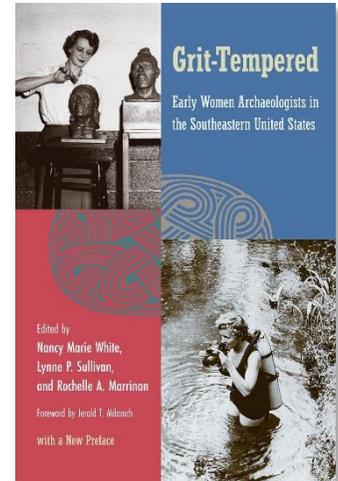


A Time Sifters Book Review

Grit - Tempered: Early Women Archaeologists in Southeastern United States.

Edited by Nancy Marie White, Lynne P. Sullivan, and Rochelle A. Marrinan (Florida Museum of Natural History)

Updated with a new preface on the 25th anniversary of its first publication, this volume documents the lives and work of pioneering women archaeologists in the southeastern United States from the 1920s through the 1960s. Some of these women were working at the time of the book's first publication in 1999, and they either wrote their own stories or were interviewed. Others were no longer living; their biographies are gleaned from archival research. Rich with humor, tragedy, and important information for the history of archaeology in the South and beyond, as well as anthropology in general, this book includes the story of African American women excavators on WPA crews during the Great Depression; tales of innovative lab work, adventurous field-work, and public archaeology; and provocative discussions of women in archaeology and of gender in the archaeological record.



February 7, All Day

Phillippi Estate Park, as the home of the Edson Keith Mansion and the historic Keith Farmhouse, is holding History Day in the Park.

Please join Time Sifters & Reflections of Manatee along with other vendors celebrating Sarasota County's history.

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Historical Trivia: Neander Valley, Germany.