

APRIL - 2026

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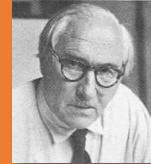
Dear Member:

Have you dreamed of making history? Of course, we all have. Now Time Sifters has a chance to be part of a region-wide 24 hours of online giving – an opportunity to widen our impact and help us connect to the larger community of people who care about archaeology and preservation. **On April 15-16, 2026, visit the GivingChallenge.org** and make a donation to us and/or to any of the great participating nonprofits in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties. See page 4 for more information

Darwin “Smitty” Smith, President
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Historical Trivia

Name this famous
Paleoanthropologist.?



Answer on page 6.

April 15th - at 5:45 PM at the Selby Library in downtown Sarasota



“Mapping the Sacred: LiDAR and the Digital Reconstruction of Mithraic Cult Spaces at Ostia Antica”

Dr. Fred Pirone, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at New College and Director of the New College Public Archaeology

What happened inside a Roman mystery cult? That question has fascinated historians for centuries – and new technology may finally help answer it.

This presentation shares an ongoing collaborative research project using LiDAR scanning to create precise digital twins of two ancient Mithraic temples, or Mithraea, preserved at *Ostia Antica*, the harbor city of ancient Rome. The team has captured these ritual chambers in three-dimensional detail. The vaulted ceilings, stone benches, altar niches, and narrow corridors, creating digital records that preserve these fragile spaces against the inevitable toll of time.

By analyzing the spatial logic of these rooms – how many people could gather, how light moves through them, how initiates would have experienced the ritual environment – we are asking a deceptively simple question: what kind of community was this? Was the cult of Mithras a brotherhood of secret initiates, or was it closer to a social club, a fraternity of men who shared meals, mutual support, and a common identity? The architecture, it turns out, has something to say.

Dr. Fred Pirone is a specialist in the archaeology of the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East, his work centers on the integration of emerging technologies –

including LiDAR and digital documentation methods – to preserve and interpret ancient artifacts and constructed spaces. Closer to home, he is equally committed to Florida archaeology and the stewardship of the state's material heritage. His research also extends into ethnographic archaeology, with ongoing work examining the material dimensions of American consumerism. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology with a concentration in Archaeology from the University of South Florida, and a J.D. from American University.

In The News

Kemune, thought to be the ancient city of Zakhiku.

By Smitty. Sources: Wikipedia, Aljazeera & Ancient World Marvels.

The water levels of the Mosul Dam have fluctuated in recent years first in 2013 and again 2019 through 2024. A massive drought has caused the levels to fall so drastically that ancient towns and cities normally under water have been exposed. Archaeologists have taken advantage of the situation, exploring long lost sites. One of the most exciting of these is Kemune also known as Zakhiku. The Mitanni era city was destroyed by an earthquake around 1350 BCE and when the Mosul Dam on the Tigris River was built in 1981 it disappeared beneath the reservoir forever.

Iraq is vulnerable to climate change, and its southern governorates, where temperatures surpass 122 Fahrenheit in the summer, have faced severe drought since 2019, forcing farmers to abandon their dying crops. Last December, water was released from the Mosul dam to irrigate farmland. As the water levels fell, Zakhiku emerged earlier this year in the Kurdish region of Iraq again.

Emergency rescue excavations by the Kurdistan Archaeology Organization and University of Tübingen were immediately organized to take advantage of the situation. In addition to mapping the majority of the site, along with other artifacts, about 100 cuneiform tablets were recovered. The tablets date from the early Middle Assyrian period, just after the destruction of the city by an earthquake. According to one of the tablets that has been translated, Kemune was the ancient city of Zakhiku.

Zakhiku was founded around 1,800 BCE by the Old Babylonian Empire that ruled Mesopotamia between the



Photos: The University of Tübingen; Wikipedia.

19th and 15th centuries BCE. The site includes a palace constructed on the banks of the Tigris River during the days of the Mitanni Empire. The remains of the palace are conserved to a height of about 23 feet. Archaeologists unearthed several rooms inside the palace and partially reviewed eight of them. They also uncovered big, fired bricks that were used as floor slabs in some places. Well-preserved wall paintings were also found in some rooms, which are six feet thick and more than 6.5 feet high.

In February, the team of archaeologists halted the excavation as the dam water rose again and Zakhiku disappeared underwater.

The site has now again flooded.

Florida History

The Importance of Cattle in Fort Myers History.

By John F. Furey M.A., RPA. President, Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS)

When you think of Ft. Myers. is cattle the first thing that comes to mind? Not today, but the importance of cattle to the historical and present-day economy of southwest Florida, and Fort Myers in particular, is celebrated this month. The historical roots of our local cattle economies are often overlooked or forgotten.

Cattle were first introduced by the Spanish in north, central, and southwest Florida during a failed settlement attempt and the fate of those cattle are unknown. The establishment of St. Augustine in 1565 started a new era of Spanish settlements and missions across north Florida that were sustained by imported Andalusian cattle.

Called *Ranchos*, not to be confused with fishing ranchos in late 18th and early 19th century Florida, Spanish herds and crops, including corn, were tended by Florida's Indigenous peoples. The Spanish rancho system was created using a herd of these cattle. The Spanish conquistadors required food from the Indigenous peoples to sustain their military, religious, and administrative personnel, and corn grown and beef from the cattle were both needed. Over time, many ranchos grew quite large. Many of the cows got loose as herds were scattered because the conflict between British and Spanish decimated the Spanish mission system. Indigenous peoples began capturing these cows for their own use and, over time, acquired sizeable herds.

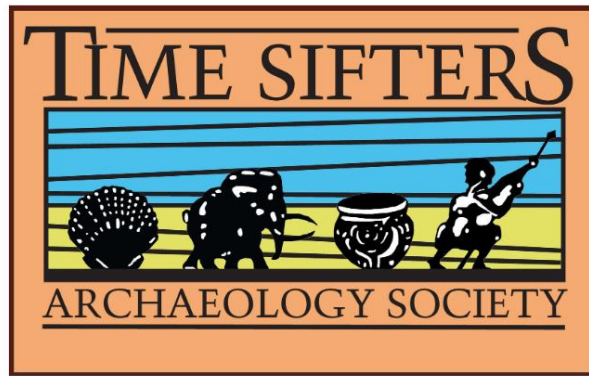
Florida became an American territory in 1821, and in 1830 the government signed the *Indian*



Removal Act into law. The policy was to relocate all of the Seminoles, Creeks, and other tribes to a territory west of the Mississippi River. Those that agreed to move could sell their cattle to a white rancher, but those that refused to relocate took their cattle and moved further south to escape the soldiers and the forced relocation. Eventually, the Seminoles were unable to keep their herds as they were pushed further into the swamps, and the cattle were taken over by white ranchers.

During the ensuing Seminole Wars (1817-18, 1835-42, and 1855-58), herds were confiscated by the government to entice relocation or abandoned by Seminole families to reduce their visibility in hopes of avoiding capture. After the Union Army hunted the Seminoles through three wars to relocate them, the government finally called an end to their attempts to relocate them. Cattle would be later reintroduced to the Seminoles in the 1930's as a part of the *Works Progress Administration*.

Free-range scrub cattle remained a fixture in Florida as new settlers sought range land further south. In early Ft. Myers history, Florida had large herds of cattle, and in the Ft. Myers area, herds were driven down Summerlin Road to Punta Rassa and shipped by boat to Cuba. But, during the Civil War, Florida cattlemen shipped cattle north to supply the Confederate army. After the war, many cattle had gotten loose and wandered through Ft. Myers and it was not until Sept. 4, 1908 that a loose cattle ordinance was passed.



The Giving Challenge is an opportunity to connect to the larger community of people who care about archaeology and preservation, and double our impact with The Patterson Foundation match. But we need your help! You can help us reach our goal of \$5,000 and 100 donors!



BE THE ONE

Presented by the
Community Foundation of Sarasota County

Here is how you can be a part of
the 2026 Giving Challenge:

1

Visit our website GivingChallenge.org from noon to noon, April 15-16, 2026.

2

Search for your favorite nonprofit or discover a new cause to connect with. Exploration is encouraged!

3

Make a secure online donation from your computer or mobile device. And remember, The Patterson Foundation will match your donation up to \$100 for each organization you donate to!

— Hosted By —



COMMUNITY
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Strengthening Nonprofits Through the 2026 Giving Challenge

April 15-16, 2026 | NOON TO NOON
GivingChallenge.org

Join the conversation on social media using [#GivingChallenge2026](https://twitter.com/GivingChallenge2026)

Tree Rings as Poetry:

Reciprocity, Storytelling, and Science from Florida Trees

WHEN:	April 10, 2026
WHERE:	New College of Florida Public Archaeology Lab (most sessions offered virtually)
SESSIONS:	
9:30 AM:	WELCOME TO NCPAL!
10:00 AM:	DOING DENDROCHRONOLOGY with Professor Kat Napora
2:00 PM:	POETICS IN DENDROCHRONOLOGY with Reverend Houston Cypress
3:30 PM:	NCF HISTORIC LANDSCAPE TOUR with Professor Uzi Baram
4:15 PM:	CLOSING DISCUSSION



REGISTRATION REQUIRED

RSVP: Email or Use the QR CODE!
EMAIL: a.bernard25@ncf.edu



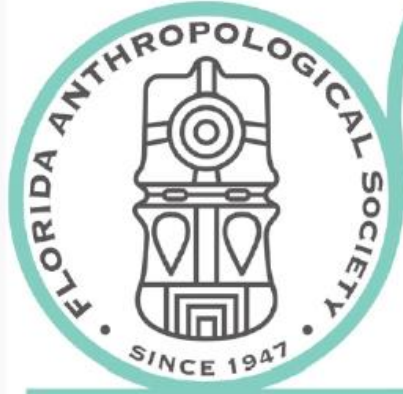
Funding for this program was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities with funds from The Mosaic Company. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or The Mosaic Company.



Event Poster, created by Professor Frederick Pirone

Time Sifters Archaeology Society members are invited to a special upcoming workshop that marks a revitalization of the long-standing collaboration between the New College Public Archaeology Lab (NCPAL) and Time Sifters. Titled, *"Tree Rings as Poetry: Reciprocity, Storytelling, and Science from Florida Trees,"* this initiative challenges participants to look at dendrochronology, the science of tree-ring dating, through a humanistic lens. The program is built on three core tenets: Science, Reciprocity, and Storytelling. Where tree-rings provide critical empirical data about past climates and chronologies, they also serve as a poetic, silent record of resilience just waiting to be discovered. Every ring is a year in the life of the tree, recording anecdotes of plenty, drought, and the changing world shared by humans and nature in its width.

This event is free and open to the public, but registration will be required as space is limited. We hope to see many Time Sifters members there to celebrate this union of archaeology, environmental science, and the humanities. Please email a.bernard25@ncf.edu, or click this link: [Tree Rings as Poetry RSVP form](#), to RSVP!



MAY 8-10, 2026
FAS ANNUAL MEETING
Punta Gorda on the Peace River

CONFERENCE: **Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center**

HOTEL: **Four Points by Sheraton Punta Gorda Harborside**

RECEPTION: **TT's Tiki Bar at Harborside Garden**

BANQUET: **Laisley Crab House on the Peace River**

ALL THESE VENUES ARE SHORT WALKS FROM EACH OTHER ALONG THE WATERFRONT

[MORE DETAILS ON THE FAS WEBSITE](#)

AT THE EVENT

- Friday Reception
- FAC Stewards of Heritage Award
- Papers & Posters
- Vendor Displays
- Meetings
- Awards Dinner
- Keynote Speaker
- Field Trips

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Lifetime: \$500
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Historical Trivia: Louis Leakey.