



APRIL - 2025

PRESERVE ♦ EDUCATE ♦ RESEARCH ♦ INSPIRE

Dear Member:

Time Sifters is one of 13 chapters of the Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) who is holding their 77th Annual Meeting & Conference on May 9-11 in Gainesville, FL. The Conference is open to the public with Saturday devoted to lectures and exhibits. See page 4 for more information.

We are proud to announce that *Time Sifters Vice President, Sherry Svekis* will be honored by History & Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County on Thursday, May 1st. for her work in Florida and Sarasota County.

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

Historical Trivia

Name this famous
Greek General.



April 16th - at 5:45 PM at the Selby Library in downtown Sarasota



**"The Art of Luxury:
The Role of Villas in
Roman Society."**

Dr. Denise Cali,
*Associate Professor of Instruction
University of South Florida*



This presentation explores the diverse functions and significance of Roman villas as both elite residences and centers of economic, social, and cultural life. From opulent retreats to vast agricultural estates, villas reflected the power and prestige of their owners while serving as hubs for production, innovation, and leisure. Through archaeological evidence, literary sources, and digital reconstructions, we will examine how these estates functioned and what they reveal about status, economy, and daily life in the Roman world.

Dr. Denise Cali is an Associate Professor of Instruction in the Department of History at the University of South Florida (USF).

She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Salerno in Italy in 2009. Her academic focus encompasses Classical Archaeology, Greek and Roman Civilization, and Mediterranean Material Culture.

At USF, Dr. Cali teaches a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses, including Classical Archaeology and specialized topics such as Emperors and Gladiators, Imperial Architecture, and Roman North Africa. She emphasizes a hands-on approach to learning, utilizing archaeological teaching collections and digital resources provided by the Institute for Digital Exploration (IDEx). Additionally, she serves as the Program Director for the Spring

Break Study
Abroad
Program,

"USF Sicily: Mediterranean Culture," offering courses on Ancient Mediterranean History and Archaeology.

Dr. Cali's research interests include urbanization and the monumentalization of landscapes in **Africa Proconsularis** during the Roman Empire, with a particular focus on Leptis Magna in Libya. She has also explored the iconography of power through the study of mosaic floor repertoires from Roman imperial villas in Sicily and Malta. She is Senior Member of the excavation project "*Melita Civitas Romana*" at **the Roman Domus of Rabat in Malta**.



Notes from a Time Sifter

Damascus: the Pearl of the East

By Evelyn Mangie, Time Sifters Board Member.

Damascus in Syria is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It developed around an oasis on *the Silk Road, a well-traveled road* that connected Asia with the West. Archaeological excavations and a clay tablet from Ebla (Tell Mardikh) indicate that Damascus was already an urban center in the 4th millennium BCE, and by the second millennium, the city was circled by protective walls.

The 1490 BCE hieroglyphic tablets of Tel el-Amarna in Egypt list Damascus as one of the territories conquered by Thutmose III in 1490 BCE. Assyrian records also reveal the importance of Damascus, as does the Bible (Genesis 14:15, 2 Samuel

8:5-6, 1 Kings 11:23-25). Flavius Josephus says that Abraham “reigned at Damascus” when he left Babylon, and Saul of Tarsus (5- 65 CE) was transformed on the road to Damascus, from persecutor of Christians to Paul, an apostle who spread Christianity.

The importance of the city is *shown in the number of kingdoms* that fought to gain control of it: Hittites and Egyptians in 1259 BCE, the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (1115 – 1077 BCE), and the Arameans (11th-8th centuries BCE), who made it the capital city of Aram, one of the small kingdoms that developed in the Levant after the late Bronze Age

collapse in the 12th century BCE.

Aramean Damascus prospered, its influence and language spread throughout the area until the 8th century BCE when the city was attacked by foreign conquerors. It fell to the Assyrians in the 8th century BCE, then to the Babylonians in the 7th century BCE, to the Persians in the 6th century BCE, to the Greeks (Alexander) in the 4th century BCE, and the Romans in the first century BCE.

Damascus was Christianized in the 4th century CE. When the *Roman Empire split* into the Western and Eastern Empires, Damascus became a military outpost of the Eastern Empire, but during the 6th century CE the Persian wars ravaged the empire. Damascus was taken over by the Arabs in 634 CE who introduced Islam. The Islamic Umayyad caliphs established court in Damascus and built the *Great Mosque of Damascus* that has been called one of the “marvels of Islamic architecture.”

Today, Damascus is the capital of the modern state of Syria. It is a large city, often called the “**Pearl of the East**”, and was named a *World Heritage Site #20 by UNESCO in 1979.*

A civil war has severely damaged some parts of the city, but its history ensures its future. Mark Twain wrote of Damascus, “*To Damascus, years are only moments, decades are only flitting trifles of time. She measures time not by days and months and years, but by the empires she has seen rise and prosper and crumble to ruin. She is a type of immortality.*”



Photos: Wikipedia, vecteezy.com, reddit.

The Discovery of 50 Extremely Rare Viking Graves

By Smitty, Time Sifters Board Member. Sources: The Independent, AP News, and Archaeology News.



Photos: Museum Odense & wallpaperflaire

Archaeologists from Museum Odense lead by Michael Borre Lundø, archaeologist and curator at the Museum, have uncovered a remarkable Viking burial site in the Danish village of Åsum. The cemetery site has revealed more than 50 exceptionally well-preserved skeletons and also five cremation graves. *"This is such an exciting find because we found these skeletons that are so very, very well preserved,"* said Lundø, who led the six-month dig. *"Normally, we would be lucky to find a few teeth in the graves, but here we have entire skeletons."* They were preserved thanks to favorable soil chemistry, particularly chalk and high water levels. The burial ground dates back to the 9th and 10th centuries.

The site was discovered last year during a routine survey, ahead of power line renovation work on the outskirts of the village of Aasum, three miles northeast of Odense, Denmark's third-largest city. This discovery offers extraordinary opportunities to perform a wide range of scientific analyses, which can



reveal more about the general health, diet, and origins of those buried. The well-preserved state of the skeletons is allowing researchers for the first time to conduct ancient DNA (aDNA) analyses. This will assist in the discovery of where these people came from which could reveal previously unknown aspects of Viking ancestry and kinship. The Vikings unearthed at Aasum likely weren't warriors. The site was probably a "standard settlement," perhaps a farming community.

Several of the graves provide evidence of high-status individuals, with artifacts indicating that the Vikings had far-reaching trade networks. One of the most notable discoveries is the grave of a woman, believed to be of noble standing. Her grave goods



included a glass bead necklace, an iron key, a knife with a handle wrapped in silver thread, and a small shard of glass that may have served as an amulet. At the foot of her grave was a finely decorated wooden chest, the contents of which remain a mystery.

Other significant items found in the graves include a bronze three-lobed brooch, a single red glass bead, and a piece of rock crystal. The presence of rock crystal, which is not native to Denmark and likely originated from Norway, underscores the extensive trade connections Vikings maintained.

2025 Heritage Award: Archaeological Conservancy

Time Sifters Vice President, **Sherry Svekis** will be honored by *History & Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County* on Thursday, May 1st. for her work in Florida and Sarasota County. The Awards Dinner is to be held at the Sarasota Art Museum.

The following is the description of some of her accomplishments to date.

"On behalf of the Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation, I am thrilled to inform you that you have been selected as the recipient of the 2025 Sarasota County Heritage Award for Archaeological Conservancy.

This award honors your exceptional contributions to archaeological conservation, historical research, and public education in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Your

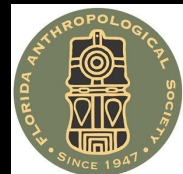


dedication to documenting and preserving the Angola Maroon Community site, securing its UNESCO International Site nomination, and leading excavations at Manatee Mineral Spring Park have been instrumental in uncovering and preserving vital pieces of Florida's past.

Through your scholarly research, public archaeology initiatives, grant funding efforts, and community outreach, you have significantly advanced historical awareness and preservation in our region. Your leadership in organizations like Time Sifters Archaeology Society and Reflections of Manatee, as well as your work in securing funding for exhibits and educational programs, exemplifies a lifelong commitment to protecting and sharing history."

THE 77th ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE

Gainesville, Florida – May 9-11, 2025



SIGNIFICANCE

of the Past for the Present
and the Future



Florida Anthropological Society 77th Annual Meeting
Presented by Florida Archaeological Council

THE FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL (FAC) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA INVITES YOU TO THE 77TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN GAINESVILLE, MAY 9-11, 2025, AT THE HILTON HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER JUST ACROSS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA.

This event marks 23 years since FAC published the "Thinking about Significance" volume. This publication was monumental at the time and has been a reference to many in the years since. But our understanding of what archaeological significance is has shifted dramatically during the last two decades as our understanding of the archaeological record has grown and as the dialogue surrounding archaeology has expanded to include a larger, more diverse stakeholder group. Papers on all topics are welcomed, but it is hoped there will be a focus on "significance", including the interpretation of site and artifact significance in relation to historic preservation, significance in interpretation and presentation, how different "groups" view significance, and how our understanding and evaluation of significance has changed as the perspectives of indigenous and other underrepresented stakeholders are integrated into archaeological discussions.

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Historical Trivia: Alexander the Great