12-1-1990

From the Editors

Tampa Bay History

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Recommended Citation
Tampa Bay History (1990) "From the Editors," Tampa Bay History: Vol. 12 : Iss. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol12/iss2/2

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FROM THE EDITORS

United States history is perceived by many Europeans as a contradiction in terms. How, they ask, could a nation so young have a history? One wonders what such people would say about Tampa Bay history. Continuous recorded history is not only relatively short for this area but also difficult to document since the original native inhabitants were wiped out by European diseases and the early period of European and American colonization was characterized by a small number of settlers living under frontier conditions. Rather than a restatement or reinterpretation of known facts, much of nineteenth-century Florida history is a search for evidence of what actually occurred, especially in isolated regions, such as south Florida. As a result, the articles published in *Tampa Bay History* often cover more accessible twentieth-century topics.

This issue focuses on unknown or little known events of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the first article, "The Sarrazota, or Runaway Negro Plantations: Tampa Bay’s First Black Community, 1812-1821," documents a previously missing chapter of Tampa Bay history. From a variety of original sources, historian Canter Brown, Jr., has discovered the existence of a community of runaway slaves that long escaped the attention of historians. Although the community was destroyed in 1821, it briefly provided refuge for runaway slaves and, as a result, captured the attention of leading Americans, such as Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun.

Another historical detective, J. Allison DeFoor, has pieced together more information about Odet Philippe, one of Tampa Bay’s earliest non-native settlers. In "Odet Philippe: From Charleston to Tampa Bay," DeFoor documents Philippe’s life in South Carolina during the 1820s and speculates about the mysterious origins of this legendary figure.

The photo essay by Lisa W. Rodriguez traces the history of Brandon, an unincorporated area of Hillsborough County that recently celebrated its centennial. Previously unpublished photographs give a graphic sense of life in this community before and after the turn of the century.

The article by R. Wade Wetherington documents "The Florida Peninsular’s View of Slavery, 1855-1861," by reproducing a selection of articles and advertisements from Tampa’s only surviving newspaper of the period. These pieces provide dramatic insight into the institution of slavery and some attitudes toward it.

The editors are pleased to announce that the 1990 Tampa Bay History Essay Contest was won by James A. Schnur. His entry, which examines the desegregation of Pinellas County schools, will be published in the next issue of *Tampa Bay History*. 