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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

The year 1992 marks the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's first landing in the Americas. The resulting encounter between the peoples of the so-called old world and the new world produced a series of mutual discoveries that historians are still trying to comprehend fully. The Quincentenary has sparked a lively debate over the meaning of the contacts that began in 1492.

For Florida the encounter between peoples of the old world and the new has special meaning. Not only did numerous Spanish explorers land on the peninsula after 1492, but the "discovery" of Florida by outsiders has continued down to this day. Indeed, given the eventual disappearance of the native tribes that inhabited Florida in 1492, Florida's population is today composed of a mixture of peoples who are descendants of displaced Indians, African slaves, Anglo homesteaders, European immigrants, Asian refugees, Latin American exiles, and countless others who discovered and re-discovered the peninsula over the past 500 years. Each new arrival encountered Florida for the first time, and their stories tell much of the history of the state.

The voyages and explorations of Pánfilo de Narváez and Hernando de Soto demonstrated that Tampa Bay was a pathway to North America. The articles in this issue of *Tampa Bay History* show that the region continued as a point of entry for Indian refugees, the U.S. army, illicit drugs, and illegal aliens. In "George Meade, John Pemberton, and A.P. Hill: Army Relationships during the Florida Crisis of 1849-1850," Canter Brown, Jr., uses diaries and letters from the period to describe the lives of army officers who served in central Florida. In the process they also developed personal relationships that Brown argues increased in significance when they later fought on opposite sides in the Civil War. Frank Alduino's article, "The Smugglers' Blues: Drug and Alien Traffic in Tampa during the 1920s," utilizes newspapers to document the smuggling of illegal aliens into the state. The scattered evidence only hints at the conflicting emotions of hope, fear, and terror that must have gripped these desperate aliens when they first encountered Florida. Similarly, one can only guess at the meaning of Florida for agricultural laborers whose work is permanently recorded in the photographs that appear in the photo essay, "Farm Labor in Florida," by Phyllis A. Hunter.

Finally, the document edited and annotated by Julius J. Gordon provides insight into the activities of one old-world institution that dates its presence in the new world from 1492 - the Catholic Church. Near Tampa Bay as early as 1549, Fray Luis Cancer de Barbastro celebrated the first mass on what would become the United States mainland. The diary of Father Clavreul, a French-born priest who visited the Tampa Bay area during the years 1866-73, reveals a wealth of information about local residents after the Civil War.

At a minimum, the festivities surrounding the Quincentenary should encourage each of us to reflect on our own first encounter with this area. In addition, the editors hope *Tampa Bay History* will continue to serve as a means of enriching your understanding of other encounters in the past. Toward this end, the editors extend their continued gratitude to subscribers, especially those listed on page 3 who have made additional contributions to sustain *Tampa Bay History*.