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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

In the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle asserted that history "is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here." For generations this declaration raised little question among historians who focused on political developments and looked largely at the past from the top down. However, beginning in the 1960s, a new generation of historians suggested that the past appeared different if viewed from the bottom up. Examinations of history from the perspective of common people far removed from the heady world of high politics brought a flood of path-breaking studies of long-neglected people such as plantation slaves, wage-earning women, and working-class immigrants. The new social history also sparked a running debate about which actors - great men or ordinary people - deserved primary emphasis in the writing of history.

This issue of *Tampa Bay History* does not pretend to answer that question, but it does reflect the variety of approaches and perspectives now used by historians. In the article entitled "Spans of Time," David W. Adams examines the contributions of George S. Gandy, Ben T. Davis, and Courtney Campbell - men whose names are familiar to residents of the Tampa Bay area. Adams highlights the foresightedness and entrepreneurship of these men who spearheaded the development of the two spans that first linked Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. The article "Florida Fliers during World War II" shifts the focus to emphasize the contributions of two women who piloted planes during wartime. In telling the story of little-known women, authors Thomas Reilly and Lynn Homan emphasize individual accomplishments that have largely escaped the attention of historians.

Two other articles focus on local African Americans and provide both new information and new perspectives. In the article entitled "African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, during the Reconstruction Era," Kathleen S. Howe shows how different the period after the Civil War looks if examined from the point of view of former slaves living in a sparsely settled area. Her study also challenges readers to think about politics in new ways that make the daily lives of ordinary people central to struggles over power. In another article, "African Americans and Chinsegut Hill," Michael Lee Correia documents the lives of several black families in Hernando County and their relations with the famous owners of the Chinsegut property, Magaret Dreier and Raymond Robins. In focusing on blacks, these articles reveal significant ways in which African Americans influenced events.

Finally, this issue includes a look at the First Christian Church of Tampa, which is celebrating its centennial anniversary, and once again, the focus shifts to an institution whose leading members ranked high in Tampa society.

The editors hope you enjoy this issue, which marks the completion of twenty years of this publication.