

1983

History News

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Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1983) "History News," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 62 : No. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol62/iss2/8>

HISTORY NEWS

De Soto Route Conference

At the call of Governor Bob Graham, and under the joint sponsorship of the Division of Recreation and Parks and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Florida, a conference was held in Gainesville on May 18, 1983, for the purpose of defining the general route of march of the Hernando de Soto expedition through Florida in 1539-1540. It is the intention of Recreation and Parks to mark the De Soto Trail, where it can be established, with appropriate signs and exhibits. The Division was represented at the conference by its director, Ney Landrum. Chairman was Dr. Michael V. Gannon, professor of history and assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

While there was divergence among the conference participants on De Soto's landing site and on the first traces of his penetration of the interior, a consensus was reached on the northern half of the expedition's line of march, from a point near Ocala along a northwesterly path to a site east of Tallahassee, and, finally, after winter encampment, to the Georgia state line north of the capital city. The conferees agreed that De Soto's army followed a route that probably fell within a corridor that would include the general districts of today's Ocala (on the west side), McIntosh, Gainesville (again on the west side), Alachua, High Springs, Hildreth, Luraville, Madison, Monticello (on the south side), and a point east of Tallahassee. For marking purposes the De Soto Trail roughly paralleled U.S. Highway 441 from Ocala to Alachua; U.S. Highway 27 from Alachua to State Road 53 west of Luraville; State Road 53 north to Madison; U.S. Highway 90 to Monticello and to the winter encampment site east of Tallahassee; and U.S. Highway 319 north from Tallahassee to the Georgia state line.

Arguments were presented favoring two different landing sites: Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor (including the estuary of the Caloosahatchee River). Neither set of arguments pre-

vailed, however, and the conferees resolved to seek funds for further study of De Soto era documents that might shed further light on the much-controverted landing site and first line of march. In the meantime, the conferees agreed that a credible first step in memorializing the De Soto Trail would be to mark the highways that follow generally the route from Ocala north on which there was scholarly consensus.

Not since 1939, the 400th anniversary of the Florida landing, has there been a commission or committee appointed to study to De Soto route, although in the interim there have been many articles and one book that have examined the question. In 1939 the United States De Soto Expedition Commission, established by the Congress, published a *Final Report* on the route (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939). It is now generally agreed by scholars that the *Report* was largely the individual work of the Commission chairman, the noted anthropologist, John R. Swanton. A facsimile edition of the *Report*, with a new introduction by Jeffrey P. Brain, one of the Gainesville conference participants, will be published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1984.

The conference participants at the University of Florida included: Dr. Jeffrey P. Brain, Peabody Museum, Harvard University; Dr. Amy Bushnell, Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board; Dr. David Colburn, chairman, Department of History, University of Florida; Dr. Kathleen Deagan, Florida State Museum, University of Florida; Dr. Charles H. Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida; Dr. José B. Fernández, Department of History, University of Central Florida; Dr. Michael V. Gannon, Department of History, University of Florida (chairman) ; William M. Goza, Gainesville and Madison; Dr. Charles M. Hudson, Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia; Louis D. Tesar, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Tallahassee; Guy Lachine, National Park Service, De Soto Memorial Park, Bradenton; Ney Landrum, director, Division of Recreation and Parks, Tallahassee; Dr. Lyle McAlister, Department of History, University of Florida; Dr. Jerald T. Milanich, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida; Dr. Samuel Proctor, director, Center for Florida Studies,

University of Florida; Marvin Smith, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida; and Dr. J. Leitch Wright, Department of History, Florida State University.

Florida Historical Records Survey

The Florida State Historical Records Advisory Board to the National Historic Records and Publication Commission (NHPRC), in conjunction with the Florida State Archives and the Bureau of Records and Information Management, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, has received a \$25,000 grant to conduct a statewide historic records needs assessment survey. The purpose is to analyze and describe current historic records conditions, identify problems, frame potential solutions, and outline courses of action that can be taken. The survey will examine historical records activities in state and local government records archives and in historical record repositories. It will also examine conservation services, microfilm programs, education and training, regional records centers/archives, archival and records management, advisory and assistance services, and program coordination. A questionnaire will be mailed in February 1984 to selected state and local governmental agencies, libraries, historical records repositories, local historical and genealogical organizations, and a sampling of actual and potential archival users. Results of the questionnaire will be evaluated by the project staff and a consultant after additional input from various local chapters of the Association of Records Management Administrators and the Society of Florida Archivists. The results will then be presented to the general public in a series of regional public meetings tentatively scheduled for May through July 1984 in Pensacola, Tallahassee, Gainesville, Orlando, Tampa/St. Petersburg, and Fort Lauderdale. A final report will be presented and distributed in December 1984. The Florida State Archives staff is developing a file of resource persons to assist in data gathering and interpretations, meeting, planning, and project publicity. Persons interested in participating in this project, or who want information on the NHPRC granting programs, should contact Edward Tribble, Florida State Archives, Department of State, Tallahassee, FL 32301 (904) 487-2073.

Announcements and Activities

The tenth annual Gulf Coast History and Humanities conference will be held April 20-24, 1984, at the University of West Florida, Pensacola. The history of literature, drama, music, architecture, arts, and artifacts on the Gulf coast and the business and industrial history of the Gulf coast region are among the themes for papers that the chairmen are suggesting. Proposals for presentation should be 500-word abstracts sent to Professor Ronald Evans, Faculty of English-Foreign Languages, or to Professor William S. Coker, Faculty of History, University of West Florida.

The Second Maritime Heritage conference will be held March 24, 1984, at the Christian Church Conference Center in Silver Springs, Florida. The topic "The Steamship Era in Florida" will focus on the role that steam-powered vessels have played in the growth of Florida from approximately 1830 to 1920. The conference is being supported by the Florida Endowment for the Humanities, Steamship Historical Society of America, and the Florida Sea Grant College. For information write to Dr. Barbara Purdy, conference chair, Department of Anthropology, 375B GPA, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Florida State Genealogical Society will hold a conference in Lakeland, November 11-12, 1983. Speakers will include Edward J. Tribble of the Florida State Archives who will describe the holdings of the Florida Archives. Ms. Beverly Bird, newly-appointed genealogy/research librarian in the Florida State Library, Tallahassee, will talk on "How the State Library Can Help You." For information write: Florida State Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 10249, Tallahassee, FL 32202.

The Pensacola Historical Society opened its fall program series with a talk by Congressman Robert Sikes on September 19. Mr. Sikes, who is completing his memoirs to be entitled, *He-Coon*, spoke on the political campaigns that he has participated in.

The Florida Aviation Historical Society is interested in

publishing photographs of historical markers, plaques, signs, or stones relating to Florida airports or the history of aviation in Florida. Pictures and historical information should be sent to G. P. Emerson, Box 127, Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33535.

The Southern Association of Women Historians announces two prizes for publications and solicits contributions to an endowment to support these awards. Each prize will be given every two years and will consist of \$500 and a plaque. The Julia Cherry Spruill Publication Prize in Southern Women's History will be for the best published work (book or article) on the history of southern women. The Willie Lee Rose Publication Prize in Southern Women's History will be for the best book in southern history authored by a woman. The committee seeks to raise a \$10,000 endowment, and this committee has as its chairperson Judith F. Gentry, Department of History, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, LA 70504. Ann Firor Scott is chairperson of the Julia Cherry Spruill Prize Fund Committee, and Carol Bleser chairs the Willie Lee Rose Prize Fund Committee. Contributors may specify to which fund they are contributing, and contributions are tax exempt.

A six-volume selected edition of the correspondence of Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) is being compiled by Barbara Oberg, Baruch College-CUNY. This project is being sponsored by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and for the University of Pennsylvania Press. Ms. Oberg is interested in receiving information regarding the location of all correspondence and papers not already included on the microfilm *The Papers of Albert Gallatin (1970)*. Write Box 348A, 17 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10010.