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Editor's Preface

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Editor's Preface

Unlike the rest of the American South, Florida's tropical climates have made back porches less than ideal places to cool off, watch the world, and talk things over. Heat, humidity, and mosquitoes force Floridians indoors. So, homes across the Sunshine State have Florida Rooms, enclosed patios with large windows that allow unobstructed views of the landscape. The Florida Room is both inside and outside, signifying leisured enjoyment of the outdoors while protecting from its impositions. In 1985, during Governor Bob Graham's administration, even the open brick patio on the governor's mansion became a Florida Room: two walls of glass allow natural light to fill the informal space where visitors and families relax, mingle, and share. More common Florida houses have similar air-conditioned glassed-in porches with casual furniture. And so do homes in New Jersey, Delaware, Kentucky, and elsewhere. The Florida Room has become a common architectural feature throughout the nation. By 1993, it became part of American pop culture with Steely Dan's song "The Florida Room": "Start on Key Plantain/Walk a tropical mile/You'll see a house/In the Spanish style/There's a room in back/With a view of the sea/Where she sits and dreams/Does she dream of me?"

In this issue, we inaugurate "The Florida Room," a new occasional feature to the *Florida Historical Quarterly*. It is an informal essay in which people who have studied history can discuss how they lived through history. We hope that you can come by, get comfortable, sit a while, reminisce, and think seriously, but not too solemnly, about Florida's histories and cultures. Of course, we also invite contributions to "The Florida Room."