

KEY WEST HISTORIC MARKER TOUR

Governor Rick Scott has tasked the Florida Department of State to create an official commemoration of Florida's 500 year discovery anniversary. Through Viva Florida 500 the state is acting as a custodian and advocate of Florida's culture, arts, and history. They have been working since 2009 formulating the state wide program to highlight and celebrate everything Florida with an emphasis on cultural tourism. Check vivaflorida.com for access to their 20 or more web sites for additional information.

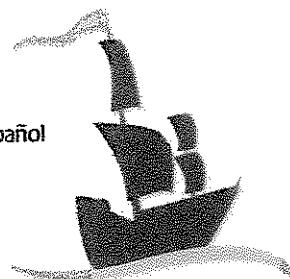
Historic Markers, Incorporated (HMI) recently became a partner in Viva Florida 500. Our partnership gives us full access to Department of State and partner contacts along with advertising, marketing, planning web sites, partner links, etc.

HMI plans to follow Viva Florida's lead and formula to organize a year-long commemorative event featuring Key West's history and heritage. The official name of the celebration is *Historic Key West* with the a subtitle of *500 Years in Paradise* .



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Message from Governor Rick Scott regarding Florida's 500th anniversary commemoration

[View Video Transcript](#)

[View the Governor's Proclamation](#)

Message from the Secretary



Secretary of State
Kurt S. Browning

As Florida's Secretary of State and Chief Cultural Officer, it is an honor to welcome you to the Viva Florida 500 website - a website dedicated to Florida's rich and diverse cultural history and the celebration of that history taking place throughout 2013.

When Ponce de Leon arrived on Florida's east coast in 1513, a new era in our history began. Florida became a place unlike anywhere else in the world, a destination where cultures could thrive together and begin to shape what would eventually become the United States of America.

The Florida Department of State is proud to be a custodian and advocate of Florida's culture, arts and history. Together these components enhance the vitality and economics of our state through improved education, increased tourism, job creation, revitalization of our downtown and rural areas, and through many other contributions to the overall quality of life in Florida.

The Department's Divisions of Cultural Affairs, Historical Resources, and Library & Information Services excel in the role of stewardship by providing outstanding services throughout Florida's communities through grant programming, educational opportunities, research, and preservation of artifacts and historical documentation. In anticipation of Florida's 500th anniversary in 2013, these divisions will be working together to showcase Florida's diverse heritage and communities.

We invite you to explore the resources contained on this website and learn more about Florida's past, its many cultures and the engaging role our state

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Viva Florida 500
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Viva Florida 500 added 4 new photos to the album Fort Jefferson.

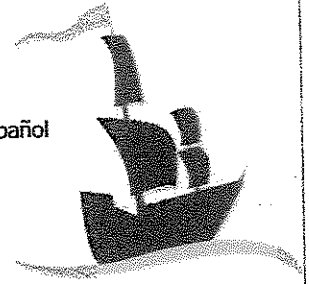


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In 2013, Florida will reach a significant milestone unlike any other in the history of the United States. It's the 500th anniversary of the cultural phenomenon that began when Ponce de León and his crew walked ashore on Florida's east coast and named it *La Florida*. What makes this anniversary so unique is that de León's convoy of explorers was the first group of Europeans to document such a landing and give a name to Florida. They were also the first recorded Europeans to explore any part of what's now the United States of America.

Florida's documented material history dates back more than 12,000 years earlier than 1513, to American Indians, who were the original pioneers. But Spain's claim in 1513 began a new era in human history that saw many nationalities come together as the foundation that eventually formed the United States of America. The legacy of Spanish Florida started with Ponce de León and was further established by Pedro Menéndez when he founded St. Augustine, the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in America, in 1565.

Spanish explorers weren't alone in Florida's transformation. In addition to the American Indians who were already in Florida, Spanish settlers were preceded by the French who established the military base, Fort Caroline, in 1564. The Spanish were then temporarily displaced under English rule in the late eighteenth century. Under each flag, Florida was cultivated by settlers of multiple nationalities and new communities were built. Today, a countless number of different cultures thrive together in Florida. Viva Florida 500 celebrates all of them and their impact on the history of Florida.

As 2013 nears, this website will reflect the plans for Viva Florida 500, the official commemoration of Florida's 500 year anniversary. Additionally, the [Viva Florida](#) website will provide information about Florida's history and how the entire state will mark this important anniversary.

The Florida Department of State and its many partners are planning enriching events and experiences across the state. Join us in celebrating the Florida we live in today!

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

