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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



DeSOTO AND THE INDIANS BARGAINED UNDER OAK TREE IN TAMPA

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA-- America is very earliest history was written underneath the spreading limbs of a majestic oak tree here The giant tree, with a stretch of more than 120 feet, still lives and thrives in Plant Park, the campus of the University of Tampa.

It's called the DeSoto Charter Oak and legend has it that the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto bargained with the Indians under the shade of the oak shortly after his landing in Florida in 1539.

Historians have battled through the years over the precise landing of the DeSoto party, but an official Commission appointed by Congress concluded the adventurer and his band of 500 men landed in Terra Ceia Island in Manatee County. Some partisans claim DeSoto first landed at Phillippi Park on Old Tampa Bay in Pinellas County.

Be that as it may, there is no dispute DeSoto tarried in the Indian village at the mouth of the Hillsborough River, where Fort Brooke later was established and what eventually became known as Tamp.

Some writers contend that's tommyrot about DeSoto trading with the red men under the oak tree; it's more likely, they say, he destroyed the Indians' village on the river, just as he did all other villages he overran.

Coeds at Tampa U. --- which is housed in the old Tampa Bay Hotel of Henry B. Plant --- while away hours under the DeSoto Oak today and soak up a little American history that way. Tampa visitors may do the same.

