

# Foreword

**H**istory that is most meaningful is history that imbeds itself deeply, beyond the mind and into the heart—history that is more nearly absorbed than learned. This deeper consciousness motivates many people to pursue the professional study of history. Others complete careers in other fields, and then show up as volunteers at historic places or in historical organizations. Yet others never work in the field at all, but their sense of heritage makes them better citizens of their communities and of the nation. One needs only look at communities, families, or individuals who have lost their self-definition to understand the degree to which heritage is bedrock beneath human feet. This is why we have a historic preservation movement, historic preservation programs, and historic parks. It is why we publish this journal.

My native town had only 36 years of apparent history when I was born. Yet with almost no Hispanic population, the town had a Spanish name, as did almost every feature on local maps. Even the entire surrounding region was known as the *llano estacado*. The implicit question was intriguing. The answer—that Francisco Vázquez de Coronado had crossed that spot a mere 48 years after Columbus reached the American mainland—was thrilling, but posed further questions. Where was the Hispanic depth in American History? Spanish and Mexican “eras” were described like the pleistocene: interesting and occasionally evident, but over.

Today, at last America takes a more comprehensive view of herself and her history. Not only is Hispanic history the most ancient part of European-derived American history, it is among the most currently applicable: the background of the fastest-growing component of the American population. In the deepest and most personal sense this group of Americans needs the bedrock of that heritage. In a broader sense we all need the enrichment it offers. We hope this issue of *CRM* will contribute in some small way to preservation of the Hispanic elements of American history, and of the places in which they may be absorbed.

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