

By Senator Montford

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Senate Resolution

A resolution recognizing the Hernando de Soto Winter Encampment of 1539 in Tallahassee as the site of "America's First Christmas."

WHEREAS, the late state archaeologist B. Calvin Jones located 16th century Spanish artifacts while investigating the grounds of the Governor John Martin House in Tallahassee, and additional excavations at the site by archaeologist Charles Ewen revealed artifacts, such as coins, pieces of chain mail armor, a tip from a crossbow bolt, and bones from pigs, which are most likely associated with the Hernando de Soto expedition, and

WHEREAS, the area known as the Hernando de Soto Winter Encampment of 1539, located off of Lafayette Street, is now believed to be the site of the earliest extended occupation by Europeans during the Winter season in La Florida, and

WHEREAS, while Hernando de Soto and his army spent years exploring the American South and many sites are identified with them, their presence has been confirmed at only one, the Hernando de Soto Winter Encampment of 1539, and

WHEREAS, the site is located in what is now a small, largely undeveloped state park located on the grounds of the Governor John Martin House and is currently being considered for nomination as a National Historic Landmark, and

WHEREAS, in 2013, Florida will reach a significant milestone with the 500th anniversary of European contact on the continental United States, and

WHEREAS, while Florida's history dates back more than 12,000 years with the American Indians, Spain's claim in 1513

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30 began a new era that will be celebrated by Viva Florida 500, a
31 commemoration of the story of how many nationalities and diverse
32 cultures thrived together in Florida and how their legacy
33 continues to shape America, and

34 WHEREAS, Hernando de Soto traveled with three priests and
35 the ecclesiastical implements needed for celebrating Catholic
36 Mass, and the Hernando de Soto Winter Encampment of 1539 was the
37 site of the first organized Christmas celebration in what would
38 become the United States, NOW, THEREFORE,

39

40 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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42 That the Hernando de Soto Winter Encampment of 1539 in
43 Tallahassee is recognized as the site of "America's First
44 Christmas."