

January 1960

Mulberry tries to save namesake tree

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Dunn, Hampton, "Mulberry tries to save namesake tree" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 18.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



MULBERRY TRIES TO SAVE NAMESAKE TREE

By HAMPTON DUNN

MULBERRY --- This is the world's phosphate capital, and the four-laving of State Road 60 through town gave it a shot in the arm, and things are humming in Mulberry.

But saddened old-time residents are watching with concern the death-bed struggle of the town's namesake, the mulberry tree down by the railroad station.

This once luxuriant berry-producing tree is now just a scraggly skeleton. But it refuses to die. A few leaves come out every year and are fed by one strain of trunk that keeps them alive. The rest of the tree is laden with cement patches, rusty nails, and other surgical scars where devoted townspeople have strived to rescue the old tree.

No one knows how old the mulberry is. Some say over 100 years. It was here long before Mulberry boasted a post office, in 1900, or when it became incorporated in 1901. This was a landmark and train crews were told to drop packages off "under the mulberry tree." Local folks used it as a shady gathering place.

Back in the days when rowdy miners here took the law in their own hands, they used this tree for lynchings. An official hanging or two also occurred here. Many bullets have ripped into the tree trunk, some of them marks of coups de grace over lynching victims.

While every effort is being made to save the old mulberry tree, even to air layering it, to get an offspring, community leaders already have planted a young mulberry tree on nearby City Hall grounds to take its place when the old tree finally expires.

