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Capital's oldest public building is a church

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



CAPITAL'S OLDEST PUBLIC BUILDING IS A CHURCH

By HAMPTON DUNN

TALLAHASSEE - The oldest public building in the government-oriented capital city is a church. It is the strikingly beautiful First Presbyterian Church at the N.W. corner of N. Adams St. and W. Park Ave. Of late Georgian Colonial design, it was built in 1832 and has served the community since.

It is the oldest church in the city and is one of the first of its denomination in Florida. The first chaplain of the Territorial Legislative Council was a Presbyterian minister. Rev. Henry White who held services in the partially constructed wing of the Capitol building.

The church was later organized and a fund-raising drive was started by selling mahogany pews at bids no lower than \$125. Total sales were \$12,500. The timber was of heart pine and the pillars supporting the galleries were hand-hewn and still show the adze marks. Incidentally, the galleries were reserved for slaves, who were admitted to membership. The roof woodwork was mortised and pinned, no nails being used in the original building. The steeple houses the original bell which was an "extra" in a set of chimes bought for a church in Baltimore. During the Civil War it was offered to the Confederacy to be melted down to make cannon, but the offer was declined. The silver plate was a gift of the congregation more than 100 years ago. During the early days the church was used as a refuge for women and children when the men went out to guard the town against Indian uprisings.

Author Ethel K. Lockwood wrote: "Never have I been so struck with the chaste beauty of a church as I was with the Presbyterian Church at Tallahassee."

