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Florida boasts world's largest cypress

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



FLORIDA BOASTS WORLD'S LARGEST CYPRESS

By HAMPTON DUNN

LONGWOOD --- It's ageless, it's enormous, it's interesting to study, it's distinctive among trees in that it was "dedicated" by the President of the United States of America!

Known as "The Senators" or "The Big Tree," this giant cypress stands straight and tall in a swamp between here and Sanford. It's been overlooking the landscape here since 1,000 or more years before the birth of Christ. The tree doesn't have a birth certificate, but it's estimated to be 3,500 years old.

Claiming to be the biggest cypress in the world, it also claims to be the largest tree in the Eastern United States. Let's measure it: "The Senator's now reaches 127 feet tall, but at one time it was 165 feet tall. A vicious Florida hurricane in 1926 clipped the top from the tree. In diameter, the Big Tree is 17 feet, and in circumference, 54 feet. It contains approximately 50,000 board feet, enough tough cypress wood to construct five small houses. It's so thick at the trunk it is wide enough for a roadway to be cut through.

This soft, tan colored tree got its name from Mose O. Overstreet, a state senator from 1920 to 1924, who donated land around the tree to Seminole County for a park. A few years later, in 1929, President Calvin Coolidge officially dedicated the site.

The Florida Forest Service reported recently that The Senator is recognized by the American Forestry Association as the largest living Pond Cypress and a champion on AFA's Social Register of Big Trees. In any event, The Senator has been a landmark around here since the Seminoles first inhabited the area.

