

January 1960

Florida capitol old as the state itself

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Dunn, Hampton, "Florida capitol old as the state itself" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 41.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



FLORIDA CAPITOL OLD AS THE STATE ITSELF

By HAMPTON DUNN

TALLAHASSEE -- For more than a century and half, other Florida towns have coveted the State capital, but this hilly community named by the Seminoles as "old towns" proudly continues as seat of government. The core of the State Capitol building itself dates back to the very beginning of statehood and, though sagging and dilapidated, continues to house executive and legislative departments.

Tallahassee was selected as site for the capital in 1823, primarily because it was midway between the two populated cities of Florida, Pensacola and St. Augustine. The first Capitol building was a log cabin near the site of the present structure.

A two-story "modern" Capitol was started in 1826. The present permanent building was begun in 1839 and featured the front and rear entrances through porticos each having six Doric columns 13 feet in circumference and 34 feet in height. This structure, the core of today's building, was finally completed in 1834 -- the year Florida became a state.

As early as 1824, a petition from "sundry inhabitants" of Gadsden County prayed for the removal of the capital to a site on some navigable water. These efforts for removal have continued off and on since, and as late as 1967 Orlando made a strong bid for the capital site. But Tallahassee's "hospitality" has always won, as noted by the poet Sidney Lanier after a referendum in 1901 gave the city the nod over Jacksonville, Ocala and St. Augustine.

This is the only Southern Capitol that did not fall into the hands of the Northern troops during the Civil War..

