

January 1960

How 'Duke of Dunnellon' discovered phosphate

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Recommended Citation

Dunn, Hampton, "How 'Duke of Dunnellon' discovered phosphate" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 51.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



HOW 'DUKE OF DUNNELLON' DISCOVERED PHOSPHATE

By HAMPTON DUNN

DUNNELLON -- A small and quiet residential area is developing today along SR 40 near here where a hardy adventurer whose nickname was "The Duke of Dunnellon" discovered hard rock phosphate accidentally on May Day, 1889.

Albertus Vogt, engineer, U.S. Marshal, journalist, world traveler and adventurer, settled down here after his exciting experiences. He expected to grow oranges and enjoy hunting and fishing on the Withlacoochee River. But it happened that a remarkable incident changed the current of his life.

While sinking a well to supply water for his groves, Vogt discovered phosphate and the event began a new era in Central Florida. The "Dunnellon Formation" of hard rock phosphate extends as a narrow strip parallel with the Gulf coast from southern Suwannee and Columbia Counties to Hernando County. Vogt immediately took up options on all land in his district and afterward sold a half interest to John T. Dunn. Later Vogt sold his interest for \$200,000. Dunnellon became a wild and lively "boom" town.

Florida's pebble phosphate industry, different from hard rock, had its start in 1884-85 when Capt. J. Francis Le Baron, an Army engineer, made the discovery in the bed of Peace River near Fort Meade.

(In photo, Dunnellon resident Billy Roland, descendant of a phosphate pioneer, studies historical marker designating the spot of Albertus Vogt's "lucky strike.")

