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First flush 'john' brought fame to this house

Hampton Dunn

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



FIRST FLUSH 'JOHN' BROUGHT FAME TO THIS HOUSE

By HAMPTON DUNN

PENSACOLA --- Fame comes in different ways to different people and places. A distinction for one of the beautifully restored homes facing on Seville Square here is that the house is reputed to have had the first flush toilet in Pensacola. This modern marvel, of course, attracted many visitors who came to see the ingenious device work.

History is clear that this lot at 304 East Government St. and adjacent properties have been used for residential areas since the late 1700s during the second Spanish period.

The present structure, now occupied by an exclusive women's gift and apparel shop, was erected between 1884 and 1896 by William H. McLelland, and is known as the "McLelland House." In 1896 it was deeded to Mary E. Stokes, wife of sea captain John E. Stokes, and is sometimes called the "Stokes House." It was completely renovated in 1965 by the present owners, Admiral and Mrs. John Raby and their daughter, Mrs. Wilmer Mitchell. It was restored as part of the vast preservation program underway in Pensacola. Marion Blount Raby is a descendant of one of the original Spanish owners.

Although the store operates as "Sea Captain's Shop," the name was not derived from Captain Stokes nor Admiral Raby. It honors a shop by the same name in Shanghai, China, where Admiral and Mrs. Raby used to shop and became friendly with the owners.

Seville Square has been the gathering place for Pensacolans for more than two centuries. The British called it Public Square during their occupation. The Spanish named it in honor of Seville, Spain.

