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Elegant hostelery of the 80's still stands

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



ELEGANT HOSTELRY OF THE 80s STILL STANDS

By HAMPTON DUNN

ORMOND BEACH --- The rambling old wooden structure today is said to be the "world's largest hotel for the retired" but at one time it was a swinging place, the capital of the wealthy. It's the Ormond Hotel.

One of the largest wooden game hostelries in the world, this elegant building with the huge verandahs was built in 1887 and opened Jan. 1 of '88 just as civilization was spreading this far south in pioneer Florida.

A syndicate of 15 investors, headed by pioneer citizens John Anderson and Joseph Price, envisioned this wonderful spot as a coming resort area and gambled on the handsome hotel. The world did not beat a path to their door, mainly because transportation was poor.

To the financial rescue came Henry M. Flagler, the great developer who had just opened the magnificent Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine and had started his railroad down the East Coast. He bought a large piece of The Ormond in the 1890s and enlarged it.

One attraction added was a golf course, and, of course, the famous beach. The Astors, Vanderbilts, the Fords and numerous other wealthy families were lured here. John D. Rockefeller and his entourage rented an entire floor of the hotel in 1914. The well-to-do began building mansions here and Ormond was said to be one of the richest resort colonies in the world. The hotel was the scene of many charity bazaars --- with John D. himself presiding over them.

