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Jacksonville's "treaty oak" is 300 years old

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



JACKSONVILLE'S "TREATY OAK" IS 300 YEARS OLD

By HAMPTON DUNN

JACKSONVILLE --- The historic "Treaty Oak" is located near downtown Jacksonville. It is more than 300 years old, and, under its giant branches, several important treaties with the Indians were made.

The sprawling tree is a symbol of the colorful history of this city on the St. Johns River, one of the earliest in the state. The French Huguenots pioneered this area in 1562 and subsequently were chased away by the Spanish under Pedro Menendez.

This city arose from a ford in the river where Indians used to cross their cattle. They called it Wacca Pilatka, the Indian language for "cows crossing over." As time went by, it was referred to as Cow Ford, although the Spaniards called it the Ferry of St. Nicholas. Cow Ford it continued to be called until Florida became a territory in 1821. In 1822, Jacksonville was platted and named in honor of Andrew Jackson, the first territorial governor.

Jacksonville was first incorporated in 1832. It has had a stormy life since, figuring prominently in the Indian Wars, the Civil War and the Spanish American War as well as more recent conflicts.

In 1901, tragedy struck the city of 28,429, as a raging fire reduced Jacksonville to shambles. From the charred ruins, the courageous citizens set about rebuilding and developed one of the South's metropolitan areas.

