

January 1960

'Neighbor John' dispensed shiny dimes at Ormond

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Dunn, Hampton, "Neighbor John' dispensed shiny dimes at Ormond" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 105.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



'NEIGHBOR JOHN' DISPENSED SHINY DIMES AT ORMOND

By HAMPTON DUNN

ORMOND BEACH --- John D. Rockefeller, who founded Standard Oil Co. and became super-wealthy, spent 23 winters here, from 1914 until his death in 1937.

He came to this pleasant East Coast resort on the recommendation of research scientists who proclaimed Ormond such a healthful place the oil tycoon could fulfill his ambition to live to be 100 years old. He missed the mark by slightly more than two years!

At first, Rockefeller stayed at his ex-partner Henry M. Flagler's swank hotel, The Ormond, leasing a complete floor of the rambling hostelry for the season. Then, he purchased in 1918 the modest estate of Dr. Harwood Huntington, situated across the street from the hotel on Riverside Drive. The Casements, as it was named, wasn't a pretentious place. It was a house of grey shingles with dark green and white awnings on the numerous windows. (Today the home has been converted into a retirement hotel for older citizens).

"Neighbor John" as he was known was a familiar figure here. He presided over the annual Charity Bazaar at the hotel; he played golf as long as he was able; he entertained a few friends in his mansion. On Sundays, the Standard Oil genius attended the nondenominational Ormond Union Church. In his earlier years he had been a teacher and youth leader at Erie Street Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. After church here, Rockefeller would stand on the lawn and hand out shiny dimes to the children---along with a brief sermon on thrift and savings.

