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## John wanted "just a little bit of a place"

Hampton Dunn

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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## JOHN WANTED "JUST A LITTLE BIT OF A PLACE"

By HAMPTON DUNN

SARASOTA --- There's a huge life-size painting of John Ringling in the entrance way of his fabulous Ca'D'Zan. It's a good likeness of the circus king, but his pal Will Rogers wasn't convinced when he visited the Sarasota palace.

"That's a mighty fine painting, Mr. Ringling, but it's not a bit like you; it's not characteristic," drawled the comedian.

Pressed to explain, Will quipped, "Because you've got your hand in your own pocket!"

Everything else about the House of John is characteristic: It depicts wealth, good taste, imagination, color and a bit of showmanship. Really, Ringling himself hadn't cared for a mansion. Said he: "I would be satisfied with just a little bit of a place."

But his beautiful wife Mable wanted an outstanding structure, one that would remind her of Venice she adored so much. Guess who won? It cost more than \$1,500,000 to build and furnish. The Ringlings moved into their home which dominates a 36-acre estate on Christmas Day, 1926. But their happiness was short-lived. Mrs. Ringling died three years later of Addison's disease.

John Ringling remarried. He died in 1936. His estate was willed to the State of Florida. The second Mrs. Ringling contested. She got \$1, the State got the valuable properties.

