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It is slaves' market, not slaves market

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



IT IS SLAVES' MARKET, NOT SLAVES MARKET

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. AUGUSTINE --- If you refer to the old shed in the Plaza area here as slaves market, be certain you put an apostrophe on it and call it "slaves' market" if you wish to be accurate.

Some tourists guide book writers have said that at one time slaves used to be auctioned off here. But you may take the word of one of the nation's foremost historians, Earle W. Newton, that the yarn about selling slaves here is just a myth.

Newton adds that it is quite possible that slaves themselves traded here. After all, it was a public market, first established by Spanish Gov. Mendez de Ganzo when he laid out the town plaza in 1597. He also set up the first standard system of weights and measures and enforced it. In the early days ships unloaded at the waterfront nearby. At this market, the folks bought their food staples, such as bread, flour, fish and meat and it was a busy place in the cool early morning. An early day supermarket, if you will.

In 1964, the late Dr. Martin Luther King chose St. Augustine as the site to make one of his first dramatic demonstrations for civil rights, and it is believed the so-called "slaves market" served for him as a symbol of mistreatment of Negroes in bygone years. Dr. King made many speeches at the Plaza during that "long, hot Summer."

The present public market building was originally constructed in 1824, shortlyafter the U.S. took over Florida, and was reconstructed after the 1887 fire.

