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Dr. Gorrie has niche in Statuary Hall

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



DR. GORRIE HAS NICHE IN STATUARY HALL

By HAMPTON DUNN

WASHINGTON, D. C. --- Statuary Hall is the place in the airconditioned U.S. Capitol where statues of the Nation's heroes in many fields are placed. Florida's representative in the Hall is Dr. John Gorrie, father of air conditioning and inventor of the ice-making machine and Apalachicola's great physician, public official and good citizen.

The Hall was converted from the room in which the House of Representatives met between 1807 and 1857. It became a gallery of fame after Congressmen in 1864 complained about the unkempt appearance of the room, then a catch-all storage place. It was "draped" in cobwebs and carpeted with dust," snorted one lawmaker. Thus, each state was invited to contribute two statues representing outstanding deceased citizens.

It was not until 1914 that Florida offered Dr. Gorrie's statue, which was executed by the state's own distinguished sculptor, S. Adrian Pillars.

By the 1930s, the combined weight of the heavy statues was such it raised fears the whole assemblage might crash through the floor. Now states may have only one monument in the Hall itself. The others have been placed in the Hall of Columns on the House side or elsewhere around the Capitol building. Florida's other representative in the Hall of Fame is Confederate hero, Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, who surrendered the last Southern force and when he died was the last surviving full general of the Confederate and Union armies of the Civil War.

Dr. Gorrie is honored in many ways in Florida, including a museum named after him in his home town of Apalachicola.

