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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



PRE-CIVIL WAR HOME HAS 'TIMBERS LIKE IRON'

By HAMPTON DUNN

GAINESVILLE --- In the pioneer days of Florida, when they built a structure they built it to last. A good illustration is the "Old Bailey Home" at 1121 N. W. 6th Street---Gainesville's oldest house. It now serves as quarters for the Rest Haven Nursing Home.

Local historian Jesse G. Davis related in his history of Gainesville that when workmen set about to modernizing the building, in the 1950s, they found "the timbers are like iron." The 16-inch square sills were all hand hewn.

Major James B. Bailey came to this area and began erecting his home in 1848. He was a well to do planter, a large slave owner and acquired considerable land here. He went with his slaves to the forests on his property and selected the very best timber to use in his house. Finally, by 1854, it was ready to be occupied.

Davis reported that the Bailey home has been called one of the most perfect examples of true Colonial architecture in the country. But don't look for huge stone columns (that's a Southern adornment borrowed from the Greeks!). The frame structure is perfectly balanced. The second floor is distinctive by its three dormer windows. The stairways were made from native Florida woods, red bay or mahogany.

Major Bailey owned the property which the county acquired for a court house site when it was moved from Newnansville and when Gainesville was chosen as the name of the settlement which had been known as Hogstown Creek. Some say Bailey gave the land, but the records indicate it was sold, 60 acres for the going rate of \$242.50!

