

January 1960

Croom family perished in shipwreck

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



CROOM FAMILY PERISHED IN SHIPWRECK

By HAMPTON DUNN

TALLAHASSEE --- An obelisk of marble, filled with fine engraving, on the lawn of St. John's Episcopal Church here is a permanent reminder of a disaster at sea which wiped out the entire family of Hardy Bryan Croom.

The noble shaft seeks to preserve the memory of Croom, who was a prominent planter and botanist (he named the unique *Torreya* tree of Northwest Florida), his wife, Frances, and their children: Henrietta May, 15, William Henry, 10, and Justina Rosa, 7, who were carried to watery graves off Cape Hatteras in the wreck of the steamboat, "Home," on the night of Oct. 9, 1837.

The family was headed for Tallahassee where they planned to develop a plantation. (Hardy Bryan Croom had a brother, Bryan Croom, who had a beautiful home, "Goodwood," and plantation here). The ill-fated family were from New Bern, N.C., and had been vacationing in New York before boarding the doomed "Home." The family had often visited Tallahassee. The "Home" was a brand new ship, this was her third voyage. It had a crew of 40 and carried 130 passengers. A violent tropical hurricane bounced the vessel around, finally sinking it.

The *Cromia*, a small flowering plant native of this area is named for Croom.

Loss of the entire Croom family at sea resulted in lengthy litigation which established the rule of American law that, in a common disaster, with no eye witness, the presumption is that the male parent has greater survival powers and, therefore, his family will inherit.

