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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## 'KING OF THE CRACKERS' ENDOWED EDUCATION

By HAMPTON DUNN

BARTOW --- Jacob Summerlin, nicknamed "The King of the Crackers," was an outdoorsman, a cattleman, with limited education himself, but he believed in schooling the youth and thus left a legacy behind in this Polk County capital city.

When this colorful pioneer (the first white child born in Florida after Spain ceded the state to the U.S. in 1819) passed away in 1893, the local editor, along with all who knew the famed cowboy, mourned his passing: "Like some giant of old, before whom men instinctively bow, was his (Summerlin) life and name to the people of Bartow. . ." the editor of The Bartow Courier-Informant wrote.

And, referring to the institution he founded, Summerlin Institute, the editor continued: "The grand structure which bears his name will live in the hearts of our people in the ages to come. Generations yet unborn will rise up and call him blessed, for at Summerlin Institute they will be educated and prepared for a higher, a better and nobler life. . ."

Indeed, they were --- and still are. One of the buildings of Summerlin Institute is still standing, at Florida Avenue and Stanford Street here, and today houses the fifth grade of Bartow elementary. This structure actually was erected after Summerlin's death. It was built in 1902 as the "new" high school.

Summerlin came here in 1862, during the Civil War, and for \$3,000 in Confederate currency, he bought the site of the town from Pioneer Riley Blount, then donated the acreage for government, educational, and church purposes. Summerlin himself dedicated the first school structure in 1887.

