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'Pasco de las lamas'

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



'PASCO DE LAS DAMAS': WHERE THE ACTION WAS

By HAMPTON DUNN

FERNANDINA BEACH --- There's a section of this historic old city that is known as Old Town. A short street on the south side of Old Town is called "Ladies Street," a translation of Pasco de las Damas, the name given it by the Spaniards because it was occupied by female camp followers of the garrison.

A street marker today carries on the tradition of Ladies Street, but it's a deserted, isolated strip and there certainly isn't any action of the nature that brought it the name in the first place.

In Old Town at the foot of Estrada Street are the ruins of Fort San Carlos, built after 1784. A footpath from the site of the old plaza, once the parade grounds of the garrison, leads down to the Amelia River and the crumbling walls, all that remain of the original fort. A guide book on the area reports that many of the old buildings still standing in Old Town were built with hand-hewn cedar. A marsh surrounded Old Town and in the 1800's Fernandina moved south and built things anew. The old pilot house at White and Estrada Streets still stands.

Ladies Street extended from Estrada Street to the 14th Street Extension. Among the unattached ladies, often of questionable character who entertained the soldiers of the early garrison, was one known as Felipa, "the witch," who, according to records of that time, did a good business in charms.

Around the old houses in Old Town grows the pomegranate tree, a tree considered by the Moors as an emblem of fertility. Here the Japanese plum and old Spanish fig trees grow side by side with wild coral and white honeysuckle.

