

January 1960

Old FEC depot at Princeton preserved

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Recommended Citation

Dunn, Hampton, "Old FEC depot at Princeton preserved" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 247.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



OLD FEC DEPOT AT PRINCETON PRESERVED

By HAMPTON DUNN

MIAMI --- The old baggage station at Princeton, some 20 miles south of Miami, which served Henry Flagler's railroad to Key West, has been moved to Metropolitan Dade County's Crandon Park on Key Biscayne and will be preserved. It now serves as the station for customers for the miniature train ride around the zoo.

It was the Junior League of Miami which salvaged the structure from extinction. The vintage pinewood station has been completely redecorated and painted a bright "Flagler yellow." This color was a favorite of Flagler, who used it on his equipment and property as he extended his railroad all the way from St. Augustine to Key West.

Old hand-baggage trucks are at the station which has a new low platform built for use by toddlers and adults using the 1865-vintage miniature model of the Union Pacific's woodburner "Iron Horse" that crossed the western plains. The miniature train holds 100 passengers.

Princeton was a citrus and winter vegetable center when Flagler extended his railroad southward from Miami toward his goal at Key West. The community originally was known as Modello, but in 1905 several university graduates established a sawmill there and erected a large sign bearing the name of their alma mater, Princeton. The sign was repeatedly removed and as frequently reappeared. When the Florida East Coast Railway reached the village, the name of Princeton was finally adopted as the name.

Flagler, who had made his original fortune in Standard Oil, began extending his FEC southward from Daytona Beach in 1892, and it reached Miami in 1896. Flagler's engineers laid out the city, as they did West Palm Beach enroute. In community after community, Flagler provided utilities, transportation, housing, hotels and churches and other needs of residents. They called Flagler's dream to have his railroad run all the way to isolated Key West "Flagler's Folly" but he stuck with his vision, spent \$50 million or more on it, lost several hundred lives of workmen, but finally rode triumphantly aboard the first train from the mainland in January, 1912. He died the following year at the age of 83.

