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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



YOU 'WALLOW IN HISTORY' AT ST. MARKS!

By HAMPTON DUNN

St. Marks --- A woman writer from the North visited ancient San Marcos de Apalache here a few years ago and exclaimed: "you simply wallow in history when you go to St. Marks!"

Indeed, you do. The history of this coastal defense town goes back long before the arrival of white man in the Western Hemisphere. The first visitor from Europe was that daring Spanish explorer, Panfilo de Narvaez, who fought Indians through Florida swamps all the way from Tampa Bay up to this port in the Panhandle. He scrapped them here, too, in 1527, to the exasperation point and he was anxious to get moving. He beat his swords into tools and his company of 300 followers constructed five small ships, thus starting the first shipbuilding industry in Florida. They shipped out, disappearing in the Gulf of Mexico never to be seen again. Hernando de Soto followed in de Narvaez' footsteps. Other Spaniard explorers, soldiers and missionaries came later, all harrassed by the pirates and the Indians and later the British. Wooden forts were first built but in 1739 a limestone fort was erected and remnants of it still exist at what is now a State Park here.

In the year 1800, a British deserter, William Augustus Bowles, who had married an Indian squaw, took the fort and set himself up as "King of Florida." His reign was short-lived as the fort was recaptured shortly by the Spanish. In 1818, Andrew Jackson captured the place as an aftermath of the War of 1812 stirring an international incident which nearly provoked war.

