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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



SANIBEL LIGHT GUARDS ISLAND 'PARADISE'

By HAMPTON DUNN

SANIBEL ISLAND --- Frederic Babcock, a former travel writer for the Chicago Tribune, who roamed some 50 countries over five continents in his journalistic journeys, discovered what old timers on this Gulf Coast isle knew all along:

"If there is a perfect climate or a perfect place to live, I failed to find it. But Sanibel is as near to that ideal as I ever encountered."

The "privacy" of the natives was invaded somewhat in 1963 when a four million dollar bridge and causeway opened up this idyllic spot to more folk. It's still a quiet retreat stretching 20 miles along with its sister island, Captiva, and about two miles wide. It is rated as one of the world's topmost shelling areas, and lies 18 miles west of Ft. Myers on the Gulf of Mexico.

Once the playground and hideout of such pirates as Jose Gaspar and Black Caesar and Calico Jack, Sanibel was taken over by the U.S. government in 1821 and the cutthroats were chased away. The interesting lighthouse, with its brown square pyramidal skeleton tower, inclosing stair cylinder, was erected in 1884. Its bright light sweeps out 16 miles to sea. One of the early keepers was Henry Shanahan and his son Gene, who tended the kerosene light in the old days for 26 years.

After the pirates were shaken, first settlers came in 1830 and in 1833, Florida real estate promoters started their first "subdivision" on the island, putting up a few houses and paved streets. They incorporated the communities of Murray and Senybal, but the towns were shortlived. They were destroyed during the Indian Wars.

