

January 1960

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Hampton Dunn

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Recommended Citation

Dunn, Hampton, "sorry deal under the "treaty oak"" (1960). *Hampton Dunn Phototouring Florida Collection*. 291.

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



THE SORRY DEAL UNDER THE TREATY OAK

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. AUGUSTINE --- The sprawling oak at the second landing place on the north bank of Moultrie Creek, about five miles south of St. Augustine, looks like many other oaks in the Sunshine State, but this one is historically significant. This is where the Indians got one of their worse deals from the white man in the "Treaty of Moultrie Creek."

The happening out at the creek during that hot September of 1823 attracted numerous civilians from town, curiosity seekers. Andrew Jackson had gone back to his beautiful "Hermitage" plantation in Nashville, and his successor, Gov. William P. DuVal, was dealing with the red men. DuVal had the respect of the Seminoles, who felt he did not talk with a "forked tongue." The whites offered the many Indian chiefs present, led by Neamathla, a reservation stretching from north of the Withlacoochee River to Charlotte Harbor and Lake Okeechobee on the south. They rattled their sabers to get the message to the Indians they'd better accept, or else.

DuVal was not aware of the terrain he was moving the Indians to. Later he inspected it and agreed, "It is by far the poorest and most miserable region I ever beheld." The chiefs complained: "We hope you will not send us south to a country where neither the hickory nut, the acorn nor the persimmon grows..."

The treaty was signed on Sept. 18, 1823. The Federal Government appropriated large sums of cash to help finance the move. Historians say: "Unfortunately, the government agents got most of this money."

