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## Tampa's first 'skyscraper' still stands

Hampton Dunn

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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## TAMPA'S FIRST 'SKYSCRAPER' STILL STANDS

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA --- When this little fishing village blossomed into a town, back in the 1880s, the center of the community was the intersection of Franklin and Washington streets, several blocks south of the present heart of the city.

Along with a new railroad and a new humming industry, cigarmaking, the area got a new "skyscraper" in 1886. It was the beautiful three-story brick building housing the Almeria Hotel. It was built by Dr. Howell Tyson Lykes, a wealthy physician and cattleman of Brooksville who contributed much to the progress of Florida in his lifetime. The hotel was completed on Oct. 29, 1886, and was given the doctor's wife's name. She was Almeria Belle McKay, daughter of famed Tampa shipmaster and exporter, Captain James McKay, who Dr. Lykes married in 1874. In fact, the new Almeria Hotel was erected on the birthplace of Mrs. Lykes!

The Almeria was for years one of Tampa's leading hotelries. The building was the third brick structure in the city, and the first three-story "skyscraper." When it was built sand streets and wooden sidewalks served the center of town. In later years, the hotel operated as the Tampa Hotel.

In 1947, the building became operating headquarters for the vast Lykes Bothers, Inc. industrial and financial empires. The firm continued from here until 1968 when it moved to the old Hillsboro Hotel.

