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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



THE DAY 'MA' BARKER WAS SLAIN IN FLORIDA

By HAMPTON DUNN

OKLAWAHA --- She was affectionately called "Ma," but my, my, what an unusual mother was Kate Barker! Born in the Ozarks, she was poor in her early years. So strong was her lust for money, furs and baubles, she turned to a life of crime and led her four young sons down the same path. The eldest, Herman, convinced her crime does pay, so she opened up in her own home a School of Crime for the younguns. When they were arrested for petty infractions, she upbraided them for getting caught. At one time, her alumni records showed Herman committing suicide rather than be arrested for murder; Arthur (Doe) was serving a life term for murder; Lloyd was in Leavenworth for 25 years for robbing the U.S. Mails, and Freddie was in Kansas State Pen for burglary wad larceny.

"Ma" Barker acquired riches she wanted. In two kidnapings, her gang collected \$300,000 in ransom. The FBI traced Ma and some of her gang to a lakeside retreat here on Lake Weir, in this beautiful, law-abiding community. The G-Men called for those inside the two-story frame cottage to surrender. A blaze of machine gun fire was the answer from the Barkers. Thus started a two-hour battle. The house was raked by bullets. Although it seemed like the whole gang was inside, only "Ma" and son Fred were doing all the shooting. They were found slain. This shootout took place Jan. 16, 1935.

The house still stands and is said to be owned by the same people who had unwittingly rented it to the Barkers back in '35.

