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TALLAHASSEE IN 1824-25

(An unsigned letter in the Pensacola Gazette
September, 1825)

TALLAHASSEE, Sept. 10 (1825). It was in the month of April, 1824, that the first wagon was seen wending its devious way through that part of the wilds of Florida which now constitutes the Middle Judicial District. The sons of the forest were often arrested while in pursuit of their wonted game, to gaze with wonder at the strange Phenomenon, for there was not a being among them within whose knowledge so strange a vehicle was ever seen to disturb the repose of their solitary retirement; nor were they sensible. that this was the day star which warned them to prepare to leave the land of their fathers, whose bones for centuries had mingled with the very soil from which they raised their bread. The weary party (who consisted of two men, two women, two children, and a mulatto man,) at length arrived in the morning of the 9th of the month by the way of a gentle rise upon the summit of a commanding eminence at whose eastern and southern base a beautiful rivulet meandered its course through a rich Hammock ; here they made a halt, and one of the gentlemen by familiarity with the wilderness was enabled soon to discover (though almost obliterated) the only marks which the Governor in his Proclamation had given designating the scite (!) selected by the Commissioners as the Seat of the Government of Florida ; our party was not long in selecting a camping ground, and pitching their tent about midway of the southern slope, which might well be taken for the land of the Fairies: to the southward and westward, the country opened to their view like a magnificent park gently undulated and studded with beautiful basins of limpid water, at their feet a crystal fountain, gushing from the declivity of a hill; to the eastward the view was more confined by the thick foliage of the undergrowth,

which served to screen the view, though not the sound of a beautiful cascade, which was formed by the rivulet above described, falling over a ledge of rocks into a deep glen, which forms almost a circle of about seventy yards in diameter, and disappears at the bottom of the same ledge of rocks, very near the cascade. In the afternoon our sylvan party commenced building and in two days were enabled to secure themselves and their furniture from the weather in the first house ever built in Tallahassee. The same day in the evening Judge Robinson and S. M'Call, Esq. arrived with hands and put up three buildings to accommodate the Legislative Council, which was expected to meet in May following and in a few days a small store was erected, after which very little improvement was made for some time in consequence of the session of the Council being postponed until November, as also the many and almost insurmountable obstacles which at times seemed to preclude the hope of ever removing the Indians from this section of the country; so firmly were they attached to their native soil that they would make the most frivolous excuses for procrastinating their departure, and nothing but the peculiarly firm and resolute, yet mild and persuasive measures adopted by the Executive, could have removed them without resorting to military force. The act providing for the laying off of the town of Tallahassee etc. allowed the right of pre-emption of all those who had built houses within the limits of the town, previously to the approval of the Bill which was the 11th Dec. and when the Commissioners under that act proceeded to sell the lots on the 5th and 6th of April, there were but six claimants for that privilege.

At this time the town contains more than fifty houses, many of which are occupied by quite large families ; there is now one house for public worship, one school house, two very commodious Hotels, seven stores, and one Apothecary's shop ; the mechanics shops are, one Printing office, two shoe-makers, two blacksmiths, three carpen-

ters, one tailor, three brick yards, etc. Nor has the country in the vicinity of the town been less prolific, although the lands were sold at a very inauspicious season (past the middle of May) for within five miles of the town there are now over twenty farms, plantations, etc. opened ; considerable corn has been raised this year, and one gentleman about a mile from town has a small field of sea island and upland cotton which appears equal to any of the similar kind raised in Georgia or South Carolina.

The Society very greatly appreciates the following editorial from the "Pensacola Journal."

J. C. Yonge, son of Hon. P. K. Yonge, is a student of early Florida history and with a number of kindred spirits is trying to revitalize the Florida Historical Society. Mr. Yonge has sent a copy of the quarterly publication to the editor, and it contains articles of intense interest.

Gathering data of a historical nature is a Herculean task, and the Florida Historical Society, founded in 1856, has had anything but a path of roses to travel, and the quarterly tells something of its task.

The Society needs new members. It is performing a work for the residents of the State today and those who will come in future years, therefore everyone who can do so should become members. The membership fee is nominal, \$2.00 the year, which includes a subscription to the quarterly magazine.

The Journal suggests that every family with children should be particularly interested in this society. The quarterly publication should be kept and bound into permanent volumes for future use.