Coffee Table Size, This Volume is a 'Lap Book' of Enjoyment

Joe Hipp
BOOK REVIEW

COFFEE TABLE SIZE THIS VOLUME IS A ’LAP BOOK ’OF ENJOYMENT

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FLORIDA: A PICTORIAL HISTORY, by Hampton Dunn. The Donning Co., Publishers, Norfolk: 1988. $35.00

All through the night, workers at Tampa Shipbuilding Company yards carried on diligently to build ships for the war effort during World War II. This photograph was taken the night of December 6, 1942. U.S. Navy photograph from the HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION.

‘THIS PICTURE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS’
-Photograph from FLORIDA: A PICTORIAL HISTORY by HAMPTON DUNN

FLORIDA: A PICTORIAL HISTORY, by Hampton Dunn, is a stunning Dunning (forgive me, Hamp) production. Coffee table
size, the book is filled with hundreds of wonderful photographs (over 550) covering events in Florida's long history from 1513 to 1987. Two Indian artifacts pictured here predate the era of discovery by several hundred and several thousand years.

Hamp, as the author likes to be called, is well known throughout Florida for his slide presentations, television spots (WTVD-TV) on little-known historical facts and his books and lectures on Florida and local history. He has spent more than fifty years in the field of mass communications - first in newspapers, then in radio, television and public relations. Hamp has won many awards for his efforts and now that he has "retired," he is the president-elect of the prestigious Florida Historical Society.

Hamp’s new book is arranged chronologically - the chapters covering such time frames as: "Chapter 1, Before 1900," and ending with "Chapter VII, 1970 to Today." The last chapter is naturally filled with many color photographs, which you usually do not see in a pictorial history.

Hampton does not limit the subjects of the photographs except by time. This diversity really enhances the book. For example in the first chapter we find photographs of 16th century maps, Spanish forts, the oldest surviving plantation house, the picture of a plaque on how to wash clothes, a picture of a Seminole chief "Alligator", the old wooden schoolhouse in Rochelle, Alachua County, and a picture of the first Fort Myers Brass Band posed in front of the bandstand in 1887. This list just whets your visual appetite. There are many more photographs in the first chapter besides these mentioned.

If you are interested in early transportation in Florida, there are many examples noted besides walking and by horse or mule. Hamp has photographs of: a steamboat on the Suwanee River; a team of horses pulling an infernal machine (automobile) out of the mire at Fort Ogden; a jitney bus ready to start its trip from Tampa to Clearwater; Tampa's first air meet, held Feb. 21, 1911, at the old racetrack near the McMullen Aviation Field; and finally, Engine No. 2 of the "Celestial Express", which ran from Jupiter to Juno, with stops at Venus and Mars and length of the line was only 71/2 miles!

An old Chinese saying says that a picture is worth a thousand words and if that is the going rate for a photograph, Hamp has put a million words into 264 pages. The book reminds me of the old-fashioned children's toy the kaleidoscope. With each turn of the tube you saw a new image - and with each turn of the page you view a new image of Florida's past. I think that you will find that Hamp’s book will be a lap book rather than a coffee table book because it will be the center of attraction for many long evenings.