1-1-1960

Church, pre-fabbed in N.Y., brought to Florida by Schooner

Hampton Dunn
APALACHICOLA --- Old Trinity Episcopal Church on Gorrie Square here, one of Florida's oldest, is the first prefabricated church in America. Begun in 1835 and completed two years later, the edifice was cut to measure in New York and the sections were brought here by schooner. Much of the structure, which is architecturally charming, was put together by wooden pegs.

The church has two Ionic columns framing the narrow front door, tall windows with green shutters, and a square belfry topped with a metal cross.

During the Civil War, the church's original bell was melted down to make cannon. And the carpets and cushions were donated to Confederate soldiers, presumably to keep them warm "way up" in Virginia and Tennessee.

Apalachicola was a gay, seaport city in the 1830's when it was the shipping point of the South's cotton crop. Gambling, race tracks and saloons flourished.

A city councilman, Dr. John Gorrie, later world famous for inventing artificial refrigeration, was disturbed because the socially-active community lacked churches.

He was one of the moving spirits in obtaining land from the Forbes Company for churches and led in organizing the Episcopaleans, with a Rev. Fitch Taylor, in 1835, as leader. In 1837, a Mr. George Field, who had held services regularly for persons of all denominations who desired to worship together, obtained from the Legislature a charge: his church, now known as Trinity Church, and among the incorporators was Dr. Gorrie, who also was a vestryman. In front of the church is Gorrie Square and the grave of the famed doctor is there. Trinity is said to be the third oldest Episcopal church in the state.
The Lord is in His holy temple.