The Rolyat is 'Taylor' spelled backwards

Hampton Dunn
THE ROLYAT IS 'TAYLOR’ SPELLED BACKWARDS

By HAMPTON DUNN

GULFPORT --- One of Florida's boomtime palatial hotels provides elegant and adequate accommodations for Stetson University Law School here.

In its hey-dey, the attractive Spanish architectured building was known as The Rolyat, And that is Taylor spelled backwards, (long before Serutan was put on the market). Taylor was the last name of the flamboyant developer, Jack Taylor.

He was a native of New Hampshire and one-time private secretary to Gov. C. A. Busiel of that state. Taylor was a banker in Boston and New York before he chanced to visit Florida in 1921, immediately after the worst storm the city had ever experienced. The debris-strewn city didn't blur his vision, however, and Taylor began acquiring property here. His major subdivision was Pasadena-on-the-Gulf.

It was here Taylor built the beautiful Rolyat at a cost of one million dollars. Then he spent a quarter million more for John Wanamaker to furnish the 100 guest rooms. It was a mecca for the smart set starting in 1926, but alas it stayed opened only three Winter seasons.

St. Petersburg old-timer Walter P. Fuller claims the 1925 land boom in St. Petersburg began that late afternoon in the winter of 1922-23 when Jack's lovely wife Evelyn "turned her back on a group of slightly flustered men, including myself, blushingly rolled down her stocking and peeled off a $10,000 bill." That's how Jack started in business here. The magnificent hotel was taken over by Stetson in 1953.