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Hampton Dunn

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PENSACOLA’S ‘OLDEST HOUSE’ IS STURDY

PENSACOLA ---There are many old homes in this historic city, but the old "Barkley house" at 410 South Florida Blanca Street on the waterfront is said to be the oldest.

Even so, it’s not as old as some legends have it. Some claim this ancient structure dates back to "the old Spanish garrison prior to 1763. Others believe the house is built on a brick foundation laid by the British during their occupation of Pensacola, 1763-81.

Best information today indicates the Barkley house was built after 1835 by George Barkley, a native of England who came here in 1820 as customs inspector and became a prosperous merchant. He lost some of his fortune before his death in 1854. He was eulogized "as a citizen he was ever ready to accord his influence and means for the promotion of public morals, the diffusion of education, and the relief and comfort of the poor and needy."

The two and half story home, which is registered with the Historic American Buildings Survey, has native brick walls 16 inches thick at the base, tapering to 12 inches under the gable. The staircase is original of highly polished planks. Curved, plastered chimney pieces fit into the white painted ceilings and serve four fireplaces downstairs and two upstairs. There are 10 rooms, including a large living room.

Though it was used at one time as the city's infirmary, the Barkley house has been almost continuously occupied since it was built and is today a private residence.