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PENSACOLA GONZALEZ GO BACK SIX GENERATIONS

By HAMPTON DUNN

PENSACOLA --- When the fiery Andrew Jackson arrived in Pensacola to take over Florida for the United States in 1821, he bumped into Don Manuel Gonzalez, a former Spanish soldier, Indian agent and then a rancher. Not many people defied Jackson. Gonzalez did.

The future President demanded that Gonzalez allow his son to guide Jackson to Fort Barrancas. Gonzalez snapped back: "I would rather run a sword through his bosom than see him betray his Spanish King!" After that, Jackson and Gonzalez became fast friends.

Descendants of Manuel Gonzalez still live in Pensacola. This pretty frame home (photo) was built in 1880 of virgin yellow pine by Manuel Francis Gonzalez, Confederate veteran and grandson of Jackson’s pal. It is a Creole high-house with an apron roof, a design brought to the Gulf Coast from the French West Indies. The house is presently occupied by Gonzalez’ son, Dickson, whose own son and grandson live next door. The latter is the sixth generation in America since the patriarch of the family was sent to New Orleans as a member of the Spanish Army in 1782.

The house is located at “Bohemia,” on Escambia Bay where the builder’s great grandmother, Marianna Bonifay, operated a brick kiln with slave labor from 1807-1832. The site is on U.S. 90, called Scenic Highway, on the northwest limits of Pensacola.

Manuel Francis Gonzalez was also a Pensacola merchant and newspaper publisher. The Gonzalez family is one of a number of Spanish colonial families with ancestors still living here.