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Hampton Dunn

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THE FLORIDA TOWN THAT WAS TO SUPPLANT HOLLYWOOD

By HAMPTON DUNN

SUN CITY --- A neat little masonry building which once housed a pager plant serves as a monument today to a Florida boom-time dream that this community one day would be the world’s film capital.

There once was a studio and in it was an oil painting of the metropolis as it would appear when it had supplanted Hollywood. The boom busted, so did the studio and just about everything else here. Today, nearly half a century later, Sun City really has never blossomed into a metropolis.

The little powerhouse sits just off U. S. 41 a few Whiles south of Ruskin near the Manatee County line. It now is owned by Dryden Machinery Co., which bought it in 1954 from Tampa Electric Co.

Back in October, 1925, an excited area participated in a spectacular dedication of the infant movie industry. More than 1,500 persons attended the flag raising ceremony at which Tampa’s Mayor Perry G. Wall gave an oration. On hand was Billy Moon, a 320-pound comedian who starred in the two short movies that eventually were produced here to protect the developer against possible fraud charges.

Finally, in July, 1932, the boom town of Sun City was sold at public auction for $100, including the power plant which had cost $100,000 when it was built in 1926 to provide light and power for teeming multitudes that never arrived. The beautiful structure housed a 300 Brake Horse Power Worthington Engine. The plant was owned by Florida Power & Light Co. and later by Tampa Electric.