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BOOM-TIME HOTEL NOW A MILITARY SCHOOL

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. PETERSBURG --- This "Sunshine City" was one of the busiest and most progressive communities during the jumping days of the Florida real estate boom in the 1930s. People came from all over the United States to this mecca, many invested and became permanent residents.

In the middle of the activity was Walter P. Fuller, who with his father did much to develop the town into a modern metropolis. In subsequent years, Fuller had distinguished himself as a regional historian and has recorded the happenings of the boom era.

He notes that St. Petersburg acquired an impressive group of big, modern hotels as a direct result of the boom --- "and most of the builders thereof acquired an equally impressive assortment of headaches." One of the fine structures was the Jungle Country Club Hotel which Fuller built as a "boom baby," in the 500 block of Park Street North. Originally the property was for the St. Petersburg Country Club, which was organized in 1915. But it never got off the ground. Fuller acquired the land in the early 1920s and built the handsome hotel at the height of the boom at a cost of $675,000. The 100-guest room building was erected by the George A. Fuller Construction Co.

Says Fuller: "The Jungle went the conventional route of all hotels. After operating it for four years, I lost it to my uncle O. C. Fuller. He lost it to Judge Lassing, and he lost it to the Commonwealth Life Insurance Co., who eventually, sold it to its present owners, Farragut Military Academy."