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GOVERNOR’S RESIDENCE TRULY AN ANTIQUE

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. AUGUSTINE --- Call it what you will, the interesting structure at King and St. George Streets here is truly an antique in this ancient city of many old buildings. You may call it Casa del Gobernador, or Governor’s Mansion, or Governor’s Palace, or Governor’s Residence, or Government House.

The building, which is being preserved under the excellent program of the Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board, a statewide agency, has a colorful background. At the beginning of the 1600’s Spanish Governor Canzo built his home here. Canzo’s home was later purchased by the government to be used as the official residence of the Florida governors --- The Casa del Gobernador.

In 1690 the house was rebuilt---this time of stone. During the 18th century its gardens were one of the town’s sights. John Bartram, the famous botanist, visiting the English Governor here in 1765, mentioned it in the journal of his travels.

The East portion is Florida’s first Capitol and residence of both Spanish and English governors (England ruled Florida from 1753 to 1783). The building was expanded to the west in 1833, 1873 and 1936.

The Governor’s Mansion of colonial days, then, still stands, a center of government for more than 250 years! In recent years, the fine old structure housed the U.S. Post Office. The colonial east portion is being restored and later the west wing will be utilized for auxiliary historical purposes. This national exhibit building represents the contribution of the United States to the St. Augustine restoration project.