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The hotel built by a citizens committee

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LAKE WALES --- It was September, 1925, at the height of the Florida real estate "boom," and this lovely community in the Ridge section of Polk County had come to life. It was attracting visitors and prospective residents.

But the townspeople were concerned about the lack of good accommodations for the visitors. And so it was, a group of local citizens formed a "hotel committee," whose goal was to furnish the finest in accommodations for visitors. Within a month, a stock selling campaign was started.

A total of 444 persons subscribed within a week (action was fast and furious during the "boom") and: $459,000 was raised, ranging from purchases of $100 to $50,000.

Total cost for what was then known as the Dixie Walesbilt (now the Florida Continental Hotel) was $800,000. After the hotel was completed, a management contract was entered into with the Griner Hotel chain. Years later the hotel was sold to a private firm, and, through a succession of corporations, it has remained in private hands since.

Although remodeled and updated several times since its erection, the hotel retains the same basic appearance today as it did at its opening on Jan. 1, 1927.

Rising 150 feet above the Ridge, the hotel commands an unobstructed view of the beautiful hills and lakes surrounding the city, as well as a good look at the famed Bok Singing Tower nearby. When it opened, the Walesbilt boasted 100 rooms, each with bath, heat and ice water.