



# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## EX-CONGRESSMAN ONCE 'RULED' AMELIA ISLAND

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FERNANDINA BEACH --- They call Amelia Island, where Fernandina Beach is situated, the "Isle of Eight Flags." Ownership switched not only among the major powers but among a series of adventurers who claimed it at brief periods.

In the year 1817 the possession of Fernandina was a prize passed around. One such adventurer was Gregor McGregor, a 31-yearold Scotsman who decided that his mission in life was to liberate Florida from Spain and he chose this spot as his base of operation. He "captured" the town on June 29, 1817, and he hoisted the Green Cross of Florida. Pirates who ravaged the coasts of Florida had free reign here under McGregor.

Soon McGregor, who was unpopular around these parts, left and the local leadership was turned over to Ruggles Hubbard, the High Sheriff of New York, and Jared Irwin, a former Congressman from the Philadelphia District of Pennsylvania.

The Spanish resented the intrusion by these revolutionaries, so on Sept. 13, 1817, they decided to try and recover the territory. The Battle of Amelia Island took place that day, at McClure's Hill.

According to a historical marker at the hill site, Spaniards erected a battery of four brass cannon with about 300 men, supported by two gunboats. They shelled Fernandina, held by Irwin and his "Republic of Florida" forces, numbering 94, the Privateers Morgiana and St. Joseph and the armed schooner Jupiter. Spanish gunboats commenced firing at 3:30 P.M. and the battery on the hill joined the cannonade. Guns of Fort San Carlos on the river bluff northwest of here, and those of the St. Joseph defended Amelia Island. Cannon balls killed two and wounded other Spanish troops concentrated below McClure's Hill. Firing continued until dark. The Spanish commander --- convinced he could not capture the island --- withdrew his forces!

The island a short time later passed to a pirate, Louis Aury, who raised the flag of Mexico over the island.

