

The Block House

The Governor of Florida issued a proclamation to the people advising them to build block houses in every community, as a means of protection against the Indians. One was built in Jacksonville, probably in 1836, at the northeast corner of Ocean and Monroe Streets. This structure was one of the famous buildings here and is mentioned in nearly every account of the early town. It was a structure of logs—a large square room raised high above the ground on a pedestal-like base. It was entered through a door in the floor, by means of a ladder. In the event of attack, the ladder could be drawn up and the opening closed. Portholes were provided on all sides, and also in the floor, through which to shoot. The object of the overhanging construction was to prevent its being set on fire, since in trying to fire the house an Indian could be shot from overhead. The block house stood at what was then the frontier of the town. All north and west of it was barren waste. Every rumor of Indians in this section caused the timid residents to seek its protection at dark. Sentries did guard duty at night and “many an amusing scene could they relate, caused by the electric imagination of the weak-nerved when it came their turn to go on post”.^b During its fifteen years of existence the block house served the community well, first as a fort and then as a place for holding religious services.

Jacksonville was a supply depot during the war, sub-commissary to the chief post at Middleburg. The government built a long one-story wooden building on the south side of Bay Street, between Main and Laura, near Laura, as a storage for supplies. This was popularly called the “government building”. It was built high above the marsh—for that region was then nothing more than marsh land, and along the Bay Street side a raised sidewalk furnished an entrance. This building stood for many years.

Attacks by the Indians

In the summer of 1836, roving bands of Indians attacked and destroyed several plantations along the lower St. Johns, among them those of Colonel Hallows and Mr. Travers. They also appeared here and there in Western Florida, between the Suwanee River and Tallahassee. The settlements in the Black Creek country and on the east side of the St.