

FLORIDA V. I.

Apalachicola



The Press-Gazette Vol. 62 No 44 Milton, Fla. Jan. 29, 1970

Phototouring Florida **LIBRARY, F.S.U.**

Doctor Was Botanist

BY HAMPTON DUNN

APALACHICOLA—"He loved every living and growing thing and welcomed each season as 'the book of nature turned its leaves' "

This description is of Dr. Alvah Wentworth Chapman, a medical doctor in pioneer North Florida, who took up botany as a hobby and in 1860 wrote "FLORA OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES" which remains a standard work in the field today.

The weather-beaten house where Dr. Chapman lived and served his fellow man sits on the main street of Apalachicola and today is the White House Hotel, a boarding house. It is one of only three mansions surviving from the days Apalachicola was a thriving port city.

A native of Massachusetts, Dr. Chapman at one time taught school in Georgia and came to Florida in 1835, first to Quincy then Marianna and to Apalachicola in 1845. He died here in 1899. His busy life included service as county judge, mayor, collector of customs from 1866 to 1870 when the revenues of the city were the largest ever known.

Dr. Chapman narrowly escaped capture by the Indians near St. Marks where he was looking for a native tree, titi. In a letter from Quincy in 1840, he wrote: "I am on the frontier and the Indians hold undisturbed possession of the country between me and the Gulf..." A genus of plants, known as *Chapmannia*, commemorates his name.

Botanical Gazette said of the Floridian: "With his demise passed away the Nestor of American botanists; the last of the great workers to whom the great progress made in the past 60 years on the exploration and investigation of the flora of this continent is to be ascribed."