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State park now site for restored mansion

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



STATE PARK NOW SITE FOR RESTORED MANSION

By HAMPTON DUNN

TORREYA STATE PARK --- A fine example of ante-bellum architecture is the beautifully restored Gregory House, now a feature of Torreya State Park off Florida 12 between Bristol and Chattahoochee.

The attractive mansion sits majestically atop Neal's Bluff facing the Apalachicola River. But it hasn't always been here.

Once upon a time there was a county known as Fayette, named in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette. It was created in 1832 by the Territorial Legislature and was abolished just two years later. The capital of Fayette was the town of Ocheesee.

An affluent settler here was Jason Gregory, who acquired much acreage and engaged in cotton farming, which was shipped down the river. He built this aristocratic two-story house in 1834.

The Gregory House figured in events of the Civil War. There was a river gunboat, the Chattahoochee, that patrolled the river and the crews often were guests at the luxurious home. The boat sank at Blountstown in 1863 and the wounded were evacuated to the Gregory House until they could be transferred. One victim in the explosion was the son of the Confederate Secretary of Navy Stephen R. Mallory.

The last big social event in this mansion was the marriage of Ida Gregory, the oldest daughter, to William Falke during Christmas, 1865. The Gregory family fled the area in 1873 to escape yellow fever. They moved to Gainesville, and even so, all the family save daughter Chaffa died in the epidemic. She returned to the old home and lived there until her death. It was sold, finally was donated to the State and moved.

