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## Tallahassee home represents ante-bellum architecture

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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## TALLAHASSEE HOME REPRESENTS ANTE-BELLUM ARCHITECTURE

By HAMPTON DUNN

TALLAHASSEE --- It is so appropriate that an organization concerned with aesthetics, the Tallahassee Garden Club, is housed in one of the capital city's beautiful ante-bellum homes that actually represents the architecture and building techniques popular in the ante-bellum days.

The Garden Center at 507 North Calhoun Street, near downtown Tallahassee, is a classic. Actual date of its construction is unrecorded but it is known it was built prior to 1850. The original owner was Henry L. Rutgers, a pioneer banker.

It was built by George Proctor, a free Negro, who was responsible for many other fine early Tallahassee mansions, including the historic Randall House, across the street at 424 North Calhoun. The Rutgers house boasts woodwork and doors of solid mahogany.

Although Rutgers was a prominent pioneer, there seems to be little data on him. A new volume on early Tallahassee, published in 1971 by the Tallahassee Heritage Foundation, and called "Ante-Bellum Tallahassee," reported that in June, 1856, the *Floridian and Journal* newspaper announced the opening of a new bank building on Monroe Street, to which the paper added, "We are indebted to Mr. H. L. Rutgers." The book pointed out that there was a question as to what bank it was to house. Perhaps, it added, it was a new building for the State Bank of Florida. It is possible that druggist B. C. Lewis, who opened his own bank in that year with his three sons, bought this building from Rutgers.

The Proctors were well known in ante-bellum Tallahassee. George's father was Antonio Proctor, a mulatto born in Jamaica and ended up in Florida's capital city. He served as interpreter for Territorial Governor William P. DuVal, being proficient in both Spanish and Creek Indian language. Antonio died at the Rutgers home in 1855; he was 112 years old: It is noted that "Antonio's was the only Negro obituary ever published in an ante-bellum Tallahassee newspaper."

