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U.D.C. headquarters in 'Patten House'

Hampton Dunn
ELLENTON --- The Florida Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy gained a permanent headquarters and the State of Florida acquired a historic structure with the purchase of the attractive "Patten House."

The building is described as an "excellent example of primitive Florida architecture from the period around the turn of the century" and is a valuable addition to the historic Gamble Mansion complex here on U.S. 301 in this village near Bradenton. The Gamble Mansion is where Judah P. Benjamin, "the Brains of the Confederacy," a Confederate Cabinet officer, hid out on his flight from the Federal troops chasing him at the collapse of the Civil War. It has been a State Monument for many years.

Maj. George Patten, a wealthy cotton merchant from Savannah, Ga., came here after the war and settled his family in the Gamble Mansion. He bought the beautiful property at auction in 1873 for $3,000, for an estate that 15 years earlier had sold for $190,000. The Pattens lived there awhile, but the structure was awfully run-down and in need of a new roof and other repairs.

The Major decided to build his own cottage and move out of the Gamble Mansion. The family lived happily ever after in the comfortable, but modest, four-room frame house. A back wing and two bedrooms and a balcony upstairs were added later. The Mansion was deserted until the U. D. C. ladies got interested in it and finally got the State to take it over.

After the death of Mrs. Dudley Patten in 1967, the State Parks Board bought the Patten House for $30,000, and it was moved several hundred yards north to another location on the Mansion grounds.

The U. D. C. ladies have done a magnificent job of painting and restoring it and furnishing it with period furniture typical of that used around 1870 or later. The building, besides being a show place, also is a nice state headquarters for this patriotic organization.