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State hospital buildings are ante-bellum

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CHATTAOOCHEE --- The grounds and buildings occupied by the State mental hospital here are attractive and some of the structures date back to the old United States Arsenal which was established here in 1832 during the Territorial days.

One of the older buildings is the handsome Administrative Headquarters (photo) featuring pretty gingerbread carpentry. Large shade trees surround it.

Chattahoochee is up almost near the Florida-Georgia state line on U.S. 90 north of Tallahassee and located in Gadsden County. The hospital is on the eastern edge of U.S. 90 and immediately south of the community. The town at one time was known as Mount Vernon.

The original United States Arsenal, the ruins of which are still visible near the hospital, was erected by the United States Army Ordnance under and Act of Congress passed in 1832. (Some sources say there was an arsenal there at the confluence of the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers as early as 1821).

The arsenal proper consisted of various buildings erected so that their exterior walls formed a quadrangle of four square acres. And, according to a historical marker on site, all the brick was made in the vicinity and construction was begun in 1832. It served as an arsenal of deposit prior to the Civil War when it was seized by the Confederacy and used as a Camp of Instruction. (The Quincy Guards took over the arsenal from an ordnance sergeant and three men on Jan. 5, 1861 and this gave Florida a badly-needed supply of ammunition).

Following the Civil War the Federal Government gave the property to the Freedman’s Bureau in 1866. The buildings were given to the State of Florida in 1869 for use as a prison. It was placed in service as a mental institution in 1876.