

LICHGATE:

The Southern Shakespeare Festival had expressed interest, but a deal fell through

From 1B

The house was vandalized by students from nearby Godby High School when Jepsen moved to a nursing home after breaking her ankle in September 1994. Since then, a group of Godby teachers has tried to keep students away from the house.

Jepsen, who taught English at Florida State University from 1946 to 1978, willed the house to The Nature Conservancy.

"We're looking to preserve the house. . . . We're in the midst of negotiation, and, as with any real-estate negotiation, it's confidential," said Deborah Keller, a development officer at The Nature Conservancy, whose primary mis-

sion is environmental, not historic, preservation.

The Southern Shakespeare Festival had expressed interest in buying the house last year, but, according to Treasurer Dean Minardi, the deal fell through after the conservancy reneged on a verbal agreement with the group that stipulated it did not need a cash down payment on the property.

Minardi said his group could not come up with \$100,000 in cash the conservancy required.

"In talking to The Nature Conservancy, I got the impression that they had a number of buyers with \$100,000 who were ready, willing and able to buy it," Minardi said. "We were going to run it as a living museum and as a performance venue."

According to Allen, the Laura Jepsen Institute has been trying to buy the house since last summer. He said the group postponed a news conference Thursday because of the confidential nature of the negotiations, and will reschedule it when the deal is finalized.

"We were encouraged, I must say. . . . We are still optimistic," Allen said.