

A photograph of a brick building with arched windows and a garden area with trees and a memorial plaque. The building is made of red brick and has several white-framed windows, some with arched tops. In the foreground, there are green plants and a brick wall. A memorial plaque is mounted on the brick wall, and a bench is visible in the background.

A Serene Space

Todd C. Prosser
Memorial Garden

BS 1997 MS 1999

1975 - 2000

THE TODD C. PROSSER MEMORIAL GARDEN

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As the agapanthus and the crepe myrtles bloom simultaneously in the waning days of spring, it's easy to see why so many of our colleagues, patrons, and members of the UF community spend some small portion of their day taking a break in the Todd Prosser Memorial Garden. Occasionally you might even see architecture students there, using the natural light in the garden to assess their handmade models.

The garden, located just outside the entry to Smathers Library between the building and the Plaza of the Americas, is a tranquil campus space where one can enjoy a light lunch in solitude, a nice conversation with a classmate or co-worker, or just quietly meditate or read.

Records on University of Florida garden spaces are scarce, and no one is really certain exactly when the garden, in its current configuration, was created. In the early days of what is now called the UF campus historic district (the part of campus adjacent to University Ave., between 13th St. and the stadium), the land between buildings was often left as the old Florida scrub, rather than the landscaped spaces we know today. A lot of the early photos of Smathers Library show what is essentially a sand lot outside the building (Fig.2). At one time there was a temporary reading room located where the garden is today, allowing a place for study while the Grand Reading Room was closed due to the addition of the north tower in the 1940's (Fig.3). The oldest photo of the garden looking similar to today is from 1977 (Fig.1). Back then, and at least through the 80s, the garden was more formal, with laurel oaks and boxwoods making it much greener than the blooming flower garden we see today.

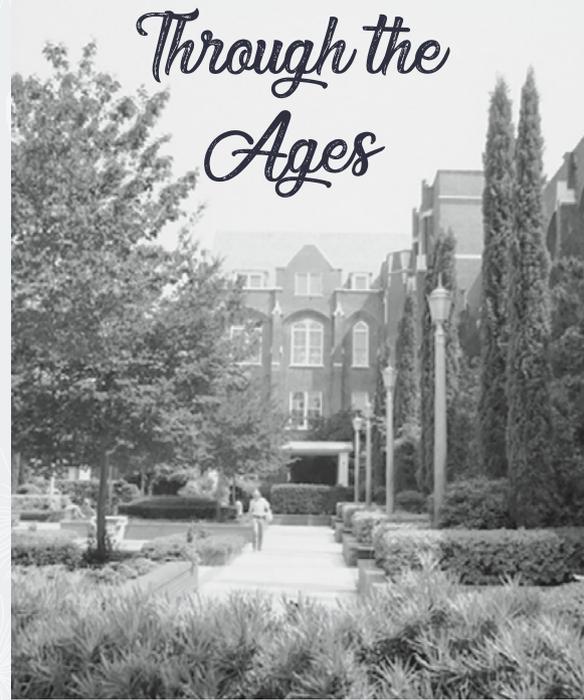


Fig.1 - Prosser Garden 1977



Fig.2 - Early aerial photograph of University Library and Peabody Hall - garden in upper left



Fig.3 - Temporary reading room where garden is today



For more about the Todd Prosser Fund:
www.uff.ufl.edu/giving-opportunities



Ten years ago, the garden was dedicated to the memory of **TODD PROSSER**. Though the garden is not the only memorial to Todd on the UF campus—there is a notable old-fashioned station clock near the O’Connell Center also dedicated to him—it is the most stunning, and it’s the one his father spends the most time visiting while on campus. Todd was a large, gregarious man with a love of British humor and John Cleese in particular. His favorite television show was *Fawlty Towers*. When he saw that his father was in a bad mood or taking things too seriously, he would always find a way to make him laugh and bring back his warmth and charm. An excellent student in high school, Todd had a lot of enthusiasm for the University of Florida. It was the only college he applied to, knowing he was not interested in attending any other university. Todd and his brother Ted Prosser III both attended UF in the 1990s for their undergraduate and graduate degrees. After attaining a Master’s degree in information sciences in 1999, Todd moved to Atlanta to begin his career in the software industry. Sadly, in the year 2000, Todd died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 25.



While at UF, Todd occasionally used his imposing size to stop fights between others. He would put himself between two arguing people and try to make them come to an understanding before the argument escalated to a fist fight. Perhaps for this reason his father Ted Prosser, Jr. chose the garden as a space to dedicate to Todd. There’s something intangible about the garden that makes Mr. Prosser feel at peace, and feel close to his son. He understands that this is a special place for so many people here at UF and is certain that tranquility is the reason why.

When, as a student or an employee, we first come to an institution like the University where there are so many spaces and places, we tend to bond with spaces in the way we bond with other people or with pets. Certain spaces take on a special meaning for us, whether that meaning is something we can put into words, or just an emotional response. If you haven’t found that special place yet, I encourage you to explore the campus and find that place that speaks to you. The Todd Prosser Memorial Garden is a great place to start. 

TALES FROM THE GARDEN

The centerpiece of the garden is an Italian Renaissance era wellhead (probably Venetian) from the collection of David Randall-MacIver. Randall-MacIver was a well-respected archeologist with a storied life. His early career was spent excavating sites in Egypt and Zimbabwe, and he spent time working intelligence during the first World War. The wellhead was most likely acquired during his time in Italy studying the ancient Etruscans. It was relocated to his summer home on Gloucester, Massachusetts, where it appears to have been used as a planter. After his death, the house was purchased by Frederick and Lenice Sayford-Bacon.



The wellhead was donated to UF by Lenice in 1967, after the passing of her husband. It was placed in what at the time was called the library courtyard. When the courtyard became the garden, the wellhead was placed on a small dais in the center.



A Learning Space

At a great university, learning is adaptive and abounds. The Prosser Memorial Garden affords a space for dialogue and is frequented by classes.

Professor Will Zajac's Architecture Class uses the outdoor setting for classes where student projects require they adapt their three dimensional models into and onto the wellhead.



Though iconic, the wellhead hasn't always been in this garden space, and has even "gone missing" as quoted in this June 27, 1967 issue of The Alligator.

<https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00028291/02676/1?search=wellhead>