

April 2, 1974

WILLIAM JOHNSON'S HOUSE
26 Queen Street
c. 1799
Home of Mr. & Mrs. Leonard L. Long

This is one of a few town-houses of the "row house" groupings scattered through Charleston; they are very familiar in Europe, but are relatively rare in this part of North America. These were built as tenement houses by the Revolutionary William Johnson, about 1800. (They run west from Philadelphia Alley along Queen Street--formerly known as Dock Street--and contained within the area 4 square blocks of the original town of Charleston.) They are joined at the roof.

Although the colorful facades of these post-Revolutionary Queen Street "row houses"--of which #26 is one--are a delightful sight for sightseers today, they were as recently as 1938 in deplorable slum condition. This section was reclaimed by individuals on a house by house basis, beginning in the 1920's.

One enters this small house through a wrought iron gate and outdoor foyer; knocks at the door, or uses the old door-knocker (a horned satyr). The row has the same flow plan . . . four stories, spacious rooms on each floor which open onto a hallway, and dormer rooms on the fourth floor.

HALL:

The H & L hinges on the doors are original. Note pegs in doors. The lock on the closet door is an old ship's lock. The kitchen door, to the left of the front door is original--pine--note old raised panels. The handle is an old ship's cleat. NOTE: PEWTER COLLECTION IN ORIGINAL NOTES WAS NOT AVAILABLE AS PIECES WOULD NOT FIT ON THE SHELVES. ALSO WOOD WORK ON STAIRS IS OF SAME DESIGN ON FIRST TWO FLIGHTS, BUT DESIGN CHANGES ON THE THIRD FLIGHT FOR RELIEF. VISITORS NOW GO UPSTAIRS TO THE LIVING ROOM.

LIVING ROOM:

This room is a unique combination of contemporary and old. The colors chosen by the young couple who recently purchased the house and the plant life give the feeling of contemporary "sun room" living, yet the antique furniture, original pine floors, and handsomely carved woodwork give the feeling of the 18th century.

ENTERING THE LIVING ROOM LOOKING TOWARD QUEEN STREET IT IS OBVIOUS THE STRUCTURE IS A PARALLELOGRAM.

The owner's love of art is apparent in both this room and the den. Note the Watercolor of "Flower Ladies" by Stoiff (local artist) on east wall. Boulanger (contemporary artist who lives in France) etching on left of fireplace. Zebra lithograph by Nancy Nemeo. (Mention only if asked.)

Most of the furniture in this room is contemporary. Wicker rocker is about 100 years old. Mahogany chest on the north wall is an interesting piece--opens into a dining table--seats 12 people!

Fireplace tools are American made brass and are very old. The copper coal scuttle with brass base and porcelain handles is old (purchased from the local "flea market.")

All fireplaces work with the exception of the Dining Room one where furnace is vented. Note rose and thistle design on mantel--Scotland influence.

Chair railing has marks in it which were made years ago by bored tenants who leaned against the walls and "whittled" to pass the time away!

Note H & L hinges on door.

There are several valuable Royal Dalton Figurines--the one on the small table is called "Flower Seller's Children."

DEN:

Point out mantel--picture over mantel by contemporary French artist, Boulanger. Royal Dalton Figuring "Balloon Lady." Center portion of dining room table on right hand side of mantel. Bronze fireplace tools are from England. Visitor's are requested to descend to dining room.

DINING ROOM:

Wall boards are native cypress and floor boards are heart of pine. (Possibly someone paneled the walls with the panels of an old ceiling or ship before the present owner lived here.) Silver-English Sheffield soup tureen c. 1880 on small server. Silver fruit basket on dining table is very old. Notice antique liqueur decanter on silver chest.

In the built-in China cabinet, note white china with gold initials JRL, hand painted by owner's grandmother.

VISITORS NOW GO OUT THE GLASS DOOR IN THE DINING ROOM LEADING
ONTO THE FOYER FROM WHICH THERE IS ACCESS TO THE COURTYARD.

COURTYARD:

The courtyard is well landscaped with camellias, azaleas and Japanese plum trees among other things. There is also a fountain. The present owners found a live cannon ball from the civil war in the courtyard in December 1973. It has been removed, but visitors are always interested in seeing the indentation which is just a little south of the fountain. Rooflines adjoining can be seen best here.

BACK HOUSE:

The back house consists of two rooms up and two rooms down-- no documentation as to whether it was a carriage house, kitchen, and/or servant's quarters. The paneling is the same as is found in the dining room of the main house. The front door is quite old, but unsure as to whether or not original. It is presently used as rental property and shows extremely well. This structure is also a parallelogram. Only the living room was open to the public this year.

NOTE: The original house history was used as basic copy. Additional information is indicated by capitalization and/or underscoring throughout this revision.

WILLIAM JOHNSON'S ROW HOUSE, c. 1802
26 Queen Street
Home of Dr. and Mrs. E.K. Wallace, Jr.

Following the Revolutionary War, the Charleston economy grew rapidly and the increased prosperity and growth of the middle class (both in numbers and importance) posed new problems for Charleston builders. The large number of city merchants and professional men wanted to reside near their businesses and near the activities of the port. One solution to this new housing demand was the building of attached row houses that could be massed on relatively small plots of land. The Johnson "row houses" at 22 to 28 Queen Street are excellent examples of this type of development. Although known as "tenements" in the 1800's (and built for rental purpose), this sequence was very well built and is distinguished by fine interior appointments.

The builders and developers were a distinguished father and son who served in a number of influential public offices. William Johnson, Sr. was born in New York in 1741 and came to Charleston at age 23 and established a blacksmith's business in the City. He began to acquire lands throughout the low country and was identified as a "planter" in later documents. The elder Johnson supported the patriot's cause in the Revolution and served in the Provincial Congress and subsequently in the South Carolina House of Representatives, until 1792. He died in 1818, revered as a leader of the Revolution.

His son, William, was born in Charleston in 1771, graduated from Princeton in 1790 and studied law under Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. He was in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1794-1798 and was speaker of that body in 1798.

Johnson also served as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1803 until his death in 1834.

The father and son had formed a partnership in 1801 and completed the impressive row of private residences by 1803.

The buildings are three and one half stories high, built of brick, and each has two dormers front and back. The end buildings are finished with simulated quoins and all have a line of brick cornice and horizontal string courses of masonry accentuating the various floor levels.

WILLIAM JOHNSON'S ROW HOUSE, c. 1802
Page 2

KITCHEN

The completely up-to-date kitchen has been created in what was probably the business section of this attached Charleston single-house. Previous owners created an arched passage for use as a garage and this opening has been retained and glassed over to provide an interesting view onto Queen Street.

DINING ROOM

The dining room is fully sheathed in cypress boards. Cypress, which is native to the low-lying swampy area around Charleston was prized by early Charlestonians for the construction of buildings and furniture. Also known as the "wood eternal", Cypress is impervious to moisture and insect damage.

Notice the view from the windows to the carriage house and the small courtyard garden.

The late 18th century tall-case clock descended in Dr. Wallace's family and was made in Reading, Pennsylvania, by Samuel Breneilen. The woods are cherry and walnut.

The chairs are old reproductions in the Queen Anne style. An interesting pair of 18th century andirons depicts Prussian soldiers.

Portraits of the Wallace children are by Lila Clayton.

HALL

The silhouettes on the stair were done by Charleston artist John Bennett who was born in Ohio in 1865, and moved to Charleston in 1898. He married Susan Smythe in 1902.

Bennett is best known for his two children's books: Master Skylark and Barnaby Lee. These are considered classics of children's literature. He published many works about Charleston (patterning many of the fictional characters on his friends and neighbors). These works include Madame Margot, The Doctor to the Dead, and the first scholarly treatise on the Gullah dialect (c. 1905-1906). His silhouettes were used to illustrate several of his works.

WILLIAM JOHNSON'S ROW HOUSE, c. 1802

Page 3

DRAWING ROOM

The drawing room decorations feature plasterwork in the neoclassical taste of the early 19th century.

Particularly noteworthy is the English burl walnut bracket clock which was made in the seventeenth century by Lord Tinerton. It belonged to Mrs. Wallace's grandmother.

The coffee table is made from a section of late 17th century coromandel lacquer and was probably originally cut from a large screen.

The hand colored botanical prints are after Reinagle and were published in London between 1798 and 1804.

On the Chippendale chairs are needlepoint seats done for each of the Wallace children by Mrs. Wallace's aunt.

The birds on brackets are by English artist Dorothy Doughty.

Secretary, American, Early 1800.

Marble top pier tables, English, c. 1770.

Armchairs, William and Mary revival pieces of c. 1900.

STUDY

The fascinating mantel is an addition of c. 1840 when coal had taken the place of wood fires. The wooden mantel and unusual matching iron coal grate feature acanthus leaves, a popular Greek Revival motif.