

HRC April 12

64 Hasell St. Will Be Restored

By W.H.J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

Another antebellum dwelling house of particularly fine quality within the boundary of the Ansonborough rehabilitation district is scheduled for restoration.

The large residence at 64 Hasell St., long in casual repair and now looking somewhat battered by the years, has recently been purchased by Admiral and Mrs. Paul E. Pihl with plans for its reconstitution. The Pihls plan to begin exterior restoration work shortly, though the dwelling itself will be kept in apartment units at this time.

The lot occupied by 64 Hasell was a western extension of the property of Col. William Rhett house (now known as 54 Hasell). The Rhett property had been bought by Christopher FitzSimons as early as 1807. It was an Elizabeth FitzSimons who sold the portion now occupied by 64 Hasell (then as now measuring 65 feet on the street and 130 feet in depth) to Benjamin F. Smith as a vacant lot for \$2,500 in May of 1843.

Benjamin F. Smith was a well-to-do building supply merchant, and perhaps this knowledge of materials led him to give attention to the details of ornamentation on his new home, for few houses in Charleston during the Greek Revival period possess such a degree of finish.

The plan of the house formed a modified U shape with two large rooms on either side of the center hall for each story, backed by two smaller rooms on the rear. The hallway did not extend through to the rear and this area was taken up by a shallow piazza.

The most surprising aspect of the interior is the lavish treatment of both wood and plaster. The entrance hallway, the east sitting room and the library of the west side each has a very full-blown entablature in plaster. That of the sitting room starts with an enriched band resting on the door and window architraves, topped by an expanse of wall, topped in turn by a foliate frieze, egg and dart cornice and then a high relief grape cluster and leaf ceiling band.

Somewhat more unusual are

the handsomely carved frames for the openings of the room, where the doors and windows are flanked by full-height pilasters in the Corinthian order copied after the Tower of the Wind at Athens.

Something of the same idea and scale is evident in the door panels and exterior door frames where we find employed the Greek

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honeysuckle design as ornament. In reduced size, repeating the design from a slight distance, we find the Greek honeysuckle in the quite elaborate cast iron fence screening the yard from the sidewalk.

Even more ornate is the wrought iron and hammered foliate work of the short flight of steps leading to the front piazza. Whether the work be in plaster, wood or iron, the builder did not skimp on enrichment.

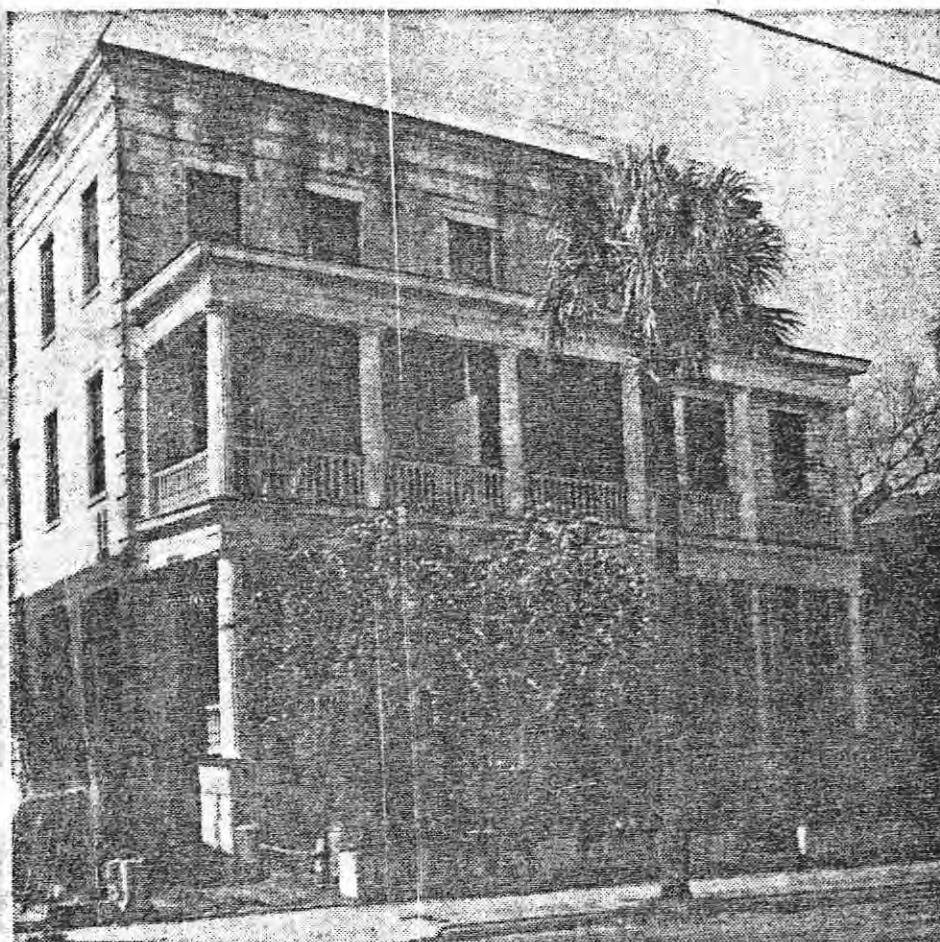
Smith kept the house only five years, selling it to Dr. Philip P. Mazyck for \$11,000.

Following Mrs. Gadsden's

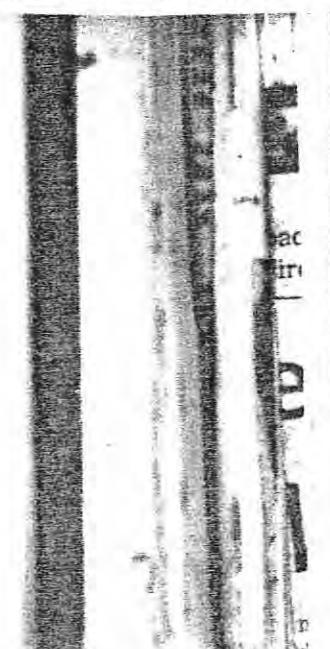
death in 1916, the house and lot passed to her four children, George M. Gadsden, Phoebe Gadsden Gordon, Florence Gadsden Smyth and Philip H. Gadsden. All interests in the property were then purchased by Philip Gadsden, a Charleston attorney who headed the Charleston Consolidated Railway and Lighting Co., then the Charleston Light and Water Co., and at the end of his career was a vice president of the United Gas Improvement Co. in Philadelphia.

On March 12, 1937, he sold 64 Hasell to the Carolina Realty Corp. for \$6,000. The property was transferred in 1951 to the Citizens and Southern National Bank as trustees under the will of Mrs. Pearl H. Walker.

The Pihls, who live in the equally interesting Greek Revival dwelling at 60 Hasell just to the east of the Benjamin Smith Dwelling, have selected colors for the exterior of 64 Hasell similar to those popular in the 1840s. Immediate plans include the painting of the residence in a shade of ivory, trimmed in white and with shutters in black.



64 HASELL ST. WAS BUILT IN 1843
Home constructed by Benjamin F. Smith. (Staff Photo by Swain.)



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Craft Flowered Early In Colony

W.H. Thomas

Ornamental Iron Enhances Charleston Dwelling

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By W.H.J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

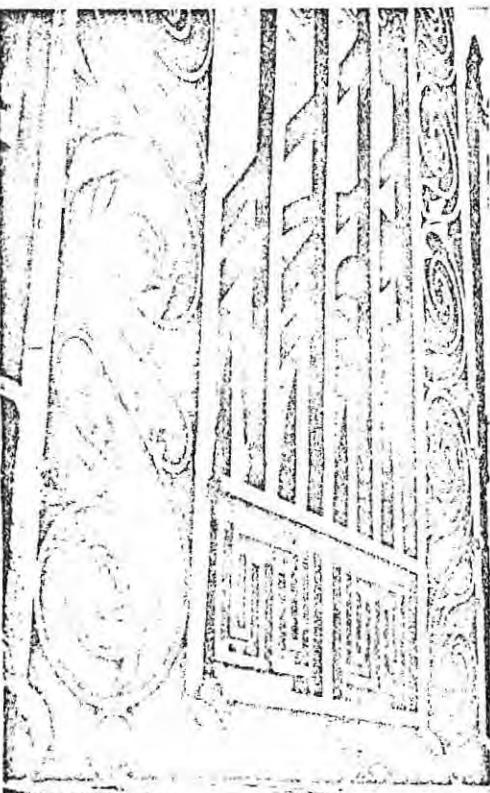
Evidence indicates that from the first flowering of the decorative arts in the Carolina colony there were craftsmen creating embellishments in iron for local buildings.

Although the earliest surviving fragments of local iron-work probably do not date before 1750, it is not unlikely that ornamental iron (no doubt lost in the many early fires) was used in Charleston just as soon as local buildings reached the grander aspects that would demand such enrichment.

As Col. Alston Deas shows in his 1941 volume "The Early Ironwork of Charleston", an advertisement was placed in the South Carolina Gazette as early as 1732 by Thomas Lovelace showing blacksmith operations here. In 1753, another notice appeared offering "all kinds of scroll work for grates and stair cases."

The art of ornamental work for the exterior of homes and institutional buildings apparently picked up in the major building periods of the city and continued with much variety and interest until the war of 1861-65 strapped the economy.

The refinements characteristic of 18th century Charleston were in evidence in the iron-work, as the robust though cruder features of later building arts are still very apparent



Fence For 64 Hasell

Do You Know Your Charleston?

In surviving ornamental iron from the 18th century through the Victorian period.

These characteristic refinements have led to a fair amount of snobbery concerning the value of "wrought" over "cast" iron, the latter presumably less worthy of attention in the minds of many homeowners.

This overshadowing of a later period's products by the appeal for the delicate lines of an earlier time appears to have resulted in some replacement of 19th century work with rather anemic 20th century versions of the earliest period.

The 18th century ironwork of Charleston was almost completely English in origin, and among the city's most active craftsmen or iron-masters were Tunis Tebout and William Johnson. This Englishness continued along with other building fashions beyond 1800 despite the Revolution (where patriots Tebout and Johnson left more evidence of their politics than they ever left proof of their ironwork).

The Adam-style iron work of 1800-1815 was quite delicate in keeping with its other related aspects and missed some of the wonderful vitality which might be seen in the gateway

to St. Philip's Episcopal Church's western churchyard (1770) or at the entrance area to the Miles Brewton House from the 1760s.

The Adam was thin-lined and fragile in appearance, frequently set about with cast rosettes in lead or small fragments of "S" and "C" scrolls collared to the principal members.

The real strength came into Charleston iron work when more firmly American appearances were developed with the Greek Revival. Though frequently ignored because of its full-bodied appearance — and once again because it is most usually cast iron — the examples from this period after 1830 give the city much of its period feel.

A most attractive and various example may be found on the Benjamin F. Smith House at 64 Hasell St., a dwelling built in 1843. No snobbery concerning the differences between wrought and cast bothed the iron worker who made the front gate, fence and stair railings to the house.

Employing in robust outline the Greek honeysuckle design to top the fence members, he created large-scale "S" scrolls for fence panels, the scroll ends terminating in cast lead star flowers. The fence rests on a series of solid iron balls, with the panels on wrought iron circles.

The stair railing is in iron

over-lays with four-sided balustrades. Between these balustrades are thicker versions of the "S" scroll woven through with modified acanthus leaves created by admirable hammer work. Each scroll ends at its bottom-most curve with a large version of the eight-pointed star flower.

By the 1830s, a Gothic or Romanesque direction was indicated, though seldom fully expressed. Cast iron had fully come into its own as may be seen in the roughly similar iron work at Bee Block (101, 103, 105 and 107 Bull), built between 1851 and 1854, and the large John Robertson House at 34 Smith St., built in 1855.

There we find a series of intersecting arches braced by flames, rosettes and curling vines, in a blossoming of Victorian tendencies.

Following the Civil War, even at the grandest homes, the iron work became surprisingly restrained. As may be seen on both the George W. Williams House at 14-16 Meeting (built 1870s) and the Francis S. Rodgers Mansion at 149 Wentworth (built 1880s), the ornamental iron dwindles to an understated treatment of spikes, barbs, flames and spears.

Another version for the same period was in a criss-crossing of stout wire in circles, ovals and Gothic arches clamped here and there with flaming rosettes.



Ornate Hasell Street Panels