



Garden of James Veree's House, c. 1754
58 Church Street
Home of Mrs. Ben Scott Whaley

James Veree, a carpenter-builder, acquired the land that this house and its neighbors to the north stood upon in 1754. Their handsome Georgian styling shows that his house and that to the north of it were built soon thereafter. The pair of houses seem to have been two of the five "tenements" on this side of Church Street between Broad and Stoll's Alley that fortunately escaped destruction by the fire of 1778. "Tenement" was the 18th century term for a house built as rental property.

In 1784, Veree's son and namesake (then in New Jersey) sold this house to Thomas Heyward, who at about that time had moved from the house that Washington was to make famous (Heyward-Washington House) to one just across the street from here.

Thomas Heyward lived from 1746 to 1809. He was an American patriot and a signer of the Declaration of Independence and later served as an officer in the Revolutionary War. Heyward was an early owner of the house but is not believed to have lived here.

This exquisite city garden was one of only thirty gardens selected from throughout the United States to be included in the recent publication THE AMERICAN WOMAN'S GARDEN by the noted British author Rosemary Verey and American garden historian Ellen Samuels. We have enclosed a copy of Mrs. Whaley's description of the garden which appears in this publication.

Mrs. Whaley's garden is the garden pictured in the 1989 Festival of Houses poster.



GARDEN OF THE JAMES VEREE HOUSE

2005

58 Church Street

c. 1754

Residence of Dr. and Mrs. Charles L. Cornwell (Marty Whaley Adams)

This simple frame Charleston single house, along with its neighbors at 60 and 56 Church Street, was built by carpenter James Veree, a Quaker, and has been occupied by the same family for more than six decades. Although #58 is larger, the house has simple woodwork compared to its neighbor on the north and is, as Emily Whaley said in her book, *Mrs. Whaley and Her Charleston Garden*, "comfortable."

Veree's son sold the house to Thomas Heyward, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who probably used it as an income-producing rental unit. Attorney Ben Scott Whaley and his bride bought the house in 1938, and in 1942 Mrs. Whaley engaged Loutrel Briggs, who created many lasting Charleston gardens that are uniquely his own, to design what has perhaps become the most visited and enjoyed small private garden in America.

The *New York Times* described Mrs. Whaley's garden as a "peaceful, understated series of outdoor rooms (with) an oval of grass as simple as a haiku." The garden is divided into five distinct areas, each with its own soul and atmosphere: the entrance, the terrace, the lawn and shallow pond, the shaded oval, and "Lovers' Lane." Upon Mrs. Whaley's death in 1998, her youngest daughter, Marty Whaley Adams, assumed ownership of both house and garden. Since then, the garden has undergone some change in plantings, though and no change in the perfect plan by Briggs. The terrace has been enlarged as the result of the removal of the tool shed and its lattice enclosure. As she plans changes and carries them out, Marty has attempted to convey a feeling of cleansing and of rebirth, remembering well her mother's love of the "storms of life that provide renewal and change." Colors of blue and lavender as well as colors that are pale in value accentuate this transition as Marty attempts to find her signature. Mrs. Whaley's gardener, Junior, and his brother still assist Marty with the weekly gardening chores on Wednesday.

The entrance, which is like a long, secluded hallway leading to the sunny terrace and garden beyond, is relatively unchanged from Mrs. Whaley's time. However, there has been a wonderful addition of a millstone that provides the turn for the entry into the terrace.

An artist who owned her own gallery in Charleston from 1991 until 2003 when she began painting in her studio at 58 Church Street, Marty has sculpted the fountain head. In addition she writes a garden column for the *Charleston Post and Courier*, as well as articles for other newspapers and magazines on the subject of gardening. She was *Victoria* magazine's Artist in Residence in 1997 and will have her own show at the Wells Gallery on May 6, 2005, where her art is represented. She also is represented at the Dog Art Dealer for her charming portraits of animals.

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Perimeter plantings which enclose the garden include evergreen plants that grow vigorously in this climate: sweet olives, Italian cypress, loquat, dogwood, anise, holly fern, boxwood, and more as Marty learns of interesting developments in the world of horticulture.

Among the plantings are natives from local woods and swamps not often found in city gardens: lucothia, royal fern, deer fern. Camellias bloom from November to March, depending on the variety. With a few exceptions, they have been here for 50 years or more. The plantings change as the owner finds more plants that do well in her garden.

The inch-deep round pool acts as a reflecting pool and birdbath. Original plans called for a deeper pool, but with young children and pets playing in the back yard, Mrs. Whaley opted for the safety and economic benefits of the shallow pool. During migration season as many as 15 birds enjoy the pool at a time.

"Lovers' Lane" begins with a subtle pathway at the right rear of the garden. It circles around toward another small pond, passing by a hollow dead tree about ten feet tall that was intentionally left by Mrs. Whaley as a reminder of eras past and the changing landscape. The pond here has become filled in over time, and Marty is considering excavating it back to its original state. A plaque to Rosie made from a piece of marble from St. Philip's Church floor is a memorial to Emily Whaley's amazing dog, of whom she wrote in her books.

As you leave the garden, notice the new trelliage that covers the entire house as well as the arbor over the balcony. The trelliage is made of copper pipes and was designed to make the house more a part of the garden. The bower above the balcony is made of cedar posts. Trelliage and bower will one day be covered with native wisteria, a less rampant vine than the Oriental variety.

PLANT LISTING

Ajuga	Azaleas
Strawberry Begonia	Boxwoods
Camellias	
Daphne	Dogwoods
Geraniums	Gerbera
Ginger	
Hydrangea	
Impatiens	Italian cypress
Loquat	
Pansies	Pentas
Petunias	
Roses	Royal Fern Deer Fern
Sedum	Stock
Snapdragons	Sweet Olives

BUILDINGS OF CHARLESTON:
A Guide to the City's Architecture
by Jonathan H. Poston

University of SC Press
1997

58-60 CHURCH STREET, JAMES VEREE HOUSES

Constructed 1754-90; restored 1930s-40s

James Veree, a French Huguenot carpenter, purchased a parcel containing these lots in 1754 and probably constructed the house at 58 Church Street immediately and the dwelling to the north a decade later. The property at 58 Church has the largest of the original houses but contains simple woodwork. James Veree Jr. sold the house to a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Heyward, who apparently used it as a rental property.

A single house with three front bays, it has been noted for its rear garden, designed by the owners with the assistance of Loutrel Briggs in 1942.

The west first-floor room is the outstanding feature of 60 Church, having pre-Revolutionary mahogany paneling with fretwork inlay, possibly attributable to Martin Pfeninge, a German cabinetmaker living in Charleston in the 1770s. After Veree moved to Burlington, New Jersey, he sold 60 Church to Stephen Duvall, a harbor pilot, who furnished it elaborately, according to his estate inventory. An officer in the S.C. navy in the Revolution, Duvall died of a fever while imprisoned by the British under the Exchange Building in 1780.

Veree also owned the lot at 56 Church Street. In 1792 James Veree Jr. sold the lot to the widow Margaret Daniel, who built a house on the site between 1794 and 1796.

This house retains its early piazza containing a notable door architrave with engaged and fluted Tuscan columns supporting a Neoclassical frieze.