

Home Was Old Service Building

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Seventeenth in a series of articles on the early dwellings of Montagu Street. The 18th will appear two weeks from today.)

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Staff Reporter

The builders of early Charleston would never have guessed that the numerous stables, kitchen buildings, laundry houses, and servant's quarters they were busy erecting in the 18th and 19th centuries would become the very desirable residences of today.

Many are too buried in the rear of deep lots ever to be noticed, but in the case of the two-story residence at 42 Montagu St., its original main house occupied a lucky corner and 42 Montagu found itself facing an open view to its south.

A quick glance at this residence, a substantial enough home in its own right, would not lead one to think of it as a period building. Its conversion to contemporary living many years ago was so thorough that one does not associate it with the large mansion to its east, built 122 years ago as the home for a member of one of Charleston's most prominent business families.

The house at 42 Montagu is the last in a long line of buildings which together once formed 93 Rutledge Ave., constructed in 1850 for Edward Leonard Trenholm. If one looks carefully, the details and materials of the large principal dwelling may be found on a reduced scale in this secondary building turned 20th century home.

Trenholm (1814-1883) was a man of considerable ability and attainments who was long associated in business with his more famous brother, George

Alfred Trenholm (1807-1876), the second secretary of the treasury of the Confederacy.

Both men were highly successful in a commercial operation run in partnership with John Fraser, a Scottish merchant. In time known as Fraser, Trenholm and Co., the firm owned a number of vessels, and with the start of the Civil War began a remarkably successful trade between Liverpool and Charleston.

The Trenholm cruiser "Alabama" became a legend for its many runs through the Union blockade of Southern ports. It is said that the "Alabama" drama only ended when England paid some \$15 million for damages done to American shipping.

It was on Nov. 5, 1850 that Edward Trenholm purchased the large lot at the northwest corner of Rutledge and Montagu. He completed his large-scale residence soon after, and at that time it must have been the most imposing single dwelling along Rutledge Avenue.

After Trenholm's death, the property passed to his widow, the former Eliza Bonnall Holmes. On April 12, 1890, it was purchased by T. Moultrie Mordecai, an attorney in partnership with Philip H. Gadsden, for \$12,305.

Though it remained his residence, Mordecai in 1892 transferred the property at Rutledge and Montagu (along with three pieces of Broad Street real estate) to the Commercial Real Estate Loan and Improvement Co. for \$20,500.

It was sold back to Mrs. Gertrude A. Mordecai on Dec. 4, 1919. Following the owner's death, it passed to Mrs. Cornelia Mordecai Jahnz, wife of Julius H. Jahnz. On May 28, 1931, the rear portion of the old Trenholm property, forming what is now 42 Montagu, was

sold for \$4,750 to Mrs. Annabel Petersen.

Five years later, on July 8, 1936, it was purchased by Mrs. Ida W. Lesemann. Mrs. Lesemann sold the house and lot to Cecil B. Johnson on Dec. 18, 1940.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

The residence at 42 Montagu was converted as we know it today during the ownership of the Mordecais. Additions to its rear to remodel it for

proper use roughly doubled the dwelling in size from the time it was a simple service extension of the Trenholm mansion.

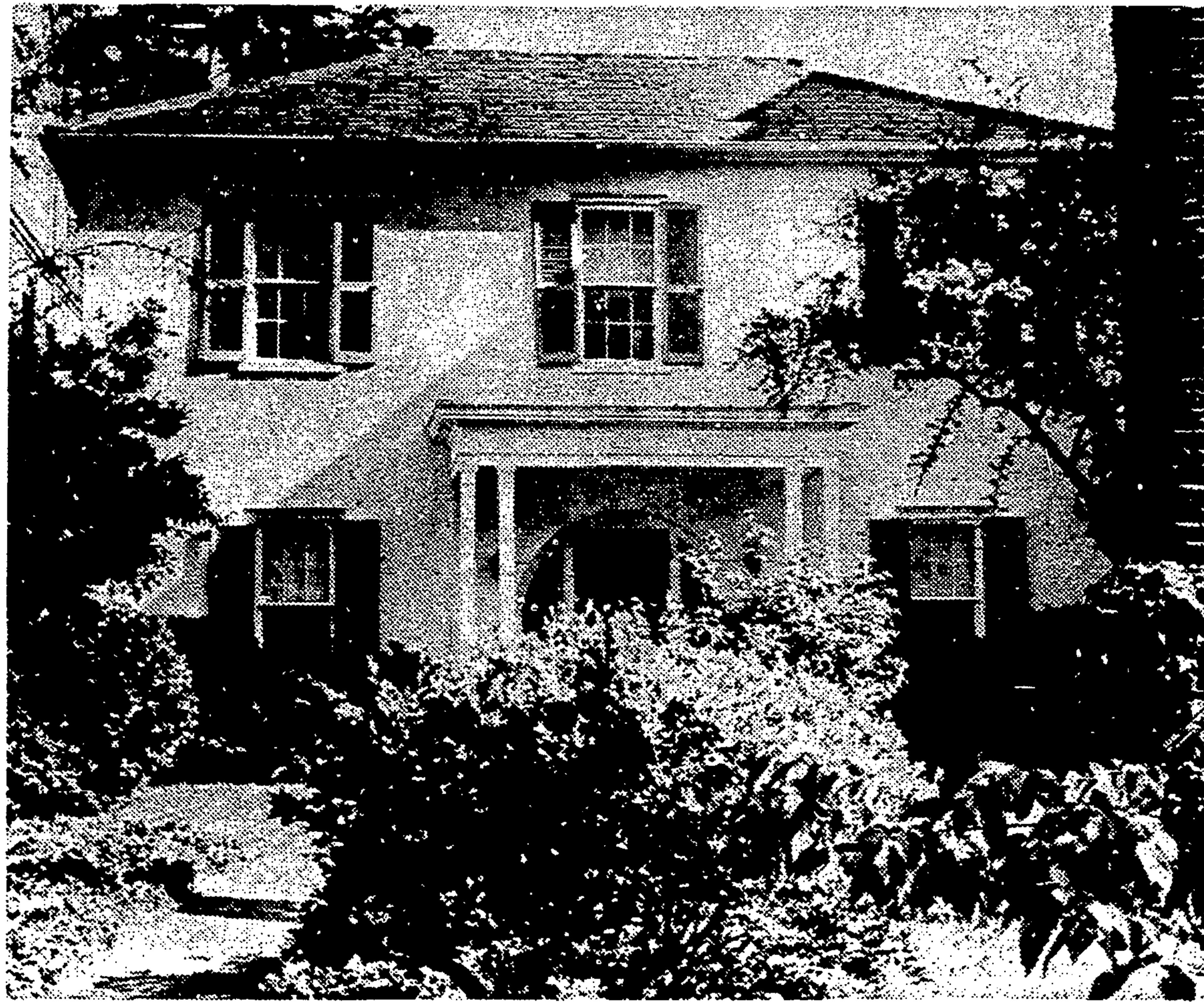
To create a large living room, the entire first story of the old carriage house section was thrown open. Retaining its two fireplaces and placing there two Georgian revival mantles of early 20th century origin, the decorative treatment followed the fashion of the Adam brothers.

A cornice, apparently salvaged from a good 1800 house, was placed fully about the

room. Its motif is in dentils and punch-work swags. Wainscoting was added and a delicate tracery treatment was created for recessed bookcases.

A fully paneled dining room was added to the north of the original carriage house, carrying the Georgian details in appropriate manner.

The upper story was remodelled to contain three bedrooms and two baths, showing that even the most basic structures may be easily transformed for contemporary needs.



42 Montagu Was Former Carriage House

Converted dependency was built with large antebellum Trenholm mansion

now known as 93 Rutledge Ave. (Staff Photo by Burbage)