



RESTORATION NOW IN SECOND PHASE

Dwelling constructed for William Lebby, engineer. (Staff Photo by Murton)

Unusual Construction

19 Wentworth Built About 1847

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Seventeenth in a series of articles on recent Ansonborough restorations. The eighteenth will appear next Monday.)

By W. H. J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

The three-and-a-half-story brick dwelling house at 19 Wentworth St. was built about 1847 by William Lebby, an engineer and machinist. Its rather unusual double-ell construction typifies the many new designs in small-scale and medium-scale houses attempted here in the mid-century decades when local builders were testing the "modern" plan while conforming to the Charleston single-house concept.

Lebby had purchased a lot of 103 feet in depth but only 35 feet wide. To gain adequate interior space with proper arrangement for comfort, in addition to a double tier of side piazzas, the builder followed a jogging line on the "open" west piazza side with each room recessed the width of a full window and with the piazza tucked behind the front sitting room.

Not only did this allow the creation of a good system of intercommunication between areas of formal living and the service areas and stair halls, but it allowed proper

lighting and circulation of air to all rooms; the front rooms on first and second story, facing the north and thus tending to be dark, have windows on three sides though the rooms are backed on the east by a stair hall.

The result was a surprisingly spacious and comfortable arrangement fitted to a quite narrow lot in a district of tall houses where light and breezes were always at a minimum.

This area of Wentworth Street was a portion of the Point Plantation, acquired by Col. William Rhett, the pirate hunter, early in the 18th century. His great granddaughters, Mrs. Susannah Hasell Quince and Mrs. Mary Hasell Ancrum, later divided the land, with the lot where 19 Wentworth now stands going to Mrs. Ancrum.

This area was surveyed by Joseph Purcell in 1799 for the Ancrums and cut into building lots; the lot occupied by 19 Wentworth apparently remained vacant for another 48 years.

In 1837, the Ancrums sought formal division of the property following the marriage of Sarah Eliza Ancrum to her third husband, Edward Winslow. James H. Gray, master in equity, sold the property at auction to Mrs.

Louisa Ward for \$1,075 on Feb. 18, 1841.

Mrs. Ward died not long after, without apparently having done any building on the property. Gray then resold the lot to William Lebby on July 8, 1847, for \$1,200.

It appears that Lebby began building right away, as he was listed as living on this spot soon after the purchase, according to John H. Honour's "A Directory of the City of Charleston and Neck, for 1849".

Some 21 years after buying the lot, Lebby sold it on July

Thomas C. Baker, Julia B. Furlow, Elizabeth R. Baker and William P. Baker.

It is then conveyed for \$10 to one of these heirs, Julia Furlow, on Sept. 13, 1924. Five years later — once again for \$10 — it was purchased by Mrs. Emily Peirano. Mrs. Peirano lived until 1941, her husband Antonio Peirano until 1944, and the house and lot then passed to Mrs. Margaret Peirano Kenny and Mrs. Louise Peirano Duffy Singletary.

These sold the property to James G. Dunklin for \$15,000 on July 21, 1969. Dunklin began his restoration work on the two-story brick dependency rather than on the main dwelling. This building is connected to the principal house by a built-in portion of about two-and-a-half levels which appears to date from about the 1890s to judge from the materials of its construction

and German siding covering; but the dependency was built as a separate unit — and was restored as such by Dunklin.

Recently the entire property was sold by Dunklin to its present owner, John A. Zeiger Jr., who is now carrying the restoration work to the main dwelling. The contractor is H. A. De Costa Co.

No structural changes are being made at 19 Wentworth, and the main dwelling will continue as a ten-room single family residence. Most of the dominate features of the principal rooms are being retained, as the residence has never been drastically altered or divided.

The original door surrounds and window casings of the front sitting room will be kept, as will the plaster cornice of this room, with its repetition of the ribbing and squared-off molding of the door and window architrave. A mantle of the period has been acquired for this room to replace an obtrusive later model found to be out of harmony with the restoration efforts.

Three other mantles in the dining room and in two second story bedrooms will be kept, and a cove cornice in wood is being added to these rooms where no period plasterwork remained.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

1, 1868, to Julius L. Bulcken for \$5,200 as trustee for Mrs. Wilhelmina C. Wohltmann, the wife of John N. M. Wohltmann, wholesale grocer and liquor dealer.

The property passed to John Wohltmann and Annie R. Wohltmann, and on Oct. 20, 1903, they conveyed it to Margaret Gravell. The property next became the possession of Mrs. Margaret L. Baker; following her death in 1919, it passed to her heirs and distributees, John H. Baker, Richard S. Baker,

FOR THE RECORD

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, Charleston County Education Assn., will meet Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. at the Charleston County Library.