



DWELLING WAS PROBABLY CONSTRUCTED IN EARLY 1820s

Was residence of Holmes family for many years. (Staff Photo by Burbage.)

NRC Jan 5/70

32 Charlotte Street Earliest House

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Fourth in a series of articles on the early dwelling houses of Charlotte Street. The fifth article will appear in this column next Monday.)

By W. H. J. THOMAS

The 1820s form a rather special period for building in Charleston. It was not a prosperous period for any part of this region and the number of buildings in the Lowcountry that date from this time of financial depression are few; yet those that were built show a particular care of construction and a fineness of detail.

At this time the delicacy and handsome proportions of the Adam or Federal period seemed to be fading, but none of the heaviness of later periods had truly been felt. Use of classical orders and details still held and these were still handled in many cases with a refined lightness of touch that is no doubt one of the reasons for its lingering popularity over a period of several decades. Flamboyance in treatment was unknown with the exception of the city's few examples of Regency that were built at this time.

One of Charleston's most pleasing examples of this graceful, balanced manner of design is the three-story dwelling at 32 Charlotte St. This is probably the earliest surviving

ing house on this broad, shady "uptown" street. It appears little altered since its construction some 150 years ago.

There are some confusions concerning the early deeds to this property, these having been incorrectly filed in the early 19th century, thus making it difficult to date the present house at 32 Charlotte very accurately. Judging from its physical self, however, it could be tagged circa 1820-1825, though it may be a few years earlier than this.

This property was owned by Alexander Mazyck during the 18th century. On Dec. 9, 1795, he sold it as an unoccupied lot to Thomas Morris and Philip Gadsden. Still as a lot without buildings it was sold to John Blake on April 6, 1807. This John Blake may have been the president of the State Bank in Charleston, as there is no other person of this name listed as a resident of the city at the time of the conveyance.

To settle Blake's estate, the property was sold on Feb. 9, 1811, to John Casken, a carpenter, in trust for Catherine Wegman. It does not appear that this last named lady ever lived on Charlotte Street, occupying instead quarters during this period near the intersection of King and Vanderhorst. Casken did take up quarters on Charlotte Street some years later, remaining there until 1840, but it appears his house was on the south side rather than the north side.

The true builder of the house at 32 Charlotte was not identified by this writer.

It was later acquired by the Holmes family. They may be found living there in 1849 but no earlier than this.

When the house was owned by William H. Holmes (of the firm of Holmes and Calder: "white lead, zinc and color manufacturers"), the property was extensive, reaching north to Chapel

Street, having measurements of 80 feet on Charlotte, 85 on Chapel, 416 feet on the east line and 402 feet on the west line.

On April 15, 1875, his surviving children and sole heirs — Edmund G. Holmes, Elizabeth R. Venning, William

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E. Holmes, Mary F. Holmes and Margaret E. Holmes — conveyed it to William E. Holmes, as trustee for George C. Holmes, for \$7,050.

On Nov. 24, 1931, it was purchased from this family after more than 80 years of ownership, by Gloria E. Gerard, the present owner. The current measurements are 81 feet by 276 feet.

In both detail and planning

the house at 32 Charlotte follows practices of the Adam period. The "single" house plan would be altered in several ways, to assure an easy intercommunication of main rooms and service areas, and to create oval rooms and semi-circular projections. This dwelling is an interesting example of such a practice in what at first appears to be a very basic "single" house plan.

The body of the house extends back in three portions: the main section with front and rear rooms split by an entrance hall and staircase, a somewhat lower extension separate of the portion under the hip roof, and then a rear dependency in two stories.

This middle portion, apparent on the west side in two projecting bays — one above the other with the second story more shallow than the first, allows for an additional room but also what could have been a passage

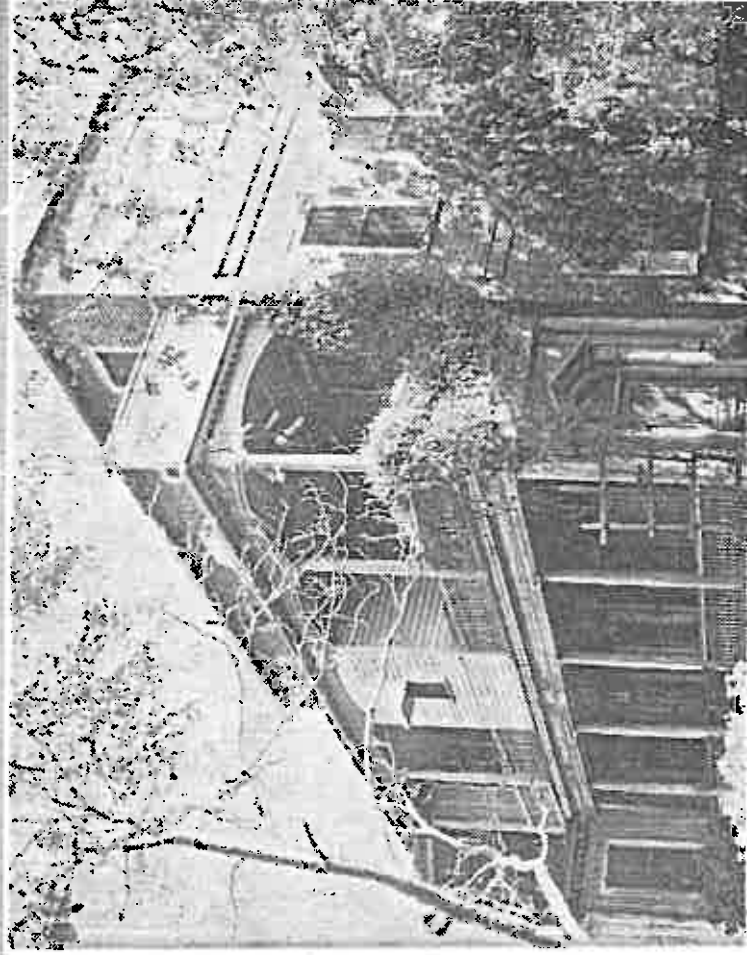
connecting the main body of the house to the rear dependency, thus allowing for a plan of superior circulation.

The house is of brick in Flemish bond, with a brick dentil cornice, and the division between floors accentuated by belting. Solid shutters were intended for the windows of the first story and slatted blinds for those of the two upper stories. Over the windows are flat arches in brick but the two stair window arches on the east are semi-circular.

The piazzas and pedimented entrance repeat the delicate treatment of the period. The columns on the two-tiered piazza are exaggerated in their slenderness; the wooden balusters have been handsomely turned. On the second piazza level the Doric columns are topped by gentle segmental arches that carry on that fine-lined grace apparent in so many other features.

Repeated in the projecting bays are the delicate brackets that are in evidence in the piazza cornice. As a whole the dwelling is one of the most "composed" houses of this style constructed during this period in the city. Not as elaborate or overly large as other Adam residences, the house at 32 Charlotte is the perfect medium size Adam home.

THE POINT I'M making is that if King St. were made really attractive, it would have almost everybody participate.



32 CHARLOTTE IS EXAMPLE OF LATER ADAM ARCHITECTURE
The graceful ante bellum dwelling still shows its good qualities despite alterations. (Staff Photo by Burbage.)

Charlotte Street Became Part Of City's First Suburb

By W. H. J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

The lower portion of the city was becoming short on space to build new dwellings. The American Revolution was not long over and the increasing prosperity of Charleston demanded expansion beyond the limits of the old boundary. It was then that the idea of a suburb appeared practical to men of position. Alexander Mazyck of the merchant family employed Joseph Purcell in 1786 to survey a portion of land above what is now Calhoun Street and have streets laid off. In this way, one of Charleston's most attractive residential streets, placed along a high ridge with creeks on either side, was created.

Charlotte Street was the center of this development that took the name of Mazyckboro. It became quite the place of fashion, boasting many spacious homes of business and professional men, who sought to escape the cramped streets of the lower parts of Charleston.

A good genteel air took over the area by the beginning of the 19th century, a quality the street has not quite lost despite a shift in its fortunes.

By the 1830s the Second Presbyterian Church had been built on the corner of Charlotte and Meeting streets and looking across the green was Joseph Manigault's handsome Adam home. Robert Martin had recently completed his fine brick Valuable.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

There are 14 buildings along Charlotte listed in "This is Charleston", many of which have been kept up over the years. One of these, the William Henry Houston House at No. 44, was recently restored by the Historic Charleston Foundation and made into four apartments.

The Martin House, standing at Charlotte and East Bay and its next door neighbor, the Aiken House, are listed as Valuable to the city. And 32 Charlotte, the personification of the best in the Charleston "single house", and an outstanding example of later Adam architecture, is listed as Valuable.

The dwelling at 32 Charlotte is of such good quality that a little shabbiness does nothing to reduce its natural grace. The lines of the structure itself and the construction of the piazzas and the doorway remain unharmed by several additions and alterations, so clearly is the house a work of excellence.

Another dwelling which is typical of several other Charlotte Street houses of a more simple design is No. 40, a tall wooden frame ante bellum facing directed into the street. Not possessing the high quality of No. 32, it is still a substantial building, constructed in the spirit of the developers of Mazyckboro who sought greater space than was available in the bounds of the city.

Porches span the entire front of two stories of the house, which spreads over a lot with a frontage double that of most lots in Charleston. The third floor, which contains only two rooms, is without a porch and has somewhat lower ceilings than the rest of the building.

This house and lot have had a number of owners since it was first sold by Alexander C. Mazyck, Paul D. Mazyck, Nathaniel B. Mazyck, Mary Mazyck and Catherine Mazyck to Samuel Ham for 490 guineas in the early days of the development. For most of the past century it has belonged to various members of the Walker family.

Nrc April 16