

127 Wentworth House Built In 1883

Charles W. Seignious, a prosperous coal merchant and real estate developer, built the house at 127 Wentworth St. for rental purposes about 1883. It remained in his family until 1965.

The two and one-half story frame single house is stylistically conservative for 1883 and illustrates a survival of antebellum architectural forms into the second decade after the Civil War.

Seignious purchased, on Dec. 18, 1866, for \$5,350, from the estate of Donald Mackintosh, a lot measuring 82 feet in front on Wentworth Street and 120 feet in depth. On the property was a two story frame house, built sometime before 1852, on the site of present-day 125 Wentworth Street.

The site of 127 Wentworth Street remained vacant for nearly two decades. The site is depicted as vacant on a plat of 1881-82, and a house is listed on the site in tax records for the first time in 1883.

Seignious lived at 317 East Bay St., corner of Minority Street (the present Maison DuPre Hotel), and purchased the Wentworth Street property as an investment, along with many other properties which he owned in the city.

Seignious' tenement at 127 Wentworth St. was rented to tenants such as David Bentschner, who had a clothing and men's furnishings store at 252 King St. and lived at 127 Wentworth in the 1890s. Reuben A. Cart, a postal clerk, and his wife Marion lived there in the early 1900s.

Seignious, who was in his 70s when the house was built, made few ventures into the new Victorian taste in the building, except for attaching pressed tin window cornices on the street facade, a wooden hood with decorative brackets of built-up ornamentation over the piazza entrance, and wooden window cornices with a flat peaked shape, suggestive of a pediment, over the windows on the piazza side.

Otherwise the house has a conservative design, with a gable end evocative of a Greek Revival pediment and two tiers of piazzas with plain Doric columns and turned balusters. The doorways between the piazzas and the stairhall, on

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both levels, have multilight transoms and sidelights, typical of the Greek Revival.

The interior also is conservatively finished, with simple architrave molding around doors and windows, baseboards with moldings along the top and a stair with a robust turned newel, turned balusters and a rail with hand grips.

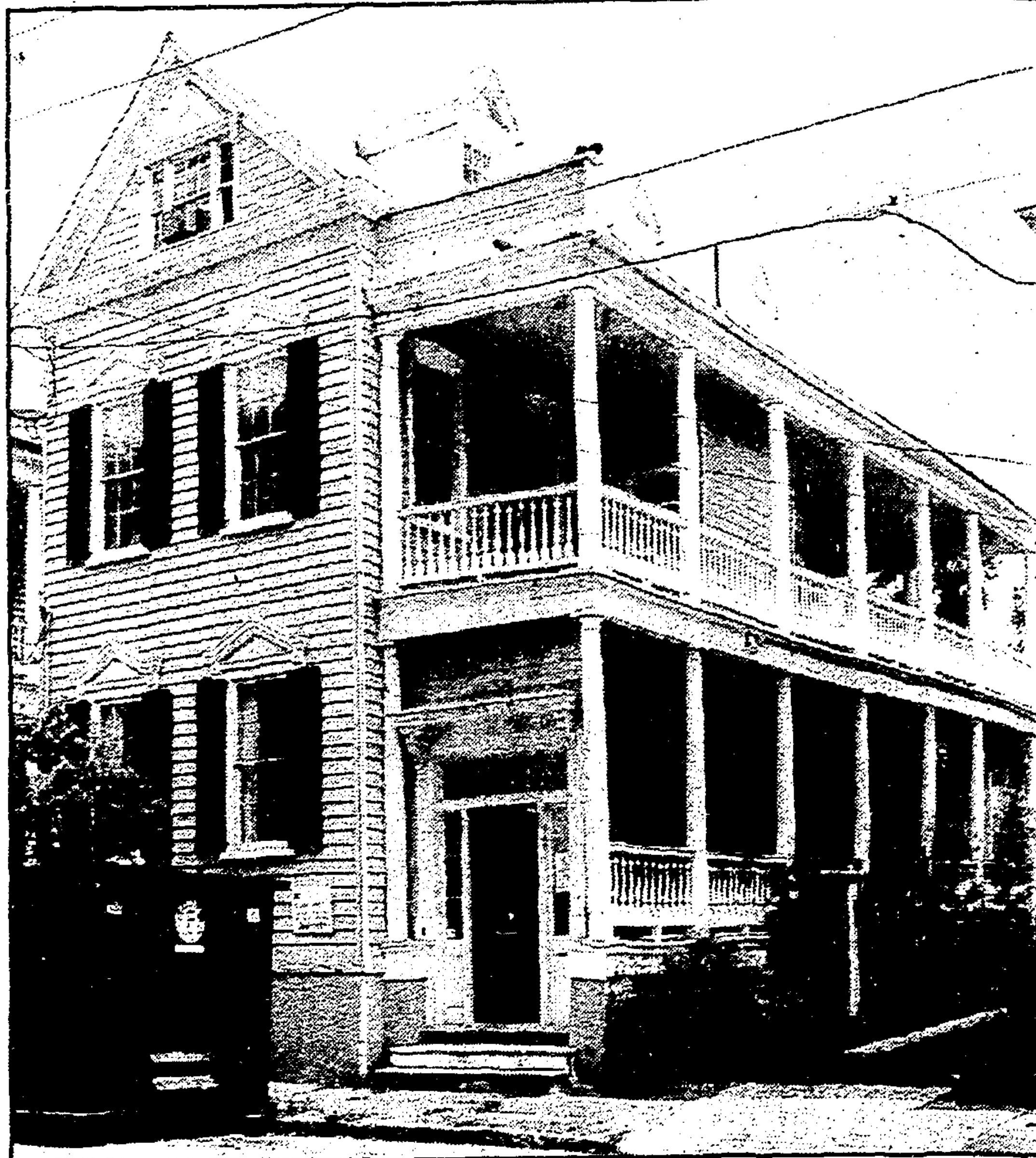
Mantelpieces in the first floor rooms are of slate, in the Italianate style with arched openings and cartouches, which had become popular in Charleston in the 1850s. On the second level, Seignious placed wooden mantels with a somewhat eccentric but nevertheless charming vernacular attempt at Italianate styling.

In the rear is a two story wooden outbuilding with a cantilevered run over the first floor openings.

Charles Washington Seignious was born in Charleston in 1810. He entered business as a young man in the coach trimming trade. Subsequently, he became a coal merchant on Palmetto Wharf (which he owned) on the Cooper River just south of Haseli Street. In later life, he devoted his attention to his extensive real estate interests.

Seignious died of apoplexy (angina pectoris) Aug. 25, 1893, while seated in his chair at the age of 83.

His funeral arrangements were delayed by the killer hurricane which struck the area with devastating force Aug. 26-27, 1893. Funeral services, attended by fellow members of the German Artillery, were held at his residence Aug. 29,



Staff Photo by Brad Nettles

Charles W. Seignious built house at 127 Wentworth St.

and he was buried in Magnolia Cemetery.

His will devised his estate to his six children and several grandchildren. The heirs included Charles Washington Seignious Jr.; Eliza Ann Mouzon and her daughters Ellen Elizabeth Main (wife of Commodore T. Gedney Main, U.S.N.), Amanda Carolina Mouzon and Anna Olivia Brown (wife of W. J. Brown); Rebecca Caroline Honour of Greenville; Mattie Elvira Seignious; Emma Isadora Beckman; and Elodia Cecilia Barton of Orangeburg.

In the division of the estate, 127 Wentworth St. was devised to Emma Isadora Beckman. Mrs. Beckman conveyed the property to her grandson, Gedney M. Howe, Sr., a city engineer, subject to the life estates of Mrs. Beckman and her daughter, Mrs. Emmie B. Howe, wife of William Kennedy

Howe, a banker and real estate investor.

Mrs. Beckman and Mrs. Howe lived at 24 Bee Street. Mrs. Beckman died in 1927 and Mrs. Howe died about 1940. Howe died in 1957, bequeathing 127 Wentworth to his widow, Jean C. Howe. She died in 1964, bequeathing the property to her children, Gedney M. Howe, Jr., James H. D. Howe, Waring S. Howe, Arthur G. Howe, Jean C. Howe Thorpe and Anne W. Howe. They sold it in 1965.

The property was purchased in 1985 by Robert M. Winters and Constance Capp Winters, who renovated the house. They sold it in 1988 to present owner Jane C. Heyman.

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