

House Is One Of Four Constructed By Acadian Family

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Last in a series of 30 articles on the early dwelling houses along Beaufain and Wentworth streets.)

By W.H.J. THOMAS

At the northwest corner of the intersection of Beaufain and Pitt streets stands a two-story, flat-roofed brick dwelling that is part of an unusually consistent row of five medium-sized antebellum residences (a sixth has been demolished) stretching between Beaufain and Wentworth streets on the west side of Pitt.

This house occupying the corner lot follows in design the squarish, solid fashion popular here in the 1830s and 1840s when this unusual unit of dwellings was built on property owned by the French Acadian family of Lanneau. Like at least three of its four surviving antebellum neighbors, this house (1 Pitt St.) was built by the Lanneaus and was their home at least briefly.

This portion of Pitt Street was in the easternmost section of Harleston's Village (where the streets were named patriotically for the figures of the time) that was

developed after 1770. The lots on the west side of Pitt were owned in the name of Isaac Harleston and in 1778 he sold these lots to Basile Lanneau, a tanner and currier, who had come to Charleston as an exile from Acadia, that early French colony located on what is now Nova Scotia.

The Lanneaus (before arriving here the family spelled it La Noue) had settled in Acadia in the 1660s, had been pushed into exile in 1755, and arrived in South Carolina later that same year. Apparently only two children of the family — Jean Baptiste and Basile — survived, and the latter was befriended by Henry Laurens, the wealthy merchant and Revolutionary patriot, and grew up under his protection.

Basile Lanneau became a Protestant, a prominent citizen of the city, served three terms in the state legislature, and had an extensive progeny by his second wife, of whom Basile Lanneau Gildersleeve, his grandson, was probably the most distinguished, being the leading classical scholar in America during his lifetime when he taught at Johns Hopkins University and editor of the "American Journal of Philology".

In 1834, the lot at the

northwest corner passed to Charles Henry Lanneau, apparently the builder of 1 Pitt. It is difficult to trace exactly which member of the family was living where on Pitt, because it seems that the frame dwelling at 3 Pitt was the first Lanneau house, then 5 and 7 Pitt (members remaining at 7 Pitt until late in the 19th century) and then 1 Pitt.

The house was standing on Nov. 20, 1848, when Charles

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Henry Lanneau sold it to William D. Porter for \$5,500, as it is fully described in the deed of conveyance.

Porter lived on here into the Civil War and the neighborhood carries a tradition that 1 Pitt was used as a prison for Union soldiers during those years; iron bars remaining on a window suggest this may be true.

The house passed to the McCormacks, being sold by Mrs. Pauline Walter McCormack (wife to William Johnson McCormack) to William Baynard Simons on Dec. 1, 1889, for \$5,000.

Simons (1858-1926), a son of Thomas Young Simons (1832-1854) and the former Susan Baynard, was an engineer with the Ashley Phosphate Co. and later the superintendent of Planters Fertilizer Works. His family maintained 1 Pitt as their home for nearly 50 years.

On July 15, 1937, following the death of Laura A. Simons, the house was sold by her executrix, Jane Margaret Middleton, to Adele Bowman Deas.

It was next purchased by Donald M. Kirkpatrick and Portia Kirkpatrick in 1961. On April 12, 1967, the house was sold to its present owner, C. Bradford Dean.

At the time the house was constructed, a favored design was to make the dwellings of "single house" type somewhat wider in proportion than had previously been the practice. This gave the dwelling a rather blocky appearance but allowed for quite spacious rooms with a hallway running along the length of the house on the side opposite the piazza.

Unlike the brick residences to its north, which are built of a polished, pressed brick that allows for an unusually narrow mortar joint—a "high fashion" building material of

the 1840s—the house at 1 Pitt is constructed of the softly-colored Charleston "gray" brick. These are laid in Flemish bond, with flat brick arches over the windows, a watertable of headers, a double-barred relief between first and second floors and a dog-tooth cornice about the parapet.

The order of entrance architrave and on the two-tiered piazza is Doric with only the slightest dentil trim. This same simplicity of design is carried throughout the interior, the decorative treatment being limited to a quite modified plaster moulding in the principal rooms, a consistent practice of broadly-molded door and window frames, and the only lavishness appearing in the handsomely carved, gold-veined black marble fireplace insets.

To add to the comfort of its residents during the warm seasons, the triple-hung piazza windows may be raised fully to allow free passage from the double parlors and rear dining room to the porches that border on a well-kept garden.

Although once in apartments, the house is now retained as a single family residence.



DWELLING APPARENTLY BUILT IN 1840s
1 Pitt St. was long a possession of Simons family. (Staff Photo by Burbage)