

Ashley Ave. Site Being Renovated

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Special Writer

Thomas R. Waring, a Charleston banker, built the Italianate-style residence at 216 Ashley Ave. c. 1853.

Waring bought the site of the house in 1844 from the estate of Mrs. Joanna Wilson. The lot then measured 90 feet on Thomas Street (now Ashley Avenue) and 88 feet on Cannon Street, and apparently was vacant.

In the same conveyance, Waring acquired the property adjacent to the east, measuring 96 feet in front on Cannon Street. That lot had on it "a two story wooden dwelling, on a brick basement, with every necessary out building." That house is today numbered 109 Cannon St. Waring paid \$4,760 for the two properties.

Waring was cashier of the Bank of the State of South Carolina, a position which was at the time a major office of the institution.

He lived in the Cannon Street house for several years after purchasing the two properties.

The corner lot remained vacant until 1853, as no house appears on the Bridgens & Allen map of Charleston, dated 1852, and the house is listed as new in 1853 tax records, when it was assessed at \$4,000.

On Aug. 5, 1853, Waring mortgaged the corner property for \$5,000, a sum indicating substantial improvement of the property.

Waring perhaps built the house for rental, as he is listed as living there for the first time in the City of Charleston census of 1861, at which time the address was 34 Ashley St.

Waring sold the lot to the east, containing the older house, in 1863 to Francis Marion Jones.

He occupied the house until his death in 1871. His inventory listed his "House & Lot south east corner of Cannon & Ashley streets," and a 980-acre plantation at Goose Creek.

Waring's widow, Mrs. Anna D. Waring, sold the Ashley Street house in 1881, for \$3,350, to Ellen J. Williman.

The property then went through several hands until 1978, when it was purchased by its current owners, Dr. and Mrs. John Gargounis, who are converting it into apartments.

The house has an attic under a gable roof and two stories of frame on a high brick basement.

The structure is in the Italian style popular in the 1850s, known today as the Italianate style, hallmarks of which are the wide eaves with decorative brackets in the cornice, and the arched openings of the piazzas.

On the first or basement level is the main entrance, with multilighted transom, sidelights and a four-paneled door. The small portico there has two wooden columns with cast iron capitals of the Tower of the Winds version of

(See Page 12-B, Column 2)



Staff Photo by Wade Spees

Old Residence Under Renovation

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216 Ashley Avenue

...Ashley Avenue

Continued From Page 1-B

the Corinthian order. The columns support a plain entablature above which is a flat roof.

On the south side of the house are three tiers of piazzas. The lower level, with brick piers, is enclosed. The two upper levels are arcaded with round-headed arches springing from square pillars, all executed in wood. Both upper piazzas have bracketed cornices, and a paneled parapet runs along the roofline.

On the upper levels, French doors with multiple sidelights open onto the piazzas. Similar openings were originally found on the lower level.

The house follows the townhouse plan popular in the mid-19th century, with a stairhall on the north side and two primary rooms in tandem on the south side. On the second and third levels, small rooms are located at each end of the stairhall.

Interior details are typically mid-19th century. Woodwork on the main level (the second) is the most elaborate and includes wide window surrounds with cavetto molding and sunk panels under the sills.

Plaster cornices with cove-and-roll moldings and plaster ceiling medallions with classic foliation are found in the main rooms and stairhall on that level. The primary rooms are connected by a wide opening with sliding doors.

Woodwork on the third level is

simpler and there is no plasterwork.

Mantels on both floors are wood, with a blank Tudor arch in the frieze. The cast iron surrounds of the fireplace openings are in the form of Tudor arches and round-headed arches.

The staircase has balustrades with hairpin turns, handrails round in section, turned balusters, applied scrollwork in the string and a single turned newel at the foot of the stairs, in the mid-19th century taste.

To the rear of the house is a two-story frame outbuilding, the first floor of which was at some point converted into a store. At some point, also, the basement of the main house was made into a store.