

February 1974

55 King Street  
FREDERIC GRIMKE HOUSE  
c. 1762

Home of Mr. and Mrs. James G. Snowden

This house was built by Frederic Grimke in 1762- there is a brick in the fireplace in the kitchen with initials and the date 1762 scratched in it. Charleston miniature artist Charles Fraser once resided in the house and some of the water colors in the Fraser Sketchbook are views from the upper windows of the building. The house was originally constructed as a double dwelling, probably for rental purposes. The most noticeable feature to attest to this is the thick piece of brick wall that projects through the slate roof dividing the house vertically. Where access doors were later cut to make the house one dwelling, they had to be cut through an 18" brick wall. The house is Georgian in period, but its woodwork is comparatively plain. There have been alterations, but the house retains the sturdiness of the Georgian period which can be seen by the deeply recessed windows set within solid brick walls almost two feet thick. The descendants of Mr. Grimke, who originally bought this land in 1747, were closely related through marriage to the Snowden family who have lived here for a hundred years.

FURNISHINGS

FRONT DRAWING ROOM:

Mantle and carved cornice - both are later than Georgian and were probably added at the same time. (Sunburst hand-carved mantle)

Full length gold-leaf mirror - c.1820; covers a window which was formerly the front door of the south tenement.

Desk - 1820-30; note Gothic lines of the glass panel. The ivory drawer pulls are most unusual.

Two chairs by the door - Hitchcock - one still retains its original rush bottom.

Table - Pier table (originally had a marble top and mirror at the bottom. When Mr. Snowden renovated it, he replaced the marble top with one of mahogany, less heavy for the delicate legs.

Vases on mantle - Staffordshire (purchased by a member of the family in Philadelphia in 1835)

Hurricane shade is most unusual size and is very old as is the Whale oil lamp beside it - note the dovetailed prisms of this lamp.

Sofa - Empire

Two chairs - early Victorian

Small table by desk - candle stand

(cont. on next page)

**THE FREDERICK GRIMKE HOUSE**

**1995**

**55 King Street**

**c. 1762**

**Home of Mr. and Mrs. H. Brown Hamrick**

In 1762 a Georgian double tenement house was built on this King Street lot by Frederick Grimke. A tenement in the 18th and 19th century referred to rental or investment property. It did not have the pejorative meaning we use today. The original structure consisted of 4 rooms downstairs, separated by a thick 18 inch brick wall, and an identical 4 rooms above. Fifteen years later the owner presented it to his daughter at which time the tenements were converted into a single family dwelling. It is believed that the beautiful Adam mantel and moldings were added at this time.

Passing through many owners, most notably the famous miniaturist Charles Fraser and his family (his mother was Frederick Grimke's daughter), the property was purchased in 1985 by the present owners. A year-long renovation and restoration ensued. The house had been long neglected; the structure had to be taken back to the studs. The plaster was found to be dead and extensive work was necessary to remove layers of paint from the original heart pine floors. In addition, the new owners removed the Greek Revival woodwork in the living room and restored it with the correct 18th century period trim.

**DRAWING ROOM**

The woodwork is early nineteenth-century with cornice of gougework decoration (cut decoration as opposed to applied plaster ornamentation). Notice also the original Adam mantel which includes marble.

Andirons, antique Charleston, solid brass, 18th century

Bow front chest, English, Hepplewhite, c. 1800

Secretary, antique, English

Chandelier, Italian, owners brought with them from their Rutledge Avenue house

Steinway, 1918 from Mr. Hamrick's grandmother, silver fittings and ivory keys

Portrait, of owners' 4 children, painted by Mrs. Hamricks's sister, Carolyn Crawford

1/74

EC.A

55 King Street

The land for this property was purchased by Frederick Grimkie in 1747. The written records on this house date back to 1764 and the house was standing then. It is believed to have been constructed in 1762 (there is a brick in the fireplace in the kitchen with the initials and the date 1762 scratched on it). The house was originally constructed as a double dwelling probably for rental purposes. The most noticeable feature to attest to this is the thick piece of brick wall that projects through the slate roof dividing the house vertically. Where access doors were later cut to make the house one dwelling they had to be cut through an 18" brick wall. The house is Georgian in period, but its woodwork is comparatively plain. There have been alterations such as the sunburst hand carved mantel of this room which is later than Georgian, as well as the carved cornice which was probably added at the same time. The house retains the sturdiness of the Georgian period which can be seen by the deeply recessed windows set within solid brick walls almost two feet thick. Charleston's noted miniature artist, Charles Fraser, once resided here and some of the water colours in the Fraser sketchbook are views from the upper windows, of what is now 55 King. From the evidence of the views he must have resided in the south north tenement. The descendants of Mr. Grimkie, who originally bought this land were closely related through marriage to the Snowden family who have been here for a hundred years. The full length gold-leaf mirror in this room is circa 1820 and covers a window which was formerly the front door of the south tenement. The desk was made during the period 1820-1830 as shown by the Gothic lines of the glass panes. The ivory drawers pullers are most unusual. The two chairs by the door are High Hitchcock --- one still retains its original rush bottom. The table is a Pier table and originally had a marble top and mirror at the bottom. When it was renovated by Mr. Snowden it was decided a mahogany top was not quite so heavy for its delicate legs. The vases on the mantle were purchased by a member of the family in 1835 in Philadelphia and are Staffordshire. The hurricane shade is a most unusual size and is very old as is the whale oil lamp beside it. The prisms of this lamp are dovetailed which is very rare. The two chairs are early Victorian and the sofa is Empire. The small table with three legs is an old coffee table and the other by the desk is a candle stand. The small portrait in- by the front door is by Jeremiah Theus,

55 KING ST.

Mary G. Fraser, Charles Fraser's mother, obviously lived in the southern part of the tenement at 27 (now 55) King Street. By her will, she passed the property to her daughters Ann and Susannah. Ann obviously married Jacob Guerard (see her will and the mention of her brother, Charles Fraser); on 17 March, 1821, Ann and Jacob Guerard conveyed their half of the tenement (one half of the southern half) to Charles Fraser (I-9,357). In 1827 (S-9,357), Fraser purchased the northern half of the tenement. In 1831, by will of his sister, Susannah, he inherited the ~~remaning~~ remaining one half of the southern half.

MG