

ADAM TUNNO'S OUTBUILDING
10 BEDON'S ALLEY
HOME OF MRS. S. HENRY EDMUNDS

A great deal of the essential character of Charleston is captured in its smaller dwellings and gardens tucked away in alleys and lanes throughout the city. The original city plan of 1680 (which was known as the Grand Modell) called for a grid division of the city into lots intersected by carriage ways. Because of the topography of the peninsula and the unique placement of buildings - numerous alleys and lanes developed that were not called for in the original scheme but were cut to provide access to dependencies and outbuildings. Today, these alleys provide vistas and closures that give Charleston a special visual appeal that is often missing in urban areas.

The Adam Tunno outbuildings (here and the companion building at 8 Bedon's Alley) were originally part of a larger complex of dependencies and service buildings that stretched behind the main house at 89 East Bay (a part of Rainbow Row). The exact date of construction of these buildings is unknown but they appear on the Edmund Petrie Ichnograph of Charleston which is a fire insurance plat based on a 1788 survey. This was the first fire insurance map of any city in America and is a valuable source for historians.

Adam Tunno, the agent who commissioned the survey of 1788, was the owner of this complex of buildings and he lived in the main house at 89 East Bay. (Please point out the main building which is the pink house with a pitched roof that you see just over the wall.) Tunno was an influential Scots merchant and it is believed that his vast mercantile activities were centered here in these outbuildings. Here no doubt drays and wagons came with goods that served the working water front along the Cooper River.

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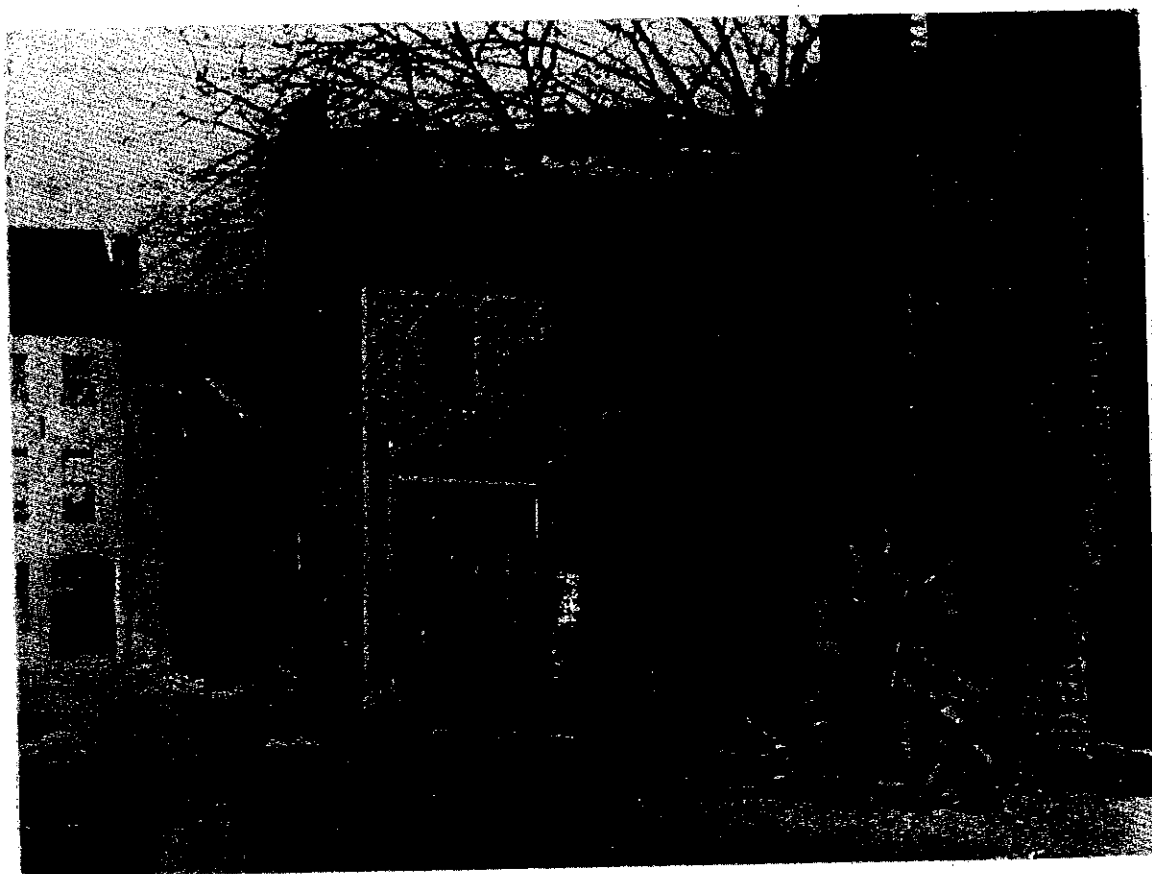
The term "alley" usually suggests an address reserved for the desperately poor and by the end of the 19th century, this section of Charleston had lapsed into slum conditions and continued so until the 1920's. At that time, these buildings were purchased by Miss Susan Pringle Frost, who restored the service buildings into two convenient houses and sold them to conservation minded buyers. Miss Frost was the founder and first president of the Preservation Society of Charleston, and was instrumental in the rehabilitation of this part of the city in the 1920's and 1930's. The present owner, Mrs. Edmunds, is very proud of this connection. She served as Director of Historic Charleston Foundation since its incorporation in 1947 until 1985. This organization has worked for similar rehabilitation efforts throughout the peninsula - first in the Ansonborough area and now in Wraggborough and Radcliffborough - where Historic Charleston Foundation is taking the lead in the rejuvenating of handsome but dilapidated historic areas.

This garden was enclosed by the existing brick wall in 1940 by Mrs. Edmund's aunt. The garden has been developed only recently. The selection of plant materials include many tropical and semi-tropical plant materials that flourish in Charleston. In protected Charleston gardens, a shrewd gardener can (with care) have a sequence of blooms and color the year round. The guest tree just over the wall is a very large Ginko - beneath it tucked away is a swimming pool - and in the summer the wall is scaled quite regularly with the help of a stile (a device made of two ladders).

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The cobblestones bordering the flower beds were carried in one by one from the alley when it was paved in the 1950's, as were the flagstones in the driveway. Some of the bricks were rescued from the excavation of a privy that was discovered on this site.

Plant materials are described on Page 4 [missing]





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Home of Mrs. S. Henry Edmunds

1992

A great deal of the essential character of Charleston is captured in its small dwellings and gardens tucked away in alleys and lanes throughout the city. The original city plan of 1680 (which was known as the Grand Modell) called for a grid division of the city into lots intersected by carriage ways. Because of the topography of the peninsula and the unique placement of buildings, numerous alleys and lanes developed that were not called for in the original scheme but were cut to provide vistas and closures that give Charleston a special visual that is often missing in urban areas.

The Adam Tunno outbuildings (here, and the companion building at 8 Bedon's Alley) were originally part of a larger complex of seven dependencies and service buildings that stretched behind the main house at 89 East Bay (a part of Rainbow Row). The exact date of construction of these buildings is unknown but they were built before 1788 as they are on the Edmund Petrie Ichnography of Charleston which is a fire insurance plat based on a 1788 survey. This was the first insurance map of any city in America and is a valuable source for historians. Adam Tunno was responsible for this insurance map.

Adam Tunno, the agent who commissioned the survey of 1788, was the owner of this complex of buildings and he lived in the main house at 89 East Bay. (Please point out the main building which is the pink house with a pitched roof that you see just over the wall.) There were seven dependencies, two of which still face Bedon's Alley. He had vast trading along the bay (or waterfront) and from the two buildings left and others destroyed, he housed and worked on such trades as sailmaker, barrel monger and a number of others. Tunno was an influential Scots merchant and it is believed that his vast shipping and mercantile activities were centered here in these outbuildings. Here no doubt drays and wagons came with goods that served the working water front along the Cooper River.

After a century and a half, Bedon's Alley was a mix of slums, small houses, and one great but deteriorated house at 5 Bedon's Alley. In the 1920's, Miss Susan Pringle Frost began buying a number of old, interesting, and deteriorated houses. She sold some outright and restored others, including 8 and 10 Bedon's Alley. Miss Frost was instrumental in founding the Preservation Society of Charleston. The present owner, Mrs. Edmunds, served as Director of Historic Charleston Foundation from 1947 until 1985. Historic Charleston Foundation has taken the lead in similar rehabilitation efforts throughout the peninsula-- first in Ansonborough, and later in Wraggborough and Radcliffborough, where there has been a rebirth of small vernacular houses and larger buildings. It is amazing to see the widespread rehabilitation in progress in this city.

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The garden was enclosed by the existing brick wall in 1940 by Mrs. Edmunds' aunt. The selection of plant materials includes tropical and semi-tropical plant material which flourish here. In protected Charleston gardens, a shrewd gardener can have a sequence of blooms and color the year round.

The cobblestones bordering the flower beds were carried in from hither and yon -- some from the alley when it was paved in the 1950's. Some bricks were rescued from the excavation of various privies which were discovered on this site -- one was 12' wide, 12' long and 12' deep and covered with low arches just at the old ground level. It was left undisturbed though many artifacts (bottles, china, dollsheads, etc. -- probably from a later date) were removed. There were an extraordinary number of privies on this lot as this is the very oldest part of Charleston. Until the 1920's, this area was composed primarily of workmen's quarters -- numerous people, backyards, and privies.

Mrs. Edmunds has lived in this house twice -- once from the late 1940's into the 1950's and back again since the late 1970's. Elliott Street and Bedon's Alley were an ethnic mix. On Elliott Street, almost all the properties east of #16 were restored. To the west of #16 it was a crowded slum. Mrs. Edmunds then lived on the dividing line and reports that the neighborhood was filled with kind and polite people in both directions. The parking lot on the northeast corner was a two-story barrel warehouse and next to that was a laundry. There was always the one great splendid house at #5, where one of the first Saint Cecilia Balls was held. It has been a fascinating first-hand study in area rehabilitation to have lived in this area as it has sprung into new life.

For the Festival of Houses and Gardens, Mrs. Edmunds has invited visitors to look through the windows into the house, and wishes that the house were just a bit larger to accommodate your going inside. The house and garden are so much a unit that Mrs. Edmunds considers the garden her living room.

The entrance to the house is a long driveway -- 12 feet wide. The brick wall to the north is completely and extraordinarily unpointed. It is thought to have been built against a wooden fence. Yew and confederate Jasmine have been planted to resemble pilasters. In between the ground cover is a hardy iris known as "flags" and a heavy border of lariope. The arch of roses as you turn into the garden is of Lady Banksia Rose. Acuba, a dwarf magnolia, nandina, some camellias and other plant material make a rather old fashioned walkway.

ENTER 10 Bedon's Alley from the street

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On the north side of the driveway is yew and Confederate jasmine, trimmed to resemble pilasters. The ground cover is a perennial iris (old fashioned) with lariope as border and on the south side is Holly fern.

As you turn into walkway to the garden there are azaleas and camellias, yew, several acuba, a dwarf magnolia, nandena, and holly.

As you proceed into the garden on the right are azaleas, camellias, and a large, old tea olive. In the corner is a Japanese plumb in fruit and on the south side along the length of the garden a Calmia (mountain laurel) has been planted as an experiment. there is a bed of large mahonia with purple berries combined with fatsia and low plantings coming up. Other plants include a magnolia grandi flora (heavily trimmed for needed sunshine), a spikenard, more camellias and a native azalea with unusual deep yellow blooms. Running along the house in the corner is an old crepe myrtle fig vine and by the side door is a heavily trimmed pitisporum in bloom and a wax myrtle.

As you walk into the front door there is a box hedge and to the right a calmia (again an experiment). The two bushes on either side of the door are cliera; then a pair of white crepe myrtles. To the left of the major flower bed is a dogwood.