

2 Periods Reflected In 51 Laurens Street

LAURENS STREET

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

Two distinct periods are discernible in the house at 51 Laurens St.

Its oldest part, the two-story frame portion, was built c. 1804 by two speculative builders. The two-story brick portion in front was built in the 1850s by the widow of a Charleston attorney.

The site formerly was part of Laurens Square, a tract of four acres, bounded by Laurens, Anson and Society streets and the Cooper River, on which Henry Laurens, president of the Continental Congress, built his house in 1763-64 and on which Mrs. Laurens established a garden famous for its rare plants.

Laurens' house stood at the southeast corner of Laurens and East Bay streets and was demolished in the early part of this century. Laurens Square was laid out into lots in 1804 by his son, also called Henry Laurens.

The younger Laurens sold two lots on the south side of Laurens Street (then called Pitt Street) on May 4, 1804, to Youngs Hosmer and John Haslett, for \$3,635.34.

Hosmer and Haslett, painters and glaziers, in partnership with a shop on Elliott Street and a home on Stoll's Alley, were also apparently speculative builders.

They had financial troubles and their real estate was auctioned on May 9, 1809 by the sheriff.

William Monies was the high bidder, at \$3,000 Sterling for the lot "with a two Story Wooden House," now known as 51 Laurens St. Monies also bought, for

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\$5,550 Sterling, the adjacent lot and three-story frame house, now known as 49 Laurens St.

The frame portion of the present house at 51 Laurens St. has construction and architectural features typical of c. 1804-09.

Restoration by the present owner, John Westendorff, revealed the massive timbers and joists, wide plank flooring and the original wood shingle roof, under the later tin one.

The floor plan of the wooden portion is unusual, with two square rooms to a floor and no central hall. A massive, squarish chimney serves fireplaces in the two first-floor rooms and one fireplace on the second floor.

A narrow cantilevered staircase rises from the rear room on the first floor, curves near the top, inward toward the chimney, where it forms a "T" giving access to both upstairs rooms.

Some Federal style interior details, without Adamesque embellishments, remain.

Monies, having moved to Scotland, sold the houses at 49 and 51 Laurens St. to Hugh Patterson, in trust for Patterson's wife, Martha, and daughters Sarah and Catherine, in 1816, for a total of \$7,700.

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Catherine Patterson married Edward P. Simons, attorney, to whom Patterson conveyed the two houses in 1821, in trust for Patterson's two daughters. Simons died in 1823, still in his 20s.

In 1825, his widow and her sister, Sarah Patterson, agreed for Mrs. Simons to receive title to 51 Laurens St., while Miss Patterson received title to 49 Laurens St.

Mrs. Simons added the brick front portion to her home sometime after 1851, when a map survey showed no front extension of the house, and by 1861, when a city census lists a "Brick" house, owned and occupied by her, at the address, then known as 13 Laurens St.

Construction and style of the masonry portion are compatible with that decade, 1851-61.

The masonry portion is of brick, laid in American (common) bond and stuccoed on the front and piazza side.

The street facade rises above the roofline slightly and a tripartite window lights the low attic, giving the illusion the house is 2½ stories. A window masks the piazza on the second level, contributing to the illusion of a larger house.

The masonry portion has a single square room on each floor, with a stairhall to the rear. Interior details are typical of the late 1850s.