

S.C. Historical Society
TOUR 1975

B. THE REV. PAUL TRAPIER GERVAIS' HOUSE. (ca 1835) 29 Legare Street

Records now show that in 1760 an early brick house on this same lot was in the ownership of Benjamin Yarnold, one of America's earliest composers, noted organist of St. Philip's Church, who moved to St. Michael's in 1766, after that church's acquisition of a Snetzler organ. In February of that year, Yarnold and his wife Mary sold to William Henderson, who three years later sold it to William Parker. It remained in Parker ownership until 1835, when the Reverend Paul Trapier Gervais purchased the property for \$5,000.00. He apparently built anew here, utilizing the floor of the former brick residence which appears on the Petrie Map of 1788. The north wall of a wing of the house (conjectured to be a servant's building or perhaps a shop) also forms part of the wall separating this property from #31 Legare. There was apparently a brick structure on the lot also, probably an outbuilding. Mr. L. Louis Green, III, who researched this property, points out that approximately twenty feet were deducted from the rear of this lot and from all the lots north of #25 Legare to form part of the lot at 129 Tradd.

From the Reverend Paul Gervais's daughter and her husband, the property was sold to Mrs. Charles H. Simonton in 1872, who in 1881 sold it to Robert Withers Memminger. During his ownership, in 1895, Josephine Pinckney, Charleston poet and novelist, was born here. Acquired successively by Mrs. Helen S. W. Rhett, Mrs. Isabella C. Gaud, and Mrs. Ashmead Pringle, this handsome house with its fine piazzas passed to Mrs. Pringle's daughter, Mrs. John T. Welch, Jr.

In the dining room there were originally windows on either side of the chimney. Those spaces have been utilized for an elevator and a powder room. The living room mantle is of black marble, like the window trim--a treatment stylish in Charleston houses of this date. The room has been curtained inside the trim to show off the corner decoration. The Welches have furnished their home with family and period pieces.