

well, considering his handicap.

Tommy's family is desperately in need of food, clothing and a bit of cheer.

His father works but is una-

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gians at Palmer College, has
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dures.

by any one church, the priest
explained. He would like for

voluntary matter.
"It's kind of an honor sys-

in which he will outline his
plans for the next four years.

when he was eight. "You can
talk to him about anything."

this weather has something
to do with it," he said.



GOOSE CREEK PLANTER WAS BUILDER OF 18 MONTAGU
Dwelling has particularly fine interior paneling. (Staff Photo by Swain)

House Endures Two Disasters

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Sixth in a series of articles on the early dwellings of Montagu Street. The seventh will appear two weeks from today.)

By W.H. J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

The spacious wooden dwelling, occupying the northeast corner of Montagu and Pitt streets was built in the 18th century by a wealthy Goose Creek planter; later it became the home of a director of the U. S. Mint; and is today the oldest surviving residence on Montagu.

Utilized in apartments since the 1940s, its history is in small scale the story of the entire Harleston Village area of the west side of mid-town Charleston which experienced first development just after the Revolutionary War. It has now started a revival as a residential area with many period homes of size being maintained in rental units.

This dwelling, numbered as 18 Montagu St., is one of the few 18th century homes in all of the north-of-Broad area to retain its interior Georgian paneling and to have escaped the usual changes in fashionable interior alteration, though its exterior has been changed

on several occasions. The opposite is usually true, and it is surprising as the dwelling has suffered severe damage during at least two natural disasters.

The property is the western most end of two Pitt Street lots purchased by Benjamin Smith in the 1780s. Smith was a Goose Creek planter, with his principal country seat at "Beechawee", who had extensive landholdings all through the Lowcountry.

He had apparently completed his two-story wooden dwelling with its full-height brick basement by 1788.

Within two years it passed to his son, Benjamin Smith Jr., and his daughter-in-law, who retained it until 1809 when it was sold for \$6,800 to Timothy Ford and Alexander Edwards as trustees for Elizabeth Ford DeSaussure and her husband, Chancellor William Henry DeSaussure.

Chancellor DeSaussure, who purchased the dwelling in his own name in 1811, was appointed first director of the mint by George Washington. He supervised the coining of the first American dollars. He had a distinguished later career as a jurist.

It was during his ownership

of 18 Montagu that the violent tornado of 1811 hit and according to a local newspaper report reprinted in Alice R. Huger Smith's "The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina": "The mansion house of the Hon. Judge DeSaussure was violently assailed, and suffered considerably. One of the chimneys was thrown down, and a part of the family who were in an upper room at the time were precipitated with the falling bricks, through two floors into the kitchen..."

Do You Know Your Charleston?

It was also at this time that a certain resident of the house acquired her nickname. According to the legend which has come down with the ownership of the property, a relative, Mrs. Gibbs, was occupying the northeast bedroom of the second story while awaiting the birth of her child. During the tornado the floor gave way and she unexpectedly gave birth on the floor below immediately upon arriving there. Mother and child were

unharmed but she was known as Mrs. "Cyclone" Gibbs from that day on.

The DeSaussures conveyed the property to Edward Lynah in 1813 for \$9,200. Lynah got in debt to the Bank of South Carolina and the bank took over in 1824. It was next purchased by an individual of French nationality, Madame Maria Z. Langlois, for \$6,000.

Madame Langlois kept an academy for ladies at 18 Montagu for some 10 years until the property was taken back by the bank to satisfy her mortgage. The house and lot were purchased by George W. Brown, a resident of 12 Montagu, on July 12, 1843. Eight years later it was sold to William Peronneau Finley.

Finley was an attorney, a member of the State General Assembly and president of the faculty of the College of Charleston from 1845 to 1857. In the year that his presidency ended, Finley sold the house to Mrs. Louisa A. Mosie for \$7,500.

Dr. T. Grange Simons, a local physician and advocate of improved public health standards, purchased 18 Montagu in 1885. The house remained in his estate into the

1940s when it was purchased by its present owners, Mrs. Valerie P. Massie and Wilfred V. Patterson.

Dr. Simons made several changes during his ownership, including the placing of wide double windows on both east and west sides of the residence to allow for additional light and the ornamental sheet metal ceiling in the large second-story drawing room. The ceiling was added after the earthquake of 1886 which so badly shook the dwelling that the Simons family was forced to set up temporary quarters in the large garden area of 13 Montagu just across the street.

The most impressive features of the interior are the two front rooms on the entrance floor, being a parlor and a dining room with fully paneled chimney breasts and recessed paneled wainscoting, and the second story drawing room. The drawing room possesses beautifully proportioned bolection work and an unusually fine pedimented overmantle. In place of the usual dentil cornice trim are tiny squares set diagonally as a rather unique form of enrichment.