

# Robert Henderson Tenement (North)

31 State Street

c. 1797

The building at 31 State Street has a cloudy history in part because of the paucity of early records but also because of the repeated changes to the name of the street,<sup>1</sup> the inconsistent numbering of the buildings on the street, and the several fires that have ravaged the area. Even the



When the Grand Modell was drawn, the Market area was still a creek to the north of Lot 199.



chain of title—normally a reliable source of information about a house—has missing links.

The house stands on the northeast corner of Lot 199 of the Grand Modell, a plat of the lower peninsula creating somewhat regular lots and a grid of streets. In 1736, **Arthur Middleton** conveyed Lot 199 (along with a 1900 acre

<sup>1</sup> State Street is the third name for the northern half of State Street. Originally, Union Street ran from Broad Street to Queen Street where it took a slight jog to the west and ran to Vanderhorst Creek (today the Market) as "Union Street continued." Union Street (Continued) was renamed Motte Street in August 1807, and the houses were apparently renumbered. *Times*, Sept. 4, 1807, at 2. That name stuck for only a short time before the entire street from Broad Street to the Market was rechristened as State Street in 1813 with the houses again renumbered. *City Gazette*, July 19, 1813, at 1. This account will use State Street to refer to the block and refer to the house as 31 State Street for consistency where possible.

plantation in Berkeley County)<sup>2</sup> to his son **William Middleton**<sup>3</sup> who subdivided Lot 199 into three, unequal lots fronting Queen Street. He sold the western 30' to Mr. George Sheed in August 1753<sup>4</sup> and the middle 55' in September 1753 to Rev. Levi Durand.<sup>5</sup>

No deed from William Middleton can be found for the remaining 35' wide eastern parcel, but the deed to Rev. Durand for the middle section identified John Remington as the owner of the adjacent parcel to the east. Thus, no later than September 1753,<sup>6</sup> the eventual site of 31 State Street (and 12 Queen Street, 27½ State Street, and 29 State Street) must have been conveyed to **John Remington**.

Mr. Remington was possibly in poor health by 1775 and engaged in estate planning in his dying days. On January 25, 1775, he conveyed to his daughter, Ann Remington-Burton (wife of mariner Isaac Burton), the southern 125'5" portion of



Lot 199 was divided into three pieces. The eastern portion, bought by John Remington in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, eventually became 12 Queen Street, 27 ½ State Street, and the double tenement at 29-31 State Street.

<sup>2</sup> Deed book S, page 434 (recorded Apr. 20, 1739)

<sup>3</sup> William John Middleton was born in 1710 in Goose Creek, South Carolina to Arthur Middleton and Sarah Amory-Middleton. He died on September 7, 1775 in England.

<sup>4</sup> Deed book NN, page 342

<sup>5</sup> Deed book OO, page 363 (recorded May 7, 1754)

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Middleton sold off other property, including Crowfield Plantation in Berkeley County, and moved to England in 1754. His sale of the three subdivisions of Lot 199 was likely in anticipation of his move to England.

their corner lot. The northern edge of the conveyance to their daughter would have fallen on the dividing wall between the current 29 and 31 State Street. *Some* house had already been added to the portion kept by Mr. Remington; just one day after the transfer of the southern portion to his daughter, he executed a will that left a house on his retained property (*i.e.*, the present location of 31 State Street) to his widow, Margaret, for her life, then to Ann. (Mr. Remington even identified the tenant of the house—barber John Bothwell—in the will.)

Mr. Remington died soon after signing his will,<sup>7</sup> and the location of 31 State Street passed to Mrs. Margaret Remington for life, then to Ann. Ann Remington-Burton did not outlive her parents by long and died herself in April 1784<sup>8</sup> without issue. Ann's only surviving sibling,<sup>9</sup> tailor **James Remington**, therefore inherited the entire lot—both the southern part that had been given to his sister and the northern part that had been retained by his father.



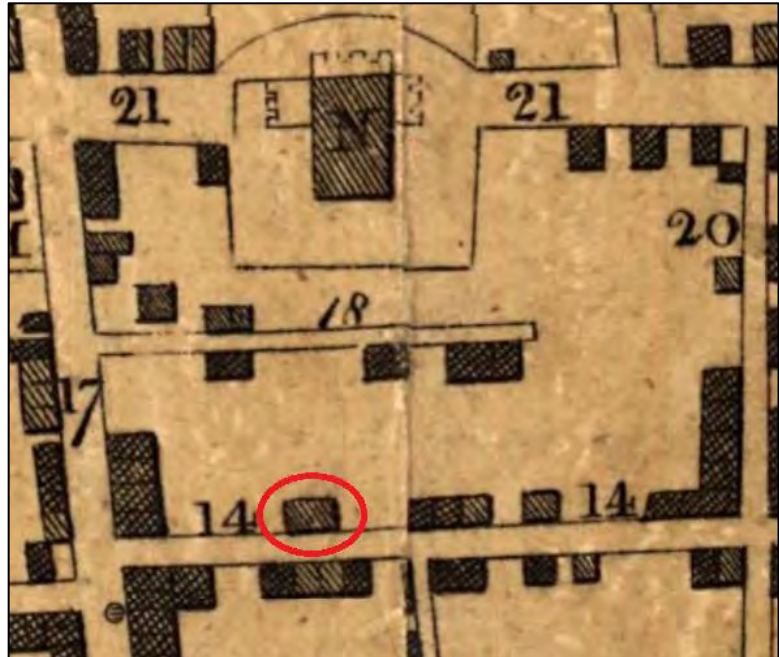
In 1775, John Remington gave the southern portion of his property (blue) to his daughter but kept the northern end (red).

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Remington's son, Jacob Remington, referred to his "late" father when he wrote his own will on July 5, 1776.

<sup>8</sup> *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, Apr. 6, 1784, at 4

<sup>9</sup> Although James Remington was identified as her sole surviving sibling, Ann had apparently been one of several children. Robert Remington was born on December 25, 1739, and Mr. John Remington's will named several other children: John, Jacob, Abraham, and William.

The earliest possible view of a building on the site arrived in August 1788 with the Iconography of Charleston. That map was drawn with care about its accuracy after professional surveyors assessed the area for use in calculating insurance rates. Not only were the locations of buildings noted, so were their materials; masonry buildings were shown with single-hatching, and frame buildings were shown with cross-hatching. That map



When the Iconography of Charleston was prepared in 1788, a masonry building was shown in the location of the existing double tenement.

shows a row of wooden buildings along Queen Street at the northwest corner of State Street. To the north along State Street, closer to Unity Alley than Queen Street, a laterally oriented, masonry building was shown.

Whatever building stood on the site was a very likely victim of one of Charleston's many fires. In June 1796, a devastating blaze began on Unity Alley and quickly spread west and south, burning almost every building for several blocks.<sup>10</sup> One count tallied 253 lots that were burned, totaling more than 300 houses.<sup>11</sup>

James Remington sold the whole Queen Street/State Street corner property to planter **Robert Henderson** for 600 pounds in May 1797.<sup>12</sup> The deed described the part of the lot that had been retained by John Remington as the land "on which the House in the Will [of John Remington] stood" and said that the house "*was situated*" there. (emphasis added) That line from the deed strongly

<sup>10</sup> *City Gazette*, June 14, 1796, at 3

<sup>11</sup> *City Gazette*, June 16, 1796, at 3

<sup>12</sup> Deed book T6, page 292 (recorded August 14, 1797)

suggests that the original building had burned in the recent fire, perhaps even prompting the sale of the land for the first time in more than forty years.

In an 18<sup>th</sup> century example of “house flipping,” Mr. Henderson and his wife, Ann, resold the corner lot to lawyer **John McCrady**<sup>13</sup> for 756 pounds in August 1797, less than three months after Mr. Henderson bought the property himself.<sup>14</sup> In addition, during his short ownership, Mr. Henderson had leased portions of his lot to Thomas Craike and tailor William Miller for just over 23 pounds each per year for six years. Those two leases must have been for the double tenement since Mr. McCrady immediately leased out the southern 94’ of the corner lot to Thomas Price with the condition that Mr. Price would add a new building to that part.<sup>15</sup>

The quick uptick in sales price to Mr. McCrady and the protected leases to tradesmen for the northern part indicates that the existing double tenement was built by Mr. Henderson, perhaps even using the old foundation or remnants of the first building (which would account for the location of the dividing wall during the 1775 transfer to Ann Remington-Burton).

The transaction was not quite so simple as Mr. McCrady might have hoped. James Remington reentered the story and made a claim that, despite



As soon as he bought the corner lot, Mr. McCrady leased the blue section to a tenant who agreed to build on it. The red portion had already been leased to two men by Robert Henderson for roughly equal rents.

<sup>13</sup> John McCrady was born in Charleston on June 13, 1775, to Edward and Eliza McCrady. After graduating with honors from Princeton, he returned to Charleston and studied the law under Gen. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney before being admitted to the bar on September 29, 1796. In 1797, he married Jane Johnson, the sister of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court William Johnson, and had three children including Edward McCrady. He died on June 12, 1803. 2 John Belton O’Neill, *Biographical Sketches of the Bench and Bar of South Carolina*, at 178-81 (S.G. Courtenay & Co. 1859).

<sup>14</sup> Deed book T6, page 290. Mrs. Henderson renounced her interest in the property in favor of John McCrady on the same day. Deed book T6, page 292

<sup>15</sup> Deed book T6, page 382 (recorded Nov. 20, 1797)

having joined in the sale of the property by Mr. Henderson (for which Mr. Henderson allegedly paid Mr. Remington only \$50 even though the deed to Mr. Henderson recited a 600 pound payment), he still had an interest in the property. He claimed that he had been a minor at the time of the sale to Mr. Henderson, making that transfer possibly invalid. Mr. McCrady paid James Remington another not inconsequential 100 pounds for a further release of any possible claims to the property in October 1798.<sup>16</sup>

Mr. McCrady died and left his estate to his wife, **Jane Johnson-McCrady**,<sup>17</sup> for her life (or until she remarried) including his father-in-law's house (which had been conveyed to him in June 1798 by William Johnson after he married Ms. Jane Johnson in 1797<sup>18</sup>). Mr. McCrady's will specifically noted the improvements made to the corner of State and Queen Streets: "[W]hereas there are sundry sums of money due to me, my will and desire is that after satisfying all just demands against my Estate, my Executors do apply all such surplus sums to purchasing the buildings on my land at the corner of Union [now State] and Queen Streets at the expiration of the present leases and to the further improvement of my Estate as they may find most advisable either by building or purchasing."<sup>19</sup> No evidence suggests that Mrs. McCrady ever occupied the State Street property herself, and she likely used it as a rental property.<sup>20</sup>

If the colonial structure burned in 1796, its replacement was luckier. In October 1810, a fire broke out on upper Church Street and burned south all the way to Tradd Street, burning almost every structure on the block of State Street between Queen Street and Cumberland Street. A brief report of the damage

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<sup>16</sup> Deed book U6, page 434

<sup>17</sup> Jane Johnson McCrady was born on December 18, 1778. She married lawyer John Campbell McCrady on May 4, 1797. She died on May 15, 1845.

<sup>18</sup> Deed book W6, page 126 (the western third of Lot 51 of the Grand Modell of the city that was 30 feet and 165 feet deep)

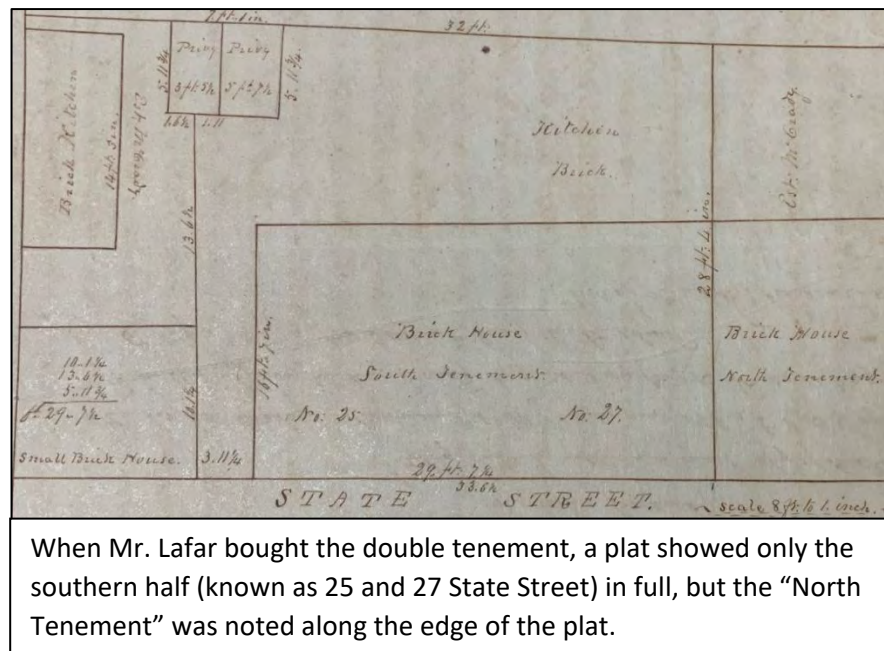
<sup>19</sup> Will book L14, page 38

<sup>20</sup> Determining tenants is impossible during the antebellum period. Street numbers were chaotic at best, and even established businesses advertised their locations with descriptions such as "Union Street, fourth north of Queen Street" instead of using numbers. Numbers did adhere to a sequential scheme and did not ensure that odd buildings were on the west/south with evens on the east/north sides of street. In a neighborhood with intensive rental uses, it can be difficult to find any known occupants who remained at the same address between editions of the city directories. However, Thomas Craike, one of the two holdover tenants upon the sale to Mr. McCrady, lived at "2 Union Street" in 1797 and 1798, a likely reference to his leased house at 31 State Street.

stated that 32 buildings on the block burned and that only two (which were not identified) survived.<sup>21</sup>

The Henderson Tenement might have burned and been rebuilt a second time on the same lines as both earlier buildings, but it might also be one of those two survivors. In 1813, the City assessed properties on Union and Motte (now State) Streets. The property that belonged to the Estate of McCrady was assessed \$880.45, an amount which was *significantly* higher than most other lots on the street.<sup>22</sup> It is unclear how the figures were calculated, but the higher than normal figure suggests that the lot was one of the only parcels on the block that had a building on it by that time.

When Mrs. McCrady died, the tenement house was sold in two separate transactions on the same day to **David B. Lafar**. The McCrady estate sold the narrower (33'6") southern "Tenement House" at 29 State Street<sup>23</sup> for \$1100 to Mr. Lafar in May 1846.<sup>24</sup> The estate



also sold the wider (36') northern part of the tenement house at 31 State Street to Mr. Lafar for \$1325 on the same day.<sup>25</sup> Curiously, a plat was drawn and recorded in conjunction with the sale of the southern half of the tenement, but no plat was recorded along with the simultaneous sale of the northern tenement.

<sup>21</sup> "Fire!," *City Gazette*, October 10, 1810, at 3

<sup>22</sup> *City Gazette*, July 19, 1813, at 1

<sup>23</sup> The southern half of the tenement was known as 25 and 27 State Street at that time.

<sup>24</sup> Deed book W11, page 175

<sup>25</sup> Deed book W11, page 180

The plat for the two-unit southern half, however, included enough of the adjacent parcels to show that a brick tenement occupied both 29 and 31 State Street.

Because the 1846 plat had house numbers for the southern tenement (25 and 27 State Street at that time), it might be assumed that the northern tenement was 29 State Street at least by the 1840s until the city renumbered all of the streets in 1861. If so, then some tenants included Ms. Flora Schlectren (who operated a boarding house) (1849-1852), M. Runkle (1849), I.O. and Susan Neal (1850), and Mary Powers (1855).



The 1852 Bridgens & Allen Map showed the double tenement on its own parcel along State Street.

**37 STATE-STREET,  
DOWNTOWN.  
ALE, WINES.**

THE UNDERSIGNED INFORMS THE PUBLIC THAT  
he has re-opened his Store, 37 STATE-STREET,  
next to the Vigilant Engine House, where he has on  
hand a good glass of ALE.

WINES AT A REASONABLE PRICE.

**GARRETT BYRNS.**

May 29 '85

Garrett Byrns opened a liquor store at 31 State Street (known as 37 State Street from 1861 until the street was renumbered in the 1880s) in May 1865.

Mr. Lafar died on February 28, 1858, and at public auction on April 6, 1858, his estate sold several properties along State Street including 31 State Street with a two-and-one-half story brick house on it. The ad mentioned an expected rent of \$240 for the 36' by 28' property.<sup>26</sup> The house at 31 State Street<sup>27</sup> sold for \$1125 to Beckman McCall (as executor of the estate of Ann Dart McCall in April 1858.<sup>28</sup> The executor quickly resold the same property the next month to **Garrett Byrns**<sup>29</sup> for \$1500.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Byrns, who already operated a tavern around the corner on Queen Street, converted the State Street house into a liquor store in 1865.<sup>31</sup> State

<sup>26</sup> *Charleston Courier*, Apr. 6, 1858, at 3

<sup>27</sup> The house was still known as 29 State Street at that time.

<sup>28</sup> Deed book F14, page 29; *Charleston Courier*, Apr. 7, 1858, at 2 (other sales included the 2.5 story house at 25/27 State Street for \$1150 and the 3-story brick house at 33 State for \$3100)

<sup>29</sup> Mr. Byrns died on April 15, 1897. "Mr. Garrett Byrns," *Evening Post*, Apr. 16, 1897, at 5

<sup>30</sup> Deed book F14, page 53

<sup>31</sup> *Charleston Courier*, May 30, 1865, at 3

Street was a largely commercial area in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with many large auction companies operating in the first block, and 31 State Street might easily have housed commercial uses at least on its first floor with residential space above. In addition, Mr. Byrnes was the first owner-occupant of the house, residing there as well as having a business at the address.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Byrns sold the 36' by 28' property in January 1869, for \$1850 to a trustee for **Ann Walsh**.<sup>33</sup> Per tax records of the 1870s, both parts of the structure at 29 and 31 State Street were used as tenements during her ownership.<sup>34</sup>

Mrs. Walsh, by then a widow, sold the same property in January 1878, for \$1330 to **Adolph F.C. Cramer**,<sup>35</sup> an entrepreneur who eventually rose in the business community to be an officer in varied enterprises.<sup>36</sup> During his ownership, the house seems to have become a more intensive rental property with as many as half a dozen men of no apparent relation living at the house.<sup>37</sup>



The 1872 Bird's Eye View did not include details but was a highly accurate as to the existence and relative size of buildings.

<sup>32</sup> At least in 1867, however, Mr. Byrns must have relocated his family and returned the house to a rental property. Residents that year included Edward Martin, George Antbus, and C. Nelson (who also operated a cigar store from the house).

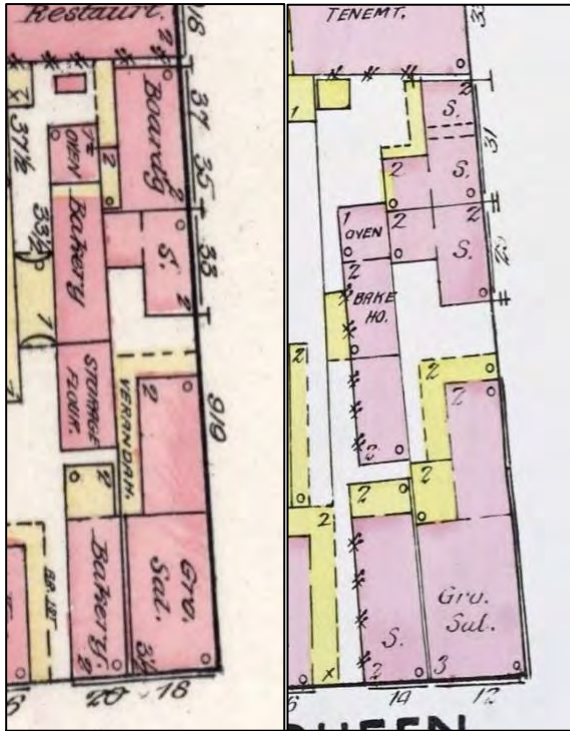
<sup>33</sup> Deed book L15, page 39

<sup>34</sup> From 1872 to 1875, the house was home to the Quinn family including at least John and James.

<sup>35</sup> Deed book J17, page 239

<sup>36</sup> Mr. Cramer immigrated to Walhalla, South Carolina from Germany with his parents when he was only three. He made his mark in Charleston though. He worked his way up through the Claussen Bakery to become its manager and later acquired a controlling interest in the business. He also owned a controlling interest in the Charleston Brewery and a coal company. In addition to success to business, he served 16 years on City Council. When he died on October 24, 1908, he was the president of the Germania Saving Bank. "Mr. Cramer's Body Buried in Bethany," *Evening Post*, Oct. 26, 1908, at 4.

<sup>37</sup> Some of known occupants were Michael Nelligan (1878), Francis J. Carraghar (1878), John Rugero (1878), Francis H. Hughes (1878), Thomas Brown (1878). Starting about 1880 until about 1900, almost all of the tenants were African-American laborers, including Simon Glover (1880-1881), Thomas Brown (1880), Edward Willis (1881-1882), Stephen Rumpel (1881-1883), Martin Hughes (1881-1883), John Brown (1881), Samuel Fields (1881-1883), Dennis Gibbes (1882), Paul Gibbes (1882), James Vanderhorst (1882), Henry Lesesne (1882), Frank Hughes (1886), James Campbell (1886), Napoleon Jenkins (1887), Thomas Washington (1887), James King (1887), Hopes Mikell (1888), John Bailey (1890-1891), Don Adams (1892), Kennedy Sumter (1893-1894), Louisa Bennett (1894), Eliza Sumter (1897), and John Plein (1899-1900).



The 1884 Sanborn Insurance (left) shows 31 State Street as a boarding house, but by 1888 it was two stores (denoted with "S" markings) divided by a passage to the rear yard.

If its masonry construction had been a benefit during the fire that swept the neighborhood in 1810 reducing frame houses to ashes, the tables turned in 1886. At shortly after ten o'clock on the night of August 31, 1886, an earthquake rocked Charleston, becoming one of the greatest disasters of the city's history. While wood structures had at least some ability to give, rigid masonry buildings collapsed all over the city. An extensive survey was done of the damage, and a catalog was produced recording the addresses of all the buildings, their owners, a mention of the materials used in the buildings, a description of the damage, and an assessment of the financial damages. The house at 31 State Street suffered some damage, but it came out well ahead of nearby buildings. The

report said that Mr. Cramer's house (which still had a slate roof) had three good walls but that the north wall "bulged" and the chimney had collapsed down to the roofline. Recommendations for repairs to the \$150 in assessed damage included anchoring the north wall and rebuilding the chimney.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Record of Earthquake Damages* 28 (Winham & Lester Pubs. 1886) (original record housed at the South Carolina Historical Society)

The current lot dimensions were established during the ownership by the Cramers. Mr. Cramer's wife, **Deborah Cramer**, added a rear segment<sup>39</sup> that she pared off from the rear of 14 Queen Street, which she had bought from the executor of Louis Vidal in 1900. Perhaps the addition of the rear yard was part of an upgrade the house; thereafter the first long-term residents occupied the house when the family of John and Annie Florio were there from 1900 to 1910.



Ms. Cramer sold the house with its additional space in the back to grocer **Henry D. Schweers** in May 1908 for \$1500.<sup>40</sup> The Florios held over as tenants despite the sale. Then, following a short rental by O.F. Fortune (1912) and a period of vacancy, other longer term renters occupied the house: the family of William H. Fox (1914-1927), the family of George Plough (1928-1934), and the family of Mrs. Ella Smith (1938-1948).

Mr. Schweers died December 18, 1930, but his son, John C. Schweers, did not sell his father's investment house until May 31, 1945, when he sold the house to **Daisy Mae Roberts** for \$2750.<sup>41</sup> The house was rented to another long-term tenant, Mrs. Margaret H. Rhett, at least from 1955 to 1961.

<sup>39</sup> The added lot was irregular. A 4' by 33' strip was added to the rear of 31 State Street with an area roughly 15' by 18' from the rear of 14 Queen Street also. Mr. James Vidal, Sr. died in April 1874 and left his entire estate to his sister-in-law, Marie Vidal. She had already died, so his property passed to his brother (Marie's husband), Louis Vidal. When Louis died on January 4, 1884, his children sold the 27' by 162' property at 14 Queen Street for \$1000 to Deborah Cramer on May 16, 1900. Deed book Q22, page 228.

<sup>40</sup> Deed book L25, page 43

<sup>41</sup> Deed book S45, page 87

In August 1962, Ms. Roberts sold the house to **Jane Hill Agnew-Lucas** for \$7500.<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Lucas lived in Alexandria, Virginia and used the house as a rental property after a renovation. When the house was listed for sale by Ms. Roberts in May 1962, it was described as an “[i]nteresting home for restoration,”<sup>43</sup> but by November 1962 the advertisements mentioned that the house was “newly renovated”<sup>44</sup> when it was listed for rent by Mrs. Lucas. Mrs. Lucas apparently rented the house out for a few years,<sup>45</sup> but by 1978, she and Dr. Lucas were occupying the house themselves.



Jane Agnew Lucas died on December 3, 1989, and her husband, **Dr. Thomas Lawman Lucas**,<sup>46</sup> was the sole beneficiary of her estate. Mr. Lucas received several properties including 31 State Street.<sup>47</sup> Dr. Lucas resumed the renting of the house,<sup>48</sup> but starting in late

<sup>42</sup> Deed book W76, page 244

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., News and Courier, May 5, 1962, at 10-B

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., News and Courier, Nov. 30, 1962, at 7-D (listing the rent as \$135)

<sup>45</sup> Tenants included Peden McLeod (1968-1969); Jack Cottingham, Jr. (1970); and Frederick and June Stevenson (1971-1977).

<sup>46</sup> Jane Hill Agnew married Dr. Thomas Lawman Lucas married on August 31, 1936. “Miss Jane Hill Agnew Engaged to Dr. Thomas Lawman Lucas,” Evening Post, July 18, 1936, at 10; “Miss Jane Agnew Hill Weds Dr. Thomas Lawman Lucas in Hendersonville, N.C.,” News and Courier, Sept. 2, 1936, at 8.

<sup>47</sup> Deed book E196, page 185

<sup>48</sup> Tenants included Dawn Carlson (1993) and Donald Bowick (1996).

1991 and continuing each year until 1996, he transferred fractional stakes in 31 State Street to his daughter and son-in-law. Probably to avoid estate and gift taxes, Dr. Lucas transferred a 4.44% interest to both his daughter, Alexandra Lucas-McFadden, and to his son-in-law, Grant McFadden, each year. Dr. Lucas simultaneously transferred an 8.88% interest to his second wife, Monique Marie Antoinette Lucas, every year who then turned around and gifted that same interest to the McFaddens. That pattern of transfers took place in December 1991;<sup>49</sup> January 1992;<sup>50</sup> January 1993;<sup>51</sup> January 1994;<sup>52</sup> and January 1995.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, in February 1996, the parties transferred the balance to the McFaddens in the same manner.<sup>54</sup> Over the next several years, the house was occupied mainly by long-term tenants.<sup>55</sup> In March 2012, the property was placed into the **Alexandra Rose Lucas Revocable Living Trust**.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Deed book E209, page 416 (from Dr. Lucas); deed book E209, page 411 (to Mrs. Lucas); deed book E209, page 206 (from Mrs. Lucas)

<sup>50</sup> Deed book X209, page 359 (Dr. Lucas gifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens); deed book X209, page 364 (Mr. Lucas gifts 8.88% to his wife); deed book X209, page 338 (Mrs. Lucas regifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens)

<sup>51</sup> Deed book H222, page 255 (Dr. Lucas gifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens); deed book H222, page 250 (Mr. Lucas gifts 8.88% to his wife); deed book H222, page 245 (Mrs. Lucas regifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens)

<sup>52</sup> Deed book E238, page 867 (Dr. Lucas gifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens); deed book E238, page 872 (Mr. Lucas gifts 8.88% to his wife); deed book E238, page 877 (Mrs. Lucas regifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens)

<sup>53</sup> Deed book R251, page 541 (Dr. Lucas gifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens); deed book R251, page 524 (Mr. Lucas gifts 8.88% to his wife); deed book R251, page 515 (Mrs. Lucas regifts 4.44% each to the McFaddens)

<sup>54</sup> Deed book K265, page 67 (Mr. Lucas gifts 2.8% each to the McFaddens); deed book K265, page 72 (Mr. Lucas gifts 5.6% to his wife); deed book K265, page 77 (Mrs. Lucas regifts 2.8% each to the McFaddens)

<sup>55</sup> Tenants included Craig and Margaret England who operate the England Insurance Co. (1997-2003), Harold Kohler (2004-2007), Henry S. Mathieu (2012-2013), and John Broughton (2011-2019). In 2011, Alexandra Lucas-McFadden was in the house.

<sup>56</sup> Deed book O240, page 213