

2 Ladson St.: Colorful History

By HELEN N. OTHERSEN
Staff Reporter

A most unusual "love affair" allegedly occurred nearly 200 years ago because of a royalist ball held at 2 Ladson Street.

Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Tidyman, prominent royalists of Charleston during the time the city was occupied by the British, held a ball one night at their home at 2 Ladson St. The account is taken from Margaret R. Martin's "Charleston Ghosts" and Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel's book, "Charleston, the Place and the People." During the party, Capt. "Mad Archy" Campbell, described by Mrs. Ravenel as a brave, honorable and "terribly erratic and flighty character, easily led into any sort of folly," became infatuated with a Tory beauty and heiress, Paulina Phelps. Miss Phelps, however, preferred the attentions of a Philadelphia officer, and the proud captain wagered his handsome Arabian horse against 50 pounds, belonging to his fellow officers, that he would marry her, with her consent, within three days.

He then invited Miss Phelps to go riding with him in his carriage, which turned into the wildest ride any person could imagine. After a two-hour, lightning-paced, mad drive, Campbell took the half-

Do You Know Your Charleston?

fainting, helpless girl to a preacher near Goose Creek to be married. Campbell even carried a pistol to help matters along in case he should lose his bet. Only a year after they were wed, he was killed while attempting to escape after capture by the colonists. His young bride died soon after.

Two Ladson St. comprises the rear portion of lots 277 and 276, which were granted in 1694 to Stephen Bull, father of Lt. Gov. William Bull.

One portion of lot 277 was owned in 1746 by the second Lt. Gov. Bull, with the second portion bought from Henry Middleton by John Deas in 1778. Ladson's Court was constructed partially on each of the two portions, with the rear lot as an entrance-way. This rear portion was given by the first Lt. Gov. William Bull to his son-in-law, John Drayton.

James Clitherale, a later owner of 2 Ladson St., owed a debt of 4,000 guineas since Feb. 24, 1796, and was ordered by the court to sell his land. On Feb. 1, 1800, a public auction was held between

11 a.m. and 3 p.m., at which William Skerving, the highest bidder, bought it for 2,085 guineas sterling.

When Skerving died, he also owed money, again forcing the sale of the property. Originally, his plantation, free farm and Georgian lands were put up for auction, but 2 Ladson St. was deemed more salable. Thomas Rhett Smith acquired it, and a plat of old Charles Town, dated July 12, 1813, accompanied the deed.

In 1832, the house was bought by a descendant of Phillip Tidyman, who bore the same name. Thereafter, it passed through several hands before coming into the family of B. Owen Geer on Sept. 14, 1939. It remained there until Nov. 11, 1969, when B. Owen Geer Jr. and his sister, Louise Patillo Geer Wardlaw, decided to sell.

The present owners are Dr. Thomas A. Kirkland Jr. and Patricia Trotter Kirkland.

Two Ladson St. consists of a wooden two-story house, with marble stairs leading to a columned porch entrance. Abutting on the east side and situated on the same property is a smaller two-story brick building and small garden, with the house being used as a rental unit. It originally served as a separate kitchen for the main house.



(Staff Photo by Bill Murton)

2 Ladson Street

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2 LADSON STREET

A History

By

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Charleston, South Carolina

21 November 1979

THE HISTORY

The house at 2 Ladson Street appears to have begun as a Georgian double house, which was expanded and remodeled somewhat during the Adamesque period, and again in the Colonial Revival period of the turn of the century.

It is impossible to pinpoint the construction date of the house because of a scarcity of records, pertaining to the property, during the 18th Century. Stylistically, however, the oldest features of the house belong to the mid-18th Century.

Historically, the site of 2 Ladson was part of Lot No. 277 of the "Grand Modell of Charles Town," which was granted by the Lords Proprietors on 19 May 1694, to Stephen Bull, along with Lot No. 277, adjacent to the south:¹ The original lots of the "Grand Modell" appear to have averaged 100 feet in width and 200 or more feet in depth.

Stephen Bull, born in 1635 in Warwick, England, arrived in Carolina in April 1670 aboard the ship Carolina, with the first group of settlers. He was a deputy of two of the Lords Proprietors and as such was a member of the Grand Council. He

also served in the Assembly, and in several prestigious appointive posts.² He died about 1706, leaving Lots No. 276 and 277 to his eldest son, William.

William Bull (1683-1755), born at Ashley Hall Plantation, was also an active public servant, serving in various posts including that of Lieutenant Governor (he is not to be confused with his son, William Bull, who was Lieutenant Governor in the period just prior to the Revolution). By his marriage to Mary Quintyne, he had several children, including a daughter, Charlotte (or Charlotte), who married John Drayton.³

John Drayton (c. 1713-1779), a son of the immigrant Thomas Drayton, was a native Carolinian. He was also a public servant, a member of the King's Council and an assistant judge, but he is probably best remembered as the builder of Drayton Hall, one of America's finest Georgian houses.⁴

It was to this illustrious son-in-law that William Bull, on 10 December 1746, conveyed, by a "deed of feoffment," the rear half of one of his Meeting Street lots. The deed does not identify the number of the lot, but the description fits

that of 2 Ladson in later years. The half lot, conveyed to Drayton, is described as bounding to the north on land of Mr. William Yeamans; west on Mr. Townsend's land; east on the "front or other half of the said Lot now in the Pofsession of Thomas Drayton Esq. and Doctor Bull"; and south "on a Lane or pafsage leading from the Street Westerly the Length of the said Lott." The back lot is further described as measuring 90 feet "from Mr. Yeaman's Land to the Said Lane," and 117 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet along the lane.⁵

William Bull died in 1755, directing in his will (dated April, 1755): "I...bequeath the Breadth of ten feet out of each of my two Lots in Charles Town to be measured from the Line that divides them from the Street Westward the full Length of the Lots unto my Son William & his heirs in Trust...to be and remain a Lane or Common Pafsage way for the use of those Persons who shall hereafter Pofsefs and enjoy the Lands joining the same."⁶ Thus he provided for the continued existence of the lane, 20 feet wide, which later became known as Ladson's Court.⁷

How long William Bull's son-in-law, John Drayton, contin-

ued to "Pofsefs and enjoy" the property now known as 2 Ladson Street is not known, as no deed has been found by which he or his heirs relinquished ownership. John Drayton perhaps owned the property until his death in 1779, at Strawberry Ferry on Cooper River, while fleeing with his family from the invading British army under Gen. Prevost.⁸ There is a possibility that he built the house at 2 Ladson sometime between 1746, when he acquired the land, and the Revolution.

There is a story which would seem to confirm that the house, now known as 2 Ladson, was standing during the Revolution. Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, in her book, Charleston: The Place and the People, relates the anecdote of "mad Archy Campbell" attending a ball "given by a Royalist lady, Mrs. Tidyman, in the house which is now No. 2 Ladson St." According to the story, "mad Archy" bet his Arab horse that he would marry a certain Miss Paulina Phelps within three days. Subsequently, by a ruse, Campbell kidnapped the young lady to the parish church of St. James, Goose Creek, where they were married in the presence of drawn pistols.⁹ Unfortunately, Mrs. Ravenel did not foot-not the story, so the source of her information is unknown.

It is possible that she had the facts confused. Dr. Philip Tidyman acquired the house at 2 Ladson in 1832, and it remained the "Tidyman House" until 1863.¹⁰

No house appears in the vicinity of 2 Ladson on the fire insurance map of 1788. The lane or passage, subsequently known as Ladson's Court, does not appear on the map either, although it is documented as existing as early as 1746.¹¹ The absence of the court and the house from the map could easily have been an error on the part of the surveyor.

The construction of 2 Ladson Street has been attributed to James Shoolbred, planter, who is said to have built it c. 1794. That attribution, however, is tenuous, as no record can be found of Shoolbred ever having owned the property. The attribution is apparently based on the 1794 city directory, in which James Shoolbred, planter, is listed as residing at 17 Meeting Street. In the same directory, 17 Meeting Street is also identified as the address of Maj. James Ladson. It is true that the house, now known as 2 Ladson, once shared a common address with the Ladson House, which is now known as 31 Meeting Street, but which originally had its entrance on Ladson.

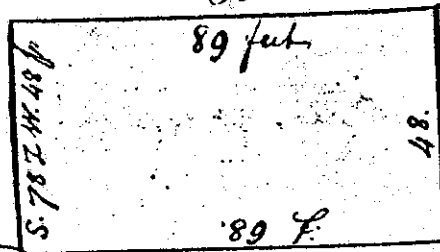
For example, the 1803 city directory lists James Ladson, planter, at 13 Meeting Street, and William Skirving, Sr., planter, at 13 Meeting Street. The 1806 directory lists Maj. James Ladson at 13 Meeting, and Col. William Skirving at "Ladson & Skirving's court 13 Meeting-street." The 1807 directory lists Maj. James Ladson at "13 Meeting-street ladson's court," and Col. William Skirving at "Ladson & Skirvings court 13 Meeting-street."

Proving that James Shoolbred lived at 2 Ladson in 1794, however, is not the same as proving that he built the house. He may have been the tenant of someone else -- perhaps an heir of John Drayton or perhaps Col. William Skirving. Shoolbred subsequently lived at the corner of Lamboll and Legare streets, in a house which, interestingly, he bought from Col. Skirving in 1800.¹²

Skirving, who is documented as living at 2 Ladson (then 13 Meeting) in 1803, is also documented as owning the property by that time. On 15 November 1803, he purchased from John H. Jeffords, a James Island planter, a piece of land "formerly belonging to Ann Townsend," measuring from east to west 48 feet, and in length from north to south, 89 feet. The lot bounded to the east on land already owned by William Skirving. A

William Alston Esqrs -

John H. Jeffords



William Reed

Col. Wm Skirving

This Plat represents part of a Lot of Ground between Market and King Streets forty eight by eighty nine feet, now intended to be conveyed by the said John H. Jeffords to Colonel Wm Skirving, laid off in November 1803.

John Diamond Secy.

plat accompanying the deed shows the lot, which for many years was the garden of 2 Ladson.¹³

William Skirving, the first documented owner and resident of 2 Ladson Street, was a son of James Skirving, a planter of St. Bartholomew's Parish. By his first marriage in 1766 to Mary Sacheverell, the only child and heiress of Thomas Sacheverell, he acquired several plantations in St. Bartholomew's Parish. She died in 1768, at the age of 18. The following year, he married Anne Holland Hutchinson, daughter of Thomas and Rebecca Hutchinson. Skirving served in the Commons House of Assembly, the First and Second Provincial Congresses, and the General Assembly. During the Revolution, he rose from Captain (1775) to Colonel (1778) in the militia. He commanded a regiment at the Battle of Port Royal in 1778, and afterwards served with Gen. Francis Marion. After the war, he returned to planting.¹⁴

Skirving was deceased by 9 November 1812, when his grandchildren, William Skirving and the children of Thomas Rhett Smith, exhibited their Bill of Complaint in the Court of Equity, against Thomas Rhett Smith and Ann, his wife, the executor and executrix of Col. Skirving's will. The suit alleged that Col.

Skirving's will had directed that his plantation in Georgia be sold for the payment of his debts. But as no purchaser could be found for the plantation, it was necessary to sell his other property. The court ordered the property sold at auction.¹⁵

The public notice of the auction listed "The House and Lot in Ladson's Court, Meeting-street, the present residence of T. R. Smith." Also listed to be sold at auction were lots on East Bay and a plantation, called "Bull's," in St. Bartholomew's Parish, belonging to the estate of Col. Skirving.¹⁶

At the auction, held on 16 February 1813, the property in Ladson's Court was sold to Thomas Rhett Smith for \$4,500. The plat annexed to the deed shows the house, which by then had acquired its Adamesque bay on the west side; two outbuildings of brick and one of wood; and a large garden with a small brick structure, probably a privy, in the northwest corner. The house was set slightly back from the court, with a semi-oval space in front, and fan-shaped steps leading into the house.¹⁷

Thomas R. Smith, planter, is listed as residing in Ladson's Court in 1813.¹⁸

On 1 February 1817, Thomas Rhett Smith sold the property

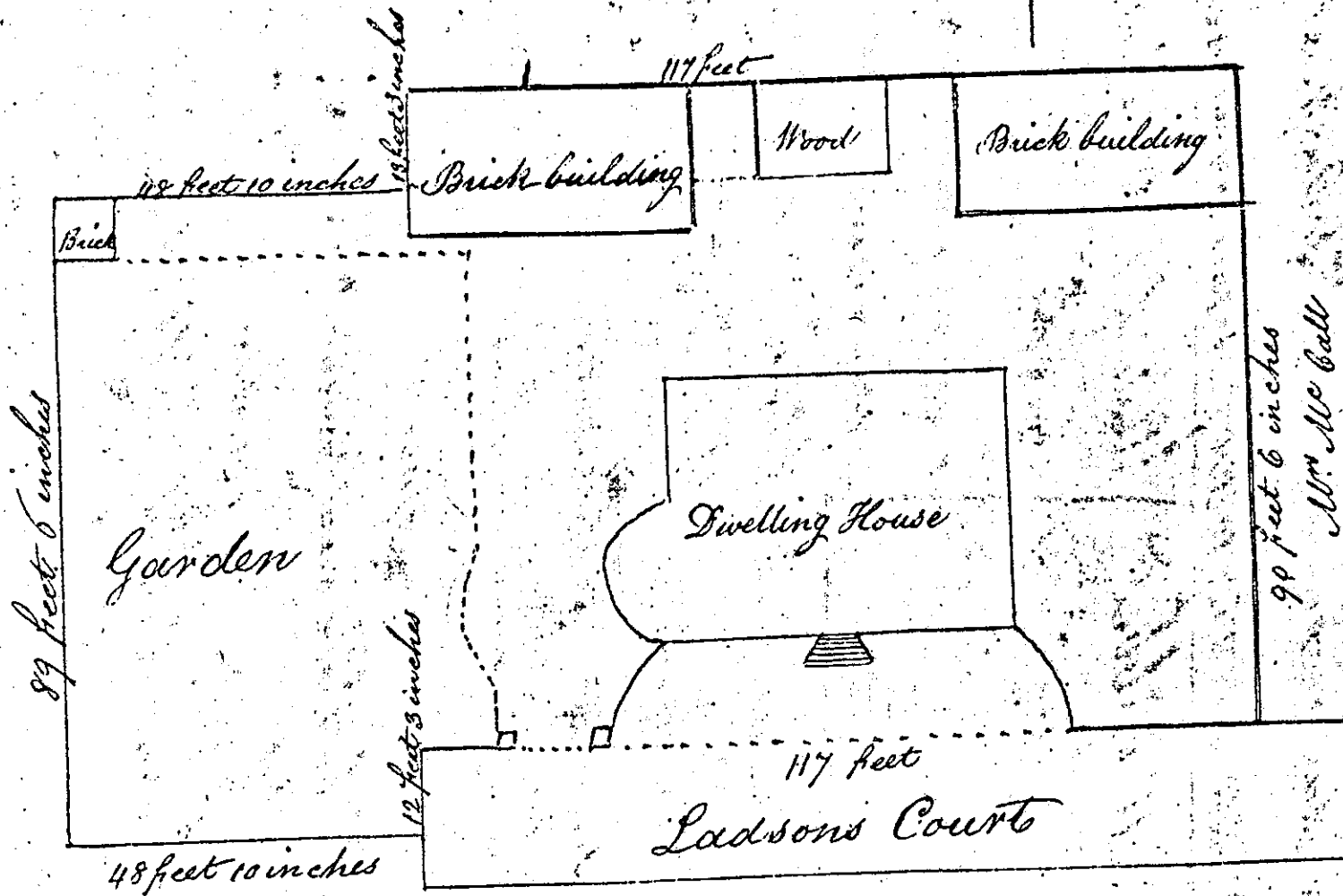
to Hugh Smith for \$12,000.¹⁹ Smith, a merchant, had his business at 7 Broad Street and lived at 2 Ladson.²⁰

Hugh Smith sold the property to Thomas Napier, on 4 June 1821, for \$12,000.²¹ The sale was partly to pay off a judgment which had been obtained against Hugh Smith by Napier and Agnes Smith, who held a mortgage on the property, and by Alexander Sinclair and Charles Kiddell, other creditors of Hugh Smith. Following the sale of the property to Napier, Agnes Smith, along with Sinclair and Kiddell, signed a quit-claim deed, releasing the premises from any claims on their part, on 27 June 1821.²²

Napier, a partner in the firm of Napier, Rupelye & Bennett, at 17 Vendue Range, lived in Ladson's Court for several years.²³ He then sold the property to Dr. Philip Tidyman, on 27 April 1832, for \$9,000.²⁴

Dr. Tidyman, a physician and planter, lived at 2 Ladson's Court until at least 1849.²⁵ He died in 1859, leaving to his daughter, Susan Tidyman, for and during her natural life, the use of the house and lot in Ladson's Court, in which he had resided. The executors of his will were to keep the estate

Regular means Commaance
William Schuchard's District



Charleston July 12 - 1813

A plan of a Lot of Land in Ladson's Court
and city of Charleston, belonging to the Estate of Col. Skerrin
Dec. 2
Surveyed by J. Wilson C. S.

intact and pay her \$3,000 a year. After her death, the property was to be sold and the proceeds distributed among Dr. Tidyman's nieces.²⁶ Miss Hester T. Drayton, who resided at 2 Ladson's Court in 1859, 1860 and 1861, was probably Susan Tidyman's guardian.²⁷ Miss Drayton is listed as the "next friend" of Susan Tidyman, in a Court of Equity suit against the executors of Tidyman's estate, brought on 27 May 1863. The bill of complaint alleged that because of the the current war, the income from the trust could not be paid, and therefore it was necessary to sell the property of the estate in order to provide for Susan Tidyman. The court, on 4 November 1863, ordered the property sold. Dr. Tidyman's executors accordingly sold the property to Allan Macfarlan, on 26 November 1863, for \$19,000.²⁸

Macfarlan died in Chesterfield County in March, 1869, leaving a will directing that after payment of his debts, the rest of his estate was to be divided among his several children. His personal property proving insufficient to pay Macfarlan's debts, the executors of his will filed suit in the Court of Common Pleas, Chesterfield County, asking that Macfarlan's real estate be sold. Consequently, William J. Hanna, Clerk of Court

of Chesterfield County, was ordered to sell the property at auction in Charleston.²⁹ The conduct of the sale was delegated to R. M. Marshall & Brother, auctioneers.³⁰ George B. Edwards bought the property at auction for a high bid of \$14,600, on 5 March 1891.³¹

George B. Edwards, president of the Exchange Banking and Trust Company of Charleston, apparently never lived at 2 Ladson, but resided at 4 Ladson. At the time of Edwards' purchase of the property, it was the residence of the Rev. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, rector of Grace Episcopal Church, who had been there since 1886. After Edwards' purchase of 2 Ladson, the property was listed as "vacant" in city directories until 1905.³²

Edwards, who had also acquired the lot to the west of 2 Ladson, fronting on King Street, which had belonged to Macfarlan, conveyed to the City Council of Charleston in 1893 a strip of land to extend Ladson's Court to King Street, and to widen the thoroughfare to 30 feet. The older part of the court was widened at the same time, leaving the front steps of 2 Ladson encroaching one foot onto the right of way. The deed provided however, "that the present encroachment of about one foot upon

the street made by the front steps of the dwelling house owned by me on the north side of the street as now opened and next East of my residence shall be allowed to remain as they are and should the same at any time be removed or destroyed, they may be replaced by me or by my heirs or assigns...so as to occupy the same position and space upon the street which they now occupy."³³ That provision has continued into the present ownership.³⁴

Edwards, on 10 December 1902, sold the property at 2 Ladson to William M. Bird, for \$10,000.³⁵ Bird also bought a court suit, however, as Anna P. Pickens, who held mortgages on ghe property, filed for foreclosure and sale. On 3 September 1903, the Master in Equity sold the property to Bird for an additional \$9,500.³⁶ Bird, on 28 March 1904, sold the property to Virginia B. Robertson, for \$6,500.³⁷

Mrs. Robertson and her husband, Jenkins M. Robertson, a fertilizer broker with offices at 16 Broad Street, lived at 2 Ladson Street for more than 30 years.³⁸

Then, on 14 September 1939, Mrs. Robertson sold the property to B. Owen Geer, Sr., for \$25,000.³⁹ Geer, president

of Geer Drug Company, conveyed 2 Ladson to his wife, Louisa F. Geer, on 5 March 1942.⁴⁰ After her death in 1967, their children, B. Owen Geer, Jr., and Louisa Patillo Geer Wardlaw, sold their interest in the property to their father.⁴¹ He returned the title to them on 31 October 1969.⁴²

On 21 November 1969, B. Owen Geer, Jr., and Louisa Patillo Geer Wardlaw conveyed the property to the present owners, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Kirkland.⁴³

THE STRUCTURE

The house at 2 Ladson obviously started out as a medium-sized Georgian double house of two stories, with four rooms to a floor, divided by a central hall and stairhall.

The construction date of the original portion of the house cannot be determined, because of the scarcity of records. Stylistically, however, it belongs to the Georgian period and was probably built before the Revolution, despite its absence from the 1788 fire insurance map.

The only documented owner of the property before the Revolution was John Drayton, who acquired the land in 1746. It is possible he built the house, either as his town residence or as a rental property. Two Ladson is obviously neither as grand nor as fine architecturally as John Drayton's seat, Drayton Hall. However, the coincidence of 2 Ladson having a drawing room overmantel with a broken pediment must be remarked upon. All the major rooms at Drayton Hall have overmantels with broken pediments, but all of course of a much more elaborate order than the one at 2 Ladson.

The overmantel is in a rectangular room on the second level, which assuredly was the original drawing room. The mantel under the overmantel has crossettes in raised molding, and consoles. Other Georgian mantels are found in the dining room on the first level and in the original rear rooms. The overmantels in the rear rooms on the first level have extremely wide board panels. The dining room also has a cornice with modillions and wainscotting with raised panels, in the Georgian style. The rather elaborate main staircase is also in the Georgian style, but there is some question about its being original.

At some point, the southwest front room on each floor was expanded to the west, ending in a three-sided bow. The expanded rooms were redecorated in the Adamesque style, with the downstairs rooms acquiring a particularly elaborate mantel with classic figures in a triumphal march in the centerblock, more classic figures in the cornerblocks, swags in the frieze and Tower of the Winds pilasters flanking the fireplace opening. The dentilled cornice and flat-paneled wainscotting are also in the Adamesque taste. The expansion and remodeling was accom-

plished by 1813, as the bow appears on the house in a plat of that year.

At a later date, the house was remodeled in the Colonial Revival style which was popular in the 1890s and early 1900s. This was accomplished after the widening of Ladson Street in 1893, as a plat of that time shows the house with the same configuration as in 1813, without the present shallow front piazza with its slender collonettes. The two story piazza, now enclosed, on the east side, the triangular window in the front pediment and the rear wing were probably all contemporaneous. According to tradition, the rear wing was added by the Robertsons, although a rear wing is shown on the Sanborn insurance map in 1894. Interior woodwork in the rear wing is typical of the period from c. 1900 to c. 1920.

NOTES

¹South Carolina Historical Magazine, 9:23.

²Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, eds. (Columbia, 1977), 2:115-116.

³Ibid., 2:120-122.

⁴Ibid., 2:201-202. John Drayton, "History and Genealogy of the Drayton Family," MS, c. 1817, in South Carolina Historical Society collection.

⁵Deeds, CC:260, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston County. The consideration was £10 "current money of the Province," that is, South Carolina currency. A "feoffment" under English law, was the grant of a "feoff" or fief. Thomas Drayton, named as living on the front part of the lot, was another son-in-law of William Bull.

⁶Will of William Bull of Granville County, WPA Transcripts, Wills Charleston County Probate Court, 7:339.

⁷The lane remained without a name for some time, however. (Deeds, E6:480; E5:277; C6:184).

⁸Drayton MS.

⁹Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, Charleston; The Place and the People, (New York, 1912), p. 297.

¹⁰Deeds, D:10:315; T14#3:32.

¹¹"Ichnography of Charleston, South Carolina At the Request of Adam Tunno for the use of the Phoenix Fire-Company of London, Taken from an Actual Survey, 2d August 1788 by Edmund Petrie." Deeds, E6:480; E5:277; B7:435.

- ¹²Deeds, B7:435.
- ¹³Deeds, I7:475.
- ¹⁴Biographical Directory, 2:621. City Directories, 1790-1809.
- ¹⁵Deeds, R8:228.
- ¹⁶Charleston Courier, 16 February 1813.
- ¹⁷Deeds, R8:228.
- ¹⁸City Directory, 1813.
- ¹⁹Deeds, R8:231.
- ²⁰City Directory, 1819.
- ²¹Deeds, H9:123.
- ²²Ibid.
- ²³City Directories, 1822; 1829.
- ²⁴Deeds, D10:315.
- ²⁵City Directories, 1835; 1840-41; 1849.
- ²⁶Will of Philip Tidyman, Original Wills, Charleston County Probate Court, K:588.
- ²⁷City Directories, 1859; 1860. Census of the City of Charleston for the Year 1861 (Charleston, 1861).
- ²⁸Deeds, T14#3:32.
- ²⁹Deeds, R21:29.
- ³⁰News & Courier, 16 July 1891.
- ³¹Deeds, R21:29.
- ³²City Directories, 1887-1905.
- ³³Deeds, A22:21.

34 Deeds, R93:21

35 Deeds, C24:217.

36 Deeds, S24:2.

37 Deeds, J24:341.

38 City Directories, 1905-1938.

39 Deeds, H41:183.

40 City Directory, 1940. Deeds, 043:65.

41 Deeds, B90:192.

42 Deeds, N93:223.

43 Deeds, R93:21.