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A STROLL DOWN STOLL'S ALLEY

By Eve Thompson

The visitor to Charleston is always charmed by the quaint lanes and alleys which run between various streets south of Broad. There his eye is gladdened by neat little old houses surrounded by fresh gardens. But thirty years ago, these very alleys were horrid dingy places. No lady ever walked thru them. Stoll's Alley is now particularly attractive. It was once "a narrow, dirty little lane in the lower part of the City, connecting Church Street and East Bay", to quote an 1894 issue of the New York Times. The oldest house dates back to 1745. Before 1788 it was a private alley; after this date the alley was named after the blacksmith who lived in it, Justinus Stoll.



STOLL'S ALLEY - Before



STOLL'S ALLEY - After

Quoted here is an excerpt from Miss Anne

Porcher's delightful "Eavesdropping at The Miniature Show" disclosing another colorful resident of Stoll's Alley.

In the "Palladium of Knowledge or Carolina and Georgia Almanac for 1805," one Peter Trezevant, of 4 Stoll's Alley, is listed as a discount and transfer clerk of the South Carolina Bank.

Tradition tells us that this hard working lad was at heart a bon vivant spending his hard earned money in his off hours on a good sheep's-head or cavalli and a bottle of light wine, inviting his friends in to share them with him - saying with the poet, perchance,

"Fate cannot hurt me
I have dined today."

Peter had married Elizabeth Willoughby Farquar who shared his poverty in Stoll's Alley until one day, when a great change came in their affairs. Elizabeth's uncle, John Farquar, whose life read like a book from Rags to Riches, starting as a poor boy in London and ending as Governor General at Bengal, the owner of Fonthill Abbey, died in London and left her a fortune. So Peter left Stoll's Alley, not for Fonthill Abbey, for it was sold, but for Chester Terrace, a fashionable part of London, and there he lived in great style. When his friend and relative, Capt. Tom Jervey, who commanded the Saucy Jack in the war of 1812, visited him in London, Peter insisted upon his entering his beautifully appointed coach, slapping him on the back and saying, "Not much like Stoll's Alley, eh Tom, old Boy?"

The alley was respectable until the Civil War. It suffered shelling by Fort Johnson. After the war colored people moved into it. Stoll's Alley really ran down hill then. When the Alley began its uphill climb in 1927 several of Fort Johnson's unwelcome cannon balls were removed from the beams of the houses.

In 1810 an attempt to set fire to the City was made. The house of Peter Trezevant was actually set on fire, but little damage was done as it was discovered early.

Number 7 Stoll's Alley was the Furman School. In 1803 The Philomathean Society held debates here between Landon Cheves, William Lowndes, John and Christopher Gadsden, and Charles Fraser. The audience often included Dr. Ramsay, the historian and Dr. Gallagher, the classicist.

Mrs. Canfield had been born and lived through-out her girlhood in number 39 Church Street. and lovely houses of this city gave her a feeling for the charm of our old dwellings. From the age of nine or ten she was "crazy about houses."

Her bent up enthusiasm broke loose with this first purchase. At last she could play with a house. In the restoration of number 9, and the houses which followed, the owner did not use the services of an architect.... She knew exactly what she wanted. Tom Flinchney, the colored carpenter, executed her ideas faithfully. She designed and he carved doors, mantles, stairs, moldings. All of this work is so in scale and period that one has to be told what is not original to the house. To the eye of this beholder the effects are delightful.



3 STOLL'S ALLEY - Before



3 STOLL'S ALLEY - After

The next step in the Alley was number 7. Its owner, observing the effective restoration work suggested that a similar job could not be done on his house. He was proved wrong and handsomely admitted it.

Downtown ladies are rightly proud of their Stoll's Alley shop. This little wooden building was a laundry house. It had no window whatsoever in the back wall of the house. Looking at the house now with its sweet little garden, one cannot imagine how hopelessly derelict it was. This is also true of the house which faces the shop. It was a depressing tenement, but is now pleasantly transformed.

The same number 7 was later used to care for wounded federal soldiers. Now it is the pleasant home of the Froleau Ravensels.



7 & 9 STOLL'S ALLEY - Before



7 & 9 STOLL'S ALLEY - After

The restoration of Stoll's Alley was the work of Mrs. George Canfield. She bought her first house, number 9, in 1927. Her own house across the way on Church Street had no garden; it looked across on 9 Stoll's Alley. One day she saw an advertisement for the sale of number 9; it had a garden. Even after she bought the property, the owner never saw the inside of the house until the colored people moved out. When she was finally able to enter it, she was amazed. Here was something worth fixing;



39 Church Street



BEFORE DOING OVER



STOLL'S
ALLEY
SHOP

10 STOLL'S ALLEY



INSIDE

Slowly from 1927 to 1935 all the houses in Stoll's Alley but one were restored. Number 11 was not available and remains much as it has always been.

The rejuvenator of all these little buildings lives in number 5. The dining room of number 5 was used as a large laundry for the Villa Marguerite. This was when the Villa was in its hey day as a rather swell inn. The laundry room had a cement floor, and some great mysterious machines. The dining room is witness to Tom Pinckney's work today. One feels here people

have dined for generations - not dreaming that this very room was a laundry for an inn. The drawing room has handsome original woodwork and mouldings.

The houses in Stoll's Alley are all owned or rented. Once the people move in, they never want to leave. They like living together in this quiet alley.

Viewed as a whole, the restoration work done by one imaginative and determined individual is impressive. The charming 17 Tradd Street is another handsome feather in her modest cap.

The reclaiming of Price's Alley she started by making the old waterworks building into a house for the Charles Dwigths. It is to such citizens as Mrs. Canfield that Charleston is quietly grateful. They have contributed permanently to the beauty of our City.

I may add that in writing this article, the Rejuvenator of Stoll's Alley had one request, "Please mention me as little as possible or not at all." It has been difficult, but we tried. We do appreciate her suffering in our interest, and her kindness in allowing us to use her irreplaceable pictures.

We feel the inspiration she may hand on to others thru our little paper is too worthwhile to pass by.

OVERLOOKED GEM?

DAVID RAMSAY HOUSE

By Mary Hagerty

To be noteworthy, a house must have outstanding architectural value, must have been the scene of some historically important event or events, or must have been built, owned or lived in by a historically renowned person. The house at 92 Broad Street excels in all three categories.



2d FLOOR LANDING



DRAWING ROOM
(2d Floor)

A handsome example of early Georgian architec-