

Tenements Traced

Do You Know
Your Charleston?

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

Humphrey Sommers, a sub-contractor of St. Michael's Church, is believed to have been the builder of the tenements which bear his name at Tradd Street and Bedon's Alley.

Sommers acquired this property by deeds of lease and release, dated, respectively, July 13 and 14, 1757, from the estate of Mrs. Anne Boone.

The deed recites the grant by the Lords Proprietors, on Aug. 24, 1688, to Richard Trade (Tradd?) of a lot known in the "Grand Modell" of the city as No. 7.

It further recites that Richard Trade, on June 12, 1688, conveyed to William Dunlop and John Alexander, the half of the lot bounded by Tradd Street and Bedon's Alley.

Dunlop, on Oct. 10, 1697, conveyed his interest to Alexander, who by his will, dated Sept. 26, 1699, left his property to his widow, Anne Alexander and his daughter by the same name.

The deed further recites that the widow Alexander afterwards married Joseph Boone, who purchased the daughter's interest in the property. Joseph Boone, by his will, dated March 17, 1733, devised his interest to his wife. She by her will, dated Dec. 1, 1749, ordered the property sold.

Therefore, in 1757, her executor, Henry Smith, conveyed the lot to Sommers for 2,142 Pounds Sterling.

In the same month that Sommers bought this property, he had his workmen engaged in rebuilding portions of St. Michael's.

Sommers built his residence at the western end of Tradd Street, now 128 Tradd, and finished it magnificently with hand-carved Georgian woodwork.

So, the buildings at Tradd Street and Bedon's Alley were solely for rental purposes. Therefore, the term, "tenements," which then did not have the negative connotation it has today, was applied to them.

Sommers described the property at Tradd and Bedon's in his will, dated Dec. 18, 1788, and proved Dec. 30, 1788. The will reads:

"I give, devise and bequeath to my daughter Ann Olney Sommers...that part of my lot of land...which fronts on Tradd St. and Bedon's Alley with the buildings corner tenement thereon...now in occupation of James Gregorie, on condition that the passage way at the back part of the store...be continued open for the use of the other tenements adjoining thereto.

"Item, I give...unto my daughter Susanna Sommers...at her arrival to the age of 16 years, the remaining part of the aforesaid lot of land the two tenements thereon adjoining the aforesaid corner tenement...one of which said tenements is in occupation of Polt Shaw the other of which said tenements now is in the possession of...Martin."

The foregoing portions of the will clearly describe the corner building known as 2 Bedon's Alley, and the double tenement known as 14-16 Tradd St.

The will goes on to describe the adjoining property to the east, now known as 12 Tradd St., which apparently then was a vacant lot:

"Item, I give...unto my three said daughters, Ann Olney Sommers, Susanna Sommers and Mary Sommers my lot of land I bought of John Lightwood...fronting on Tradd Street adjoining to the aforesaid two tenements bequeathed to my aforesaid daughter, Susanna Sommers.

"Item, my will is that my executors...direct to be built good and substantial brick buildings on the last mentioned lot, the expenses of which are to be defrayed out of the profits and income of my estate..."

Sommers further directed that "the profits and income arising from the said buildings and lot to be equally divided between my said three daughters share and share alike, that is the yearly rent and income..."

Thus, the provident father tells us that the "good and substantial" brick house, now known as 12 Tradd St., was probably built shortly after his death.

His will also tells us that 2 Bedon's Alley was in 1788 a store of some type, operated by one James Gregorie. It is possible that the buildings fronting on Tradd Street also had shops on the ground floor, with living quarters above.

Twelve Tradd shows signs of extensive rebuilding of its lower street facade, and all of the buildings show modifications according to changing standards of taste.



(Staff Photo By Jordan)

Humphrey Sommers' Tenements

16 Tradd St.
14, 12 2 Bedon

possibly
11/3/1975