



HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

51 MEETING STREET . . . CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29401

ANTHONY TOOMER'S HOUSE, ca. 1797-1798
17 Legare Street
Home of Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey S. Parker

Anthony Toomer, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and a "masterbuilder" of Charles Towne, acquired this unusually deep and narrow lot (40 feet by 296 feet) in 1797 for the sum of 665 pounds sterling. Toomer died the following year (1798) and bequeathed the property to his daughter. It was described as a "two-story wooden dwelling house, brick kitchen, etc., thereon." This house that you will visit today is an enlarged adaptation of the original "Two story wooden dwelling". The house was enlarged and expanded in the 1840's with the addition of a two story brick wing added to the front and a side piazza with slender columns and a dentiled cornice. A distinguishing feature of this dwelling is its position on the lot, set back from the early carriage way.

PIAZZA

The adaptations made to the house in the 1840's include the re-fashioning of the principal entrance. The owner added this broad fanlight and sidelights on either side of the entrance. The beaded watherboarding survives from the earlier late 18th century dwelling.

ENTRANCE

The main staircase, with slender, urn-shaped newels and stick balesters, is original to the house. Many of the six-paneled doors are also original features. If time allows, you may wish to point out the American, cherry, drop-leaf table.

DRAWING ROOM

The ornamentation found here dates from the late 18th century (the time of original construction) as well as the later adaptation of the 1840's. The cornice and door surrounds are crafted in the bolder Greek Revival style that was popular in America in the 1820's to 1840's. The earlier Federal period ornamentation which can be seen in the panelling and chairrail dates from the 1790's.

The owners interest in early Americana and antique furnishings is represented in numerous pieces. The chest, with graduated draws, is American and crafted in cherry. The portrait of Mrs. Parker's maternal grandmother was painted in Louisiana in the 1800's.

short - Great

Mary Ruth Bon



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ANTHONY TOOMER'S HOUSE
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DINING ROOM

The enormous depth of the Dining room fireplace dominates the room and gives further evidence to the 18th century origins of the house. There is also in this room a great sense of space with the heightened ceiling and large, nine over nine panel windows.

The large mirror over the mantel descended in the Priolau family, earlier owners of the house. An accomplished portrait painter used the front room as her studio earlier in this century. The three pedestal banquet table is surrounded by a handsome set of dining chairs. The mahogany cabinet is one of a matched pair made in Peru for Mrs. ~~Popehoo~~ Parker's family. The clock descended in the owner's family and is London made in 1776 and signed by the clockmaker.

Guests will exit through the pantry and to the garden beyond.

THE GARDEN OF 17 LEGARE STREET
Home of Mrs. Gordon Douglas

1992

A long driveway bordered on the south with Loquats leads to this interesting garden. Loquats flower in the fall, fruits grow over the winter and become ripe in the spring. These edible, peach colored fruits are delicious and make wonderful preserves. These are not citrus trees - as in Kumquat.

Shading the entrance to the garden is a Pittosporum grown in a tree form. The very fragrant flowers are white, then turn to cream. Pittosporum grown as a shrub requires constant pruning, which also removes the flowers. A quiet group of happy children play nearby.

A grassy space is very restful looking. It also allows for many activities - perhaps croquet. A small _____ tree is to the right. This tree is unusual in Charleston.

A fine Mondo Grass (or Monkey Grass) is to the left of the walkway to the pool, Liriope is on the right. The pool is a lovely gray blue. Confederate jasmine has been trained on the railings of the porches.

There is a Sago Palm with its very stiff leaves. Carefully feel it - it is surprisingly rigid. Notice the leaves are feather-like instead of palmate like our State Tree, the Palmetto.

There are several small Leyland Cypress which will grow quickly. They are an attractive green and have a soft quality to them. Their branches make wonderful cut greens for Christmas decorating.

The four statues portray the four seasons.



HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

GARDEN OF THE ANTHONY TOOMER HOUSE

2010

17 Legare Street

c. 1796 with c. 1840 additions

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. James T. Dyke, Jr.

Anthony Toomer, a veteran of the Revolution and master-builder, acquired this large lot in November of 1796. Between his purchase and his death in 1798 he constructed a two-story frame house on this site in the Adam style that was popular of the day. The house was designated as a tenement, which meant only that it was a rental unit, there were no negative connotations associated with this term until the mid 19th Century. The staircase, the beaded weatherboarding, and the nine-over-nine light windows are a few examples of the elements still retained from the Adam period of this house. The building and grounds were extensively altered by a subsequent owner who held the property from 1830 to 1841. He enlarged the house with a two-story brick and stucco addition to the front, a single-story piazza with slender columns and a dentiled cornice, as well as added decorative elements like the fanlight and sidelights to the main entrance.

Additions to the landscape design were added in 2008 and 2009 by Bob and Donna Cox, Landscape Architects. Prior to 2007, much of the garden was very dense along the perimeter. In 2008, the owners uncovered the brick wall on the South façade of the property. All of the remaining brick work throughout the property was added by the current owners over the past three years, including the front and rear wall and ironwork.*

The use of the long walk to the front of the house was retained to preserve the view to the house and front steps from the street. The motor court area was modified to provide for comfortable off street parking for two vehicles. Ligustrum, Sasanqua and a specimen Japanese Maple screen the parking from the street. Palmettos and Italian Cypress soften the neighbor's house to the south.

A pair of Crape Myrtles flanks the walk past the refurbished gas lamp to the front lawn, surrounded by a formal Boxwood hedge and plantings of Hydrangea and variegated Pittosporum. Grand old growth Pittosporums shade the fern garden in front of the original brick wall on the right.

GARDEN OF THE ANTHONY TOOMER HOUSE

PAGE 2

The front walk opens up on a small front patio at the base of the front steps. A Japanese Maple and Sasanquas soften the wall to the left. The Saucer Magnolia at the bottom of the steps provides early spring color and is a harbinger of Spring every year.

The wrought iron gate to the left of the porch opens to the expansive 'Big Lawn', a wonderfully unexpected space in this downtown garden. The brick wall extends down the front of the piazza to the kitchen house patio and beyond to the swimming pool.

The Big Lawn and surrounding plantings were designed with the homeowners' small children in mind. The lawn is open and wide with soccer ball friendly plantings on the edges. The large Pittosporum in the southeast corner of the lawn was preserved, creating an interruption in the bed line and a shaded, secluded space for the playhouse and afternoon tea parties. The large tree-form ligustrum and Palmettos were installed along the south wall to provide privacy for the house and garden while leaving the existing brick wall open to view.

The kitchen patio was originally intended to be a kitchen garden and can be converted to one as the children grow older and the use of the garden changes. The brick pattern in the patio reveals four cutouts that can be exposed in the future to create four planters around a central circle. Conduits for water and lights are already in place.

The pool room is separated from the rest of the garden by a new brick wall and a row of Little Gem Magnolias. A locked gate provides security for children and four legged friends. The pool was pre-existing and fore shortened to accommodate the geometry of the kitchen patio and to allow room for the new wall and Magnolias. A bluestone deck surrounds the pool and new Live Oaks and Crape Myrtles provide screening for a private space in front of the Guest House. Note the outdoor shower tucked into the corner.

The garden renovation was designed and installed in 2007 by Derek Wade of Carolina Landscape, Inc.

ANTHONY TOOMER HOUSE
17 Legare Street
c. 1798
Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Peter W. Naylor

at least 2002

Anthony Toomer, a master builder, acquired this lot in 1797 for 665 pound sterling and died the following year. The two-story wooden dwelling with brick kitchen, he bequeathed to his daughter. The house today is an enlarged adaptation of this original, expanded in the 1840s when a brick wing and side piazza with slender columns and a dentiled cornice were added.

Its most distinguishing feature is that it is set back at a greater distance from the street than most neighboring dwellings. It exemplifies how a period house can be utilized as the 21st century approaches.

The most recent owners have incorporated their own style in the house and each room focuses on a different vibrant color combination.

PIAZZA

The main entrance was redesigned in the 1840s. This broad fanlight and sidelights were added. The beaded weatherboarding survives from the 18th century dwelling.

FRONT HALL

The main stair with slender urn shaped newels and stick balusters is original as are many of the 6 panel doors.

Table, demi-lune console style, Empire, with oval giltwood frame mirror above
Landscape, Chuck Williams, Charleston artist

ANTHONY TOOMER HOUSE - PAGE 2

LIVING ROOM

This is a part of the 1840s addition. The interior ornamentation has been altered over the years.

Pair of cupboards, pine, flank the fireplace wall
Vase, red, on mantel, from the same workshop Picasso used in France, on mantel
Coffee table top, assembled from a pair of pierced Indian panels
Rug, Sisal
Mirror, with painted wood frame, carved panel insert, above mantel
Multi-paneled screen, by owner (paints for her pleasure) hides a TV
Curtains, English, from Tricia Guild

OFFICE

Pair of planter's chairs, Indonesia, narrow board swings out to support your feet
Round mirror, with wide painted frame, contemporary
Framed photos of autos capture the hobby of the owner

DINING ROOM

This is very probably an earlier portion of the house. The delicately paneled wainscoting and mantel all probably date from the original construction.

Mirror, twin to painted one in living room, above fireplace
Pair of jars, white crackled glaze, on mantel
Chandelier, metal frame trimmed with crystal globes, contemporary
Table, long lengths of wood supported by four legs, one at each corner, made in England, contemporary, seats 12
Screen, owner's work
Concierge desk, for buffet and storage
Lamp, with chartreuse and gold ceramic base, contemporary
Fire screen, Italian, forged metal, vine and leaf design

Walk through pantry to kitchen - The floor rises slightly.

KITCHEN

In this completely new area the chimney is a copy of one in the owner's family home in Tours, France. Note the generous seating in front of the fireplace and dining table overlooking the new piazza, garden and pool. The floor is ceramic tile.

Country cupboard, English pine
Cabinets, copies of those in pantry

GARDEN

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The four statues portray the four seasons.

17 Legare St.

Def 12715

'Tenement' Of The Times

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

Anthony Toomer's Tenement at 17 Legare St. is a basically Adam-period house masked by a remodeling operation circa 1840.

Anthony Toomer, a veteran of the Revolution and a master-builder, acquired a large lot, measuring generally 40 feet by 296 feet, on the west side of Legare Street, from John Bonnoit for 665 pounds sterling on Nov. 8, 1796.

In his will, dated Nov. 3, 1797 and probated Oct. 19, 1798, Toomer left this property to his daughter, Mary, who married Daniel Remousin.

Subsequently, in a deed of April 26, 1811 by which the master in equity conveyed the property to Harry Grant, it is recited that there was a house on the lot at the time Toomer's will devised the property to his daughter.

A notice of the master's sale, which appeared in the Charleston Courier on April 26, 1811, described the property as having "a two-story wooden dwelling house, brick kitchen, etc., thereon..."

The records indicate Toomer built the two-story frame house between Nov. 8, 1796, when he bought the property, and October 1798, when he died.

Toomer apparently built 17 Legare St. as a tenement, since his will devised to his widow, Ann, "during her widowhood, the use of the house wherein I now live," which was clearly not the same property.

The term "tenement" was a completely respectable one in the 18th and early 19th Century, indicating simply a rental property. The term did not fall into disrepute until later.

Toomer's Tenement retains many features of his time, including the delicately paneled wainscoting of Charleston's Adam period, with bands of guilloche and hash-mark patterns.

Also retained from that period is the main staircase, with slender, urn-shaped newels and stick balusters; six-paneled doors constructed with wooden pegs; nine-over-nine light windows, also pegged; beaded woodwork, and a Federal period mantel with croisettes (a carry-over from the Georgian period) and pilasters.

The house also retains features installed by later owners including Thomas F. Purse, who held the property from 1830 to 1841.

Purse made several changes in the house, the major one being the two-story brick front addition which appears on a plat of 1841.

He also changed mantels and woodwork in the primary rooms, adding a mantel in the transitional style of the

1830s in one room and a later, Greek Revival style mantel in another.

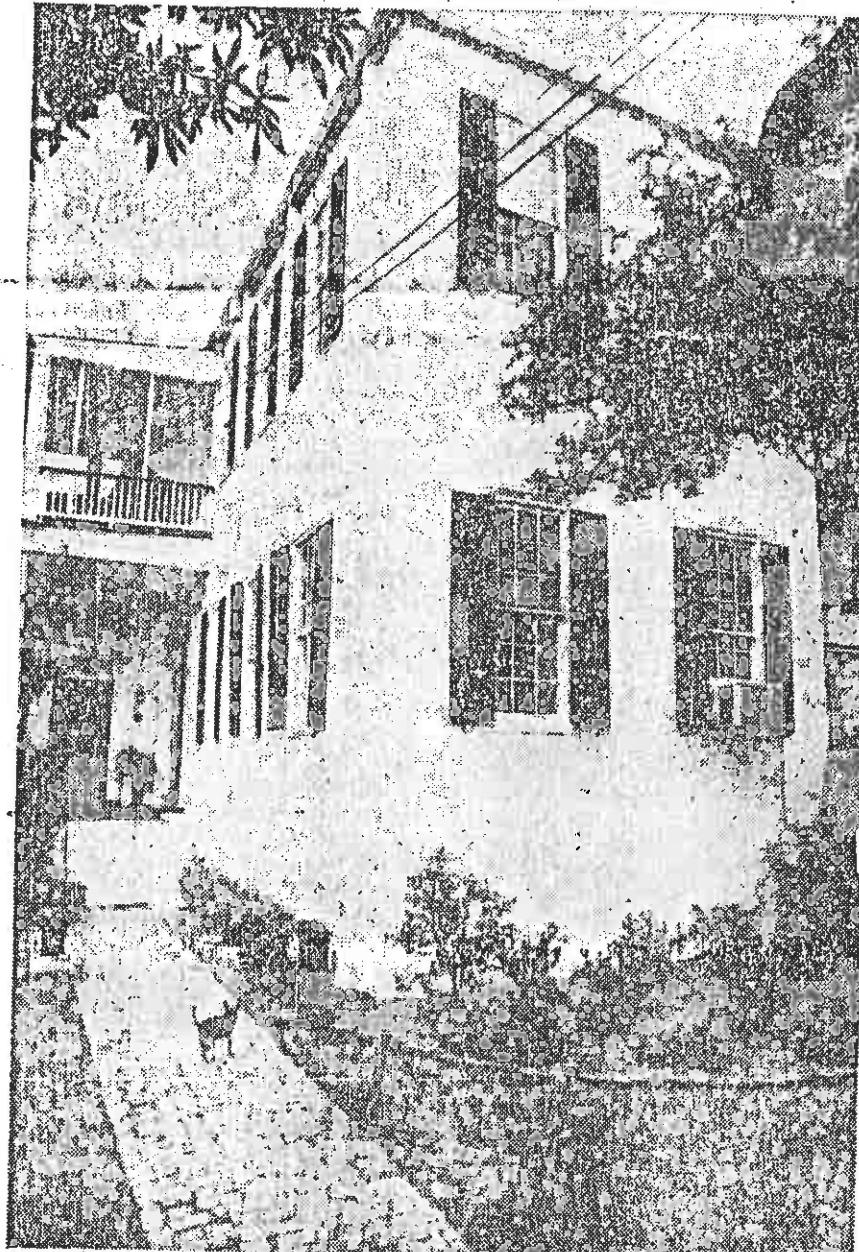
weatherboarding which appears to be original.

A subsequent owner installed, in one room of the brick addition, a grey marble Italianate mantel with a cast iron grate, typical of the decade before the Confederate War.

Purse also added to the property a piece of ground measuring 39 feet by 132 feet, bounding on the south of the rear portion of the lot, on which the 1841 plat shows a formal garden.

Seventeen Legare is currently the home of Dr. and Mrs. Donald A. Riopel. It will be on the Legare Street tour of the Preservation Society of Charleston, Oct. 21.

On the exterior, Purse added a broad fanlight and sidelights to the main entrance and erected a single-story piazza with slender columns and a dentiled cornice. The exterior does retain beaded



17 Legare St., Brick Portion, c. 1840

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HISTORIC SCHOOLS OF LEGARE STREET

By Sarah Fick

Today's preservation issues regarding historic schools tend to focus on purpose-built structures of the twentieth century designed by professional architects and erected by commercial building contractors. Their architectural variety marks changing attitudes about efficient design and visual attractiveness. The educational character of earlier schools in Charleston, however, is not always so clear. By contrast, their private, residential character often obscures their historic use.

Until the Friend Street School (forerunner of the Crafts School) was organized as a free school for white children in 1859, city government limited its role in education to the College of Charleston. Churches and beneficial organizations supported a number of others. Parents who could afford higher tuition sent their children to distant boarding schools, or to private schools housed in dwellings all over the city. Legare Street hosted some of the most prestigious. Location and climate contributed to this status.

In terms of its location, Legare Street, which runs between South Battery and Queen Street, is unique in having been purely residential—no shops, no tanneries, no warehouses. This resulted from its location at the western edge of the planned city, relatively protected from the marshy inlet that regularly overwhelmed other streets. By the time lower Legare Street was reliably passable from South Battery to Tradd, other routes—King, Meeting, and Tradd—were permanently established as Charleston's primary commercial and shopping arteries.

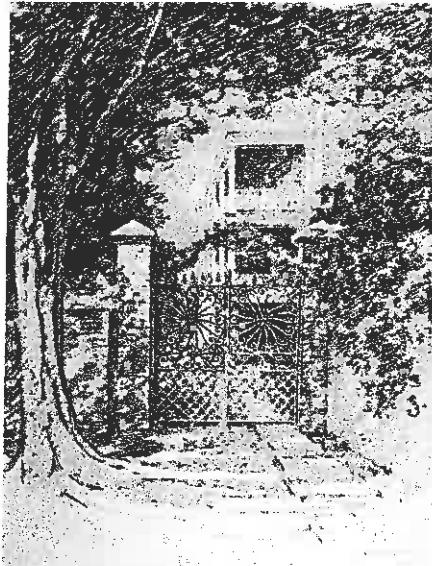
Climate and type of use also played a part. Legare Street's clean air was refreshed twice daily by tidal breezes, and, opposite Gibbes Street, the "back garden" of the Miles Brewton House on King Street provided a broad green space into the late 1850s. Moreover, parcels remained undivided through several generations. Nevertheless, a

surprising number of Legare Street houses were converted to rental: as residuary property in estates, they served as reliable income properties. The combination of a healthy setting, large houses with ample outbuildings, and rental-readiness made Legare Street houses obvious candidates for boarding and day schools.

Between 1819 and 1934, at least five schools operated on Legare. The first of these was Madame Talvande's Select School for Young Ladies, followed by Miss Julia Datty's School and Madame Petit's School for Young Ladies. After the Civil War came the Misses Murden School for Children and Gaud School. Of these, only two earned lasting reputations, one because of a mythical elopement and one as a forerunner of Porter-Gaud School. Miss Datty's heritage remains in the Catholic diocese's school system; Madame Petit is forgotten except by music historians; and the Misses Murden School—later the Misses Sass School—survives in the recollections of middle-aged Charlestonians who recall where their grandparents learned to read and write.

Asked to name an earlier girls' school than present-day Ashley Hall, many Charlestonians reply, "the Sword

Gate House," home to Madame Talvande. The reason is not the quality of Madame Talvande's school, which was high, or her longevity on Legare Street, which was considerable, but the power of fable. The legend of a young boarder escaping her schoolmistress to be secretly married has been repeated endlessly, but never officially documented. Alice R.H. Smith (*The Dwelling Houses of Charleston*, 1917), recounted the yarn told by "an old lady who was a pupil at that school some eighty years ago," adding the second component of the romance: Madame Talvande built the high wall around the grounds to prevent further getaways. The fact that the wall was in place before Talvande bought the property cannot stand



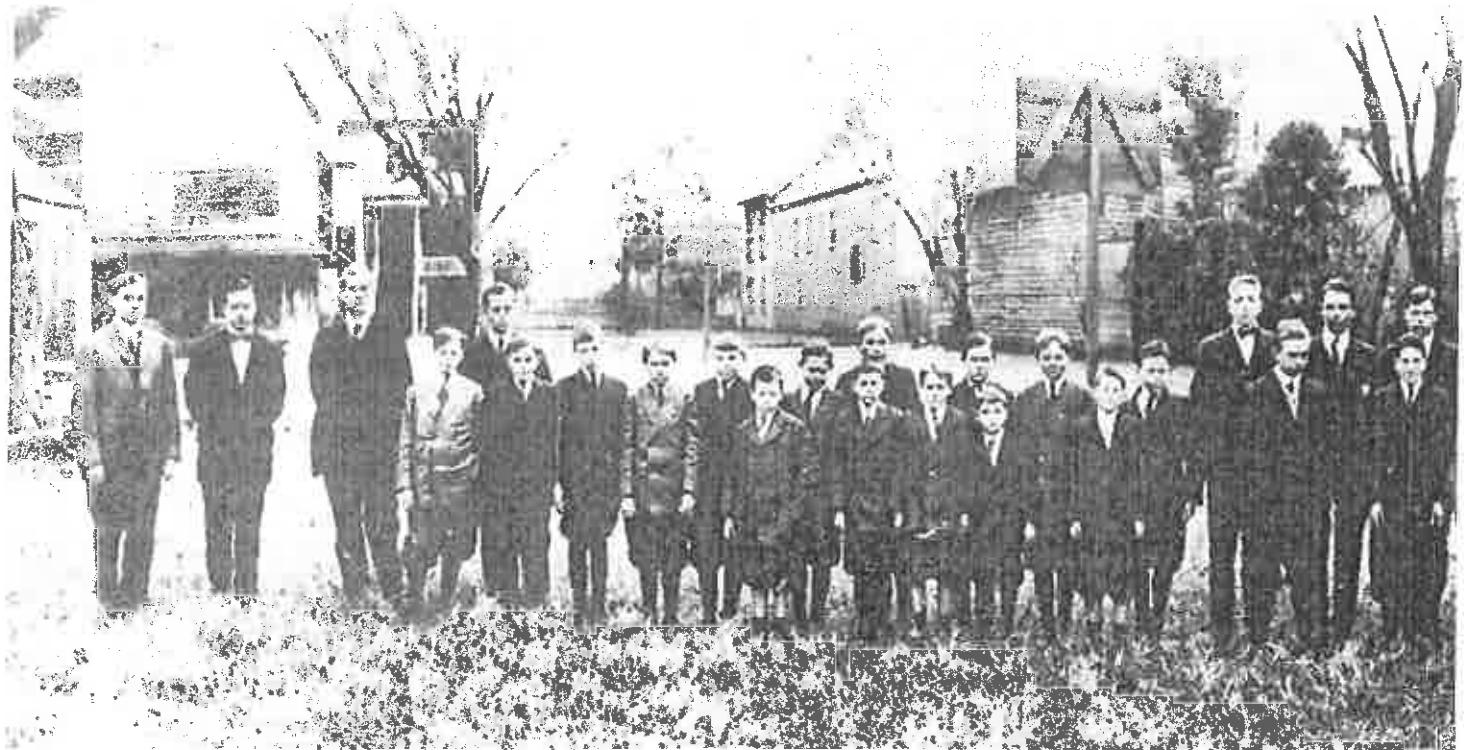
iron Gate of the Sass Residence:
23 Legare Street (Once the Home
of Colonel Arthur P. Hayne), ca.
1914. By Alice Ravenel Huger Smith
(American, 1876 – 1958)
Conte crayon and pencil on
paperboard. © Image courtesy
of the Gibbes Museum of Art

in the way of a good story. Neither can it be killed by the implausibility of a school's reputation surviving such a scandal in that era. The myth lives on, however, in the stories of many tour guides, but overshadows the story of one of Charleston's immigrant communities.

Andre and Ann Marsan Talvande were refugees from revolutionary upheaval in Santo Domingo (Haiti). Beginning in 1793, hundreds of white Santo Domingans reached Charleston and needed to earn a living. Raised in a world of cultivated privilege, they suddenly found

her furnished house (31 Legare), across from Madame Talvande's, should be rented to benefit her heirs. Miss Julia Datty immediately leased the property, moving her books, desks, slaves, and boarders into the Heyward home. This tenancy was brief. In 1831, Miss Datty closed her school, joined the convent of the Sisters of Mercy, and organized its School for Young Ladies.

During her tenure, Julia Datty educated Jane Amelia Postell. Later, as Mrs. James L. Petigru, Jane sent her own daughter, Susan, to Madame Talvande's in the



themselves with no land and only the few domestic slaves they had brought with them. Turning their education and accomplishments to profit, many became school teachers, music and dancing teachers, and even fencing instructors.

One of the first of these was Marc Datty, who taught French in his Hasell Street home. Aided by his daughter Julia, Mr. Datty expanded his operation into a boarding academy. In time, Julia Datty took over the school, employing several part-time teachers. Under Miss Datty's careful eye, teenagers became charming companions in the drawing room and at the dining table, as familiar as their future husbands with art, literature, and foreign travel. Despite moving every few years, the small school flourished, and Datty's wealthy clients endorsed it as the best of its type. As evidence of this devotion, Hannah Shubrick (Mrs. William) Heyward in 1829 bequeathed five hundred dollars to "my much esteemed friend Julia Datty." She further directed that for five years

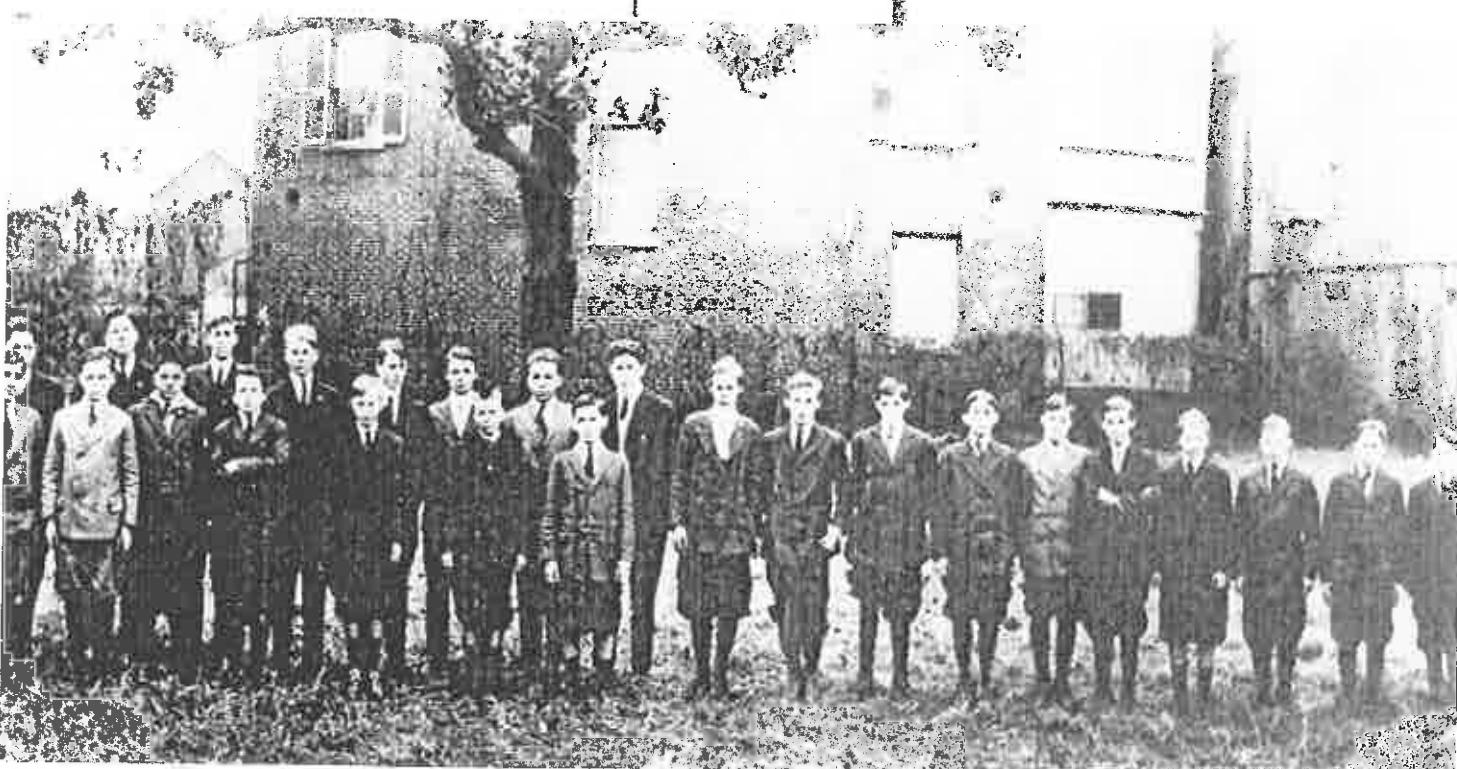
mid-1830s. Susan Petigru complained angrily about the high academic expectations, while her classmate, Mary Boykin Miller, was an enthusiastic pupil. Nevertheless, both were served as adults well by their education. Susan King's novels and short stories made her a minor celebrity in the literary and social worlds of New York City and Washington, D.C. Mary Boykin Chesnut's Civil War diary continues to be required reading for any student of South Carolina history.

One more house on Legare Street, the two-story residence at today's 17 Legare Street, is also known to have housed an antebellum school. During the ownership of Dr. Amory Coffin between 1855 and 1857, the property was leased to Madame Victor Petit and her daughter, Hermina, for their School for Young Ladies. By 1855, control of Charleston's private education had passed from Santo Domingans to other enterprising immigrants. The Belgian-born Petit family arrived in 1853 with significant advantages as female school proprietors: French was their

mother tongue, Victor Petit was a published composer, and Miss Hermina Petit had sung for European royalty. As teachers, they were immediately successful. Mrs. Petit and her daughter retrenched after Mr. Petit's sudden death in 1856, renting 17 Legare Street and resuming the voice lessons he had started. Soon they opened a school that offered "all the branches . . . for a finished education. French will be exclusively spoken." Upon the sale of their rented building on Legare Street, the Petits moved to other quarters. They were put out of business only by

the Sass daughters, Mary and Jane, worked in the new Misses Murden School for Children at 23 Legare, while his son, G. Herbert Sass, returned to class at the College of Charleston. When G. Herbert Sass began practicing law, his elderly aunts finally retired. A decade later, the academy was revived as the Misses Sass School, where Mary and Jane Sass worked into their sixties.

The Misses Sass School was in its heyday in 1908 when William S. Gaud, former headmaster of Lawrence Academy in Massachusetts, opened a new school next



Gaud School Boys ca. 1914. 29 Legare Street. Courtesy of Porter-Gaud School

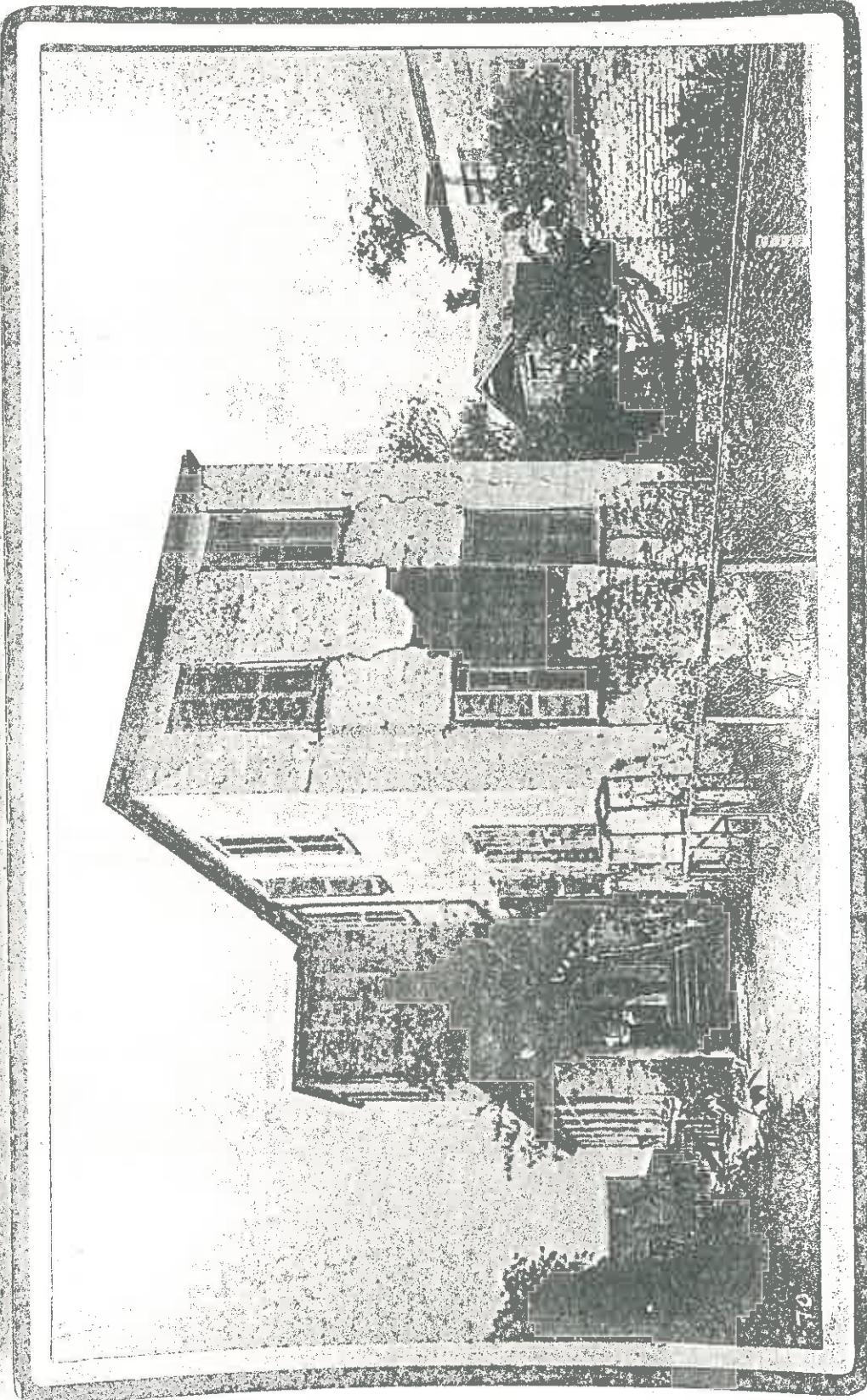
the Civil War, an event that temporarily halted the notion of teaching children on the lower peninsula. Too close to cannon fire, this area was effectively abandoned.

Eliza Crawley Murden, the wife of a ship's broker and herself a published poet, had begun Mrs. Eliza Murden's Seminary in the 1820s. Her three daughters joined her as teachers; one of her daughters, Octavia, remained involved even after marrying Jacob K. Sass. During Sass's rise to the presidency of the Bank of Charleston, his wife and her sisters continued Misses Murden's Female Seminary on Society Street, boarding a half-dozen girls each year, until war forced them to close.

Octavia Murden Sass died late in 1862 and a few months later, Jacob Sass bought today's 23 Legare Street. Despite the Union siege, he, his children and their aunts, Malvina and Victoria Murden, moved into the new home. By the time the Civil War ended, Jacob Sass had died. When full-time residents returned to the lower peninsula after the Civil War, Malvina and Victoria Murden and

door. Gaud had married Isabel Williams of Charleston, and began the Gaud School for boys in a building behind their home at 29 Legare Street. Well-established by 1912 when the Gauds sold the property, Gaud School remained a respected college preparatory school. In 1964, the Gaud School merged with Porter Military Academy and the Watt School to become Porter-Gaud School.

No active schools remain on Legare Street today. The school founded by Julia Datty has become part of the Charleston Catholic School. The Crafts School was converted into condominiums in the mid-1980s. On lower Legare Street, the classroom outbuildings have mostly been demolished, and the houses and gardens no longer ring with the clamor of dozens of pupils. They serve as visible reminders, though, of the young scholars who once roamed the neighborhood on the way to their lessons.



17 Legane Street

Cooke's *Architectural Views*
[see LC Digital Library: "Home Residences"]