

HISTORY OF "BREWTON CORNER" AND ITS OCCUPANTS:

In 1681 Thomas Clowter a butcher, was granted part of lot 41- the site now known as Brewton Corner. Apparently without having built on the site, Clowter sold it in 1690 to John Scott, a shoemaker. Although there is no written description of a building on the property, I found a 1700 map which showed a building on the site. In 1715 Col. Miles Brewton, a gold smith, acquired the property.

In 1684, Miles Brewton (born Michael Broughton) was brought to South Carolina by his parents. Little is known about the latter. He became one of the colony's most prominent and wealthiest citizens. By the time he was twenty-five he was captain of one of the two militia companies charged with the defense of Charleston. He was appointed Powder Receiver in 1717 and was foreman of the jury which tried and convicted Stede Bennet, the notorious pirate and his crew. Miles Brewton married three times. His first wife, whose name is unknown, bore all his children.

The Brewton family were great builders and many of their properties are still standing today. Col. Brewton built 71 Church Street, one of the oldest surviving single houses in Charleston, for his son Robert, 73 Church for his daughter, and a brick house on the corner of Tradd and Church (77 Church) for himself. He also built another small house for his wife on Tradd Street on land adjoining the kitchen of 77 Church Street, all of this property was to become known as "Brewton Corner." It is these latter two edifices- the kitchen and the adjoining brick house that we now own. In Col. Brewton's will (1747) he leaves his "new brick house" on the southwest corner of Church and Tradd (77 Church) and the adjoining Tradd Street property (35 Tradd) to his third wife, Mary. He also provided in his will that this same lot would go to his son, Robert upon the death of his surviving wife.

Robert was the eldest child and only son of Miles Brewton. He succeeded his father as Powder Receiver and was appointed Church Warden, an important post, for St. Phillips Parish and later Warden of Christ Church Parish. Robert married twice. His second wife, Mary Loughton, bore Miles II, Francis and Rebecca. Two other girls did not survive to maturity. In Robert's will he leaves the corner property to his son, Miles II. This later Miles, married Mary Izard who bore him one child. Miles II, his wife and their one child were drowned at sea in 1775, leaving no direct heirs. Thus his two sisters, Rebecca Motte and Francis Pinckney, sold the corner property to William Trenholm, a merchant. This is the first time the property had left the Brewton family.

William Trenholm was originally from England. He came to Charleston in 1764 at the age of 27. He married and bore six children. One of his most illustrious descendants was his grandson, George A. Trenholm, the Secretary of Treasury of the Confederate States of America. During the American Revolutionary Revolution, Trenholm, a loyalist, fled to Holland and then to Santo Domingo. In 1787 he returned to Charleston and a year later bought the Brewton property. He may well have learned about it from an advertisement in the March 10th 1788 issue of the Gazette of South Carolina, a Charleston paper, which described the property. Trenholm bought "Lot #1... situate at the corner of Church and Tradd Street, 41 feet on Church and 72 feet on Tradd... (consisting of).... an old wooden house much out of repair... the kitchen is of brick and may be easily

repaired." He also bought lot # 1 of the Browton property which is identified as "... adjoining lot # 1, containing 47 feet on Tradd Street... 6 1/2 feet deep . . . (consisting of) . . . 2 small dwellings, one brick, the other wood." This is the first clue that Mile's Browton's "new brick house" of 1733 no longer existed. There had been a number of disastrous fires in the intervening years and the brick corner house must have been replaced with a wooden house which by 1788 was in bad repair. The kitchen, however, to the "new brick house" is seen to have survived as well as the adjoining brick house in lot # 3 - the present 35 Tradd Street property. Finding this advertisement in the old news paper was perhaps the single most satisfying piece of research I accomplished as it clearly established the existence of the two houses in 1788 as probably being the two mentioned as being built in 1733 by Browton himself. Thus the property must be older than 1733!

2) William Trenholm had a large mercantile business, but Charleston trade declined badly at this time due to the "paper medium" problem. ② and William Trenholm went into debt. To pay off his debtor, he sold his property on the corner of Church and Tradd to his son-in-law, James Miller. He bought it back a year or so later. All these transactions involved the whole property- corner house and the adjoining Tradd Street brick and wooden houses. In 1800 due to renewed debts, William Trenholm had to sell the corner house to Sebba Sebbin, a grocer. In 1802 Trenholm sold the Tradd Street brick and wooden house adjoining the kitchen to John M. Ehrich to satisfy another debt. It should be noted that at this time the Tradd Street house did not have a kitchen. ③

In the Charleston Directory of 1802, Sebba Sebbin is listed as a grocer living and doing business at the corner of Church and Tradd. There is no further reference to him in the Directories. He must have continued there, however, until 1810 or 1811 when the house on the corner was conveyed to Louis Danjou. Sebbin died without heirs in South Carolina. Further he was not a US citizen and thus could not will his house under the then-laws. In the Directory of 1813 Louis Danjou is listed as being a grocer and living on the corner of Church and Tradd. While the evidence is not conclusive, it is probable that Louis Danjou tore down the old wooden house on the corner and built the brick house that presently stands on the corner of Church and Tradd. This was probably accomplished in 1820-1822. The next year Louis Danjou died and the Browton Corner house and old brick kitchen were inherited by Philadelphia relatives, John and Joseph Perrier. There is no clue as to occupancy during the period following Danjou's death until 1847 when the Perriers sold it to Peter Porcher, a physician.

In the Charleston Directory of 1849, Porcher is listed as living at 49 Church Street which is later described in the Directory of 1856 as being the house on the Southwest corner of Church and Tradd Street. (Due to the erratic changes in street numbering, in the directory of 1852, Porcher is listed as living in 53 Church Street- the corner of Church and Tradd. It was this sort of mysterious hopping around that made tracing the property not as easy as I had thought it would be.)

As to the Tradd Street house, there is no mention of J. Ehrich in the Directory at the Tradd Street location thus I concluded that he neither lived there nor did business there. ~~Ehrich~~ Ehrich sold the house in 1804 to John Kennedy, a retail grocer. While Kennedy lived on Tradd Street, the number of his residence was too high to be the Tradd Street property though it is possible that he conducted his business there. In 1810 Kennedy sold the property to Michael Kelly who was listed in the Directory of 1831 as a broker at 37 Tradd Street. Kelly was in later years an ironmonger.

In 1838 Kelly sold 37 Tradd to John^{A.} Hedly. He must have bought the property as an investment as I could find no record of him living or doing business there. Changes in the numbering of Tradd Street prevented me from knowing exactly who was in the property from 1838 until it was sold to the ~~Dreyer~~ Dreyers in 1865. This latter transaction was performed by Hedly's widow, Harriet who sold to Albert Dreyer, a grocer.

In 1875 Peter Porcher sold the Brewton Corner house to Dreyer to repay a large debt. This is the first time in 77 years that the original two Brewton Corner properties were reunited. Albert ~~Gerd~~ Dreyer ran a family grocery store which was by then listed as 77 Church, its present number. In the directory of 1875 Dreyer is listed as having a grocery store and saloon at 77 Church. He also lived in 77 Church but there was no separate listing for the Tradd Street property. It is possible that he used it as storage. In the Directory of 1906 Albert Dreyer's son, Gervert, who had inherited the property, is listed together with a Fuseler as the proprietors of ~~the~~ "Acme Mill" in 35 and 37 Tradd, the old corner house kitchen and the adjoining brick house. In 1909 when Gervert died, there is no listing for 35/37 Tradd and his ~~with~~ wife, Anna, was living in 77 Church.

In 1909 Gervert's widow Anna sold both the corner house and the Tradd street property to William Gaud. The latter lived in 77 Church in the upstairs and started a school in the downstairs shop area. Gaud rented 37 Tradd to negro laborers. It may be presumed that he kept 35 Tradd for his own use. In the Directory of 1913 William Bower, a negro laborer, is listed as residing at 37 Tradd and in 1918 a James Evans, also a black laborer lived there.

In 1920, William Gaud sold 35 and 37 Tradd to Marie Eason. In the interview I had with Mrs. Eason's daughter, Miss Elmina Eason, I was told that the Eason's close friend, Miss Susan Frost, the real founder of Charleston's historic preservation, had persuaded them to buy these two very old houses that were in serious danger of destruction from a generation of neglect. Miss Frost a notable lady, was horrified at the destruction and neglect of the houses in old Charleston and she persuaded many of her friends, the Easons among them, to buy old houses and restore them. At the time this was quite an adventure since the neighborhood had deteriorated very seriously and was almost entirely negro in composition.

35 and 37 Tradd Street were two separate but adjoining houses at the time the Easons purchased it. They first stripped the inside of the shoddy material and restored much of the old woodwork, including 4 fine mantelpieces - two quite notable and probably dating back to the early days of the houses, but not to their beginnings. They then broke through the wall between the two houses and made a connecting passage. They blocked off the door connecting 35 Tradd, the old kitchen, to 77 Church and built a two story wooden addition containing a dining room and kitchen downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. This is the house essentially as it is today.

The corner house, 77 Church, continued to be occupied by Mr. Gaud for another decade until he sold it ~~it~~ to a retired naval officer, Herbert McNulta and his wife. The Easons never lived in the Tradd Street house but swapped it with Mrs. Anna Hugenin McDowell a year or so after they acquired it. Mrs. Hugenin further improved the interior of what is now known as 35 Tradd (the joined kitchen and brick "jointure" of Miles Brewton's construction) and lived in it until she sold it to the McNulta's in 1937. Mrs. McNulta upon the death of her husband in 1939 converted 35 Tradd into the Brewton Inn and 75 Church and the garden into a tea room. These were nationally famous for good food and elegant accommodations.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

Brewton Corner



KNOWN AS BREWTON CORNER, the southwest corner of Church and Tradd streets is viewed here from the Church street side. The three-story brick building stands on the site of two earlier houses owned by Miles Brewton I and II which gave the corner its name, though the Brewtons have not lived there for a century and a half. Brewton inn is in the two-story building at the left.

Brick House Built Over Century Ago by a French Grocer on Site of Onetime Dwelling of Miles Brewton

The southwest corner of Tradd and Church streets has always been a busy corner from the very beginning of Charleston's history. For a good many years it has been a matter of speculation as to who built the houses which now occupy this site. Nos. 77 and 77 1-2 Church street, and as to when it was built; but the land itself has a long and authentic history.

In 1681 it was part of Lot 41 on the Grand Modell, owned by Thomas Clowter. Clowter sold it in 1690 to John Scott, "shoemaker", the lot facing east on a street running parallel to Cooper river, with buildings thereon. In 1715 it was owned by Michael Brewton, "goldsmith", who had bought the premises some time before that date.

At that time the term "goldsmith" not only meant an artificer in precious metal, but included banking in all its forms. Michael or Miles Brewton, as the name is later recorded, came to the province as a child, and became one of its most prominent and wealthy citizens. By the time he was twenty-five he was captain of one of the two

militia companies; he became powder receiver; and was foreman of the jury which tried and convicted Steede Bonnet, the pirate, and his crew.

Before 1733 Miles, or Michael Brewton, built No. 71 Church street for his son, Robert Brewton, likewise called "goldsmith", and likewise powder receiver; and No. 73 for his daughter, Mrs. Thomas Dale. He built also, for himself, a house on the corner. In his will of 1743 he speaks of his "New Brick House", on the corner; the inference being that he had been occupying a previous dwelling on the site, whether he had built it or not. He built also for his wife, as her "jointure", a brick house to the west, on Tradd street.

Brick House Destroyed
But the "New Brick House" was destroyed, most probably by fire; for in 1773 his grandson, Miles Brewton, II, who built the famous Brewton House on King street, speaks in his will of his "Wooden House", on the corner of Church and Tradd. After the tragic wiping out of Miles Brewton, II, and

all his family by drowning off Charleston on their way to England, to furnish the new King street house, his sisters, Frances Pinckney and Rebecca Motte, residuary legatees, sold the corner property to William Trenholm. Trenholm in 1800, sold the southern half of the premises to one Sebby Sebbins, once of the Duchy of Bremen, but after the two parts had passed through several not significant ownerships the old lot was reunited, in 1810, in the possession of Louis Danjou, native of Cluny, France, who is set down in the Directory of 1816 as "Louis Danjou, grocer, 31 Church street".

Everything about the corner house and its erstwhile stable, (now well known as the Brewton inn) point to Danjou as their builder, between these two dates. Both buildings are made of the same "English" measure native brick, laid in Flemish bond. The interior woodwork is very handsomely decorated with the gouge-work, which just then was displacing the figurines and other pseudo-classic decoration of the Adam style, and on the ground floor it has even preserved the wide doorway, with its transom furnished with curved muntins, that must have been the entrance to Danjou's grocery on Church street.

Dr. and Another Grocer

From Danjou the establishment was inherited in 1821 by John and Joseph Perrier, who in 1847, as residents of Philadelphia, sold it to Dr. Peter Porcher. The doctor used the building more strictly as his residence and, doubtless, his office, but Gervert Dryer, who purchased it in 1874, used the lower story again as a grocery, making away with a central staircase and partitions that connected the Tradd street doorway with the residence above.

Later the building was used by William S. Gaud for his residence and school. About 1923, the property changed hands, and again was returned to its original intention when Mr. and Mrs. Loutrel W. Briggs occupied the premises, residing upstairs and using the ground floor as an antique shop. The lower floor is now the Century Antique Shop.

The piazza has long been closed on the street to make a separate entrance to the upstairs apartment. The ground floor of the piazza is paved with flag-stones; the rec sandstone window sills of the house were brought from England and the slates of the roof from Pennsylvania, a thinner slate than that brought from Wales in earlier days.

SUSAN S. BENNETT.

Buildings - 77, 77 1/2 Church

jointure

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