

HOUSE AND GARDEN OF ALEXANDER HEXT'S HOUSE c. 1737

51 Tradd St.

General and Mrs. William Connor

This house stands on a parcel of land which was given (deeded, allotted) to Richard Tradd, June 13, 1694. His son, Robert, was born at the corner of Tradd and East Bay Street and was the first male child born in Charleston --- it was for him that Tradd Street was named.

In 1731, Robert's executors sold the land, the parcel on the southwest corner going to Jacob Motte at that time, and this lot (#60) going to Alexander Hext. The house is shown on an old map by _____ Toms dated 1739, so it may be assumed that the building was erected about 1737. Alexander Hext died unmarried c. 1741. In his will of July 16, 1736, he left the eastern tenement (or half-portion) of his brick house on Tradd Street to the second daughter, also named Mary of Mary and Thomas Seabrook. Mary was married August 23, 1739 to William Harvey, Jr. It later belonged to their son (?), Alexander Harvey, a Tory, whose estate was confiscated in 1783 and who died insane in England. Alexander mortgaged the property in April 1772 to John Savage for 5,000 pounds. Twenty-five feet by 105 feet was sold to satisfy this debt by the sheriff, Isaac Huger, July 14, 1785, to Benjamin Waller.

The western tenement went to Elizabeth Seabrook (another daughter of Mary and Thomas Seabrook). She married George Saxby, who was the Receiver-General of His Majesty's Quit-rents in 1763 and Stamp Distributor in 1765 (Stamp Act). This half of the house was ransacked, its windows broken and Saxby was hung in effigy.

In recent years the house had declined, being cut up into apartments, until it was completely restored in 1966-67. The present woodwork and paneling are not original, but excellent copies of the type which was being used at the time this house was built.

NOTE TO HOSTESSES: There will be a congestion problem here. When you visit Mrs. Connor prior to your tour, she will explain the best way to handle traffic.

HALL

Engravings - Crimean War - English

Table and mirror - French, 19th century

Candlestick - Meissen (German)

Brass Pot - Japan

COLONEL ALEXANDER HEXT'S HOUSE
53 Tradd Street
Home of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Crawford

1991

This handsome three story brick dwelling with stucco finish was built about 1736 by Colonel Alexander Hext, a Johns Island planter and member of the Commons House of Assembly. Subsequently, the property was owned by the Seabrook, Saxby, Lanneau, Miller, Dorscher, Ostendorff and Conner families of Charleston.

The house stands on Lot No. 60 of the "Grand Modell of Charles-Town" and was originally granted to Richard Tradd, one of the city's earliest settler whose name and position is remembered in the street name today. This land was acquired by Colonel Hext before 1736 and he proceeded to build the double houses that exist side by side on this plat. Colonel Hext was one of ten children of Hugh Hext, who emigrated to Carolina from Dorsetshire, England about 1686, and settled on the Stono River. The father and son amassed large land holdings in Colleton County, along the Ashepoo River and on Johns Island and held numerous public offices for the proprietors of the Colony and later the Royal Government. Their wealth appears to have derived primarily from their extensive plantation holdings and their mercantile activities.

At Hext's death, the property was bequeathed to John Seabrook and later to his sister, Elizabeth Seabrook who married George Saxby, a Royal official, merchant and planter who immigrated to Charleston from London in the 1730's and was appointed Searcher of the Customs at Charles Town by the Crown. This was a highly important and lucrative position and led to his appointment in 1765 as the Inspector of Stamp Duties, a position that would ultimately result in his political and economic ruin. Colonist in opposition to the "Stamp Act" formed a secret organization known as the Sons of Liberty. A mob ransacked Saxby's house in search of the stamps and he was burned in effigy. Saxby and his wife sailed for England in 1772 and he never returned. In 1782, his property was confiscated by the state government and in depositions filed in the 1780's, Saxby complained that he had been financially ruined and compelled to "live in a way to which I was always a stranger."

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In 1802, the property was sold to Bazile Lanneau (pronounced La-new), a native of the french colony of Acadie, now Nova Scotia, who immigrated to Charleston with his family in the 1750's. Unlike Saxby, the new owner had supported the patriots cause during the Revolution and secretly furnished supplies to the patriots after the occupation of Charles Towne by the British in 1780. He also served as a French interpreter for the Continental army. After the Revolution, this French Huguenot merchant expanded his business interest and was instrumental in the development of Harleston Village, one of Charleston earliest boroughs. Lanneau spent the last 30 years of his life in "industrious and cheerful" retirement and died in 1833 at the age of 88.

LIVING ROOM

The plan for this house follows the Charleston "single house" plan but during its 250 years of existence a number of modifications have been made and a great deal of the original architectural features were removed at different periods. The Crawford's employed local craftsmen to recreate the raised panelling on the chimney breast wall. The mantle in this room dates from the 18th century. The walls seen here have the characteristic depth of houses of this period. During the renovation, the modern flooring was removed to reveal the original random width pine floors which were refitted throughout the first floor.

Mrs. Crawford is an accomplished painter and her knowledge and skill of color and texture is evident throughout this highly attractive and inviting residence. The painting above the sofa of Florence, Italy, is one of her painting.

Desk and bookcase, English, c. 1780.

Portrait of Mrs. Crawford, by her daughter.

Framed daguerreotype of Mrs. Crawford's family. The young man in the lower left hand corner is Mrs. Crawford's grandfather who fought in the Civil War at the age of 15.

Serape rug.

GUESTS WILL PROCEED FROM THE LIVING ROOM UPSTAIRS TO VIEW THE STUDY AND BEDROOM AND THEN RETURN TO THE DINING ROOM. SUPERVISION OF THE TRAFFIC FLOW ON THE STAIRS WILL BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. MAKE CERTAIN THAT GROUP ENTER IN A CONTROLLED COUNT (no more than 10 per group). Please ask each person to hold the stair rail and do not touch the wall paper. THE INTERPRETATION ON THE SECOND FLOOR SHOULD BE HELD TO A MINIMUM - WE MUST AVOID A BOTTLENECK.

STUDY

Print over mantle by R.C. Garman, noted American artist whose works depict scenes from the southwest.

Watercolor by Chevis Clark

Sofa Table made in England, using old woods

BEDROOM

Painting over bed, European 19th century
Clothes press, English Hepplewhite, c. 1800

DINING ROOM

Buying an old house is an adventure, fraught with trials. Often the most elementary modern living needs and conveniences are missing. But the biggest decision of all for many new old-house owners is the way to go about making changes. Should the house be restored as authentically as possible or should the structure be renovated, keeping the best of the old and adding the convenience of the new? The decisions and solutions made by the Crawford's are a noteworthy example of careful and precise renovation.

They began by commissioning a complete history of the house and site to get a feeling for its period interest. They then commissioned a Charleston builder and planner who specializes in using authentic materials and restoration craftsmen. The renovation decisions were well thought out and the physical work on the house continued for over a year.

Mrs. Crawford noted that many of the original features in the Dining Room has long since disappeared (such as the wainscoting and the fireplace) and this portion of the house has been updated several times in the 19th and 20th century. The work that you will see here and in the kitchen are excellent examples of how to make a house from the past fit the present.

Sideboard, southern origin, possibly a Charleston made piece,
Hepplewhite style, c. 1800
Chippendale Chairs, 6 early ones, 4 made to match
Candelabra from Mrs. Crawfords family, Old Sheffield plate

KITCHEN

The original house stopped at the Dining Room and a separate kitchen dependency stood behind the main house. The outside wall of the older detached kitchen has now been incorporated into the new kitchen that was installed by the Crawfords (and now serves as the merger of the two buildings). Of interest here is the addition of the large double hung sash windows (with nine over nine panes) which brings needed light and architectural interest into what would have been a very dark area.

Guests can look into the charming study and then proceed through the kitchen door to the courtyard garden.

Tradd St. home

Older house turned out to be just what couple was looking for

By LISA DENNIS
Post-Courier Reporter

Alexander and Mary Crawford have lived in Charleston off and on since 1948, and there was never any doubt in their minds that they wanted to retire here.

When a handsome, three-story Tradd Street home with stucco finish went on the market a couple of years ago, it seemed to be just what they were looking for.

"I'd always wanted an old home," says Mrs. Crawford, "but I didn't want the burden of a huge house with piazzas that would need painting every year. We looked for a long time before we found this. It's just what we needed and wanted."

The dwelling, built about 1736 by John's Island planter Col. Alexander Hext, was originally used as rental property and is actually one side of a duplex. Both houses were renovated in the 1950s to be single-family homes, says Mrs. Crawford.

Due to the structure's 18th century beginnings, the Crawfords wanted a historically accurate renovation — with modern conveniences.

They began by commissioning a complete history of the house and site, then hired Charleston builder and planner David Hoffman, who specializes in using authentic materials and restoration craftsmen. In addition, all new appliances, bathroom fixtures, light fixtures, heating and air conditioning were added.

While the original plan for the house followed the Charleston single house style, during its 250 years of existence a number of modifications have been made. For instance, the two-story kitchen house dependency was at one point joined with the rest of the house. There were also changes in the stairs.

Homes In Detail

The Crawfords were careful to keep the original part of the house historically accurate and modernized newer parts. The interior decor, planned to reflect the period, was a joint effort by Mrs. Crawford and designer James Evans.

The entry hall sets the feeling of the entire house, she says, with an Oriental-style wallpaper featuring bright colors of navy, slate gray, deep rose and touches of yellow.

She apparently drew the color scheme from a favorite serape rug in the living room. "This house is so old, it's rather primitive as far as woodwork," she adds. Yet the living room still retains the original mantel and window seats underneath large windows set in walls which are 16 inches deep.

The builder also put in a great deal of work on the original wood floors. Original boards were taken from the dining room to replace damaged ones in the living room and hall. Then old heart pine flooring not original to the house was added in the dining room and kitchen to continue the look.

The dining room, with subtle gray wallpaper and floral drapes, was reworked to close off an outside door, which was probably once a window.

The Crawfords were allowed a freer hand in remodeling the back portion of the house, because it was not all original. Mrs. Crawford redid the kitchen, adding a central island and pickled birch cabinets, including a glass-lined bar area.

To make room for a dinette, the room was extended 8 feet and the west wall lined with double sash windows, overlooking a small garden tucked behind the driveway.

"I wanted an old house, it's true, but I also wanted all the modern conveniences," Mrs. Crawford says. "This house lent itself to that. Because the area was not originally part of the older house, I could do pretty much what I wanted and still retain its authenticity."

Adjoining the kitchen is the brick structure which used to be the old kitchen house. The original wall was left exposed inside the kitchen and the room is used as a den.

While the original fireplace has been partially enclosed, the outline of the much larger opening is still visible. A cozy seating group in warm colors surrounds the fireplace, enhanced by wildlife photos and an old gun case on the grasscloth walls.

Although the first flight of stairs is not original to the house, the second set of steps and bannister are, Mrs. Crawford says. On the second floor landing is a contemporary-styled bath, with a second parlor or library to the right and the master bedroom suite to the left.

The bedroom is decorated in peach and coral with deep green trim and coordinating drapes and upholstery. A connecting hall, which is above the newer portion of the house, contains a small bath, hallway closets, cabinet space and a laundry room closet, then leads into Mrs. Crawford's luxurious bath, which includes a small fireplace, sunken jacuzzi tub, vanity table and walk-in closet.

The third floor is comprised of a guest room, bathroom and Mrs. Crawford's work room. She's an artist and many paintings in the house are hers. Wood floors on this level are also original.

Furnishings and decorative art found throughout the house include family pieces along



Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

Mary Crawford stands outside her home

**Deep-set
windows
in the
living
room
reveal
thick
walls**



...Home

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with acquired antiques.

The exterior was painted a lively shrimp color, accented by beige trim and Charleston green shutters. For added interest, the couple also had a wrought-iron balcony added over the main entrance at the side of the house.

Physical work on the home took almost a year and Mrs. Crawford took up residence only a few months ago. Her husband, who has a business in Houston, commutes for visits and will retire here soon.



Staff Photos by Bill Jorg

Sets the tone

The hallway with colorful, Oriental-style wallpaper, set the tone of the Crawfords' entire home. At left, Mrs. Crawford's modern kitchen connects the original portion of the house with the original kitchen dependency. Visible is the brick wall which was once the exterior of the kitchen house.