

Massive House Built About 1843

No. 21 Legare St. is a massive house, reflecting the oversized items of its era (c.1843) — large furniture, huge families, billowing hoopskirts and the St. Bernard dogs that were then the rage.

But more than that, this handsome residence is an example of the severely correct classical mansion of the wealthy Charlestonian of that time. It was built in perfect attunement with the breezes that then reached it easily across the marshes of the Ashley River to the southwest and its piazza-end screening walls gave it privacy from Legare Street passersby.

From the Flemish bond bricklaying in its facade to the balustrade atop its stuccoed parapet, the house bespeaks the wealth of its owner and the good architectural taste of its builder. Who he was is not clear, but the similarity of architectural schematism in the design of this house and others known to have been the work of Edward Brickwell White is obvious. The house either was designed by White or by someone who drew heavily on his genius.

Viewed head on, the house appears to be an unusually wide variety of the Charleston residence but the windows on the south are at the end of wide verandahs. These, on the south, and a wide entrance and stair hall on the north, flank the major rooms that run en suite between. Both the piazzas and the stair hall ends are recessed slightly from the main facade on the street.

The facade brick are laid in Flemish bond while those on the side and rear walls and the outbuildings are in running bond. The builders laid three rows of stretcher bricks to each row of headers instead of the usual five-one system. The three-to-one plan makes for a stronger wall and also costs more.

No. 21 Legare has two entrance driveways. One serves the garden at the front of the house. The other, which is shared with 23 Legare St. is along the north wall.

In order to avoid damage from vehicles entering the premises, the lower part of a corner of the kitchen building was rounded off. The upper floor was left square and this differentiation, plus a reinforcing stone slab, gives a quaint look to a utilitarian building.

The Legare Street end of the house is decorated with brownstone trim on the basement windows and door while the windows on the upper floors have marble trim, those of the second (main) floor being quite elaborate marble enframements.

An interesting architectural trick used in this house was to have the mortar used in the brick-laying tinted the same color as the brick. While the seal is pointed, the unanimity of color pulls the broad planes of the work together in homogenous friendliness.

The house has a very wide staircase and the



21 Legare — Severely correct classical mansion reflects taste of builder.

windows are furnished with interior shutters that have come back into vogue recently. The major rooms have lofty ceilings and decorative plaster work.

The porches are unusual because of their great width and the window-bearing screening walls at the street end. The colonnades are of massive columns, an architectural detail that was called for by the wide spacing of supports. Extra large plinths were used throughout and the columns of the main floor porch are set on square pedestals the height of the balustrades.

The lot was sold to a Virginian, William C. Gatewood, in 1843 by Edward Frost for \$2,400 and the house was begun shortly thereafter. Gatewood was a factor (wholesale merchant) here who owned considerable real estate in the city.

Gatewood lived here until 1863 when the house changed hands twice in a single year. Gatewood sold it to William Hart who transferred it a few months later to James H. Baggett. Each transaction was for \$27,000, probably in Confederate States currency.

In settlement of a debt, Baggett sold the house in 1867 to Winthrop B. Williams, a member of the well-known Williams family of Rhode Island whose southern branch married into the Middleton clan of South Carolina. It

was occupied by the Williams family for 14 years and contained New England, Charleston and English heirloom furniture that now graces the homes of that family's descendants here and elsewhere.

The Baggett-Williams property deed specifically mentions mirrors and gas-light fixtures, indicating they had a high value.

The Williams family sold the house to Lavinia R. Inglesby in 1881. During the residency of the Inglesby family, the second-floor drawing rooms were the scenes of many parties and balls long remembered by the young people who attended them.

The Shingler family purchased the house in 1901 from Thomas S. Inglesby and held possession until 1927 when the house was bought by Rees Hawkins for \$16,000. The Hawkins family sold it in 1942 for \$8,000 to Joseph Miserindino, Charleston businessman. A year later it was purchased by Mrs. Henry Deas, wife of a Charleston physician.

She leased it to Mrs. Samuel J. Beckley who operated it as an apartment and rooming house during World War II. It continued as an apartment house until 1959 when it was purchased by its present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Drury. The Drurys gave the house a complete renovation and have occupied it since as a residence.