

The decision by the Environmental Protection Agency to close Bears Bluff — a move that has been rumored for more than a year — marks the last chapter in the story of one of the country's pioneering centers for select types of marine research.

According to Andrew J. McErlean of the lab's parent facility at Gulf Breeze, Fla., Bears Bluff fell victim to age and a desire by the EPA to consolidate its field stations. While local officials speculate about other reasons for its closing, most agree that Bears Bluff will never recapture the luster it once knew.

The Bears Bluff lab traces its ancestry to the early 1940s when Lunz, then curator of crustacea at the Charleston Museum, began experiments on oyster cultivation in a

With support from Slocum, the Charleston Museum and eventually the state, Lunz began work on projects that would characterize Bears Bluff for years to come: the study of oysters and shrimp in salt water ponds.

Lunz was convinced, Badger recalled, that oysters and shrimp could be grown and harvested in the ponds built at Bears Bluff.

"Bears Bluff was one of the first places in the United States that did any research in the outdoor ponds," said William P. Davis, the current director. "It is still known for that."

But the experiments that put Bears Bluff on the scientific map never reached fruition. The practice of growing shrimp and oysters never caught on, and Badger noted that the concept was made obsolete by laws

included such topics as "Oysters By-products of the South Carolina Fisheries Industry" (1947), "The General Pattern of Oyster Setting in South Carolina" (1956), "Notes on Rock Shrimp *Sicyonia Brevirostris* (Stimpson) from Exploratory Trawling Off the South Carolina Coast" (1957) and a 1966 critique on the Corps of Engineers plan to reduce silting in Charleston Harbor.

According to Davis, who took over Bears Bluff in 1974, Lunz was dedicated to increasing the public's awareness of the importance of the state's marshes and creeks. "He was very, very active that way. He was known throughout the world for his work," Davis said, adding that Lunz was "fighting the bureaucracy all the way."

Staff Photo by Bill Murl

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Unusual Features Found In Dwelling

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON
Special Writer

Built on speculation by Alexander Black, the two-story frame house at 137 Wentworth St. was first occupied by Mrs. Catherine Lopez, a "free person of color."

Black built the small dwelling sometime between October 1837 when he purchased the vacant site, and March 1838 when he sold the lot and building to Mrs. Lopez.

The site was historically part of Lot No. 16 in the plan of Charleston, surveyed by William Rigby Naylor in 1770.

According to Naylor's survey, Lot 16 had 120 feet, 4 inches frontage on Pitt Street and 212 feet, 6 inches in depth along Wentworth Street.

A portion of Lot No. 16, measuring 60 feet, 6 inches on Pitt Street and 212 feet on Wentworth Street, was purchased by Black on Oct. 10, 1837, for \$3,200, from Basile Lanneau Jr. The property was then described as "All that Vacant ... Lot of Land."

Black conveyed to Catherine Lopez, for \$2,000, a lot "with the Buildings thereon" on March 17, 1838. The lot, fronting 25 feet on Wentworth and 60 feet, 6 inches in depth, was described as being part of the larger lot purchased by Black from Lanneau.

Black, the apparent builder of 137 Wentworth St., is identified in the 1838 deed as a "Merchant." He was either the Alexander Black listed in contemporary city directories as a resident of Wentworth Street, or Alexander W. Black, notary public and "shipping master," listed with offices on "the Bay" and residing at various times on East Bay and Savage Street.

Catherine Lopez, identified as a "free person of color" in the 1840-41 city directory, is listed in that directory for the first time at 117 Wentworth St., which was probably the present 137 Wentworth St.

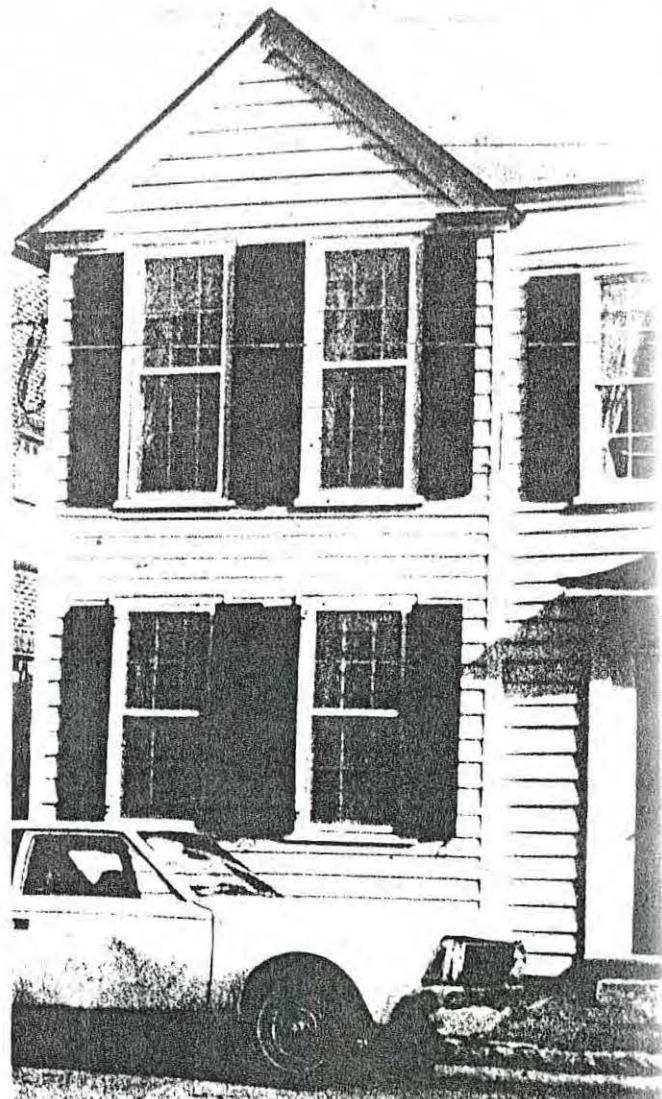
Mrs. Lopez died in 1846. Robert Mishau, Samuel Weston and Benjamin K. Kinloch, who inventoried her estate, concluded, "There is ... nothing more than two Story wooden House & lot... which in our humble opinion is not worth more than one thousand dollars."

In April, 1846, Daniel Butler and his wife, Ann, formerly Ann Lopez, petitioned the Court of Ordinary of Charleston District, seeking permission to sell Mrs. Lopez's real estate and divide the proceeds. The court ordered the "Lot and House thereon" to be sold at auction.

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The News and Courier

Do You Know Your
Charleston?



Staff Photo by Bill Murton

137 Wentworth St.

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...1830s Dwelling

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Consequently, on July 6, 1846, Thomas Lehrer, Ordinary of Charleston District, conveyed the lot, "with a Two story wooden House" to Edward S. Lee, administrator of Mrs. Lopez's estate, for a high bid of \$1,100.

Lee sold the property to Anna M. Beile for \$1,150 on July 24, 1846.

The property subsequently went through several owners until 1970 when it was purchased by the Atlantic Coast Life Insurance Co., the present owner. Y.W. Scarborough, president of Atlantic Coast Life, said the company bought the house, which was then in "terrible condition," to protect the neighborhood of the company headquarters, which is located in the Rodgers Mansion, dating from the 1880s, at 149 Wentworth.

The house at 137 Wentworth was restored under the direction of Mrs.

Scarborough and her daughter, Mrs. Harold R. Pratt-Thomas Jr., and the Pratt-Thomas family were the first tenants.

The house, though in its outward appearance a typical small Charleston single house, has some unusual characteristics.

The house contains, in its original portion, two small rooms (perhaps originally one large room) on the first floor and a large room on the second.

The stairway is not centrally located, as in the typical single house, but on the right side of the house in a small hallway behind the original piazzas.

The piazzas, which were shorter than typical Charleston piazzas, not extending the full length of the house but terminating at the stairhall, appear to have been enclosed sometime before 1882 when a ward plat shows the house in its present configuration.

The 1882 ward plat also shows the house with its shed roofed rear addition, indicating the addition was constructed by then.

The enclosed piazzas contain, on the first floor, a small entrance hall and on the second floor, a small bedroom.

An unusual feature of the staircase is a large, mast-like post, extending from the first floor to the second floor landing.

Another unusual feature is the oversized windows of the second floor, in the house's original portion.

The windows, oversized for the scale of the house, have almost the effect of floor-to-ceiling windows, giving the main upstairs room a light and airy effect unusual in a small house of its period.

The house originally had one chimney, located at the rear and probably having a fireplace on each floor. The house had no mantels by the time it was remodeled in 1970 and the chimney now houses the heating unit.

On the exterior, the house has beaded siding and narrow window surrounds with simple molding. The cornice, with simple ovoli molding above a plain platband, has returns on the front and rear gable ends and is repeated in the gables and along the parapet of the piazza screen.

The entrance door, originally the piazza entrance, is off center in the piazza screen. It has a simple surround and a hip-roofed canopy set on Victorian brackets.

Ornamentation of the interior is very plain, the most elaborate feature being simulated triglyphs in gouge-work in the molding of the stair string.

THE OLD WAYS TO SAVE DON'T NECESSARILY WORK ANYMORE.



One thing that hasn't changed in all the economic shuffle