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Subject: RE: Beyond Big House research outline
Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 5:40:26 PM
Attachments: [39 Church Street.docx](#)

I've been taking a look into the history of the George Eveleigh house at 39 Church Street.

It has been written about many time in the past, but those seem to all be cut-and-paste jobs based on an early newspaper article from the 1930s. One of the things that bothers me the most about historical research is UNDOCUMENTED claims. So, the first step was finding all of the citations to original materials to back up the regular history of the house.

Next, I worked on the rest of the story (almost the entire 19th century) and brought it up to date.

Finally, I tried my best to pull together any information specific to the outbuildings. I have few sources about that, but certainly not a lot.

I'm attaching what I put together. I'm not totally happy with the sound of the final report; it sounds too much like a bullet point of facts at times. Still, it is something!

I hope that any of this is helpful to the people tasked with writing the tour guide info and booklet!

Of course, if anyone has any input into revisions, please let me know.

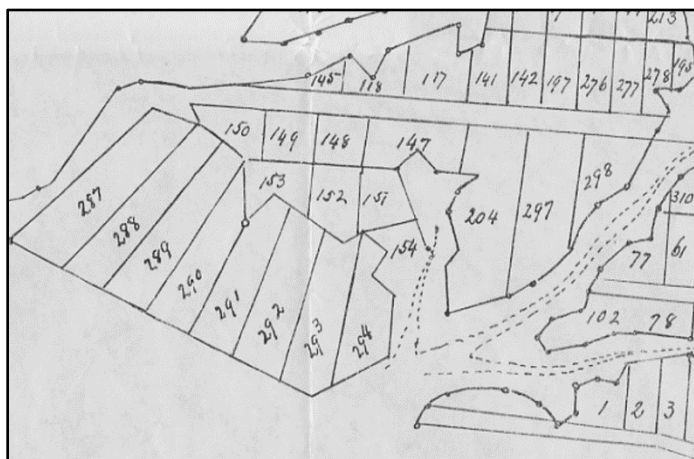
Kevin

39 Church Street

George Eveleigh House

c. 1743-1753

The property upon which 39 Church Street was built had belonged to John Vanderhorst, Sr. and then was inherited by his son, John Vanderhorst, Jr. When the son died, his wife, Mary, inherited the land. Mary died without any children, so her brother, John Hodsen, received the property. The land had been part of Lots 297 and 298 of the Grand Modell of Charleston and were located on the west bank of a creek that ran basically along the present site of Water Street.



On March 29, 1743, **George Eveleigh**¹ agreed to pay 1000 pounds for the large lot that ran all the way between Church Street and Meeting Street.² Mr. Eveleigh was a prominent deer skin trader but was not an unsophisticated frontiersman; in 1742 he had graduated from Harvard. Although a construction date cannot be pinpointed, his house was built sometime after he bought the unimproved land (in March 1743) and when he gave his power-of-attorney to agents to sell the house at White Point "late in my occupation" (in January 1754).³ Mr. Eveleigh had already moved to Southhampton, Great Britain when he named his agents to sell this house.

Finding a buyer must have taken some time. Mr. Eveleigh approved the terms of the sale of 39 Church Street for 7000 pounds to **John Bull** and completed the deal only on June 18, 1759.⁴ Either Mr. Bull or someone else in the Bull family built the impressive house at 34 Meeting Street, thereby converting the rear of the Church Street lot into a new Meeting Street address.



¹ Mr. Eveleigh was born on August 15, 1719; married Elizabeth Whiting on August 19, 1742; and died in Bristol, England on December 15, 1791.

² Deed book KK, page 142

³ Deed book OO, page 184

⁴ Deed book C6, page 135 (recorded in Sept. 1789)

Records are meager from the 18th century, but the few sources suggest that the house at 39 Church Street was used at times as a rental property while owned by the Bull family.⁵ In 1790, Ms. Elizabeth Blake, a granddaughter of John Bull, seems to have resided in the house herself. The earliest recorded mention of slaves at the property *might* have been in 1790 when Elizabeth Baker and Samuel Baker⁶ seem to have been recorded at the house in the federal census (whose address can be determined only based on the identities of known neighbors). They together owned 16 slaves.

Dr. Jean Louis Polony bought the Church Street house on September 15, 1795, with its newly subdivided lot from the estate of Elizabeth Blake, Mr. Bull's granddaughter.⁷ Dr. Polony was a native of Bayonne, France and had graduated from the College of



Montpelier. He was described him as “a man of extensive natural genius, which was highly cultivated and improved by the greatest acquirements in the various branches of literature and science.”⁸

A plat, dated August 15, 1795, showed the house and dependencies. According to the plat (which was not recorded until 1809 during a sale by a later owner), the house had a porch along both the front and back. In the northwest corner of the lot, a kitchen and “room” stood. In the southwest corner, the stables and carriage house mirrored the kitchen house.

In 1796, Dr. Polony was living in the house (when it was still known as 9 Church Street); in 1801-02, the street was renumbered, and the house became 17 Church Street. When the federal census was taken in 1800, Dr. Polony was recorded as a resident in the house along with his family and six slaves (below). The fact that a wealthy man would have slaves at this town residence is certainly not surprising,

Dr. J. L. Polony	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
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although one would have hoped that Dr. Polony would have been an exception: He had been the inspector general of hospitals in Santo Domingo put emigrated to Charleston during the 1791-1804 Haitian slave revolts. Dr. Polony owned even more slaves which he must have used at nearby plantation; when he died on October 18, 1805, his estate advertised the sale of personal property and “[a]n entire gang of about sixty Negroes, accustomed to the culture of cotton.”

⁵ In 1784-1786, the house was occupied by John Calvert, a government official involved in roads projects. Elizabeth Blake (the granddaughter of John Bull) lived in the house in 1790. Mary M. Grimball lived in the house in 1794.

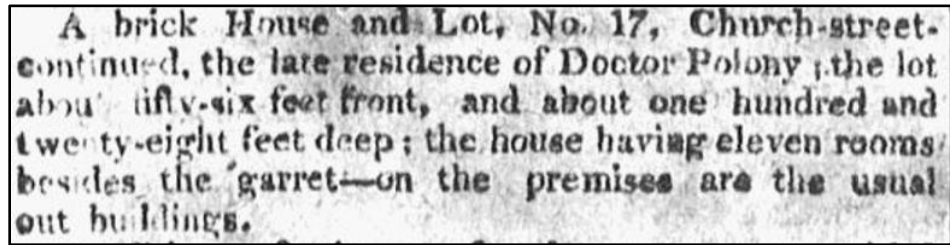
⁶ There was a grocer named Samuel Baker with a business on Tradd St. about the same time.

⁷ Deed book N6, page 443

⁸ Carolina Gazette, Oct. 4, 1805, at 3

Dr. Polony's estate was permitted to sell the house at a public auction. The house was listed for sale on January 21, 1807, as an eleven-

room house, not counting the attic rooms. The house also included "the usual out buildings."⁹



Dr. Polony's executors sold the house to **Simon Jude Chancognie** for \$4100 after a public auction. Having completed the payment for the house, the sale was recorded on June 7, 1809.¹⁰ Mr. Chancognie must have been a house-flipper of the early 19th century; on the same day that he completed the payment to Dr. Polony's estate and recorded the sale, Mr. Chancognie sold the house to merchant **Joseph Fidele LeMercia Boisgerard**¹¹ for \$7000 on June 7, 1809.¹² Mr. Boisgerard was, among other things, a director of the Charleston Fire Insurance Company and occupied the house.¹³ The Boisgerard family was recorded in the 1810 census at the house with no slaves. A tornado struck Charleston on the night of September 8, 1811. A thirty foot beam of 6 by 9 inches was blown from "the balcony" of Mr. Boisgerard's house on Church Street and blown through the roof of Mr. Ruddock's house on King Street.¹⁴

Their stay in the house was brief; Fidele Boisgerard and Victorine Galez Boisgerard, his wife, were living in New York and appointed an agent to sell the house in 1812. While finding a buyer for the house, the agents seem to have returned the house to rental use.¹⁵ On March 30, 1816, their agent sold the house for \$6500 to **Dr. John William Schmidt**.¹⁶ In his youth, Dr. Schmidt, who had been born in Emdon, Prussia on February 1, 1777, went to London to live with an uncle and received his medical training there. He joined the British Navy and was stationed in South America for some time. Finally, in 1805 he moved to Charleston and opened a medical practice on Bedon's Alley catering to seamen.¹⁷ At times he served both on City Council and in the South Carolina House of Representatives.¹⁸ (Dr. Schmidt was not universally liked, however; in June 1850, there was an effort to burn the house, but it was not successful.¹⁹)

Dr. Schmidt was certainly a successful doctor, but he was also a plantation owner and had extensive slave holdings, including many who lived at 39 Church Street. In the 1820 federal census, Dr.

⁹ City Gazette, Jan. 21, 1807, at 2

¹⁰ Deed book Z7, page 134

¹¹ (d. Oct. 30, 1817, New York)

¹² Deed book Z7, page 136

¹³ Strength of the People, Feb. 15, 1810, at 3

¹⁴ "The Tornado," Carolina Gazette, Sept. 14, 1811, at 3 (Reports often mistakenly refer to the house having been unroofed. While the 1811 tornado did damage many nearby houses, there is no basis for the claim that 39 Church Street lost its roof in the storm.)

¹⁵ John H. Wienges, a grocer, lived in the house at least for the 1816 city directory.

¹⁶ Deed book O8, page 414

¹⁷ Charleston Courier, July 9, 1853, at 2

¹⁸ "Death of Dr. J.W. Schmidt," Charleston Courier, June 21, 1853, at 2

¹⁹ "Attempts to set Fire," Charleston Courier, July 1, 1850, at 2

Schmidt occupied the house with only two family members but with 16 slaves.²⁰ In the 1830 census, he was listed along with 12 slaves.²¹ By the time of the 1840 federal census, Dr. Schmidt had 29 slaves at the house for his small family of three people.²² In 1850, Dr. Schmidt owned five slaves at the house, but his slave holdings were actually much greater. Dr. Schmidt died on June 18, 1853, and a legal battle ensued over the status of Dr. Schmidt's estate.²³ Eventually, his South Carolina holdings were sold off by his estate including 101 slaves and a plantation on Deer Creek in Colleton County with 1154 acres.²⁴ On January 17, 1854, there was an auction at which 99 of Dr. Schmidt's slaves were sold – “many of whom were old and decrepid [sic]” – for an average of \$601 per slave.²⁵ (Two female slaves were sold later.²⁶)

Another auction was held on March 2, 1854, at which the doctor's extensive real estate holdings – 22 pieces of property in the city – were sold.²⁷ On June 17, 1854, the children of Dr. Schmidt recorded the sale of their father's house to the **Anna H. Elliott trust** for \$6100.²⁸ The trust seems to have also rented the house; on May 11, 1858, there was an ad for the rent of the “pleasant and commodious residence.”²⁹

Harness and saddle maker **Charles Love**³⁰ paid \$5200 to the trust for the house in January 1860.³¹ Mr. Love was living at 39 Church Street in 1861-1872 (by which time it had been designated 19 Church Street). The Love family lived in the house in 1870 along with several other families of blue collar workers. One black family also appeared. Mr. Love's conversion of the house to a multi-family residence was the first such use of the house. Mr. Love died in September 1873, and Mary Ann Love, his widow, sold the house to the owner of a large auction and brokerage house, **Richard Maynard Marshall**, on June 21, 1875 for \$2000.³²

Having bought the house in 1875, the Marshalls did not immediately occupy their new house. Rather, short-term renters continued to use the house. In the 1881, the Marshall family still lived on East Bay Street and did not move to 39 Church Street until by 1882.

²⁰ Living at the house were 16 slaves: 1 male slave (under 14), 1 male slave (age 14 to 25), 1 male slave (26 to 45), 1 male slave (over 45), 5 female slaves (under 14), 4 female slaves (14 to 25), and 3 female slaves (26 to 45).

²¹ Living at the house were 12 slaves: 3 male slaves (under 10), 2 male slaves (10 to 23), 2 male slaves (24 to 35), 1 female slave (under 10), one female slave (10 to 23), and 3 female slaves (24 to 35).

²² Living at the house were the following: 3 male slaves (under 10), 7 male slaves (10 to 23), 4 male slaves (24 to 35), 4 female slaves (under 10), 8 female slaves (10 to 23), 2 female slaves (24 to 35), and 1 female slave (36 to 54).

²³ Dr. Schmidt had conveyed a life estate in his plantation and two Charleston houses, including 39 Church Street, to his mother-in-law to settle a dispute caused by his wife's early death and the extensive real estate his wife had brought to their marriage from her father. Deed book T9, page 116. The titles to those properties ended up being muddled because of the timing of certain deaths and revisions of Dr. Schmidt's will. In the end, the case was resolved by the South Carolina Supreme Court, and the houses and plantation were dealt with as part of Dr. Schmidt's estate. *Schmidt v. Schmidt*, 7 Rich. Eq. 201 (1854).

²⁴ Charleston Courier, Dec. 5, 1853, at 3

²⁵ Charleston Courier, Jan. 18, 1854, at 2

²⁶ Charleston Courier, Mar. 22, 1854, at 3

²⁷ “Real Estate Sale,” Charleston Courier, Mar. 3, 1854, at 2

²⁸ Deed book L13, page 140

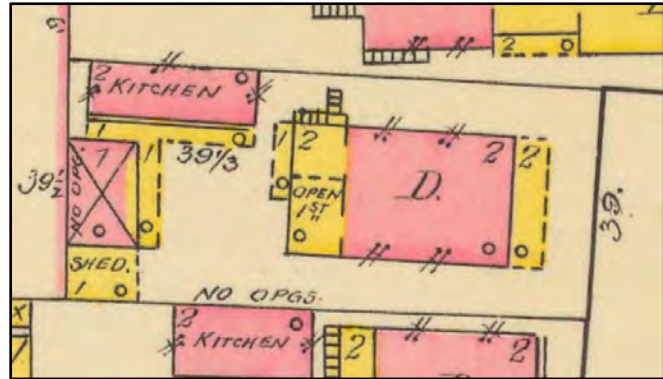
²⁹ Charleston Courier, May 11, 1858, at 3

³⁰ (b. Feb. 22, 1807, Scotland; d. Sep. 3, 1873)

³¹ Deed book Y13, page 318

³² Deed book V16, page 14

On August 31, 1886, the Charleston Earthquake struck but did not apparently cause much damage to the house. Cracking was reported and some chimney damage, but earthquake damage reports by the city did not mention the loss of the stables. However, when the June 1888 Sanborn maps were published, the southwestern dependency was gone and had been replaced with an unoccupied single-story masonry unit along the rear property line that was connected to the kitchen house by a porch. The rear most unit was marked as 39 ½ Church Street and the kitchen house was marked as 39 1/3 Church Street, strongly suggesting separate rental units. The modern southwest outbuilding which had replaced the stables by the 1880s was still in place in the 1950s.



In 1900, the house was home Richard M. Marshall;³³ his wife, Frances Olmsted Marshall; and their four daughters, Caroline, Mary, Frances, and Alida; no tenants were recorded. Mr. Marshall died in 1904, but his wife and family remained in the house. In 1910, the census did not record any tenants, but by 1920, the rear building was occupied by a cotton warehouse worker, Jacob Gardner, and his wife, Lidia.

Mrs. Marshall died on January 31, 1929, and her daughter Mary Olmsted Marshall was her sole beneficiary. In 1930, Mary, an antiques dealer, lived alone in the main house; a black laundress, Jennie Benson, rented the rear unit for \$4 per month. On May 5, 1936, she transferred the house to a trustee for her own benefit.³⁴ She was the only occupant in 1940 and died in 1957.

In February 1958, Mary's surviving sisters, Elizabeth Maynard Marshall Kittedge and Alida M. Canfield, sued over their sister's estate, and the house was sold to **Alida Canfield Sinkler**, a granddaughter of Richard Marshall, for \$30,000 on July 28, 1958.³⁵ The house continued to be home to the descendants of Richard and Frances Marshall. It was the home of Huger and Alida Sinkler and then their son, Dana. On July 23, 1987, **G. Dana Sinkler** bought the house from his mother for \$334,500 though she reserved the right to remain for her life.³⁶

A trust to which Mr. Sinkler transferred the house in 1999³⁷ conveyed the house on January 31, 2005 to Huger Sinkler, Jr.; Llewellyn Huger Sinkler; James Marshall Sinkler; and George Dana Sinkler, Jr.³⁸ Those recipients joined in selling the house to **Anthony M. Merck** for \$4.2 million on April 29, 2009.³⁹ Again, the house was placed in a trust on December 28, 2011.⁴⁰

³³ "Mr. R.M. Marshall Dead," Evening Post, Oct. 27, 1904, at 2

³⁴ Deed book C38, page 627

³⁵ Deed book E66, page 512

³⁶ Deed book E167, page 590

³⁷ Deed book D222, page 517

³⁸ Deed book B524, page 539

³⁹ Deed book 0050, page 798

⁴⁰ Deed book 0224, page 484



Streets which was being demolished.⁴³

The Historic Charleston Foundation has an easement on house to preserve its high-quality appearance.⁴⁴

In 2013, the house received a Carolopolis Award for continued preservation. The rear porches had been filled in at least 125 years earlier, and the interior of the porches was highly segmented. The rear porches were reworked according to plan by Charleston architects Bevan & Liberatos.⁴¹

Otherwise, the house retains much of its original woodwork and interior layout. Typical of very early Charleston, the floorplan for 39 Church Street is asymmetrical. A small entrance hall connects to a large reception room and to a stair hall toward the rear. The two small rooms and a hall have been joined to form a dining room. Upstairs, a drawing room runs the full width of the house with two chambers in the back. Much of the Georgian paneling remains, as does the staircase and newel post.⁴² The original mantels in the first floor reception hall and second floor drawing room were removed when Mr. Marshall bought the house and replaced with then-fashionable marble versions. The replacements were themselves later replaced—they had been damaged in the Charleston Earthquake of 1886—using, for one, a fine Adam style mantel from the Heyward House on East Bay and Society

⁴¹ <http://bevanandliberatos.com/buildings/> (accessed July 26, 2017)

⁴² Robert Stockton, "Eveleigh House Dates To Mid-18th Century," *News & Courier*, Oct. 9, 1978, at 13

⁴³ "Do You Know Your Charleston?," *News & Courier*, Nov. 11, 1935, at 10

⁴⁴ Bridget Venatta, "An Eye for Refinement," *Charleston*, May 2017