

...34 Smith St. Has Long History

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Beaufain to Wentworth Streets along Smith Street. The Wentworth Street lot was later sold separately.

He was in residence in 1856 and lived there until he died. The house was bequeathed to his wife's niece, Anna Ingraham Robertson, whose husband was Col. Samuel B. Pickens, a member of a distinguished Up-country plantation family from the Piedmont area and a valiant soldier in the Confederate States Army.

Anna Robertson's maternal line, Ingraham, included Commodore Duncan Nathaniel Ingraham, who owned the house at 89 Beaufain St. Ingraham resigned his commission in the U.S. Navy in 1861 and headed Confederate Navy operations on the South Carolina coast. He helped design and build the CSN ironclads Palmetto State and Chicora.

In 1853 he was in command of a sloop-of-war, the St. Louis, in the Mediterranean Sea and entered the

port of Smyrna, Turkey. The American consul there told him an American naturalized citizen, a native of Hungary named Martin Koszta, had been seized by Austrians and was being held prisoner aboard one of several Austrian Navy ships then in the harbor.

Ingraham demanded the release of Koszta and, when the Austrians refused, sent word he would open fire if the man were not freed. Koszta was freed and Ingraham returned to this country a hero. His sword is on display in the museum of the U.S. Naval Academy.

The Pickens family, of Scotch-Irish lineage, migrated from County Kildare, Ireland, and settled in the Abbeville area. One, Gen. Andrew Pickens, was of Revolutionary War fame and there have been three Pickens governors of South Carolina. As a senior cadet, Samuel B. Pickens was one of a contingent of Citadel cadets posted on Morris Island in January of 1861 to man a coastal artillery position.

When a Union supply ship, Star of the West, tried to enter Charleston Harbor to relieve the beleaguered Federal troops in Fort Sumter, Cadet G.E. Haynsworth fired the Confederacy's first hostile shot. Pickens fired the second, a prologue to the actual fighting, which began three months later.

Anna Ingraham was a refugee in Camden during the war when she met the dashing colonel. They were married after the war.

Pickens managed an Ingraham rice plantation on the Cooper River and then was employed by the South Carolina Railroad Co. He died in 1891 and the house was sold in 1902 by Henry Ingraham, acting as trustee for Anna Pickens, to Julius H. Jahnz for \$10,000.

Jahnz had made a fortune as a co-partner of the C.D. Franke Co., a hardware distributorship that Jahnz and his brother enlarged into one of the largest wholesale hardware suppliers in the nation. Jahnz also was a vice president of two Charleston banks, each oriented toward Charleston's burgeoning and wealthy Germanic community.

Jahnz had come to Charleston from his native Posen, Germany, and worked for the Franke firm. After the death of the founder, Jahnz and his

brother bought the business and proceeded to make it into a regional distributorship.

As chairman of the Charleston Commissioners of Public Works, Jahnz was a moving force in providing the city with a viable water system. That meant digging a tunnel from Goose Creek to the Edisto River at Givhan's Ferry, a tunnel that still supplies the city with potable water 60 years later.

Jahnz's widow sold the house in 1943 when it already had become a multiple family dwelling. The Robertsons had the house generously designed for formal entertaining and the three main rooms on the first floor all opened into each other, being connected with folding doors that have curved tops that fit into arched openings above which is hand-carved woodwork.

The marble mantels in the main rooms were made in Italy. They originally were topped with large and ornate mirrors but these were taken when Charleston was looted by Union troops in 1865.

From the street level, the house appears rather tall, an effect achieved by the full basement that lifts it above storm tide level. The garden is separated from the streets by a handsome cast-iron fence that has the Greek anthemion design. The main entrance is approached by a wide flight of steps made out of sandstone and flanked by ornate cast-iron railings.

On the front (western) facade, a tri-windowed central bay lights the principal room. Above the roofline, a decorative pediment further extends the height of the building and adds to its eye-pleasing balance.

The house was sold by Mrs. Jahnz in 1943 to Mary H. Lawrence who, in turn, sold it three years later to Florence and Irving Steinberg. They sold it to Dr. and Mrs. Matthew Steinberg.

Today the house is maintained as an apartment complex by the Steinberg family.

The interior woodwork and mantels have been retained and the major apartment reflects the Victorian tastes and affluence of the builders. There are four apartments in the principal dependency and one in the former carriage house, both fronting Beaufain Street.

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34 Smith St. Connected To S.C. Heroes

By JACK LELAND
Post-Courier Reporter

During the 1850s, the last affluent era in Charleston before the Civil War, the house at 34 Smith St. was built by a wealthy merchant of Scottish lineage who had made a name in Charleston.

George Robertson and his wife, Mary Joanna, had lived in the mansion at 1 Meeting St., the Ross House, and their early Italianate-styled house at the northeast corner of Smith and Beaufain streets shows traces of

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the Meeting Street house. It has a balanced facade, the entry on the north side being balanced by masking window walls on the piazza on the south, an architectural ploy also found in the Ross House and in the Wingate House at 21 Legare St.

When built, the house at 34 Smith St. had a view of the Ashley River across Colonial Lake, originally called Rutledge Pond, which was a holding basin for logs rafted down the rivers to be cut into lumber at several saw mills in the area.

In 1855, Robertson paid \$8,000, a rather high price for the times, for contiguous lots stretching from

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Staff Photo by Tom Spain

House at 34 Smith St. was built in the 1850s.

34 Smith Street