

I. JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE, c. 1853
94 Rutledge Avenue
Property of Historic Charleston Foundation

In 1853, Isaac Jenkins Mikell, an Edisto Island planter, built this house, an American version of an Italian villa, as a wedding gift for his young bride and third wife whom he called "the love of my life" (the first two wives had passed away). From 1936 to 1960, the building housed the Charleston County Free Library. In 1961, it was purchased and restored by Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Woodward of Charleston and Philadelphia. The property has been divided into four dwelling units without in any way marring the original lines. The very attractive garden follows the designs of the period.

The building is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in Charleston houses. The main entrance on Rutledge Avenue consists of a magnificent portico with splendid wooden columns, each made from the trunk of one great pine tree crowned with six Jupiter columns of the Corinthian order. Note the rams' heads on the capitals. The house contains twelve rooms other than the former servants' quarters. The sum paid the workmen for the labor alone was \$35,000.00. Imagine what the material and labor would cost with today's inflation.

The house reflects the wealth of the sea island cotton planter whose empire reached its zenith coincident with the fires of sectionalism that were to destroy it and the society it created. The reclaiming of this landmark neighborhood, an area of nearly 50 city blocks which has recently been added to the National Register, was sparked by restoration of this house a decade ago. The County Library's removal to another location in 1960 threatened the future of this significant landmark. Standing at the center of the Village, the loss of this one property might have fostered a quick decline of the area, for its immediate neighborhood has an uncertain future. Its restoration made it a landmark project as well for the saving of its several surrounding blocks.

Harleston Village, a "small inner city", actually possesses a greater number of early and distinguished properties than many entire cities that have established reputations in preservation work, with several hundred structures dating from major building periods in the city's history and with a good number of interesting and comfortable Victorian residences.

In the renovation of the house, very little alteration to its original design has occurred. The house has captured something typically "Charleston" in the use of an end of the house as the main entrance. Through marble-paved halls, one enters the huge hall that backs up the portico and is the focal point of the residence. From it, the stairs curve upward and the tall porch doors open onto the garden.

The property has extensive grounds. The large house included a servants' wing and carriage house; these have been converted into four apartments, one large unit in the main house, and three others. Intact at the Mikell House are the formal Victorian garden beds laid out a century ago. The restoration of the property included extensive work here. Allowance has been made for the current problems of maintenance and parking in this complete utilization of an old property, where modern needs and historic architecture are welded to produce these handsome results.

I. JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE

2001

94 Rutledge Avenue

c.1853

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Randy Bates

In 1852, I. Jenkins Mikell, owner of vast plantations on Edisto Island, built this magnificent dwelling for his 3rd wife. It is built in the classical revival style of architecture and follows the form of the legendary Italian villa design. Its south portico is as magnificent as that of any in the city. The splendid wooden columns, crowned with Corinthian capitals, which incorporate rams heads in their design, were each made from the trunk of one great pine tree. Despite the uniqueness of many of its design elements in the city, the popular Charleston plan of placing the main entrance on the gable end of the dwelling is retained here - while the portico steps lead to the private garden.

At the time the house was built, it was customary for planters to maintain town houses to which they moved their families during the legislative, shipping and social seasons. The Mikell family would have traveled the 40 miles from Edisto Island to Charleston by boat and landed at docks that were then located near the present Colonial Lake. The Mikell family used this as their townhouse until the Civil War when (along with other Charlestonians) they found refuge in the upper part of the state. In August of 1866, Mikell sold his townhouse to Edward Willis, a Charleston merchant, for \$22,500.

This mansion remained a private dwelling until 1935, when it was converted for use as the Charleston County Free Library. When the library moved to its new home on Marion Square in 1960, this significant landmark was threatened. There was talk of demolition because appraisers said the property was worth more without the house than with it. Through the efforts of Historic Charleston Foundation and private benefactors, the house and grounds were saved from destruction when the library was moved. The benefactors responsible for the purchase and renovation of the site were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Woodward of Philadelphia and Charleston. They became leaders in preserving many of the city's most distinguished buildings.

FRONT HALL

Tall case clock, English with Adam style inlay

Scenic mural, one of a series of 5 done by the French firm Zubor and Dufour

in 1834 showing scenes in North America. This one displays Boston Harbor.

This firm is considered the best maker of scenic wallpaper.

I. JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE

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STUDY

A pair of columns opens this comfortable family study to the hall.
Quartet of 4 framed illustrations from Harper's Weekly, hand colored depicting
Charleston scenes during the Civil War.
Tiffany style lamp
Coffee table, tortoise shell

STAIR HALL – RIBBON OFF STAIRWAY

Chest on chest, English
Console with marble top and brass trim. The escutcheon (key hole guard) shows an
array of musical instruments.
Mirror above with Egyptian ornament.

FRONT PARLOR

Note the matching pair of crystal and bronze chandeliers in both this room and the dining room. The brass rams head trim on the chandeliers repeats the rams head motif in the capitals of the piazza columns. The black marble mantels throughout these rooms were very a la mode in the middle of the 19th c.

Pair of tea caddies, on each mantel
Settee with inlaid design on crest
Mirrors, matching pair, giltwood
Secretary bookcase, English, Georgian period, displaying collection of figurines
Piano, refurbished Steinway

DINING ROOM

Sideboard, American
Pair of knife boxes, with Adam style shell inlay
Pair of chests, French, with elaborate ormolu trim and marble tops
Chest of drawers, with painted design
Collection of blue and white porcelain pieces, from the Mottehedah firm which
works with the Historic Charleston Reproduction program.

I. JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE

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REAR HALLWAY TO

MORNING ROOM (PASS RIBBONED OFF KITCHEN)

This family room contains the other North American scenic wallpaper panels. Two represent a view of a natural bridge. one depicts a parade day at West Point, and the last a skyline of Manhattan. The marble fireplace is a simple one with a carved design.

MAKE CERTAIN DOOR TO BACK ROOM IS CLOSED.

Visitors may exit from this room to the porch if the weather is nice. Otherwise, direct them to the outside doorway in the hall.

GARDEN

Portions of the Victorian garden design have survived, and this has been enhanced by additions made by previous and present owners. Charleston landscape designer Sheila Wertimer designed the ironwork featuring the Greek Key motif.

The swimming pool, added by a previous owner, is a gentle blue-gray color. Three clumps of all green Aucuba are on the south, along the wall on Montagu Street. A round bed has Asiatic Jasmine groundcover under a flowering Crabapple.

Near the house are Palmetto Trees (our state tree, a native to this area, honored for the part it played in the defense of the city in 1776). There are also several Sago Palms, which are very stiff and look feather-like instead of palmate.

Crushed brick makes a wonderful path surfacing material. The color is so compatible with the brick edgings of the flowerbeds.

The small tree with gray bark to the east of the portico is Loropetalum, a member of the Witchhazel family.

Notice the many ancient Crape Myrtles, probably as old as the house. Some branches have fused together. The bark is very smooth.

In the intimate courtyard garden are deciduous Magnolias. Japanese Cleyera is against the house wall on the left. The ground cover is Asiatic Jasmine.

Near the Montagu entrance to the property are several plants of Fatsia with their very large leaves. In the eastern parking area, near Montagu Street, are several Wax Myrtle, also known as Bayberry.

GARDEN OF THE I. JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE c. 1853

When the Charles Woodwards purchased the Mikell house in 1961 they found that the patterned garden had grown up around existing shrubs which needed to be replaced. They asked Loutrel Briggs to redesign the garden keeping the ~~flavor~~ ^{flavor} of the original garden.

The small beds at the front of the house were left just as they were. The other beds were relaid and a flag ^{stone} and brick terrace put in the rear for parking.

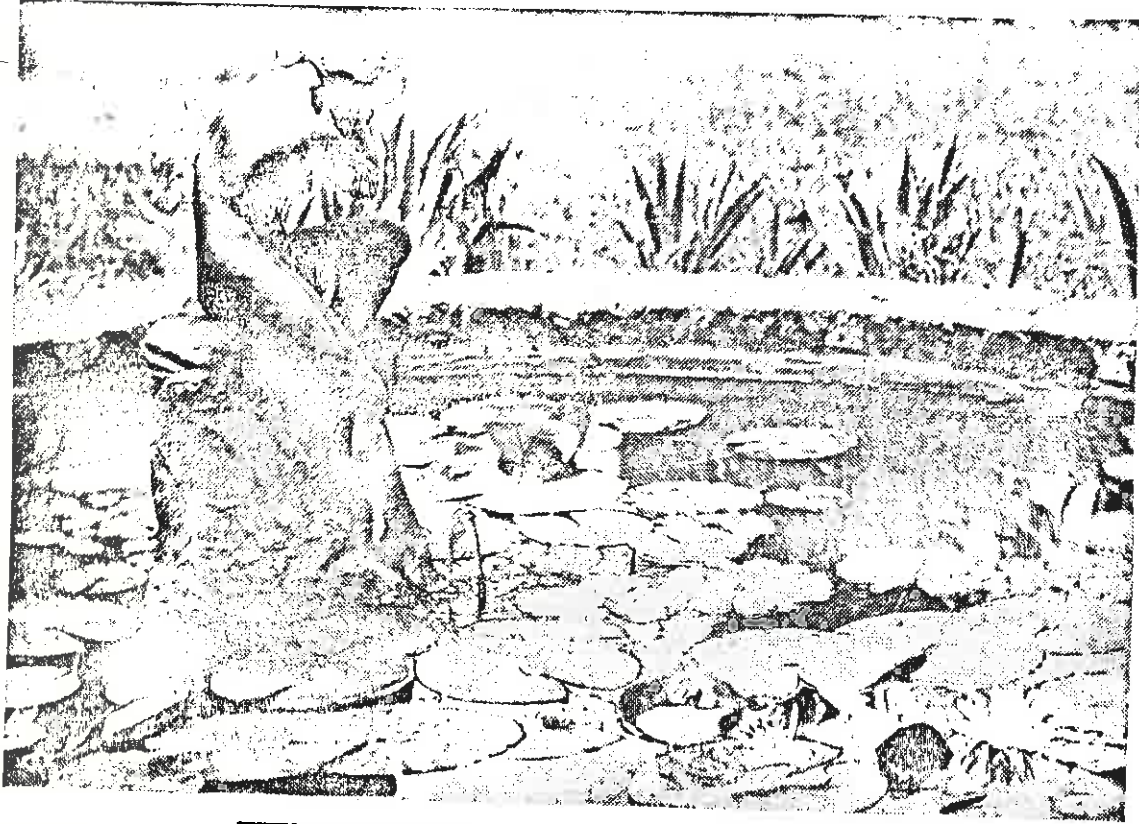
The three large crêpe myrtle trees, the magnolia trees along Montagu Street, the palmetto trees by the front porch with the white Lady Banksia rose are all part of the older garden. The rest of the planting has been added by the Woodwards. The camelias along the walk were transplanted from their country place, the Wedge.

The paths were covered with crushed tile as is sometimes seen in Italian gardens. They are edged with larippe.

Beside the porch are two cherry laurel trees and two yew trees. The tree next to the balcony is a camphor tree. The two in the parking area are pecan trees. Cherry laurel has been planted along the wire fence in the rear.

The bush with the white flowers at the side of the porch and next to the garden light is laurel petlum or Chinese fringe. The red-leaved ~~shrub~~ is red tipped photinia globra. The thick green leafed plants with small white flowers about the circle are viburnum suspenseum. Dwarf azaleas are used in the small beds near Rutledge Avenue. Medium azaleas are used about the circle (pink). There are a number of white flowering Japanese quince about the garden. The row of small plants by the rear circle are daphne.

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Bubbles, Statuette by Mrs. Wiggin, Now in Library Pond — Aged Negro Man, a Heritage with House, is Dead

—Photo by Falne

Bubbles, three-foot statue sculptured and named by Mrs. Albert Henry Wiggin, now is resting at its permanent home in a small pool of the Charleston Free Library garden.

Mrs. Wiggin, of New York and Yeamans Hall, gave her work to the Charleston Garden club. This organization, which maintains the library's garden, added Bubbles as one of the attractions. A spray of water sometimes bubbles over the statue's toes and from this she appropriately comes by her name.

Bubbles is among the newest additions to the library's grounds. Little known but among the older of the building's associations are two aged negroes, one of whom recently died. Their story is part of the building's history.

The large residence, which was converted into the library, was finished in 1853 by I. Jenkins Mikell, who owned it until 1856. From then until 1872 Edward Willis owned it. From 1872 to 1884 it was the property of David McPherson and, from 1884 to 1924 it belonged to the late Mayor John F. Ficken and his heirs.

Library Adopts Couple

During the years before the house was sold to become a library, Henry

H. Ficken, Charleston attorney, kept a small part of it open. As house servants he had two negroes who had been there for years, Jake Dingle and Lizzie Chapman. They stayed in the small cottage which is on the library grounds and which formerly was a stable house.

The library, in taking over the home, took over the old pair too. Jake was allowed to work around the garden. He could not do much, but the Garden club took the same interest that the library and the Fickens showed in seeing that the pair got along.

To learn much about Jake was a task in itself. Miss Parmelee Cheves, the librarian, asked him whether Lizzie was his wife.

It did not take Jake long to say no.

"Is she your sister?" Miss Cheves asked.

No again was the answer. She wasn't his mother, either.

"Well, what is she to you?" Miss Cheves asked.

Jake scratched his head, but the best he could do was, "I declare, Miss, I done forget what she is."

Months later the relationship became known. Jake once was engaged to Lizzie's daughter. The daughter died. So Lizzie wasn't his

mother-in-law—and he didn't know exactly what she was.

Jake Goes to Asylum

Jake used to putter about the gardens and it seemed to worry him that a gardener was employed. The Garden club knew Jake could not be trusted to take care of the beautiful plants that surround Bubbles, and a more adept man was needed.

One hot day Miss Cheves saw Jake busying himself in the garden.

"Why don't you get up very early one morning and finish all the garden work before it becomes hot?" she asked, diplomatically.

"Lawdy, Miss, I'se a carpenter. I ain't no gard'ner."

Jake liked his comforts. On another day Miss Cheves saw him put sand over the window sills of the cottage to keep the blinds shut. She surmised that a little carpentry might be a better way of making satisfactory arrangements.

"Lawdy, Miss," declared Jake, "I'se no carpenter. I'se a gard'ner."

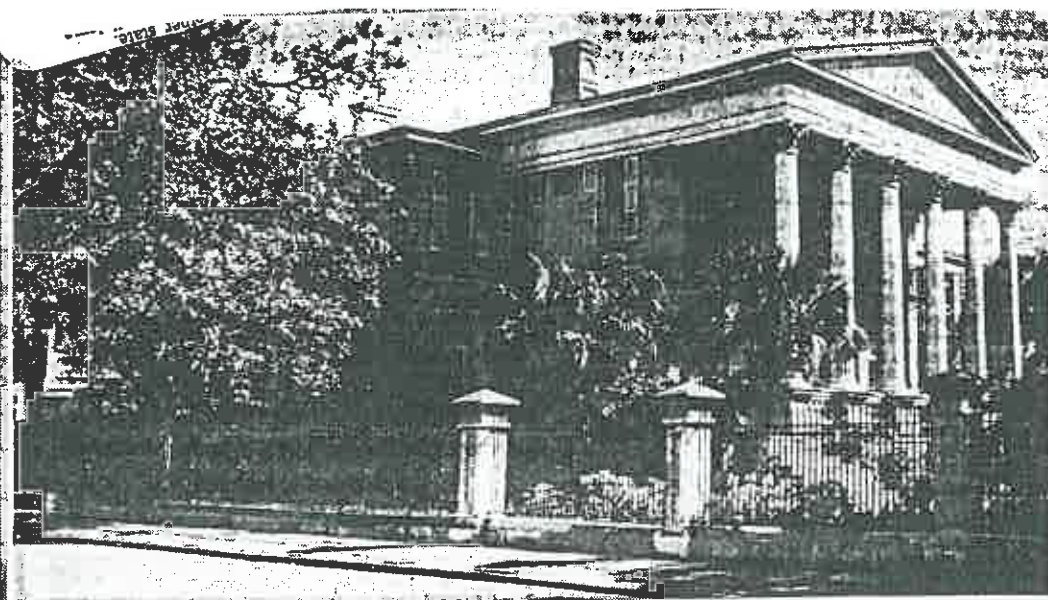
Jake wandered, in mind and in body, during recent months. Friends of the library and of the garden club would bring him back. Then he would wander away again.

One day Jake was found near the North Charleston viaduct. His mother, who had lived in Sumter, was calling him, he said. His mother had been dead for many years.

His white friends found a place at the State hospital for Jake. He passed his last weeks there.

Aunt Lizzie received word of his death a short time ago.

L. M. W.



(Staff photo by Gene Evans)

ISAAC JENKINS MIKELL HOUSE AT 94 RUTLEDGE AVENUE

Isaac Jenkins Mikell House Illustrates 'A Lavish Life At A Lavish Time'

By Samuel G. Stoney

The full flavor of Charleston in its "Gone With The Wind" era is imbued in the Isaac Jenkins Mikell house at 94 Rutledge Ave. The entire establishment, built in 1853, illustrates a lavish life at a lavish time.

The bulk of the building would be impressive by itself. The monumental Corinthian portico with the flanking terraces emphasizes this impression. The formal garden fills in a most appropriate foreground. The line of magnolias along the south bound of the property add the finishing flourish that makes this house give even the most imagined Tara a run for its movie money.

There should be enough of those most romantic trees in this row to satisfy even the most demanding seekers of Southern romance, particularly as moonlight and mockingbirds may be had with them — in season.

There is something fascinating about even small and stodgy islands. Edisto, when it supplied the wealth that built this mansion, was neither.

It is one of the largest in South Carolina's share of the Sea Island archipelago. It was, when this house was being created, the site of many of the finest plantations then producing the

THIS IS the ninth in a series of articles by Samuel Gaillard Stoney, local historian, architect, author and raconteur. The bearded Mr. Stoney is widely acknowledged as an authority on Lowcountry and South Carolina history. Literally a fountainhead of information on Charlestonians, he is the author of "This is Charleston," "Charleston: Azaleas and Old Brick" and "Plantations of the South Carolina Lowcountry."

finest cotton known, the "black seed" Sea Island sort which had been developed painstakingly by Mr. Mikell and others from West Indian seed in the early days of the Republic. In the 1850s it was repaying them bountifully.

Sea Island cotton was brought to South Carolina in the 1790s. It was virtually destroyed by the boll weevil just after World War I.

Mikell's life from 1808 to 1881 spanned the greater part of that of the valuable crop. A semi-exotic, it was favored by the warmth of these sea-bound islands. Pound for pound, it was worth five or six times as much as the "green seed" cotton that made a far shorter lint on what Sea Islanders called the "Main." The house on Rutledge Avenue marks a high time in its production. It also marks

the romance of its owner's life.

In his old age, he summarized it by his four marriages. His first was then so remote that he hardly recalled it. In his second, he gained success and wealth. The third brought him the love of his life. His fourth, in 1864, gave him the comfort of his old age, in the anti-climax of the post-war years. It was in preparation for his third marriage, in 1854, that he had this house built.

Contrasting it with his plantation house on Edisto points up the story of flush pre-war Charleston. Peter's Point plantation house is on the south side of Edisto. Overlooking the great width of St. Helena's Sound with a distant view of the further islands to give scale, it has one of the finest sites in the Lowcountry. It is large, well proportioned, and commodious, but, compared with the town place, it might be considered rather a "working" house.

Parade is left to its fellows in Charleston where it would count for the most. At the time it was a Lowcountry rule to build so. There were plantation houses of the period that vied with the one on Rutledge Avenue, but you sought them in the Middle Country, as at Millwood of the Hamptons, and Millford of the Mannings.

Mikell's son and namesake has left us a tantalizingly brief account of the family life between the two houses. He was only a youngster when the war ended it. So much of his book dealt with that impressive calamity that he called it "Rumbling of Charlot Wheels."

But from the part that went before the forced abandoning of Edisto, you get a sense of the well-ordered industry of the three plantations that had made possible the well-ordered life that had gone before.

Lately the town house has been most fortunate. For many years after it had ceased to be a private dwelling, it housed the county library.

In 1962 it seemed doomed to destruction by its own size and that of its grounds. But in that year it became, as it had begun, a part time residence of a plantation owning family. Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Woodward, of the Wedge on the Santee, and incidentally of Philadelphia, have repaired the place most handsomely. They have given the big house renewed usefulness with a most judicious redvision into apartments. And in so doing they have made it a center and an incentive for further salvations of more fine houses in one of Charleston's finest neighborhoods.

April 24, 64
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94 Rutledge — Town house of wealthy sea island cotton planter is a reflection of elegance.

Planter Built House In 1854

The full sophistication of antebellum South-
ern "Society" permeates the feeling imparted
by the residence at 94 Rutledge Ave.

For this is "Country Come to Town" in the
elegant sense of the phrase — the "country"
being that of the antebellum "Gone With the
Wind" era.

Its magnificence reflects the wealth of the
Sea Island cotton planter whose empire
reached its zenith coincident with the fires of
sectionalism that were to destroy it and the
society it created. For while 94 Rutledge Ave.
was built for show, it actually was the "pied a
terre" of Isaac Jenkins Mikell of Peter's Point
Plantation, Edisto Island.

And the house at Peter's Point, while
commodious, comfortable and scenic in itself,
lacks the refinements of architectural taste
that Mikell lavished on his town house. At
Peter's Point, the big house commands the
Edisto River reaches with the islands and
sweep of St. Helena Sound beyond. The site is
one of the most beautiful in the Lowcountry.

The Mikell town house could sit "at ease"
on Peter's Point for its monumental Corinthian
portico would have allowed its owners a much-
romanticized "Southern" backdrop from which
to view the glories of the tidewater country.
This house is, indeed, the prototype of
Margaret Mitchell's "Tara" in a metropolitan
setting.

Its designers kept the illusion of a spacious

woodland setting by providing a formal garden
before its capacious porch and flanking paved
terraces. Beyond the garden, tall magnolia
trees form a solid bank of greenery that cuts
off the mundane city sights beyond. Within
the garden, formal hedges and floral beds
established a sylvan serenity that (before the
era of the automobile) provided serenity
reminiscent of Edisto.

And that serenity Mikell could well afford.
In addition to Peter's Point, he owned and
operated two other Sea Island cotton planta-
tions. In his life — rich, full, vigorous,
romantic — Mikell was the human parallel of
the virtues of the long staple cotton that made
it all possible.

He was born less than 20 years after the
production of long-fibered cotton was estab-
lished on the Sea Islands, about 1790, and
his death (1881) was not four decades
removed from the advent of the boll weevil
which effectively killed the long cotton busi-
ness during World War I.

Mikell included in his town house some of
the "grandeur that was Greece, the glory that
was Rome" and it was truly a labor of love.
The house was built for his third wife whom he
was to describe later as the love of his life.
The Rutledge Avenue house was built in 1854
when Mikell was 46 years old.

In his old age, he reminisced that he
scarcely remembered his first bride; his

second brought him success and wealth, the
third was the "love of my life" and the fourth
marriage, in 1864, provided comfort in his
old age.

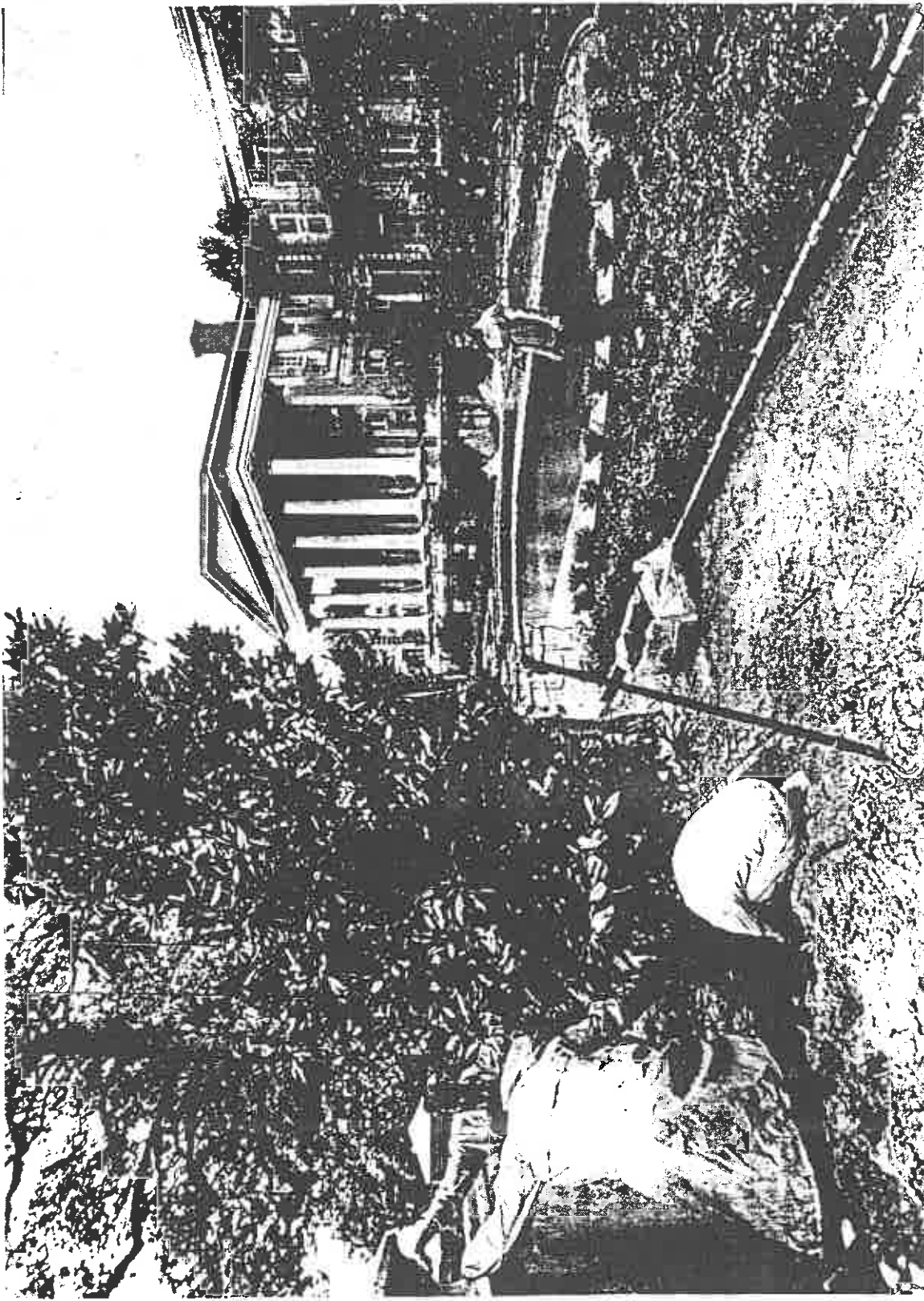
His town house also captured something
typically "Charleston" in its use of an end
of the house as the main entrance. Through
marble-paved halls, one enters the huge foyer
that backs up the portico and is the focal point
of the residence. From it, stairs curve upward
and tall porch doors open onto the garden.

On a moonlit night, with a mocking bird
singing beyond the balustrated veranda, all
that is needed is for Scarlet O'Hara to come
swooping down the stairs. Margaret Mitchell
wrote about it, Hollywood immortalized it on
celluloid, but an Edisto Island planter had it all
well in hand a hundred years earlier.

The house has large grounds that included a
service wing and carriage house. Today the
house has been most handsomely restored and
divided into spacious units. It faced almost
certain destruction in 1962 when Charleston
County abandoned it as a free library.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Woodward of
Philadelphia and Charleston bought and re-
novated the house with very little alteration to
its original design. They have provided very
handsome apartments, two in the main
section, one at the rear of the service wing and
one in the former carriage house.

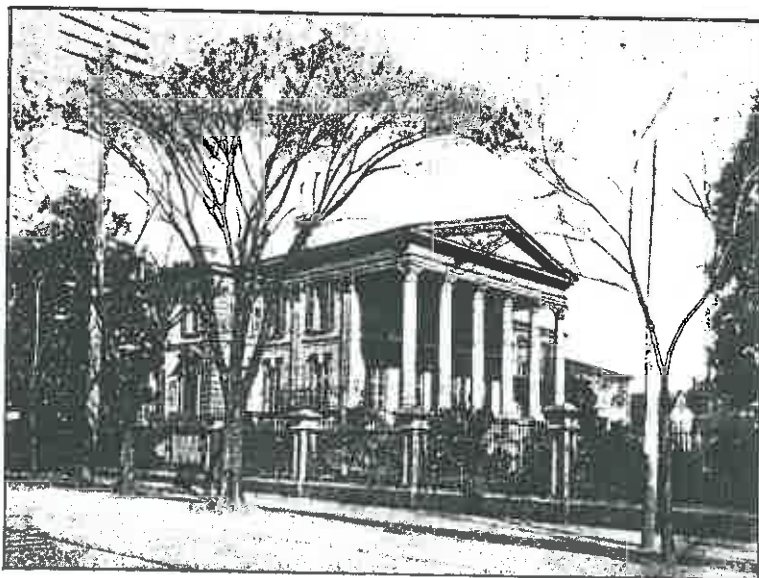
60 Great Houses
by Jack Leland
News & Courier, 1985



Staff Photo by Wade Spees

Magnolias Replaced

Workers set one of three magnolia trees into place Thursday at 94 Rutledge Ave. in Charleston. The trees are replacing old, diseased magnolias. Owner Joseph Land had the diseased trees removed earlier this year.



FOR SALE:
HANDSOME CHARLESTON HOME

By

SUSAN PRINGLE FROST

Realtor 57 Broad St. Charleston, S. C.

THIS beautiful Southern home in Charleston, S. C., is situated at No. 94 Rutledge Ave., one of the most exclusive residential streets in that city. A fine type of old time residence with large gardens planted with old fashioned shrubbery—Japonicas, palms, magnolias, pomegranates, etc. The residence is spacious and is approached through beautiful iron gates. It contains on the first floor, two handsome drawing rooms, a reception room, breakfast room, large dining room and pantry. On the second floor, four large bedrooms, bath room, and a very elegant library capable of holding eight thousand volumes, with handsome built-in bookcases. Also a maid's room.

A substantial two-story brick annex joins the residence, containing on the first floor, a kitchen, laundry and servants' dining room, and on the second floor, five bedrooms.

The house is equipped with a central heating plant, electricity, gas and water. There is a quaint coachman's house on the grounds with an old time tiled roof, and a garden house. Also two garages.

The house is on a large lot at the northeast corner of Rutledge Avenue and Montague Street, measuring 125 feet on Rutledge Avenue and 212 feet on Montague Street. On three sides is a handsome porch floored with Italian tile, and beautified with Corinthian columns of striking proportions. Apply to:

SUSAN PRINGLE FROST

REALTOR

57 Broad Street Charleston, S. C.