

Early Building May Face Demolition

Early Dwelling May Face Demo

W. H. J. THOMAS
Staff Reporter

The earliest surviving
dwelling houses in
the north of Calhoun
Street being considered for
demolition.

A two-story frame house,
at the northwest corner
of Rutledge Avenue, is a
isolated survivor from
the first suburban development
of what was known as
Cannonsborough and may
have been built by Daniel Cannon
himself, the wealthy miller and master builder who
gave his name to this district.

An application requesting its
demolition was heard before
Charleston's Board of Architectural Review in February
but was deferred. It is also
being offered for sale at this
time.

The house stands on what
was one of the few natural
high points—in fact, an island
in this case—in the low, marshy
tract of westside land acquired by Daniel Cannon in
the 1760s. It was the site of at
least two large lumber mills
owned by Cannon and was laid
out for residential development
after the Revolutionary
War, the marsh area probably
filled by waste from the mills.

The able Mr. Cannon, a
wide-ranging entrepreneur, as
mill-owner is noted for having
harnessed the tides to operate
his mill, taking advantage of
both flood and ebb to propel a
water wheel about 60 feet in diameter.
He is also remembered as the builder of several
surviving late 18th century
houses. As the partner of
Thomas Bennett, he received
the contract for the carpentry
on the now-demolished Orphan
House at Calhoun Street.

The original lot for 185 Rutledge
measured approximately
116 feet on east and west
lines and 360 feet on north and
south, being bounded by
Pinckney Street (now Ru-

tridge), Thomas Street (now
Ashley), Elliot Street (now
roughly Cannon) and the area
which has become Bee Street.

In 1798, the aging Mr. Cannon
made a gift of the property
to Miss Sarah Peronneau
Webb, a minor daughter of
John Webb, as an expression
of Cannon's love for her, according
to the deed of transfer.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

The actual conveyance was
made to Thomas Doughty as
her trustee, at that time
Webb's business partner. The
precise connection between
Cannon and Miss Webb has not
been determined by this writer,
but it appears that Webb,
Cannon and Doughty had
known each other since the
Revolutionary War. Their
three names were placed together
on that list made by the
British in 1782 ordering
them, as zealots of the Revolution,
out of the city.

It appears that at the time
of conveyance there was a
dwelling on the property, but
to judge from details of the
present building, it must have
been a new house in 1798. It
bears the marks of Cannon's
other work, and it is interesting
to observe that it is nearly
identical in certain details to
several houses built on Bull
Street by Cannon's partner
Bennett, or by Bennett's sons,
soon after 1800.

The property remained in
Doughty's name until his
death and the death of his
wife, Mary Legare Doughty,
when it passed to their eldest
daughter, Elizabeth Hall
Doughty, along with 60 shares
in the Bank of South Carolina,
\$500 and a "Mulatto female
slave Sukey".

Miss Doughty married the
local merchant Jeremiah Con-

dy, and on April 20, 1818, conveyed the house and lot to their son, Thomas D. Condy. This gentleman, an attorney, retained the property until his death in the 1850s, at which time it became the possession of Jane W. Condy.

On April 5, 1870, it was purchased for \$4,050 by the banker and merchant prince, Charles O. Witte. In 1908, with Witte's death, his executors transferred 185 Rutledge to his daughter, Mrs. Fay Witte Ball, along with five other parcels of investment property.

Mrs. Ball sold the property
on Jan. 10, 1920, to Charles B.
Claussen. Following Claussen's
death, it passed to Mrs. Marie
Louise Claussen. On Oct. 2,
1959, it was purchased by Dr.
J. Hertz Warren Jr.

As it currently stands, the
house represents two periods
of construction. The original
plan was for an "L"-shaped
dwelling, with piazzas at side
and rear, forming a slightly
modified single house with two
principal rooms to a floor.

Though worn by time and
now divided as two apartments,
the dwelling is still
very much a well-proportioned
Georgian residence if one
looks for what is original and
attempts to ignore the post-
Victorian additions. Its wide,
beaded weather boarding, its
blinds and solid shutters, its
handsome cornice with swag
design, and the bell-curve hip
roof still convey the feeling of
the residence as first constructed.

Renovations have been
strongly felt on the entrance
story, but some early features
still survive. Apparently soon
after 1894 (judging from an in-
surance map of that year
showing the old outline of the
house), the hallway and main
rear room were brought out to
be flush with the front sitting
room. Also at this time the sit-



185 RUTLEDGE BUILT CIRCA 1798
Located on old Cannonsborough site. (Staff Photo)

sitting room mantel was re-
placed by one of Victorian ori-
gin.

The renovations were appar-
ently conscientious attempts to
improve the interior, as the
early details in many cases
are extended rather than aban-
doned.

On the second story surviv-
ing details are more abundant,
and this floor may be judged
as little damaged from its ear-
ly time of construction. Re-
maining details occur often
enough to allow for restoration
should the dwelling find its
buyer.