hurt is so great as to des onetary compensation. The trial ... ected to last at least a week.

Ostensibly, all that is at stake is a total of $3.5 million in damage claims. That is regarded as a puffed-up amount far overshadowed by the politically explosive testimony which may come out in the trial.

The fear is that witnesses may be forced to delve into allegations of "sexual escapades" by House members with female legislative aides seeking monetary gains for their favors.

The charge that some women on the House payroll were at the State House mainly because of their after-hours availibility was made by Mrs. Russell to newsmen several months before she filed a $1.5 million slander and assault suit against Mrs. Risher last Aug. 3. Her suit deals only with an alleged incident at Charleston on July 22 during a social-hour gathering of those attending the Southern Legislative Conference. President Jimmy Carter addressed the conference later, but what happened before he arrived in Charleston has made headlines in South Carolina since then.

Mrs. Russell claims Mrs. Risher accosted her at the Mills Hyatt House, not only verbally but physically, and in the presence of many witnesses — to her personal embarrassment and political disadvantage.

If the trial were confined to the Charleston incident, little sleep would be lost by those who do not want background bickering in the Russell-Risher feud dredged up.

However, Mrs. Risher came right back with a $2 million countersuit. Not only does she deny that the Mills Hyatt House confrontation was damaging to Mrs. Russell, but she also alleges a long-standing effort on the part of the Lexington County Republican to oust her from her $28,000 job as House clerk.

That effort has been made, claims Mrs. Risher, through newspaper articles in which Mrs. Russell has impugned her efficiency and integrity, the "sexual escapades" assertion being a case in point.

If Mrs. Russell — in her own defense — has to present a parade of witnesses to try and back up her previous complaints, then embarassment for those called to the stand is inevitable because of the nature of the questions they will be asked.

In a civil court suit, a jury cannot impose criminal penalties, including a prison term, upon those involved. But all those who testify do so under oath — and are subject to criminal penalties for perjury if caught in deliberate falsehoods.

More than 80 witnesses have been subpoenaed for the trial, all but a handful of them called by Mrs. Russell. House Speaker Rex L. Carter, D-Greenville, and Speaker Pro Tempore Ramon Schwartz, D-Sumter, are the only ones summoned by both sides.

Blatt is one of three attorneys for Mrs. Risher. Her chief attorney is Kermit King of Columbia, and she also is represented by former Rep. William Rhoad of Bamberg. Mrs. Russell is represented by J. Lewis Cromer of Columbia.

Regency-Style Villa Shows Exuberant Detail

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

Patrick Duncan's Regency-style villa at 172 Rutledge Ave. has intrigued architectural historians for years.

Researchers have speculated about the age of the house and about the identity of the "English architect" whom tradition says designed the house, now known as Ashley Hall School.

Duncan, a prosperous tallow chandler, factor and real estate speculator, acquired the site of the house in 1798 from Daniel Cannon and expanded the grounds by acquiring a lot to the south in 1807 from Elizabeth Combe.

Duncan is listed in city directories as residing on Pinckney Street (now Rutledge Avenue) in Cannonsborough as early as 1806.

However, there is nothing about the present house which would indicate a construction date so early; Duncan must have had an earlier house on the lot.

One researcher has assigned the date of c.1816 to the house, based on his assessment of its architectural period.

However, the house could have been built anytime between c. 1815 and 1829 when Duncan sold the house and grounds to James Nicholson.

It has been speculated that William Jay was the architect of the building, since it resembles documented examples of his work in Savannah.

His work is characterized by exuberant architectural detail in the Regency style, remarkable staircases, curving walls, curved doors, round-headed openings, impressive porticoes and balconies.

All of these features are present at Ashley Hall.

The News and Courier

Do You Know Your Charleston?

Jay, a native of Bath, England, arrived at Savannah in 1817 and apparently moved back and forth between that city and Charleston until he returned to England around 1822.

It is interesting that Jay designed a villa, built in 1818 on Sullivan's Island, in the "Gothic order." Gothic influence is seen in the three pointed-arch windows in the pediment of Ashley Hall's portico, and in the vaulted ceilings of the interior.

Robert Mills of Charleston, Jay's contemporary, also used Gothic forms and Classic motifs in combination, monumental porticoes, curving walls and doors and striking staircases.

However, Ashley Hall is too elaborately detailed to be ascribed to Mills, whose style was much more austere.

Ashley Hall's portico, the most impressive feature of the exterior, is reflective of Jay's work in its unorthodox placement of the Ionic columns, with a wide space in the center, revealing the apse-like curve of the front wall of the structure.

The sinuous balconies, wide round-headed doorways and round-headed windows are also evocative of Jay's work.

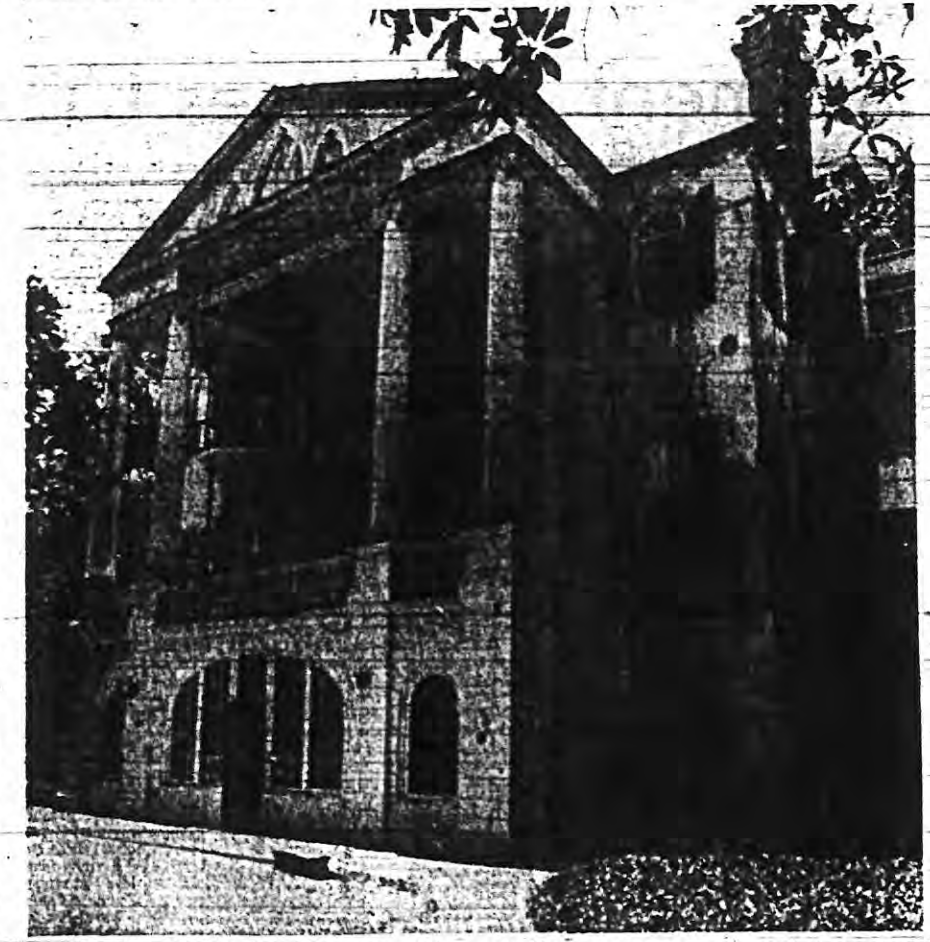
The portico is set on a high rusticated base, with arched openings flanking a wide elliptical arch through which the house is entered.

On this basement level begins the staircase which rises in elliptical curves for four flights.

The staircase has spiral terminals, slender "stick" balusters, mahogany rails, decorative spandrels and fretwork and beading on the string.

On the first floor the central hall has curving walls and doors and a ceiling of groined vaulting which is not structural but ornamental. The groins are outlined in plaster grape vine ornamentation and the vaults spring from fluted columns with foliated caps.

The double drawing rooms on the west side of the hall have oval walls and vaulted ceilings and are joined by a high elliptical arch, set on each end on an entablature supported by a column and a pilaster, both fluted with foliated caps.



Ashley Hall

Morning Coffee

By Dave Doubrava

Let me tell you about The Group.

The Group is a bunch of guys and girls who get together now and then to play poker. Naturally we don't play for money. That would be gambling and could be considered illegal and we're all upstanding citizens who would never knowingly break the law. We play for matchsticks. To add a little extra excitement we pretend that each matchstick is worth...oh let's say one dollar.

Anyhow, we get together now and then about 8 p.m. and chat and play poker for a couple hours. We may even split a can of beer between the six or seven of us. The games are very friendly and seldom does anyone lose more than 10 matchsticks. Real nickel-dime stuff, you know.

Well, last night we got together to play. Everything is quite normal and about midnight the game starts to break up.

Then a strange thing happens. Someone says, "I'll play a few more hands if anyone else wants to." Me and three others say, "Sure."

Usually we play strange variations of poker — games like Low-Hole-Roll-Your-Own, Pass-The-Trash and Follow-The-(CENSORED). Often there are so many wild cards that it is possible to lose a hand when you're holding six Jacks. They would laugh us out of Las Vegas, but we have fun.

About 1:30 a.m. a second strange thing happens. The Group drifts away from all the silly games and into a very serious game called Seven-Card-Stud-Murder. The Murder rule is a nasty thing and too complicated to explain. Let it suffice to say that it can take a two-matchstick game and quickly turn it into a several-dozen-matchstick game.

About 3:30 a.m. we are beginning to wilt from fatigue. We note that we all have to work tomorrow and need our beauty rest. But several members of The Group have dropped a bundle of matchsticks and we agree to play a couple more hands and give them a chance to recoup their losses.

Besides, we're all giddy from exhaustion and doing and saying silly things. At one point we all get a case of the Incurable Contagious Giggles and split our sides with laughter over some joke which isn't even funny.

At 7 a.m. the sun is coming up. We stand up and try to walk without weaving. Our eyes are puffy, our faces are pale and we are fighting to keep from collapsing on the floor for 14 hours. Between the five of us we don't have the energy to light a nightlight. We look at each other through bloodshot eyes and ask, "What, are we crazy or something?"

About 9 a.m. the last strange thing happens. I am at my desk writing this column! My tail is dragging, I've spent an entire sleepless night and won a grand total of 3.70 matchsticks and now I'm sitting here hoping I don't doze off and fall off my chair!

I've answered my own question.

Yes, I am crazy or something.

172 Rutledge Ave. Oct. 17, 1977

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172 Rutledge Ave.

Ashley Hall's McBee House Displays Regency-Style Detail

By ELSA F. McDOWELL
Post-Courier Reporter

The building that houses administrative offices for Ashley Hall School was almost 100 years old when the school was founded 75 years ago.

The Regency-style building was built between 1815 and 1825 as a residence for Patrick Duncan, a successful tallow chandler and real estate speculator.

Ashley Hall School was founded in 1909 by Mary Vardrine McBee. For the first year, classes for the 45 girls were held in the lounge, drawing room and bedroom used by Miss McBee.

Since then, buildings have been added to house the library, classes and physical education programs, but the original building at 172 Rutledge Ave. is still in use. Recently it has undergone renovations funded partly by a grant from the S.C. Department of Archives and History.

When the building was first constructed, it was in the suburban area outside Cannonsborough. Duncan bought the site in 1798 from Daniel Cannon. In 1807, he purchased a second lot to the south from Elizabeth Combe.

Records do not show who was architect for the imposing building, but authorities believe it was William Jay, a native of Bath, England, who worked in Charleston and Savannah between 1817 and 1822, when he returned to England.

The elaborate architectural detail in the Regency-style, soaring eliptical stairway, curved walls and doors, round-headed openings, grandiose portico and rounded balconies are similar to designs in Savannah known to be Jay's.

The three pointed arch windows in the pediment of the building's portico and the vaulted ceilings of the interior add Gothic motifs also used by Jay's contemporary, Robert Mills. But Ashley Hall is too profusely detailed to be ascribed to Mills.

The soaring portico has four Ionic columns placed in an unorthodox fashion with a wide space in the center to give an open view of the iron balcony rails and large door opening to the second floor.

In 1829 Duncan sold the property to James Nicholson. After Nicholson, James Reid Pringle, leader of the Unionist Party in the nullification controversy, lived there.

Later, George A. Trenholm acquired the property and lived there during the Civil War when he served as Confederate Secretary of the Treasury. Trenholm was senior partner in the John Fraser Co., one of the largest handlers of Sea Island long-staple cotton. At the onset of the war, Trenholm financed the outfitting of 12 small coastal defense ships for the Confederate Navy.

Do Your Know Your Charleston?

After Trehnolm's death in 1877, Charles Otto Witte, banker and German consul, bought the property. Witte was first named consul for the Free State of Hamburg in 1855 and then became consul for the North German Federation of States. After the Franco-Prussian War, the German Empire was formed and Witte became its consul. He resigned in 1907.

In 1909, Miss McBee bought the house from Witte's estate. She opened the boarding school in September.

This year the alumnae and staff of Ashley Hall are planning a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the school's founding. They also will be celebrating the completion of a $35,000 restoration project for the main building, called McBee House.

The project included repairing a leaking roof, replastering the ballroom, fixing the foundation and painting and repairing the southeast parlors and back hall.

The work was done with input from Alan Kemper, decorative arts consultant. Kemper dates the ballroom to the 1870s in East Lake tradition. The hand-stenciling on the ceiling, he says, looks similar to work of a Danish seaman popular in Savannah in the late 1800s. School officials hope to get funding to restore the hand-painting.

On the third floor, Kemper believes the mantles are original. One that had been believed to be marble, he thinks is black slate dipped flat side down in a tub of water with an oil-based lacquer floating on top to achieve the marbled effect.

From the basement, the staircase mounts in eliptical curves to the fourth floor. The stairway has spiral terminals, mahogany handrails, slender balusters, decorative spandrels, fretwork and beading on the string.

Molding motifs range from egg and dart to grapeleaf.

Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

McBee House is thought to be the work of Engli[sh] a[rchi]tect William Jay.