



31 Legare — Residence resembles town houses found in inland sections of South Carolina.

## Pensive Ghost Liked Sunlight

The house at 31 Legare St. played a role in the preservation of South Carolina's Negro spirituals and one of its earlier owners was a member of the Confederate Army "Air Force".

It also has a ghost, a young veteran who was killed in a hunting accident shortly after the end of the Revolutionary War. The ghost story holds, however, only if the house can be documented as a pre-Revolutionary construction.

Its building date is generally given as 1789. However, there are indications that the main body of the building pre-dates the conflict that tore South Carolina — somewhat unwillingly — away from its motherland, Great Britain.

The handsome residence is not a "typical" Charleston house at all, favoring rather the town house that developed farther inland. This factor is said to have endeared it to one of its owners who grew up in Columbia during the antebellum era before the state capital's beautiful homes were burned during the Civil War.

The house is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe in whose family it has been since just after the Civil War. His great-grandfather purchased the dwelling, probably in 1868. He also was named Augustine T. Smythe and he was selected to accompany Capt. Joseph Manigault as his

"best man" in an ascent in a gas-filled silk balloon to spot the Federal gunboats blockading the port during the Civil War.

Just who filled that particular balloon with gas is unknown but the late Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who later designed the famous German airships, was in Charleston during the siege and wrote later (1929) of assisting with the filling of balloons for the Confederate aerial experiments.

At any rate, the balloon carrying Lt. Smythe burst, bringing that particular attempt at aerial warfare to a crashing end. Lt. Smythe survived the war and his descendants have lived in 31 Legare ever since.

The house was one of many fine plantation and town houses built by the distinguished Heyward family of Carolina. Its design incorporates the best of several plans and its huge curved "bows" at the southern and northern ends give light and added distinction to very handsome rooms.

The house retains its large original lot, making it one of the downtown area's largest single residential sites. Children of the area for many years enjoyed its tennis court and some of the palmetto trees in its garden are among the tallest in the state.

The ghost of young James Heyward may be one of the most tragic and quietest spooks on record. He survived the American Revolu-

tion only to be killed by gunshot during a deer hunt after the war.

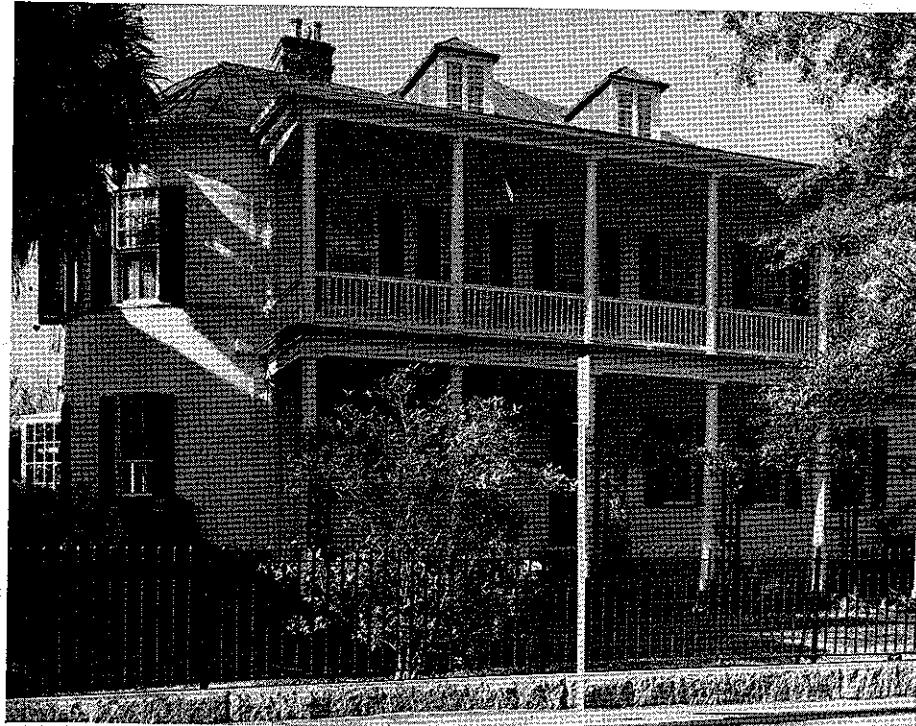
This talented young man, known as a deep thinker, was killed about 8 a.m. and at the very moment of his death, his mother reportedly walked into the handsome library of the 31 Legare St. property to see the dim outline of her son, seated in a chair, head-on-hand, in a pensive pose.

The ghost has not been seen for many years but it always appeared on bright sunny summer mornings, always in the same position.

The present owner's father was for many years president of the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. Many of the earlier rehearsals of the Society were held at 31 Legare St. The Society was founded by descendants of plantation owners or former plantation owners who had moved to the city and who gathered together to sing the old songs they had heard the Negroes sing in the country.

They were asked to sing at a charitable affair one year in the early 1920s and were so popular that the Society took formal shape. It has performed ever since and is generally credited with having preserved the true Negro spiritual in this area, songs that otherwise would have disappeared.

Early Festival of Houses tour booklet



Carl Julien

No. 11—MRS. WILLIAM HEYWARD'S HOUSE

31 Legare Street

c. 1789

This pleasant double house with its rather unusual entrance across a stone flagged lower piazza stands in the center of a never-divided lot from the "Grand Modell" of 1672. About 1789 it was built by the widow of William Heyward, whose brother, Thomas, had signed the Declaration of Independence. Like her in-laws, Hannah Shubrick Heyward was a successful rice planter. Her house shows this in "improvements" that were obviously made soon after its building. Among these is the "bow" to the south with its delicate palladian window in the large upstairs parlor. It remained her home until 1829.

In this time it unhappily acquired a fairly well-authenticated ghost. Young James Heyward, son to the builder of this house, was riding out hunting on a plantation in the Euhaws. His hounds bayed a hog and he struck at them with the butt of his gun. It went off and shot him dead from the saddle. He appeared, according to the legend, that very hour to his sister in the room that is now the library. And he has been seen there since, always in the same attitude, his head in his hand, seated pensive at the table.

From: Architectural Guide to  
Charleston

WILLIAM HEYWARD HOUSE  
c. 1789  
31 Legare Street

Of all the streets within the old and historic areas of Charleston none can display a greater concentration of architectural distinction than Legare Street. Number 31, though second to none of its neighbors in grace and elegance, holds its place with hospitable poise and relaxed assurance devoid of hauteur.

Like many Charleston houses of an earlier period the first floor is raised only a few feet above the tile paving of the lower piazza. The front door is in no way accented, except by a flight of concentric semi-circular stone steps. The hall is of medium width and the stairway takes its place at the rear. To the left is the library extending to the south in a semi-circular bay. This bay is separated from the rest of the room by a pair of slender wood columns recalling a familiar Adam mannerism. Tall bookcases line the walls reaching almost to the ceiling. All of the woodwork has been "grained" in subdued tones of ochre and raw sienna suggesting an atmosphere of quietude and literary relaxation.

On the opposite side of the hall the Parlor was extended to the north and terminated with a bay window formerly glazed with colored glass now replaced with clear panes. At the time of the enlargement all of the original woodwork was replaced with mahogany designed in the contemporary Eastlake manner.

The dining room is an interesting example of how popular fashion alters a building. In the Victorian era the walls were tongue and groove yellow pine with an open truss of yellow pine spanning an extension to the south and all finished "natural". In the 1930's, this room was brought more into harmony with the original character of the house. Wainscoting, mantle piece, door and window trim from a demolished building of the same period was added, and the exposed truss encased in a segmented arch.

The drawing room on the second floor gives this house its greatest distinction. In length it includes

the width of the hall, the library and its circular bay below, and it is the same width as the library giving a well proportioned spatial enclosure. In the center of the bay facing south is a Palladian window with the detail refined to domestic scale. The walls are paneled not only below the chair rail but also above up to the cornice at the ceiling. This is an unusual feature for a house built after the Revolution when walls were usually plastered above the chair rail.

A.S.

# FOHG Tour Script

MRS. WILLIAM HEYWARD HOUSE  
31 Legare Street  
post-Revolutionary  
Home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Smythe

1995

The house at 31 Legare Street is one of several fine plantations and town houses built in the 18th century by the distinguished Heyward family of South Carolina. This is one of only four Heyward dwellings to survive in the city. It was completed in the last quarter of the 18th century and is believed to have been built by Mrs. Hannah Shubrick Heyward, the widow of William Heyward, whose brother Thomas had been a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The widow Heyward lived here until her death in 1829. It was bequeathed to her daughter, Mrs. William Drayton and for a short time it was leased to a famous French school mistress, Mme. Jules Datty, a refugee from the Revolution in Santa Domingo in 1843.

The dwelling is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Smythe in whose family it has been since just after the Civil War. Mr. Smythe is the grandson of Augustine T. Smythe who purchased the house in 1870.

The house is believed to have been built in the 1770s or 80s (just before or after the Revolutionary War.) It is considered one of Charleston's earlier examples of a house to reflect the Adam style influence. The Adam style became the dominant style of the new United States from 1780-1820, a period in which the population of the United States grew from 3 million to 10 million. This style which is often referred to as the "Federal style" reached its zenith in prosperous port cities such as Charleston and can be seen in its more advanced high style fashion at the Nathaniel Russell House, the Foundation's outstanding house museum at 51 Meeting Street. Many architectural historians agree that Charleston has more fine surviving examples of Adam architecture than any city in America.

An unusual feature of this house is the positioning of the two storied piazza across the width of the main facade. The piazza supports rise from a flat paved stone base, which is a rarity for Charleston. The projecting bay on the southern end is also a departure from the Georgian plan of the house. One can see the Palladian window on the second floor of the Bay from the garden.

The house retains its large original one-half acre lot which was laid out in the Grand Modell of 1673 (original town plan) and is one of the historic district's largest single residential sites.

## MRS. WILLIAM HEYWARD HOUSE

PAGE 2

For those with a taste for the supernatural, this house has a ghost. He is a young man, James Heyward, the son of the builder of the house. He survived the Revolutionary War only to be killed by a gunshot during a deer hunt after the war. According to legend, he appeared that very hour to his mother in the library. He was seated there holding his head in his hand. The ghost reappears when there is tragedy in the house, but he has not been seen for many a year.

### ENTRANCE HALL

Portrait of the wife of James Leech Ridgeway, Caroline Carrington Ridgeway (born 1766 died 1832).

Tall case clock, English, marked William Lancaster, Plymouth Dock. It has always been in Mrs. Smythe's family.

Side chairs, from Smythe's family, Chippendale fashion  
Settee, pine, from Lowcountry plantation

### LIBRARY

This is a very special room with timeless sophistication usually associated with English country houses. The extensive shelving houses a splendid collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, and historic memorabilia reflecting the interest and talents for the owners as well as numerous family possessions that have survived the many turbulent periods of English and American history.

It is interesting to note that Augustine Smythe, the first Smythe owner of this dwelling was an officer in the Confederate forces and was a member of the Confederate Army Air Force. He was selected to accompany Captain Joseph Manigault as his best man in an ascent in a gas-filled balloon to spot the Federal gunboats then blocking the Charleston port. The balloon carrying Lt. Smythe burst, bringing that particular attempt to aerial warfare to a crashing end. Lt. Smythe survived the war and his descendants have lived here for 125 years.

Documents of significant interest include:

An 18th century plat of the site which illustrates the original floor plan and configuration of the lot

An original copy of the Ordinance of Secession signed in Charleston on December the 20th of 1860. This copy was taken to Columbia during the War for safe keeping, only to be discovered by Union forces. This document is reputed to have been slashed by the saber of a Union soldier.

Framed broadside which bears the chilling message "The Union is Dissolved." SC's secession from the Union was quickly followed by six additional Southern states. From the window in the library, a Palmetto Palm, which is the State Tree, can be seen. It was planted with much ceremony on the day SC seceded from the Union and it now towers above the roof.

Portrait, one of the Smythe sons, George, now has 5 children, above the mantel.

Deer, shot by Mrs. Smythe

Windsor chair, English

Arm chair, Chippendale style, English

Large library table, resurrected from barn in rear of property (perhaps one of the few remaining barns in the city)

DINING ROOM

One of the original rooms in the earliest part of the house but it underwent modifications at two different periods. It was originally remodelled in the Victorian era when its walls were stripped of their original woodwork and refitted with the then fashionable tongue and groove yellow pine panelling. Fashions changed and, in the 1930's, the owners took advantage of the opportunity to purchase this ornamental woodwork which had been salvaged from a demolished Charleston house and was refitted to this room.

The house originally stopped at this room and has been altered with the addition of a rear wing and the enclosed solarium which gives light and protection for plant materials housed there.

The furnishings are inherited family pieces along with additions chosen by the owners. Mrs. Smythe's family emigrated from England to Bermuda and many pieces found here were originally crafted in England when Charleston was still a royal colony.

Portraits, include two generations of the Ridgeway family, Mrs. Smythe's English forebears. The first is a portrait of James Leech Ridgeway who died in 1862. His father and namesake is depicted in a satirical sketch in which he is jailed in Newgate prison for refusing as a publisher to divulge the names of his news sources.

Portraits of Mrs. Smythe's mother completed at her home in Bermuda, and the present Mrs. Smythe (yellow green dress)

Drop leaf table, Sheraton, American  
Dining table, double pedestal, English, c. 1790-1800  
Hanging cabinet, Dutch marquetry, above sideboard

SITTING ROOM

This warm and inviting room show extensive signs of the remodelling that took place in this house in the late 19th century or Victorian period. At that time, the north bay was added to the house and the Edwardian styled mahogany and walnut chimney breast woodwork and wainscoting were installed. Family tradition maintains that the woodwork was crafted from wardrobes, tables, and bureaus, which is a very inventive adaptation. Note the depth of the chimney, very characteristic of houses of this period. The furnishings and art works are primarily inherited family pieces.

Sofa, Sheraton, particularly handsome  
Library table, English  
Chest, possibly from the 17th century  
Sofa table, custom designed, contains an interesting collection of shells collected by Mrs. Smythe who grew up in Bermuda

**MRS. WILLIAM HEYWARD HOUSE**

**PAGE 4**

One of the fascinating events associated with this house is the role played by the Smythe family in the preservation of the Lowcountry's spiritual music traditions. Mr. Smythe's father was president of the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals for many years. Many of the early rehearsals of the Society were held here. Both Mr. and Mrs. Smythe are members (He is currently president) and the Society remains an active organization with a busy concert schedule.

Group photo, on side shelf, taken in 2nd floor drawing room

**GARDEN**

**Take care the ground is uneven.** The range of buildings on the north consist of the old kitchen, now a rental property, the old stable and carriage house with 3 loose boxes. Notice the huge Live Oak which shelters the house and yard. The plantings are the result of careful tending of many generations. The rear garden is relatively new, it was formerly a tennis court. The visitors can use the walk along the conservatory to return to the street.