

CARRINGTON HOUSE
Constructed 1890-1892
2 Meeting Street

This large Queen Anne-style dwelling at the foot of Meeting Street occupies one of the city's best sites overlooking White Point Gardens and Charleston harbor. The house, the second to occupy the site, replaced a structure destroyed in the earthquake of 1886 and is a good example of the adaptation of Victorian decorative elements to Charleston's vernacular traditions.

Waring P. Carrington acquired the site for this house in 1889. Construction of the residence Carrington built for himself and his wife, Martha Williams, followed between 1890 and 1892. Carrington's wife was a daughter of George W. Williams, a wealthy banker who resided at 16 Meeting Street (the Calhoun mansion). Tradition holds that Williams gave his daughter and son-in-law a wedding gift of \$75,000, money the couple then used to construct their residence. Carrington was a King Street jeweler who purchased two Tiffany windows now in the first floor parlor to celebrate the couple's fifth wedding anniversary in 1895.

The bandstand in White Point Gardens was built and donated to the city by Mr. and Mrs. Carrington in memory of Mrs. Carrington's father, George W. Williams.

CLH

2 MEETING STREET

"The funds to build the 3-story house were given by George W. Williams as a wedding present to his daughter Martha, who married Waring P. Carrington, a King Street jeweler, in 1890."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Family tradition maintains that Williams presented the newlyweds with a check for \$75,000."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"The Carrington house, built in the then-popular Queen Anne style of architecture, was constructed btwn. 1890-1892 on a double lot that had been occupied by a large Charleston single house destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1886. That house which appears on a map dated 1853 in the collection of S.C. Historical Society, belonged to Henry Gourdin, who acquired the property in 1838 from Mary S. Horry."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Two stained-glass panels in the 1st floor parlor are Tiffany windows, worth more than \$100,000, which Carrington purchased for his wife on their 5th anniversary in 1895."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Today, visitors can leave with memories of the house, thanks to a guest tradition that began on March 14, 1931, with the Carringtons' daughter, Sallie Calhoun Carrington Chaney, who inherited the residence."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"When Minnie S. Carr purchased the Carrington house in May 1946, she carried on the tradition Mrs. Chaney began. For 30 yrs., she and her sister, Pleasant S. Blevins, welcomed an array of visitors to 'Mrs. Carr's Guest House' (DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Following Mrs. Carr's death in June 1981, the residence passed to her nephew, David S. Spell"(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"It is a prime example of 'the merchants palace' of the 1890s."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Mrs. Martha Carrington, wife of Waring P. Carrington bought the large piece of property at the N.E. corner of Meeting St. & S. Battery on April 3, 1891."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"She paid \$17,000 for the property and the large 2 story Charleston single house with a 2 story service wing."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"The single house appears on a map dated 1852, in the S.C. Historical Society collections."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"In memory of her father, George W. Williams, the Carringtons donated the bandstand in White Point Gardens."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"The Carrington house was built 1890-1892 on a double lot that had been occupied by a large single house destroyed in 1886 earthquake."(DYKYC Jan. 28, 1985)

"Queen Anne Style- was invented by British architect Richard Norman Shaw,(1831-1912). The popularity of the style here peaked in the 1880s & 1890s." (DYKYC 1978)

2 MEETING STREET

RMC NUMBERS

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1890-92 | Carrington | |
| March 14, 1931 | Sallie C. Carrington-inherited | |
| June 26, 1946 | Minnie S. Carr | S46-573 |
| June 1981 | David Spell | E126-173 |

2 MEETING STREET

RMC NUMBERS

| | | |
|----------------|--|----------|
| May 24, 1838 | Mary S. Horry /J. D. Yates (exal) | U-10-329 |
| | Henry Gourdin (Owned until 1886 earthquake destroyed original house) | |
| Oct. 27, 1886 | W. J. A. Fuller | K-20-297 |
| May 3, 1889 | Alice O. Eppley | W-20-272 |
| | William Carrington | |
| 1890-92 | | |
| March 14, 1931 | Carrington | |
| June 26, 1946 | Sallie C. Carrington-inherited | S46-573 |
| | Minnie S. Carr | |
| June 1981 | | E126-173 |
| | David Spell | |

THE CARRINGTON-CARR HOUSE
2 Meeting Street
c. 1890-1892
Property of the Spell family

1993

The Carrington-Carr House is one of Charleston's finest Victorian mansions exemplifying the Queen Anne style. This style is quite intriguing by its avoidance of straight lines on the exterior, and plain flat walls on the interior. As you approached the house, you probably noticed the fish-scaled turrets, multiple roof lines at right angles to themselves, bay windows and the curved piazza supported by double columned arches. This irregularity of plan has been affectionately described as "calculated restlessness". The charm of the dwelling is further heightened by its placement on a double lot with frontage along two important carriage ways (Meeting and South Battery).

GENERAL HISTORY

The house, built from 1890 to 1892, was a wedding present from George W. Williams to his daughter, Martha, and her groom, Waring P. Carrington. Mr. Williams, a wealthy merchant and banker, had previously built (in 1876) another elaborate mansion at 16 Meeting Street -- known today as The Calhoun Mansion. Family tradition maintains that Mr. Williams presented the newlyweds a check for \$75,000 (to build their home) on a rose colored pillow, which is displayed in the foyer. Mr. Carrington himself was a wealthy local jeweler and in 1907, the Carrington family donated to the city the bandstand in White Point Gardens (across the street) in memory of Martha Williams. One could then catch the Southern breezes and hear the Sunday afternoon concerts from the porch.

ENTRANCE FOYER

Much of the character of the house is established in the entry foyer by the generous use of carved English oak. Here, it appears in the fine balustrade that rises to the second floor landing, in the ambitious mantelpiece with mirrored pediment, in the 8 foot panelled walls, and in the ceiling. Looking into the mirror, one can see who is on the second floor, and if upstairs, the reflection shows who is standing underneath the chandelier in the foyer.

THE CARRINGTON-CARR HOUSE

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ENTRANCE FOYER

(continued)

The chandelier is Czechoslovakian cut crystal and was made by the same company which did the intricately cut beveled glass in the front door and transom. The fixture was originally gas fired.

Another outstanding feature of this area is the inglenook or fireplace/sitting area. The door to the left connects to the porte cochere, where you would enter the house from the carriage. You could remove damp coats and shoes, and warm yourself by the fire before further entering the home.

The pictures on the mantel are of Mrs. Carr's nephew's family.

Chest of drawers, English, c. 1820, mahogany with lion's head inlay on upper two drawers.

PARLOR

The house remained in the Carrington family until 1946 when Mrs. John H. Carr bought the home and moved from across the street at #1 Meeting, the Ross Mansion. Some of the furnishings here were originally used in the Ross Mansion, an example being the overwhelming matched brass chandeliers in the parlor and dining room.

The eleven foot etagere is a Carr family heirloom. This massive piece is Renaissance Revival style was made to order and followed the basic mirror and shelf arrangement; however, its size and decorative detail make it unique.

On either side of the etagere are original artworks by Anne Worsham Richardson, a Charleston native and nationally renowned bird painter. These were painted in 1950 and are family favorites, as Mrs. Richardson's mother and the Spells' uncle were sweethearts in their youth.

The house has nine stained glass windows. The two panels in the parlor are by Louis Comfort Tiffany and are exceptional in their beauty. These panels were given as a 5th wedding anniversary present from Waring to Martha in 1895.

The bridal portrait behind the piano is of Mrs. D.R. Spell, wife of the current owner. Their two daughters also wore the same wedding dress, making it a very special part of their memories. The daughters are pictured in the dining room.

Chippendale chest, English, mahogany with satinwood inlay.

THE CARRINGTON-CARR HOUSE

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DINING ROOM

In the dining room, you find the Victorian's love of shaped rooms and wall ornamentation.

Oak china cupboard, on the east wall of the oval room, large, hand carved and built in.

Over the cupboard is a sunburst stained glass window which measures 6 feet across at the bottom. The room is completely lighted with the rising sun each morning.

Oak ceilings were installed in the dining room because of the earthquake which shook Charleston in 1868. Wooden ceilings replaced plaster ceilings to prevent plaster from falling into one's dinner if the quake came again. Typically, plaster was 2 to 3 inches thick and extremely heavy. Recently, during Hurricane Hugo, the plaster ceilings fell on the second floor and the weight dented the hard wood floors.

Over the mantel is a plaster shell designed to coordinate with the semi-circular stained glass window.

Mr. Spell's daughters are pictured in the family wedding dress.

Two larger Anne Worsham Richardson originals of cardinals. Charleston rooftops by John Stobart, a painter of port cities.

The sterling silver chased serving set and candelabra are family pieces, as well as all the silver in the home.

Lucky Newlyweds Given Funds To Build Home On Meeting St.

By LISA DENNIS
Post-Courier Reporter

The Carrington family on the popular nighttime soap "Dynasty," with a beautiful mansion, glamorous clothes and opulent jewels, represents to many the epitome of wealth and elegance in modern times.

During the late 1800s, however, Charleston had its own Carringtons, an affluent family whose home at 2 Meeting St. is a prime example of a "merchant's palace."

One of Charleston's finer Victorian dwellings, it is an intriguing house with a relaxing, romantic quality, situated on a superb site, shaded by century-old live oaks, overlooking White Point Gardens and the harbor beyond.

The funds to build the three-story house were given by George W. Williams as a wedding present to his daughter Martha, who married Waring P. Carrington, a King Street jeweler, in 1890.

Williams, a wealthy merchant, land-owner and banker — a rare exception to the general condition of the economy in the South following the Civil War — had built an elaborate Victorian mansion at 16 Meeting St., known today as the Calhoun Mansion. Family tradition maintains that Williams presented the newlyweds with a check for \$75,000 on a rose-colored pillow that is displayed on the mantel in the foyer at 2 Meeting.

In memory of Williams, the Carringtons donated to the city the bandstand in White Point Gardens, which was popular in the early 1900s for Sunday concerts and picnics.

The Carrington house, built in the then-popular Queen Anne style of architecture, was constructed between 1890-1892 on a double lot that had been occupied by a large Charleston single house destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1886. That house, which appears on a map dated 1853 in the collection of the S.C. Historical So-

Do You Know Your Charleston?

ciety, belonged to Henry Gourdin, who acquired the property in 1838 from Mary S. Horry.

On the interior and exterior, the residence at 2 Meeting embraces virtually all of the architectural techniques associated with the Queen Anne style. Its characteristics, including irregularity of plan and variety of color and texture, have been described as "calculated restlessness."

The rambling arched piazzas that wrap around the house on two sides and two floors, are designed to capture the Southern breeze and are typical of the period.

The multiple rooftops are high and the round turret on the west side of the house is a distinguishing feature of the late phase of the Queen Anne style.

Much of the character of the house is established in the central hall by the generous use of finely grained English oak with carved ornamentation. The room is dominated by a massive staircase, climbing in three stages to the second floor, and a large mantel with mirrored pediment.

Of particular interest in the foyer is the Czechoslovakian crystal chandelier, originally gas fired, and the intricately cut beveled glass used in the door and transom.

The hall is surrounded by asymmetrical rooms of varied shapes and sizes, reflecting the rambling nature of the floor plan. Beautiful fireplaces and mantels, with glazed tile surrounds, adorn practically every room, as do unusually shaped windows.

A second outstanding feature of the house is the use of stained glass in nine windows throughout the house. Two stained-glass panels in the first-floor parlor are Tiffany windows, worth more than \$100,000, which Carrington

purchased for his wife on their fifth anniversary in 1895.

Above the stairs, an angled chimney flue is offset by a beautifully colored oval window. And on the east wall of the oval dining room, a sunburst window, measuring six feet across the bottom, completely illuminates the room with the rising sun.

Architectural interest in the dining room extends to the ceiling, which is paneled in oak. Ceilings of wood, designed to keep plaster from "falling in the food," were not unusual in the period following the Great Earthquake.

On the second floor, five bedrooms branch off the large upstairs foyer in a fingerlike arrangement. One room, on the northeast corner of the second floor, was added for Mrs. Carrington's mother 15 years after the house was completed. It features a large Victorian bathroom and private balcony.

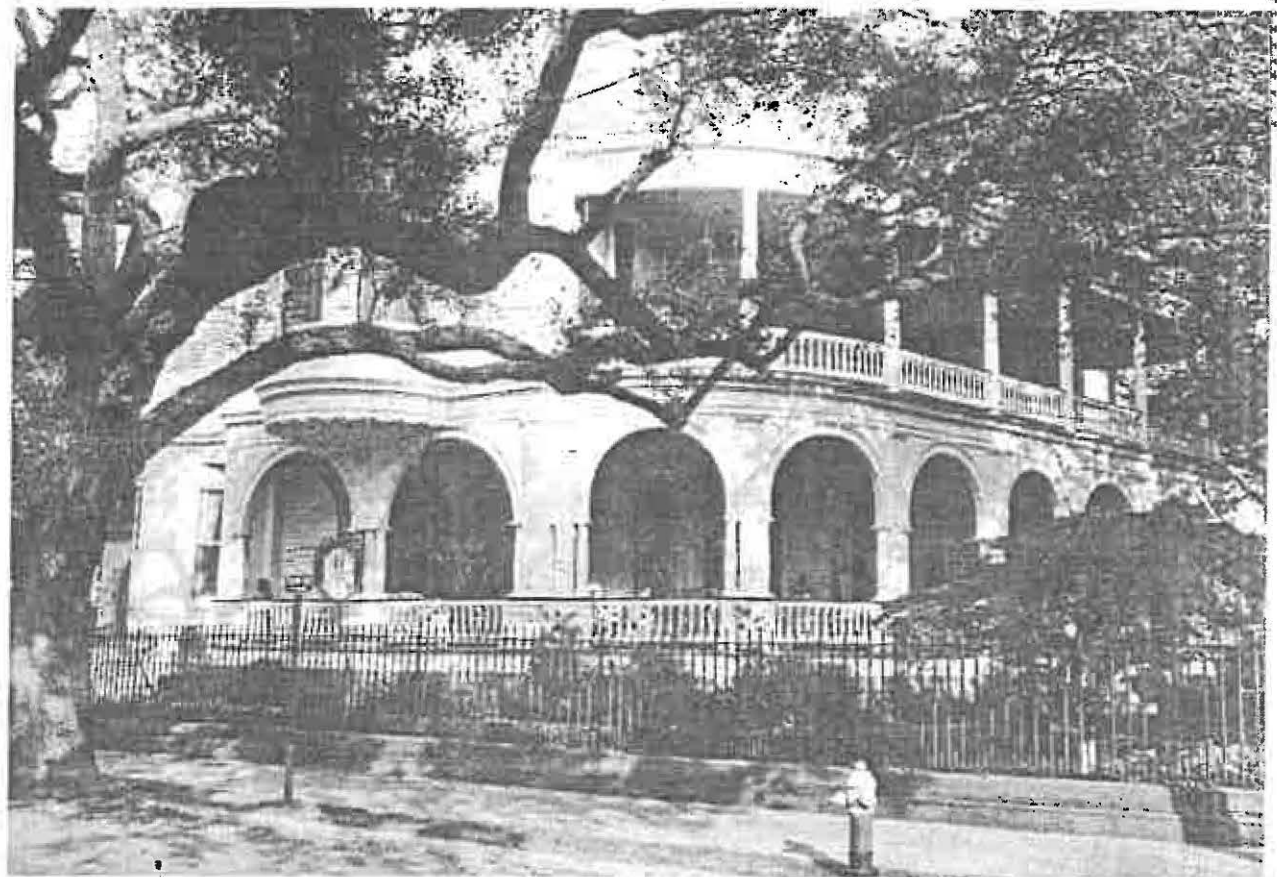
The third floor, which can be reached by a back stairway near the kitchen, was almost certainly used for servants' quarters.

Historian Elizabeth Cole says she can remember attending parties at the Carringtons' as a child, noting that the house always had a "storybook" quality about it.

"I remember it was always very plush, with deep pile carpeting. The interior was magnificent and so beautifully lighted. And they always gave us a little memento when we left."

Today, visitors can leave with memories of the house, and Charleston, thanks to a guest house tradition that began on March 14, 1931, with the Carringtons' daughter, Sallie Calhoun Carrington Chaney, who inherited the residence.

When Minnie S. Carr purchased the Carrington house in May 1946, she carried on the tradition Mrs. Chaney began. For 30 years, she and her sister, Pleasant S. Blevins, welcomed an array of visitors to "Mrs. Carr's Guest House" — from Parisian couples toting knapsacks to a woman who said



Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

The piazzas are designed to capture the Southern breeze

she was the Grand Duchess Anastasia.

Numerous furnishings, decorative arts, silver, Oriental rugs and family heirlooms throughout the house, including a pair of brass chandeliers used in the parlor and dining room, were originally used in the Ross Mansion across the street at 1 Meeting, where Mrs. Carr lived previously.

Following Mrs. Carr's death in June 1981, the residence passed to her nephew, David S. Spell. In the past three years, he has spent a quarter of

a million dollars in renovations to the house, which is called Two Meeting Street Inn.

Modern heating, air conditioning, kitchen appliances, wiring and plumbing have updated the house. In addition, the interior has been painted, wallpapered and refinished. For a special touch, each guest room is named for a family that occupied the house.

The garden has been redesigned and relandscaped, its brick paths re-

flecting the curves and arches of the piazzas. Spell says his next project is to tear down a shed at the rear of the inn and replace it with a functional garden house.

Not every young couple can start their new life together as fortunately as the Carringtons, but many can, and do, experience 19th-century elegance and charm by staying at the inn on their honeymoon.

**The Year's
10 Best Inns**

Country Inns

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1989

BED & BREAKFAST

**Victorian Valentines
From Coast to Coast**

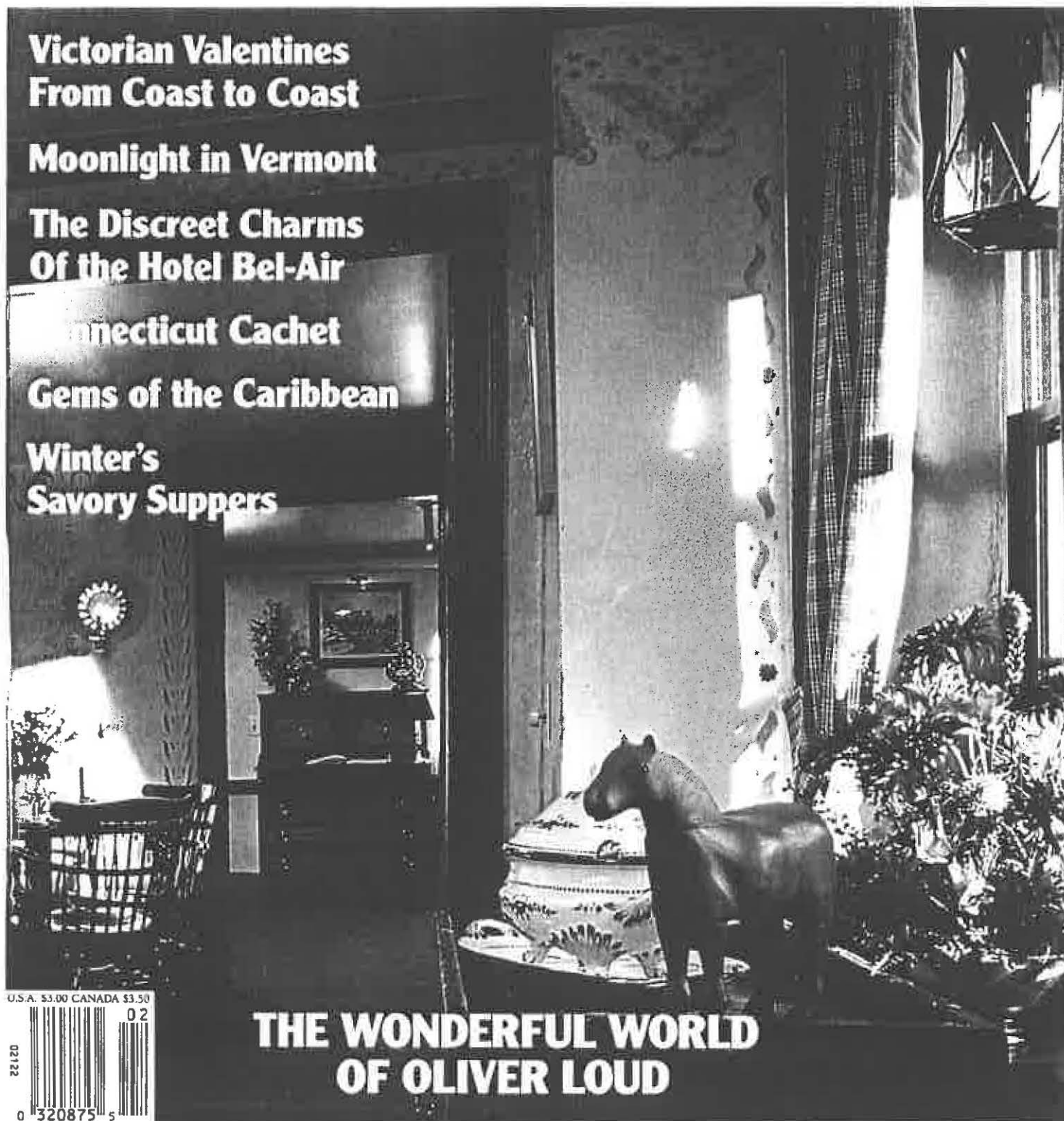
Moonlight in Vermont

**The Discreet Charms
Of the Hotel Bel-Air**

Connecticut Cachet

Gems of the Caribbean

**Winter's
Savory Suppers**



**THE WONDERFUL WORLD
OF OLIVER LOUD**

U.S.A. \$3.00 CANADA \$3.50





Romantic Interludes



Two Meeting Street

Romance is a melody with a thousand variations. Mozart and champagne by candlelight... smoky jazz and a white camellia... a slow dance under the stars to Nat King Cole on the car radio—singing wistfully of lipstick traces and plane tickets to romantic places.

There is a world of places for which we wax nostalgic, about which we dream. As winter closes in and Valentine's Day approaches, our thoughts turn to these places of the heart. Whatever the fantasy, there is a common chord: to be alone, away, together.

Following, a trio of Victorian inns whose seductive settings—a misty beach on the Pacific, a grand allée of oaks dripping with Spanish moss, a north country field sparkling with new snow—are dreams come true.

Charleston is a city of sultry southern charm and a certain patrician grandeur. It is a small city bordered by two rivers on the South Carolina coast; an historic city of tree-lined eighteenth-century streets and pretty nineteenth-century houses. It is a city perfect for strolling, and for celebrating romance.

Two Meeting Street Inn, at the tip of historic Charleston peninsula, is one of the prettiest of the city's old mansions, and one of its few Victorians. Such turn-of-the-century architectural details as turrets, gables, bay windows and balustrades differentiate the three-story Queen Anne from

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(Opposite) Some of the owner's extensive collection of Canton china sits on the baby grand piano; the stained glass is one of nine original Tiffany windows in the 1892 inn. (Above) A Renaissance Revival étagère, Italian fireplace tiles and an ornate brass and cut-glass chandelier lend an old-world elegance to the sunny living room.



(Top) The dining room features an "earthquake-proof" oak ceiling, a mahogany table resplendent with crystal and silver, and a built-in cupboard topped by a semicircular stained glass window. (Below) A sunny bay and a Charleston Rice four-poster with a lacy canopy make the romantic Blue Room a favorite with Meeting Street guests.



her more stately neighbors. But a double-decker pair of sweeping arched piazzas (Charlestonese for porch), irresistibly inviting with rocking chairs and lacy potted ferns, distinguishes this inn from all others.

The setting, too, impresses. Framed by noble moss-draped oaks, the white wood-framed inn faces picturesque Battery Park, with its grand allées, horse-drawn carriages, rusted cannons and memorial plaques. A few steps from the inn's wrought-iron front gate there are fine views of tranquil Charleston harbor and Fort Sumter, where the first shots of the Civil War were fired.

The South's enduring reverence for history and family tradition resonates throughout Two Meeting Street. Inn-keeper David Spell has decorated with antiques and heirloom objects so deftly chosen and placed it seems they must always have been there—just this way. And with its English oak paneling, luxuriant draperies, carved and mirrored mantels, cut-crystal chandeliers and nine original Tiffany stained glass windows, Two Meeting Street is as richly textured as a Victorian valentine.

Built as a wedding gift, the inn's very history turns on romance. In 1891, when Waring and Martha Carrington were married, the bride's wealthy father gave them \$75,000 to build a home befitting their social stature.

In 1931, the Carringtons' daughter, Sallie Chaney, inherited the residence and transformed it into a guest house. Indeed, Two Meeting Street is Charleston's oldest bed and



(This page) A wealth of Victorian details distinguishes the Queen Anne inn, but the sweeping arched piazzas are its crowning glory. Lined with rockers, the ground-floor piazza is the perfect place to relax. The brick courtyard—and the flowers at its center—echo the shell pattern of the dining room's stained glass window.

breakfast. "I still have Miss Sallie's guest books," reveals Spell, who was bequeathed the property by his aunt, Minnie Carr, in 1981.

As in Miss Sallie's time, today's guests are welcomed in a warm foyer paneled with hand-carved oak and appointed with an antique chest, an Oriental rug and lavish floral arrangements. A grandfather clock, circa 1790, sounds its chimes on the hour.

In an arched alcove, an authentic inglenook with recessed stained glass windows and cushioned seats flanks a cozy fireplace. Above the inglenook is a mirror that served an important purpose in days gone by. The resident belle would stand on the landing above the foyer and evaluate prospective beaux who could not, from their vantage point, see her. Many a gentleman caller was thus turned away.

In the elegant living room guests can relax with a book on Charleston history or simply sit back and relish their surroundings. A baby grand piano, a magnificent mahogany étagère from the 1840s, Italian fireplace tiles and a mirrored Victorian mantel, enormous windows draped with rich silk moiré and an ornate brass and cut-glass chandelier accentuate the old-world atmosphere. Every available surface brims with treasures, including an antique Baccarat candelabra and exquisite porcelain plates and vases from the owner's collection of blue-and-white Canton china.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," says Spell. "Loads of things are in storage. My aunt, typical of the elderly, would not let go of a thing."

The oval-shaped formal dining room is resplendent with gleaming silver, sparkling crystal and china hand painted by the innkeeper. A huge mahogany table centers the room,

which also features a built-in cupboard lined with mirrors and surmounted by a semicircular stained glass window with a stunning shell design.

The oak ceiling in the room was no whim; it was installed to prevent plaster from falling into food should there be an earthquake. Few people are aware that Charleston suffered a devastating quake in 1886—five years before Two Meeting Street was built.

While all the rooms are conducive to romance, the Blue Room, with its Charleston Rice canopy bed and spacious, sunny bay, is the most requested. The pale pink, utterly feminine Williams Room is also a favorite. It even has a private balcony—perfect for sipping champagne and whispering sweet nothings under the stars.

Breakfast at Two Meeting Street is a continental affair: homemade muffins, fresh fruit, juice, tea or coffee. Guests have the option of being served their morning repast in the living room, on the piazza or in the courtyard garden—a shady haven where clay pots explode with greenery and the air is perfumed with the scent of lemon blossoms and tea olives.

Of course, the true romantic will sneak downstairs, fetch a beautifully arranged tray and take it up to his or her mate for a cozy breakfast in bed. —Jolee Edmondson; photography by Larry Workman

Two Meeting Street Inn, 2 Meeting Street, Charleston, SC 29401; 803/723-7322. Eight guest rooms, six w/private baths. Rates from \$55 to \$125, including continental breakfast. Children over 8/no pets. Smoking restricted. Cancellation policy. Personal checks.

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