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# Riddle Linked To Mansion

By W. H. J. THOMAS  
Staff Reporter

One of Charleston's larger Greek Revival mansions, thought somewhat isolated along the always-changing western section of Calhoun Street, has just undergone its third restoration in 25 years and has received an award as a "Noteworthy Preservation" by the Preservation Society of Charleston.

A well-maintained dwelling now in large apartments, with unusually fine ornamental plasterwork and ornate Greek Revival wood carving, this house at 214 Calhoun St. is probably best remembered locally for its association 73 years ago with one of Charleston's unsolved and most hushed-up murders, the killing of the brilliant young Thomas Pinckney Jr. in February of 1899.

## Do You Know Your Charleston?

Occupying the northwest corner of the intersection of Pitt and Calhoun Streets, the dwelling stands on what was early known as Wragg Lands. By 1780, the property was part of a 23-acre tract to the north side of Calhoun Street which had become the possession of the wealthy planter, Joseph Manigault, who was soon to build his own grand residence at Meeting Street and Ashmead Place.

After the start of the 19th century, when the drift to the "suburbs" had begun, Manigault split this section into quite large building lots for sale. An early buyer was Frederick Shaffer, a prosperous house carpenter, who bought a series of lots near Calhoun and Pitt between 1825 and 1834.

It appears that shortly after making his final purchase on Jan. 20, 1834, for \$1,050, Shaffer started the extant imposing



(Staff Photo by Burbage)

## 214 Calhoun Built Circa 1834

dwelling, a residence strongly similar in its plan to the great houses of Beaufort with a modified version of the Beaufort T-shape. It seems certain Shaffer had either an association with that town or at least a great fondness for its buildings.

The house he built was unusually elaborate even for its period, both in the number and arrangement of rooms and in the careful attention to details in ornamentation. It seems certain that as a carpenter and contractor he used his own work crews, as the construction costs otherwise would have been exorbitant.

It is interesting to note that Shaffer kept as many as 18 slaves at his in-town property to assist in its maintenance. The Shaffer family retained the house and lot until June of

1885 when, in settling the builder's estate, it was sold to Isaac V. Bardin, a local cotton merchant, for \$10,500.

Bardin lived on at the dwelling until his death in February 1897. Just two years later, following a call at the house, Thomas Pinckney Jr., a 28-year-old attorney of distinguished lineage, was found shot twice in the back.

Pinckney, described by The News and Courier of that day as "a most charming gentleman, possessed of rare qualities of heart and mind", died two days later without making a reported statement or naming his killer. He was known as a man very attractive to women, and speculation as to the identity of his killer or killers has always centered upon a love affair.

Soon after the shooting that

night, the wounded man was joined by a Miss Bardin, a Mr. Bardin and a Mr. Barnwell.

There followed a series of closed hearings after which the matter was officially dropped with no charges being made.

The News and Courier reported "the secrecy preserved about the death gave rise to many unpleasant expressions on the part of theorists and furnished foundation on which to erect further sensation in connection with the matter."

In Victorian Charleston's manner of closing doors where scandal might be, the case ended as if it had never taken place, though a number of individuals whose names were associated in the affair moved from the city.

The property at 214 Calhoun was next sold along with the Bardin family commercial property at Prioleau and Gendron streets in 1910 to the Panama Real Estate Co. for \$21,435. The house was then conveyed to Mrs. Ida E. Sanders on Aug. 9, 1910 for \$8,610.

On July 17, 1947, the house and lot were sold to Mrs. Fadwa Shahid. Within several months, it was purchased by J.A. Wilkins.

Wilkins had the dwelling elaborately renovated to be used as quality apartments while not damaging any of the period details. Following his death in 1964, the house was sold to his daughter, Mrs. Laura Wilkins Pendleton, and her husband, John R. Pendleton.

The Pendletons have completed two additional restorations of the dwelling and now maintain their own residence there as well.

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alph J. Land,  
Pierce, said

aboard the vessel here Sunday.

The Pierce has its temporary berth at Charleston Coast Guard Base.

"The old-timers," Land said, "used landmarks to check their positions. Then when the landmarks were about to be lost beyond the horizon they'd string out buoys at intervals and use them as markers."

"They sounded the depth with hand-lines."

The Pierce is checking

depths between the 10 to 100-fathom marks, ranging approximately from seven to 60 miles offshore.

Land said the present phase of the survey from Edisto to east of the Savannah River was expected to be completed in June.

Later the Pierce will return to survey inshore waters.

"It has been very uneventful," Land said.

"The real surprising thing has been how accurate the old charts have proved."