

News & Courier - June 2, 1975

# 14 Legare St. Considered

## A 'Gem'

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

The Adam-style dwelling house which Francis Simmons built at 14 Legare St. is recognized as a gem in Charleston's treasury of fine architecture.

An architectural "bonus" is the Regency style fence, with the so-called "Pineapple Gates," which a subsequent owner, George Edwards, built.

Both the house and fence are rated in the highest category in Charleston's new Historic Architecture Inventory and were rated as "Nationally Important" in the architectural survey "This is Charleston."

The house was apparently built by Simmons, a John's Island planter, soon after he purchased the site on Feb. 28, 1800, from Mrs. Sarah Elliott Johnston.

Simmons is listed in the 1800 city directory on Tradd Street and in the 1803 city directory for the first time on Legare Street.

In his will, dated Jan. 30, 1814, and probated March 18, 1814, Simmons refers to "my Brick House" on Le-

gare Street and mentions the furnish of several rooms.

The will mentions two lower rooms, a "small room adjoining the Bed Chamber opposite the Drawing

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Room" and the "Eastern Chamber" (implying there is also a western chamber) of the third story.

The description is, of course, that of a typical Charleston "single house" with two primary rooms flanking a stairhall on each floor. However, it cannot be called simply a "single house" as it is of mansion proportions and contains some of the finest Adam style interiors in Charleston.

Simmons built his town house with three full floors on a high basement, three windows wide, with mock quoins on the corners and a dormered hip roof.

The construction is of Carolina "grey" brick laid in Flemish bond.

The piazza blind is also of brick

rather than the usual wood. The piazza doorway with its paneled surround, pilasters and entablature, and fanlight with fine tracery, is particularly beautiful.

The piazzas themselves are a delicate balance to the mass of the house, with slim columns of the pre-Greek Revival period, plain balusters and a handcarved cornice.

George Edwards, who bought the property from Simmons' estate on March 5, 1816, for \$20,000, enhanced the beauty of the property by adding the front fence, which bears his initials in the ironwork.

The fence was apparently built after 1818 for on July 31, 1818, Edwards bought the property to the south of the residence and tore down a wooden house there to provide space for a garden.

He bought the wooden house and lot from the estate of Simmons, who had left the property in his will to Mrs. Sarah Todd; "during her widowhood" and "on her death to my cousin Mary Simmons if single."

Edwards had the fence built in the Regency style which evolved from the Adam.

According to tradition, Edwards had the finials carved in Italy, and asked for live oak acorns. The artists, not being familiar with the fruit of that native American tree, assumed that Edwards' sketch was wrong, and gave him representations of pine cones native to their own country.

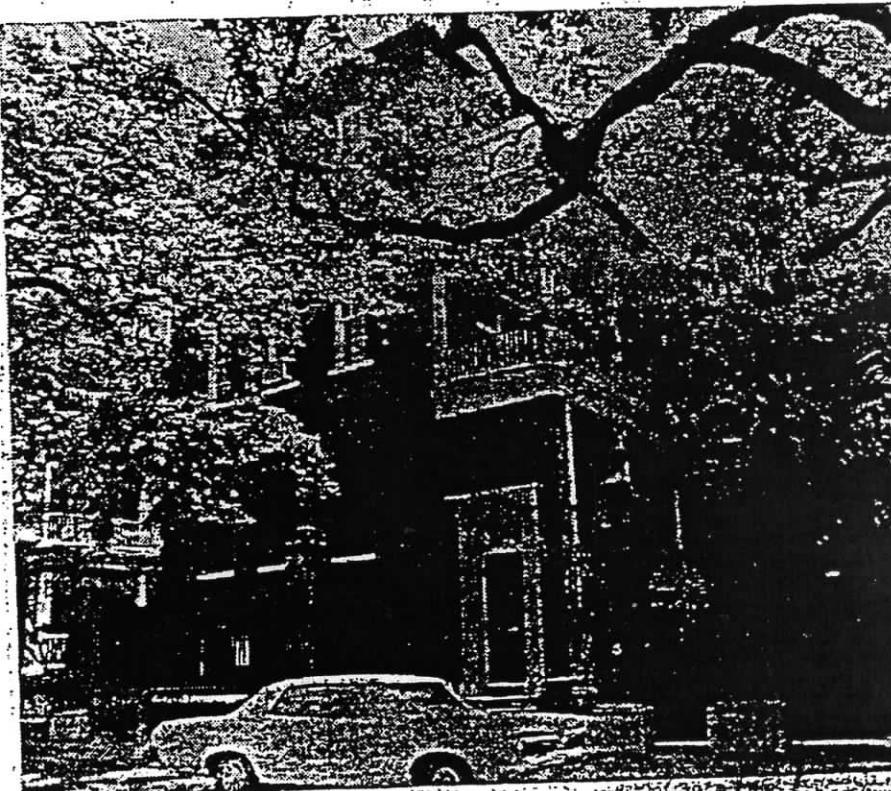
A two-story kitchen building and a single-story coach house, which possibly date from the construction of the main house, occupy the rear yard.

Edwards sold the property in 1835 to Arthur P. Hayne for \$16,200. The relatively low price reflects the economic conditions of the period.

Hayne, however, profited from the relatively prosperous period which followed, as he sold the property in 1841 for \$30,000 to William Henry Heyward, a planter.

Subsequently the property was bought by Edwin L. Kerrison, merchant, in 1863. James Adger Jr., in 1870, bought the house, and it remained in the allied Adger and Smyth families until 1930.

The house has been the home of Mr. and Mrs. Norman B. Stevenson since 1968, when they purchased it from Mr. and Mrs. Bushrod B. Howard.



(Staff Photo by Dewey Swain)

Simmons House And Edwards Gates