

Elizabeth Barnwell Gough House
705 Washington Street
Beaufort
Beaufort County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-542

HABS
SC,
7-BEAUF
34-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

ADDENDUM
PAGES...

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Addendum to
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34.

Location: 705 Washington Street, Beaufort, Beaufort County, South Carolina.

Owner: Private.

Significance: One of the town's largest tabby dwellings, the Barnwell Gough house is the earliest structure built on a "T" shaped plan known to survive in Beaufort, South Carolina.

PART I. HISTORIC INFORMATION.

A. Physical History

1. Original plan and character: The house is a "T"-shaped, tabby structure of Palladian inspiration incorporating two full stories over an elevated basement. It has a temple-like, pedimented entrance porch and is approached south from Washington Street.

2. Alterations: Some time during the early nineteenth century, single windows of the two side wings facing east and west were enlarged at both the first and second floor levels to accommodate new tripartite windows. The house suffered extensive interior damage during the Civil War; the mahogany handrails to the main stair, for example, disappeared during this period and were replaced by new, Victorian-era handrails, balusters, and newels near the turn of the nineteenth century.

Paneling of the first floor's southwest and southeast rooms was sold and removed from the house in 1933. During the 1950s or perhaps 1960s, the basement was excavated to improve headroom and concrete floor slabs installed; the original north porch was removed and replaced by a concrete block addition. Interior spaces were also altered to form apartments, as well as an exterior staircase and porch being added to the east facade.

The house was extensively restored after 1976 when a new, two-story addition containing bathrooms and a kitchen was added to the rear (north) of the building. This addition also served to buttress the north facade which was considered structurally unstable. The apartments were removed, the paneling restored to the first floor southwest room, and trim elsewhere repaired or restored.

B. Historical Context

On March 24, 1785, an act of the South Carolina General Assembly instructed local officials "to expose for sale in whole or in lots the lands...known to be common adjoining the

town of Beaufort”.¹ Located north and west of the Township, this common land was subsequently subdivided into blocks, existing streets being extended northwards to intersect with an old highway called the Shell Road. Between the latter thoroughfare (currently Boundary Street) and Duke Street, three new east-to-west roads (Washington, Greene and Congress streets) were laid out, the old Shell Road defining the Town’s northern limits. Altogether, fifty-two blocks were added to Beaufort’s original grid plan which had been first laid out in ca. 1717, with two blocks set aside for communal purposes. Block 131 was for a “burying ground” and Block 132 for a workhouse. The rest underwent subdivision, and the resulting lots were assigned numbers starting with “1” at the northeast corner of East and Duke streets.²

According to cartographic sources, thirty-eight new blocks had attracted purchasers of one or more lots before 1799.³ Nathaniel Barnwell II was most likely among them, buying Block No. 42 (bounded north by Greene Street, south by Washington Street, east by Carteret Street and west by Scott’s Street) in its entirety. Subsequently he built a large tabby house upon it for his sister, Elizabeth Barnwell Gough.

Born in 1753, Elizabeth was the third daughter of Colonel Nathaniel Barnwell and his wife Mary Gibbes Barnwell. In 1772, she married (supposedly in London) Richard Gough, a planter of Goose Creek. But, according to family tradition, the marriage was stormy and ended in separation some time after the birth of a daughter named Mariana in March of 1773. Colonel Nathaniel Barnwell was well aware of this marital discord, adding a codicil to his will clearly designed to prevent Richard Gough, who died in 1796, from making any claims against Elizabeth’s inheritance. Dated December 21, 1773, the relevant passage reads as follows:

I Nathaniel Barnwell the Elder of the Town of Beaufort in perfect and sound memory; do make this Codicil to my Will, : wherein I did bequeath, unto my beloved daughter Elizabeth one fifth part of my personal Estate, but now, being hereunto moved, by divers, good causes, & reasons, I do hereby in this codicil to my Will give and bequeath unto my beloved son Nathaniel Barnwell the aforesaid fifth part of my Personal estate in trust for the sole use of his Sister my beloved daughter Elizabeth Gough , & unto the Issue & Heirs of her body.⁴

¹SC Statutes at Law, Vol. 1, 702.

²This created duplication since Lot numbers 1- 453 had already been assigned prior to Beaufort’s northward extension.

³This information is based on an analysis of a map apparently prepared by Thomas Fuller in 1799, which as far as known now exists only in the form of copy redrawn from the lost original. National Archives, Cartographic Division, RG 58, Item 25.

⁴ Will of Nathaniel Barnwell , Charleston Wills, Vol. 17, 650-54. WPA Transcript, SC Archives & History, Columbia, SC.

Nathaniel Barnwell the Elder died in 1775. Where or under what circumstances Elizabeth Barnwell Gough lived immediately thereafter is not known. But, it seems likely that the tabby - built residence erected for her use on Block No. 45 was finished with a year or two of Beaufort's expansion in 1785. Although Elizabeth's household was never large, the house itself was unusually grand for the period, reflecting, no doubt, the owner's close connections with Beaufort's leading and most prosperous families rather than the ambiguity of her marital status.⁵

Two stories high over an elevated basement with a pedimented entrance portico supported on Roman Doric columns, the house was probably modeled after Miles Brewton's Charleston townhouse at what is now 27, King Street (built 1765-69) which in turn re-interpreted drawings for the Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese illustrated by Andrea Palladio's *I Quattro Libri* of 1570.⁶ Elizabeth Gough's house was one of the largest tabby buildings of its time and among the first to be built in Beaufort on a "T"-shaped, double-pile plan. This arrangement had the advantage over its strictly rectangular counterparts of allowing direct ventilation of the rear rooms (these projecting right and left as wings), though at the expense of long roof spans and complex roof carpentry.

The Barnwells employed highly competent craftsmen to execute the work. But these workmen were not especially inspired. Elizabeth Gough's house lacked the richly detailed, interior and exterior trim which characterizes the Brewton House in Charleston. However, Beaufort's far less dense urban development allowed land toward the south (Block No.43) to be left open, giving the residence a park- like setting appropriate to its Palladian style. The green was destined to survive as open space down until 1882 when it was subdivided for housing.⁷

In 1791, Elizabeth's daughter, Mariana Gough, married James Harvey Smith. Through the influence of Smith's uncle, who was Governor of North Carolina, the couple moved in ca. 1800 to a plantation in Brunswick County on the Cape Fear River, in North Carolina. Their four oldest sons either stayed behind or spent extended periods in Beaufort, living with their maternal

⁵Captain Richard Gough died in February of 1796. While he continued to acknowledge his wife and daughter, he left them only £50 apiece. Elizabeth never remarried.

⁶ See *I Quattro Libri*, Libro Secundo (Venice, 1570): 53. The model was to remain influential in Beaufort until the early 1800s, the John Mark Verdier House (ca. 1801) and William Fripp House (ca. 1830) recalling the Palladian prototype at ever more distant removes.

⁷ In 1882, J. C. Mayo mentions that Lot 43, which was then being subdivided into building lots, was formerly known as "the Green" a designation which confirms that it was originally meant to function as open space. See (Port Royal) *Palmetto Post* (19 January 1882).

grandmother while attending school. It is thought that at least one of them, Robert Barnwell Rhett, sometimes called the Father of Secession, was born in Gough's house.⁸

Elizabeth Barnwell Gough died 10 October 1817 and was buried at St. Helena's Parish Church, in Beaufort. Her daughter and son-in-law then left what was apparently an unsuccessful agricultural enterprise on the Cape Fear River and returned to Beaufort. While it seems likely that Mariana inherited most, if not all of her mother's property, relevant probate records are lost which makes the sequence of subsequent events uncertain. Stephen Barnwell asserts that John Gibbes Barnwell, only surviving son of General John Barnwell, "bought the large tabby house in Beaufort built by his aunt Elizabeth Barnwell Gough." but gives no date or reference for the statement.

Maps prepared for the US Direct Tax Commission in 1862 do show that on the eve of the Civil War, Block No. 42 was owned by J. G. Barnwell's son and namesake, Captain J. G. Barnwell (1816-1905). The block and its improvements, moreover, were valued at \$10,000 which was an exceptionally high figure for a Beaufort town property.

Abandoned by its owner following the Battle of Port Royal in November of 1861, the house was later seized by Federal Forces occupying Beaufort. Along with the neighboring buildings, including Beaufort College (Block 33) and the Fuller house (Block 31), it was turned into a military hospital and designated Hospital No.10.⁹ Subsequently, Block 42 was auctioned by the US Direct Tax Commission for delinquent taxes in the amount of \$120, including penalties.¹⁰ Emily Barnwell, younger daughter of Captain John Gibbes Barnwell, then purchased the property for \$200 from the United States in November of 1866.

If Emily Barnwell ever occupied the original tabby house is uncertain. The structure's interior spaces suffered considerable, perhaps malicious, damage during the Civil War, a circumstance perhaps explained by the dwelling's association with Robert Barnwell Rhett. Repairs were made, including the installation of a new, walnut handrail to the main staircase (which had probably lost its original mahogany handrail and balusters to looters or medical orderlies carrying pallets or stretchers up to reception rooms on the second floor) but when or by whom the work was completed is not known.

⁸ James Smith's children took the Rhett family name, which was in danger of dying out, in 1837.

⁹ A claim for compensation indicates an adjacent property, Lot A, Block 53, occupied by a large house and outbuildings owned by J.F. Porteous was also designated a hospital. The building "was destroyed by fire while so used ." National Archives, Records, Court of Claims; Ms. map of Beaufort, Library of Congress, G3914.B4E58.

¹⁰ Along with most other Beaufort Town properties, the forthcoming sale of Block 42 was advertised in the *Free South*, 17 January 1863. It is likely that the property was bought in for the United States as the US Direct Tax Commission later sold it to Emily Barnwell.

By or during 1891, Block 42 was divided into two unequal portions. The old house now stood on the larger southern parcel. To the north, a smaller lot was bought by Mary R. Bailey from Joshua A. Whitman, and a new, timber framed house was built on the site at the corner of Greene and Scott's streets some time near the turn of the nineteenth century.

Picture postcards published during the early twentieth century, including one postmarked in 1916, indicate that the house was then Beaufort's Baptist Manse, but the duration of this use is uncertain. It is attested that following purchase by George W. Becket, probably from C.M. McTeer in ca. 1932, an attempt was made to strip what remained of the building's original paneling and sell the same for reinstallation elsewhere.

Impoverished by the Great Depression, George W. Becket, who was an attorney, approached wealthy northern families who had set up hunting camps in coastal South Carolina with offers to sell them paneling, mantel pieces, and other trim items from the house. Mrs. Hiram Dewing, of Locust Valley, Long Island, New York, was told that:

For an immediate sale you may have these three paneled interiors at the ridiculously low price of Thirty-five Hundred (\$3500) Dollars cash, the paneling in the ballroom alone is worth nearly double that sum.

If you wish the ballroom paneling itself you may have it for Twenty-five hundred (\$2500) Dollars. If you wish the paneling of either of the other rooms you may have it at Twelve Hundred (\$1200) Dollars for the eastern room or One Thousand (\$1,000) Dollars for the western room. These prices are for an immediate acceptance only as my time is growing short.¹¹

Eventually, an agreement was reached with Mrs. Herbert Lee Pratt who purchased the paneling from the dwelling's southeast and southwest first floor rooms.¹² Becket was grateful, though still hopeful of an additional sale, writing:

My Dear Mrs. Pratt:

¹¹George W. Becket, Beaufort, SC to Mrs. Hiram Dewing, Locust Valley, Long Island, New York, 6 January 1932. Copy, Historic Beaufort Foundation, Beaufort, SC.

¹²Herbert Lee Pratt (1871-1945) was the son of Charles Pratt (1830-91) who founded an oil refinery on Long Island, New York, and later (1874) entered into partnership with John D. Rockefeller. A Trustee of the Pratt Institute which had been founded by his father Herbert Lee, Pratt bought what became known as Good Hope Plantation, a tract containing 19,000 acres located near Grahamville (now Jasper County) South Carolina from the heirs of the Heyward family in 1910. Subsequently a log-built hunting lodge was erected on the property.

Please pardon my apparent impatience since I would never have troubled you had it not been for the urgency of my need nor would I have done so than had I known of your illness, for which I am very sorry.

Needless to say your timely help has saved me the home and has converted what was a losing proposition and an expense into a paying proposition and a gain. By paying off a large part of the mortgage I have stopped the interest and by using part of the money to remodel my home I have added to my income. I have now the beautiful walnut staircase, the paneling of the ballroom and four mantels- besides the front door, all of which I would be glad to sell since under my scheme of remodeling they would be of no further use to me. ... I will take Five Hundred Dollars for the walnut staircase, Two Hundred Dollars for the front door assembly, Two Hundred Dollars a piece for the mantels and Twenty-five Hundred dollars for the ballroom assembly. ¹³

At first Becket was under the impression that the paneling was to be reinstalled in the Pratt's hunting lodge at Good Hope Plantation, near Grahamville, South Carolina. But, if this was the original plan then circumstances changed, Becket shipping his paneling by rail from Yemassee, South Carolina, to Long Island, New York, where it was installed in the Pratt's residence at Great Neck. Desperate for reimbursement of his expenses, Becket wrote to Mrs. Pratt again on 15 February 1933:

My Dear Mrs. Pratt:

The paneling of the east rom was delivered completely crated to the railroad company on Tuesday, the 14th instant and bill of lading issued , which I enclose with this letter. The west room is being taken down and crated and will follow by next Monday I believe, though it may take a little longer.

I would appreciate a check from you for Two Hundred (\$200) Dollarsthis is necessary because my house is so torn up that my tenants are threatening to leave and I wish to make the rooms habitable as quickly as possible. ¹⁴

The house remained in Becket ownership until 1945 when it was sold to John F. Morrall who excavated its basement to create greater headroom and then subdivided the lower space and two upper floors into rental apartments. An early, probably original, timber-framed back porch was

¹³George W. Becket, Beaufort, SC to Mrs. Herbert Lee Pratt, 1277 Fifth Avenue, New York City, 28 March 1933. Copy, Historic Beaufort Foundation, Beaufort, SC.

¹⁴George W. Becket to Mrs. Herbert Lee Pratt, 15 February 1933. Copy, Historic Beaufort Foundation, Beaufort, SC.

replaced with a concrete-block addition containing kitchens and bathrooms. By the late 1960s the house, now largely rented by military personnel, was almost derelict.

After negotiations between Morrall and the University of South Carolina for the building's sale reached an impasse, the property was purchased in 1976 by Jane Bruce Guion Brooker who, with her husband Colin Brooker, embarked upon a long conservation program involving stabilization of exterior tabby, extensive repairs, rehabilitation of interior spaces, and installing semi-formal gardens around the dwelling in place of car parking. Through an arrangement with Historic Beaufort Foundation, paneling removed from the southeast first floor room (which some time after 1933 had been moved to La Jolla, California, where it was reinstalled in another residence) was obtained from the Pratt family and restored to its original place.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of exterior

1. **Facade arrangement:** Facades of the building's front portion are organized in a 5 bay (south) x 2 bay (east and west) arrangement. The principal street facade (south) features pairs of windows flanking a central opening at the first and second floor levels, which has a jib door giving onto the south porch. Smaller wall openings at the basement level follow the same general fenestration pattern.

The long, rear (north) facade incorporates seven bays, three windows being grouped to each side of a doorway at the first floor level. Disposition of the second floor openings is similar except that the central bay is occupied by a Palladian or Venetian window which lights the upper stair hall. End facades (looking east or west) of the two projecting wings feature a tripartite window centered at the first and second floor level. These windows are not original. The reworking of interior trim and molding profiles indicate that smaller openings were enlarged to accommodate the much larger window frames some time between 1825 and 1835.

2. Structural system, framing

a. **Exterior Walls:** Exterior walls are made of load-bearing tabby rising to a height of about 31'-0" above current ground level. As usual in multi-storey tabby construction of the period, the exterior skin is reduced in thickness at each successively higher floor. Thus the basement walls measure 1'-10" in width, this dimension being reduced to 1'-5" at the first floor level and to 12" at the second floor level. Tabby shows evidence of expert

casting and careful compaction, vital factors considering that the long north facade approaches theoretical limits with respect to stability.

Walls are stuccoed using an oyster shell lime and sand mix in at least two coats on all exterior faces, the stucco scored in imitation of regularly coursed stone with voussoirs and keystones indicated over openings. There is evidence that exterior building faces received regular applications of lime wash. Where not faced by paneling, interior wall surfaces are finished smooth with shell lime plaster applied directly over the tabby.

b. Internal Partitions: These are typically timber framed and non-load bearing. An exception occurs in the basement where a load bearing cross wall running east-to-west centered on the chimneys is made of tabby.

c. Floor framing: The first and second floors are supported on cypress joists running east-to-west supported on a pair of heart-pine transverse beams, each measuring 9"x 9" in section, running north-to-south across the building, this span being uninterrupted at the second floor level. Typically, joists measure 9" x 3" in section, are positioned 18" on center, and span up to 26'-0" without intermediate support.

d. Roof framing: Still in excellent, near original condition, the main roof frame is hipped, with gable ended extensions enclosing the two wings and south porch. Two parallel king post trusses run from front to back of the dwelling (an approximate span of 42') without intermediate support. Each of the two trusses, which are spaced 8'-6" apart, receive two principal rafters directly and a through-purlin secondary rafter system (rafters measuring 6" x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ") indirectly. Ceiling joists span between lateral (east or west) external walls, where they rest on continuous 9" x 4" timber plates, and the bottom chord of a truss. The king posts are about 11'-0" high, measure 8"x 8" in section, and receive four diagonal struts. Each bottom chord is cut from a single baulk of timber and measures 9" x 6" in section by about 43' in length. All carpentry joints in the roof frame are carefully morticed, tenoned, and pegged, a circumstance which underscores how labor intensive, and expensive, installation of this and similar roof frames must have been.

A ladder in the roof space gave access to the exterior via a hatch in 1976, the ladder appearing original. A fragmentary early roof covering of cypress shingles was also visible. During the twentieth century, a sheet metal was introduced over the shingles, this later being patched and replaced by several generations of composition tile.

4. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:

a. South Porch: Measuring approximately 12'-0" north-to-south by 21'-0" east-to-west in plan at ground level, the south porch incorporates two tiers raised on brick supporting

piers, with brick arches spanning between the piers on the south face. Porch construction is supported by four Tuscan columns at the first and second floor levels. The lower columns are constructed of stuccoed brick, and the upper columns of timber, all carefully detailed. Balustrades extending between porch supports feature simple, rectangular balusters. Access from Washington Street is gained by a flight of brick steps which are gently splayed in plan.

The south porch is surmounted by a pediment, the second floor ceiling (almost certainly original) being paneled.

b. North Porch: Now replaced. Rafter and floor joist sockets observed during reconstruction indicate that the original north porch incorporated one raised, single story enclosed under a hipped roof. It was approached by a flight of splayed steps closely resembling those approaching the house from the south.

4. Chimneys: A pair of chimney stacks is centered between the front and rear rooms. Originally all rooms above the basement level were heated. The hearths opened north or south in a side by side, rather than a back to back, arrangement. Except in the main, second floor reception room (ballroom), each chimney is flanked on one side by a closet and the other by pass-through doors linking the pairs of rooms north and south. Chimney construction is of fired brick, built independently of all timber framing. Exclusive of an arched brick cap (now rebuilt), stacks rise approximately 44'-6" above current ground level.

5. Openings

a. Doors and doorways: Surrounded by a simple but carefully made timber doorcase with reeded pilasters and transom of Adamesque design, the south (main) entrance has no sidelights. Conversely, the rear entrance features a low central doorway without transom, flanked right and left by narrow windows equipped with single hung sashes.

b. Windows and shutters: The majority of first and second floor windows (which each measure 6'-4" high x 3"-9" wide including exterior trim) feature a fixed sash above and sliding sash below, installed without weights, as was typical in Beaufort down until the twentieth century. Lower valves open notch and catch fashion. Defining six-over-six glazing patterns, the muntins are thin, and their carefully cut, molding profiles suggesting an early nineteenth-century, if not original, date.

End facades of east and west wings feature tripartite windows (measuring about 6'-10" wide x 6'-9" high excluding their timber hoods) at the first and second floor levels. Each tripartite window incorporates a six-over-six light central section flanked right and left by

narrow side lights. Again, sashes are fixed at the top and sliding below. The Palladian window centered on the upper north facade is similar except that its middle section has a semi-circular head. Unlike the tripartite windows of the wings, which are secondary installations, the north Palladian window is original.

Basement wall openings typically measure 3'-6" wide x 2'-9" high. It is unclear if they were originally glazed or fitted with vertical or horizontal slats, the latter being most likely. The current casement windows are modern.

B. Description of interior

1. Floor plans: "T"-shaped in plan, the Barnwell Gough House incorporates two full stories over an elevated basement, with the stem of the "T" projecting south toward Washington Street. At maximum, the structure measures 42'-9" north-to-south by 64'-6" east-to-west, excluding the porches. The stem of the "T" is 48'-4" wide measuring east-to-west and projects 23'-6" north of the building's range of rear rooms. Approached south by a raised, two-story high, pedimented entrance porch, the interior is arranged in a symmetrical double-pile plan.

The first floor features a central hall giving access to four rooms arranged in pairs right and left, the two rear rooms projecting approximately 8'-0" east-to-west beyond the stem of the "T" to create shallow wings. Originally, both the southeast and southwest rooms were fully paneled, the two rear rooms having timber wainscots, chair rails, and cornices. Pass-through doors positioned right or left of a fireplace, allow direct passage between front and rear rooms on the building's east and west sides.

The central space widens from 8'-4" to 12'-2" into a two-story stair hall at the back of the building "to receive a single flight of stairs which rise to a landing, lit by a Venetian window, and then divides into two flights, returning to the second story against opposite sides of the hall."¹⁵ This staircase brings visitors to an upper landing and the building's most important space, a large, fully paneled reception room, the so-called ballroom, which extends over the front entrance hall and the southeast room of the first floor. A smaller, less elaborately finished reception room is located immediately west, this being entered either directly via the upper landing or indirectly by a door from the so-called ballroom. The same upper landing gives access right and left to two second-floor rear rooms, the westerly one having a pass-through to the smaller reception space.

There is no evidence for any staircase linking the two upper floors with the basement areas. Rather the basement appears to have originally been used for storage, remaining

¹⁵ Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: South Carolina* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1984), 134.

undivided down until the twentieth century except perhaps for one small, northwest room enclosed by timber partition walls.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Plans and Early Photographs

No original or early plans are known. A Civil War period stereoscopic photograph of the house is held by the Beaufort County Library, in Beaufort, South Carolina. Measured drawings of the house were made by Jane Bruce Brooker in 1976; the originals are on file at Brooker Architectural Design Consultants, in Beaufort.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Historic Beaufort Foundation and by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) division of the National Park Service, Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief, HABS. This report is one component of a larger survey of extant examples of tabby architecture

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within Beaufort County, South Carolina. The documentation was undertaken by HABS under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky with assistance from Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian, who worked with Jefferson G. Mansell, (formerly of) the Historic Beaufort Foundation, Ian D. Hill, Beaufort County Planning Department, and Colin Brooker, Brooker Architectural Design Consultants, to identify subjects of study and locate them in the field in 2002 and 2003. Colin Brooker, whose research underpinned the project, wrote the historical report. Evan Thompson, now with the Historic Beaufort Foundation, assisted Brooker in the production of the reports. Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer, took the large format photographs.

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