

Charles Edmonston House
21 East Battery
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-54

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101-

An Addendum to
Alston House (Middleton-Smith House)
Charleston, South Carolina
in HABS Catalog (1941)

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

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Historical Data:

This house was built prior to 1838 by Charles Edmonston and sold to Charles Alston, who placed his coat-of-arms upon a parapet on the roof. This is rather an unusual feature and as far as is known, is the only house in the city which has it.

Bibliography:

Wilson, Miriam Bellangee - Street Strolls around
Charleston, S. C.

L. H. H. H.

THW 6/27/01

CHARLES EDMONSTON HOUSE

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Location: 21 East Battery, Charleston, Charleston County,
South Carolina

Present Owner: J. J. Pringle Smith, 21 East Battery, Charleston,
South Carolina

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement of Significance: An early-nineteenth-century mansion relatively
unchanged since it was redecorated about 1838.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Charles Edmonston, original owner. [Samuel Gaillard Stoney, article in *The News and Courier*, Charleston, March 15, 1948.] NOTE: Edmonston's name is sometimes found spelled Edmondston. The house and lot were sold in 1838 by Edmondston's assignees to Charles Alston for \$15,500. [Account book, Assignees of Charles Edmondston & Co., page 6. Longhand. Owned by Beatrice St. J. Ravenel, 126 Tradd St., Charleston, S. C.] The house remained in the Alston family until bought by H. A. M. Smith, and since 1924 has been the residence of the Smith family. [Samuel Gaillard Stoney, *The News and Courier*, March 15, 1948.]

2. Date of erection: By 1829. [Stoney, *ibid.*]

3. Architect, Builder, Suppliers, etc.: Unknown.

4. Notes on alterations and additions: Charles Alston redecorated the house in Greek Revival style, added a third story to the piazzas and placed his arms on a parapet on the east front. A balcony was destroyed in the earthquake of 1886, and the present cast-iron balcony was then added. [Stoney, *ibid.*]

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Stands on the foundations of Fort Mechanic, built about 1795. [Stoney, *ibid.*]

C. Supplemental Material: The following is quoted from Alice R. Huger Smith and D. E. Huger Smith, The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1917), pages 180-181:

"This large three-story brick house is set somewhat back from the street with a low wall surmounted by a wrought-iron railing or fence, the gates being also of wrought-iron. The house has a large extension at the back end, with its brick outbuildings, presents a marked appearance of solidity. Looking at it from the High Battery the roof is partly hidden by a parapet, which bears on it the Alston coat of arms.

"The wide piazzas to the south add even greater width to the house. The entrance is into a large hall on the north, and from this you pass through an arch into the wide staircase-hall which runs through from north to south, where it has a door on the lower piazza. The squarely-built staircase with its wide window leads to the drawing-rooms on the second floor, which are en suite with large folding doors and include the width of the central hall, as a connecting third room. Over the entrance hall is a pretty room used as a library with a door also opening into the east drawing room. The advantage of such a plan for coolness as well as beauty is obvious, and the simple spaciousness gives an air of quiet dignity and comfort . . ."

Note: A pencil sketch of the front by Alice R. H. Smith, reproduced on page 180, shows chimneys topped by hoods--not the present chimney pots.

Prepared by Beatrice St. J. Ravenel
Architectural Historian
Charleston, South Carolina
July 1958

AND

Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1962

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Three-story stuccoed brick structure with a fine Classic Revival porch. House has had few alterations.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Foundations: Brick.

2. Wall construction: Brick coated with stucco.

3. Chimneys: Many brick chimneys with terra cotta chimney pots.

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Wood.
- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden frames, wooden shutters

5. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Slate--low pitched behind parapet.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Projecting brick courses.
- c. Dormers: None.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: Two large rooms on each floor, plus smaller room (or hall) with wide stairway running north and south.
- 2. Stairways: Main wood stairway, plus wood back stairs.
- 3. Flooring: Wood floors.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ornamental plaster.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Wood.
- 6. Trim: Wood, elaborate.
- 7. Hardware: Metal (modern).
- 8. Lighting: Electric (modern).
- 9. Heating: Fireplaces, plus central heating.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: Best residential section, magnificent view overlooking harbor and High Battery. House faces east.
- 2. Enclosures: On front, iron fence on top of three-foot brick and cement wall. Walls at sides and back, brick.
- 3. Outbuildings: Two-story brick and stucco servants' buildings, and garage.
- 4. Walks: Brick.
- 5. Landscaping: Traditional.

Prepared by E. R. Martin
July 1958

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

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U.S. Department of The Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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