

Thomas Bennett House
89 Smith Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-267

HABS

SC

10-CHAP.

175 -

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

THOMAS BENNETT HOUSE

HABS
SC
10-01-58

Location: South Carolina, Charleston County, Charleston, 175-
89 Smith Street

Present Owner: Mrs. Ruth O. Williams, 88 Smith St., Charleston,
South Carolina

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement
of Significance: A nineteenth century house once owned by Thomas
Bennett, Governor of South Carolina, with unique
architectural details

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Thomas Bennett, original owner, bought land in 1831 (Charleston County Mesne Conveyance, Book D-10, p. 167 /longhand/) and sold property to his son, W. J. Bennett, Dec. 30, 1850 (Book R-13, 11). Two days later, the latter sold the house and lot to Simons Lucas and Henry E. Lucas, trustees (N-12, 683). Later owners were Edward C. Jones, architect (P-13, 455); Charles H. Cohrs (J-14, 198); Joseph Purcell (A-15, 101); George Little (D-15, 349); Hugh A. Little (Y-18, 260); Josephine B. Little (K-19, 275); Doris Werner; John F. Werner; Augusta Werner (H-21, 282) and Mrs. Ruth O. Williams, the present owner (X-28, 186).
 2. Date of erection: Between 1831 and 1850 (Charleston County Mesne Conveyance Office, D-10, 167, and N-12, 683)
 3. Architect: Unknown
 4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown
- B. Historical Events Connected With Structure: Thomas Bennett (1781-1863) was governor of South Carolina (1820-1822). (His tombstone, Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina)

Prepared by Beatrice St. J. Ravenel
August 1958

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A house in the Greek Revival tradition, somewhat altered, with unique bay windows.
2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 48' (3 bays) frontage; two stories; faces east.
2. Foundations: About 5' high, stucco over brick, rusticated under the bay windows. Rear portion on piers.
3. Wall construction: Frame, narrow clapboards.
4. Porches: A straight flight of masonry steps, with stuccoed side blocks, leads up to a squarish entrance porch with two fluted wooden Greek Doric columns with fluted pilasters responding at the wall, and an orthodox entablature. The entrance doorway is simple, having a rectangular transom and side lights with panels below. Stucco consoles flank the threshold. A modern porch has been built over this at the second story.

A simple two-story wooden porch on the west side appears to be a later addition; there is no indication of it in a survey of 1851 /Robert C. Allen, Survey Charleston, 1851, Vol. I (Field Notebook), page dated May 3, 1851/.

5. Chimney: Brick, centrally located.
6. Openings: windows: Double hung sash, six lights over six lights, with plain trim and heavy sills. Windows on front elevation are triple, 2/2, 6/6, 2/2. First floor windows have paneled shutters, second floor **louvered** shutters.

At the north and south ends of the front portion of the house are similar bay windows of remarkable design, extending the height of the first floor, with basement piers underneath. In plan, the central portion of each bay forms a projecting splayed alcove on the interior with a window at each side in the plane of the main wall. On the exterior the central projecting portion is flanked by concave sections which join it to the wall. The whole is treated with orders. The entablature contains a very wide cove, with fascia and

small cyma reversa above it; below the cove is a heavy moulding and a narrow architrave. Pilaster capitals are bell-shaped with three rows of simple leaves and rounded abacus. The abacus of two capitals retain a three-lobed division. These capitals, and the entablature, appear to have been derived freely from Egyptian models of the Ptolemaic or Roman period. Pilasters have five flutes on the face; the pilasters in the center are angular in plan. Below the pilasters are simple pedestals with a paneled railing-motif between them. The central panel simulates a railing with small arches and imposts; the side panels are simpler, simulating a railing with rectangular openings.

On the central projection, between pilasters, is a paneled motif--a conventionalized representation of the inside of a window with partly drawn drapery, disclosing paneled interior shutters. The simulated window trim has an anta at each side with two narrow panels terminating in a pointed arch; the mouldings of the antae capitals continue across the top, with a cresting above--small anthemions alternating with balls. Over each anta is a larger anthemion.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The pitch is very low or flat.
- b. Cornice: The house cornice has prominent bed mouldings, and a plain frieze below. It is surmounted by a low parapet with modern sheet metal gutters.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: In the front portion is a central hall with a principal room on each side; a smaller rear portion has a small room on each side. A piazza extends across the rear, with narrow continuations at both ends of the rear portion.
2. Stairway: This is located at the rear of the hall. The handrail is mahogany.
3. Interior finish and trim: Walls and ceilings are plaster. The principal rooms on the first floor have plaster cornices and ornamental plaster center pieces in the ceilings. Fireplaces (closed up) have marble mantels.
4. Interior of bay windows: The central alcove has ornamental plaster on the upper two-thirds of each side--three blank arches formed by four palm trees with arching fronds. The

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ceiling of the alcove is gabled; each side has six coffers in plaster ornamented with square rosettes and with acanthus leaves around the mouldings.

The window trim is of wood, quite wide; corner blocks are ornamented with three acanthus leaves each.

/Part of the interior data is from E. R. Martin, August, 1958/.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces east on a residential street.
2. Outbuildings: A survey of 1851 /op. cit./ shows two rectangular outbuildings behind the house, one along the north lot line and the other along the south lot line. At present there are only modern buildings.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee
Architect, N. P. S.
July, 1962

ADDENDUM TO
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1845 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240