

SIMMONS-EDWARDS HOUSE
(Pineapple Gate House)
12 & 14 Legare Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HALS SC-11
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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HALS NO. SC-11

Location: 12 & 14 Legare Street, Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina

Part of the Charleston Historic District (#66000964)

National Register of Historic Places (1971)

National Historic Landmark (1973)

Latitude: 32.772688, Longitude -79.933580 (Center of the property , Google Earth, WGS84)

Significance: The Statement of Significance for the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Pineapple Gate House prepared on April 25, 1973 summarizes the significance of the Simmons-Edwards House with this argument:

The Simmons-Edwards House is one of the city's most handsome houses with garden, beautiful woodwork and intricate wrought-iron decoration. Built by Francis Simmons in the Federal Style, the house has wide piazzas overlooking the garden and extensive outbuildings connected to the main house at its rear.

Built during a period of suburban expansion as Charleston grew outside the constrictions of its colonial city wall, the Pineapple Gate House contains some of the best examples of metal and plaster work in the city. The Federal style iron and brick fencing which fronts Legare Street are among the most ambitious in Charleston. Fence piers crowned with stone finials that resemble pineapples, are the source of the popular name given the house and reflect a high order of craftsmanship. George Edwards' initials are fashioned into the ironwork on either side of the piazza entrance.

Archaeological investigations conducted by Martha Zierden during the late twentieth century uncovered the original design of the circa 1818 garden. The team led by Zierden discovered four separate historic gardens, a spring flower garden, a summer flower garden, a fruit garden, and a vegetable garden. These gardens run in sequence from Legare Street to the rear of the property and its junction with properties that back up to it from King Street. Entry to the property is by two gates, one that leads to steps that ascend to the piazza door and a double gate that opens into a carriage way that runs along the north edge of the gardens leading to service buildings at the rear of the property. All four gardens were restored on the basis of archaeological evidence in 2003. The design for the garden folly located in the front garden was based on photographic

evidence. Along with Zierden, architectural conservator Richard Marks, and architect Glenn Keyes based their meticulous restoration of the property on extensive architectural and historical research.

The garden is the most accurately restored historic ornamental landscape in Charleston and unique for the application of both archaeological and historical research to determining its historical appearance. The gardens at the Pineapple Gate House are today planted with period appropriate plants and are meticulously maintained by its owners.

Description: 14 Legare is a three-story Federal style house built circa 1818 with a raised basement and features a two-story piazza located on the south side of the house. The house yard and front garden are separated from Legare Street by wrought ironwork fencing with stuccoed brick columns topped with sandstone finials. Laid out in the same manner as the house lots of other larger Charleston houses, the deep lot of the Simmons-Edwards House pushed service function to the rear of the lot. At 14 Legare, a kitchen/quarter building (now attached to the main house by a masonry hyphen), a carriage house, privy and cattle shed lined two sides of a work yard. A paved carriage way, lined with a fence run between Tuscan columns, ran from the street to the work yard. The classically-ornamented fence separated the carriage way from the ornamental gardens.

The house and its gardens are privately owned and not open to the public. The garden can be partially viewed from the street. This vantage point allows one to see the garden folly and hedges designed to resemble the decorative pattern featured in the gate ironwork.

The front or spring garden was originally intended to be visible from the street as well as from the piazza during social gatherings. Small boxwoods are sculpted into rosary and lozenge patterns and are bordered by oyster shell pathways. A variety of trellis styles at differing heights are positioned around the center design. A garden folly building is located at the back of the first garden.

There are two more gardens located within the property to the east of the front garden. The second garden features open lawn and includes a double serpentine pathway and a small grid of orange trees. The rear garden would have originally been used as a vegetable garden and for livestock. This area retains, however, the configuration of the 1950s redesign by landscape architect Benito Innocenti.

History: In 1816, George Edwards purchased two lots and converted the southernmost lot into a garden. After 1818, Edwards separated the house yard on the northern lot and the southern lot with a Federal style fence. The fence featured a series of 26 Tuscan columns standing ten feet apart each topped with a spherical sandstone finial. Wooden pickets (now missing) ran between the stone columns. The inner fence ran from the street to the rear of the property, separating the gardens from

the house and its work yard. Edwards also installed an iron and brick fence along the western, Legare Street, boundary of the property. Edwards' initials are included in the ironwork that frames both sides of the piazza door that opens above a flight of the white marble stairs. Historic photographs show granite posts along the curbing which were meant to prevent carriages from going on the sidewalk, a function live oak street trees continue to serve along much of the length of Legare Street. In 1975, the fence was rated in the highest category in Charleston's new Historic Architecture Inventory and was deemed nationally important.

A grassed lawn had replaced George Edwards's gardens by the 1880s. A lawn filled the site of the front gardens through much of the twentieth century. The firm Innocenti and Webel, landscape architects based in Long Island, New York, redesigned the garden in 1951, but later owners altered it.

In the late twentieth century, archaeologist Martha Zierden began the slow, systematic process of investigating the gardens archaeologically. The team examined approximately 16-20% of the lot. Zierden and her team, which included landscape historian Allan Brown and Architect Glenn Keyes, collected enough information through archival research and archaeology to support a reconstruction of the garden to its circa 1820 appearance. Zierden also conducted an analysis of pollen and phytoliths samples from the gardens in an effort to identify plant species used in the early nineteenth century garden. Plants species used in the reconstructed garden are similar to plants likely present in the garden during the 1820s.

During their research, the team discovered that the earthquake of 1886 had toppled the inner fence. In addition to fragments of household furnishings, Zierden discovered crushed oyster shells that were part of the bedding material for the winding paths buried one and a half feet under modern lawn grasses.

Three sections of the historic 1818 garden were restored: the spring flower garden, the summer flower garden, and the fruit garden. The spring flower garden, the section located closest to Legare Street, is 60 feet long and mirrors the length of the piazza. This garden included a series of oyster shell paths lined with clay roofing tiles which defined a flower garden designed in a rosary pattern. The rosary pattern had four lobes resembling petals of a flower. The lobes/petals were separated by dwarf English boxwoods and the oyster shell paths. Five hundred bulbs of anemone, lady tulip, ranunculus, and hyacinth were planted in each lobe/petal. These bulbs were some of the only species available and thus popular in Charleston's earliest gardens. The central boxwood hedges are set in a bowed lozenge shape, similar to the pinched diamond featured in the adjacent gate. A Champney's pink cluster rose occupies the center of the garden. In summer, the bulbs are removed and replaced with heliotrope and attention is turned to the serpentine summer flowers in the rear of the garden.

A garden folly bridges the two front gardens. Glenn Keyes design for this feature is based on photographic evidence of the garden's original summer house. The middle garden, known as the grass plats section, includes a serpentine pathway. A fruit garden behind this section contains six of a species of six single-trunk orange trees discovered by Jerry Poore. Originally there was a vegetable garden located in the rear.

In 2001, the placement of two wooden trellises precipitated a public controversy. A neighbor complained that the trellises were too tall and thus blocked the view from their adjacent property into the Pineapple Gate gardens. In one of very few cases in which the City of Charleston's Board of Architectural Review heard a complaint about a garden structure. Landscape historian C. Allan Brown argued that the trellises were a similar size to trellises common during the 1800s. Architect Glenn Keyes testified that extensive research uncovered a similar structure of roughly the same height as the new trellises placed in the garden. This controversy led to Eddie Bello, then the city's preservation officer, to rule that even minor work on Charleston's most historic houses should go before the Board of Architectural Review. In 2002, city's review board approved the placement of the trellises.

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- Jason Hardin. "Legare St Trellis Argument Continues." *The Post and Courier*, December 6, 2001.
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Historians: Clayton Johnson, Jesse Cantrell, and Kymberly Mattern
Master of Science Students in Historic Preservation

Faculty Sponsor:
Carter L. Hudgins, Director
Clemson University & College of Charleston
Graduate Program in Historic Preservation
Department of Planning, Development and Preservation
292 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29401
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2016 HALS Challenge Entry: Documenting National Register Listed Landscapes



View from the street, looking east into the front or spring garden. The oyster shell paths, sculpted boxwoods, carved sculpture, garden folly, trellises, and separation fence are visible in the photograph. (Clayton Johnson, February 26, 2016)



View from the southwest corner of the front or spring garden, looking northeast. The oyster shell paths, sculpted boxwoods, carved sculpture, garden folly, trellises, and separation fence are visible in the photograph. (Clayton Johnson, February 26, 2016)



View looking east at the ironwork gates fronting Legare Street. (Jesse Cantrell, February 26, 2016)