

918 Abercorn Street  
Savannah Victorian Historic District  
Savannah  
Chatham County  
Georgia

GA-1169 M

HABS,  
GA,  
26-SAV,  
53M-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
 SAVANNAH VICTORIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT

918 ABERCORN STREET

HABS No. GA-1169M

Location: 918 Abercorn Street, northeast corner of Abercorn and Waldburg Streets, Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia.

Present Owners: Thomas Smith and Gillespie, address unknown.

Present Use: Apartments.

Significance: A Queen Anne-style house with flamboyant porches, this house is located on a prominent corner and is the frequent subject of local artists.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1896.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original owner: George A. Mercer, lawyer and former President of the Board of Education. The house was built as rental property.
4. Alterations and additions: There have been no significant changes to the exterior. The stairhall has had a partition added and the original stairs to the basement have been removed.

## B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Harvey Granger, who lived in this house in 1898, developed Chatham Crescent in 1910, one of Savannah's first "automobile suburbs", with a parks system included in the development scheme.

For background information, see Savannah Victorian Historic District, HABS No. GA-1169.

## C. Bibliography:

Morrison, Mary Lane et al., White Ward Book, Georgia Historical Society.

Insurance Maps of Savannah, 1898, Sanborne Map Co., N.Y., Georgia Historical Society.

Prepared by: Beth Lattimore Reiter  
 Project Historian  
 Historic American Buildings  
 Survey  
 October, 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This house has very fine interior tiles and mantels. Its exterior is characterized by two-story arcaded porches connected by a corner tower.
2. Condition: Poor; water damage has caused much of the ceiling plaster to fall; the southern porches are collapsing, and the gutters have rusted to the point of deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story main block measures 27'-2" across its three-bay front X 40'-4". The two-and-a-half story tower on the southwest corner is 13'-5" X 16'-4" deep; southeast corner wing addition is 28'-3" X 21'-5" deep.
2. Foundations: Partially exposed brick foundation.
3. Wall construction, finish: Clapboard siding. Beveled metal shingles trim the tower between the first and second stories.
4. Structural system: Wood frame construction.
5. Porches: Both the west (front) and south porches are wooden, two-story galleries resting on brick piers. The first story is trimmed with plain balusters and spindled frieze. The second story has a latticework balustrade and arched openings formed by the termination of the slender wooden box columns. The front porch is approached by marble steps.
6. Chimneys: Brick chimney at the intersection of the tower and roof. A slender brick chimney rises up through the dormer window on the west side.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to the front vestibule is a pair of paneled double doors, topped by a three-light transom. The two inside doors are also wooden with glass in the upper half and panels below, framed by sidelights and transom.
  - b. Windows: Floor-length windows flanked by shutters open out to the porches. All other windows are two-over-two-light double-hung sash, set into plain surrounds.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The main block is covered with a hip roof with a standing seam tin sheathing. The tower has a steeply pitched pyramid roof with iron cresting. A shallow hip roof covers the rear one-story addition.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: The principal roof terminates in a box cornice, with a frieze under the tower eaves which is decorated with applied wooden circles.

- c. Dormers, towers: A gabled dormer window is on the west side of the main roof. A two-and-a-half-story tower is built onto the southwest corner of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan:
  - a. Basement: A 6' high basement extends under the main block.
  - b. First floor: Irregular plan; a central hall is flanked by rooms on the south side, and two small rooms on the north.
  - c. Second floor: Irregular plan.
2. Stairways: A four-flight open stairway with three intermediate landings rises from the stairhall to the second floor. A partition separates the stair from the hall.
3. Flooring: The basement floor is concrete; hardwood floors throughout the main block.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first-floor entrance hall is covered wooden paneling; all other wall surfaces are plaster. A slightly covered cornice is at ceiling level in all rooms.
5. Doorways: Sliding double doors with six panels separate the two front first-floor parlors. All other doors are have raised panels, set into plain surrounds and topped by transoms.
6. Decorative features and trim: The fireplace openings are framed by wooden mantels and over-mantels, supported by brackets or fluted columns, and tile surrounds in a variety of colors throughout the house. Plaster medallions designed in a circular rope motif ornament the ceilings of the foyer and first-floor tower room.
7. Hardware: Decorative escutcheons still exist in first-floor entrance foyer.
8. Mechanical systems:
  - a. Heating: The house was originally heated by coal-heating fireplaces, now replaced with gas space heaters.
  - b. Plumbing: The original bath with a sink supported on iron brackets is located on the second floor.
  - c. Lighting: The original gas lighting has been replaced by electricity.
9. Furniture: Wooden cupboards are built into what was the original kitchen. In the basement is an old kitchen sink and cupboard with glass doors.

D. Site:

The house stands on a corner site, facing west. A brick wall defines the north side of the building; an iron fence is on the south side.

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Historic American Buildings  
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October, 1979

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the City of Savannah, the Historic Preservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc.; and Historic Savannah Foundation. The recording project was completed during the summer of 1979 under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect; Eric Delony, Project Coordinator, Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc.; Beth Lattimore Reiter, Project Historian, Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc.; and Susan Dornbusch, Project Supervisor, University of Virginia; with student architects Gregori Anderson (Howard University), David Fixler (Columbia University), Stephen Lauf (Temple University), and Tamara Peacock (University of Florida), at the HABS Office in Savannah, Georgia. The drawings were edited in the Washington office in September 1979 by architects Susan Dornbusch and Gregori Anderson. The historical and architectural data was reviewed and edited during October-November 1979 by staff historian Jan Cigliano. Photographs were taken in September 1979 by Walter Smalling, a staff photographer with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. The documentation on the historic district will be used in the rehabilitation of the residences and in developing design guidelines for the area.