

FENWICK HALL PLANTATION

Northeast intersection of River Road and Maybank Highway

John's Island

Charleston County

South Carolina

HABS No. SC-646

HABS

SC

10-CHAR,

413-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of Interior

1845 C Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM TO:
FENWICK HALL PLANTATION
Northeast of intersection of River Road & Maybank Highway
Johns Island
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS SC-646
HABS SC, 10-CHAR, 413-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
FIELD RECORDS

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FENWICK HALL

HABS No. SC-646

Location: 30 Fenwick Alleé, Johns Island, Charleston County, South Carolina.

The coordinates for Fenwick Hall are 80.038383 W and 32.750822 N. These were obtained through Google Earth in June 2013 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Constructed in the mid-eighteenth century, Fenwick Hall on Johns Island, Charleston County, South Carolina is one of the preeminent eighteenth-century brick plantation houses in the South Carolina Lowcountry. One of the earliest surviving examples of Georgian architecture in the Lowcountry, Fenwick Hall is the only surviving eighteenth-century building on Johns Island. Enduring both the American Revolution and the Civil War undamaged, Fenwick Hall was used by British General Sir Henry Clinton as a headquarters during the Siege of Charleston in 1780. Culturally, Fenwick Hall's eighteenth-century owners played a leading role in the introduction of English thoroughbred horses to the American South and in the breeding of Euro-American race horses. Evidence of this cultural practice remains visible in the form of repurposed and highly altered stables which are part of the complex of buildings surrounding Fenwick Hall. Architecturally, the house is distinguished by an unusually large entry salon and a large, two-story, Federal-style dining wing with octagonal ends added to the west gable end of the eighteenth-century house. Victor and Marjorie Morawetz of New York acquired the house and its extensive grounds in the 1930s and retained Charleston architect Albert Simons to restore the main house after a long period of neglect. Simons is widely acknowledged as a leading figure in the beginnings of the modern historic preservation movement in Charleston and his restoration of Fenwick Hall, carried out with Colonial Revival flair, is an important contribution to his body of work.

Description: Fenwick Hall is a two-story, brick dwelling set over a full English basement consisting of two distinct parts. The main five-bay section of the house dates to the eighteenth century and measures 45'-6" wide by 38' deep. A two-story Federal-style brick addition with octagonal bays is situated at the west end of the original structure. The brickwork of the eighteenth-century section is generally laid in English bond and includes some sections with irregular bond pattern. A water table and raised brick quoins accent the eighteenth-century section. The brickwork of the Federal, Phase II, addition is also English bond, although plainer, featuring only a water table. The roof of the eighteenth-century, Phase I, section of the building is now a low hip, accented with a narrow, modillioned cornice at the eaves. Four interior chimneys set at the gables pierce the roof. A faceted roof covers the octagonal ends of the addition and a Phase II hipped gable roof covers the main volume of the addition. Two interior chimneys rise through the west facet of this hipped section of the roof. The primary, south facing façade of Fenwick Hall is approached by a long alleé of live oak trees.

The primary entrance is centered on the south façade and is comprised of double, paneled doors and a fanlight set into a reproduced surround with triangular pediment and engaged Doric columns. The current double-return brick and stone staircase with an iron railing grants access to the first floor from the roundabout in front and replaced an earlier, late eighteenth-century portico removed during restoration of the house in the 1930s under architect Albert Simmons. Four reconstructed nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows under flat jack arches flank the entry door.

The river-front, north, paired entry doors are approached by a straight run of stone stairs with an iron railing that flares slightly at the base. Two Palladian windows laid up with cut and gauged bricks flank the north entry door. Nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows flanked by six-paned side lights are set in these tripartite openings. Five symmetrically-placed nine-over-nine sash windows set under flat jack arches illuminate the second floor.

The eighteenth-century Phase I first floor plan features a rank of rooms on the eastern side of a narrow stair passage. A northwest chamber and entry hall occupy the three southwest bays of the house. The second floor is comprised of a central hall with two rooms to the east and two to the west. Most rooms retain original raised panel interiors. Georgian details dominate the interior including mantelpieces with Greek key detailing, denticulated cornices, and ornate scrollwork on the stringers of the main staircase.

The Phase II, two-story Federal-style addition to the west contains six-over-six double-hung sash windows on both first and second floors. The interior features north and south rooms accessed on both levels by a central stair hall. A second, two-story, rectangular, Phase III addition was added west of the octagonal addition in the twentieth century. This addition is generally referred to as the Morawetz addition and included increased living space and a modern kitchen. This twentieth-century campaign, coordinated by architect Albert Simons, also added a one-story veranda on the eastern façade. The covered veranda is supported by Roman style Doric columns and enclosed by an octagonal brick half wall with iron railing that leads to a garden and reflecting pool. The upper story of the veranda features wood Chinese Chippendale railing.

Detached, flanking brick service buildings were erected to the east and west of the main structure in 1750, after the primary volume of Fenwick Hall had been built, but preceding the octagonal addition. The western flanker was constructed to serve as a carriage house with stables and has since been converted into a private residence. The eastern flanker, which is no longer standing, also served as horse stables. Additional buildings have been constructed through the twentieth century, further developing the site of Fenwick Hall. These outbuildings include a caretaker's residence, a garage, and utility and office buildings.

History:

Set along the banks of the Stono River and featuring an oak alleé on the land side, Fenwick Hall is one of the earliest surviving eighteenth-century brick plantation houses in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Fenwick Hall was constructed when

plantation agriculture, specifically rice cultivation, boomed and merchants grew wealthy on extensive trade with Great Britain. Tradition holds that the earliest portion of Fenwick was built for merchant John Fenwick on the location of a previous log plantation house.¹

John Fenwick came to South Carolina from England in the early eighteenth century. A noteworthy citizen in his own right, Fenwick fought against the Spanish and French attacks on Charles Towne in 1706, led troops as a garrison commander during the 1715 Yemassee War, was an influential political leader, and prospered in the rice trade.² While he grew rice on his Black River land, north of Georgetown, South Carolina, Fenwick Hall served as his plantation residence.³ Often traveling between Charles Towne and Britain, John Fenwick remained connected to his English family. Near the end of his life, he left Fenwick Hall in the hands of his son, Edward, and returned to England.

When John died in 1747, Edward Fenwick took formal ownership of Fenwick Hall. Like his father before him, Edward traveled between South Carolina and England, maintaining familial ties. He married Mary Drayton, daughter of Thomas Drayton of Magnolia Plantation, connecting two influential families in the burgeoning colony. While he prospered as a rice planter, Edward was also instrumental in making Fenwick Hall famous for horse racing and breeding. He was the founder of the James Island Stud and influential in the beginnings of horse breeding in the American colonies. He selected horses on his travels to England and in doing so introduced the bloodlines of successful English racehorses into America which would eventually make their way to Kentucky and Virginia.⁴

Edward's venture into the stud business is connected to the evolution of the Fenwick Hall property. He commissioned the east and west flanker buildings in 1750.⁵ These two structures served as a carriage house and stables for his breeding and racing business. While several sources credit Edward with the addition of the octagonal wing, its Federal design indicates it was constructed later.

Following Edward's death, ownership of Fenwick Hall passed to his son, Edward Jr., in 1775. Edward Jr. continued horse breeding on John's Island. His open sympathies with the British during the American Revolution became the source of financial hardship at the war's end. British General Sir Henry Clinton, who led the siege against Charleston in 1780, used Fenwick Hall as his headquarters, presumably at Edward's invitation.⁶ Edward participated in a formal congratulation to General Cornwallis on his victory at Camden which subsequently caused his holdings,

¹ Harrison Fairfax, *The John's Island Stud* (Richmond, VA: Old Dominion Press, 1931), 31.

² Fairfax, *John's Island*, 25-30.

³ Fairfax, *John's Island*, 31.

⁴ Fairfax, *John's Island*, 34-35.

⁵ William P. Baldwin Jr., *Plantations of the Low Country: South Carolina 1697-1865* (Greensboro, NC: Legacy Publications, 1985), 34; Samuel Gaillard Stoney, *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1938), 58.

⁶ Cynthia C. Jenkins, "Wake-up Call on Need to Protect, Preserve John's Island," *Post and Courier*, June 29, 2008.

including Fenwick Hall, to be listed in the Forfeiture Act of 1782.⁷ Fenwick Hall was eventually removed from the list of properties enumerated in the Forfeiture Act, likely thanks to Edward's relaying of valuable information regarding British plans to American General Nathaniel Greene. In 1787 Edward was forced, through financial and legal woes, to sell Fenwick to his cousin John Gibbes.⁸

John Gibbes is likely responsible for the construction of the two-story octagonal wing added after his purchase of Fenwick Hall in 1787. The wing includes four rooms and a central staircase. Gibbes also added a portico to the south façade of the original structure at this time.⁹ In 1803, Gibbes sold the plantation to Joseph Jenkins. Following Jenkins, ownership changed hands several times prior to the Civil War.

Dr. Daniel Jenkins Townsend of Edisto Island owned Fenwick Hall during the Civil War and his son James Swinton Townsend was born at Fenwick.¹⁰ Fenwick survived the war by serving as a hospital for both Union and Confederate troops. Following the end of the war, Fenwick passed through several owners until it was eventually boarded up in the early twentieth century.

In the 1930s, Victor and Marjorie Morawetz of New York acquired Fenwick Hall and initiated the first major restoration of the property since its construction. The building restoration was overseen by noted Charleston architecture firm Simmons and Lapham. Albert Simons was a leading figure in Charleston's preservation movement in the early to mid-twentieth century and was responsible for early public housing projects and the construction of numerous other structures within the city. Simons' restoration work completed at Fenwick Hall featured many Colonial Revival elements. Many original features, among them the southern exterior door surround, were reconstructed during this time. Reconstructed nine-over-nine sash windows replaced the existing two-over-two lights, introduced in the late nineteenth century. Colonial Revival style paneled shutters were installed during this time; however they were later removed as exterior shutters were not part of Fenwick's original design. Non-original elements, such as the Neoclassical portico added by John Gibbes, were removed by Simons. The Phase III west rectangular addition was also added during this period to accommodate a modern kitchen. Fenwick Hall remained a private residence through the 1970s and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.¹¹

In 1980, Fenwick Hall became a private drug and alcohol recovery center under the name Fenwick Hall Hospital. The historic design as a private residence presented challenges for the new commercial use. The interior was altered to accommodate patient and staffing needs; bathrooms, partition walls, and mechanical modifications are notable changes from this period. Unique, but compromising design solutions,

⁷ Harrison Fairfax, *The John's Island Stud* (Richmond, VA: Old Dominion Press, 1931), 43.

⁸ Fairfax, *John's Island*, 43-46.

⁹ Samuel Gaillard Stoney, *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1938), 58.

¹⁰ Alisha Anderson Thompson, *Images of America: Rockville* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 53.

¹¹ Mary Schuette, Fenwick Hall, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*. (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972).

such as shower facilities built into the volume provided by thick exterior masonry walls at window and door openings, typify the alterations made during this period of Fenwick Hall's history. Recreational facilities including basketball and tennis courts were also added during this time. The hospital closed in 1995 and Fenwick Hall sat empty until its purchase in 2000. Fenwick Hall has since returned to private residential use. The current owners reside in the surviving coach house while restoration work continues on the primary building.

Fenwick Hall reveals nearly three hundred years of Charleston and American history. Though the plantation's acreage has diminished, the landscape populated with additional buildings, and modifications made to the building over time, Fenwick Hall serves as one of the most significant architectural connections to plantation life during Charleston's eighteen-century golden age.

- Sources: Baldwin Jr., William P. *Plantations of the Low Country: South Carolina 1697-1865*. Greensboro, NC: Legacy Publications, 1985.
- Fairfax, Harrison. *The John's Island Stud (South Carolina): 1750-1788*. Richmond, VA: Old Dominion Press, 1931.
- Hart, Emma. *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010.
- Jenkins, Cynthia C. "Wake-up Call on Need to Protect, Preserve John's Island." *Post and Courier*, June 29, 2008.
- Millar, John Fitzhugh. *The Architects of the American Colonies or Vitruvius Americanus*. Barre, MA: Barre Publishers, 1968.
- Porcher, Richard Dwight and Sarah Fick. *The Story of Sea Island Cotton*. Charleston, SC: Wyrick & Company, 2005.
- Schuetz, Mary. "Fenwick Hall." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972.
- Stoney, Samuel Gaillard. *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1938.
- Thompson, Alisha Anderson. *Images of America: Rockville*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006.
- Historians: Laurel Bartlett and Julianne Johnson Clemson/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. Report completed in June 2013.

Project Information: This documentation project was conducted by students in the Clemson University/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. The

team leaders were Pam Kendrick and Liz Shaw. Faculty advisors were Ashley Wilson and Amalia Leifeste. Team members included: Caglar Aydin, Laurel Bartlett, Charlotte Causey, Katherine Ferguson, Kelly Finnigan, Emily Ford, Robert Fuhrman, Lauren Golden, Elise Haremski, Elyse Harvey, Julianne Johnson, Lia Kerlin, Brittany Lavelle, Rebecca Long, Wendy Madill, Stefanie Marasco, Neale Nickels, Rebecca Quandt, Joseph Reynolds, Mary Margaret Schley, Mariah Schwartz, Karl Sondermann, Julia Tew, Amy Elizabeth Uebel, Syra Valiente, Dan Watts, David Weirick, and Jamie Wiedman.