

Inge's Store  
331-333 West Main Street  
Charlottesville  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1015

HABS  
VA,  
2-CHAR,  
15-

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS  
VA  
2-CHAR,  
15-

INGE'S STORE

HABS No. VA-1015

Location: 331-333 West Main Street, Charlottesville, Virginia

Present Owner: Leslie C. LaFon

Present Status: Grocery Store

Present Condition: Poor

Statement of Significance: Inge's Store, a grocery, is a fine example of the Federal Style of Architecture. Built in 1820 by Johnson W. Pitt, it originally was only a residence. Its significance lies in its style, its metal canopy, its dependency, and the fact that it has been owned and operated by the same black family, the Inge's, since 1890.

## Ownership, Historical Persons, Events

In 1803 the land upon which Inge's Store is now located was owned by John Mantua Carr, a future clerk of the Circuit Court, who lived at Belmont, a large estate directly South of Charlottesville, now a neighborhood of the city. At this time Carr sold twelve acres of the land to Joseph Bishop (or "James" Bishop as in Alexander's Recollections) for 150 lbs. The acreage stretched from the "Staunton Road" (now West Main Street) North to the "Whitehall Road" (now Preston Avenue) and East to roughly Second Street; thus it contained the future Inge store lot.<sup>1</sup> Nicholas had bought several parcels of land in Albemarle County; here he decided to settle and so established a farm and tannery. The tannery, a sizable operation with 25 vats, was located where the Vinegar Hill Theatre and Maddox Building Supply now are located, at the foot of Vinegar Hill on West Market Street, and Nicholas's house was nearby. He also operated a furniture warehouse on about 101 West Main Street. He also had a large family, nine sons and daughters, many of whom he established in houses on Vinegar Hill, beginning what was to become Random Row, which stretched from the bottom of the hill to the top where Ridge Street crossed. Ann was one daughter, who married a Johnson W. Pitts and in 1820 Bishop conveyed the following parcel to Pitts on the twenty-sixth of January, 1820:

"... in consideration of the sum of one hundred dollars ... paid by the said Johnson W. Pitts (the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged)

have bargained and sold unto the said Johnson W. Pitts two unimproved lotts (sic) of ground lying in Albemarle County on the north side of the three notched road between Charlottesville and the University.<sup>2</sup>

At this time the original house was constructed, which likely consisted of the right half of the building only, namely because it is constructed with a full basement, and the other half is underpinned, a later technological development.<sup>3</sup> It was thus two stories high, with the full basement, and contained probably only two or three, maybe four, rooms. The Pitts, though, did not live here long, for on September 29, 1821 they sold the house to Lawrence P. Catlett for \$1,000. That the house had been built the deed shows, for it reads "... a dwelling house and a lot of land...." the lot was described as follows

...bounded as follows. Viz. Beginning at a stake corner of the street between said Lot and Lot no. 2 lately conveyed by John Bishop to James Widderfield thence 5.81 W/6 poles 3 links to a stake within twenty feet of the line between Pitts and Bishop, thence parallel with the said line 14 poles to the middle of the three notched road thence with the said road to the first mentioned street thence with the said street to the beginning.<sup>4</sup>

Catlett occupied the structure for seven years and then sold it on September 6, 1828 to William F. Gooch for \$812.84.

Probably this was Dr. William F. Gooch who came to Charlottesville in 1823 from Amherst, and who later resided on High Street. He was appointed magistrate in 1843, moved to Ivy later

and died in 1881. He was another short resident who sold the house to John A. Marchant on the first of January 1833 for \$700. A "staunch Episcopalian, he came to Charlottesville in about 1826 and became at first a dry goods merchant. Marchant later, between 1850 and 1852, bought a controlling interest in the Charlottesville Factory, which later became the Charlottesville Manufacturing Company which produced lumber, flour, plaster, cotton, and woolen products. Under his direction, though, he converted the factory to only manufacture woolen cloth and clothing, such as Confederate Uniforms. Later, in 1864, he dissolved the parent concern and sold out to his son, Henry Clay who went on, through hard work, to establish the most important industry in Charlottesville, the Charlottesville Woolen Mills.<sup>5</sup>

On the tenth of February, 1841 Marchant sold the building now with a brick kitchen, for \$2000 to stewards of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Walter Timberlake, Nathan C. Goodman, and Gesner Harrison for use as a parsonage. On January 12, 1842 the deed was conveyed to E. Walls, Robert S. Jones, James S. Crewdeon, John H. Timberlake, and John M. Godwin, trustees for the church who then gave the deed to Buckley Townley, Trustee, in order to secure payment of \$1200 until October 15, 1842, and if it was not paid, the building was to go up for public auction. The church's location then was several hundred yards to the East at Water, First, and South Streets. Defaulting on its payment, the church gave up the house to Nimrod Sowell at public auction

for \$1220, and he obtained the deed on November 1, 1842.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless the church did manage to get another parsonage at 401 Ridge Street, which remained as such through at least 1942.

Nimrod Sowell, in 1834, he had also purchased a lot across the street from William F. Garland, East of R. F. Harris's warehouse, and had built a residence there in 1839. With his brother Lewis, he operated a wheelwright business. Probably Lewis lived in the structure he and his brother built, Nimrod, according to later deed, definitely lived in his newly bought house. The Sowell's business lasted until 1850, when Harris, with partner H. Taylor, expanded his operations and bought Sowell's property. They operated an iron foundry and agricultural machine factory which lasted into this century, and then Whiting Oil Company and Macgregor Motors (416-420 West Main) replaced the business. On November 8, 1853, Sowell sold the building for \$1800 to Musgrove and Patterson, merchants.<sup>7</sup>

At this time the building began its commercial life for Musgrove and Patterson, who more than likely, operated a dry goods store.<sup>8</sup> R. A. Musgrove, though, also operated a tuition school for 32 blacks, and helped Anna Gardner set up a school for blacks as well.<sup>9</sup> Coincidentally, George P. Inge was to follow right in his footsteps. Musgrove and Patterson eventually ended their partnership, and thus sold the building to John J. Barksdale and John N. Fry for \$1900, who presumably continued commercial operations. They only remained for four years, after which they sold the house to Isaac and Simon Letterman on August 1, 1863 for

\$4,050. Quite possibly the smokehouse was built within this four year period, for this deed contains the first mention of it, as well as the description of the lot to be used in future years,

...beginning the boundaries at the junction of the said road leading from Charlottesville to the University of Virginia, with a lane leading from said road in a Westerly direction on course to the old barracks road, and running parallel with said lane one hundred and seventy feet, and thence east to a back line eighty-two feet eight inches to a stake in the Garden, and thence south one hundred and two feet by the east end of the smokehouse to the said road leading to the University thence Eighty-seven feet from to the beginning. 10

The Letterman (or Leterman) family were prominent business people, Simon Leterman was an original director of the People's National Bank in 1875.<sup>11</sup> His business, a dry goods and clothes store, was located at 101 West Main Street and never moved; he died in 1904.<sup>12</sup> His wife was very active in community affairs. She aided the poor and advocated temperance, founding the White Ribbon Temperance Society. Their sons in 1898 opened one of the two largest department stores in Charlottesville, but it only lasted about ten years. On March 18, 1870 Simon conveyed the deed to his brother Isaac for his half of the original purchase price (\$2,000), and Isaac resided in the house until May 6, 1887 when he and wife conveyed the deed to Liebichen Levine for \$2,500.<sup>13</sup> George Pinkney Inge then bought the store for \$3,000 on February 25, 1890.<sup>14</sup>

Born a slave in Southside Virginia, George Inge was fortunate enough to have a benevolent owner who gave him aid thus

allowing him to attend the Hampton Institute.<sup>15</sup> He became a public school teacher in Charlottesville, but at \$28 per week could not afford to continue the job. Thus he bought the building on 331-333 West Main Street and opened for business on July 1, 1891.<sup>16</sup> He was 28 years of age. He operated a very successful business, and bought much property throughout Charlottesville to provide for his nine children. Three were daughters, all of whom became school teachers, and one, Gertrude, continued living for some time at the family residence.<sup>17</sup> Two sons became doctors, and another was a Ph.D. and Doctor of Science at the Hampton Institute. A fourth son became a realtor. The youngest, Thomas Ferguson Inge, overtook the Inge store in 1946 when his father died.<sup>18</sup> George Inge participated in city politics and was Chairman of the Charlottesville Republican Party in 1900, and a Republican Committeeman in 1904. Many prominent black men stayed at the Inge residence, among them Booker T. Washington, a friend from Inge's Hampton days.<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Inge was born in the house on March 17, 1903 and has lived and worked at the store ever since.<sup>20</sup> When he was married in 1928, he moved out of the building into his own home, but still spent nights from time to time in the house. His sister continued living there until about 1959, and his son resided there until about 1964, after which the living quarters have remained vacant. He had two daughters and one son; only the son survives. Upon the death of his father, the house and lot was equally divided into four sections. Half of the store was given to Thomas, the



other half to Frederick Inge, the third, as a lot of land, to Theodore Inge, and the fourth, a lot, to Hutchins Inge.

The store, again, was a busy operation. It, for a time, sold the only supply of fish in Charlottesville, and sold small game-turkey, pheasant, squirrel, rabbit-until outlawed. Inge's store delivered with a horse and buggy, later advancing to a Model T vehicle. For a time, chickens were kept in the rear smokehouse, and fresh vegetables were raised in a garden in the rear. Credit was better in those days; many University professors kept running accounts there which were paid at each month's end. (Records of them still exist in the store) In addition to serving the professors, hotels, and University of Virginia Hospital, the store was a neighborhood grocery as well, selling to then residential West Main street area. The store stayed open and busy until as late as 11:00 p.m. However, with time the neighborhood became much more commercial, and new, large, chain supermarkets opened throughout town. The Inges thus have lost much business due to competition with these stores and due to the loss of nearby clientele. Thus, Mr. Thomas Inge sold the store and property to Leslie C. Lafon and ended his business on December 31, 1979.

During the Inge's occupancy, the structure saw most of its changes. By 1896, the building had doubled its length, and a later wing was added to the Northwest corner. The second half likely came soon after the first, as the two ends closely resemble in style and aging each other. The wing probably resulted from

the need for more space for one of the commercial establishments of the time prior to the Inge ownership. When George Inge opened, both halves of the building served as the store and across the front ran a frame porch. By 1907 a frame porch was placed on the rear, and a small brick wing on the Northeast corner was enlarged. At this time the central hall was constructed with a staircase, and the store only occupied the left section of the building. George Inge further expanded the building, and by 1920 had added rooms filling out the building to its present shape. The right front room served as a storeroom. Interior changes came in the 1920's and by 1929 the building had two rooms subdivided for shops, for rent or storerooms, with a frame porch now extending across the rear, and one still across the front. The central fireplace also was removed from the first floor in these years. After this date only the room on the Southeast corner was rented: the central room became the stairhall and two rooms on the East side were bedrooms. The basement floor contained a dining room and kitchen through these years. The front porch was replaced by corrugated metal and pipe awning, and the rear porch was torn down due to disrepair. Upstairs, Gertrude Inge replaced the old Federal windows on the left side with more modern ones.

Change will come again to Inge's store when it is converted to a restaurant, emporium, and apartment by Mr. LaFon. While the oldest exterior walls will remain, additions will be placed on the North and East sides, and the interior will be completely

altered. Nonetheless, with exterior restoration, the building will preserve its grace, dignity and character, and the memories of the Inge family, and of an earlier Charlottesville, will remain.

#### Chain of Title

Location of Records: Transfer Reference Deed Books (DB) or Will Book (WB) by book number and page Records prior to 1896 are located in the Records Room of the Clerk of the Court, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia; records after 1896 are located in the Records Room of the Clerk of the Court, Charlottesville City Courthouse, Albemarle County, Virginia.

23 June, 1803, DB 14-330.

To: Joseph Bishop  
From: John Carr  
12 acres for 150 lbs.

26 January, 1820, DB 22-40.

To: Johnson W. Pitts  
From: Joseph Bishop  
"...two improved lots..." for \$100

29 September, 1821, DB 22-416.

To: Lawrence P. Catlett  
From: Johnson W. Pitts  
"...a dwelling house and a lot of land..." for \$1,000

6 September, 1828, DB 27-256.

To: William F. Gooch  
From: Lawrence P. Catlett  
"...a certain house and a lot of land..." as well as other pieces of property for \$812.84

1 January, 1833, DB 30-363.

To: John A. Marchant  
From: William F. Gooch  
"...certain pieces and parcels of land with the buildings and improvements thereon...for \$700

12 January, 1842, DB 39-152.

To: E. Walls, Robert S. Jones, James S. Crewdeon, John H. Timberlake, and John M. Godwin, trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church.  
From: John A. Marchant  
"...certain lot of land containing 40½ poles lying on the road leading from Charlottesville to the University of Virginia...the improvements on said ground is a brick dwelling house and a brick kitchen," for \$2000

1 November, 1842, DB 40-104.

To: Nimrod Sowell

From: Buckwell Towley, trustee (deed had been conveyed to him by the trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church a day or two after obtaining it from John A. Marchant in order to secure payment of \$1200 to Marchant by October 15, 1892.) Sold by public auction to Sowell for \$1220

8 November 1853, DB 52-157

To: R. A. Musgrove and J. C. Patterson

From: Nimrod Sowell

...a certain piece or parcel of land situated and lying in the town of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle: together with all the improvements and buildings and fixtures on said piece or parcel of land..." for \$1800.

20 June, 1859, DB 55-248.

To: John J. Barksdale and John N. Fry

From: R. A. Busgrove and John C. Patterson, "late merchants and partners in trade" for \$1900

1 August, 1863, DB 60-218

To: Isaac and Simon Letterman

From: John J. Barksdale, John A. Fry, Mary E. Fry for \$4,050

18 March 1870, DB 65-194.

To: Isaac Letterman

From: Simon Letterman and his wife Haueh for \$2,000, "road leading from the town of Charlottesville to the University of Virginia" now called Main Street

6 May, 1887, DB 88-49

To: Liebichen Levine

From: Isaac and Matilda Letterman

location now termed "North side of University Avenue at the intersection of said avenue with what is known as Bull Alley." for \$2500

25 February, 1890, City DB 1-440

To: George P. Inge

From: David and Leibichen Levine for \$3,000

12 August, 1946, City DB 6-136

To: Thomas Ferguson Inge

From: George P. Inge

½ of store and fixtures (other half willed to Gertrude and Frederick Inge, 12 August 1946, City W.B. 6-136.)

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Rev. Edgar Wood, Albemarle County in Virginia, Bridgewater, The Green Bookman, 1932, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>Deedbook 22-40, 26 January, 1820.

<sup>3</sup>James Boyd, Architect, Charlottesville, Virginia, Interview, October, 1979.

<sup>4</sup>Deedbook 22-416, 29 September, 1821.

<sup>5</sup>Harry E. Poindexter, "Henry Clay Marchant and the Foundation of the Charlottesville Woolen Mills, 1865-1882," in The Papers of the Albemarle Historical Society, XIV (1949-1950), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Deedbook 40-104, 1 November, 1842.

<sup>7</sup>Mary Rawlings, ed., Early Charlottesville, Recollections of James Alexander, 1828-1874, Charlottesville, The Michie Co., 1940, p. 91n.

<sup>8</sup>Woods, p. 318.

<sup>9</sup>John Hammond Moore, Albemarle, Jefferson's County, 1727-1976, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1976, p. 232.

<sup>10</sup>Deedbook 60-218, 1 August, 1863.

<sup>11</sup>Rawlings, p. 88n.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Moore, p. 262.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas F. Inge, Charlottesville, Virginia, Interview, October, 1979.

<sup>16</sup>Daily Progress, 1962.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas F. Inge, Charlottesville, Virginia, Interview, November, 1979.

## Bibliography

Books

Jones, Newton B., B.A., M.A., Charlottesville, Virginia, 1819-1860.  
Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, Charlottesville,  
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Boyd, James, Architect, Charlottesville, Virginia, Interview,  
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Inge, Thomas F., Charlottesville, Virginia, October, November,  
1979.

Maps

Gray's New Map of Albemarle County, Virginia, Philadelphia,  
O. W. Gray's and Sons, 1877.

Sanborn Map Co., Charlottesville, Virginia, New York, Sandborn  
May Company, 1896, 1907, 1920, 1926.

Periodicals

The Daily Progress, 1962.

## Architectural Description

### General Statement and Description

Inge's Store is a simple, Federal style structure built in 1820 for use as a residence. Originally it only consisted of the right half of the building in a rectangular plan with two stories and the bays. It exhibits many characteristics of the Federal Period: Low pitched roof, lintel type window heads, their muntons, smooth brick with fine joints, and raised, stepped gables.

Its significance lies not only in its style of architecture, but also because it contains one of the few remaining dependencies in Charlottesville, and one of the few remaining corrugated metal awnings as well. Also, it has been owned and operated by the same black family, the Inges, since 1890.

The following description and illustrations concern themselves only with the oldest, most important parts of the store; those existing when George Inge bought over the store.

## Exterior Description

Overall Dimensions: The structure, as it exists today, measures 39' by 46'. From ground level to cornice on the front facade it measures 17'-1".

Foundations: The foundations are constructed of brick approximately 12" thick. On the West side there are three air holes into a crawl space. On the East side a small door opens into a basement.

Wall Construction: All of the exterior wall are constructed of brick in a variety of bonds. Flemish bond covers the South facade and the original West side. The later wing on the Northwest corner has six course American bond. On the East side, left of the chimney there is five course American Bond and on the right side there is seven course American Bond. Although not original, the South, main, facade now has a wooden cornice below the metal awning, and four engaged Doric columns on the right side.

Structural System: the original structure's of load bearing brick walls, and later additions were constructed with load bearing frame and plaster walls. The original wall are 12" thick, the frame walls are 6".

Porches: Originally the building probably had no porches, but at some time a seven bay wood porch was built across the front of the building. George Inge replaced this porch with a simple corrugated metal and pipe porch. The rear had a frame porch at various times, the last of which extended across all of the newer additions, but it was recently torn down by Thomas Inge due to disrepair.

Chimneys: There are presently five chimneys, all of brick. The two original, simple ones are located in the center of the building and outside the East end. It has slender proportions, stepped shoulders and is built in stretcher bond. Its stack is free-standing.

Doorways/Doors: Multiple (three) main doors lead on into the structure. The actual store's doors have remained since George Inge opened, they consist of a beveled rail raised panel and a flush panel of glass. It has a plain surround, as does the central door which is another partly glazed door with three panels and beveled, recessed panels. The right door is the most recent, partly glazed with three bevelled raised panels, and having no surround.



Windows/Shutters: Generally the windows are six over six double hung in the old part. Two on the first story West side, and one on the East side, have been bricked up. The North-east wing has large 6 over 9 windows. Much of the fenestration of this floor is obscured by the store front. However, one window does exist which has a four light sash under four casement windows with mullions. Upstairs, there are the typical Federal windows except where Gertrude Inge replaced them with Victorian two over two windows. All of the sash windows have wood architrave surrounds too with subsills. There are no shutters.

Roof: The roof is a low pitch gable of tin. Northeast has a shingle roof now covered with tar. Stepped, corbelled gables extend up on either side, and a mousetooth cornice runs the lengths of both the North and South sides.

#### Description of Interior

Floor plans: Underneath Inge's Store is a partial basement within which the Inge's had a kitchen and dining room. On the left below the structure is just a storage crawl space. The original floor plan probably was only a few rooms with a stair at one end. Now, there is the storeroom, a central entrance and stairhall, with a bathroom in the rear, and two bedrooms. A rented room has been walled off on the Northwest corner. The second story has a stairhall and five bedrooms and a bathroom. Originally there was only two or three rooms on the second story.

Stairway: There is a single, central stairway, of two flights and 1 landing and open strung. It has simple brackets, tapered doric balusters and a square newel.

Flooring: The original flooring is of pine planking, about six inches in width.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Walls are plaster on brick in the original section, and plaster on lath in the additional walls, covered with wallpaper. There are baseboards in all rooms except the bathrooms.

Doorways and Doors: There are two types of doors, a "cross and bible" style in the older sections, and a Regency with 5 recessed bevelled panels in the additions. The two doors in the master bedrooms have been painted and grained. All remained unpainted and stained.

Interior Trim: All of the doors and windows have architrave surrounds and the fireplaces have been filled. Their mantels are simple federal style with shelves. All woodwork is still naturally stained. A simple baseboard runs on all walls.

Mechanical and Electrical Equipment: Several delicate Victorian fixtures exist in the house which originally were gas lights. They still operate today either for electricity or for gas.

### Site and Surroundings

Orientation and General Setting: The building's location is on the corner of Fourth Street and West Main and its long axis runs from East Southeast to West Northwest. To the West and South are office buildings; to the east is a small vacant lot and then an appliance store. The North is a rear yard and parking, vacant space.

Outbuildings: A rare surviving outbuilding is at the Northeast corner, and served as a smokehouse; constructed of brick in seven course American bond, it is a good example of diapering brickwork for both ventilation and decoration.

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### PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Associate Professor of Architecture. It was compiled during the Fall Semester, 1979, by Timothy L. Bishop, undergraduate Architectural History student, with the assistance of James R. McCue (Measuring), Catherine Powers (Photography and Developing), and Suzanne DeMasters (Typist). The material was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.