

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON HOME IS AUTHORS HAVEN

Both the builder and the restorer of the historic Dr. Joseph Johnson House in the Ansonborough section of Charleston, South Carolina were authors.

The pink brick and stucco ante-bellum mansion which again this Spring opens its doors to international visitors was built in 1838 by Dr. Joseph Johnson (1776-1862) on the site of an earlier brick dwelling, one wing, dating from 1770 which remains. Dr. Johnson was the author of "Traditions of the American Revolution in the South", a lengthy volume running to 584 pages published in Charleston in 1851. He built his home at number 56 Society Street as a gift for his French Huguenot wife, Catherine Bonneau.

During the War Between the States, the Johnsons were forced to flee the city. Dr. Johnson's son, another Dr. Joseph Johnson was rector and rector-emeritus of St. Phillip's Church for many years, during which time the house on Society Street was acting rectory.

With the decline of that section of the city the house deteriorated and was finally purchased in 1961 by British-born author Gordon Langley Hall as a gift for his cousin, Isabel Lydia Whitney of New York, water-colorist who is represented in such collections as the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and America's first woman fresco painter. When Miss Whitney died of leukemia, in 1962, Hall restored the house to its former beauty as her memorial. It is open daily to the public. Schoolchildren with their teachers are especially welcomed to see the Whitney-Hall collection of furnishings including one of the largest assembly of embroidered pictures in the South.

Wedgewood enthusiasts from all over the world come to see the Adam chimney piece with Wedgewood medallion insets depicting Venus and her swan-drawn shell chariot, circa 1785. The chimney piece came from the now dismantled home of Sir Sampson Gideon in Erith, Kent, England, and was illustrated in Alison Kelley's book "Decorative Wedgewood."

Dr. Johnson, one of the South's finest medical scientists of his era, wrote in the preface of his book: "As I advance in years, I am sensible that my memory is failing me as to recent events, but not as to what I heard and saw in my youth." Then he proceeded to record historic happenings through which members of his family had lived that they might not be forgotten.

During his residence at the Dr. Joseph Johnson House, Gordon Langley Hall has written biographies of "Osceola" - "Vinnie-Ream - the Girl Who Sculptured Lincoln" - "Mr. Jefferson's Ladies" - "Jacqueline Kennedy" (with co-author Ann Pinchot) and his current "Lady Bird and Her Daughters." He is currently working on a serious biography of William the Silent, Father of the Netherlands for Rand McNally, and a biography of "Mary Todd Lincoln."

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CHARLESTON HOME IS AUTHOR'S

Both the builder and the restorer of the historic Dr. Joseph Johnson House in the Ansonborough section of Charleston, South Carolina were authors.

The pink brick and stone endo-bellum mansion which again this Spring opens its doors to international visitors was built in 1838 by Dr. Joseph Johnson (1776-1862) on the site of an earlier brick dwelling, one wing, dating from 1770 which remains. Dr. Johnson was the author of "Traditions of the American Revolution in the South", a lengthy volume running to 264 pages published in Charleston in 1821. He built his home at number 26 Society Street as a gift for his French Huguenot wife, Catherine Honneman.

During the War Between the States, the Johnsons were forced to flee the city. Dr. Johnson's son, another Dr. Joseph Johnson was restorer and restorers-members of St. Philip's Church for many years, during which time the house on Society Street was being restored.

With the decline of that section of the city the house deteriorated and was finally purchased in 1961 by British-born author Gordon Langley Hall as a gift for his cousin, Isabel Lydia Whitney of New York, water-colorist who is represented in such collections as the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and America's first woman fresco painter. When Miss Whitney died of leukemia, in 1962, Hall restored the house to its former beauty as her memorial. It is open daily to the public. Schoolchildren with their teachers are especially welcomed to see the Whitney-Hall collection of turn-of-the-century things including one of the largest assembly of embroidered pictures in the South.

Wedgwood enthusiasts from all over the world come to see the Adam chimney piece with Wedgwood medallion insets depicting Venus and her swan-drawn shell chariot, circa 1782. The chimney piece came from the now dismantled home of Sir Sampson Gideon in Epsom, Kent, England, and was illustrated in Alison Kebley's book "Decorative Wedgwood."

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During his residence at the Dr. Joseph Johnson House, Gordon Langley Hall has written biographies of "Georgia" - "Virginia" - "The City and Suburbs of Lincoln" - "Mrs. Jefferson's Ladies" - "Washington Kennedy" (with co-author Ann Pinchot) and his current "Lady Bird and Her Daughters". He is currently working on a extensive biography of William the Silent, Father of the Netherlands for Rand McNally, and a biography of "Mary Todd Lincoln."

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In the spring he writes in a wisteria shrouded open-air study leading off from the upstairs-piazza. There under the shadow of the Whitney Coat of Arms he can look down into the garden which was restored in memory of V. Sackville-West, poetess, author and gardener, who read his first manuscript when he was a child of seven, and encouraged him. Her husband, Sir Harold Nicolson, whose diaries have recently been published in this country is a close friend.

The lead unicorns on the entrance gate pillars were given by Dame Margaret Rutherford, Academy award winning actress, who calls Hall "my adopted American son." A Spanish stone Madonna behind an iron grille commemorates Hall's friendship with best-selling novelist, Frances Parkison Keyes, who wrote her comments upon "Mr. Jefferson's Ladies" inside the cover jacket. In the pets cemetery is Simon's grave, which says Hall, the tourists photograph most of all. Simon was a guinea-pig who lived to be nearly seven. Fannie Hurst, the novelist wrote the epitaph which is engraved upon his tombstone: "Sleep peacefully under your white Rose of Sharon." Dr. Johnson who had a pet donkey would have liked this domestic touch!

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