

## Museum Around the Corner

### Georgetown County Historical Society and Museum

#### Town Lots of Georgetown ©

When the Reverend Elisha Screven began laying out the plan for his new town, little did he know that his ownership would be challenged a few years later. In 1729, he hired Surveyor William Swinton to lay out the 274 ½ acres into business and residential lots. In only seven years, the town lots were sold out. One stipulation when signing the contract was that the owner was required to build a structure a minimum of 16 square feet by 22 feet square feet with a brick chimney. Failure to erect such a building resulted in forfeiture.

Streets were named for royal titles: King, Queen, Princess (later changed to Prince), and Duke. Others were named for their descriptive roles: Broad, (one of the two widest streets), Highmarket, (the other widest street and it is assumed where the city market would be located), Wood, (being the last street on the western side at the woods), and Front Street, (sometimes called Bay Street) on the river. Screven Street was named for our founder, and Orange Street referred to a royal alignment with the Netherlands House of Orange. Church Street is so named because the plan called for the Presbyterian Church to be built there at the head of Orange, the Church of England was to be built at the head of Broad Street, and the Baptist (Anabaptist) Church was to be at the head of Screven Street. None of these congregations built on their assigned lot. However, the Baptists did build their sanctuary on their lot years later. Church Street is now Highway 17, a major artery through Georgetown.

The owners of business lots on Front Street were granted the use of land down to the river to give them access to the waterfront. At one time, there was a dock built at the foot of each street on the river. Eventually, only one dock remained, the one at the foot of Cannon Street where the Port of Entry was located. It was large enough to accommodate eight ships at a time.

In purchasing their lot, families were granted the privilege of pasturing one horse and one cow on the town common, located across Church Street at the northern limit. A scavenger was hired periodically to go about the town to remove any trash and refuse placed there by citizens. In a newspaper article a complaint was lodged that the scavenger was depositing his collections in a large ditch at the northern end of Queen Street and causing an eyesore.

One twist of fate was that Winyah Bay was too shallow and muddy for larger trading vessels to come in on a regular basis to our Port of Entry established in 1732. That meant we could not engage in trade on a large scale, thus limiting Georgetown to remaining a small town until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1737, the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. John Cleland may have caused an uproar. It seems that Mrs. Cleland's father, John Perry, laid claim to the same property and endowed it to his daughter, Mary. Upon investigation, it seems that Mr. Perry's agent, John Abraham Motte, had sold this very same plot to The Reverend William Screven who in turn left it to his son, The Reverend

Elisha Screven. After the court case was completed, the town was given to Mr. and Mrs. Cleland and a board of three trustees. All lots set aside for common usage were still reserved. Two new streets were added in 1737, Cleland Street on the western end and St. James on the east side.

The Museum has research on the ownership of each lot in Georgetown from 1729 to at least the War Between the States, the compiled from several sources. Come in or call us for information on your lot!