

Washington Couple to Restore Annapolis Mansion

By W. H. Shippen

A Georgian home, built in Annapolis more than 200 years ago, has been acquired by a Washington couple who also took title to a ghost and skeleton in the closet.

But Mr. and Mrs. Stanley S. Wohl are less impressed with stories of rattling bones and mysterious midnight prowlers than their son and daughter, who are seniors in college.

Mr. Wohl, a retired political and historical writer of Raleigh, Charlotte and Greensboro, N. C., and his wife have purchased the Brice House at East and Prince George streets from St. John's College.

At the same time, the Wohls sold their home in Washington at 3107 Cleveland avenue N.W. They plan to take possession of the central part of the historic mansion July 1.

In Colonial days, the Brice home was a place of entertainment for George Washington and other prominent persons of the surrounding area. The parties were staged in royal style prior to the Revolution.

During modern times the mansion was used first as an annex for Carvel Hall Hotel and later as an apartment building for professors and instructors at St. Johns.

Mr. and Mrs. Wohl, whose hobby in the 25 years of their married life has been the study of historic American sites and the collection of period furniture, are looking forward to restoring Brice House to its original state of simple dignity.

Mr. Wohl pointed out that about 98 per cent of the old home remains as it was designed in 1740 by Architect William Buckland. The central part was completed a few years later, and the two wings were finished in 1745.

The home was built by Thomas Jennings of Annapolis as a wedding present for his daughter Juliana and her bridegroom, Col. Jennings Brice.

Thomas Jennings, born in England, was a cousin of the first Dutchess of Marlboro. He came to the New World at the age of 19 and was appointed attorney general of the Province of Maryland about the year of 1773.

Old history books describe Col. Brice as a "gallant soldier" of the French and Indian Wars which preceded the Revolution.

Mr. and Mrs. Wohl, who are members of the National Trust for Preservation of Historic Sites, have been told that the mansion contains a secret stairway leading from a large bedroom on the third floor to the basement.

Another concealed passageway, they said, led from the base-



WASHINGTON COUPLE ACQUIRES BRICE MANSION IN ANNAPOLIS—This historic home in the Maryland capital has been purchased from St. John's College by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Wohl of 3107 Cleveland avenue N.W. The mansion dates from 1740 and is regarded as an outstanding example of Georgian architecture.

ment to the Annapolis waterfront. The house was built to overlook Chesapeake Bay, about a block away.

During the 1890's workmen discovered a concealed closet in one of the wings. This closet contained the bleached skeleton of a woman. No authentic information could be developed on this score.

Various explanations advanced in the meantime included one to the effect that some member of the family had been of unsound mind, with the result that she was confined within the home until her death.

Mrs. Wohl said she had been informed that the "ghost" glimpsed occasionally on the premises appeared to be an elderly man dressed in black with a starched white "stock" collar. She added that this shade may be laid to rest when the home is completely restored and preserved in its former state.

The Brice mansion has approximately 30 rooms, all designed with a touch of spacious grace.

The grand staircase in the central section includes a hand-rail carved by hand from Central American mahogany.

Seven different kinds of precious woods from the West Indies were imported for the interior trim, as revealed in the palladium windows, the cornices and paneling treatments around the fireplaces.

The Brice house has a small

garden which the Wohls plan to replant on the formal lines of the original.

The mansion has been the subject of numerous stories in publications specializing in early American homes. One writer said of it:

"This is one of the most magnificent wedding presents in the history of Colonial times."