

Col. Robert Brewton House
71 Church Street
c. 1720
Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Saul Krawcheck

The Col. Robert Brewton House, c. 1720, is believed to be the oldest surviving Charleston "single house", the prevailing low-country floor plan in which the house is placed sideways on the lot with the gable end facing the street. Col. Brewton had sold his former home just up the street at the corner of Tradd in 1722. It would be logical to assume his new house here was ready for occupancy at that time. Undoubtedly it took a year or more for the house to be constructed.

The land on which the house stands was the northern portion of Lot. No. 57 of the Grand Modell (c. 1694), the original city plan of Charles Towne. The site had been purchased six years before the house was finished by Robert Brewton's father, Miles Brewton. He had been appointed Powder Receiver for the city and the family was already an illustrious one. Robert was a goldsmith by profession. He was elected to the Commons House of Assembly and was succeeded in his father's post of Powder Receiver. It was Robert's son, another Miles Brewton, who built the famed Brewton house at 27 King Street in 1765.

The house is constructed with extremely thick walls of brick finished with quoins at the corners and a hip roof of tile. An attractive exterior feature is the molded brick cornice around the roof line. The house was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962.

FIRST FLOOR SITTING ROOM

As already mentioned the date of this house is 1720 and the interiors retain traces of their original finish. However changes were made in the early part of the 19th century and again, to a lesser degree in 1847 or 1852.

The owners acquired the house six years ago and since that time they have been occupied with its restoration. Many modern alterations have been removed and most of this work was accomplished by the owner himself. Here is a prime example of on-going restoration with many fascinating projects still to be started.

The Charleston single house is but one room deep. This dwelling is somewhat wider than usual on the street side allowing for three graceful windows across the front. One was probably a doorway at an earlier date. The graceful proportions of the room are enhanced by the woodwork, probably one of the early changes in the house. Similar moldings are found in the dining room at Mulberry, one of the great Cooper River plantation houses. Probably the same carpenter was responsible for the stylish trim in both houses done about 1800.

The owner recently uncovered some Spanish brown paint while scraping down one of the dado panels. An indication that this popular color was once used in the house. The floors are original heart pine.

FURNISHINGS

Slant front desk - purchased at a local auction some years ago for a pittance. It was in terrible condition, marred, broken, covered with ink spots. Supposed to have an English provenance; A receipt in pounds was discovered in a drawer. But upon inspection of the secondary woods it is now thought to be an American piece, shipped to England at one time and after years of useful service there, returned to America where the owner has carefully restored it.

Framed maps all pertain to Charleston history.

Mantel painting - done by contemporary Charleston artist, William Halsey in 1939. Entitled "Condemned Building". Subject is the rear of a decaying King Street building which the family has restored and now houses their fine men's specialty shop.

Book on brass stand below painting inscribed as prize at Yale to Charlestonian Benjamin Hayward for his skill in writing Latin. Benjamin's brother Thomas was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The title of the book, THE LOUNGER, belies the subject matter. It contains a number of essays on the 'proper moral and social behavior of a gentleman'.

Platter: English ironstone.

DINING ROOM

The owner feels the whole room is a sham. He has recently discovered that the walls are false. They were installed in the past, apparently to cover some cracked paneling. He also suspects that the fireplace opening was originally a much larger one. The present kitchen house is believed to be a somewhat later addition to the property. Perhaps, at one time, some cooking had been done in this room.

The owner's next project is tackling this room and it portends to be an exciting one.

Mantel vases: porcelain with portraits of Martha Washington on each.

Sideboard: supposedly English, but again, there is some suspicion that it is American, based on the secondary woods.

Platters: Mason ironstone (English).

Table and chairs - reproductions

FRONT HALL

The newel post at the foot of the stairs as well as the balusters and rail to the second floor were all additions of this century. However, the originals

FRONT HALL CONT.

have turned up and will soon be installed. They match those still in place, the balusters between the second and third floors and the newel posts on the landings.

Audubon print - Carolina parrot (a bird virtually extinct) engraved by Bien in Philadelphia, 1860.

DRAWING ROOM - second floor

The restoration of this room has just been completed by the owner after years of careful and rather tedious work. All the moldings had been covered with many coats of paint that had to be burned off and then repiared and repainted. Brown stained plywood bookcases lined the inside wall. Closets took up space on either side of the fireplace. Behind them, the windows were uncovered; One had even been bricked up. Once again the beautiful proportions and moldings of this rare and handsome room are wonderfully apparent.

Docent reading: DWELLING HOUSES OF CHARLESTON, p. 43-47, A.R.H. Smith &
D.E.H. Smith

S.C. Historical Society - Tour

5.

71 CHURCH STREET

c. 1720

ROBERT BREWTON'S HOUSE
RESIDENCE OF MRS. JOHN A. COLWELL

This house was called by D. E. Huger Smith the earliest example standing in Charleston of the uniquely Charleston "single house", one room wide and presenting the narrow end to the street. "Robert Brewton, goldsmith" was residing here in 1733, the earliest date usually given, but he had sold what is now #38 Tradd Street in 1722, called in the deed, "where Robert Brewton now lives". Therefore he must have newly built #71 Church Street, before 1722, and after 1716, when his father bought the lot.

An attractive feature of the exterior is the molded brick cornice, and the interiors retain traces of their original finish, although much "modernized" in 1814 or 1822, and again to a lesser degree in 1847 or 1852.

Robert Brewton (1698-1759) was a Captain of Militia, and a member of the Commons House of Assembly, and succeeded his father as Powder Receiver in 1745. His son Miles built the famed house at #27 King Street in 1765.

No. 71 Church Street was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962.

SOME SINGLE HOUSES IN CHURCH STREET

71 Church - 1730, 94 Church - 1759,
90 Church - 1760, and 92 Church - 1807
No. 7

No. 71 Church was the home of Colonel Robert Brewton who succeeded his father Colonel Miles Brewton as Powder Receiver, an office of considerable responsibility. This dwelling is the earliest example of what is known locally as a "single house". Its entrance is on the long side giving direct access to the stair hall with a door to a reception room facing the street. Directly opposite is the door into the dining room over looking the garden. The same basic arrangement of rooms with the stair hall between is repeated on the second and third floors. From the street the profile seems tall and narrow.

The distinctive feature of this house is the carefully executed moulded brick cornice with well defined modillions supporting the over hanging fascia under the eaves. The roof is covered with pan tiles and there are no dormers. The wrought iron balcony under the central window on the second floor adds an impressive accent at this focus.

All of these features are related to London precedents. Sir John Summerson in *Georgian London* gives us several significant instances of London building practices which we find repeated on this side of the Atlantic. He states "The insistent verticality of the London house is idiomatic. The French learnt at an early date to live horizontally and most, if not all, continental capitals followed the French lead". x x x "Continued fear of conflagrations prompted a Statute of 1707 which abolished the prominent wooden eaves-cornices which were such a striking feature of the streets and squares of the Restoration". x x x "Two years later in 1709, another attack was made on exposed woodwork, this time in the window-openings. The frames instead of being nearly in the same plane as the brick face, were to be set back 4 in. leaving an exposed reveal of brickwork and incidentally giving a sense of solidity to the walls". Earlier regulations stated that "the larger types of houses were required to have a balcony at first floor level" x x x "In England as in France the "first floor" is that above the ground floor. The house of Colonel Robert Brewton conforms to all of these

London requirements except that the window frames are not recessed. Charles-Town lagged in following this fire precaution though it was finally accepted. The Heyward-Washington House, 87 Church Street, which was built in 1770, has the window frames flush with the face of the brick wall throughout except on the second and third floor windows facing the street which are recessed. This was an early and apparently reluctant compliance. Later this precaution was adopted generally.

No. 94 Church Street was built about 1730, by Thomas Bee. Its former coating of stucco has been carefully removed from the street front disclosing a facade of brick laid in Flemish bond. The cornice under the eaves consists of crown and bead mouldings of moulded brick with a dentil course between of alternate projecting and receding row lock brick. The window frames are of solid timbers set almost flush with the brickwork. At the window heads on the first and second floors there are segmental relieving arches of row lock brick with the spandrel between arch and window frame filled in with brick clipped to fill the space. On the first and second floors the window sash are glazed with nine lights over nine and on the third floor the sash are six over six lights. On the second floor under the central window a wrought iron balcony has been added and the window extended to the floor and the guillotine sash replaced by a French window with large panes of glass, disturbing the scale established by the smaller panes.

Although this is the oldest of these three neighboring houses its piazzas on the first and second floors are the latest to be added, evidently in Greek Revival times in the eighteen forties. The roof is of slate with clay tile over the hips and ridges. There is one dormer on the east slope of the roof.

This building is important historically which is explained on the tablet facing the street.

No. 90 Church Street built some thirty years later by Thomas Legare is a further development of the single house. Here the original entrance was from the street into the front room occupied as a real estate and financial office. This door was later converted to a window but its former presence is still evident in the greater width of the flat arch over the opening. There is a family entrance to the stair hall on the south side. Dormer windows appear on the roof