

*Do not use any kind of tape
to tape runners to the floor,
to other runners or to
anything else.*

THOMAS ROSE HOUSE
59 CHURCH STREET
c. 1735
Historic Church Street Foundation

2017

The Thomas Rose House was built about 1735 by Thomas Rose and his wife, Beuler Elliott Rose shortly after their marriage in 1733 in St. Philips Church. The earliest reference to the property was a land grant to Elizabeth Willis made by the Lords Proprietors in 1680, part of the original grand Model of Charlestowne, and one of the few such grants ever made to a woman.

In 1731, the property passed from Thomas Elliott to his daughter, Beuler, who was 18 years old. She was the youngest of 18 children, nine by each of two wives. Her father was one of the wealthiest men in the colony, and at his death he left a plantation to each son, and a property in town to each daughter. There is reference to a small house at that time, rented to a retired sea captain who paid his rent in peppercorns. In 1733, Beuler married Thomas Rose, a wealthy Irishman.

The architectural and structural details of the Thomas Rose house place it as having been built under the ownership of the Roses between 1735 and 1740. In any case, it is shown on a plat of the town as being one of the buildings surviving the fire of 1740. Letters from the Rose family found in Belfast, Ireland in 1988, indicate that Thomas Rose wrote to his family in Ireland in 1734 asking them to locate four workmen who would be willing to leave England and come to work for him.

The house is a very fine example of the early Georgian period with an unusual asymmetrical floor plan. Rose's large, dignified panels, robust cornices and other simple early Georgian decorations are nearly as he left them. Ninety percent of the original paneling is intact -- all of it cypress, with the exception of the stair hall, which is black walnut.

There have been very few changes made through the years. One of these is the placement of the entrance, which originally was located at the front of the house, and led into the front room. There was also at one time, a door into the small front room that would have served a business function. Later, probably around 1790, piazzas were added on the south side of the house, at which time the entrance was moved to its current location.

In the 1940's the kitchen building was connected to the main house thus allowing for a larger 20th century kitchen. Later the second floor of the dependency (which would originally have been servants' quarters) was opened to the main house, accommodating an additional bedroom and dressing room. The first floor rooms of the dependency remain relatively unchanged, and still have the fireplaces and ovens of the early kitchen and wash rooms.

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The house is currently the property of the Church Street Historic Foundation, a private foundation incorporated in 1959 with the aim of preserving the architectural character of Church Street and preventing the destruction of old buildings and the encroachment of business into the area. While it is opened to special groups thorough the Historic Charleston Foundation, this house remains a private residence.

It is said that the house is haunted by the ghost of Joseph Brown Ladd, a young physician from Rhode Island, who boarded on Church Street for a time. He and his friend Mr. Issacs argued over an actress appearing at a local theater, Miss Perdita Robertson. This resulted in a duel in Church Street. The story is that Ladd shot in the air to avoid harming his friend, but the friend shot Ladd, gangrene set in, and Ladd died in the house in 1786. They say that his friendly ghost still walks the staircase, whistling.

SITTING ROOM

This room, like others in this early 18th century house, is paneled throughout. The wood of the paneling is cypress, except in the stair hall, which is paneled in black walnut. Walnut was found in great quantities in this area in the Colonial period. Few changes have been made in this room. One can see where the original door was located in what is now the northernmost window (note how much wider it is than the other windows and the angle of the panels). The fireplace remains the original size, but the mantel is a later addition and the original bolection molding has been changed. The small closet at the right of the fireplace is original and contains a tea and coffee service of Chinese exportware (Lowestoft) of about 1780. The paint colors chosen for this room come from a sketch of Chippendale's in which he shows 32 different shades of color used on paneling very similar to that in this room. Shades of blue were chosen since it was the most popular color in the 18th century.

Chair, blue, upholstered, Chippendale in style, with simple mahogany arms and stretchers, English, c. 1795.

Card tables, American Hepplewhite; the table near the window, with the rounded corners and satinwood inlay dates from about 1790.

Sofa is a reproduction

Mirrors, at the end of the room, a pair of late 18th century mahogany and gilt, Chippendale-style, hang above two card tables. The mirrors have the Eagle, not the Phoenix at the center top, and are characteristically American, the birds facing left and right, symbolic of looking both to war and peace.

Wing chair, Queen Anne type, American, circa 1750, covered with 18th century needlepoint. Rolled arm and walnut feet, stretchers typical of the period.

Chairs, set of four French walnut armchairs with original needlework;

Mirror, on the panel, next to the front door, hangs an old French trumeau. "Trumeau" is the name of a French mirror of the Louis XV or Louis XVI style. It is tall and characterized by a painted scene in the upper portion.

Table, under the mirror, English, marble-top, mid-18th c. This shows many of the decorative motifs the Adam brothers adapted for their own designs.

Fire screen, c. 1800, mahogany shafts, old family sampler.

Blue bowls, on the mantel, old Persian ones

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SITTING ROOM (Continued)

Chandelier, brass, English, about 1745-1750 and has been wired for electricity. The owners designed the coved ceiling to accommodate the chandelier.
Field desk, mahogany, brassbound box, in the window seat, English.
Clock, is an ornate, French mantel clock, made by Admusin in Paris - 1830. It is made of ormolu (gilded brass or bronze made to imitate gold) and boulle (thin sheets of tortoise shell).
Child's chair is a reproduction of an American Windsor piece, of New England origin.
Rug, Bokara.

LIBRARY

Collection of American birds and flowers, in wall cabinet, designed by Dorothy Doughty (pronounced "Dowty") who worked for Royal Worcester between 1935 and 1962. She designed a total of 43 birds and flowers plus the 6 rock flowers. She died in 1962. Only one pair is missing from this collection, returned because the owner did not care for it. That pair is particularly rare, since many other collectors felt the same way! The rest of the collection can be seen in the dining room

STAIRS - UPPER HALL

The hall is fully paneled in black walnut and contains all of its original woodwork, an unusual survival for a house of this period in Charleston. The position of the stair hall, chambered at the rear of the building, reflects the floor plan of early merchant houses, many of which were destroyed in the fire of 1740. The mahogany balustrade and carved brackets beneath the treads are original and may be the work of an English or Irish craftsman sent specifically by the brother of the builder.

Window drapery on the stair is contemporary needlepoint, incorporating in the design the birds and flowers of the Carolinas.
Small-case clock, on the stairs, 18th century. The brass face is by John Knapp of Corke (Ireland), circa 1795, and the mahogany case is American.
Hurricane lamps, upstairs and down in the stairwell, from a New Hampshire house, circa 1760. They have been wired for electricity.
Tallboy, Queen Anne-type, far end of the hall is of Santo Domingo mahogany and has the typical flat top. From the style of the moldings, the skirt, the carved drake feet, it is shown to be an American piece, characteristic of the work done along the Delaware River between 1740 and 1760. The workmen in this area were possibly trained in Philadelphia or had worked there.

DRAWING ROOM

This room is an early example of what became the norm for great Charleston houses -- an upstairs drawing room. This is an unusual example in that it is one single room the full width of the house, rather than being divided into a drawing room and an accompanying withdrawing room. The lovely arched openings seen at the doorway and the cupboard in this room as well as elsewhere in the house, are unusual and would have been quite avant-garde for this early period.

Only two material changes have occurred in the room through the years. The middle window, which was formerly a door opening onto an iron balcony, has been closed. The bolection molding used around the fireplace was removed about 1800-1820, the Adam style mantel replacing it. In 1950, while work was being done on the fireplace, the owner entered the room to find workmen chipping away at Delft tiles found underneath! Two of the tiles were saved. The ornament on the mantel was scraped down and it was repainted at this time, revealing many of the delicate refinements of the carving. Although this mantel is not original to the house, it is a lovely and unusual feature.

Dinner set, partial set, inside cupboard, c. 1790, Chinese export ware (Armorial Lowestoft), with the border edged in blue with a gold star design. A monogram is in the blue and gold mantled shield. This exportware was popular in the United States when trade with China was opened to the new republic. The first American ship to engage in China trade was the "Empress of China", which went to Canton in 1785. Previously all China-trade porcelains came to this country via England. The large punch bowl is of the same period. This cabinet door originally opened onto a pass-through which led into the bedroom. It is now made into two closets.

Portrait, over the mantel, of the children of Willowby Wood, by the British painter, John Berridge, 1770.

Card tables, on the other side of the mantel, and also at the south end of the room, two demilune, Sheraton, mahogany and satinwood inlaid panels of the finest workmanship.

Mirror, convex, Sheraton style, hangs over the table on the south wall.

Sofa, Chippendale style, American, 18th century, upholstered in yellow damask.

Side chair, at the desk, with pierced scroll splat, American Chippendale, probably a Philadelphia piece. Most examples of "simplified" Chippendale chairs, produced by the provincial cabinetmakers have a square leg, as in this case.

Armchair, upholstered in rose velvet, Chippendale with interesting pierced stretchers.

Arm chairs, set of four are small, with oval backs, Hepplewhite and show French influence and taste. These are of the periods 1780-1790, and are of mahogany. These chairs are upholstered in contemporary needlepoint. The special flower designs were done for these chairs in colors that harmonize with the room.

Secretary-bookcase, at the north end of the room, English, 18th century. The carved moldings in the cornice, the garlands of husks which festoon the glass doors, and the general refinement of detail and workmanship, suggest the Adam influence upon a piece which, in some respects has the characteristics of an earlier style, notably the ogee feet. This is most likely a "marriage piece", that is, two separate pieces that were put together; hence the very different styles of the top and bottom. The upper section contains a collection of Meissen figurines.

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DRAWING ROOM (Continued)

Porcelain box, on the secretary-bookcase is Cappel di Monte, done at the Naples factory about 1760. (This factory was started and run by the Duke, who later became King of Spain and moved the factory from Naples in 1760).

Mirror, over the console, a northern Italian carved mirror of the 18th century.

Demi lune console, at the other side of the window, Adam, with rich painted decoration employing classic motifs of garlands, cupids, jewels and cameos. The doors of the bow-front have medallions painted in the manner associated with the name of Anjelica Kauffman. This 18th century artist has become inextricably associated with the style of painting (in which pretty women and cupids predominate) used on furniture, walls, ceilings and produced in prints, just as the names of Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton are associated with styles of furniture. This console is believed to have been designed for the Countess of Derby, such a design being shown in the "Works in Architecture" by Robert and James Adam.

Stool, in front of the fireplace, Chippendale, English, mid-18th century, mahogany. This is a very fine example of 18th century craftsmanship. Stools are the oldest and simplest form of seating. The increased use of chairs in the 18th century lessened the dependence on stools, so that Queen Anne and Chippendale stools were made in smaller numbers than in the 17th century.

Tea table, mid-18th century, tilt-top, mahogany. The tripod foot was developed by Chippendale about 1730 to stand straight on the uneven floors. These tables were very popular between 1730 and 1750, and could be placed against the wall when not in use.

Sofa table behind the door, English, made in the first years of the nineteenth century

Silver sconces on either side of the mantel, were thought to be reproductions of Charles II silver made in England about 1800. However, representatives of the National Gallery in 1987 said they may actually be original Charles II, 1660-1685.

Dumb waiters with three tiers were an English invention of about 1740. These were used for the serving of dessert, allowing servants to be dismissed and the conversation to be private.

Nesting tables, two sets. Sheraton introduced nests or sets of small tables for use in the drawing room. These were known as trio or quartetto tables, depending on whether there were three or four tables in the set. There are sets of each in this room, used as end tables. The set of tables with the bamboo legs dates from 1803.

Urn stand, small mahogany, 18th century. Cantilevered legs and a Chinese type pierced gallery.

Wall brackets, English, late 18th century, showing the influence of the Adam brothers, with the carved ram's head supports and festoons of husks and bell flowers.

Covered porcelain jars on the brackets are Chinese, Chien Long (1735-1795). The tops are pierced, with pierced jade inserts and were used for pot pourri.

Small bookcase next to the fireplace is English, late 18th century.

Lamp on table at south end of the room is a brown and beige gourd-shaped lamp from the Sung dynasty (950-1278 a.d.); Tzu Chou (pronounced Soo Joe)

Lamp on the table beside the door is a Chinese polychrome wood figure of the Ming period - 1367-1644.

Clock - gilt-washed with a silver face is Dutch

Clock - small gilt and glass clock is French, Bousset de Villeneuve, fils, 1850

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DRAWING ROOM (Continued)

Side chair, one of a pair (other in first floor hallway), Queen Anne, walnut, with horse-shoe seats covered in contemporary crewelwork of appropriate design. The chairs are of Newport origin, circa 1740, and have the fine spindle and block stretchers characteristic of the best New England work. In New England, stretchers were used on chairs of the Queen Anne style. This pair belonged to Sir William Pepperell, hero of the Battle of Louisburg, in 1745 in the French and Indian War, born in Kittery, Maine, lived in Massachusetts, and died in 1759. He was made a Baronet for his services in the French and Indian War, and was the only New Englander so honored.

BEDROOM

Wallpaper in this room is made of silk, of a type used in the mid-18th century, and was painted in 1961 to fit the walls of this room by Chinese refugee artists working in Hong Kong. In the latter part of the 18th century, wallpapers became fashionable as a substitute for painted or paneled walls. This type of Chinese wallpaper was imported into England at the close of the 17th century. Chinese scenic paper was used in several early Massachusetts houses in 1750. At this time, however, little of any type wallpaper was imported to this country, as it was very costly.

Bed, four-poster, double, American, late 18th century and has the carved American eagle motif and tobacco leaves on the bed-posts at the foot. The single bed is a Williamsburg reproduction made about 1950.

Table, small, by the bed, early 18th century, mahogany, lowboy, Queen Anne type, with cabriole legs and pad feet

Chairs, low, curved, Directoire period, called "gondola" chairs.

Dressing table, Chippendale, 1780, showing Queen Anne influences with the slipper foot. The brasses are original.

Stool, mahogany, 1790.

Chambersticks, silver-plated, early American.

Chest, mahogany, bow-front, late 18th century.

Mirror, gilt, over the mantel, English, Chinese Chippendale in style, circa 1755.

A frequent practice in the 18th century was to use the bedroom also as a sitting room. Often there was a tea table for use, extra chairs, etc.

HALL

(Exit the bedroom down to the dining room.)

Note the doorway in the middle of the hall – this was originally a window at the end of the house, before it was connected to the dependency. The two bathrooms at the other side of the hall were made from what was originally the other bedchamber. Guests should be cautioned to walk carefully on the stairs and to use the handrail on their left.)

DINING ROOM

Placement of furniture in the 18th century was less static than today, and rooms were often multifunctional. It was not until the end of the 18th century that rooms were specifically set aside for dining. This room might have been frequently used for dining as it was adjacent to the warming pantry (now the kitchen), however, it may also have served as a family sitting room or morning room since the present sitting room was at that time the "hall".

The only alterations in this otherwise untouched room of the 18th century are the mantelpiece and framing around the cupboards and the fireplace. The present mantel was probably added in the late 18th century, and the far cupboard was originally the pass-through to the front room. These cupboards contain more of the birds and flowers done by the English ceramist, Dorothy Doughty.

- Urns, on the mantel shelf, late 18th century, English, lead, Chestnut. The gold design is free-hand gold leaf painting. These urns were introduced to England from France and were used to move hot chestnuts from the hearth to the table when the gentlemen were having their port. Such urns were also used by the Dutch and were produced from 1770 to 1800. This pair, from the refinement of design, shape and workmanship, appear to be of French origin and the slightly curved lids would place the date about 1780.
- Portrait, over the mantel, by Benjamin West, the American Quaker, who won great popularity and royal patronage in England in the late 18th century.
- Demi lune consoles, two, English-made, Adam-style, against the west wall, mahogany and satinwood and are completely original, made about 1770. They were no doubt, designed to fit a special room, and it is interesting to see how admirably they fit into this one, although their style and period are some decades later than the room. Looking closely, one sees that the two panels behind the consoles are different sizes, but since one console is wider than the other, the proportions work out perfectly.
- Mirrors, over the consoles, pair, Chippendale-type, c 1760. The beveled glass (in two pieces) is original. The mirror frames are the old mercury-gilded process which gives the soft silver tone to the gold leaf. The base is smoothed, then rubbed with mercury and dried. Gold leaf is then applied and burnished, rendering a grayish cast to the gold when combined with the mercury.
- Chairs, four, American-made, mahogany, style that is a transition between Chippendale and Hepplewhite. The carved splats are reminiscent of the work of the former and the tapering legs are characteristic of the latter.
- Chairs, four, painted, at the table, reproductions of a set of family chairs which came from one of the Dutch estates on the Hudson River. The stretchers on these chairs are unusual, as is the design which is in free-hand gold-leaf rather than stenciled. The cabinetmakers probably came from New York seeking employment on the country estates upstate. The wood used in the original chairs is mountain ash and the design was most probably from Sheraton's pattern book. The original chairs became too fragile for continued use, and were "retired" in 1984.
- Dining table, English, 18th century, Sheraton in design. It is a two-pedestal table of mahogany with reeded edges, about 1790.

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DINING ROOM - *Continued*

Rug, needlepoint, made for the room in Portugal in the 1960's. The design is an adaptation of a period rug in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the colors being taken from the Benjamin West portrait.

Three tiered mahogany table is a late 18th century Irish accountant's table

Chandelier, modern Waterford copy of an old one.

Steel and brass firegrate, Georgian, circa 1810.

Black and gold toile box, beside fireplace, claw feet and tin liner, an old Chinese tea chest.

Urn, silver, pear-shaped, English, George III, made in London, by Francis Crump, 1764.

6 silver candlesticks, made by Gorham, late 19th century.

Collection of Birds and Flowers by Dorothy Doughty

GARDEN

The hanging baskets along the ground floor piazza are lovely. Many paving patterns are used in this garden. Look at the kumquat tree by the dependency.

The garden seen today reflects the original property owned by Thomas and Beuler Rose. However, in the early 19th century, the south side of the garden was sold off, and a house was built on it about 1840. In 1954, the owner of the Rose house was able to purchase the southern lot and had to demolish the 19th century house because it was in such poor condition.

The garden was planned and developed in 1954-55 by Loutrel Briggs, a prominent Charleston landscape architect. The oak trees were planted at that time after the garden had been dug out three feet and filled with top soil and fertilizer, which perhaps accounts for their remarkable growth.

This is a spectacular azalea and camellia garden which is at its peak in the spring. Asiatic jasmine is used as a ground cover in many places with Confederate jasmine growing on the tall wire screen that was erected to hide the large building built on the adjacent property about 1960.

At the rear of the north side of the garden is a pattern garden with an astrolabe. The original 18th century astrolabe, which had been in the family since the 1920's, was unfortunately stolen in the mid 1990's.

The terra-cotta squirrels on the side gateposts are by Willard Hirsch, a local sculptor.

Moving to the south garden, the small unicorns on the pedestals at either side of the brick path are by the late American sculptor, Henry Mitchell. Mitchell was a graduate of Princeton with an M.A. from Temple University. He was an engineer as well as a sculptor.

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Mitchell was born in Canton, Ohio and was stationed in Charleston with the Coast Guard in World War II. He received a Fulbright scholarship to study with Marino Marini in Italy and continued to do much of his work in Milan as well as in Philadelphia. He was a close family friend and was commissioned to do the bronze statues of the Four Seasons which are in the south garden. While contemporary in feeling, they have the basket so often used in 18th century garden figures of the four seasons. These figures were to be Mitchell's last work. While delivering them to Charleston, he was taken ill, and died in April, 1980, at the age of 61.

The large broad leaf shrub behind the two benches is a latifolia holly. The iron gate at the rear of the south side is 18th century Italian.

Extensive renovation of the garden was undertaken in 1988, and again in 2002 by Hugh Dargan Associates, landscape architects. Most recently the garden was renovated by Sheila Wertimer and Associates in 2008.