

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

NEED INTERIORS

JOSIAH SMITH HOUSE

?

7 Meeting Street

c. 1783

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. L. R. Burtschy

The Josiah Smith House at 7 Meeting Street was one of the first great houses built in Charleston after the American Revolution. Architectural historians have placed the general date of c. 1783 on the house, based on its original interior architectural details.

The original interiors are in the rather formal and simplified form of the Georgian style which Charleston builders adopted after the Revolution. Owing probably to the unsettled economic conditions of the 1780's, this period lacks the somewhat heavy elaboration of detail which characterized the period just before the Revolution. It also lacks the touch of frivolity which Charleston's Adam period would display in a later and more prosperous era.

Whether or not Smith, a prosperous merchant before the Revolution, had rebuilt his business by 1783 sufficiently to construct so fine a house is a matter of conjecture. His merchantile house must have suffered from the shortages that the war imposed, not to mention the long period of neglect when Smith was exiled from Charlestown by the British.

However, the house was certainly standing by August, 1788, as it appears prominently in the Phoenix Fire Company Map of Charleston, based on a survey which Edmund Petrie completed in that month and year.

Smith's house is of two and one-half stories on a moderately high basement and is crowned with a lantern or cupola. The exterior is of black cypress, the most durable of local woods, and is insulated with walls of brick between the framing timbers.

A simple pediment with a round window points up the street facade, which is embellished by a semi-circular porch. This porch, with a shape reminiscent of the Adam-cum-Regency period, with fluted Doric columns and delicate iron railings and sweeping double stair, is probably not original to the house, but added some years later. The Greek Revival piazzas on the south side of the house are, of course, a much later addition.

Smith's house follows the traditional Charleston double house plan, with four rooms split by a central hall on each floor. The rear stairhall is set off by a high, wide keystone arch in the Georgian style. This arch is considered one of the most beautiful in the city. The stair has elaborately turned balusters and climbs hugging the walls, with two landings on each level.

Josiah Smith, the builder, was born in 1731 at Cainhoy, in St. Thomas' Parish where his father was the Presbyterian minister, and moved to Charlestown as an adolescent. Smith became a successful merchant and was elected to the Provincial Assembly.

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Smith's diary of the period of exile provides exhaustive details of great benefit to historical researchers. After the Revolution he returned to the merchantile business until, in 1790, he was appointed cashier of the Charleston Branch, Bank of the United States. He held that office until the termination of the bank's charter in 1810.

Smith married, in 1758, Mary Stevens, daughter of a fellow merchant, and they had seven children. He died in 1826 at the age of 95. He is buried in the Circular Churchyard. He was a deacon at the church for more than 40 years.

Smith had acquired a large portion of land on the west side of Meeting, and the north side of the present course of South Battery, and filled in much of the marchland there some years before the Revolution. He sold the house which he built there to Wilson Glover in 1800 for 4,000 pounds sterling, a considerable sum.

Glover left the property to his daughter, Ann, who married John Huger. After her death, Huger sold the house to Martha Prioleau, who lived there until her death about 1875. Subsequently it was acquired by Anna S. Simons, whose family sold it to the Charleston Club. It continued as a clubhouse until 1927 when it again became a private residence.

HALLWAY

The stair hall, separated from the front hall by a keystone arch, is completely authentic, and it is one of the finest in Charleston. The walls are covered with contemporary Chinese paper with a pattern of flowering trees against a silver background.

Settee - George II style, old Baker reproduction
Bombe chests in hall - old copies of 18th century originals
Tall-case clock, Ohio, early 19th century

LIVING ROOM

The living room is furnished with reproductions representing the Queen Anne, Chippendale and Federal styles.

Paintings: "Morning Sky" by Frank J. Girardin
Painting of baby by Elizabeth Nourse, a Cincinnati, Ohio artist who studied in France
Small painting by Charles A. Meurer (1865-1955), Cincinnati artist
Chinese export fish bowl, Famille Rose colors c. 1830.

LIBRARY

Many of the paintings here are by Charles A. Meurer (1865-1955), a Cincinnati artist for whom Mrs. Burtschy's grandfather acted as patron. The library retains its original panelling.

Judy Garland by Hirshfield
Candlesticks made from ram's horns on mantel

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DINING ROOM

Sheraton pedestal table c. 1810

Chairs, reproductions of Queen Anne originals made in Philadelphia , c. 1750.

Mirror is an Historic Charleston reproduction by Baker.

The chandelier, along with others in the house, was here when the Burtschy's bought the house.

KITCHEN

The kitchen has been expanded by St. Charles' kitchens to accommodate a family of four children, all of whom love to cook. The industrial restaurant steam jacket is a favorite for making homemade soup.

GARDEN - 2008

The original owner of this home provided leadership for the very first Chamber of Commerce in the country. The house is one of the few large double houses built in Charleston immediately after the Revolutionary War.

The large garden sits behind Creeping Fig (*Ficus pumila*) covered walls. It is a formal garden in that the largest axis is entirely symmetrical. Entering through the wooden gate, the visitor immediately sees a large circular fountain surrounded by four small matching beds. On either side of the walk to the center, two large Cocus Palms reside in beds filled with *Scaevola* and bordered with a small leaved Boxwood (*Buxus*). To the right an old *Pittosporum* grows, while to the left, a line of 18 foot tall Burford Holly (*Ilex*) trees creates a verdant wall. All beds are edged in the small Boxwood, and the double set approaching the fountain contain white Azaleas as well as the Pentas. Four huge hanging baskets of Ferns decorate the piazza openings. Entering through two pillars with planted urns on top, the viewer sees four small island beds surrounding the fountain and containing the Victoria Blue *Salvia*, with a cone-shaped Boxwood plant as a center. Opposite, a bench invites repose and is placed between two Sago Palms, with matching Holly bushes behind.

An enormous arch set in a low latticed brick wall opens up to the pool area. Stepping up on the bluestone hardscape, one is struck by the continuing symmetry beginning with two Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) and white *Camellia japonica* at the entrance. A series of Cocus or Pindo Palms accentuates the geometric shape of the wet edge pool with its ongoing water movement. The crossways axis of the garden is emphasized in the seating areas placed exactly opposite one another. Two enormous and shallow urns containing plant material accent the corners of each of these rest areas. In this pool area, the tall Burford Holly south wall gives way to equally tall Japanese Yew which continues round the perimeter. White *Camellia* and lots of variegated *Pittosporum* shrubs are planted throughout the pool surround and add a lightening effect; throughout, Pentas, *Scaevola* *Euphorra* – Diamond Frost. Two old Magnolia trees (*Magnolia grandiflora*) stand tall and add even more verticality.

GARDEN OF THE JOSIAH SMITH HOUSE

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The right side of the yard contains the back steps with various trees accenting beneath – a large cone-shaped Burford Holly, a Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia soulangeana*), a Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) and a Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*). An inviting bench is placed here by two small grass parterres where a metal frog sculpture sits contentedly reading. The carriage house, situated under a massive Live Oak Tree (*Quercus virginiana*) looks out upon this scene. Fascinating garden chairs flank the carriage house entrance which is near a wild Cherry tree (*Prunus campanulata*) and Fatsia japonica, Holly Fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum*) and Azaleas add to the greenery.

Stepping through the wrought iron gate and pillars to the parking area, one looks up to see some antique appearing iron urns on top. This brick area has beds planted with Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina*), Ligustrum and Azalea surrounding it, and Japanese Yew coats the walls of the long driveway. Burford Holly, Gardenia, Magnolia, Holly Fern, Japanese Yew and a Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) continue the attention to detail which marks this garden as a very special place. Large trees from the neighboring landscape add another dimension to this area.

This wonderful garden is most effective in its repetition of the same plants such as the continued use of the dwarf Japanese Boxwood and bedding contents, the magnificent Burford Hollies and the contrast of old and new plant material. It reaches all the visitor's senses – from the gentle burbling of the pool, the fragrance of blossoms, the differences of textures in green material and the visual impact of order.

The garden was designed by Robert Chestnut and is serviced by Botany Bay Landscape Company.