CHAPTER 4

Carl Lounsbury

The Dynamics of Architectural Design in Eighteenth-Century Charleston and the Lowcountry

On June 22, 1753, James Glen, the royal governor of South Carolina, convened a meeting of members of the King's Council and Commons House of Assembly to observe the anniversary of King George II's accession to the throne with a grand ceremony. The crowning moment of the day occurred when these distinguished leaders of the colony gathered at the northwest corner of Broad and Meeting Streets in Charleston to lay the cornerstone of the first provincial statehouse.[1] Work progressed slowly due to a shortage of funds to finance the rapidly escalating cost of this undertaking, but when officials moved into this two-story brick structure three years later, they took great satisfaction in knowing that they had completed one of the grandest public buildings erected in the American colonies. Its English Palladian form and detailing asserted the refined tastes of its provincial builders and provided an appropriate setting for the formal rituals and ceremonial activities that punctuated the rhythm of public life in the colony.

Yet, this public accomplishment was short-lived. The statehouse and much of the city suffered damage during the Revolution. The destruction and humiliation wrought by the British occupation of Charleston was followed after the war by the decision in 1788 to remove the state government to the upcountry village of Columbia. Shortly thereafter, a further blow was struck when the statehouse burned.[2] In the early 1790s, the building became the Charleston County Courthouse as a third story was added to the old walls and the interior refitted. Although the building served as the center of legal life in the city for the next two hundred years, its earlier form was severely altered and the original plan concealed by several generations of renovations and two large additions.[3] By the time Hurricane Hugo damaged the courthouse in 1989, the early history of the building

had been so forgotten that no one was certain whether anything had survived of the old statehouse. The Hugo disaster provided the opportunity for a systematic study of the fabric and associated documents, which rescued the building's architectural and cultural history from its long obscurity.[4] With a firm commitment to revive the fortunes of this civic institution, the Charleston County Council undertook to restore the courthouse to its late-eighteenth-century appearance.

Charleston's architecture is deceptively familiar. Like the courthouse, it has been encrusted with legend, but much remains unexamined. The distinctive urban environment is well known, attracting many thousands of visitors annually, but the historic development of a cityscape defined by walled lots, narrow frontages, and tiered piazzas is less familiar. The plans and rich detailing of a few dwellings, such as the Miles Brewton House and the Nathaniel Russell House, are icons in the history of early American architecture. However, as the story of the statehouse suggests, most of Charleston still needs thorough field and documentary research. The first serious investigation of Charleston's architectural heritage began in the late 1910s and flourished for more than two decades as local architects and historians measured many of the great landmarks, plumbed private and public archives for building documents, and published their findings in a series of articles and

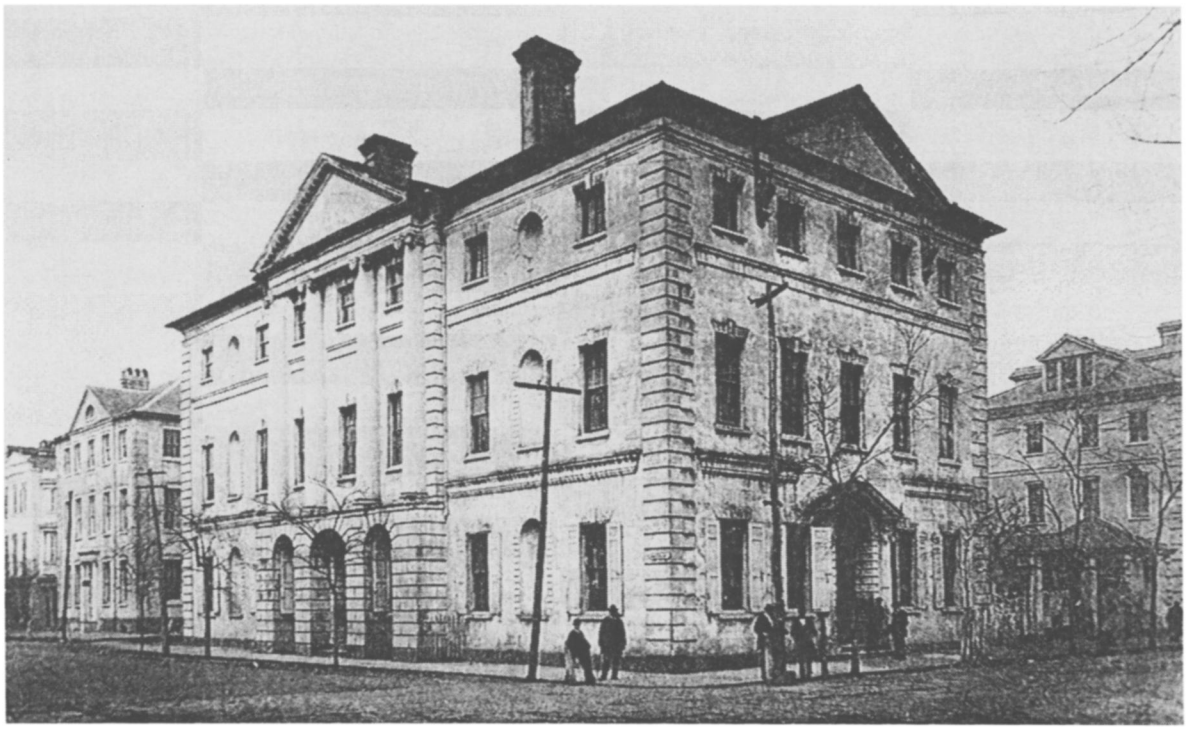

Fig. 4.1. The Charleston County Courthouse, 1883. This view of the courthouse shows it as it was reconfigured following the fire of 1788 and prior to its first major renovation in 1883. Courtesy of the Historic Charleston Foundation.

books which established the boundaries of architectural discussion for the next half century.[5] Although well illustrated, they lacked interpretive analysis and had a limited perspective. Much of the writing from the 1920s and 1930s described in the narrowest terms the stylistic development of Charleston according to national patterns. As might be expected of their time and place, they concentrated on the great colonial and antebellum dwellings south of Calhoun Street and the mansion houses standing along the Cooper and Ashley Rivers and their tributaries but ignored vast areas of the urban and plantation environment. Stores, warehouses, postbellum dwellings, slave houses, and kitchens received little notice.

Without a flourishing research institution or university in the area with a cadre of scholars and graduate students mining the wealth of documentary and field evidence, few added fresh perspectives to Charleston's architectural history in subsequent decades. Given this background, any new work must begin by re-examining many old assumptions. What has been written in recent years echoes or refines but seldom questions the basic premises underpinning the work of the pioneering generation of scholars.[6] For example, many have argued for a Caribbean source for the brightly colored stuccoed exteriors. This belief affected twentieth-century preservation activities in the city. During the 1930s, the restoration of a number of houses on East Bay Street—now known as Rainbow Row—was guided by this colorful notion of a Caribbean influence. But when did buildings such as these, and St. James Church, Goose Creek, receive their first coat of stucco? Completed by Barbadian immigrants by 1717, St. James was originally brickfaced and only later stuccoed.[7] Charles Fraser's sketch of the church in 1800 is tantalizingly confusing. Did he portray the red bricks set off by jambs, quoins, and cornice painted white or had the brickwork by that point been roughcast and painted red? If it were still brick-faced in 1800, one can only wonder about the lingering effects of Barbados on third- and fourth-generation native South Carolinians.[8] This is not to dismiss the earlier use of stucco in Charleston and the lowcountry. In 1768, scarcely a dozen years after its completion, the statehouse had a coat of stucco applied over its finely detailed brickwork which had featured rubbed jack arches.[9] What needs careful documentation is the advent of this fashion for roughcast. Stucco and Roman cement were less expensive means of imitating the more prestigious material of stone, and Charlestonians certainly took to this trend with great zeal, as an Englishman noted in a visit to the city in 1774. By then, the statehouse, St. Michael's Church, and the nearby guardhouse were "plaistered over so well on the outside to imitate stone that I really took them all for stone buildings at first." Both Broad and Meeting Streets contained "many large handsome modern built brick houses also some of brick inside and plaistered over on the outside so as to imitate stone very well."[10] It seems likely then that colonial Charlestonians selected more subdued tones for their decorative stucco than twentieth-century restorations would suggest.

Another long held but unexamined assumption is that the Charleston piazza derived from Caribbean sources. South Carolinians did construct open-sided porches or piazzas by the 1730s, but were they adopting a form developed by Caribbean settlers? Was there any correlation between the form's appearance in the two regions? Certainly trade relations and social networks between the two regions were strong throughout the colonial period, but there is no intrinsic reason to suppose that the architectural influences operated in only one direction; indeed, building materials and house frames were shipped from the mainland to the islands.[11] On the Caribbean side of the equation, scholars still lack the type of fieldwork necessary to answer critical questions about the chronological appearance of stucco and piazzas. The question of Charleston's architectural inheritance and legacy clearly begs closer scrutiny, especially for the formative period of the mid-eighteenth century.

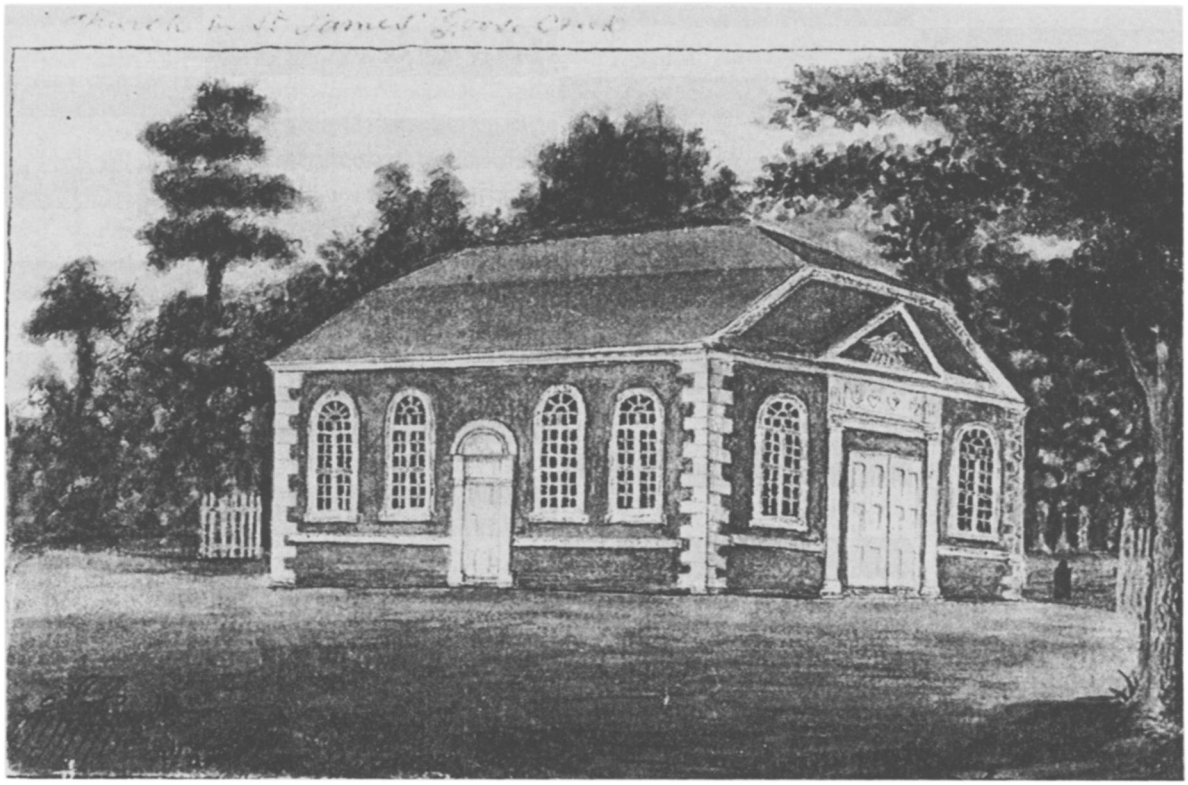

Fig. 4.2. St. James, Goose Creek, Watercolor by Charles Fraser, c. 1800. Courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston.

Much of the culture that gave Charleston and the lowcountry such a distinctive character was fashioned in the forty years between Bishop Roberts's painting of the Charleston waterfront in the late 1730s and the occupation of the city by the British during the Revolution. As the plantation system matured during the 1730s, wealth flowed into the colony at an unprecedented level, partly generated by a dramatic increase in the production of rice and the introduction of indigo.[12] By the time of the construction of the statehouse in the 1750s, these exports had made many planters among the wealthiest people in British North America. On the eve of the Revolution, the per capita wealth of Charleston was as much as four times that of people living in the Chesapeake and close to six times higher than that of the inhabitants of New York and Philadelphia.[13]

Agricultural prosperity transformed the city of Charleston. The surge in agricultural exports was accompanied by the introduction of a variety of imported goods that soon turned luxury items into necessities. Charleston was the entrepôt for this highly productive hinterland and had become a community where modest fortunes could be made catering to the needs of the planter plutocrats. Doctors, lawyers, and schoolmasters enriched the fabric of urban life as men of taste and education saw their skills and services in increasing demand. Merchants flocked to the city to establish wholesale and retail trade connections with firms in London, Bristol, and Glasgow and subsidiary stores deep in the Carolina backcountry.

Planters, provincial officials, and professionals found Charleston's shops filled with items ranging from imported ceramics, tea, and books to locally produced furniture and coaches.

Like few other cities in America, Charleston acted as a magnet, drawing the rich and powerful as well as the poor and enslaved. Besides the lure of consumer goods, planters were attracted to the city for many other reasons, not the least of which was the quest for political power. Clustered almost entirely in Charleston, the offices and courts of the provincial government so dominated the colony that few local institutions emerged that could serve as counterweights. The way to power in South Carolina was not through the county court or parish vestry, as in Virginia or Maryland, but through a position in the provincial government or elected assembly. More than any other British colony on the American mainland, Charleston functioned like an old medieval city-state.[14]

Commerce and politics may have dominated the talk of taverns and dining rooms, but Charleston also offered its inhabitants and visitors many social and cultural diversions. The pursuit of pleasure by the provincial elite spawned a host of new public activities and forms of entertainments. Theaters, music concerts, assemblies, clubs, and other social events enriched the cultural life of the community. In 1773 a young Bostonian, Josiah Quincy, carefully recorded in his diary the details of a very rich and active social world far more brilliant than that of his native city. Quincy spent much of his time dining in great houses, drinking fine wines, toasting the beauties of the city, and talking politics. On other occasions he attended balls and assemblies where he noticed the women and men "dressed with richness and elegance uncommon with us."[15] Public walks, long rooms, libraries, and museums provided places and opportunities for members of polite society to display their charms, beauty, and good breeding and to find suitable matrimonial partners. Over time, marriage alliances cemented the bond between planters, merchants, and professionals, creating a self-conscious elite society.

The concentration of wealth in the city naturally affected the habits of its citizens. As another eighteenth-century visitor observed:

> the manner of the inhabitants of Charleston are as different from those of the other North American cities as are the products of their soil. The profitable rice and indigo plantations are abundant sources of wealth for many considerable families, who therefore give themselves to the enjoyment of every pleasure and convenience to which their warm climate and better circumstances invite them. Throughout, there prevails here a finer manner of life . . . there were neither domestic circumstances to stand in the way nor particular religious principles, as among the Presbyterians of New England or the Quakers of Pennsylvania, to check the enjoyment of good living. So luxury in Carolina has made the greatest advance, and their manner of life, dress, equipages, furniture, everything denotes a higher degree of taste and love of show, and less frugality than in the northern provinces.[16]

Charleston was not a strange and hedonistic Southern version of Boston or Philadelphia, but a city whose social patterns and development more closely followed the trends characteristic of most eighteenth-century British provincial cities. The activities and cultural institutions established by polite society in Charleston in the third quarter of the eighteenth century had similar counterparts in York, Norwich, Bristol, and a host of smaller provincial cities in England and Scotland, where horse races, concerts, theaters, fraternal and social clubs, and scientific societies enriched the fabric of urban life.[17] The economic and cultural maturation of South Carolina elite society in the late colonial period is what historian Jack P. Greene has described as the process of social replication or Anglicization. After a pe-

riod of growing acculturation when colonists adjusted the slave-based plantation economy to lowcountry conditions, the emerging elite displayed a strong desire to replicate British society in South Carolina and began to take pride in the extent to which it was coming to increasingly resemble the metropolitan culture of London.[18] Eliza Lucas's observation that "the people live very Gentile and very much in the English taste" was echoed by countless others.[19]

One of the most striking manifestations of this social replication of metropolitan culture was the substantial investment in the reshaping and refining of the architectural fabric of the city since, in the eyes of contemporaries throughout the Anglo-American world, a town's physical form was the most conspicuous sign of its prosperity and power, expressing the social and cultural aspirations of those who resided there. Grand public buildings were simply the most obvious indication of this process. The simultaneous construction of the statehouse and St. Michael's Church formed one of the most impressive civic squares in British America. Unlike the hybrid form of the capitol in Williamsburg or the awkward provincialism of the statehouses in Philadelphia and Boston, the South Carolina statehouse, with its projecting pedimented central block, stood squarely in the Palladian fashion, which characterized the assize courts and assembly rooms in leading provincial English towns. The transatlantic antecedents of the Charleston statehouse are readily apparent in its function and classical details. The scale, form, massing, and detailing of shire halls and other civic buildings provided Charlestonians with vivid images of civic architecture. Most were two or three stories tall and stretched from five to eleven bays in length, with a massive door or projecting pediment usually accentuating the center of the building. A mixture of rich details—compass-headed windows, niches, cupolas, coats of arms, rustication, and arcades—imbued these public buildings with a conspicuous degree of architectural pretension.

How these English public building prototypes were translated into a formal design for workmen to follow on the building site remains unknown, since no drawings or specifications for the statehouse's construction survive. As William Rigby Naylor's 1767 drawings for the Exchange exemplify, there were a number of master builders working in Charleston who were more than capable of devising a plan and perhaps an elevation for the statehouse. Yet, even drawings such as these do not necessarily reveal the individual or source responsible for the design. It is more than likely that the actual design decisions emerged from the deliberations of a building committee. Composed almost entirely of members of the provincial assembly, the statehouse building committee simply appropriated recognizable architectural forms whose symbolic attributes would have been quickly understood in any part of the English empire.[20] Many of the commissioners had considerable experience in this new architectural vocabulary. For example, in the mid-1740s, Charles Pinckney formulated a plan and estimated the costs of an imposing two-story brick dwelling on Colleton Square facing the Cooper River. With its engaged pilastered portico and Venetian window lighting the stair landing at a right angle to the entrance hall, Pinckney's house was one of the first in the city to embody many of the English Palladian features that were to be repeated in the statehouse design.

No account or minutes of the building commission survive, so it is difficult to ascertain the precise role of each member or to suggest which one of them (or any other individual) was responsible for the design of the structure. Throughout most of the American colonies in the late colonial period, the design of public buildings was often the result of collective decisions. Generally, a committee would decide upon the size, plan, number of stories, materials, and placement of doors and windows, with the details developed in

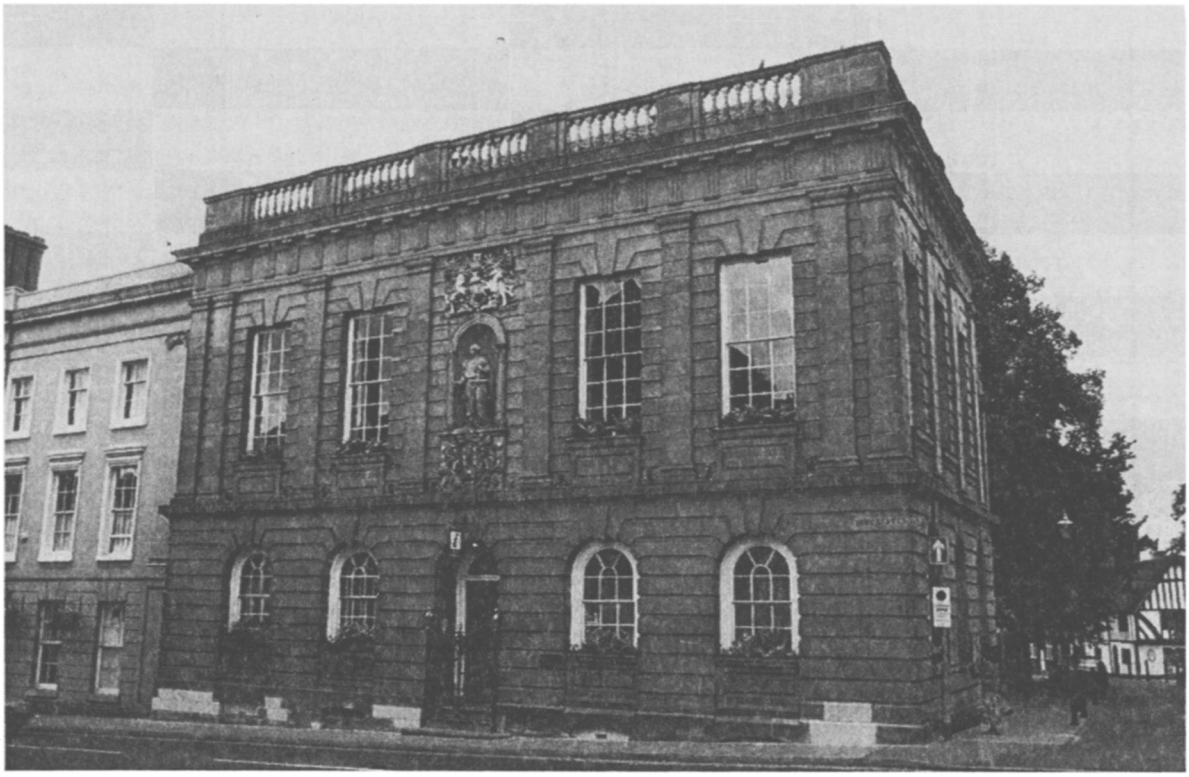

Fig. 4.3. Courthouse, Warwick, Warwickshire, 1725.

consultation with the builder (or "undertaker," as he was known in the eighteenth century). Secondary decisions were then made about interior and exterior finishes, leaving the details of execution more or less in the hands of the professional builders and individual craftsmen who carried out their work in the customary fashion of the city or region.

In the overall design, there was little to distinguish the statehouse from the formulaic pattern of public and country house architecture that had flourished in Great Britain for more than a quarter of a century. In this broader context, the severely plain, two-story rectangular block set off in the center by a projecting three-bay pediment fit comfortably into prevailing English architectural fashion. Only the absence of a rusticated ground floor and the lack of carved or molded detailing around the apertures marked the structure as a modest provincial interpretation of metropolitan taste. Yet, in the context of the American colonies, it was indeed a landmark, heralding a more sophisticated application of design ideas in public building.

If the public buildings of Charleston emulated the best of British provincial design, the form of the city's dwellings began to respond to local circumstances. At no time did Charlestonians mistake their society for a mirror of London, for Charleston society had been profoundly conditioned by the novel physical environment of the New World as well as by the peculiar economic and social conditions which had emerged in three or four generations of settlement.[21] Fueling the

wealth of the elite of Charleston was a plantation culture based on the exploitation of a large enslaved population of African laborers. This vast black presence defined for white South Carolinians a social order that was manifestly different from any English precedent. It also helped shape a remarkably distinctive plantation and urban landscape.

Charleston's domestic architecture in the eighteenth century was a complex and continuous interaction between local experience and metropolitan ideals. From the 1740s through the early national period, the city was thoroughly transformed. Bishop Roberts's late 1730s view of the port depicts a densely packed urban scene with large dwellings, warehouses, and stores rising two and three stories. If the topography illustrated in a contemporary map is still familiar, the buildings shown in Roberts's painting are scarcely so. The features which are characteristic of Charleston architecture today—houses with narrow frontages and multistory piazzas—are nowhere to be seen. Instead, buildings of five, seven, and even ten bays line Bay Street; shallow, bracket-supported balconies open from second-story doorways; and dormers light the garrets of Dutch and M-roofs. A few buildings have curvilinear gables. The buildings painted by Roberts represent a period of architectural experimentation, a period of creolization when new forms and new materials, such as tabby walls and cypress wainscotting, were employed by the inhabitants of Charleston and the surrounding countryside.[22] Some of these conventions were cast aside—for example, the broad fronted alignment of buildings toward the street. Others were given up as fashioned dictated—the use of M-roofs for example. A small number, however, continued in use and became part of the lowcountry building tradition even while losing favor elsewhere.[23]

Bishop Roberts captured the Charleston cityscape at a moment when all was about to be swept away—by fire and fashion. Fires certainly destroyed most of what is depicted in his view of the port from the Cooper River. These buildings were not replaced in kind, but by something entirely new. Merchants, planters, and professionals began to construct dwellings, service buildings, and shops whose orientation and plans clearly articulated new sensibilities about interactions among family and guests, servants and masters, shopkeepers and customers. Foremost was the emergence of a domestic plan and lot arrangement that was to dominate Charleston for a century and a half. The *single house,* as it came to be called in the late eighteenth century, stood two or more stories and contained a center-stair passage flanked on either side by a single depth of rooms.[24] The dwelling's shorter end fronted the street and usually had a piazza of one or more stories stretching across the long entrance facade. At the back of the house stood service structures such as kitchens, stables, wash houses, and

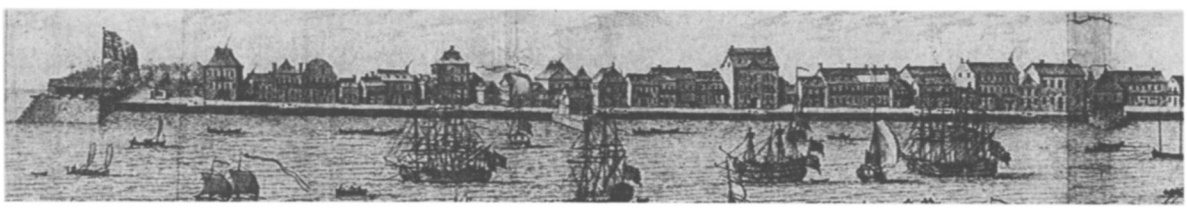

Fig. 4.4. Bishop Roberts, *Prospect of Charles Town*, c. 1739, Engraving by William Toms. This partial view of the Charleston waterfront depicts Bay Street from Granville's Bastion in the south to the Council Chamber at the head of Broad Street. The panorama of the port continues northward just past St. Philip's Church. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

slave quarters. A walled or railed fence enclosed this urban compound whose entrance was accentuated by gate piers. Entrance to the house was through a frontispiece which gave access onto the piazza. Halfway down the piazza, a doorway opened into the stair passage. As Bernard Herman has observed, the form of the single house responded to a combination of local circumstances: merchant and planter families sought to cement their position in society by erecting well-fashioned houses, developmental pressures created narrow deep lots, a warm climate encouraged the use of open but formal porches for semipublic activities, and walled enclosures provided garden privacy and helped regulate the movement of slaves and outsiders in this domestic setting.[25]

Even as the form of Charleston residences was emerging as a distinctive regional type, in terms of furnishings and ornamentation, Anglicization still prevailed. Because it was a port, Charleston had direct access to new architectural ideas promoted in design books (which were stocked by the city's booksellers) and in the buildings seen by the merchants and planters who frequented London, Bristol, and Glasgow on a regular basis. Pouring into the city as well were costly imported materials like marble chimneypieces, Delft hearth tiles, and Central and South American mahogany, along with a steady stream of highly skilled British tradesmen who sought their livelihood in a rich, bustling community. The intricately carved chimneypieces found in dozens of dwellings throughout the city exemplify the skills of a number of London-trained immigrant craftsmen who found an appreciative clientele eager for the latest in metropolitan fashion.[26]

Charleston provided the opportunity to construct bold, classically inspired buildings on a scale that few other American cities could match. The South Carolina planter elite, unlike its counterparts in Virginia and Maryland, chose to make the capital its primary place of residence, electing to spend only short intervals of time on country estates. Residing in town for extended periods, the great planters and their merchant suppliers maintained opulent urban residences, for it was here, in the city, that the notion of style mattered most.[27] The imported materials and fine detailing of dwellings such as merchant Miles Brewton's house had few rivals elsewhere in the colonies. According to Josiah Quincy, Brewton's house was "said to have cost him 8000£ sterling" and contained, besides the carved woodwork of the London-trained Ezra Waite, "the grandest hall I ever beheld, azure blue satin window curtains, rich blue paper with gilt, mashee borders, most elegant pictures, excessive grand and costly looking glasses."[28] It is no accident, then, that building in this city was more Anglicized, more substantial, and more embellished, than any other city in the entire South.

This provincial architecture was not a diminished image of metropolitan design ideas, diluted or distorted by ill-trained artisans unable to comprehend the sophistication and complexity of the original forms.[29] Rather, it drew selectively from local and metropolitan customs. As Dell Upton has argued, colonists carefully chose those aspects of the metropolitan corpus which suited their own particular needs and desires.[30] Academic design concepts did not displace local patterns but became intricately woven into the native building tradition, creating distinctive regional forms. Many features of this eighteenth-century academic architecture, such as rubbed brickwork, hipped roofs, and oval windows, merged with local elements and practices from the previous century so that the great houses and public buildings constructed in the late colonial period were blends of Anglo-Georgian ideals and Creole building practices.

In colonial Charleston, features such as piazzas, wooden shingles, and beaded weatherboards set the city apart from Georgian London. Social conditions, levels of wealth, access to materials, technological capabilities, craft skills, climate,

and topography shaped its response to building forms. The process of designing, building, and furnishing a dwelling was a complex one involving the participation of dozens of people in various and ever-changing combinations and circumstances. Small elements such as a window architrave or even more complex ones such as a chimneypiece or paneled door may show few variations from examples illustrated in imported builders' books, but their execution, treatment, and combination with other elements almost invariably reveal local or regional patterns. Architrave moldings, balusters, and other Georgian details might attest to the superficial resemblances of dwellings in eighteenth-century Bristol and Charleston, but differences in materials, construction, scale, plans, and the arrangement of buildings in the landscape made the architectural character of the two ports as distinct as the accents of their inhabitants.

Regional variations remained a part of the building process because much of the design and fabrication of buildings was left in the hands of skilled craftsmen. The thousand and one decisions about any building—the finish of a piece of material or the detailing of a staircase—continued to be resolved by craftsmen on site. Although building specifications grew in their list of particulars as clients indicated their choices of treatments and details, many fundamental as well as minor elements were left to the traditional rules governing the execution of workmanlike craftsmanship. Contracts may have required good, well-fired bricks and hard lime mortar, but rarely did they specify types of brick bonding, mortar-joint widths and finishes, or range of brick colors. It was understood from long-standing experience what was expected, and any variation from time-honored practices of a particular locality required explicit explanation. Thus, the monochromatic brickwork in Charleston in the late colonial period distinguishes it from the characteristic penchant for variegated surfaces in the Chesapeake. Each region had evolved its own standards of practice. What was not spelled out was left to custom, so that tradition continued to shape the form and finish of most buildings erected in early America.

The interplay between outside ideas and local building practices can be seen at Pompion Hill, a brick chapel of ease erected between 1763 and 1765 in the parish of St. Thomas, Berkeley County. It is a building of mixed pedigree. Compared to a contemporaneous 20-by-30-foot log church in neighboring St. John's Parish, Pompion Hill, measuring 36 by 48 feet, must have seemed the height of fashion.[31] Contrasted with English parish churches of the period, its parochial origins are unmistakable. From a topographical view, its solitary location on the bluff overlooking the East Branch of the Cooper River more than twenty miles northeast of Charleston would be unusual in much of America and Britain but common in the lowcountry.[32] There are isolated English churches, but their secluded positions usually derive from a very different set of historical circumstances. Many of these isolated churches are the parish churches of now deserted medieval villages or appendages of a great estate, such as St. Mary's, Avington, Hampshire (1768).

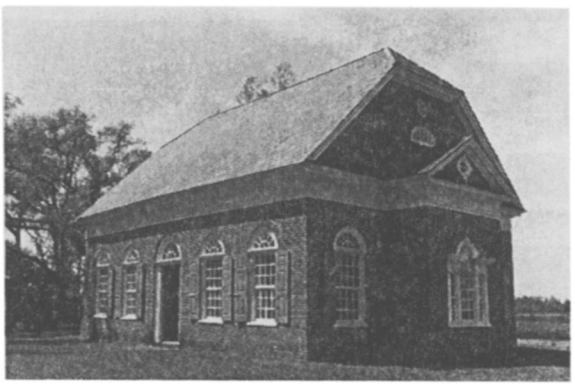

Fig. 4.5. Pompion Hill Chapel, St. Thomas and St. Denis Parish, Berkeley County, S.C., 1763.

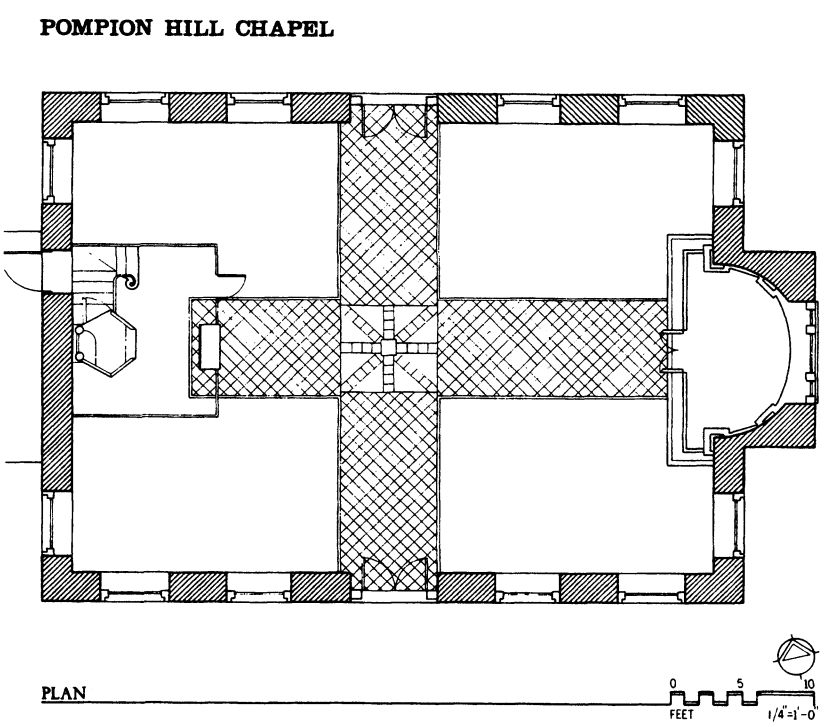

Fig. 4.6. Plan of Pompion Hill Chapel.

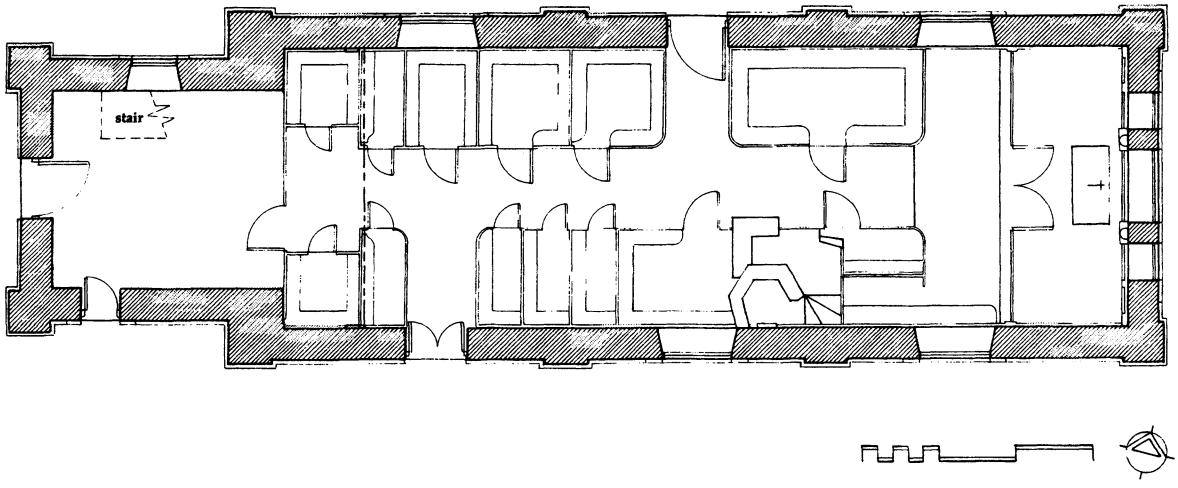

Fig. 4.7. Plan of St. Mary's Church, Avington, Hampshire.

Inside Pompion Hill, the form and enriched carving of the pulpit drew inspiration from the plates of Batty Langley's *Workman's Treasury of Designs,* which was first published in 1740 and had wide currency in the American colonies.[33] Whereas English pulpits of this period were fabricated out of oak, walnut, or Baltic pine, at Pompion Hill craftsmen used a local material to construct a "genteel Pulpit of Cedar."[34] The similarities with polygonally shaped pulpits in other Anglican churches such as St. Mary's, Avington, are unmistakable and underscore the universality of many design details in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world.[35] Yet, the rectangular layout of Pompion Hill Chapel, with the Langley-derived pulpit standing in the west end opposite the chancel, its two entrances placed in the center of the longer north and south walls, and the nineteenth-century benches facing each other across a central aisle, is much more akin to a dissenting meeting house plan than the linear Anglican arrangement of Avington Church.

On the exterior, the absence of a dominant west tower accentuates Pompion Hill's affinity with the meeting house form, and it is only the Venetian window in the east wall of the shallow chancel which reveals its Anglican affiliation and ecclesiastical orientation. The oxeye and compass-headed windows follow contemporary Anglo-American public building practices, but the brickwork, mortar joints, and transomed shutters are unmistakably South Carolinian. Clearly, the form of Pompion Hill Chapel derived from the amalgamation and interaction of homegrown and academic sources. It was this rich blend, not the individual ingredients, that made Pompion Hill Chapel, in the eyes of one of its contemporaries, "one of the best country churches in Carolina."[36]

As Pompion Hill Chapel suggests, this imaginative interplay between regional traditions and metropolitan influences was firmly embedded in Charleston and lowcountry architecture by the middle of the eighteenth century. Searching contemporary English architectural books for design precedents for public building forms or the enriched woodwork found in grand domestic rooms may be a useful exercise in connoisseurship, but can lead to a serious misreading of the nature of the design process. Looking at buildings in this manner only promotes an anachronistic and artificial distinction between high-style and vernacular building, a perspective as distorted today as it was alien to contemporary builders of the South Carolina statehouse.[37] Such discrete categorizations encumber our understanding of the complexity of the colonial building process in Charleston, the lowcountry, and the rest of early America.

Notes

The opportunity to study the Charleston County Courthouse with my colleagues Willie Graham and Mark R. Wenger of the Architectural Research Department at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and Brown Morton of Mary Washington College induced us to take a closer look at the buildings and documents of eighteenth-century Charleston. The following observations about the state of architectural research in this area grew out of that study and were presented as a keynote address at the annual meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Forum in 1994. I am very grateful to Jonathan Poston of the Historic Charleston Foundation for his encouragement of our research, his reading of the earlier version of this chapter, and the kind hospitality shown to all of us during our many visits to Charleston over the past decade.

1. After the cornerstone was laid, Governor Glen and his entourage retired to John Gordon's tavern at the northeast corner of Broad and Church Streets for dinner and toasts to celebrate the occasion. See *South Carolina Gazette,* July 2, 1753.

2. *Columbian Herald,* Feb. 7, 1788.
3. Although the historical importance of the courthouse was acknowledged by Charlestonians throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, few were inspired by the building. In her 1945 study of Charleston, Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel noted that most critics agreed with the verdict passed on the building nearly a century earlier, which was attributed to the antebellum novelist and native Charlestonian William Gilmore Simms: "It is content to be big, solid, square, and lofty, serving its purposes, and making no fuss, and challenging no man's admiration" (*Harper's Magazine,* June 1857). Quoted in Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, *Architects of Charleston* (Charleston, 1945; rev. ed., 1954; reprint, Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1992), 75.
4. For an account of that investigation, see Carl Lounsbury, Willie Graham, Mark R. Wenger, and W. Brown Morton, *An Architectural Analysis of the Charleston County Courthouse,* unpublished report for the Historic Charleston Foundation, August 1991.
5. Published in 1917, Alice and Daniel Huger Smith's *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company) was one of the first efforts to chronicle the history of Charleston's architecture. Antiquarian in tone, Harriette Kershaw Leiding's *Historic Houses of South Carolina* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1921) featured buildings from the entire state and included evocative drawings by Alfred Hutty. The most visually detailed early study was *The Early Architecture of Charleston,* edited by two local architects, Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham Jr. The first edition was published in New York in 1927 by the Press of the American Institute of Architects under the title of *The Octagon Library of Early American Architecture, Volume I: Charleston, South Carolina.* Generously illustrated with photographs and measured drawings but containing little analytical text, the volume drew attention to the finest houses and public buildings to survive in the city, many of which had been or were to be renovated by the authors' architectural firm. In 1938 Charleston historian Samuel Gaillard Stoney, along with Simons and Lapham, published *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country* under the auspices of the Carolina Art Association. Stoney described the important plantations and churches and the families associated with them in the area surrounding the city. Measured plans and detail drawings by Simons and Lapham and evocative photographs by Frances Benjamin Johnston and Ben Judah Lubschez and others accompanied Stoney's brief survey of the historical and architectural developments of the region. Unfortunately, Stoney provided little documentation for the dating of the buildings in his survey. The last major work of the period, *Architects of Charleston,* appeared at the end of World War II and surpassed previous studies in its attention to archival sources. A leading member of the city's nascent historic preservation movement in the 1930s, Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel produced a documentary history of the careers of the city's principal architects and builders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
6. See, for example, Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: South Carolina* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1984). In a solidly researched study with much new information, Kenneth Severens elaborated on the traditional perspective in *Charleston Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1988). His study of civic rather than domestic architecture in the antebellum period called attention to several previously ignored buildings.
7. In 1727, the parish minister wrote that "St. James Goose Creek is built of brick cornered with plaister work in imitation of Hewed Stone, as are 3 Door Cases Wst No & So and 9 handsome arched Windows are plaistered answerably" (Rev. Richard Ludlam to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel, SPG Letterbook A, XX, Fulham Palace, London, Dec. 12, 1727). Originally, the walls were carefully laid in Flemish bond with decoratively finished mortar joints.

8. In 1810 the vestry of St. James advertised that it would "receive proposals for ROUGH-CASTING their Parish Church." Whether or not this was the first time the entire building was stuccoed is unknown. See *Charleston Courier,* Sept. 26, 1810.
9. In 1768 Peter and John Horlbeck received £1,250 for "Rough Casting the State House." *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* No. 37, Part 2, 526–27, Feb. 23, 1768, Columbia, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
10. "Charleston, S.C., in 1774 as Described by an English Traveller," reprinted in *The Colonial South Carolina Scene: Contemporary Views, 1697–1774,* ed. H. Roy Merrens (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1977), 282.
11. It seems unlikely that the earliest white settlers to South Carolina from Britain's West Indian colonies such as Barbados were familiar with the piazza. Immigration from this area fell to a trickle by the first decades of the eighteenth century, a full generation before the advent of the piazza in the lowcountry. On the relationship between the West Indies and South Carolina, see Jack P. Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection," in his *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1992), 68–86. For an overview of the issues involved in the study of Caribbean architecture, see William Chapman, "Irreconcilable Differences: Urban Residences in the Danish West Indies, 1700–1900," *Winterthur Portfolio* 30 (Summer/Autumn 1995): 129–33.
12. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), 179; Kenneth Morgan, "The Organization of the Colonial American Rice Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., 52 (July 1995): 433–52.
13. Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection," 83.
14. For a study of the cultural and political life of Charleston during this period, see George C. Rogers Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1980); Walter J. Fraser Jr. *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1989).
15. Mark A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 49 (1915–16): 441–51.
16. Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation [1783–1784],* 2 vols., trans. and ed. Alfred J. Morrison (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 2: 167–68.
17. The best summary of the development of English urban culture in this period is Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
18. Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 147–50, 168–69.
19. Eliza Lucas to Mrs. Boddicott, May 2, 1740, in *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney 1739–1762,* ed. Elise Pinckney (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972), 7.
20. The building commissioners included William Middleton, Charles Pinckney, William Bull Jr., James Graeme, Andrew Rutledge, John Dart, Othniel Beale, Benjamin Smith, and Isaac Mazyck. "Acts of the Colonial Assembly, 1749–1756, Act: 13," CO5/420, Public Records Office, London.
21. Rather than a "metrocentric approach," recent scholarship by a number of historians have explored the "interaction among component parts of imperial systems." Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan suggest that "instead of a single, coherent outward thrust by the English, the process should be seen as vastly more complicated, much more double-ended, with the colonies playing as dynamic a role as the metropolis" (Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan eds., *Strangers within the*

Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991], 9).

22. On the use of native woods in building and furniture making, see Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "Timber Available in Charleston: 1660–1820," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 20 (Nov. 1994): 39–99.
23. The use of curvilinear gables at St. Stephen's Parish Church in the late 1760s and at St. Bartholomew's Parish Church, rebuilt after it was burned by the British during the Revolution, are two notable examples of the survival of this gable form in the second half of the eighteenth century.
24. See, for example, a contract made in 1789 to build a "dwelling house commonly called a single house" (Charleston County, S.C., Land Records, Book R).
25. For a more detailed discussion of the single house, see chap. 3 in this volume, "The Embedded Landscapes of the Charleston Single House, 1780–1820," by Bernard L. Herman.
26. One such immigrant from the British Isles was Samuel Cardy, a builder from Dublin who came to Charleston in the early 1750s. Shortly after his arrival, he was entrusted with the construction of St. Michael's Church. See Kenneth Severens, "Emigration and Provincialism: Samuel Cardy's Architectural Career in the Atlantic World," *Eighteenth Century Ireland* 5 (1990): 21–36.
27. McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America,* 183.
28. Howe, ed., "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773," 444–45. In 1769 Ezra Waite, "Civil Architect, House-builder in general, and Carver, from London," advertised his expertise in the local newspaper noting that he "has finished the architecture, conducted the execution thereof, viz.: in the joiner way, all tabernacle frames (but that in the dining-room excepted) and carved all the said work in the four principal rooms; and also calculated, adjusted, and draw'd at large to work by, the Ionick entablature, and carved the same in the front and round the eaves, of Miles Brewton, Esquire's House, on White Point" (*South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal,* Aug. 22, 1769).
29. The following three paragraphs are adapted from my introduction to *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), xi–xii.
30. Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (Summer/Autumn, 1982): 95–119.
31. A brief description of the log church appears in a letter by the minister of the St. John's Parish. Rev. Levi Durand to the Secretary, SPG Letterbook B, vol. 5, no. 249, Oct. 1, 1764.
32. No detailed study of the surviving colonial parish churches of South Carolina has been undertaken. A good beginning is Harriette Hawkins, "Icons in the Wilderness: The Anglican Churches of Rural South Carolina," (Master's thesis, Univ. of Delaware, 1983).
33. Batty Langley, *The City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (London, 1740). See particularly plate CXIV in the 1750 edition.
34. Rev. Alexander Garden to the Secretary, SPG Letterbook B, vol. 5, no. 220, May 6, 1765.
35. Both pulpits share similar ovolo molding profiles wrought from planes with blades that were no doubt manufactured in Birmingham or Sheffield. Each ogee-shaped sounding board is crowned by a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.
36. Alexander Garden to the Secretary, SPG Letterbook B, vol. 5, no. 220.
37. On the detrimental effect this distinction has had on the scholarship of early American architecture, see Dell Upton, "Outside the Academy: A Century of Vernacular Studies, 1890–1990," in *The Architectural Historian in America,* ed. Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 199–213.