

Similarities And Differences Mark Trio Of Charleston Residences

Perhaps nowhere in Charleston is the similarity — and the differences — in its "single houses" so evident as in this trio of old dwellings on lower Meeting Street.

Each has its end to the street, but the ends differ in shape, width, height, architectural decor and color.

Each is a three-story building but two have garrets and one has a basement.

Each has a second-story balcony over the sidewalk. The wrought iron-supported platforms are of different size and shape, alike in that they open onto spacious drawing rooms but different because of small details.

Each has its wrought iron gate that affords the passerby a peek into shaded patio gardens that widen spaciouly where the narrow outbuildings and rear flankers begin.

One of the houses — No. 23 — has Victorian "eyebrows" hooding its deep-set upper windows. It and its neighbor, No. 25, maintain the traditional Charleston habit of blinds on the first floor windows and louvered shutters above that level, a practice designed to prevent peeping by passersby. No. 27, however, has a low basement that lifts its first floor windows well above eye level of all but big league basketball stars and rendering blinds unnecessary.

No. 25 is thought to be the oldest of the trio, dating to about 1760. The post-Revolutionary house at 27 Meeting has an unusually lovely wrought iron gate of recent vintage but designed to fit perfectly into the old Charleston scene. Date of construction of No. 23 is not certain but probably before 1788.

In the early days of the port city, this section of Meeting Street was called "Meeting Street, Extended." At first it was separated from the main street which began just above the present site of Water Street where the old walled city had its southwestern corner. At that point a small marsh creek ran westward. It was an extension of Vanderhorst's Creek, the estuary that fronted the city's south wall. The marsh is now Price's Alley. Meeting Street consists of several layers of materials reflecting the roadway construction of different periods.

In descending order, one finds asphalt, brick, oyster shell, wood and a mixture of sand and shell. Also covered in modern years were two sets of trolley tracks, one wood and the other iron. The latter often plagued unwary waterworks crews when they try to lay new water mains.

The houses form one of the more picturesque groupings in Charleston. Viewed on a spring morning with sunlight funnelling down between the trees, their soft colors, charming facades and trim appearance do much to delight the eye.

An even prettier view is on a cold winter's night with a high-riding moon pen-



23-25-27 Meeting — A picturesque, colorful grouping.

etrating the shadows, spraying lacy patterns of limb shadow on the pavement and blending the pastel-colored walls into a sort of midnight magic. In that light, the spacious rooms, soft-lighted and dim, from across the street have the appearance of artificiality.

But they are very real and the two northerly ones represent two of the more affluent eras of Charleston's past. No. 25 was built when the colony was enjoying a boom under the status of a Royal Colony, having recovered from the troubles that beset it until the Lords Proprietor were displaced in the 1720s.

Its roof has a belled eave, the tip-tilted effect being carried out in the facade parapet. This slight upturn was devised to

send rainfall cascading away from the sides of the building and is found usually only on fairly steep roofs.

The northernmost house has a hip roof that is almost invisible above its severely decorous front. Its elegantly spiralled balcony ironwork and decorative buttress combine to soften the austere front.

The "eyebrows" over the windows at No. 23 probably were put on much later, possibly following the 1886 earthquake. At that time, a great many houses suffered heavy damage and late Victorian decorations were substituted because the original items could not be replaced.

Each of the graceful trio of houses is a single-family dwelling now, serving the purposes for which they were constructed nearly two centuries ago.



18 Meeting — House where

Declaration Signer Lived

Thomas Heyward, signer of the Declaration of Independence, lived in some brick dwelling at 18 Meeting Street.

He also is believed to have been the person to parody the words of the national hymn, "God Save the King," ever, Heyward's version did not gain the popularity of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," a later author.

He probably built the house after 1803, the year he bought his brother, Nathaniel. Thomas had been living on lower Church St. to the Grinke family house is now known as the Washington House because He and fellow revolutionaries, stayed there during the national tour of the nation in 1793.

62 Famous Houses of Charleston, SC.
by Jack Leland (News & Courier, 1970)

- *23 Meeting St. -- This three and one-half story single house is believed to have been built c. 1750 by Albert Detmar.
(Stoney, This is Charleston, 71. _____, N&C, April 6, 1958.)
- 25 Meeting St. -- A three and one half story stuccoed brick single house, this is believed to have been built c. 1750 by William Hull.
(Stoney, This is Charleston, 71. _____, N&C, April 6, 1958.)
- 26 Meeting St. -- This three story stuccoed brick, Regency style structure was built c. 1822 by William Mason Smith, son of the Rt. Rev. Robert Smith, South Carolina's first Episcopal bishop. One tradition attributes the design to architect William Jay of Bath, England, who came to Charleston by way of Savannah. A parallel tradition attributes the design to the Charleston architect Robert Mills. The designer, to make a formal facade, masked the piazza with a screen of masonry, with windows. The three tiers of the piazza have the "correct" sequence of orders: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian. The interior has a curving stair.
(Ravenel, Architects, 115. Smith & Smith, Dwelling Houses, 204. Stoney, This is Charleston, 72. _____, N&C, April 6, 1958. _____, Charleston's Historic Houses, 1949, 46-47.)
- 27 Meeting St. -- This three story stuccoed brick house on high brick basement is presumed to have been built after the Revolution. The cast iron gates to the yard were added in the 20th century.
(Stoney, This is Charleston, 72. _____, N&C, April 6, 1958.)
- 30 Meeting St. -- The site of this house was purchased in 1769 by Thomas Young, who sold it the following year to Col. Isaac Motte, a planter. Tradition says Young