

Thomas Legare Back Building, 90 Church Street, Charleston, SC.

Eliza Cleveland showed me the back building at the Thomas Legare House, a circa 1752-60 single house, three and a half stories high, three bays, wide, and five long. My first impression was that this is a post-Revolutionary kitchen-laundry, two stories high, with parts of an original second-floor porch giving access to quarters on the upper floor, but the appearance of a well-articulated chimney cap and one original fireplace, rectangular in plan and with curved rear corners, suggests that it could be pre-Revolutionary.¹ The interior is highly altered, but much of the plan is relatively evident. All exposed walls are English bond, and the early six-over-six windows have unbeaded frames, previously with pairs of outside shutters hung on pintles; the original door frames are joined the same way but are beaded.

The back building faces south, into the rear yard, and was originally detached, 15' 4" east of (behind) the house. It was later connected by a single-story hyphen. A 20th-century frame rear wing was demolished last week in preparation for a new bedroom addition. Apparently an early privy further to the east was demolished in the process. The first floor of the back building has two rooms, a large (17' 11" by 14' 3") front room used as a kitchen, and a small (12' 7" by 14' 3") room presently partitioned into a laundry space and pantry. There is now a 1' 6" wide coal burning fireplace in the front room, the original kitchen, and the fireplace in the rear room, probably a laundry, is

¹ Chimney caps with a stucco band and multiple corbel courses continued to be used in Charleston buildings into the 19th century, but we have not seen square fireboxes with round corners after the middle of the 18th century.

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plastered over. The best visible indication of the original scale of the fireplaces is in the dirt-floored cellar, entered through an arched bulkhead on the south side and lighted by a small window on the east end. There I see a 7' 1 1/2" wide and 6' deep chimney base, with vaulted blind openings on both sides, and a continuous vault 2' 4 1/2" wide to the north, somewhat like the fragmentary vault in the cellar of the Heyward back building and perhaps built to support an oven beside the kitchen fireplace. The cookroom has three original front openings in the south wall: a door flanked by two windows. The laundry has two: a door to the east and window to the west. Removal of the frame wing has revealed a row of closers indicating another original window, smaller at about 2' 8" high, 3' 11 1/2" north of the southwest corner.

There are now two rooms upstairs, reflecting the main spaces below. The two original south windows and one towards the south end of the west wall, all matching the form of those downstairs. Once this room must have been partitioned into two workers' quarters, because the present south doorway is matched by a blocked door to the west. Neither of these is original, however, and it is not evident that their construction caused the loss of a single original second-floor doorway. Most of the interior has modern finish except for a heating fireplace, 2' 1" wide, 1' 10 1/2" deep, and 2' 9" high to the spring of a segmental arch. The fireplace is housed in a 4' 5" by 2' 6" English-bond box, unplastered, with the flue rising through brickwork stepping back to the north (see photos).

Thomas Legare Back Building (cont.)

The room to the east was apparently unheated, as only a 2' 11 1/2" wide and 3' 3" deep shaft rises there to form the leg of a T-shaped chimney with a stucco band and multiple corbel courses above the roof. This smaller space is now lighted by one original window, identical to those elsewhere, towards the east end of the south wall. One would expect a doorway to the west, but the present blocked one again is a late 19th-century addition, and I see no closers under the thick whitewash to indicate its earlier presence. Is it possible, then, that the porch is an addition created to provide access to three workers' rooms remodeled from an older pair of rooms reached from the cookroom and occupied by one family, the cooks' or people other than servants? This could be considered if someone takes a closer look.

Edward Chappell
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