

## PETER LEGER HOUSE

*Constructed c. 1759-1760  
90 Church Street*

## ALEXANDER CHRISTIE HOUSE

*Constructed c. 1805  
92 Church Street*

## COOPER-BEE HOUSE

*Constructed c. 1760-1765;  
94 Church Street*

Numbers 90, 92, and 94 Church Street reflect the development of the single house from the mid-18th century. The clients who contracted for the three houses, Peter Leger, Alexander Christie, and John Cooper, wealthy and socially prominent individuals whose architectural aspirations defined Charleston's early town houses as a union of cosmopolitan and vernacular building traditions. While Christie and Cooper were merchants, Leger owned and operated his own cooperage. At his death in 1762, Leger resided in Bedons Alley and rented out his newly built Church Street house to Dr. Robert Wilson. The two earliest dwellings (90 and 94) Church Street) were constructed in 1759 and 1760 as three-and-a-half story, hipped-roof, center-passage plan dwellings with ground floor front commercial rooms or offices entered directly from the street. The mid-18th-century lot plan at 90 Church include a two-story quarter-kitchen, while that at 94 Church included a narrow passage behind the house providing access to the neighbors' backbuildings on the interior of the block. neither building individually retains all of its first period interior finish, but together they provide an overall impression of how early single houses were decoratively and functionally considered. The Leger House at 90 Church was provided with a fully paneled heated office or counting room. The stair in both buildings was an open-string arrangement, and in the case of the Cooper-Bee House at 94 Church finished with heavily-turned balusters, paneled soffits, and elaborately carved cornice all of which originally were covered with a tan or cream colored paint. The plainest ground floor spaces in both houses were the paneled dining rooms behind the entry. On the second floor, the hierarchy of rooms ran from the front best parlor overlooking the street below (and, as in the Cooper-Bee House provided with a small balcony) to a rear dining room chamber looking out onto the backbuildings and service yard. The third floor, considerably less finished than those below, contained two secondary sleeping chambers. The pattern of room use and ornamentation was continued in the Alexander Christie House at 92 Church Street. The Christie House, like its neighbors and other federal period single houses in the older parts of the city, continued the pattern of a ground floor office. While the decorative hierarchy of the Christie House is slightly less apparent than in the older neighboring houses, the pattern of finish and function is consistent with 18th-century forms. Thus, the best room remained situated in the second floor front over a less elaborately detailed office. The third most elaborate room was the dining room chamber, and the fourth was the dining room. The two plainest rooms in the main house were the third floor sleeping chambers.

The Cooper-Bee, Leger, and Christie houses were altered from the early through the mid-19th century. The Cooper-Bee House, following the subdivision of its old lot to make way for the Christie House, received all new backbuildings arranged in the familiar linear pattern. The Leger House lot was increased through the acquisition and demolition of the neighboring house to the south, and then refurbished with a new garden wall and additional backbuildings. The Cooper-Bee and Leger houses both received two-story piazzas. All three houses underwent the removal of their commercial rooms, and all three houses were physically connected to their backbuildings. This former change is particularly significant for two reasons. First, it occurs in the context of a growing segregation between work space and domestic space; and second, it reflects a topographically redefined central business district. The latter change in which individual buildings on the lot were connected with infill wings represented a two part shift in lot planning toward, first the consolidation of household functions under a single roof and, second a growing sense of room specialization



*Detail of staircase carving, HCF Photograph*

*Late 19th century post card view, showing 90-92-94 Church street in the context of surrounding buildings, wharves, and industrial sites, Charleston Museum*



*92 Church Street,  
First floor plan,  
Measured by  
Bernard Herman  
and Gary  
Stanton; Drawn  
by Gabrielle  
Lanier*