

STUDIO-MUSEUM
ELIZABETH O'NEILL VERNER
38 Tradd Street

1991

The Governor's Awards for participation in the arts, given annually at a joint session of the State Legislature, are named for Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. This honor reflects an important facet of Mrs. Verner's life, for she was steadfastly concerned with promoting the arts and her city. From trying to improve art teaching in the schools, and helping to revive the Art School of the Carolina Art Association, to helping to found the Preservation Society, finding capital for the Historic Charleston Foundation, telling fairy stories on Saturday mornings at the Charleston Library Society, singing alto in Madame Barbot's choir, helping found the Sketch Club, the Etchers' Club, the Charleston Artist Guild and the Southern States Art League, being president of the Garden Club, and rescuing the flower women when they were put off the streets by City Council, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner was always involved. For years it was she who issued the Garden Club Permits to the flower sellers "on good behavior" for which the Garden Club was responsible. She wrote frequent and trenchant letters to the newspapers on preservation.

The Museum collection includes Mrs. Verner's pastels, etchings and some memorabilia. She was a very productive worker and the family has collected enough work to show a representative group of her landscapes, cityviews and portraits of the black people whom she loved. The pastels are on raw silk or tropical plywood. The rich colors come from pastels made in Dresden before the Second World War.

Here also is a collection of Mrs. Verner's etchings. She began her professional career as an etcher after study at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, marriage and motherhood. She exhibited in shows in the Northeast and Midwest but declined to be taken over by big city galleries. Thirty-seven of her etchings are in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. A set of drypoints of Japan from 1937 are in the Museum in Kyoto, a gift of the State of South Carolina. Her work has been exhibited in Hawaii, the Phillipines and Europe. She was asked to make drawings of Mount Vernon, Williamsburg, the Rockefeller Center and New York, Harvard Medical School, Princeton University, West Point, and the University of South Carolina. She did etchings of Savannah, and drew Fayetteville for the preservation movement there. She contributed drawings for the church bulletins of Christ Church in Cambridge, Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, Saint Philip's Church in Charleston, Christ Church in Alexandria, the English Church in Brussels, Trinity Church in Columbia, and St. Matthews in Charleston.

When at the time of the Second World War, etching supplies such as copper plates, English ink and French paper were unobtainable, Mrs. Verner turned to pastel, as she had providently laid in a generous supply.

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38 Tradd Street
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Mementos of her life include her etching press, an exhibit on the craft of etching, a portrait of the artist by Marie Danforth Page of Boston, awards and honorary degrees.

The site of the Museum and Studio consists of four small independent structures which over the years have been merged into one. They are among the earliest buildings in Charleston and are clearly of 17th century construction. In 1694 the Lords Proprietors began to sell the town lots and Antoine Bonneau, a Huguenot cooper, or barrelmaker, bought lot no. 39. He was the third person to whom the lot had been assigned. An examination of the property during renovation after a fire in 1979 on the third floor which required the removal of much old plaster because of water damage showed that the house at 38 Tradd Street had not been burned by any of the early fires which swept through Charleston. The house resembles a French village house and was obviously built without knowledge of the climate. All the structures have undergone many interior transformations, losing a chimney, partitions, changing the location of doors and stairs, and serving many purposes from dwellings to shops to slums. They were early participants in the preservation movement after the First World War. DuBose Heyward rescued 79 Church Street, for instance, when the City proposed to tear down the tenements on Tradd Street.

The house at 38 Tradd had a passageway from the side door to the rear where a stair gave access to the second floor. The first floor must have been a shop in front and workshop behind. Small as it is the house had two chimneys. Later the passageway became the interior stair. The blocking of a window in the small structure at the rear of 38 Tradd seems to indicate that it is older than 79 Church. It has been surmised that the little one-story house with an enormous chimney behind 83 Church served as a common kitchen for the small pioneer houses in the neighborhood.

The Museum of the life and work of Elizabeth O'Neill Verner has been recognized by the City of Charleston, the State of South Carolina and the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt institution. Mrs. Verner bought 38 Tradd Street in 1938 and lived there until her death in 1979. Seventy-nine Church was added in 1972 and it was found that the two houses had been opened together before.

THE GARDEN OF THE STUDIO MUSEUM OF
ELIZABETH O'NEILL VERNER

1991

The colors of the parking area are Italian. Italian colors complement the soft colors of a Charleston spring, which this garden is designed to show off. At the end of the garden is a little pavilion, called a stoa or portico. It repeats the Italian colors of the drive, but in a paler color, this and its small size are designed to make the garden look bigger than it is. The fountain is also smaller than it looks from the gate. Using perspective is one of a great garden's pet devices. The colors are deeper at the gate, the deep blue of the iris and the red azaleas give way to mauve and lavender in the middle distance and the palest pink and white at the far end. The plants at the end are also much smaller than those in the foreground.

There is a wisteria vine on the arbor over the driveway. The iris are a common Charleston variety known as Blue Flags. The tile in the wall is the work of sculptor Daphne vom Baur, who also made the tiles around the fountain. It is surrounded by a climbing Peace rose. The spectacular yellow fountain is a Lady Banksia rose in full bloom. The lavender and pale pink colors go with the brick walls. The tall leafless tree on the left is a crepe myrtle, it is called Elizabeth after a former owner of the property and the magnolia grandiflora beyond it is called George after her husband. He was the one who initially planted the wisteria, the azaleas and the Lady Banksia. The present design of the garden is Mrs. Hamilton's and its spectacular beauty is due to the devotion of Jeanne Huger Franklin, a horticulturalist and a specialist in plant diseases and plant culture.



GALLERY
ELIZABETH O'NEILL VERNER
38 Tradd Street

1999

The Verner Award, recognizing outstanding contributions by South Carolinians in all branches of the Arts, is named for Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. It is presented annually by the Governor of South Carolina on behalf of the South Carolina Arts Commission. This honor reflects an important facet of Mrs. Verner's life, for she was steadfastly concerned with promoting the arts and her city. From trying to improve art teaching in the schools, and helping to revive the Art School of the Carolina Art Association, to helping to found the Preservation Society, finding capital for the Historic Charleston Foundation, telling fairy stories on Saturday mornings at the Charleston Library Society, singing alto in Madame Barbot's choir, helping found the Sketch Club, the Etchers' Club, the Charleston Artist Guild and the Southern States Art League, being president of the Garden Club, and rescuing the flower women when they were put off the streets by City Council, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner was always involved. For years it was she who issued the Garden Club Permits to the flower sellers "on good behavior" for which the Garden Club was responsible. She wrote frequent and trenchant letters to the newspapers on preservation.

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GALLERY ELIZABETH O'NEILL VERNER

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Mrs. Verner's etching career ended in 1933 as she wanted to take on a freer medium including color and drawing. Her earliest pastels were experimental and unsuccessful and she began them in 1934 or 35. However, by 1936 she had determined that is what she wanted to do. In 1937, on her trip to Japan where she did a collection of drypoints, her last graphic work, she hit upon the idea of drawing with pastels on raw silk while it was still wet from the glue used to hold it to a substratum such as an artist's board. On her return to Charleston she did the first drawings of flower women using this medium. The two earliest examples dated 1937 from her studio at 85 Church Street are in the collection of Mr. Hugh McColl. She called this new process Verner Colors.

The site of the Gallery consists of four small independent structures which over the years have been merged into one. They are among the earliest buildings in Charleston and are clearly of 17th century construction. In 1694 the Lords Proprietors began to sell the town lots and Antoine Bonneau, a Huguenot cooper, or barrelmaker, bought lot no. 39. He was the third person to whom the lot had been assigned. An examination of the property during renovation after a fire in 1979 on the third floor which required the removal of much old plaster because of water damage showed that the house at 38 Tradd Street had not been burned by any of the early fires which swept through Charleston. The house resembles a French village house and was obviously built without knowledge of the climate. All the structures have undergone many interior transformations, losing a chimney, partitions, changing the location of doors and stairs, and serving many purposes from dwellings to shops to slums. They were early participants in the preservation movement after the First World War. DuBose Heyward rescued 79 Church Street, for instance, when the City proposed to tear down the tenements on Tradd Street.

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GARDEN

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GALLERY ELIZABETH O'NEILL VERNER

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GARDEN - Continued

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38 Tradd Street
Assessment of Surviving Historic Fabric
Summer 2004
Louis P. Nelson
(Not for publication without the author's permission)

Current Owner: Sandy Diner

Like Ms. Diner's other property at 73 Church, 38 Tradd Street has all the indications of being among Charleston's earliest surviving architecture. Even more importantly, 38 Tradd is an example of early architecture from economic strata below the elite, whose more substantial architecture usually comprises the earliest architecture of any colony. Ms. Diner's recent purchase of this building has allowed an extensive examination of its surviving fabric. She allowed the removal of plaster in critical locations for the examination of masonry and the lifting of floorboards for the inspection of floor framing systems. She is to be heartily thanked for this opportunity.

38 Tradd is a two-and-a-half story brick masonry building of Flemish bond on the street and English bond to the rear. Evidence suggests that the nearly square building always included two, heated front to back chambers on each floor with an arched, western alley adjacent to the first floor accessing the rear yard. The second floor of the building enjoyed a larger footprint by spanning over that first floor alley. 38 Tradd was erected certainly in the first half of the eighteenth century and possibly in the opening decades of the century. The best evidence for an early date is the location of the house in the city and the situation of the house on the lot. This block of Tradd Street between Church and Meeting is the most likely place to find Charleston's earliest architecture. These blocks were squarely within the walled city—the oldest portion of the city—and these are the only blocks within the old walled city that survived the 1740 fire. The position of this house immediately on the street with only the smallest side access to the rear is also a planning arrangement found in Charleston's earliest houses. 38 Tradd Street is an excellent example of early house construction occupying the entire street frontage. The 1739 Ichnography suggests that this was the lot occupation pattern from the first half of the eighteenth-century. For further discussions of changing lot arrangements in this earliest period, see Joe Joseph's article, "From Colonist to Charlestonians: The Crafting of Identity in a Colonial Southern City," in *Another's Country: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on Cultural Interactions in the Southern Colonies* (Alabama, 2002). The lot occupation at 73 Church matches that found from the earliest period in Joseph's archaeological research. The second aspect of the physical fabric that supports an early date is the interior paneling of the fireplace wall on the first floor and the doors and window seats of the second floor. This material, which all includes a small ovolo surrounding the field of the raised panels, appears to be mid-eighteenth century and is from a second period of construction.

Physical evidence also conclusively indicates the presence of a street-front balcony at the second floor level in a manner similar to those found on most buildings in the 1739 Bishop Robert's view of Charles Town. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this

exterior balcony might also have included an exterior stair allowing direct access from the street to the residential spaces of the second floor. This would not be out of character with circulation practices elsewhere in the Caribbean. A mid-eighteenth-century city view of Willemstad on Curacao illustrates that most buildings had large second floor covered galleries, but also illustrates numerous exterior stairs from the street up into these galleries. Similar covered galleries—or second floors that extend over the sidewalk—can be found in eighteenth and nineteenth-century cities in the British Caribbean, esp. Kingston and Falmouth, Jamaica; St. John's, Antigua; Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas; Fredericksted and Christiansted, St. Croix, and others. Certainly by the nineteenth century and probably in the eighteenth century, these projecting galleries had exterior stairs rising from the street. It is true that the 1739 Robert's View of Charleston does not include an exterior stairs to these second floor balconies, but the view also eliminates the wharves, warehouses, and other features, which would have obscured a view of building facades. The fact that exterior gallery stairs did in fact exist in Charleston can be found in the colony's post-1740 fire legislation, which required that second floor balconies be utilized as a means of escape in the instance of fire.

To the rear of the building at 38 Tradd is a two-story masonry addition erected in 3-course American bond, suggesting an early nineteenth-century date.

First Floor

The first floor street-front fenestration is from left to right, an arched opening that was originally the abovementioned alley, then a window-door-window-arrangement. While the wide door opening is original, the flanking windows have been altered in size. The width of the first floor of the building was determined by the arched opening to the western alley, which accessed the rear yard. A solid masonry foundation running the depth of the building just to the east of the alley suggests that a solid masonry wall separated the alley from the interior of the building on the first floor in its first period of construction. No evidence for this wall survives on the first floor. The floor framing system and evidence above clearly indicates that the first floor was two chambers separated by an east-west interior partition. A principal east-west summer in the first floor framing locates the position of the first period partition. A diagonal trimmer and disturbed brick masonry in the eastern foundation wall indicates that a corner fireplace originally heated the front chamber from the northeastern corner of the room. Presumably a door opened through the inner partition allowing communication between the front and rear chambers.

A stack centrally located on the western wall and originally flanked by cupboards heated the rear chamber. The absence of any chimneypiece is typical of earlier eighteenth-century buildings, secondary and tertiary chambers in better houses and in those houses lower down the socio-economic scale. Other contemporary houses with paneled walls without chimneypieces include the first floor front chamber of 75 King, the rear first floor chambers of 69 Church (c. 1750), and possibly most if not all the chambers in the Thomas Rose House (late 1730s). Three windows opened through the rear masonry wall of the first floor. The location of closers and evidence of window seats clearly suggest

that the two easternmost were windows. The position of closers also suggests that the opening—which is now an arch—was originally a window. This was probably opened into a door to allow access into the rear addition; hard Portland cement and the hard-fired bricks of the arch suggests that it dates to the early twentieth century. The absence of a door along the rear of the building suggests that there was probably a side door into the alley.

Curiously, there is no evidence for an interior stair. The removal of floorboards on the second floor allowed the examination of the floor framing system between the first and second floors and no evidence of a stair box of any sort was identified. The absence of any door at the rear of the second floor—allowing for the possibility of a rear stair tower—probably means that the street-front second floor balcony contained the stair to the second floor in a manner similar to houses found in St. Johns, Antigua and Falmouth, Jamaica. Needless to say, the current location of the stair post-dates the closing of the alley passing through the building.

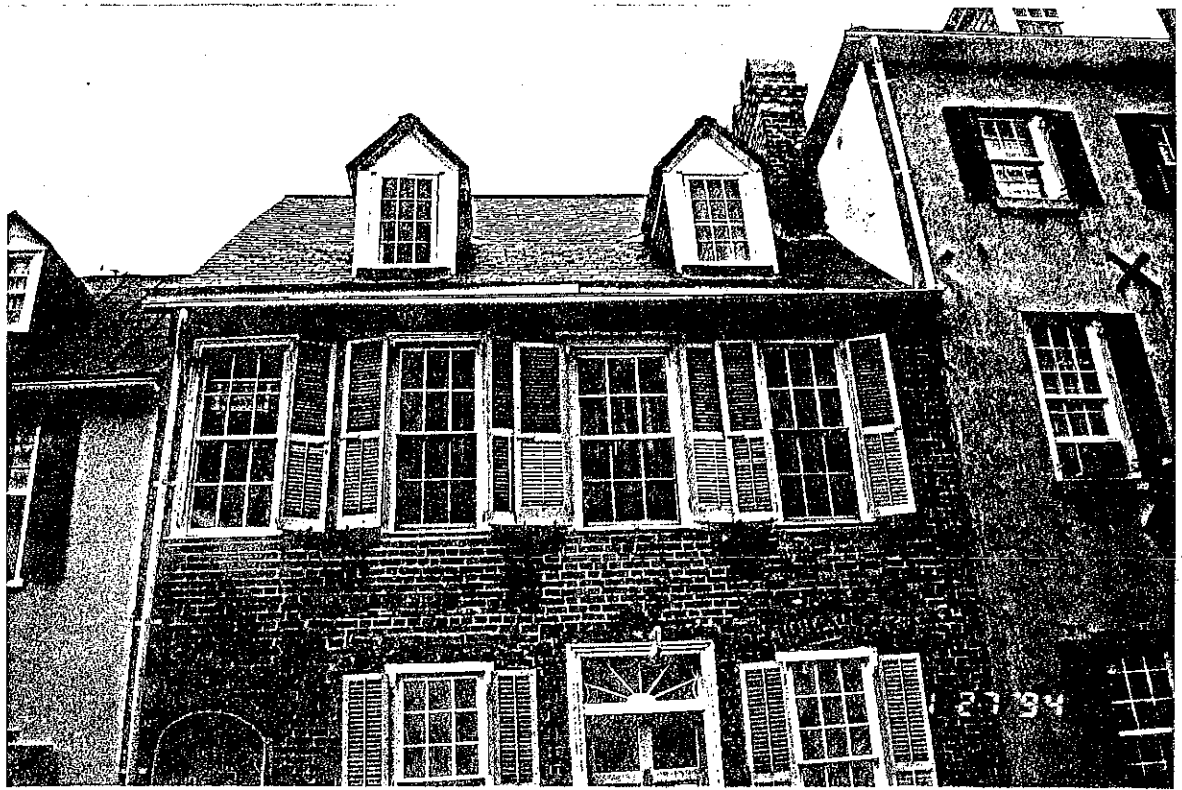
Second Floor

At the eastern end of the building, the floor plan of the second floor followed closely that of the first. An interior frame partition wall divided the floor into front and rear chambers. Scars on the floorboards reveal clear evidence of the partition and even possible evidence of the location of the door communicating between the chambers. Evidence for the means of heating the front chamber has been eradicated, but the 5 flues rising from the eastern chimney and the corner fireplace below both suggest the presence of a fireplace in the second floor front chamber. The chimney stack for the second floor rear survives together with two flanking closets with their original eighteenth century doors.

While portions of the second floor ceiling were removed, the ends of two trimmers framing a wide stair box providing access to the third floor were identified. The great width and shallow depth of the box probably indicates a winder stair, possibly contained in its own chamber. Together with these two trimmers, the four openings through the southern elevation overlooking the street say much about the early building. The three easternmost windows all have seats typical of the mid-eighteenth century. The westernmost of these three has a replaced corner suggesting that the window seat originally terminated in an interior partition. Since this location lines up directly with the joist carrying the trimmers for the stair box, it is assumed that an interior wall ran from the edge of the stairbox all the way to the front wall. This reading of an interior partition enclosing the stair is further reinforced by the absence of a similar window seat in the westernmost of the front windows; this window would not have been in the front chamber but in the stairhall. Lastly, the central of the three front windows is significantly wider than those flanking. Together with the location of a closer below the window on the exterior, this width is certain evidence that it was originally a door to an exterior balcony. Furthermore, the width of the extant first and now-closed second floor doors were three feet nine inches.

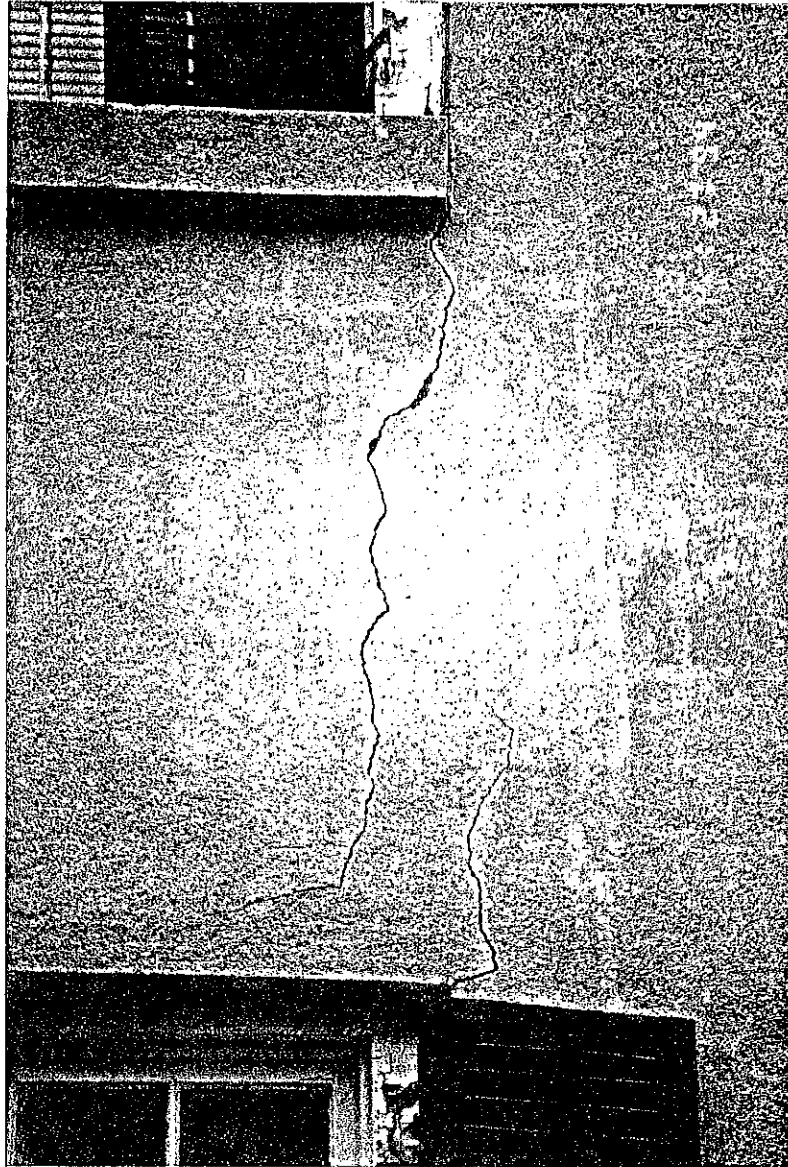
Third Floor

The location of the stairbox in the framing between the second and third floors corresponds nicely with a scar in the third floor floorboards. The finished stair rose into a heated and finished third floor chamber. This chamber was probably illuminated by dormers and was covered by a roof framed in common rafters.

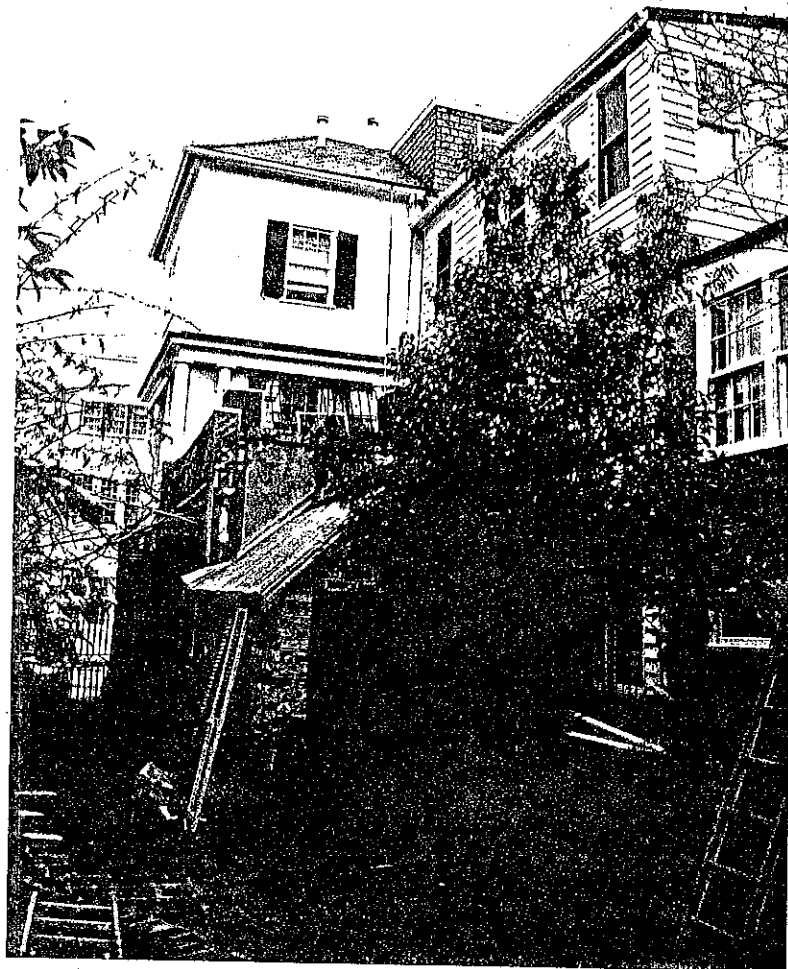


A. January 27, 1994 - 38 Tradd Street.

Possibly from Rosen & Associates (engineers) files



C. January 27, 1994 - Crack
beneath 3rd floor right side
window.



E. January 27, 1994 - Rear of 81 Church Street.



38 Tradd Street
South of Broad

*Perhaps one of the oldest buildings existing
in downtown Charleston*

\$625,000

Listing Agent: Dan Ravenel, CRB

They were among several building erected by Col. Brewton (Powder Receiver of the Province) and his family, at what became known as "Brewton's Corner," at Church and Tradd.

(File, 77 Church & 35 Tradd, SCHS. Stoney, This is Charleston, 102.)

38 Tradd St. -- This quaint two and one-half story, stuccoed brick house was built between 1718 and 1722 by John Bullock or his widow, Mary. It was devised to their daughter Millicent who married Col. Robert Brewton of 71 Church St. This was the studio and residence of artist Elizabeth O'Neill Verner after 1838. (Green, unpub. MS. Elizabeth Verner Hamilton, unpub. notes. Stoney, This is Charleston, 102)

40 Tradd St. -- John Bullock or his widow Mary also built this two and one-half story house c. 1718. Col. Robert Brewton sold this property with the house on it in 1752 to Daniel Badger.

(Green, unpub. MS. Stoney, This is Charleston, 102)

44(?)
41-43 Tradd St. -- This three story brick double tenement is believed to have been built c. 1746 by Jonathan Badger.

(Stoney, This is Charleston, 103)

46 Tradd St. -- Built c. 1770 by James Vanderhorst, this three story stuccoed brick dwelling house was the home of Alfred Hutton, the well known artist, an adopted Charlestonian from Woodstock, N.Y.

(Stoney, This is Charleston, 103.)

51-53 Tradd St. -- Col. Alexander Hext made his will in 1736, stating that he had "lately built and Erected a large Brick Messuage and out Houses consisting of two Tenements," on this site. Col. Hext, who lived

he bequeathed "the house and grounds whereon I now dwell" to his "well beloved wife Jane."

In the 1920s, this was the home of Postmaster Edward Jennings and his son Edward I. R. Jennings (1898-1929), one of Charleston's jazz age artists whose works are in the Gibbes Art Gallery collections.

26 Tradd Street

Robert Ewing House

Constructed c. 1785; renovated 1990s

This three-story brick house is believed to have been built by Scottish merchant Robert Ewing.

35 Tradd Street

Brewton's Corner Dependencies

Constructed by 1747; restored 1920s

These two structures, now combined as a single residence, were among several buildings erected by Col. Robert Brewton, Powder Receiver of the Province, and his family at what became known as "Brewton's Corner" at Church and Tradd streets. They are believed to be the two structures mentioned in the will of Col. Miles Brewton in 1747. The easternmost structure was the kitchen to Col. Brewton's house on the corner of Tradd and Church streets, although the house itself has been replaced. The westernmost structure was a tenement that Brewton bequeathed to his third wife, Mary. 35 Tradd Street is illustrative of an early 18th century building type that once existed inside the walled city.

38 and 40 Tradd Street

The Bullock House

Constructed between 1718 and 1722

These quaint two-and-a-half story stuccoed brick houses were built by John Bullock or his widow, Mary. It was devised to their daughter, Millicent, who married Col. Robert Brewton of 71 Church St. Both are rare survivals of the fires that swept through this area in the 18th century. Col. Robert Brewton sold 40 Tradd St., with the house on it, to Daniel Badger in 1752. Artist Elizabeth O'Neill Verner had her studio and residence at 38 Tradd St. from 1938 until her death in 1979.

41-43 Tradd Street

Jonathan Badger Tenements

Constructed between 1746-72

It has long been believed that this early exposed-brick, three-story double tenement was built by cabinetmaker Jonathan Badger, c. 1746. In the 1990s, however, a brick with the date "1772" was discovered on the exterior. The property was purchased in 1770 by Alexander Cormack, a tailor.

46 Tradd Street

James Vanderhorst House

Constructed c. 1770; renovated 1927

Built by the Vanderhorst family, this three-story, stuccoed brick house became the home and studio of Alfred Hutty, the well-known artist from New York. Hutty was a part of the Charleston Renaissance in the 1920s.

51-53 Tradd Street

Hext Tenements

Constructed c. 1736, restored c. 1966, 1980s

Col. Alexander Hext's 1736 will stated that he had "lately built and Erected a large Brick Messuage and out Houses consisting of two Tenements" on this site. Col. Hext, who lived on his Johns Island plantation, was a member of the Commons House of Assembly. It was subsequently the home of George Saxby, Inspector of Stamp Duties during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765. A Charles Town mob ransacked his house in search of the hated stamps and Saxby was burned in effigy.

54 Tradd Street

William Vanderhorst House

Constructed 1740; restored 1930s, 1996

This three-and-a-half story, stuccoed brick house is believed to have been built by William Vanderhorst. Unlike many of its historic neighbors, it retains a front door that would have been used by clients or customers entering the ground floor commercial space. Though preserved, the door is no longer in use, and a new entry on the west side of the house is used today.

Subsequently, it was the home of Peter Bacot, whom President George Washington appointed as