

Architectural Guide to  
Charleston (Simons)

DR. ANTHONY VANDERHORST TOOMER HOUSE  
c. 1829  
34 Chapel Street

ELIAS VANDERHORST HOUSE  
c. 1832  
28 Chapel Street

[See next pg.]

The "uptown" district of Wraggborough, an early suburban area, was semi-rural when these neighboring antebellum dwelling houses were constructed. They are among the city's earliest examples of the Greek Revival expression utilized in the design of dwellings. The two building lots were of generous size and extended back about 300 feet to a tidal creek. To the east, from the front piazzas, the marshlands bordering the Cooper River could be seen. The fortunes of this 19th century suburb have declined greatly in the last 60 to 70 years.

The two principal levels of the Toomer House are of frame construction, rear and both side facings are clapboard but the dwelling's south front, rounded by shallow bays repeated in the triple tiered piazza, are in vertical boarding, with alternating panels recessed. Between the two bows, the center of the facade is topped by a small pediment, the shape of which is repeated by the triangular window it contains.

On the interior, at the rear of the stair hall, the staircase ascends in two flights, uniting in a single flight to continue to the second story. Two stair niches and a center rear doorway are inpointed Gothic arches, this motif repeated again in paneling and door panes. The entrance hall, with the staircase as nucleus, produces a formal and balanced effect. Patterned English linoleum formerly covered stairs and hall floor, perhaps the earliest use of such material in a Charleston dwelling.

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The Vanderhorst House was constructed at a time when Charleston's version of Regency had given way to the bare, robust Greek Revival. Ceilings were gaining their greatest height, doors and windows reached almost fully to the ceiling, and a minimum of decorative plasterwork was used. The austerity of the Vanderhorst House interior is relieved only by a simple plaster cornice, reeded door framings with corner blocks, and marble mantels free of decorative carvings.

The brick-and-stucco exterior is unadorned except for a dog-tooth cornice in the pediment and roof gables, a fan light, and the fluted Doric piazza columns. The third level of the piazza is a late addition.

W.H.J.T.