

125 Tradd

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Uniqueness Marks Its Character

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

The Capt. John Morrison House at 125 Tradd St. has unusual characteristics which distinguish it from other Charleston "single houses."

Its most obvious oddity is the ample width which provides a street facade four windows wide, in place of the usual width of two or three windows in other single houses.

The structure is a traditional single house in the sense that it is a single room "deep," with two rooms bisected by a stairhall on each floor.

However, the unusual width makes the

primary rooms rectangular rather than square, and places the staircase an unusual distance from the front door, deep into the hall.

The house has been attributed to Capt. John Morrison, a mariner who purchased the property on May 1, 1800. He paid 250 guineas for the property which is described as measuring 49 feet in width and 206 feet, six inches in depth.

There is no mention of a house in the deed to Morrison from the estate of Isaac Mazzyck the Elder.

The purchase price, 250 guineas, was the equivalent of 262 pounds, shillings,

sterling. This was a considerable sum, but whether large enough to indicate a house of the size of the present one is open to debate.

Capt. Morrison is first indicated as residing at the location in the City Directory of 1806, which would place him there in late 1805 when the survey for the directory was made.

Based on that, the date of c. 1805 has been placed on the house.

If that date is true, Capt. Morrison built in a conservative manner for the time, when decoration in the style which



(Staff Photo by Richard Burbage)

Capt. John Morrison House, C. 1805

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in Charleston is called Adam was in vogue.

The Adam (or Federal, as it is known elsewhere) influence is seen in the fan-lighted piazza doorway which was retained when present piazzas in the style of the 1840s were added.

The main entrance also has a delicate fanlight and sidelights with slender rounded and squared pilasters of Charleston's Adam period.

Otherwise, the exterior is conservative in style, with a cornice of shaped modillions carried over from the so-called eorgian period.

The cornice continues on the entablature of the piazzas and is echoed in the cornice of the drawing room. The drawing room cornice, of wood, also features dentils, and a plain band in lieu of the stucco-decorated frieze one might expect.

The drawing room, which is on the first, rather than the second floor, features delicately molded wainscoting of the Adam period, and a large mantel with sunburst and fan designs in the Regency style.

The unusual width of the house gives the drawing room four windows overlooking Tradd Street.

Across the hall, the dining room also features wainscoting of the Adam period and an unusually small mantel in the Federal manner, with straight pilasters and mouldings and sans the molded Grecian figures associated with the Adam style.

The dining room has a cornice, molded but undecorated, of extreme simplicity.

The same simplicity is found in the hallway, which has plain wainscoting and a staircase with simple but refined lines.

Capt. Morrison continued to be listed at the Tradd Street address through the City Directory of 1819. He died before March 9, 1821, when his will was probated.

In the division of his estate, the property was sold on Dec. 21, 1826, to William Peronneau in trust for Mrs. Sarah Peronneau and her children. The purchase price was \$4,300.

Subsequently, the lot adjacent to the west was added to the property, giving it its present width of 96 feet.

According to the late historian Samuel G. Stoney, the western lot which now provides a garden for the house was occupied in the 1790s by Robert Squibb.

Squibb, author of the "Gardener's Calendar," a local classic, introduced exotic plants to Charleston, maintaining a commercial garden at the Tradd Street location.

Capt. John Morrison's House is the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Stoney.

The Capt. John Morrison House, 125 Tradd St., will be one of six houses included on an afternoon tour sponsored by the Historic Charleston Foundation. Built about 1807, the house is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Laurence O'Hare Stoney. (Staff Photo By Murton)

