

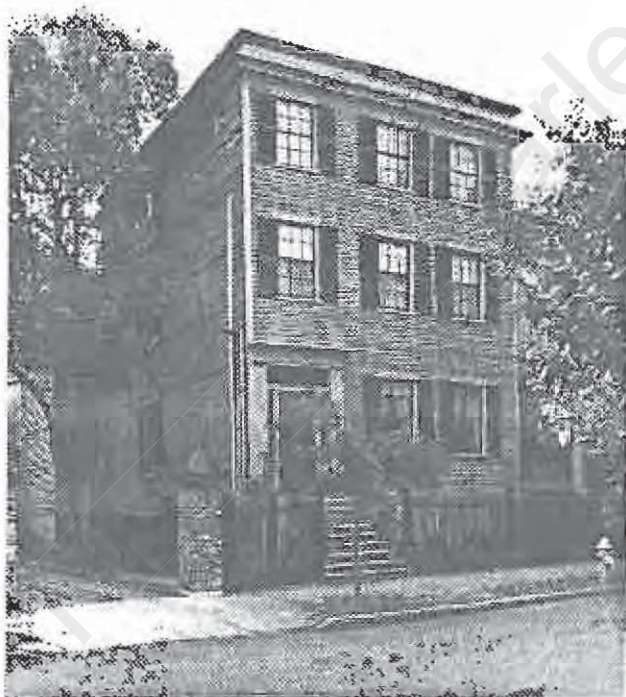
THE AUGUSTUS TAFT HOUSE

Constructed 1836
57 Laurens Street

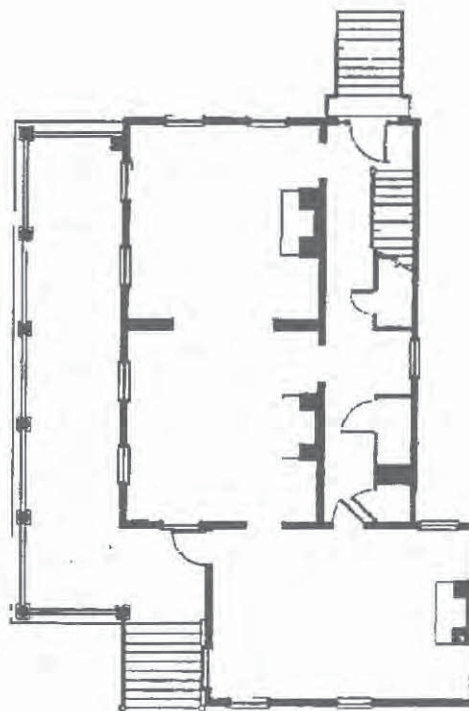
This three story townhouse is a good example of early Greek revival style in the emerging Charleston interpretation. The dwelling is built of black cypress and exhibits little ornamentation on its exterior, save the simple Greek key motif in its door architrave and the fine marble staircase approaching it. The double parlors on the interior are ornamented by Greek revival cornices and plaster ceiling medallions with simple black marble mantels. The dining room was added soon after construction. Prior to this alteration, meals were prepared in the detached ground level kitchen and were carried up to the rear parlor. The present dining room incorporates a part of the original piazza. Evidence of the change is visible in the interior door surround leading to the porch. When the rear "hyphen" addition was added in 1973, the kitchen was relocated from the ground level to its present position. Prior to conversion, the split door between the dining room and the rear parlor was a window complete with hangings looking out into the dining room.

The house was built in 1836 by Augustus R. Taft, a member of a prominent New England family that also produced a President and a Senator. Shortly after construction, the dwelling became one of the narrow survivors of the Great Fire of 1838 which burned adjacent properties to the south. Shortly after the fire, however, new dependencies were added, including the remaining three story masonry dependency which originally contained the kitchen and slave quarters. A stable and carriage house formerly faced it across a stableyard. The present garden area has always been a part of the property.

The builder's daughter married Pierre G. Stoney, and the house remained in their family for over a century (with the exception of a six month period in 1865 when the Freedman's Bureau confiscated the house to provide housing for freed slaves.) It was sold to the present owners in 1973.



57 Laurens, photograph, c. 1980, HCF



57 Laurens, first floorplan, Measured and drawn by Allyson Eubank, Emily Curtis, and Laurie Black, MWC, drawn by Steven Bauer,