

THE PINK HOUSE

*Constructed 1712; renovations and additions mid 18th century and 1930
17 Chalmers Street*

Constructed of pink Bermuda stone (coral limestone), odd-sized bricks, and ballast, the Pink House is the sole surviving alehouse from the colonial bawdy district that ran along Mulatto Alley (now Chalmers Street) to the corner of Meeting Street. The gambrel roof, while early, is not original, for the inner faces of the gable walls retain traces of straight rafters extending from the ridge to the eaves, mirroring the small building to the west. The gambrel roof apparently dates from the upgrading of the structure's chimney in the mid-18th century. The absence of carpentry work in the stark interiors and the diminutive size of the interior spaces show this to be one of the earliest of Charleston's buildings, besides being a rare survival from the material environment of the lower classes. The pantile roof reflects contemporary north European urban roofing practices. In 1930 a one story service wing was added to the south-east corner by Mr. and Mrs. Victor Morawetz. At the same time, the first floor room was lined with random width vertical cyprus boards.

The Pink House remained in use as an alehouse or dram house for most of the 18th century. Thereafter it was used as a residence. It was much deteriorated when purchased by the Morawetz's from Dennis and Jeremiah W. O'Brien in 1930. Since the Morawetz's restoration, it has remained one of the city's landmarks. At various times it has served as the studio of painter Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, the site of Harry McInvaill's Pink House Press, Louis Lawson's Pink House Galleries, and the law office of Frank H. Bailey.



*Early twentieth century photograph of 17
Chalmers Street, Early Architecture of
Charleston, Simon and Lapham, USC Press*