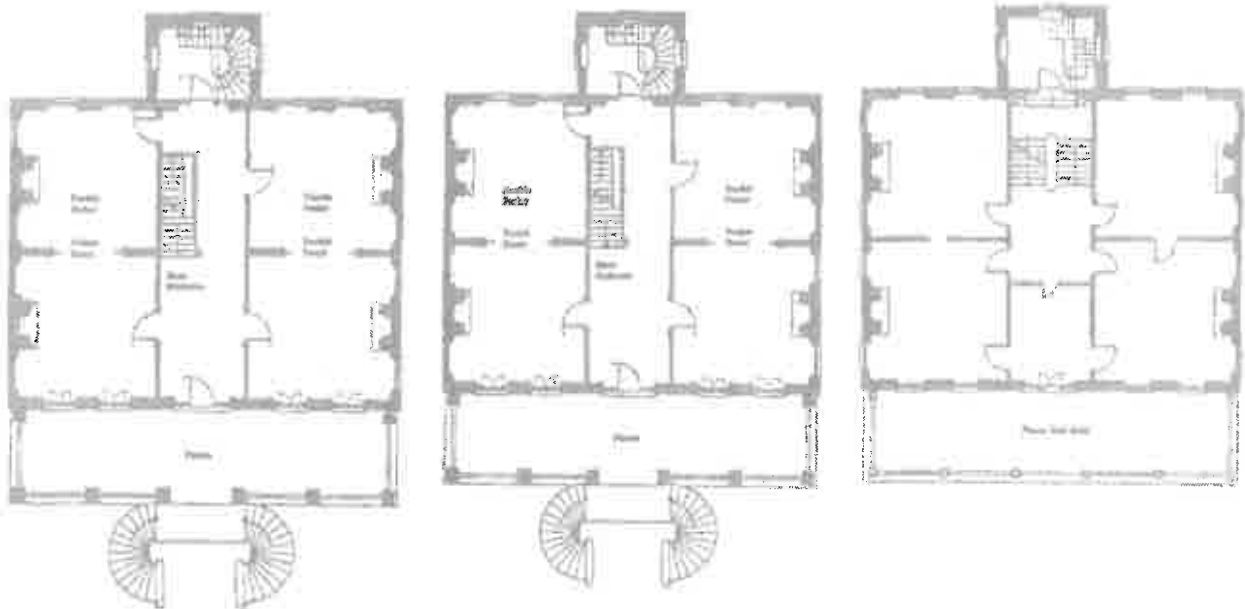


ROBERT MARTIN HOUSE

*Constructed 1834-35
15 Charlotte Street*

On July 16, 1834 Robert Martin purchased a lot in Wraggborough from Thomas Milliken for \$2500. The lot, with 100 feet fronting on Charlotte street and 260 feet in depth, differs greatly from the lot as originally laid out in the 1801 plat of Wraggborough by Joseph Purcell. In that plat the lots were oriented east-west rather than north-south as Martin purchased it. Additionally, his lot was considerably larger than those originally devised. In the 1835-36 city directory Robert Martin, factor, was listed as living on Charlotte Street so it appears that construction must have begun shortly after his purchase of the property. In that same year, Martin's business is listed at Boyce and Company's wharf. In addition to being a factory, it appears that Martin was involved in the lucrative trade of hauling upland cotton from Atlanta to Charleston.

Martin's house presents a rather traditional central-hall plan, two symmetrical rooms on each side of the entry and stair hall. On a high brick basement, oriented east-west and set back from the street, Martin's house resembles many of the earlier plantation homes of the Carolina Lowcountry. Onto the rectangulaire house certain ornamentation in the Greek revival style has been added. The one-story piazza is supported by massive Doric columns with fluted Doric columns above. Spanning the central hallway is a monumental arch buttressed with massive scrolling acanthus leaves. The mantels feature black marble Ionic columns. The floor plan is updated by the shortening of the upstairs hall allowing the entire front of the house to function as a ballroom. A later owner has since added the expected interior walls. Mingled amongst these current stylistic features are other dated elements. The door features a fan-light opening and egg-and-dart moldings while dog-tooth brick work and a front gable are unexpectedly featured on the exterior.



Robert Martin House, ground floor plan, showing the location of the stone bath and the servant's stair, Drawing courtesy of Max Hill, III

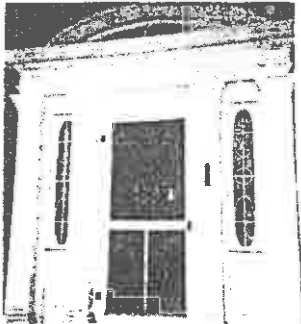
Robert Martin House, first floor plan, showing the double parlours and the connecting pocket doors, Drawing courtesy of Max Hill, III

Robert Martin House, second floor plan, showing the interior walls which now divide the original ballroom and the addition to the piazza (since removed), Drawing courtesy of Max Hill, III

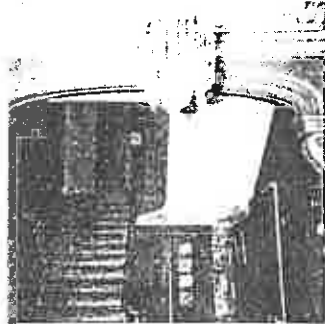
On Charlotte Street, next to East Bay, rise two splendid brick houses. They were built in the last century. Their handsome facades, green lawns and formal flower beds are surrounded by high brick walls and appropriate iron work. They present a marked contrast to the encroachments of the 20th Century which have grown up on East Bay....billboards, a filling station, an automobile agency, and a television station with its accompanying high antenna. Their charm and dignity are intensified, not altered by the ugliness near at hand. They dominate the area, and the eye is drawn to them compellingly.

These two houses, 16 and 20 Charlotte Street, completely occupy the short block on the north side of Charlotte, between East Bay and Alexander. Dated within ten years or each other, they offer two different examples of the same architectural period, Greek Revival.

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 The Robert Martin house, 16 Charlotte, is now owned by Mrs. J. Cutchin. It stands well back from the street. It has two broad piazzas facing Charlotte Street. The welcoming arms of an extremely graceful curved double stairway extend from the first piazza to the garden level. A particularly handsome doorway, with carved molding and a cornice is surmounted by a small arch. The door itself is a fine example of the Greek Revival style, with two long panels outlined with egg and dart molding. It is a fitting preview of the stately interior. When the door closes behind, the visitor views the wide entrance hall; it is most impressive.



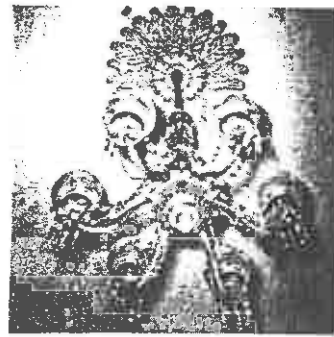
Handsome Doorway



Entrance Hall

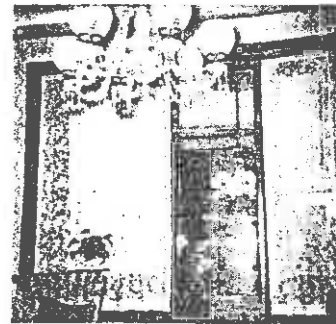
Attention is drawn immediately to a beautiful gold archway in the center of the hall. This arch is supported by gold consoles. It forms an effective frame for the wide curved stairway behind it. The wood stair, at first glance, appears to be marble, but this effect is achieved by marbleizing with paint.

The woodwork in the hall is very handsome. There is a white cornice, and under this a gold picture molding. There is also a lovely molded plaster ceiling medallion, and from it hangs a chandelier of graduated circles of crystal prisms. The paint on the walls is scored to look like colored marble. However, the total effect in perspective in the hall, accomplished by the placing of the chandelier, arch, and stairway, cannot be adequately described with ordinary phrases; one must resort to such words as magnificent and sumptuous.



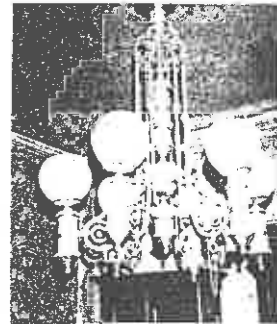
Medallion with Chandelier

On each side of the central hall are two large rooms. These were originally the parlors and sitting rooms. The front parlor on the east side has the original magnificent crystal chandelier with etched glass globes. Handsome raised molding frames the door, windows, and arch. The interesting ceiling features a projecting cornice, from which the ceiling is coved, and under the cornice is a gold picture molding like that in the hall. All the first floor ceilings have large, ornate, plaster medallions. The two front windows are framed by the molding as one, with a built-in mirror between them.



Front Windows with Built-in Mirror

There is a corresponding window and mirror treatment in the east back parlor. Here the wood work and ceiling are the same as the front. The chandelier in the back parlor, however, is quite different and unusual. It is of brass, branched, colored enamel holders, and etched glass globes.



Chandelier with Enamel Holders

The plan of the house, with a central hall and two large rooms on each side, is the same on the three upper floors. On the ground floor were originally the kitchen, pantry, storerooms, and offices; on the first floor the parlors;

and on the 2d floor the bedrooms, with three large rooms in the attic. There are two interesting accessory buildings on the property, a carriage house and servant's quarters.



Carriage House

The Martin house is reputed to have had the first bathtub in the City of Charleston. It was a large tub, carved out of a solid piece of gray granite; and is located in the basement. When the bath tub was first put in, young friends came to frolic in its great watery depths. Some maiden ladies thot this all-over bathing very daring, and not quite modest! Mrs. Cutchin, the present owner, says that her father had it covered over, but that it is still there.

The architect of the house is unknown. It was built between 1835 and 1840 for Robert Martin, a wealthy Charleston merchant. He married Milberry Serena Daniel from Camden. They had six children. In the Historical Society archives is an old newspaper clipping of the tribute written about Mrs. Martin at the time of her death. It is quoted here because it shows so clearly what an indelible mark such a mistress leaves on her house. It isn't difficult, even now, to picture Serena Martin descending her stairway, clad in the regal black that all our ladies wore arter the Confederate War.

"Mrs. M. Serena Martin, born in Camden, S.C., on the 17th May, 1808, died at Summerville, near Charleston, S.C., on the 20th February, 1877.

"These simple dates tell us the beginning and end of a life. The beginning was with God, the end was in Christ. Between, there breathes a life, that wondrous mystery - a human soul, a mystical individuality, a spiritual portrait - the portrait of a sweet and noble woman. It will do us good to look at this life, to catch the inspiration of a thought and gather the lessons of an example.

"Bright, beautiful, true, brave, and tender, Mrs. Martin began life with her husband in all the gentle courage, and mingled strength, and sweetness of her nature. With such a wife, such a man as Robert Martin, the upright gentleman and sagacious merchant, could not fail of success.

"They soon built for themselves a strong, tasteful, roomy, and sheltered home - a home of graceful comfort and quiet dignity, which the children of the house might remember with love and pride, and all friends recall with a grateful sense of its restful welcome. Here she reigned and ruled first with her husband, and after his death, alone. Here she taught her children to be good men and women; here

she gathered the young around her, and here she dispensed the bounty of an active life, gracious in authority, wise in kindness.

"During the siege of Charleston she was an exile from this home. She shared the toils and trials of her countrywomen of the South, with the generous fortitude which marked them all. When the war ended, she returned with impaired fortune, but still with a measure of comfort, to take her place among her friends, and to do her part in restoring the social life which had neen so rudely shattered.

"As the years passed, her strength failed, and she was sick, but to the end she bravely kept her place, and was still ever the cheerful and gracious mother and friend to all who were gathered around her. And then at last there came a time when she placed her hand trustingly in the hand of her Savior, bowed her head reverently to God's great mystery of suffering, and so passed into her Father's unseen Kingdom - died from life into life, as the seed dies in the flower, as the child dies into the man, as today will die in tomorrow.

"In this our day of ambitious parade and feverish craving for publicity, it is well, we say, to look at and learn the lesson of this retired life, this brave bright spirit, this gracious dignity, this self-respectful content with duty and the right, this sound tradition, this wholesome social force which must ever be the grace and strength of the Church, and the sure safety of the Commonwealth."

The Martin house was sold to Mrs. Rosa G. Witte in 1878. Mrs. Witte sold it to H. F. Bremer in 1912. Mrs. Cutchin, the daughter of Mr. Bremer, has lived there for fifty years. She recalled that there were nine children in her father's family and every room in the house was used when they first lived there. Now, however, only Mrs. Cutchin and her sister and brother-in-law live there. The 2nd story and attic have been closed off, and only the basement and first floor are used. Mrs. Cutchin's deep love for her house shows in its immaculate appearance and its thick green lawn which is her particular care.

Standing in the walled yard in the rear of the Martin house, one can hardly believe that busy East Bay Street is only a few yards away. There is a quiet here, a combination of the huge old trees, the high wall, the deserted outbuildings, and the grandeur of the main house. It produces a sense of remoteness from the surrounding district, not only in feeling, but in actual distance. The sounds of the street are muted and the modern sights are blotted out by the uncompromising wall.

In 1848 while 20 Charlotte Street was abuilding, Ellen Aiken and her husband spent the year abroad. There they bought chandeliers, gold mirrors, and bedroom sets ornamented with vignettes of scenes of Switzerland. Should you call on Mr. Albert Simons, Senior, you will see some of his grandmother's charming things.

The Joseph Aiken house, 20 Charlotte Street, presents a completely different aspect than the Martin house. Here the design is more definitely Greek, with Greek motifs incorporated into every detail. The front of the house is domin-

THE ROBERT MARTIN HOUSE
16 CHARLOTTE STREET

The striking mansion and dependencies known today simply as 16 Charlotte Street offer a glimpse of mid nineteenth century Charleston at its zenith, from the grand scale of the Greek Revival interiors to the luxury of the first built-in bath tub in the city.

The property was acquired by Robert Martin of Winnsboro, a nephew of David Aiken, in 1834, as one of the largest lots in the fashionable new suburb of Mazyckboro. Robert Martin was then in his early 40's, and operated a very successful freight drayage business hauling cotton from Atlanta to Charleston. The successes of the Aiken family in subsequently creating the world's first commercial railroad along that route are well known, and the profits from their ventures placed them in the limelight economically, socially and politically.

The grandeur of scale made necessary by such a life are readily apparent in the Martin House. One double-parlor was not sufficient. Robert Martin needed two, each only slightly less than 1,000 square feet in area. These generously-sized rooms opened onto a 600 square foot piazza for more room and breeze. Such accommodations would have been enough for "smaller" gatherings, but the real entertainment occurred on the second floor (the third story) in the ballroom, which spanned the Charlotte Street facade, and opened onto the rooftop veranda of the piazza below.

The pressures of family life must have dimmed the lustre shortly thereafter, as Robert Martin married Serena Daniel and needed more bedrooms for the six children who followed. What had been built as a two bedroom entertainment center and social statement became a family home, and the additional traffic and population necessitated the addition of a servants' stair tower, and the division of the ballroom into a three-room suite. Probably about this time, the first built-in tub in Charleston was installed in the northeast chamber of the ground floor, where it stands today (since it is made of Winnsboro granite, it is likely to remain there a while longer).

Throughout the house and its dependencies, only the finest materials were used, and the excellent condition of such normally fragile components, as the double flight of white marble entry stairs, and the matching white marble lintels above the windows attest to the care given the structure during its long life.

The majority of the original trim is still in existence throughout the house, from the pocket doors to the ceiling medallions, and that which is missing can be replicated from what is left. A tour through the house reveals its solidity, and while a structural survey of any historic building is strongly recommended, there is little, if any, evidence of structural failure as is encountered in most houses of the period. The floors are flat and level, the stairs level and solid, and there is no apparent evidence of masonry damage, even from the Great Earthquake of 1886.

Much of the work needed in 1985, when the property was purchased by the present owners, was done at that time. While the main house needs a thorough cosmetic renovation, most of the expensive work, i.e. porch rebuilding, roofing, etc., has been done, and the two dependencies are complete and ready for occupancy as office space.

Other improvements, such as the moving and rebuilding of a new brick wall incorporating wrought iron entry gates from East Bay Street, as well as the paving, in brick and concrete, of the drives, courtyard, and parking areas, have added measurably to the value of the property.

The Martin House now awaits the owner who will bring it finally back to its original glory. Whether as a residence, as a commercial property, or both, the Martin House represents an opportunity unique in Charleston. Now that the construction of the Aquarium and new School District Administration building are underway, with the waterfront center/Fisherman's Wharf, and new County Library soon to begin, Mazyckboro is finally undergoing its long-awaited rebirth, and Charlotte Street will soon again take its place as one of the finest addresses in Charleston.

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Charleston

16 Charlotte St. -- This three story brick double house on a high brick basement, with fluted Doric columns on the piazza, curving outside steps and fine interior plasterwork and woodwork, was built between 1834 and 1840 by Robert Martin, a successful merchant in the "wagon-yard" trade. The wagon-yards were located mainly on upper King Street where wagon drivers from the state's interior exchanged country products for store goods. A bathtub in the basement, seven feet long, three feet wide and two feet deep and carved from a single block of Winnsboro granite, was, according to tradition, the first stationary bathtub in the city. (Thomas, DYKYC, Dec. 15, 1969. Stockton, N&C, July 30, 1975.)