

SC Historical Society tour
(undated)

12. 34 Chapel Street

Built about 1840 by Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer, or by his son, Dr. H.V. Toomer, this two-story wooden house on a high brick basement combines elements of the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles, the details of which show the influence of Robert Mills, who designed buildings in both styles. The house also has an unusual curving piazza which follows the curve of the paneled bows of the facade. Among neighbors it is known as The Bosom House.

Columns on the level of the piazza are of brick, capped with marble; those on the upper levels are of wood.

The interior has a double flight of stairs, which curve to unite at the landing, from which a single flight continues to the second floor. The exterior front steps have an iron rail with "dog tail" newels.

The house is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Mac Holliday, to whom we offer thanks for allowing us to tour their home.



34 Chapel Street

She added the Federal Revival style piazza entrance.

38 Chalmers Street Jane Wightman House

Constructed c. 1844

This two-and-one-half story brick house was built for Jane Wightman, a free black woman, who also owned 36 Chalmers St. Artist Elizabeth O'Neill Verner was born here in 1883. It later was the home of Laura M. Bragg (1881-1978), director of The Charleston Museum and founder of the Free Library. She was visited here by Gertrude Stein, Carson McCullers, DuBose Heyward, and other famous authors. Miss Bragg restored the house in 1927. Architect Albert Simons added Georgian and Federal details at that time.

CHAPEL STREET

Chapel Street was named for a chapel that was apparently never built, though a lot at the northeast corner of Chapel and Elizabeth streets was set aside for it when Wraggborough was laid out. In 1858, a chapel was built on the triangle at the street's western end. It was used by the congregation of St. Luke's Episcopal Church while their sanctuary (now New Tabernacle Fourth Baptist Church, 22 Elizabeth St.) was being built. The tradition that the street was named for this chapel is untrue as the name of the street predates the building. Later, the chapel was used by the congregation of St. Mark's Episcopal Church until their church on Thomas Street was built. The chapel was demolished in 1884.

14 Chapel Street Northeastern Rail Road Company Depot

Constructed 1865-66

The Northeastern Rail Road Company Depot was built in 1865-66 to replace a depot that was blown up during the Confederate evacuation of the city on Feb. 18, 1865. That depot had been filled with various commodities, including gunpowder that had to be left behind. Looters rushed in to help themselves as some cotton was burning nearby. Some small boys, who found that gunpowder thrown on the fire would make a blaze with lots

of smoke, amused themselves by carrying handfuls of it from the depot to the cotton. Powder trickling through their fingers left a trail back to the depot. It ignited and before anyone could extinguish the fire, the entire depot blew up, killing about 150 people. Houses near the depot also caught fire, adding to the chaos.

The building has been a restaurant for many years.

28 Chapel Street Elias Vanderhorst House

Constructed c. 1832; rehabilitated 1983; partially restored 1990s

The Elias Vanderhorst House was built by a member of the wealthy Vanderhorst rice planting family. It remained in the family until 1915. The structure is a valuable example of Greek Revival architecture expressed in a suburban villa. The two-and-a-half story stuccoed brick house is built on a high brick basement and has a double flight of stone steps leading to the piazza.

34 Chapel Street Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer House

Constructed c. 1840; restored 1980s

Built by either Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer or his son Dr. H. V. Toomer, this two-story wooden house on a high brick basement combines elements of the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles, the details of which show the influence of Robert Mills, who designed buildings in both styles. The house has an unusual piazza, which follows the curve of the paneled bows of the facade. Columns on the piazza level are of brick capped with marble; those on the upper levels are wood. The interior has a double flight of stairs, which curve to unite at the landing, from which a single flight continues to the second floor. The exterior front steps have an iron rail with "dog tail" newels.

The younger Toomer was appointed official physician for The Neck area. He died tending victims of Charleston's great yellow fever epidemic of 1858.

* Source [from original tour guide manual]
Thomas, DYKTC, 10/14/1968; Rawand, DYKTC, 11/1/1941;
323 Sticktan, DYKTC, 9/29/1975; Waddell, unpub MS; Stoney,
This is Charleston, 24; Smith & Smith, Dwelling
Houses, 298-299

Architectural Guide to Charleston

Land was bought by Dr. Toomer in 1827 - 1828
not built until 1829

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

TYPE 40
THURSDAY
Oct. 1886

ELIAS VANDERHORST HOUSE
c. 1832
28 Chapel Street

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.

34

28

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.

RESEARCH SOURCES

Property address: 34 Chapel Dr. Anthony, W. Va. 26201

Tax Map #:

Sanborn Map

1861 Census

1886 Earthquake R. Arnold owner / Brick + frame dwelling

City Directory

Other Sources: C. 1840 by either Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst ^{Toomer} or by his son Dr. H. V. Toomer. This house was home to young Toomer, official physician for the Neck - died while treating victims of yellow fever during the epidemic of 1858. (Thomas, DYKUC Oct. 14 '08, Ravenel DYKUC Nov. 11 '41, Stockton, DYKUC Sept. 29 '75 -; MS. Waddell unpubl. Stoney, TIC. 24, Smith + Smith Dwelling, Houses 298 + 299).

7 (*C. 1829-Stoney) - MS is in the possession of the
T.I.C. and is further claimed by the
S.C.H.S. - SCHS

Sept. 29, 1975

Toomer House

Was It Designed By Architect Robert Mills?

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

The possibility that Robert Mills may have designed the Toomer House at 34 Chapel St. is an intriguing one.

To date, no documentary evidence has been found connecting Mills, America's first native-born professional architect, with the house.

Inquiries at the S.C. Historical Society, the Caroliniana Library, the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, Tulane University (where the bulk of Mills' papers are preserved) and other sources have

failed to establish a direct relationship. However, the question begs an answer because the house certainly has a Millian quality in its design.

A two and one-half story frame structure on a high brick basement, the house was built by Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer or his son, Dr. Henry Vanderhorst Toomer.

The house was perhaps built shortly after Dr. Anthony V. Toomer purchased the then vacant lot on June 9, 1829.

Or perhaps it was built with the \$3,000 which the elder Toomer received on Sept.

17, 1833, when he mortgaged the lot and the one adjacent (on which he had built the plantation style house, now 36 Chapel St., c. 1810).

In any case, various decorative details, such as the mantels, which are transitional from the Adam-cum-Regency style to the Greek Revival style, indicate a construction date in the early 1830s.

The house follows the traditional Charleston double house plan, with four rooms to a floor and a central hallway, yet the structure is unlike any other Charleston house.



34 Chapel St. Has Millian Features

The News and Courier

Do You Know Your South Carolina?

What makes the difference is a striking combination of (and very early use of, in Charleston's architectural chronology) the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles.

The Charleston-born Mills was perhaps the first to use these two architectural styles in this part of the country.

Mills' diary (a copy of which is in the South Caroliniana Library) contains on one page his sketches of a Masonic hall which he designed for Savannah in 1831. The sketches include alternate designs for the facade — one Greek Revival, one Gothic Revival.

Another feature of the sketches which catches the eye is Mills' use of wide, shallow bows in the front rooms of the proposed Masonic hall.

The front of the Toomer House also features such wide, shallow bows. The difference is that the engaged columns of the Masonic hall mask the curving bows, while the piazza columns of the Toomer House follow the curve of the bows and emphasize the sinuous line.

Sheltered by the piazzas, the front facade of the house is finished in a series of alternating indented panels, finely beveled, in a rather unusual and refined version of "board and batten" construction.

The facade receives a "Gothic" touch from the small pediment in the center of the roofline, which features a triangular window with diamond-shaped panes.

The Gothic Revival is predominant in the wide central hallway of the entrance level, where a double flight of stairs rise above a Gothic-arched doorway.

These flights curve at the back to unite at a landing from which a single flight continues to the upper story.

Niches in the walls on either side of the landing also have Gothic pointed arches. The pointed arch motif is repeated in paneling under the stair flights and in the panes of the rear door.

The hall was obviously planned with care, with the staircase as a focal point to produce a formal and balanced effect.

This formality and love of balance is evident in Mills' work. The entrance hall of the Mills-designed Ainsley Hall House in Columbia, for example, has the same formal and balanced aspect.

The entrance hall of the Columbia house contains no staircase, but its rear wall curves like that of the Toomer House, and set into the curve is an arched niche. Formal balance is achieved with the conspiracy of a false door, matching a real door on the opposite side of the hall.

Unfortunately, neither Mills' diary nor any of his other extant papers contains a mention of the Toomers or of Chapel Street.

But, while there is no proof that Mills designed the house, it at least can be said that the Toomer House shows the impact of Mills' work, which defected builders from a reliance on English models and toward a distinctly American architecture.

The Toomer House is currently owned by John D. Muller Jr.

Morning Coffee

By Dave Doubtava

"Ah, come on, it's not that bad," she said.

"Not that bad? This friendship fruit has turned into a monster. It just keeps growing," I grumble from behind a stack of jelly, peanut butter and pickle jars. "Hand me some more lids, will you, I've got two more vats of this stuff to can."

"Well, give it to your friends," she said. "That's what it's for. You add the fruit and sugar once a week, it ferments and gets brandied and you give some of it away as a sign of friendship and affection."

"Sure...just give it away. I've already given some to everybody I know and now they won't even talk to me. They're mad because now they've got their own growing, pulsating monster to contend with."

"Well, can't you just stop adding new fruit each week," she says, dabbing the sweat off my brow with a washcloth.

"Nope. I found out last week that if you don't feed the beast every week it gets so brandied that one whiff and you wake up five hours later with a strange woman at the Magnolia Drive-In."

"How about just storing the jars somewhere until you can give them

away," she says, straining to haul 40 pounds of brandied mess across the kitchen.

"Are you kidding? Look at this place. It already looks like a mason jar warehouse and I've filled up half of the 25 cent lockers at the bus station. The Greyhound people are getting suspicious."

"The problem is," I said, "that you run out of people to pawn the stuff off on. Four months ago I had three jars and now look. I have the feeling friendship fruit was invented by a science fiction writer trying to develop in real life what he wrote about in a novel...a monster that feeds upon itself, can't be stopped and which will devour Nebraska if given the chance."

"Maybe you'll just have to make more friends."

"Ha. You have any idea what would happen to me if I walked up to some guy and said 'Hi, will you be my friend and take some of my fruit?'

"So what are you going to do?"

"Well, I've got this aunt in New Jersey I never much cared for. How much do you think the freight rates would be on a steamer trunk to Camden?"

Toomer House Boasts Multitude Of Architectural Delights

By LISA DENNIS
Post-Courier Reporter

The district of Wraggborough was a once fine suburb beyond the city limits, which in the early 1800s extended only to Calhoun Street, then called Boundary.

It was a pleasant country area where a number of distinguished Charleston families lived in generously proportioned homes, nicely separated and each possessing extensive gardens, orchards or small farm yards.

In the heart of this district was a wide and pleasant thoroughfare, Chapel Street, which led down toward the marshlands along the Cooper River.

Chapel Street today retains little of that elegant country appeal, having been stricken with economic blight and urban residential developments.

Many of its fine houses, built in the design of the later Classical Revival, have deteriorated and been divided into apartments. But their plain, massive beauty and unusual features still shine through.

The Toomer House at 34 Chapel, which has been rated excellent by the city in its historical architectural inventory, is typical of this condition, yet remains one of the street's finer houses.

The house has a slate roof and consists of two wooden stories on a high brick basement that is the equivalent of another floor. Sheltered by piazzas, the front facade of the house is finished in a series of alternating indented panels, finely beveled, in a rather unusual and refined version of "board and batten" construction.

On either side of the entrance, the front is rounded by a shallow bow and the piazzas are held up at the base, one level by marble-capped brick columns covered in stucco, four columns under each curve. From the

Do You Know Your Charleston?

front garden, marble steps with iron railings run up to the first-story piazza.

The front doorway has a row of delicate dentils. And overhead, between the two bows, the facade is topped by a small pediment in the center of the roofline, which features a triangular window with diamond-shaped panes. A similar pediment is at the back of the house.

Various decorative details of the house such as the mantels, which are transitional from the Adamesque style to Greek Revival, indicate a construction date in the early 1830s.

In 1829, the lot on which it stands was bought at auction by John Dougherty for \$529 and sold a few months later for \$700 to Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer, physician and planter, who owned the adjoining lot to the west.

The low price suggests the house was not standing at that time, so it seems reasonable to think Toomer built it. For many years it was the residence of his son, Dr. Henry Vanderhorst Toomer.

The actual designer of the house at 34 Chapel remains unknown. However, an article that appeared in The News and Courier in September 1975 explores the possibility that Robert Mills, America's first native-born professional architect, may have been connected with the project.

... The house certainly has a Millian quality in its design. It follows the traditional Charleston double house plan, with four rooms to a floor and a central hallway, yet the structure is unlike any other Charleston house.



Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

The designer of the house remains unknown.

"What makes the difference is a striking combination of (and very early use of, in Charleston's architectural chronology) the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles. The Charleston-born Mills was perhaps the first to use these two architectural styles in this part of the country.

The Gothic Revival is predominant in the wide central hallway of the entrance level, where a double flight of stairs rise above a Gothic-arched doorway. These flights curve at the back to unite at a landing from which

a single flight continues to the upper story.

Niches in the walls on either side of the landing also have Gothic pointed arches. The pointed arch motif is repeated in paneling under the stair flights and in the panes of the rear door. The hall was obviously planned with care, with the staircase as a focal point to produce a formal and balanced effect.

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House in Columbia for example, has the same formal and balanced aspect.

Unfortunately, neither Mills' diary nor any of his other extant papers contains a mention of the Toomers or of Chapel Street. But while there is no proof that Mills designed the house, it at least can be said that the Toomer House shows the impact of Mills' work which defected builders from a reliance on English models and toward a distinctly American architecture."

The house is also noted for what was probably the earliest use of linoleum in a quality residence. The linoleum, which has since been removed, covered the stairs and the hall floor. Reportedly it was ordered from England and the dimensions were sent with the order so it arrived already cut. When put in place, it was found to fit exactly.

Also removed years ago was a ceiling decoration, a heavy plaster of Paris plaque — apparently a Victorian addition that didn't match the bare Classical Revival expression that dominates the home. The center of the hall ceiling is occupied by a large rosette, which is believed to be original.

Dr. Henry V. Toomer sold the house shortly before his death to John L. Holmes in 1853. Holmes in turn willed it, together with a number of slaves, to Toomer's widow and she continued to live there until 1863.

She then sold it to Eliza Mayer, who conveyed it in 1879 to Jane D. Arnold, whose estate sold it to Bessie C. Seay in 1937. John D. Muller Jr. purchased the property in 1941 and remodeled the house into apartments.

Kathryn Sommerville Polk bought the home in 1978 for \$66,000 and sold

in 1980 to Ronald H. and Elsie M. Martin, who began restoration work in hopes of making 34 Chapel their residence.

Unfortunately the time and expense were too great, forcing the Martins to sell the property in 1983 to James Asimus and William Winn. One month later Asimus bought Winn's interest and became sole owner.

Asimus, who also owns the mansion at 20 Charlotte St., planned to convert the property again to apartments, but with several other restoration projects in progress, decided to sell earlier this year.

The Toomer House was bought recently by John M. Holladay, executive vice president of the Charleston Trident Chamber of Commerce, and his wife, Jeanne.

Holladay has continued the work the Martins started, adding new crown molding, paint, wallpaper and other finishing touches. Modern wiring, plumbing and heat had been installed. Most of the interior work was completed in March and Holladay's family moved in shortly after.

The basement floor, which was apparently servants' quarters, will be made into two apartments, a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom unit. The Holladays occupy the top two floors. The exterior and apartments should be completed some time this summer, Holladay says.

The Toomer House is one of many on Chapel Street that are being revitalized and Holladay is excited about the transition. Perhaps these historic and aesthetically valuable homes will soon be restored to the gracious elegance of days gone by.



HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION
51 MEETING STREET ∴ CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29401

August 28, 1979

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Executive Committee
Members of the Area Projects Committee

FROM: Frances R. Edmunds.

RE: Purchase of 34 Chapel Street

After our last meeting, I went through the six apartments at 34 Chapel Street and was impressed with the importance of the building and its ability to be developed into either four or six rental units without making any drastic changes in the architecture of the dwelling. Our agent, the Rex Clement firm, then called on the owner and indicated that they had a buyer who would pay \$70,000 in cash in thirty days. The purchase price of the property, which was bought about two years ago, was \$66,000.

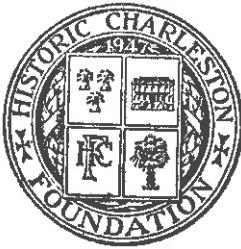
The building is gravely deteriorated, and this deterioration has advanced rapidly during the present ownership. The owner expressed no interest at all in this preliminary offer. Evidently, at times she says she is not interested in selling, and at times that she will sell for ninety-thousand-odd dollars. The agents have been told to keep in contact with the owner and to keep the Foundation advised of any activity concerning 34 Chapel.

In my opinion, it is the kind of building the Foundation should buy. It is handsome; it would make a tremendous splash on Chapel Street, in the immediate neighborhood of 36 Chapel, which we restored and recently sold. The wooden building is, in my opinion, in real jeopardy. It will be an extremely expensive job to restore it properly, so we also have the threat of an improper restoration.

Actually, the style and importance of the building are in the exterior, in an astounding Gothic period double interior staircase, and in its location, and the space relationship between it, 36 Chapel, and the plans for our Judith-Chapel development. I had thought we might try, if we purchased it, to have the building certified and set it up as an income-producing property and sell it to a limited partnership.

I will leave on Thursday for China, and will be back the very end of September, and hope that 34 Chapel will still be standing when I return.

ADDENDUM: Last report from agent - thinks owner would like to keep it but can't afford to - might sell it for \$85,000. Agent considers this an outrageous price.



HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION
51 MEETING STREET ∴ CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29401

August 31, 1979

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Area Projects Committee
FROM: Gregory B. Paxton
RE: Judith - Chapel Project

As discussed at our last meeting, on Tuesday, September 4th Tabb Heyward will deliver plans with sufficient details to enable the Foundation to obtain construction estimates from a contractor.

Mr. Heyward stated that since the Committee had approved the proposals at the previous meeting, he did not believe that it was necessary for the Committee to review this set of plans. Mr. Stubbs is due to return from vacation on September 4th. I will meet with him concerning arrangements for a firm to prepare the estimates. If any Committee members have suggestions for contractual firms other than Coward-Hund, DeCosta, and Ruscon, please contact the Foundation as soon as possible.

The next meeting concerning this project will be scheduled after the estimates are received. Any name suggestions? The only suggestions to date have been "Wraggs to Wriches" and "Aiken Arms".

On another subject - the Rex Clement agency called to say that Ms. Katherine Polk would accept an offer of \$85,000 for 34 Chapel St. Ms. Polk has decided that she definitely wishes to sell the building (although her price may not indicate it).