AN ARCHITECTURAL INVESTIGATION OF

# 79 ANSON STREET

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Willie Graham, Carl Lounsbury and Orlando Ridout V
for the HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

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## INTRODUCTION

The house at 79 Anson Street has been the subject of much speculation over the years, attributed in some accounts to the ownership of Captain George Anson in the 1730s and 1740s, while more studious research has argued for construction by Daniel Legare sometime after his acquisition in 1760. The property's recent purchase by the Historic Charleston Foundation initiated a new round of interest in the age and significance of the house and a rear dependency. There is also interest in better understanding the house's unusual plan and development so that a more accurate restoration can be achieved during its next remodeling. The Foundation therefore engaged a team of three architectural historians to examine the building and prepare a summary report of findings.

Field investigations were conducted on January 14-16, 2005, starting with a tour by former owner, Sonny Mevers. He was kind enough to share his records and knowledge of the property. The on-site study was limited by time, but was greatly aided by the opportunity to selectively remove sections of late twentieth-century sheetrock, revealing a remarkable array of early clues to the complex evolutionary history of the house that is summarized below.

The authors are indebted to Jonathan Poston, the Foundation's Director of Museums and Preservation, for the opportunity to explore this singularly interesting house. Foundation staff member Kristopher King figured out much about the complexity of the Anson Street house before our visit and shared his findings with us. Paint analyst Susan Buck made a cursory examination of the house at the beginning of the study. All paint observations in this study are preliminary, but are a result of her observations. We were also assisted by Richard Marks, a Foundation board member and local restoration contractor, and by Jim Wigley, a project manager in the employ of Richard Marks. We are grateful to them for their help and insights during the project.

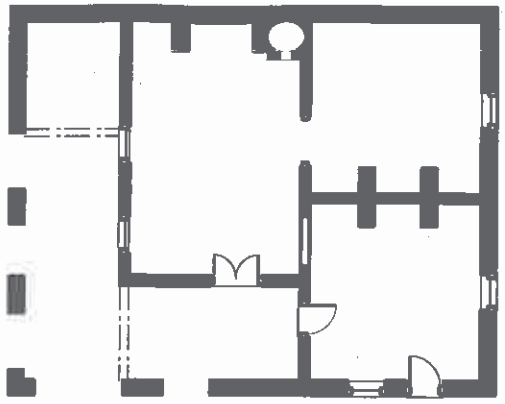
## HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A SUMMARY

The two-story frame dwelling at 79 Anson Street had long been thought to be one of the oldest structures in Ansonborough, the first suburb of Charleston, South Carolina. Several histories of the property trace its origins to Daniel Legare, who purchased this lot on the west side of Anson Street in 1760 and is said to have built the dwelling sometime thereafter. A 1791 deed describes the boundaries of a generously sized lot measuring approximately 80 feet along Anson Street on the east and extending about 230 feet in depth to the west. The lot size remained unchanged through Leo(Sonny) Mevers' purchase of the property in 1956. The Legare family held on to the property for fifteen years after Daniel Legare's death in 1791, but in 1806 the heirs sold it to the Mortimer family. After Edward Mortimer's death in 1827, the house changed hands several times until 1868, when it was purchased by William May Wightman. The house remained in the Wightman family until 1954, and in 1956 it was purchased by Sonny Mevers.

The architectural investigation of the building identified four major periods of development for the house, with indications of other minor repairs and improvements over the years. Based on architectural evidence, the house was built early in the nineteenth century, probably shortly after the lot was purchased by Edward Mortimer in 1806. This conclusion is based on an interesting juxtaposition of building fabric. The building is constructed with hand-forged, double-struck nails that appear in the Low Country as early as the 1760s and as late as about 1810, while the original (riven) plaster lathing is fastened with early machine-made nails that have been found in town as early as about 1800. The fully fielded panels of the earliest doors and the paneled shutters are commonplace in the late eighteenth century, but had passed out of common use by the early 1810s. Cast-iron butt hinges of the type used for original openings in this house first appear around 1800, while the swelled-pattern, wrought-iron strap hinges employed for the shutters pass out of fashion by the 1810s. Thus the architectural details demonstrate a strong intersection of evidence in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and Edward Mortimer seems a more likely builder than the Legare heirs. This conclusion should be tested against more rigorous documentary research into both the Legare heirs and Edward Mortimer.

Mortimer's new dwelling was erected on the corner of a spacious lot in Ansonborough. It is a frame building set over an at-grade cellar. The house has an L-plan with an integral, two-story, wrap-around piazza that allows the whole ensemble to be contained beneath a single, hipped roof. With its side entry, the Mortimer House was arranged on the lot and had the general appearance of neighboring properties, but it seems to have functioned a bit differently.

Analysis of the interior reveals an unusual plan. The cellar was clearly intended as service space, but the inclusion of an internal kitchen—made evident by a work fireplace and the remains of an oven—was no longer common at this time. And indeed, there was an early, detached brick kitchen, raising the question as to why two such spaces were needed. More problematic, though, was the layout of the first and second floor. At both levels, the plan was arranged with a large, central room, with a pair of fifteen-foot-square rooms to the east and a small, nine-foot-square stair hall to the northwest. This stairway provided communication between the first and second floor, but did not extend to the cellar. The northeast room connected directly to the larger central room, but, surprisingly, there was no direct communication between the central room and the southeast chamber on the main and upper floors until doorways were inserted in 1956. Until that time, access to these southeast rooms at both levels was through a doorway that opened off the east end of the south piazza, and possibly through a doorway on one side of the central chimney, evidence of which was destroyed with the removal of the stack in 1956. It is not clear why these two southeast spaces were segregated internally from the principal rooms of the house, but this unusual arrangement offers some interesting insights into room function, as discussed



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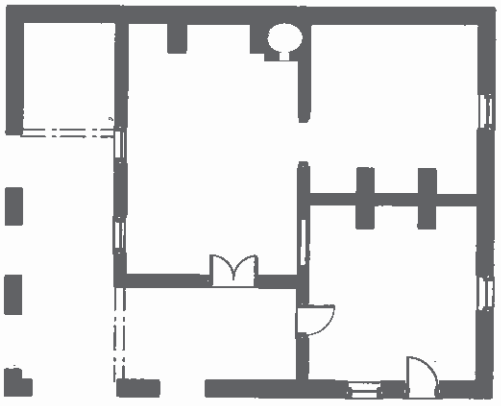

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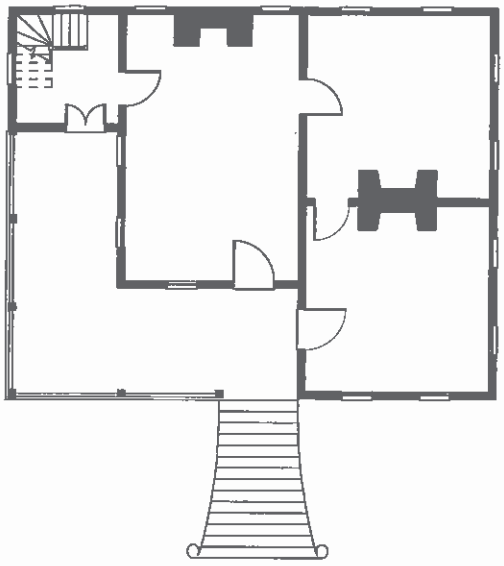

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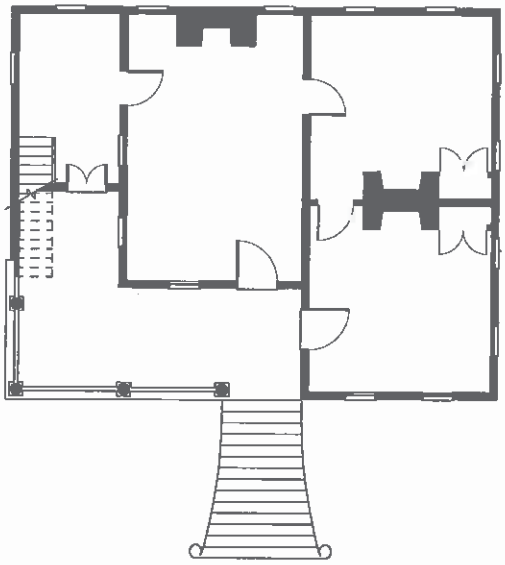

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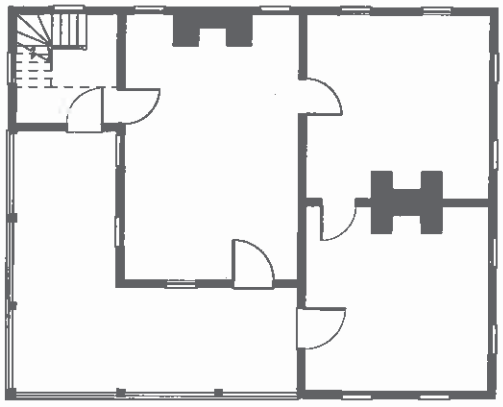
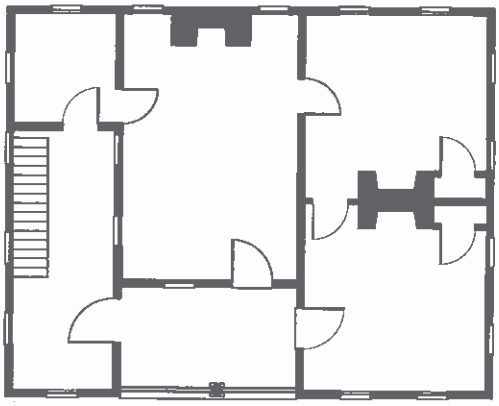


SECOND FLOOR

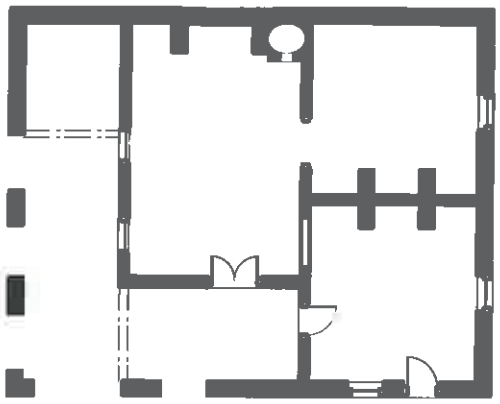
**ca. 1806**



SECOND FLOOR

**ca. 1827**

# CONJECTURAL PLANS: 79 ANSON STREET



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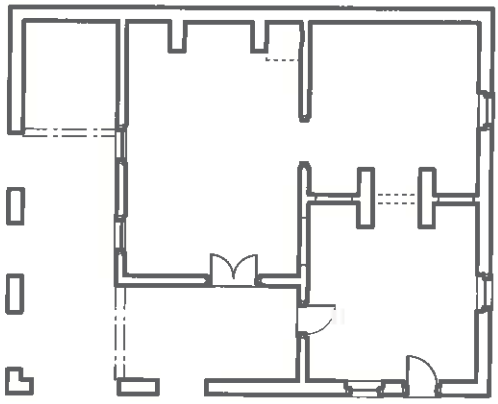

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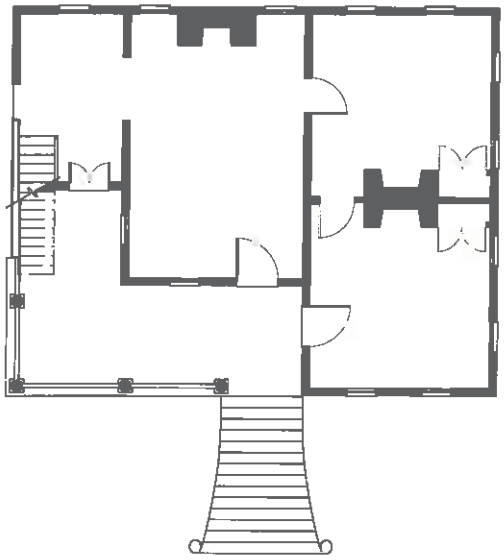

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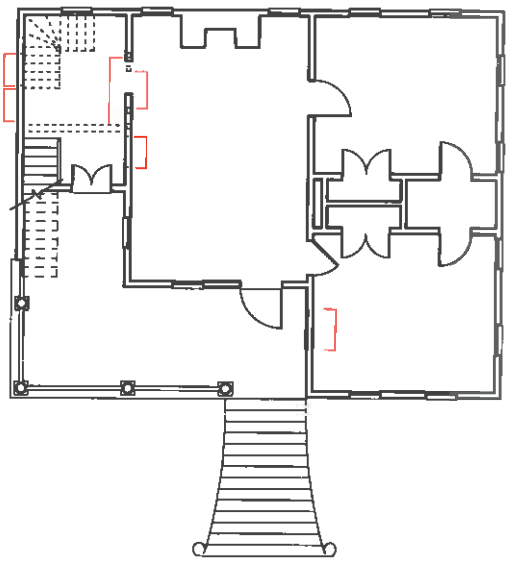

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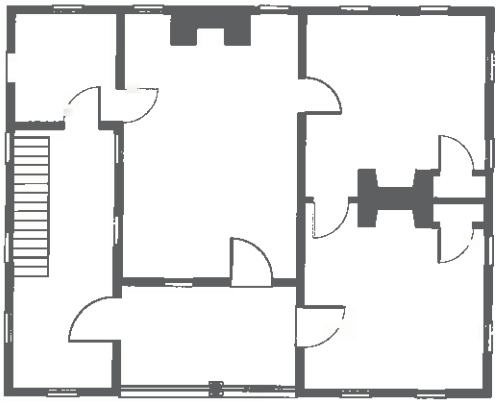
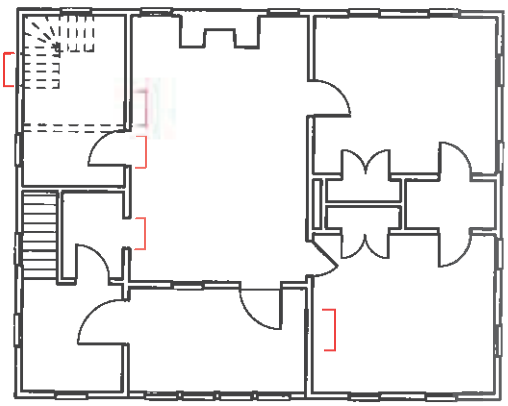


SECOND FLOOR

**ca. 1870**



SECOND FLOOR

**current plan**

# CONJECTURAL PLANS: 79 ANSON STREET

later in this report. This unusual three-room plan with its small stair hall and integral piazza has survived relatively intact despite at least three subsequent periods of alterations.

The second major phase of work on the house dates to the 1820s or early 1830s, possibly initiated by the owner that succeeded Edward Mortimer in 1827. In this phase, the principal focus was to improve circulation from first to second story, while increasing interior space. The cramped original stair was removed and additional space was carved out of the piazza at both the first- and second-story level to accommodate a new stair that could rise in a straight run to the upper floor. Upstairs, much of the piazza was enclosed to create a proper passageway for the new stair, leaving only a sleeping porch between the new enclosure and the east wing of the house. The interior of the new room was lathed and plastered, while the side facing the truncated south piazza was finished with flush-laid, beaded horizontal sheathing. Similar sheathing was also used on the new staircase—on its underside exposed to the exterior, and lining the inside of the stairway. As part of this alteration, the reconfigured piazza was re-trimmed with more elegant Greek Doric columns and a new balustrade, and some of the interior door and window architraves on the second story were changed from Roman to quirked Greek revival moldings.

The third major period of development occurred sometime after the Civil War, most likely initiated by William May Wightman following his acquisition of the property in 1868. The most significant change was to the exterior appearance of the house. The original, small-pane, nine-over-nine and nine-over-six sash were all replaced with stylish new two-over-two sash. This is also a likely time for the construction of the frame wing on the west side of the house, a feature that appears on a January 1956 survey plat of the property and was torn down shortly thereafter. Interior changes by Wightman included enlarging the doorway between the first-floor stair hall and the central entertaining room, removing the original chair boards throughout the dwelling, and installing new baseboard and Italianate trim in selected locations. Some of the locks were replaced, and portions of the house were replastered. The house remained in the Wightman family until 1954, and there is little architectural evidence of further significant changes during their ownership.

A fourth period of development occurred in 1956-57 (abbreviated in subsequent descriptive text to 1956), following acquisition of the property by Leo E. (Sonny) Mevers, Jr., a local contractor. Mevers transformed the house into a commercial property, converting the first and second stories into apartments and the cellar into a commercial office space for his construction business. He removed the chimneystack between the two east rooms on the first and second stories and inserted bathrooms and closets on each floor in the resulting void. Doorways were punched through for the southeast rooms on both floors so that these spaces now communicated directly with the central room. The original doorways that had opened directly onto the south piazza were sealed on the interior face but left in place, visible from the exterior. The remaining section of open piazza on the second story was enclosed, and the column and balustrade of ca. 1827 were replaced with a bank of four triple-hung windows. The doorway from the central room to the stair hall on the first floor was reduced in width and moved slightly to the north. On the second floor, new partitions were erected to divide the west room into three spaces—a stair landing in the south, a closet space in the center, and a small kitchen to the north. In the cellar, Mevers removed the bake oven, repointed brick walls, and tinkered with the circulation plan. He also installed plate glass windows to enclose the open area under the piazza. This extensive renovation was completed in 1957; Mevers undertook a second phase of work in 1971 with evidence of additional improvements around 1979 and repairs following Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

## EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The house is located on the west side of Anson Street, one lot south of the intersection with George Street in the Ansonborough district

of Charleston. It is of frame construction on a full brick cellar, rectangular in form, and two stories plus a cellar in height under a hipped roof. The house sits on a more-or-less rectangular lot with the long axis set perpendicular to Anson Street. The rear (north) elevation of the house is aligned with the north boundary of the lot and the principal elevation faces south to a side garden and driveway. An early, two-story brick dependency also survives on the property. This building, too, aligns with the north boundary line on an east-west axis and is placed to the rear of the main house. While the dependency has since been adapted as a separate dwelling house, it once served as a kitchen/wash house/quarter. A survey plat prepared for the property in January 1956 indicates that a later addition projected from the west end of the main house and that a cistern was located between that addition and the kitchen dependency. Mevers purchased the property later that year and the addition was demolished as part of Mevers' restoration of the house in 1956-57.

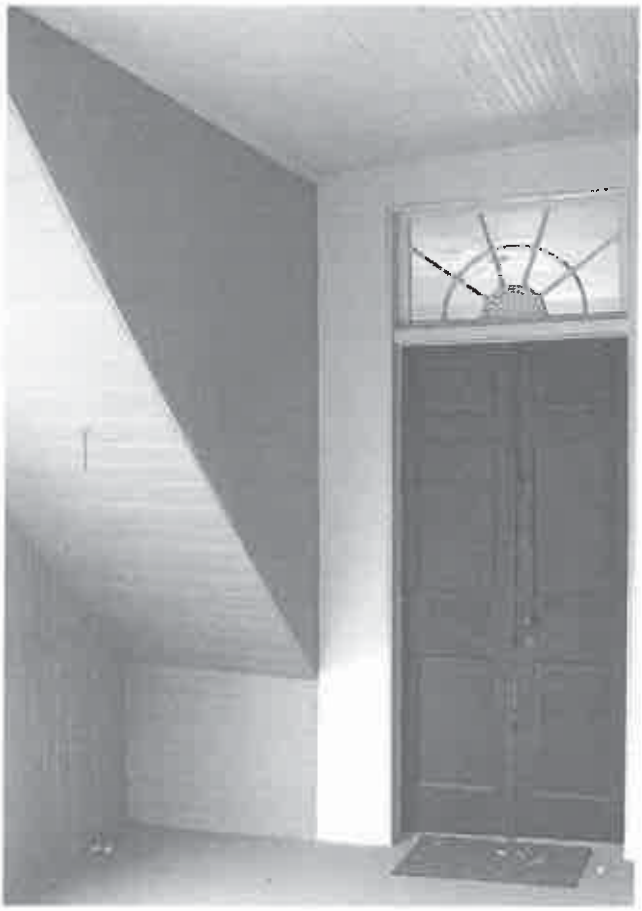
The house measures 32'-2½" on the north-south axis and 40'-2" east to west. As originally conceived, a two-story piazza was incorporated into the southwest portion of the house. In contrast to the more typical single-house arrangement, the piazza is not an appendage across the south elevation. Instead, the hip roof of the house encapsulates the piazza as well. The piazza is nestled in the southwest corner of the plan, forming an ell that extends along the western 24 feet of the principal, south elevation, before turning the corner and continuing 22 feet along the southern portion of the west elevation. It measures nine feet in depth.

The piazza was modified in several stages. First, expansion in the late1820s of the first-floor stair room in the northwest corner slightly reduced its size. Original, heavily chamfered posts with lamb's tongue stops were replaced with the present columns on the ground story, and the western portion of the ell on the upper floor was enclosed to help contain a new stair. This left a small sleeping porch upstairs on the south façade between the new enclosure and the eastern range of the house. This small section of piazza was also given a new column, set midway along the length of railing for the sleeping porch. In 1956-57 this column was removed and a bank of windows was installed to enclose the last remaining portion of the upper-floor piazza. The incorporation of the piazza into the rectangular body of the house resulted in an unusual configuration for the south and west elevations, creating an interesting contrast between conventional weatherboard elevations punctuated by windows, and recessed exterior walls set back behind the open expanse of piazza.

## South Elevation

On the south elevation, the principal entrance is centered, but set back under the piazza, with one large window to the left (west). Two more windows are symmetrically placed on the eastern portion of this elevation, unencumbered by the

*Principal entrance doorway to left; door to southeast room (center of image) was converted to a blind door in 1956. All photographs by Carl Lounsbury, 2005.*



*The stair as shown here was reconfigured when the entry was enlarged and the doorway moved to its present position about 1827. The doors may have been salvaged from the period I opening, but the transom was newly created at the time of the move.*

piazza. A second, original door at the east end of the piazza provided access from the piazza into the front, southwest room. A third door, dating to the 1820s period of work, grants access from the northwest end of the piazza directly into the original stair passage. The principal entrance retains an early (but probably not original) six-panel door. Because the interior trim of this opening varies slightly from known first-period work, and because that trim lacks the first four generation of paint found on some other jambs, it is assumed that the doorway was widened early on, perhaps during the 1827 construction phase. It initially swung inward from the east jamb, as indicated by filled hinge and lock scars, but was reset to open outward, presumably to meet fire code when the building became a commercial office in the latter part of the twentieth century. This door has boldly raised panels on both faces, but the middle two have been replaced with glass.

The opening at the east end of the piazza is also original, fitted with an original, six-panel door with fully raised panels. Here, too, the door initially swung inward, but in 1956 its rising-butt hinges and iron rimlock were stripped off, the edges were cut down slightly, and it was remounted on the outside of the opening. The interior face of the opening was plastered over and it became a blind opening, visible only from the piazza. Paint scrapings suggest that this door and its trim retain the most complete paint history of the house and they make an excellent benchmark for comparing paint chronologies elsewhere in the structure.

*First-floor window, south facade. The jamb, shutter and hardware are original; the sash were replaced about 1870.*

The door opening at the north end of the piazza dates to about 1827 when the stair hall that it serves was enlarged. The architrave for this opening is original to the house, reused as the wall was pushed to the south. However, the paired doors and rectangular transom with radiating muntins date to the ca. 1827 remodeling phase. These changes made this door more fashionable than the principal entrance, but its location in the sheltered northern end of the piazza, far from the entrance steps, indicates that it was not intended to supersede the traditional "front" door.

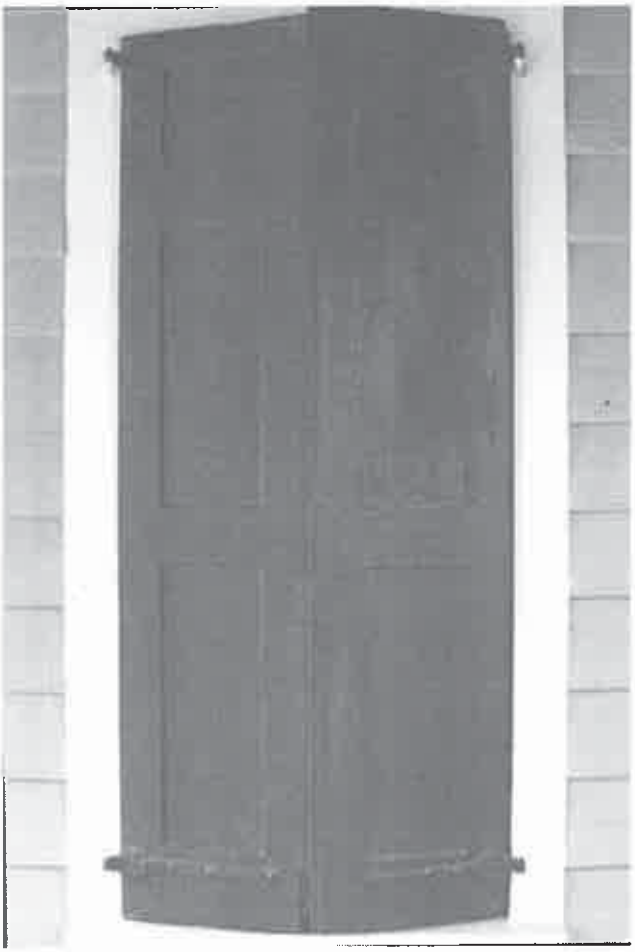
The first-story windows measure 31¾" wide by 73¾" high and are trimmed with deep wood sills and plain beaded frames. This trim is almost completely original, with perhaps only minor repairs and replacement throughout. Original nine-over-nine sash were replaced in the latter part of the nineteenth century—probably about 1870—with large-pane (13 5/8" by 34"), two-over-two sash.

The second-story fenestration pattern has been altered as the piazza was reduced to a smaller, enclosed sun porch. Much of the original pattern of doors and windows either survives or can be pieced together from existing evidence. An original door opening in the center of the elevation survives, and retains an original, six-panel door. Like the corresponding first-story door, it was rehung to swing out as part of the 1956 work. A second original door at the east end of the second-story piazza provided access to the southeast chamber. Indeed, as originally conceived and constructed, this exterior door provided the only access to the front, right-hand room (unless a doorway had once been situated in the partition next to the now-missing chimney that divided the two east rooms). The same, odd circulation pattern held true for the first floor, a surprising detail that carries significant implications for the original plan arrangement and the use of these two rooms. On the second story, the exterior door to the southeast room was closed up in 1956 and replaced with an interior door that led to the large, abutting, central room to facilitate more conventional circulation. It seems likely that a third door was located at the north end of the piazza, but evidence for this opening has largely been obliterated by later alterations. One original window survives to the left of the central door, and two more survive on the eastern portion of the façade, corresponding to the first-floor arrangement. These openings retain ornamental cornices and early shutters, but the original nine-over-six sash have been replaced with the large-pane, two-over-two sash of the ca. 1870 period.

*Second-floor door to southeast room, converted to a blind opening in 1956.*

The window openings on both the first and second floor retain early shutters of two types. The original window openings that were protected by the piazza are fitted with solid, paneled shutters, while the more exposed windows are hung with louvered shutters. Protected from the weather

by the piazza, the solid shutters are in remarkable condition. Each shutter leaf consists of three panels, arranged vertically, with the raised field of the panel embellished with an edge molding. The stiles and rails are finihed with a federal-period molding.



*Pair of paneled shutters with original hardware. First-floor, west elevation.*

The louvered shutters bear characteristics typical of the federal period but are more vulnerable to weather. Although presumed to be original, they could prove to be skillfully executed replacements from a later period. These shutters are constructed with pinned, through-tenon joints and the louvers are boldly proportioned with angular edges, a telltale contrast with the smaller, tightly spaced louvers with rounded edges that came into favor as manufactured sash, doors and shutters replace hand-crafted work in the middle of the nineteenth century. Both types of

*Original strap hinge.*

shutters are hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with a decorative, swelled design (often seen on Pennsylvania German work, but actually a form that was once common to the English regions of the Southern colonies as well). The hinge pintles are plate-mounted and made of hand-forged wrought iron. Wrought-iron slide-bolts are mounted to the lock rail on the interior face of each shutter pair. Shutter dogs are of two-types: most are simple, wrought-iron fittings that are likely original, but some early fittings have been replaced with cast-iron ones of a shell pattern that is typical of the mid nineteenth century.

A single dormer is centered on the south pitch of the hipped roof. This dormer appears to be an early feature, but attic-framing evidence suggests it is not original and likely dates to about 1827. The dormer has a hipped roof and is fitted with a fixed, four-part louvered panel rather than glazed sash.

At cellar level, the foundation is concealed in the center bay by a set of masonry stairs that rise to the first floor of the piazza, directly in front of the principal entrance door. The stairs are flared at the bottom, tapering as they rise to the piazza deck. The fourteen stair treads are stone, set on a rendered brick base. The treads are made from a stone that is unusual for Charleston, high in mica content, somewhat prone to horizontal cleaving, and heavily weathered, but retaining traces of original tooled surfaces. A lateral barrel vault serves to reduce the mass of the masonry support, and the brickwork visible within the vault is

*The stone steps and associated wrought-iron railing are an early, and probably original feature.*

typical of the early nineteenth century. It likely dates either to original construction or to the 1820s period of work. Simple, wrought-iron handrails on both sides of the stairs are supported by square-section iron balusters set into the stone treads with lead. The rails terminate in a curtail that corresponds to the bottom stone tread.

A window and door to the east of the staircase served in the latter part of the twentieth century as the public entrance for a cellar office from which Mevers' construction business operated. Both openings have been reworked sufficiently to obscure clear evidence of original conditions. However, the right jamb of the window appears to be original and both the window and door frame are beaded. Moreover, the door frame has pinned corner joints, all signs that this work is early. The window frame retains one early iron pintle and is fitted with nine-over-nine sash that is a close match to the first-floor window openings (31" by 72½" with 9 1/8" by 11 1/8" panes). It seems likely that a smaller, original cellar window opening—fitted with a wood frame and a solid batten shutter—was eventually replaced with a larger opening fitted with nine-over-nine sash salvaged from the first floor.

To the left or west of the piazza staircase, the house foundation is set back to correspond with the back wall of the piazza, and the outer edge of the piazza is supported on brick piers. Mevers filled in the open area under the piazza with plate glass windows and the resulting interior space was incorporated into the construction office. The foundation brickwork is laid in English bond and was then rendered with a thin coat of stucco, most likely as an original

treatment. Where exposed to view, the stucco was tooled with a narrow, incised joint to imitate neatly finished, fourteen-inch ashlar coursing.

The first and second-story exterior wall surfaces are finished with beaded weatherboards trimmed with beaded corner boards. The weatherboard siding is also employed on the exterior walls that form the back wall of the piazza. This siding was cut at a sash mill before being hand-planed and is secured with hand-forged, wrought-iron nails with double-struck heads. Even the siding added to enclose part of the piazza about 1827 matches this description. The cornice is difficult to see due to low light conditions and a modern gutter system, but it appears to include a complex crown mold applied to a plain fascia, with a bed mold affixed to a plain frieze below the soffit. The top course of weatherboarding tucks in behind the frieze, which is set flush with the corner boards. The main roof is covered with slate trimmed out with tile ridge caps; slate is also used for the roof and side walls of the south dormer. This material appears to date to the nineteenth century, but probably is not original, based on evidence in the attic, as described later in this essay. Cast bronze roofing nails suggest a second quarter of the nineteenth century date.

*Buried within the exterior wall of the upper floor are the remains of the original porch posts and balustrade.*

The piazza originally was constructed with six-by-six-inch support posts that were square in section up to plinth level, and then tapered into octagonal columns above lamb's-tongue chamfer stops. Many of these posts and the original balustrade survive on the western face of what was the second-story piazza, buried in the later exterior walls that were added when the upper piazza was enclosed about 1827. The balustrade is composed of molded cap rails, square-section balusters, and a plain bottom rail.

As part of the ca. 1827 work, the original posts and railings were removed entirely at first-story level and replaced with wood columns and a new balustrade. At second-story level, the old posts were retained where they could be used as structural members for the new wall, but it was necessary to chop the interior faces back to accommodate the depth required for the new wall. The balustrade became extraneous, but was left in place, and new

*The original chamfered columns were replaced as part of the ca. 1827 work. The new turned columns were done in the Greek revival style, as can be seen here in the moldings of the capital.*

framing was worked around the rails and balusters to receive exterior siding and interior plaster lathing. A single column and flanking lengths of new balustrade were added to support and trim the surviving section of the second-story piazza. The columns are of staved construction, with molded caps and bases typical of the Greek Doric order. The balustrade consists of a molded cap rail, turned balusters, and a plain bottom rail. A filled top-rail mortise on the outside face of the southwest column indicates at least one column has been moved or rotated in place at some point.

The ca. 1827 piazza arrangement remained largely intact until 1956, when the column and adjoining sections of balustrade at second-story level were removed and replaced with a bank of four floor-to-ceiling windows composed of triple-hung, two-light sash. A photograph taken during this work illustrates the house with the small second-story piazza still intact, and enough siding removed to reveal the concealed balustrade on the west elevation.

## East Elevation

The east elevation of the house sits back approximately twenty feet from the sidewalk. It is a symmetrical, four-bay façade, with two-over-two windows on the first and second stories, and two cellar windows in the foundation. The windows match those on the south elevation in detail. First-story openings are sized to have held nine-over-nine sash, while the second-story windows originally contained nine-over-six sash. The openings are framed with 3" wood lintels, beaded trim, and ornamental cornices, and are fitted with louvered shutters mounted on wrought-iron strap hinges and secured with wrought-iron slide bolts and hand-forged dogs. The two cellar windows do not match. The north window is the smaller of the two and retains an early, pinned wood frame with shutter pintles driven into the left jamb; one original shutter dog remains, set into the masonry wall at sill height. The south window has been enlarged by dropping the sill, as indicated by one surviving shutter dog. The dog is positioned 9½" above the present sill, but properly aligned with the sill of the north window. Both cellar openings are fitted with six-over-six sash that presumably date to 1956.

The brick foundation on the east elevation has been rendered with a thin coating of stucco. Original scored imitation ashlar coursing is evident, including splayed arches above both cellar window openings. The first and second stories are sheathed with beaded weatherboards trimmed with beaded corner boards; the cornice matches the south elevation. A large chimney originally pierced this plane of the roof, serving back-to-back fireplaces in the two east rooms of the first and second floors. In 19565 this chimney was demolished down to the

*South and east elevations. The dormer was added about 1827. The sleeping porch--created out of the original piazza ca. 1827--was made into a sun porch in 1956.*

level of the first floor and the roof was reframed and covered with slate. This change occurred because of a desire to add bathrooms and modern utilities between the east chambers. It is curious to note that the infill rafter and sheathing visible from the attic appear to date earlier than the mid-twentieth century, but is probably material salvaged from the west wing that was demolished as part of the 1956 work.

## North Elevation

The north elevation, as noted above, conforms to the north property boundary and overlooks the adjoining property. Despite the secondary significance of this elevation, it is neatly detailed and orderly, if not quite symmetrical. A chimney is offset to the right (west) of center, set within the body of the house flush with the exterior wall so that the siding and cornice can run continuous, uninterrupted by the chimney. There are three window bays at first- and second-story level to the east of the chimney and two more widely spaced window bays at each level to the west. These windows match those on the east and south elevations in every detail. Originally configured as nine-over-nine sash on the first story and nine-over-six on the second, they were later converted to large-pane, two-over-two about 1870. The windows are trimmed with beaded frames, ornamental cornices, and are fitted with louvered shutters. Three pairs of early, hand-forged shutter dogs survive, supplemented by one hand-forged S-shaped catch and a further complement of cast-iron, shell-pattern fittings.

Beaded siding and the ornamental cornice match the east elevation, but the brick foundation on this façade is plain, exposed brickwork with little evidence of rendering. The brickwork is laid in a casual version of English bond that includes

numerous bats and partial bricks and no attempt at a refined mortar joint. This could be evidence that the foundation was intended to be rendered from the start, but the few patches of stucco that survive are of indeterminate age and reveal no trace of the scribed coursing on the east elevation. The chimney shaft emerges from the roof and terminates in a corbelled cap. The chimney is rendered with modern stucco. Extensive repairs to the roof frame and replacement of roof sheathing on the west side of the chimney bay are visible from the attic and suggest a major repair, most likely linked to a chimney fall during Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Similar hurricane repairs are visible from the attic of the east wing of the Aiken-Rhett House, nearby.

### West Elevation

The west elevation has undergone several periods of change as previously described in relation to the piazza. Briefly, the original, two-story piazza wrapped around the southwest corner of this side of the house, extending about 22 feet across the 32-foot length of this elevation. The second-story piazza was enclosed across this side of the house about 1827, and the first story was reduced somewhat in length as part of a reconfigured stair and stair hall. Random-width beaded sheathing was used in period II to enclose the soffit of the stair; similar sheathing was also used for some interior wall surfaces associated with this change.

Today, there are no window openings on the first story and three symmetrically spaced windows on the second story. These windows match the rest of the house—nine-over-six sized openings converted to two-over-two sash about 1870, but in this case the current configuration includes some modifications tied to the construction and later demolition of a west wing. These changes are invisible from the exterior but can be deduced from framing and interior building fabric, and are discussed as part of the interior description. Note that originally a single window was set into the west wall of the stair hall on each floor. They were removed when the west addition was erected.

The only concession to the proximity of this elevation to the service yard is found in the brick foundation. The northern end of this foundation is continuous, while piers served to support the piazza. The brickwork of the northern wall is relatively crude and retains some stucco, although it is unclear if this is fragmentary evidence of the original treatment or repair work from a later period. The piers are more neatly laid and were probably not rendered. As noted, the survey plat of January 1956 indicates that a wing and a small porch once covered much of this elevation.

## INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

### The First Story

The original plan of the first story included four rooms—a large rectangular room approximately in the center of the house, two square rooms that shared a chimney to the east, and a small, square stair hall at the northwest corner of the house. An L-plan piazza in the southwest corner completed the rectangular form of the house. The front door opens into the central room, which is proportionally the largest first-floor room and doubtless served as the most important public space. The northeast room is directly accessible from the central room, while the southeast room was not. Instead, this room opened onto the piazza, and may also have been connected to the northeast room by a doorway that was lost when the chimney and associated features were demolished in 1956. The stair to the second floor was tightly configured in a nine-foot-square room that opens onto the west side of the central room. This plan arrangement was repeated on the second story, including even the restricted access to the southeast room.

As executed, this is a plan that is unusual and begs for a clear understanding of the original builder's intent. In the context of early nineteenth-century Charleston, several options were predominate. The most common model for a manageable but genteel house was the 'single house' that had gained widespread acceptance by the late colonial period. Indeed, the owner (most likely Edward Mortimer)

would have had to consciously resist following that model. In exterior appearance and plan, the house does not seem to share a lot in common with the single house form. Still, it does sit against the northern property line, faces south to a side garden, and all of the basic plan elements are present—a south-facing, two-story piazza, a stair hall that is intended primarily as circulation space, and possibly two public rooms on the first floor. These core elements are rearranged, however, with little concern for the rigid internal symmetry so common to single houses. And, despite the rather modest proportions of the house, there is space here for a third room on each floor, one that was restricted for private use.

A second model was available as well, one in which the public rooms were not confined to the first story, but extended as well to the second floor. This option worked best for single houses if they were three stories, so that bedchamber needs could be accommodated at the back of the second floor and the whole of the third. For wealthier builders, the same goals could be accomplished with a two-story house that was two rooms deep, a form known locally as a "double house." The usual signature for a house with second-floor entertaining rooms is evident in the height and finish of that story—it is taller than the first story, the windows are often taller, and the interior finishes are more refined. This approach to house planning was encouraged in the early nineteenth century by a growing interest in English neoclassicism, as expressed by houses such as the Blacklock House of 1800, the Joseph Manigault House of 1803, and the Nathaniel Russell House of 1807-08.

The house on Anson Street clearly did not aspire to compete with Manigault or Russell, but the very uniqueness of the plan implies the design choices were purposeful rather than random, and conventions observed elsewhere in the city can at least assist in analyzing the house. Thus, the first step is to explore the relationship of first to second story in both height and finish. If the first story was higher, this would suggest that it was the entertaining floor, with the second story dedicated to family space. Conversely, if the second story was taller and more refined, then the large central room on each floor would have served the most important public needs—a dining room on the first floor and drawing room above, with other needs met by the paired eastern rooms on each floor. This latter arrangement had gained favor in larger American cities by the late colonial period and is well represented in early nineteenth century Charleston.

Curiously, the Anson Street house defies both conventions. Instead, the two stories are exactly the same height: 9'-6" from floor to ceiling, and there is little distinguishable difference in the level of finish from first floor to second. In all likelihood, the first floor was the public floor, with the central and northeast rooms serving as drawing room and dining room, respectively, and the southeast room serving as a family parlor or a bedchamber, buffered from the public spaces by an indirect path of access. On the second story, the central room seems ill suited as a bedchamber, but would have served well as a family parlor with two bedchambers to the east, the southeast of which is also buffered by indirect access. Lastly, given the modest state of the documentary evidence for the property, it is worth raising the possibility that the house is so balanced from first to second floor because there were two primary occupants—a scenario that raises the specter of a house shared by two generations of the same family, by two siblings, or some similar association. While this seems unlikely, it is useful to include here, if only to ensure that an effort is made sometime in the future to expand the documentary record for this property.

## Central Room, First Floor

The principal entrance door opens from the piazza into a large rectangular room that measures 14' by 22', oriented with the long axis north/south. A fireplace is centered on the north wall, flanked by an original window opening on both sides; one original window opening survives on both the south and west walls. At present, two doors on the east wall open into the paired east rooms, and a single door in the west wall opens into the stair passage. However,

only the doorway to the northeast room is original. The door opening to the southeast chamber was cut through in 1956-57 and trimmed out with an original paneled door, architrave trim and hardware salvaged from the demolished partition between the two east rooms. The doorway from the central room to the stair hall (the northwest room) was enlarged about 1870 and then shifted and reduced in size in 1956-57.

The central room retains original flooring (except where patched) and some original wall and ceiling plaster. The flooring is gauged and undercut, and ranges from about 7" to 9" in width. The plaster is applied to hand-split lathing secured both with hand-forged wrought nails and early machine cut nails. A band of later, machine-sawn lathing centered about three feet above the floor is apparent on the east wall, providing evidence of an original chair board in this room that was removed about 1870. The present baseboard trim, mantel, window sash and most window trim date to the post Civil War period (ca. 1870), while much of the door trim is early nineteenth century. The bed molding of the cornice may be original, but the crown molding dates to the 1956 renovation.

On the south wall, the front door opening appears to have been enlarged as part of the first period of change about 1827. A preliminary field analysis of the paint evidence by analyst Dr. Susan Buck notes that the door trim (a single architrave with ovolo backband) is missing the first four generations of paint identified as being on other early woodwork in this room (principally the door and trim leading to the northeast room). The first layer of finish on the six-panel door is mahogany graining, the typical treatment for original doors throughout the house. The window to the west of the doorway retains original jambs and paneled shutters, while the sash and the Italianate backband date to period III of about 1870.

Originally there were two windows on the west wall that opened onto the piazza and a doorway that led into the stair hall. Both the doorway and the northernmost window were altered significantly during one or more remodelings. Only the south window opening remains intact, but with period III, ca. 1870 replacement sash and backband trim. The northernmost window on this wall appears to have survived the southern extension of the stair hall around 1827 and for a period of time thereafter this window opened into the reconfigured stair hall rather than the piazza. This anomaly was eliminated in period III when the window was removed and the opening was enclosed using circular-sawn lathing and plaster. At this time the original doorway into the stair hall was replaced by a larger opening that extended farther south along the wall, almost against the original north window jamb. A circular-sawn stud and mature, machine-cut nails that once secured the new doorway header survive as diagnostic evidence for this change. In 1956 the period III doorway was in turn replaced by a smaller opening. An early six-panel door was recycled and installed in this opening.

The two original window openings that flank the chimney on the north wall repeat the pattern found elsewhere in the room—original frames with replaced, period III sash and Italianate backbands. The projecting chimney mass retains original hand-split lathing and plaster; the mantelpiece appears to date to period III.

On the east wall, the northern opening is original while the opening to the south was cut through in 1956. The new doorway provided interior access to the southeast room, previously accessible only via an exterior door that opened from the piazza (and possibly another door in the partition with the room to its north). The north doorway is trimmed with a single architrave with an ovolo backband and bead. The paint evidence on the jambs and the raised, six-panel door matches that of the main entrance in the south wall—both doorways are missing four generations of paint. This evidence is surprising, since in all other respects the doorway appears original. Ghost evidence on the east face of this northerly door indicates that originally it was hung with hand-wrought HL hinges, later replaced with a pair of "raising" butt hinges. This is the only evidence for HL hinges in the house and the butt hinges match other

period I work.

While the southerly door opening was cut through in 1956, the door and architrave trim are early, presumably salvaged from a chimney closet that was eliminated when the eastern chimneystack was demolished. The recycled, raised six-panel door is set in an early frame, trimmed with a single architrave with ovolo backband and bead, and hung on early cast-iron raising butt hinges. The jamb has twelve generations of paint, the first of which is a medium tan in color; this trim retains a full paint chronology for the house.

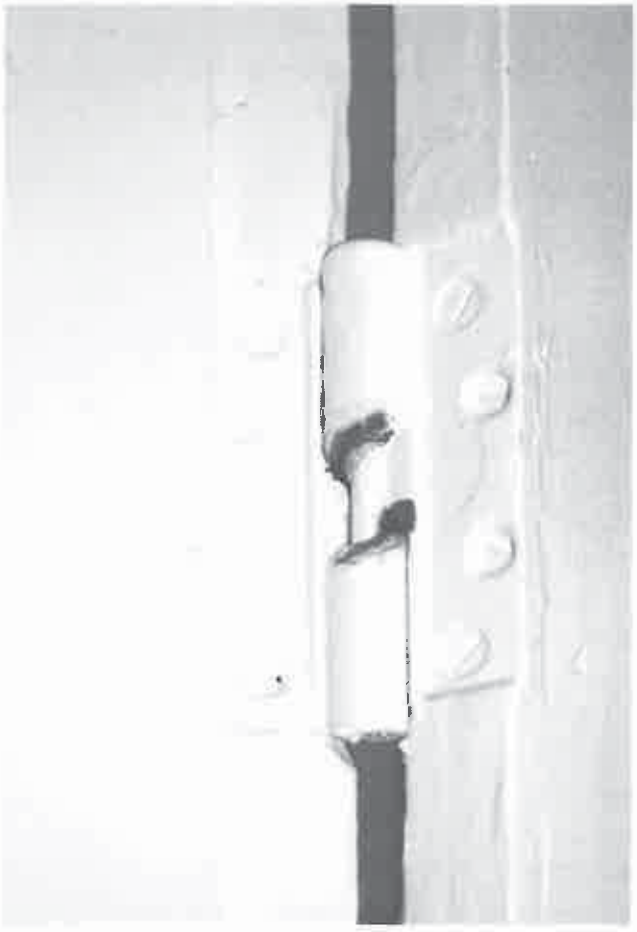
## Northeast Room, First Floor

This room measures approximately fifteen-feet square, and originally was heated by a fireplace centered on the south wall. The fireplace was enhanced about 1827 with a flanking pair of elliptically arched cupboards with paired doors. (Alternatively, if a doorway connected this room with that to its south, an elliptical cupboard was used in both adjoining rooms.) These cupboards are considered to be an early alteration due to their flat panels, federal molding profiles, and eight rather than twelve generations of paint. Although the original location of the paneled cupboards is unclear, one can speculate that they would have been used in a dining room, a function more likely for this room than the corresponding southeast room, which was not directly accessible from the important, central room. In 1956, the chimneystack was demolished down to just below first-floor level, and a small bathroom, closets and utilities were installed. The arched cupboards were retained and reinstalled, one in each of the two east rooms.

Original fabric in this room includes gauged-and-undercut flooring, wall and ceiling plaster (the latter concealed by modern acoustical tile), and baseboard on all but the south wall. Subtle clues in the patched wall plaster indicate an original chair board that was removed during period III. There are two original window openings on the north wall and another pair of original window openings on the east wall, facing Anson Street. All four windows retain original, single architraves trimmed with ovolo backbands and a bead. These architraves retain twelve generations of paint, the first layer of which is a tan color. As elsewhere, the window sash were replaced in period III.

## Southeast Room, First Floor

As noted previously, originally this room was only accessible from the piazza and possibly through the partition shared with the northeast room. In 1956, the piazza door was blocked and a new opening was cut through from the central room to create a more conventional circulation plan. Creating that new door required cutting through a structural down brace, leaving no doubt that a door opening was not initially intended in this location. The new opening was trimmed with an early single architrave with ovolo backband and bead and was fitted with a six-panel door hung on cast-iron raising butt hinges. The



trim, door and hinges were probably reused from a closet that was eliminated when the chimney was demolished in 1956—perhaps taken from the second floor.

Original fabric in the southeast room includes the flooring (except where patched around the former chimney location), and baseboard on the south, east, and parts of the west side of the room. The two window openings on both the south and east walls retain their original single architraves trimmed with ovolo backbands and a bead. A chair board was removed from this space in period III. The two-over-two window sash date to period III; the present chair board dates to 1956.

The north wall of this room was reframed after the chimneystack was removed in 1956. As in the northeast room, a pair of elliptical paneled doors and the associated architrave trim were salvaged from an early cupboard and reset to form the doors and trim for a modern closet in this room.

*Stair in its 1827 location.*

*The stair hall was expanded to the south when the stair was moved to its present location in 1827.*

## Northwest First Floor Room: Original Stair Hall

This space originally measured nine-feet square and contained a winder staircase that rose against the north and west walls to the upper floor. Around 1827, the south wall was removed and replaced with a new wall located approximately 4½ feet farther to the south, thus trading a small section of the first-floor piazza for a larger, more commodious stair hall. The new south wall was framed to accommodate a new entrance door consisting of paired two-panel doors with decorative transom above. In contrast to the fully raised panels

*Detail of window trim that was encapsulated in the expanded stair hall, but was not blocked until changes in the 1870s. Circular-sawn lath seen to the right is evidence of the abandonment of this opening. Note the oak graining on the bead that represents a finish predating the 1870s alterations.*

of period I doors, these doors have flat panels and are hung on raising butt hinges. The rectangular transom is divided by muntins that radiate from a semicircular medallion at the lower center part of the transom.

With more space and a rather fancy exterior door, the tightly configured original staircase was removed and replaced with a new one that rose in a single, straight run against the west wall of the expanded stair hall. The rectangular balusters and molded handrail may be reused pieces from the first staircase, while the turned newel post more likely dates to the period II alterations. A straight joint in the floorboards marks the location of the original south wall; flooring patches indicate the position of the original newel and supporting structural post for the stair. As noted in the description of the adjoining room, the connecting door between the center room and this hall was altered on two occasions.

One original window opening survives on the north wall of the stair hall, and framing evidence (a sill mortise) survives for another original window on the west wall. The north window was altered in period III, as original nine-over-nine sash were replaced with large-pane, two-over-two sash; the backband trim dates to 1956. The west window probably remained functional after the stair was shifted to this wall, but it was blocked at a later date, possibly as part of period III work to accommodate construction of an addition to this side of the house. As part of this construction a door was cut through the west wall; this was closed back up when the wing was demolished in 1956.

## THE SECOND STORY

### Central Room, Second Story

The original configuration of this central space was identical to the room directly below on the main floor. A fireplace on the north wall is the dominant feature of the room, while five doors provide circulation to the adjoining rooms. Original fabric in this room includes the flooring and ceiling plaster. Early plaster survives on the face and cheek walls of the chimney, but concealed under modern wallboard. Much of the original lath and plaster on the walls was removed with subsequent alterations, especially the twentieth-century remodelings. There is evidence in this room of an original chair board that was probably removed in period III and the present baseboard and cornice were installed in 1956. Two original window openings flank the projecting chimney stack. Their frames appear to be original, but the sash date to period III and the backbands date to 1956. The mantelpiece is early, dating to about 1827, but with a modern shelf.

The door in the south wall is an original opening, as indicated by the omission of a structural

down brace at this end of the wall and the inclusion of one at the west end where no opening was required. This opening is trimmed with a beaded single architrave with quirked cyma/astragal backband and fitted with a six-panel door that was re-hung in 1956 to open outwards. The window to its west is also original, framed by a single architrave with a quirked cyma backband with no astragal. As elsewhere on the second story, the original nine-over-six sash was replaced in period III with two-over-two sash.

Originally there was a single doorway on the east wall, opening into the northeast chamber. This doorway is trimmed with a beaded architrave whose backband was replaced about 1827 with a quirked cyma that terminates in an astragal. It is fitted with an original, six-panel door with fully raised panels and hung on raising butt hinges. A second doorway that opens into the southeast chamber was cut through in 1956. Prior to that time, access to the southeast chamber was from the south piazza and possibly from the chamber to its north (the partition and chimney mass that divided these two rooms were demolished as part of the 1956 work). While the southern door opening is mid-twentieth century, it is fitted with a raised, six-panel door, perhaps reused from an original closet in one of the east chambers.

The west wall has undergone the most significant change. Originally, two windows looked out onto the west piazza and to the north of these a doorway opened into the northwest stair hall. All of these apertures have been altered. It appears that the two windows continued to be exposed despite the enclosure of the second-floor piazza about 1827. By 1956 they were eliminated or altered. The window to the south was enlarged to become a new, interior doorway, and the doorway that led to the stair hall was moved to the south, a change made possible by enlarging the old stair hall as well.

## Northeast Room, Second Story

This room measures approximately fifteen-feet square and originally was heated by a fireplace centered on the south wall. In 1956, the chimney stack and south wall were demolished and a small bathroom, closets and modern ductwork were installed. Original fabric in this room includes the flooring (except for infill where the chimney was removed), and the plaster on the ceiling and the east, north, and west walls. The door opening in the west wall and two window openings on both the east and north walls are original, but the window sash date to period III. The door opening is trimmed with original jamb material and a fully-raised six-panel door set on raising butt hinges. There is evidence of an original chair board in this room; presumably this was removed as part of the work in period III. The baseboard and cornice date to 1956.

## Southeast Room, Second Story

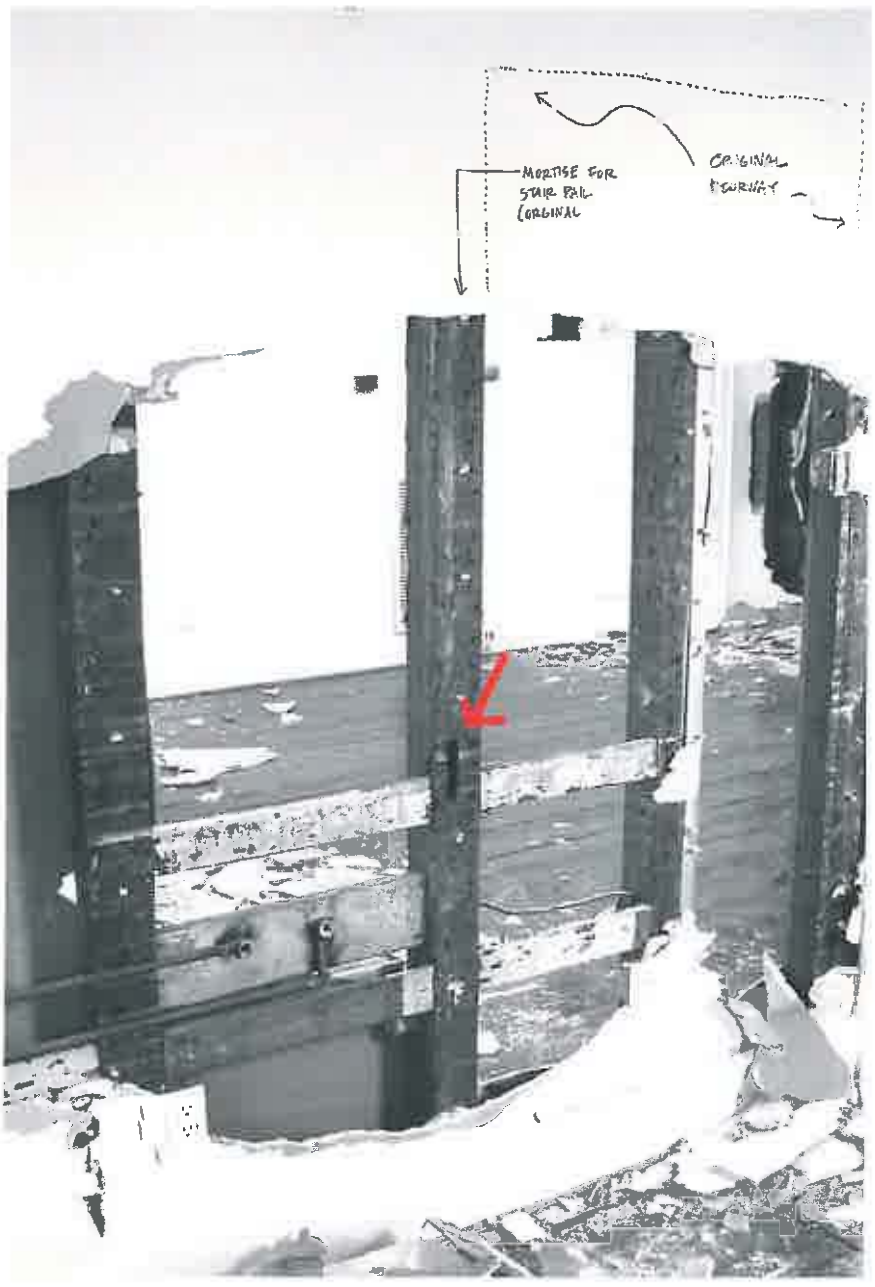
Originally, this fifteen-foot square chamber was accessible only from the piazza, and possibly through a doorway in the now-missing north partition. A fireplace on the north wall originally heated this room. In 1956 the exterior door leaf was trimmed, stripped of its hardware and re-mounted on the outside of the opening as a blind door; the interior face was sealed over with wallboard. Hinge scars that survive on the interior jamb match in size and screw placement the cast-iron raising butt hinges that survive elsewhere in the house. With the piazza door sealed off, a new doorway was cut through the west wall to provide interior circulation from the central room, and the fireplace and adjoining frame partition were demolished. A small bathroom, a closet and utility ductwork replaced the original chimney. The new door opening was trimmed with a mixture of recycled and new material. The opening is framed with a single architrave and fitted with a six-panel door with flat panels on the room face, hung on raising butt hinges. There are four original window openings, two each in the south and east walls. Each received new, large-pane two-over-two sash in period III.

Some of the wall plaster in this room is early, but it was renewed when an original chair board was removed in period III. Flooring survives relatively intact except where patched at the cut-in

door opening and around the demolished chimney. Portions of the original beaded baseboard survive.

## Northwest Room, Second Story

This space originally contained the stair and had a door that led into the central room. When the staircase and lower stair hall were reconfigured in period II, this space became an unheated chamber off the central room. The south partition wall was moved south in 1956 to conform approximately to the period II wall at first-floor level. The baseboard and cornice also date to 1956. Patched areas in the floor are evidence for the original stairwell as well as alterations to the original room configuration, and a mortise on the west face of a stud in the east wall identifies the height and location of the original stair balustrade.




*The red arrow indicates the mortise for an original stair rail. Note the indication of the original doorway between the stair hall and the central room.*

On the west wall, a window was inserted in period II just south of the original corner post. It was trimmed with a beaded single architrave and a cyma backband; the two-over-two sash date to period III. (Note that this window, when inserted, was in the newly created stair passage to the south and only became part of this space with the shifting of the south partition in 1956-57.) To the north there is evidence of an original period I window, which was later made into a connecting door for the west addition. That in turn was sealed up when the wing was demolished in 1956. The window opening on the north wall is original, fitted with period III sash and a 1956 backband.

Evidence of the original south partition can be deduced from the corner post buried in the west wall, adjacent to the inserted window. The mortise for a down brace and the cut-off tenon for that brace are buried in this post. Presumably there was a doorway in this wall. It can be deduced that its trim was reused in period II when the piazza was enclosed, undoubtedly shifted to the new wall that formed the west side of the sleeping porch. Its backband

rises to a shallow pediment over the door, just as was done over the other original doorways leading from the piazza to second-floor rooms. Paint analysis on one of these openings demonstrates this to be an original feature of the house. However, it is likely that the doorway remained, as this provided the only possible internal route from the newly created stair passage to the rest of the second floor. It must have been retrimmed with a federal backband at this time. The doorway was finally eliminated as part of the 1956 work when another one was created between the period II stair passage and the central room.

## Southwest Second Story Room: present stair landing

Originally, this area was part of the second-story piazza that wrapped around the south and west façades of the house. The entire western portion of the second-story piazza was enclosed in period II, however, and reconfigured to serve as the arrival point for the new stair. The original chamfered posts and balustrade of the piazza were incorporated into the exterior wall, and the interior space was partitioned to create circulation from the top of the stairs to the much reduced piazza that remained intact on the south side of the house. This space now served as circulation for the upper floor. After passing through this newly created stair room/passage, one either had to go into the sleeping porch and then re-enter the body of the house, or go into the original stair hall and traverse the upper floor through the central space.

*Detail of original balustrade buried within the west wall of the southwest, second-floor room.*

The east wall of this newly created room is made up, in part, of the original weatherboarded back wall of the piazza and a newly created (that is, 1827) nine-foot extension to the south. The southern extension forms the west wall of the sleeping porch and the studs of that wall are made of sash-sawn stock. The studs were set proud of the adjoining weatherboarded wall that abuts to the north. Both the studs and weatherboards were covered with riven lath to form the base for plaster. Encapsulated within the wall is the original corner board where the back wall of the piazza turned the corner. Oddly, this trim board was mounted to the south face of the corner, whereas on the floor immediately below it was mounted to the west side. Most of the lath and plaster on this wall, as well as the associated weatherboards, were removed in 1956.

## South Piazza, Second Story

After the western part of the upper-floor piazza was enclosed about 1827, only a fourteen-foot length of the south piazza remained open. A photograph of the house taken shortly before the 1956-57 alterations indicate that the Greek Doric column, similar to the ones on the piazza on the main floor, was installed in the center point of the truncated upper-floor piazza during the ca. 1827 changes. The new function of the smaller piazza appears to have been a sleeping porch. The Greek column and balustrade were removed

during the 1956 renovations and the south piazza was enclosed with a bank of four triple-hung windows when this became a sun porch.

The west wall was created as part of the ca. 1827 enclosure of the piazza. The east (or piazza) face of the wall was sheathed using random-width, horizontal beaded boards, measuring 3" to 5" in width, and are similar to those found in the soffit of the staircase and in the stair hall extension. The paneled door dates to the 1827 phase and was a poor attempt at matching the two original doors in this space. The jamb and architrave appear to have been reused from the south wall of the northwest corner room (see discussion of the door trim in that room). The architrave of this doorway has a flat pedimented cap, an original treatment found in the other doorways that opened onto the piazza and intended to complement the window cornices.

The original beaded weatherboarding survives on the north wall, having always been the back of the piazza. The weatherboards were cut at a sash mill and are secured with hand-forged, wrought-iron nails with double-struck heads. The window is original, with original jambs, sills and cornices matching other period I work, and two-over-two replacement sash of the ca. 1870 construction phase. The doorjamb and pedimented head are original; the door leaf is discussed in the description of the central room, south wall.

Original beaded weatherboards also survive on the east wall. The door in this wall, its architrave and adjoining weatherboards have fifteen generations of paint (note that this is five generations more than on woodwork in the central room). The raised, six-panel door was originally grained; the next layer was verdigris. It has the same architrave and shallow pediment as used on the other doorways in this space. See a description of the southeast room for a discussion of the doorway on this wall.

## THE CELLAR

The cellar plan conforms to that of the first floor, with a pair of nearly equal, square rooms to the east, a larger, rectangular room in the center, and the open, L-plan space beneath the piazza wrapping around the southwest corner of the house. The cellar space that conforms to the first-floor stair passage (at the northwest corner of the house) was not treated as a separate room in the masonry construction, but instead was configured as a more sheltered continuation of the open area under the adjoining piazza. This space was partitioned in the twentieth century to form a utility room, and the open area under the piazza was enclosed with plate glass windows to create additional interior space for Mevers' construction business.

The original cellar floor was at grade, and even with a modern 3" concrete slab (added as part of the 1956 renovation). The ceiling heights at this level average about 7'-10". The exposed brick foundation walls have been extensively repointed in at least two major periods (based on mortar variation), and there is clear evidence of several alterations to the interior circulation plan. For example, there are filled door openings evident in the north and west walls of the southeast cellar room; at least one and possibly both of these were doubtless cut through in 1956 to improve internal circulation. In a later renovation, dating to the 1970s, these openings were bricked up and a passage was cut through the vaulted base of the chimney that served the two east rooms.

### Southeast Cellar Room

The southeast room measures 14'-1½" east/west by 14'-6" north/south and is interrupted by a chimney base that projects into the room on the center of the north wall. This base included an arched recess but no fireplace; the arched base for the hearth of the room above survives at ceiling level. This room had a plaster ceiling at one time, as indicated by lathing scars in the ceiling joists. However, the ceiling finish was not original, as indicated by a whitewashed finish that survives on the joists and the underside of the gauged-and-undercut flooring. The joists are hewn and pit-sawn and measure 3" by 9½"; they run in an east/west direction. The lathing scars indicate fairly

*Vaulted chimney base, east stack. A doorway was cut through the chimney base as part of twentieth-century alterations.*

uniform widths, but with enough variation to suggest they were riven and hence pre-date about 1850. It is worth noting that the vertical surfaces of the framing members that cap the masonry walls in this room have been scarred with a hatchet to receive plaster, suggesting the walls were plastered at the same time.

The door and window openings in the south wall are framed with proper wooden lintels of the period, indicating that both of these openings are original, but the jambs have been reworked, making conclusions difficult. The door in the west wall that once led out under the piazza appears to be an original opening, and the jambs of the window in the east wall reveal good evidence that this original opening was made deeper, confirming evidence found on the exterior face.

## Northeast Cellar Room

The northeast room is virtually identical in size to the southeast room, measuring 14'-1½ east/west by 14'-3" north/south. The ceiling joists in this room also run east/west, and are pit-sawn from hewn stocks. They bear remnants of the early whitewashed finish found in the southeast room. The ceiling was never plastered. An arched chimney base in the center of the north wall is a continuation of the base for the southeast room; the brick dividing wall that separated the two arches was cut through in the 1970s. As part of this change, the door immediately to the west of the chimney base was filled in, creating a new, barrel-vaulted passageway between the (southeast) reception room and the office in the northeast room. The door in the west wall of the northeast room is 4'-3" wide and might be construed as having been enlarged, but the jambs appear to be original, particularly as viewed from the west side. The window opening in the east wall is original, with twentieth-century sash. A small bathroom has been added in the southeast corner of this room. The toilet is dated March 16, 1992, but the sink is avocado green and dated February 10, 1979, a more likely indication of the approximate date for construction of the bathroom.

## Central Cellar Room

The "central room" is the western enclosed space in the cellar. It measures 14'-2½" east/west by 21'-1½" north/south. A massive chimney is centered on the north wall, serving fireplaces in this room and the corresponding room on the first and second stories. This fireplace is clearly intended for cooking, based on its size (2'-6" deep by 5'-6" wide) and evidence in the adjacent brickwork for a domed oven, later demolished. However, the opening is formed with a small, wooden lintel (3¼" high by 4" wide) topped with a segmental brick arch. The opening is rather low for a cooking fireplace (3'-4½" high, measured to the slab), and this factor combined with the use of a small wooden lintel would suggest heavy damage to the lintel if the fireplace was used on a regular basis. This is not the case, offering evidence that the detached kitchen/laundry

*Cooking fireplace in the central cellar room. An oven was located to the east of the fireplace and was removed in the twentieth century.*

in the yard was built concurrently with or shortly after the main house. The odd relationship of the chimney that served this fireplace to the roof framing (discussed later in this report) raised the possibility that the chimney was not original. While there is some incongruity in the bonding, the chimney base is bonded into the foundation wall, and the one framing header that is accessible at ceiling level is properly tenoned and pinned through, indicating it is original. The oven evidence consists of a fragmentary section of the curving and sloping back edge of the dome, and a narrow ledge that was the back of the oven floor. The ledge is 2'-5" above the slab; filled brickwork in the chimneystack indicates the location of the filled-in oven flue.

The ceiling joists in this room match the framing elsewhere. They measure 3" by 9½", are pit sawn from hewn stock and run east/west. The joists and the underside of the gauged-and-undercut flooring are not whitewashed in this room, and lathing scars, as well as several fragments of lathing, indicate this ceiling was plastered from the start. Whereas no lathing nails survive in the joists of the southeast room, here they are numerous, and are clearly hand-forged, wrought-iron, rosehead nails. This nail evidence, combined with the lack of whitewash, indicate that this was the only room with a plaster ceiling in the first period, and that a ceiling was added to the southeast room at an early date. The latter ceiling was probably installed using machine made lathing nails (which do not have the holding power of hand-made, and therefore were easier to remove) and riven lathing. This suggests a date prior to about 1850, and may indicate the ceiling finish was added as part of the ca. 1827 work done on the first and second stories.

An original door is centered in the south wall of the central room, opening into the exposed area below the piazza. As noted, a broad door opening in the east wall provides access to the northeast room, and a filled doorway near the south end of the east wall is presumed to be one cut through in 1956 and filled in the 1970s. Two original window openings on the west wall retain the original pinned wood frames, fitted with twentieth-century twelve-light, fixed sash. Scars on the exterior face of these window frames are evidence for shutter hinges.

## Enclosed area under the Piazza

The framing for the piazza deck is visible from the space beneath it, now enclosed for office use. The one curious feature of this structure is that the piazza deck is framed to be at the same level as the interior floor level of the house, rather than a step down as is more common. However, the piazza usually projects from the building and is structurally separate, rather than being integrated into the body of the building. Thus, it may not be surprising to see the principal framing members (8" wide by 6½"

high) run the full north/south extent of the house, regardless of the distinction between interior rooms and piazza. The south section of the piazza is framed with its joists (3½" by 9") running east/west and the tongue-and-groove decking (4¾" to 5" wide) laid north/south, matching the floor framing of the interior rooms.

A diagonal "dragon" beam serves as the transition from the south section to the west section of the piazza, and on the west side, a double joist system is employed so that the decking can run east/west and shed rain water properly. The lower set of joists measure 4" wide by 4¼" high and run east/west; they support an upper set of joists that measure 3¼" wide by 3¾" high and run north/south to receive the decking. The north end of the piazza terminates with a heavy beam (5¾" wide by 7¾" high) that marks the transition back to interior space and the conventional east/west flooring joists that support the interior flooring of the stair passage. Earlier decking has survived at the north end of the piazza because of the protection offered by the later screening wall. This material measures 4¼" to 6¾" wide but shows some evidence of circular-saw marks, indicating this post-dates about 1850 and most likely is replacement material installed as part of the ca. 1870 period of work.

## THE ROOF AND ATTIC

A modern, retractable folding stair in the ceiling of the northwest room on the second floor provides access to the attic and roof. This space is floored but otherwise unfinished. A dormer on the south plane of the roof is fitted with a louvered panel to provide air circulation and minimal indirect natural light. The roof frame is almost entirely original, sheathed later in the nineteenth century for a slate roof. Late twentieth-century framing and sheathing adjacent to the west side of the north chimney most likely indicate that the upper shaft of the chimney was felled by Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and subsequently repaired.

The roof is hipped with the ridge oriented on the east/west axis, and rafters set at a pitch of 32 degrees. The ridge is approximately 7'-9" long, defined by two principal rafter pairs at each end and three common rafter pairs evenly spaced between. All five of these rafter pairs are secured at the ridge with pinned mortise-and-tenon joints and are reinforced with original collar beams, which also display pinned mortise-and-tenon joints. Hip rafters rise from the four corners of the building and are mitered and spiked to the outside face of the principal rafter pairs; the hip rafters in turn receive mitered jack rafters secured with hand-forged, double-struck nails.

The principal rafters measure 3¾" by 8" at the base and taper to 6" in depth at the ridge. The hip rafters measure 4" wide by 5½" deep at the eaves, tapering to 4½" in depth at the peak. The common and jack rafters are 3" wide by 4" deep with little or no taper. Collar beams are 3" wide and 4" deep. The principal rafters are sash-sawn, while most other framing material is pit-sawn from hewn stock.

The header for the north chimney survives intact, but does not align precisely with the chimney shaft, requiring a rather dubious framing modification. Specifically, the header runs the full width between the two principal rafters on the north face of the roof, and the ends of the header are tenoned through the rafters and pinned. The three intermediate common rafters are tenoned into the header. This is a rational and widely used framing convention, except it did not anticipate that the north chimney would not be centered on that side of the building and indeed would not quite fit within the framed opening. While the chimney mass measures just 5'-0" on the east/west axis and the header created a 7'-2" opening, the opening did not fully align with the chimney. Once construction of the chimney was well underway, this conflict became apparent, and the carpenter's solution was to cut the western principal rafter just below the header and re-support it with a short, vertical stud. While this detail is clumsy and has the appearance of a later alteration, the conflict between the chimney location and the roof frame is an original condition tied to the floor plan, and the nails used to secure the vertical stud are the same

hand-wrought, double-struck nails found elsewhere in the roof.

Evidence also survives in the east plane of the roof for the chimney that was removed in 1956-57. This masonry stack served paired fireplaces in the east rooms of the first and second stories, and was demolished down to cellar ceiling level to make room for modern bathrooms, closets, and utility needs. Framing evidence for this chimney location includes one of the two flanking common rafters, the upper of two headers, and both sections of the rafter that was interrupted by the chimney mass. The upper header is joined at its south end to the original flanking rafter; the north rafter has been replaced. While the lower header is missing, the pinned joint for this member survives in the south rafter and the lower section of the interrupted rafter retains most of the tenon that secured it to the missing header.

The roof is sheathed with random-width one-inch boards, laid edge-to-edge rather than with gaps. This material is sash sawn and could be original but more likely dates to the installation of slate roofing sometime later in the nineteenth century, possibly as part of the second period of work about 1827. Possible evidence for the original roof treatment survives on the south face of the roof where a small dormer was added. Here, several pieces of narrow stock survive that form possible evidence for an original wood shingle roof. These nailers measure 2¼" to 2¾" wide by 1" to 1 5/8" thick, are set several inches apart, and are nailed with what appear to be the same double-struck nails found in original framing. Conversely, while these pieces have the general appearance of shingle nailers, the uneven depth dimension is poorly suited for a well-laid shingle roof and they do not appear to have the requisite nail holes for an earlier generation of roofing.

The framing for the dormer indicates that it is not an original feature, but was added later in the nineteenth century and could be contemporary with the installation of the slate roof. Adding the dormer required cutting out a section of one original rafter just below the collar connection, and the dormer is framed with sash-sawn stock and mature, machine-made nails typical of the 1830s through the 1890s. This alteration was probably made concurrent with installation of the slate roof, and was fitted with a louvered panel rather than window sash to facilitate ventilating the attic space.

## THE KITCHEN/WASH HOUSE/QUARTER

This two-story brick building is located to the west of the house, oriented on an east/west axis with the north wall aligned with the north boundary of the lot. While only the exterior was examined at this time, it is possible to make some speculative assumptions about how this structure has been modified for its present use as a separate dwelling. The building presumably had a two-room plan that originally must have included a pair of chimneys centered on the north wall of each first-floor room, the east fireplace to serve a kitchen, and the west fireplace to serve a wash house or laundry. A tight winder stair was presumably centered on the north wall between the chimneys, with access from a door in the south wall. When this dependency was modified to serve as a separate dwelling or guesthouse, several changes were made. Two original doors were converted to windows and a window was changed to a doorway. The west chimney was demolished to make room for a small, modern kitchen, and the stair was shifted to the west to provide more space for a living room at the east end of the first floor.

The building measures 16 feet in width and 30 feet in length, with two rooms on each floor. As with the main house, the south elevation of the dependency is the principal façade. There are four opening on the first story and three on the second. The first-floor arrangement has been altered significantly. The original arrangement evidently consisted of doors in the east and west bays, with six-over-six windows in the two center bays. When the dependency was converted to a dwelling, both doors were transformed to windows and the west window (that is the third bay from the east) was cut down and

made into the new entrance door. The second-story openings are unchanged, and are fitted with six-over-six sash. The brickwork of the south façade is Flemish bond, neatly laid with a beak joint and queen closers at the corners. Closers also mark some door and window jambs, but not all. There is no water table; the cornice is corbelled brick, and the east and west ends are finished with parapet gables.

The east gable elevation is also neatly laid in Flemish bond. A door is centered in the first story, but this almost certainly replaces an original window. There are two original six-over-six windows at second-story level and a blocked window opening centered in the upper gable. Remnants of whitewash on this gable at first-story level, combined with a line of tar provide ghost evidence for a structure that was added to this side of the building and later demolished. Most likely, this was a one-story, shed-roofed porch, or perhaps an enclosed work or storage room.

The west gable is similar in design with a six-over-six window in the north bay of the first story, two six-over-six windows on the second story, and a blocked window opening in the upper gable. The brickwork has been extensively repointed and shutters block any view of the second-floor window jambs, but the mix of visible features raise some question as to whether all openings are original. The brickwork on this façade is Flemish bond with queen closers at the corners and the wall includes a parapet gable. The first-floor window lacks an arch and the bricks on the north jamb are cut, suggesting this may be a later opening. The south window on the second floor has a segmental brick lintel, while the north window has a flat, rowlock lintel. All three openings are fitted with iron shutter pintles driven into the left (north) jamb of the window frames.

The north elevation, as noted, faces the adjoining property, and typical of Charleston outbuildings, aligns with the side property boundary. There are no window or door openings in this elevation. The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond, but with a plainer joint than that found on the south and east sides; the cornice is corbelled brick.

## Dating evidence for 79 Anson Street

### Period I: ca. 1806

- Framing material is primarily pit sawn from hewn stock, but some sash-sawn material is mixed in. Pit saws were used through the middle of the nineteenth century and saw mills were operating by the late colonial period. In this instance, the preparation methods are useful to distinguish first period work from later periods.
- Sash-sawn siding. Saw mills were becoming more common in the Charleston area during the last quarter of the eighteenth century and routinely produced building material for the town by the early nineteenth century.
- Riven lath was used throughout, as would be expected for work predating the 1850s.
- Framing nails are hand-forged, wrought iron "clasp" nails with double-struck heads. These can be seen as early as 1766 at Fairfield Plantation on the Santee and as late as 1807-08 at the Nathaniel Russell House.
- Original lathing is secured with a mixture of hand-forged, wrought-iron nails and early machine-cut nails. Wrought nails are common into the 1810s, and later for specialized uses, but lathing is one of the first places the transition to cut nails occurs. Machine cut lathing nails show up in Charleston with regularity early in the first decade of the nineteenth century.
- The wrought-iron strap hinges with bulbous projections employed here as shutter hinges are common in eighteenth-century Southern buildings, but are seen rarely (if at all) in non-German parts of the country after about 1810.
- The original door hinges are cast-iron, raising butt hinges introduced to the region about 1800. Cast-iron butts are used in the first-period work at the Simmons-Edwards House of 1801; an early instance are the hand-forged, wrought-iron type of rising butt hinges used at Prestwould in Mecklenburg County, Virginia in the mid 1790s.
- Georgian style moldings and conventional, Georgian style raised-panel doors pass out of fashion by the early 1810s.
- Raised-panel shutters are not common after about 1810, while louvered shutters appear as early as the 1770s and 1780s and become quite common after 1800.
- Square balusters in the piazza railing and possibly the original staircase, as well as the very small, molded handrail for the main stair, are details that are common to the early nineteenth century.
- Documentary evidence indicates Daniel Legare died in 1791; his heirs sold the house to the Mortimer family in 1806. Architectural evidence favors the Mortimers as the likely builders.

### Period II: ca. 1827

- Framing material from this period is sash sawn in a mill. This technology was available over a long period of time, but in this house can be compared with the predominance of pit-sawn material in period I and circular-swan material in period III.
- Framing material is joined with machine-made cut nails, a nail type available by the late 1810s and one that dominates from the 1830s through the 1880s.
- Plaster lathing from the second period is still riven, but applied with cut rather than a mixture of cut and wrought nails.
- Interior trim from the second period employs quirked moldings, used in Charleston as early as 1806 at 54 Montagu Street, and widely used in the 1810s and '20s.
- The two-door cupboards in the east first-floor rooms have the flat panels of the late federal period rather than the fully raised panels of period I.
- The wooden posts of the piazza are replaced with staved Greek Doric columns with moldings favored from the 1820s through the 1850s; the original square-section balusters

are replaced with turned balusters consistent with the Greek columns.

- Documentary evidence is incomplete for the period 1827-1868, but a likely time for the period II work is in the years immediately after the property is sold following Edward Mortimer's death in 1827.

## Period III: ca. 1870

- Framing material from this period is circular sawn in a mill. This technology is available in Charleston by the early 1850s, but in this house can be used to distinguish work that post-dates period II.
- Framing material is joined with mature machine-made cut nails that are dominate from the 1830s through the 1890s, when they are superseded by wire nails with round heads.
- Plaster lathing from the third period is circular sawn, easily distinguished from the first two periods.
- Interior trim from the third period employs Italianate moldings, common in this particular profile from the 1850s through about 1910.
- Window sash is the large-pane, two-over-two sash that comes into fashion in Charleston after the Civil War and continues to be popular into the early twentieth century.
- Documentary evidence is also incomplete for the period 1868-1956, but the property is purchased by William May Wightman in 1868 and remains in the family until 1954. A review of the Sanborn Insurance Maps for Charleston would help illuminate more precisely when the west addition was constructed.

## Period IV and later: 1956-57 to present

- Framing material from this period is manufactured in nominal sizes with factory-planed surfaces. It is easily distinguished from the nineteenth-century material, but is more difficult to differentiate between several post-1950 episodes of work.
- Framing material is joined with manufactured wire nails with round heads. These come into use in the 1880s, are dominate by the mid 1890s, and are still in use, although with increasing variety promulgated by nail guns.
- Wall surfaces are finished with gypsum board rather than plaster. A later phase of work is distinguishable by the use of plastic sheeting applied to stud walls prior to application of the drywall. This practice gained favor in combination with blown insulation as an energy conservation measure following the oil embargo of 1973-74.
- Interior trim from this period employs standardized manufactured stock, planed with milling machinery that is prone to leave telltale chatter marks; the millwork is applied with wire finishing nails.

- Documentary evidence can be supplemented with the oral testimony of Sonny Mevers, who purchased the property in 1956 and can recall details of much of the work undertaken. One published source indicates additional work was undertaken in 1971, and physical evidence suggests further work may have occurred about 1979 and following Hurricane Hugo in 1989.