



PRESERVATION SOCIETY of CHARLESTON

—FOUNDED 1920—

36 Chapel Street

Revised 2012 SFL

Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer House

c. 1809

Guides: 1SHG, 4HGs, on 1st floor, 2HGs on 2nd floor, and 2 GG (9 total)

Flow: Enter into house, go into formal living room, then upstairs to the 2 bedrooms and the 2nd floor porch, next go back downstairs to the dining room, and through that into the kitchen. Go out the kitchen to the back garden, and then around to the front garden and exit.

House History

Locally known as being in the Plantation style, the 2 ½ story, 15-room frame house at 36 Chapel Street was built c. 1809 with classical Adamesque detail. Fronted by a two-story piazza and grand stuccoed masonry stair hidden from the street by a late 20th century formal garden, three front dormers and a hipped slate roof cap the early nineteenth century single family residence. Despite the historic integrity of 36 Chapel's street façade, the rear of the structure has gone through many alterations, and changes to the structure's architectural history are visibly noticeable from the both side and rear elevations. Both aerial and ground level views of the structure reveal differentiations between modern additions and the original structure in both scale and materials used. Despite these changes, the original center hall, double pile floor plan of nineteenth century 36 Chapel Street has been preserved, as well as its original late-Federal style elements, as the main rooms on each floor have retained original mantelpieces, wainscoting and moldings over the past two hundred years.¹

The first of several Vanderhorst family houses in the then still rural Wraggborough, 36 Chapel Street was built by Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer, physician, planter and one of the earliest investors of Chapel Street. He bought this lot from Mrs. Ann Wragg Ferguson, daughter of original land owner Joseph Wragg for whom Wraggsborough is named. Dr. Toomer began to purchase several other lots in the area over the next decades, including the land next door for which the current house of 34 Chapel was built for his son, Dr. Henry V. Toomer, c. 1835. After calling 36 Chapel Street home for over thirty

¹ "The Densmore House and Garden." *Colonial Homes*. April/May 1999. Property File, Historic Charleston Foundation.

years, the family sold the house to Charleston clerk Levy J. Moses in 1851, who lived in the house for over a decade with his wife and eight children.² In 1883, John E. Bonneau and W.E. Bonneau purchased the structure and by 1900, John E. Bonneau was residing in the structure with nine other relatives. It was the Bonneau family that began to build several tenement outbuildings on the property that slowly transitioned 36 Chapel Street into an apartment and rental complex.³ By the early 1900s, the main structure had been segmented into three different apartments and the rear of the lot was occupied by two other two-story buildings, each home to three black families.⁴ In a 1944 map of the property, almost a dozen smaller dwellings defined the rear lot.⁵ The structural character of 36 Chapel changed during this time as well, as prior to the earthquake of 1886, a three-story enclosed stair hall was constructed on the northwest corner of the home, and by 1944, it was extended to serve as a three-story full-width addition.⁶ The original single family residence remained an apartment building for most of the mid twentieth century until December of 1975 when Historic Charleston Foundation bought the property as part of a larger project to rejuvenate deteriorating uptown historic homes. At the time of their purchase, Apt. 36A, which comprised of the raised basement, was home to a family with four children.⁷ Historic Charleston Foundation removed more modern elements such as external stairs on the first and second floor front piazza, as well as deteriorating outbuildings, and restored original fabric that was lost during the structure's transition into apartments. After Hurricane Hugo, which gutted the entire first floor and basement, homeowners restored the lost elements while further extending the rear of the structure, adding yet another two-story L-shaped addition to include more rooms and a north facing piazza. The structure briefly served as a Bed and Breakfast in 1999, but since the late 1990s, has returned to a single family residence.⁸

The formal garden was shaped by the former owners and is now maintained by the current owners. Fishponds complemented by small fountains define the front, the rear and side gardens.

Room Descriptions

CENTER HALL AND STAIRS

² City directories show that Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer was living at 36 Chapel Street in 1816 through 1836; "Chapel Street in 1800s Offered Envious Location," *The News and Courier*, Oct. 21, 1968; (1861 Census); "City of Charleston, South Carolina: Chapel Street," United States Census, 1860, 1861, Ancestry.com.

³ Robert P. Stockton, "Lesser Buildings Sometimes Suffer," *The News and Courier*, May 30, 1977. Property File, Preservation Society of Charleston.

⁴ "City of Charleston, South Carolina: Chapel Street," United States Census, 1900, Ancestry.com; "Charleston, South Carolina." 1902. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Fire Company.

⁵ Correspondence, Property File, Historic Charleston Foundation; Betty and J. Francis Brenner, *The Old Codgers' Charleston Address Book*, 1990-1999. The Old Codgers Inc., 2000.

⁶ Bridgens and Allen Map, 1852. Published by Hayden Brother and Co. 1852. South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library; "Charleston, South Carolina." 1888-1955. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Fire Company.

⁷ Correspondence, Property File, Historic Charleston Foundation

⁸ "36 Chapel Street," Festival of Houses and Gardens Tour Information, Property File, Historic Charleston Foundation.

The central staircase is completely restored in the original style, with most of the woodwork intact.

DINING ROOM

- The front two rooms on each floor are original to the 1809 house
- The dining room features one of the four original mantelpieces to the house.

KITCHEN AND DEN

- The kitchen has been completely renovated by former owners.
- The den is new, designed between the years 1989-1992, and made to have a New England appearance.
- The beams are recycled, but not original to the house.
- Stained glass is by a local, South Carolina artist
- the octopus is also by a local South Carolina artist
- The baskets in the kitchen and around the house are all different baskets picked up while travelling. They chose to collect baskets as they remind them of their sweetgrass baskets back home and they love to compare them with the ones from different cultures.

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BREAKFAST ROOM

- The rear piazza looks out over the rear garden with the 3-tiered fountain.
- Original Adamesque fireplace mantel

SITTING ROOM

The sitting room has the second original mantelpiece, featuring gold painted figures. The floor was hand stenciled in this pattern by a New York designer, over the original heart of pine floors, after Historic Charleston Foundation restored the two front rooms. The wallpaper is a mural, which was obtained by the former owner and kept by the current owner.

The little cabinet originally held a door, but was shaped this way by the former owners.

SECOND FLOOR LANDING AND LIBRARY

The house features bookcases around the doors on the landing as well as a fine library. If you take a peek into the bedroom you'll see the third original mantel to the house. (The fourth is in the library).

You're free to take a peek, or if weather permits go out to the upper front piazza, to enjoy the view from there, which is really grand, thanks partially to the fact that Chapel St. is still a nice wide street and in part to the nice tall crape myrtle's in the garden.

If the next door is left open you may mention the following:

(If you take a peek through to door in the rear of the library, you'll see, past the owner's office, the upper rear piazza, and the view, which unfortunately is not as wide anymore as way back when the house was first built.)

SPECIAL NOTES:

- **GUIDES MAY USE ANY OF THE POWDER ROOMS**