

London requirements except that the window frames are not recessed. Charles-Town lagged in following this fire precaution though it was finally accepted. The Heyward-Washington House, 87 Church Street, which was built in 1770, has the window frames flush with the face of the brick wall throughout except on the second and third floor windows facing the street which are recessed. This was an early and apparently reluctant compliance. Later this precaution was adopted generally.

No. 94 Church Street was built about 1730, by Thomas Bee. Its former coating of stucco has been carefully removed from the street front disclosing a facade of brick laid in Flemish bond. The cornice under the eaves consists of crown and bead mouldings of moulded brick with a dentil course between of alternate projecting and receding row lock brick. The window frames are of solid timbers set almost flush with the brickwork. At the window heads on the first and second floors there are segmental relieving arches of row lock brick with the spandrel between arch and window frame filled in with brick clipped to fill the space. On the first and second floors the window sash are glazed with nine lights over nine and on the third floor the sash are six over six lights. On the second floor under the central window a wrought iron balcony has been added and the window extended to the floor and the guillotine sash replaced by a French window with large panes of glass, disturbing the scale established by the smaller panes.

Although this is the oldest of these three neighboring houses its piazzas on the first and second floors are the latest to be added, evidently in Greek Revival times in the eighteen forties. The roof is of slate with clay tile over the hips and ridges. There is one dormer on the east slope of the roof.

This building is important historically which is explained on the tablet facing the street.

No. 90 Church Street built some thirty years later by Thomas Legare is a further development of the single house. Here the original entrance was from the street into the front room occupied as a real estate and financial office. This door was later converted to a window but its former presence is still evident in the greater width of the flat arch over the opening. There is a family entrance to the stair hall on the south side. Dormer windows appear on the roof

providing much needed ventilation. The roof is covered with slate. When in 1926 this building underwent considerable repairs it was found that each slate was attached to the purlins by small wooden pegs worn through to mere threads by the movement of the slates under wind pressure. Probably the original roof covering was of hand split cypress shingles for it was not until 1765 that Lord Penrhyn began to develop the export trade from his Welsh quarries. However, the agreement of the commissioners with the Horlbeck brothers in 1767 for the Exchange Building specifies "Welsh Slate" for the roofing. Soon slate superceded pan tiles for roofing as a much tighter roof could be obtained thereby. Welsh slate can be readily identified by its purplish color and much of it is still to be seen on the roofs of old buildings. As ships entering the port brought comparatively light manufactured items and sailed back with heavy cargoes of deer skins, lumber and rice it was necessary for the ships on the outward bound voyage to carry considerable ballast and Welsh slate proved more profitable than cobble stones and bricks.

The eaves cornice of Thomas Legare's house is not as sophisticated as that of Robert Brewton, and is contrived with projecting courses of ordinary brick. Below the top stretchers is a row lock course of alternating projecting and recessed brick giving the effect of a denticulated cornice. This translation of a classic cornice into brick soon became standard for brick houses.

No. 92 Church, next door, has been for many years the rectory of St. Phillip's Church. It follows the general scheme of its older neighbor except that the second floor is given a loftier ceiling adding considerably to the over all height of the building.

The native merchants of Charles-Town had been wiped out financially by the disasters of the Revolution and as the commerce of the port revived a new merchant class arose composed of such men as William Blacklock from England and Nathaniel Russell from Rhode Island. These men brought new ideas, one of which was to enliven the severity of the facades of "Carolina Gray" brick with the contrast of red brick as noted at the Bishop Robert Smith House, 6 Glebe Street, 1770. Red brick appear on this building in the flat arches over the windows, in belt courses and in the

cornice under the eaves. Considerable care has been taken to point up the brickwork with narrow joints of white lime mortar. Summerson states that red brick were used for window arches in London in the "latter part of the eighteenth century". In London brick which were not red were called "gray" whether brown or yellow. In Charleston "Carolina gray brick" were a dark brown with flecks of iron as may be seen in this building. The standard size of London brick was 8-3/4" x 4-1/8" x 2-1/2" and the brick here check out very closely to these dimensions. However, the brick at No. 90 are about 1/4" shorter. As bricks were made by hand at several Cooper River Plantations, variations from standard sizes often occurred. This became evident in the restoration of the first floor of the Heyward-Washington House when search had to be made for old brick which would course and bond with existing work without changing the size of the prevailing mortar joints.

Both 90 and 92 now have piazzas on the south sides. The piazza on 92 is the earlier of the two though probably not coeval with the rest of the house. The presence of louvers in the spaces between the columns suggests an influence from the West Indies where such sun shades are prevalent to shield interiors from heat and glare. Piazzas, as differentiated from classic porticoes, were an integral part of such Pre-Revolutionary plantation houses as Middleburg, 1699, and Louisfield, 1774, where the builders were of Huguenot origins, not Carribean background. In the last decade of the eighteenth century Charleston received a considerable number of refugees from the revolution in Santo Domingo. It seems not unlikely that the adoption of the piazza as an essential part of a resident, which took place early in the nineteenth century, maybe attributed to the influence of these West Indians.

A.S.

# *Vernacular Architecture of Charleston & the Lowcountry*

**PETER LEGER HOUSE**  
**Constructed c. 1759-1760**  
90 Church Street

**ALEXANDER CHRISTIE HOUSE**  
**Constructed c. 1805**  
92 Church Street

**COOPER-BEE HOUSE**  
**Constructed c. 1760-1765;**  
94 Church Street

Numbers 90, 92, and 94 Church Street reflect the development of the single house from the mid-18th century. The clients who contracted for the three houses, Peter Leger, Alexander Christie, and John Cooper, wealthy and socially prominent individuals whose architectural aspirations defined Charleston's early town houses as a union of cosmopolitan and vernacular building traditions. While Christie and Cooper were merchants, Leger owned and operated his own cooperage. At his death in 1762, Leger resided in Bedons Alley and rented out his newly built Church Street house to Dr. Robert Wilson. The two earliest dwellings (90 and 94) Church Street) were constructed in 1759 and 1760 as three-and-a-half story, hipped-roof, center-passage plan dwellings with ground floor front commercial rooms or offices entered directly from the street. The mid-18th-century lot plan at 90 Church include a two-story quarter-kitchen, while that at 94 Church included a narrow passage behind the house providing access to the neighbors' backbuildings on the interior of the block. neither building individually retains all of its first period interior finish, but together they provide an overall impression of how early single houses were decoratively and functionally considered. The Leger House at 90 Church was provided with a fully paneled heated office or counting room. The stair in both buildings was an open-string arrangement, and in the case of the Cooper-Bee House at 94 Church finished with heavily-turned balusters, paneled soffits, and elaborately carved cornice all of which originally were covered with a tan or cream colored paint. The plainest ground floor spaces in both houses were the paneled dining rooms behind the entry. On the second floor, the hierarchy of rooms ran from the front best parlor overlooking the street below (and, as in the Cooper-Bee House provided with a small balcony) to a rear dining room chamber looking out onto the backbuildings and service yard. The third floor, considerably less finished than those below, contained two secondary sleeping chambers. The pattern of room use and ornamentation was continued in the Alexander Christie House at 92 Church Street. The Christie House, like its neighbors and other federal period single houses in the older parts of the city, continued the pattern of a ground floor office. While the decorative hierarchy of the Christie House is slightly less apparent than in the older neighboring houses, the pattern of finish and function is consistent with 18th-century forms. Thus, the best room remained situated in the second floor front over a less elaborately detailed office. The third most elaborate room was the dining room chamber, and the fourth was the dining room. The two plainest rooms in the main house were the third floor sleeping chambers.

The Cooper-Bee, Leger, and Christie houses were altered from the early through the mid-19th century. The Cooper-Bee House, following the subdivision of its old lot to make way for the Christie House, received all new backbuildings arranged in the familiar linear pattern. The Leger House lot was increased through the acquisition and demolition of the neighboring house to the south, and then refurbished with a new garden wall and additional backbuildings. The Cooper-Bee and Leger houses both received two-story piazzas. All three houses underwent the removal of their commercial rooms, and all three houses were physically connected to their backbuildings. This former change is particularly significant for two reasons. First, it occurs in the context of a growing segregation between work space and domestic space; and second, it reflects a topographically redefined central business district. The latter change in which individual buildings on the lot were connected with infill wings represented a two part shift in lot planning toward, first the

consolidation of household functions under a single roof and, second a growing sense of room specialization  
BLH

Heyward, author of *Porgy*, lived for a time in the service building in the rear.

#### **92 Church Street**

##### **Alexander Christie House**

*Constructed c. 1805*

This three-and-a-half story brick, Adamesque house was built by Alexander Christie, a Scot merchant. The site was formerly the garden of 94 Church St. The middle window on the first floor was originally a door, indicating that the front room was a place of business. This has been the rectory of St. Philip's Church since 1908.

#### **94 Church Street**

##### **Cooper-Bee House**

*Constructed 1760-65; various 20<sup>th</sup> century restorations*

This three-story hipped-roof house was built between 1760 and 1765 by merchant John Cooper and his wife Mary. From 1771 to 1799 it was owned by Thomas Bee, attorney, planter, delegate to the Continental Congress and U.S. Judge. After 1799, it was purchased by William Alston, a Georgetown planter, who gave it in 1805 to his son, Gov. Joseph Alston, who sold it the same year.

Joseph Alston married Theodosia Burr, daughter of Aaron Burr. She was lost at sea, inspiring many legends about her fate. Tradition says that Robert Y. Hayne, John C. Calhoun and their supporters met in the drawing room in 1830 to draft the Ordinance of Nullification, which sought unsuccessfully to establish South Carolina's right as a sovereign state, to "nullify" the unpopular Tariff Act of 1828, called by Nullifiers the "Tariff of Abominations." The house was owned by the Alexander Christie family at the time.

The property was purchased in 1856 by James B. Poyas, whose wife, using the pseudonyms "The Octogenarian Lady" and "The Ancient Lady," wrote several works on local history. The center window on the first level was originally a door, indicating commercial use of the front room. The Greek Revival piazza was added in the mid-19th century.

#### **95-99 Church Street**

##### **Charleston Improvement Corporation Houses**

*Constructed 1906-07*

This row of two-and-a-half story frame Victorian residences was built on the former site of the large brick building of the Charleston Hydraulic Cotton Press Company.

#### **100 Church Street**

##### **The Bank of the United States Building**

*Constructed c. 1785-90*

This three-story stuccoed brick building was the initial location of the Charleston branch of the first Bank of the United States, chartered in 1790. The bank moved to 80 Broad St. when that building was completed in 1804.

#### **107 Church Street**

##### **Isaac Holmes Tenement**

*Constructed c. 1740*

Isaac Holmes, a planter, built this three-and-a-half story, stuccoed brick house after the fire of 1740. Georgian paneling in the primary rooms is similar to that of other early houses, including the George Eveleigh House at 39 Church, c. 1743, and the Thomas Rose House at 59 Church, c. 1735. Holmes called himself "Isaac Holmes of Church Street" to distinguish himself from contemporaries of the same name.

#### **131 Church Street**

##### **James Huston House**

*Constructed c. 1809; restored 1929*

The James Huston House, c. 1809, a three-story brick single house, retains its street entrance, a common feature on houses used for business and residential purposes. Huston was a merchant tailor.

#### **135 Church Street**

##### **Planter's Hotel/Dock Street Theatre**

*Constructed 1809; renovated 1935-37, 2008-10*

The Dock Street Theatre is located in the old Planter's Hotel building, established by Alexander Calder and his wife who purchased the site in 1809 and added on to buildings they found on the site. The hotel was remodeled in 1855 by J. W. Gamble, who may have added the main entrance

# 'Bee House' Improperly Named

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON

The so-called Thomas Bee House at 94 Church St. should actually be called the John and Mary Cooper House, after the couple who constructed it between 1760 and 1765.

The house, which will be one of three on tour Feb. 23 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Historical Society of South Carolina, has long been attributed to Thomas Bee, who was said to have built it around 1730. A plaque on the front of the building states those "facts."

That tradition ignores the fact that the great fire of 1740 devastated that part of Church Street, and the fact that Thomas Bee did not acquire the property until 1771.

The site of the house was historically part of Lot No. 36 in the "Grand Modell of Charles Town," the original plan of the city. Lot No. 36 was acquired by William Smith the Elder, a merchant.

Smith's will, dated Aug. 13, 1710, devised a house on the site to his widow, Elizabeth, until their son Benjamin should arrive at the age of 21. The house was then in the occupation of William Sanders.

Benjamin Smith, however, died before reaching age 21, unmarried and without issue, and the property was devised to his brother, William Smith the Younger, a planter of St. Philip's Parish.

The Smith house on the site was destroyed in the 1740 fire and the site was not built upon until around 1760, the records show.

William Smith the Younger, by his will dated Dec. 30, 1741, directed that his wife, Elizabeth, and his executors, his brothers-in-law Peter Tay-

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lor and Thomas Dale, and his friends William Elliott and John Stanyarne, should sell the property.

Peter Taylor, as the surviving executor, contracted to sell the property to Mary Cooper, wife of John Cooper of Charlestown, a merchant, for 1,600 pounds, currency.

She, having money of her own, was entitled to purchase title to the property as a "sole trader" under the law, but for her protection the property was conveyed to James Parsons and William Glen, as trustees, and to her and John Cooper in January 1759.

The property, however, remained unimproved until after Oct. 25, 1760, as an agreement signed on that date makes clear.

The agreement was between the Coopers and their trustees, as title holders to the property, on the one part, and Ann Peacock, as owner of the property adjacent to the north, on the other part.

By the agreement, Ann Peacock was authorized to use a silver of ground along the north side of the Coopers' lot, measuring one foot, four inches in breadth, as part of a passageway to "the back part of her said House and Lands."

In return, Ann Peacock was to leave the passageway free of any "Building, Shed or Edifice whatsoever," which might prevent the opening and closing of shutters "on the Northside of any house to be hereafter Erected" on the Coopers' lot.

Also, "the Person or Persons, Tenant or Tenants that shall from time to time be in Possession of the said house, to be built as aforesaid or any other after built house ... shall always have and Enjoy ... the Cheerful light and wholesome air, which by and through the windows on the Northside of such house may or can enter."

Mary Cooper, on Oct. 31, 1765, assigned her Church Street property, along with slaves and household goods, to Parsons and Glen, directing that the real and personal property be sold to pay her debts.

Parsons and Glen conveyed the property to John Izard in July 1766 for 9,990 pounds currency, a purchase price which would indicate the presence of a substantial house.

John Izard and his wife, Isabella, sold the property in May 1771 to Thomas Bee, an attorney and planter, member of the Commons House of Assembly and subsequently a Continental congressman and federal judge.

Bee, having incurred substantial debts, had his trustees sell the property in 1799. Subsequently, it was purchased by William Alston, a prominent Georgetown planter, who in 1804 gave it to his son, Joseph Alston, a governor of South Carolina.

Joseph Alston and his wife, Theodosia, the daughter of Aaron Burr, sold it in the same year.

In 1805, the property was purchased by Alexander Christie, who built the large, Adamesque-style house, presently 92 Church St., on the site of the "office and Carriage house" of 94 Church St.

After a succession of owners, 94 Church was purchased in the 1880s by the Paul family. The Pauls sold the house in 1975 to Mr. and Mrs. T. Ashton Phillips.

The John and Mary Cooper House is three stories of brick, with a hip roof. The Charleston grey brick is laid in Flemish bond and pitted to receive stucco. The stucco on the facade was removed some years ago.

The street facade is three bays wide, with the windows on the upper level smaller than those below, in the Georgian-Palladian tradition. A cornice with dentils and a crown molding of brick continues around the building.

The center opening on the ground floor was formerly a doorway, and the ground floor was formerly a store. The residential entrance is on the south side, via the Greek Revival



(Staff Photo by Brad Nettles)

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## ... Bee House

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style piazza, an addition of the mid-19th century.

A single house in plan, the structure was extensively remodeled in the mid-19th century.

Of the original interior details, only the stairhall decorations remain intact.

The staircase retains its original carved railing, ending at the foot in a spiral, and its robust newels and turned balusters, carved wood step brackets and bands of applied wooden fretwork.

The stairhall has an elaborate

cornice of carved wood, with moldings and other classic motifs. The stairway is lighted by two round-headed windows.

Pegged construction of hand-hewn timbers is visible in the attic and the shallow basement.

Other houses on the Historical Society tour will be the Col. John Stuart House, c. 1772, at 106 Tradd St. and the Maj. Peter Bocquet House, c. 1770, at 95 Broad St. The Fireproof Building, headquarters of the Society, will also be open to members.