

THE SIMMONS-EDWARDS HOUSE

Constructed c. 1800; restoration 1992; present garden 1950
14 Legare Street

Francis Simmons, a Johns Island planter, constructed this dwelling as his townhouse in about 1800. It is one of a group of masonry, neoclassical, single houses of this decade (including 18 Meeting Street and 51 East Bay) that are related in scale, fenestration, exterior brickwork, marble detailing, woodtrim profiles, as well as interior plasterwork. During Simmons lifetime, he also owned an earlier wooden house on the site of the present garden.

At his death in 1814, his appraisers completed a room-by-room inventory listing furniture in "the back room on the first or ground floor," "the first room on the first floor" (the dining room), the "Passage way of the 1st floor," "the Drawing Room on the 2nd. Floor," "Passage on the 2d. floor," "the chamber opposite the drawing on the 2d Floor or drawing room chamber," "the small room on the 2nd floor of the Drawing room chamber," "the Back chamber on the 3rd. Floor," "the front room on the 3rd. floor," and "the back Garret."

The large brick gates with decorative wrought-iron panels were installed during the ownership of George Edwards, who acquired the houses in 1816, and bear his initials. The brickwork is one of several examples in Charleston of true English tuckpointing with the mortar tinted red to visually straighten the lines of the irregularly-shaped bricks and a white lime mortar joint added within a recess in the tinted mortar. The stone "pineapple" finials dating from the Edwards occupancy were carved to resemble Italian pinecones. Although said to have been carved in Italy, they may be the work of an Italian mason working in Philadelphia, as it is known that Charlestonians were ordering marble work from Philadelphia in this period.

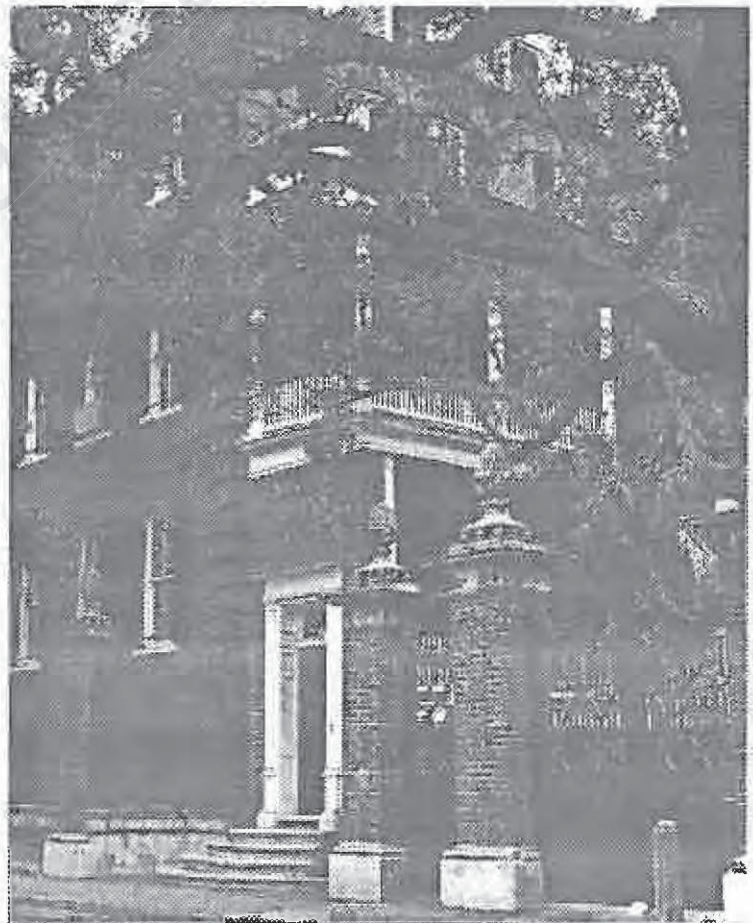
The original two story kitchen building and one and a half story carriage house survive, joined to the main house by a series of late nineteenth-century hyphens. The plan of the nineteenth century garden is unknown but the owners of the 1940 engaged Umberto Innocenti to design the current formalistic garden at the rear of the site, reusing the stone posts with spherical finials and the hexagonal "summerhouse" already in the garden.

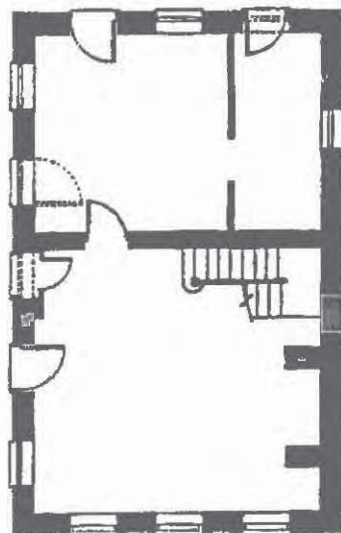
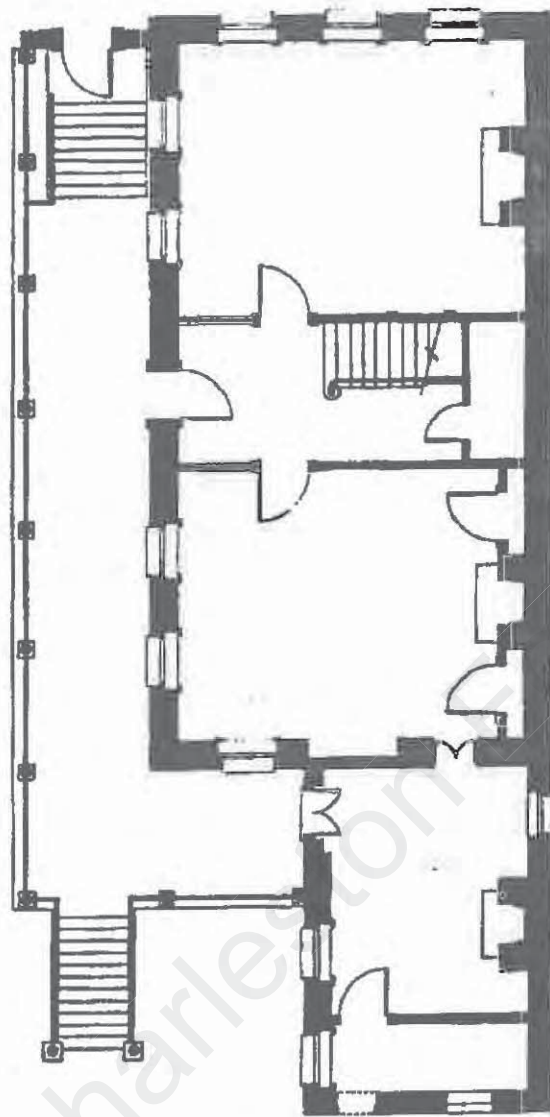
Sources:

Samuel G. Stoney, "Simmons-Edwards House," monograph for HCF.

Inventory of Francis Simmons, recorded Dec. 30, 1814, Charleston County Probate Court.

Simmons-Edwards House showing the c. 1816 gates, HCF





Simmons-Edwards House, first floorplan, Measured by Bernard Herman, U. of Del.; drawn by Gabriel Lanier