

Gibbes Tenement
371 Meeting Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC 632

HABS
SC
10-CHAR,
353-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Southeast Region
Department of the Interior
Atlanta, Georgia

HABS
SC
10-CHAR,
353-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GIBBES TENEMENT

HABS No. SC-632

Location:

371 Meeting Street
Charleston County
Charleston, South Carolina

U.S.G.S. Charleston Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17/599560/3627280

Present Owner:

The City of Charleston
100 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Present Use:

Vacant; structure to be relocated

Significance:

The Gibbes Tenement, 371 Meeting Street, is a modest residential structure, typical of those built in Charleston during the first half of the nineteenth century. While documentary evidence as to the exact date of construction is inconclusive, architectural detailing suggests that the house was built ca. 1835. Typical of the Charleston "single house," the long, one-room wide structure faces Meeting Street and extends back along the north property line. Although altered, the building is rated Group 3, "Significant," in the 1973 Historic Architecture Inventory of Charleston by Carl Feiss and Russell Wright. Group 3 is defined as: "Good architectural quality. Vernacular. Of less sophistication and refinement than 'Excellent'. Modest, appealing, curious, interesting. To be retained and protected."

PART I. HISTORY AND SETTING

Setting and Context:

371 Meeting Street is located within the Wraggsborough neighborhood of downtown Charleston. Wraggsborough derives its name from the Wragg family who owned much of this area of the city until the late eighteenth century. Although by 1800, much of the area surrounding the subject property was farmland, large residences, then considered country estates, had begun to appear throughout the neighborhood shortly after the land was subdivided after John Wragg's death in 1796. Meeting Street began to develop as a fashionable residential address, with such structures as the Joseph Manigault House, John Brownlee's House, and the Francis Withers Mansion.¹

Residential development continued along Meeting Street, between Cainoun and Ann Streets, with the infill of blocks with more modest structures. The block on which 371 Meeting Street is located was filled with structures prior to 1852, most of which were small residences similar to the present structure.² The 1840s and 1850s saw great change in this edge of Wraggsborough with the coming of the South Carolina Rail Road, bisecting the block between King and Meeting Street from John Street northward.

The character of the blocks surrounding the railroad changed after its coming and more so due to the impact of the Civil War, which destroyed much of its track and rolling stock. The railroad struggled economically in the 1870s and many of its structures were sold to manufacturing concerns. The residences along Meeting Street gradually gave way to commercial structures.³ By 1930, only half of the dozen houses along this block of Meeting Street remained and, by 1950, only 369 and 371 Meeting Street survived.⁴ Presently, 371 Meeting Street is the only residential structure on the Meeting Street side of this block which now includes two small commercial structures and several vacant lots. The historic residential character of this block has thus been completely destroyed over time and the relationship between the neighborhood and 371 Meeting Street lost.

History:

After John Wragg's death in 1796, his lands were divided among his heirs. Four lots were created on the block bounded by Meeting, Ann, King, and John Streets: one covering the entire southern half of the block was acquired by Christopher Gadsden and three on the northern half of the block were acquired by Joseph Smith, Judith Wragg and her husband James Ladson, and Mary Wragg and her husband John R. Gibbes.⁵ Gibbes established a trust in 1817 utilizing the property for the continued benefit of him, his wife, and their children, with Alexander Garden as trustee.⁶ About 1826, Garden was replaced as trustee by the Gibbes' son Arthur.⁷ On 12 May 1845, Gibbes sold the property, consisting of three present-day lots, to John McKeeghan, a blacksmith residing at 180 Meeting Street, who owned several investment properties in the area.⁸

Documentary evidence is not conclusive as to the precise date of construction of 371 Meeting Street. The deed for the transfer of the property to McKeeghan in 1845 does not mention any structures. McKeeghan purchased the property, consisting of three lots, for \$1,700. The 1852 tax records for Charleston indicate that each of the properties, by then improved with houses, was valued at \$1,200, or a total of \$3,600.⁹ Comparison of the values of houses and lots in the 1852 tax records and the relatively high 1845 acquisition cost suggests that at least one of McKeeghan's parcels was improved when he purchased them. Architectural detailing that remains in the house at 371 Meeting Street suggests that it was built between 1830 and 1835; indicating that this was the

improved property McKeeghan purchased. Arthur Gibbes, therefore, is thought to have constructed the present structure in ca. 1835.

City Directories for the period from 1841 through 1890 indicate that both Gibbes and McKeeghan utilized the property as an investment, renting the house as a tenement. The earliest occupant to be identified, in 1861, is Charles O. Martindale, a bookkeeper.¹⁰ The house, which was only slightly damaged by the 1886 earthquake having lost its chimneys, was listed as a Catholic Church dwelling in the city's earthquake damage assessment.¹¹ In 1890, the Charleston City Directory lists John and Michael Kiley, policemen, and John P. Corcoran, a foreman with F.W. Wegener & Co., at this address.¹²

After McKeeghan's death, two parcels, 369 and 371 Meeting Street, were sold by his estate's executor, Bernard O'Neill, to William Meagher, a fruit merchant, on 27 January 1891.¹³ Meagher continued to rent the property to others until it was sold to Helena C. O'Donnell in February 1909.¹⁴ Mrs. O'Donnell resided in the house only for a short while, as she died in June 1910. The house was again rented until 1912, when her heirs sold the property to Emily D. Moorer.¹⁵ Mrs. Moorer and her husband W.D., a worker at the Charleston Naval Shipyard, resided at 371 Meeting Street until 1916.¹⁶ The Moorer's estate retained ownership of the property until 1924.

The property was again rented through 1947.¹⁷ In 1924, the Real Estate Conservation Company, a real estate investment firm chartered by Walter B. Wilbur, an attorney, and Harold A. Mouzon, acquired the property.¹⁸ The house was sold to the Mortgage Loan Company in 1930 and in 1939 to Anne S. Gibbs, wife of John E. Gibbs, president of Etiwan Fertilizer Company.¹⁹ Anne Gibbs died in July 1946, leaving the property to her sons John, Coming, James, and Charles.²⁰

The property was sold by John Gibbs in December 1947 to Edwin T. Rabens.²¹ Rabens, an employee of the Charleston News and Courier, and his wife Frances, resided at 371 Meeting Street. In 1978, the Rabens' son, Edwin T. Rabens, Jr., sold the property to Helen W. Lilienthal, who again utilized it as rental property.²² It was sold by Louis G. Lilienthal to the City of Charleston in April 1988.²³

Notes:

¹The Brownlee and Withers houses were located on Meeting Street at the corners of Hutson and John, respectively; both have been demolished.

²R. P. Bridgens and Robert Allen, *An Original Map of the City of Charleston* (New York, 1852), South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

³David B. Schneider and Sarah Fick, "An Introduction to the Historical Resources of Camden Station," unpublished report, 1981, Preservation Consultants, Inc., Charleston, S.C.

⁴Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Charleston* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884, 1888, 1902, 1934, 1942, 1951), South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

⁵Kimberly Grimes and Martha Zierden, *A Hub of Human Activity: Archeological Investigations of the Visitor Reception and Transportation Center Site* [Draft, 31 October 1988] (Charleston, S.C.: The Charleston Museum, 1988), p. 2-9.

⁶Deed Book V-8, p. 218, Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, S.C.

⁷Deed Book R-11, p. 197.

⁸*Ibid.*; Charleston City Directory, 1852; Indexes, Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, S.C.

⁹Ward Books, City of Charleston, City of Charleston Archives, Charleston, S.C.

- ¹⁰ Grimes and Zierden, p. 2-12.
- ¹¹ Charleston Fire Department, Assessment of Buildings, 1886, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.
- ¹² Charleston City Directory, 1890.
- ¹³ Deed Book F-21, p. 311.
- ¹⁴ Deed Book W-213, p. 285; City Directories, 1891-1909.
- ¹⁵ Deed Book H-26, p. 140; City Directories, 1910-1912.
- ¹⁶ City Directories, 1913-1916.
- ¹⁷ City Directories, 1917-1947.
- ¹⁸ Deed Book R-31, p. 236; Deed Book K-31, p. 514.
- ¹⁹ Deed Book F-35, p. 609; Deed Book Y-40, p. 38.
- ²⁰ Deed Book D-48, p. 8.
- ²¹ Deed Book Y-48, p. 234.
- ²² Deed Book Y-115, p. 254; City Directories 1978-1987.
- ²³ Deed Book B-174, p. 311.

PART II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Gibbes Tenement, 371 Meeting Street, is a modest residential structure, typical of those built in Charleston during the first half of the nineteenth century. While documentary evidence as to the exact date of construction is inconclusive, architectural detailing suggests that the house was built ca. 1835. Typical of the Charleston "single house," the long, one-room wide structure faces Meeting Street and extends back along the north property line. Although altered, the building is rated Group 3, "Significant," in the 1973 Historic Architecture Inventory of Charleston by Carl Feiss and Russell Wright. Group 3 is defined as: "Good architectural quality. Vernacular. Of less sophistication and refinement than 'Excellent'. Modest, appealing, curious, interesting. To be retained and protected."

The building is in generally good condition, having been occupied until recently and having been regularly maintained. Some deterioration is evident in the additions and in the piazza.

The Gibbes Tenement is a two-story, three bay wide residence measuring approximately nineteen feet eleven inches by sixty-two feet four inches. The original core of the house is rectangular with a narrow two-story wing to the rear and a two-tier piazza along the south elevation. A two-story addition (ca. 1935, extended to the west ca. 1950) extends along the south elevation of the rear wing and a one-story shed extension (ca. 1950) has been added to the rear of the building. All elevations are clad in wide wood weatherboards with simple beaded cornerboards; the north elevation appears to have been re-sided with similar weatherboards ca. 1950. The structure is frame resting on brick piers, with a continuous stuccoed brick foundation wall along the east and north walls, and a wood roof truss system. The principal historic block of the house and its original rear wing have front-facing gable roofs. The piazza and side addition have a continuous shed roof that slopes from north to south and the rear addition has a shed roof sloping from east to west. All roofs are covered with composition shingles. A historic flush interior brick chimney, stuccoed below its corbelled cap, is located at the eastern end of the north elevation. A simple concrete block flue is located between the roofs of the main historic block and its historic wing, at the ridge, and an exterior brick flue, with corbelled cap, is located at the north corner of the west elevation.

The principal east facade is three bays wide with two bays of windows to the north and the piazza to the south. Windows at the first level are rectangular with replacement wooden 1/1 double hung sash (ca. 1910). The first level of the piazza is enclosed by a recent (ca. 1975) concrete block screen wall with a historic wooden entrance door with two vertical molded panels. Windows at the second level are rectangular with wooden 9/9 sash. The second level of the piazza is open with a historic column and balustrade along its east end and a louvered screen behind. The gable end has a simple close cornice with short, narrow returns and a centered double louvered attic vent.

The five eastern bays of the south elevation represent the original block of the house and contain a central entrance flanked by two rectangular 9/9 wooden sash windows at each level. The principal entrances are rectangular with three-light transoms. The first level retains an historic wooden entrance door with two horizontal raised panels. Windows at the first level have wooden raised panel shutters: the two sets of shutters to the east appear to be original and retain their historic iron strap hinges and hardware; the two shutters to the west are similar but with recent hardware. The first floor piazza deck has been replaced with a concrete deck and retains two historic columns and two segments of an historic balustrade. These columns and sections of the balustrade appear to be of a later date than the house (ca. 1850) or to have been relocated from another house. The upper level of the piazza retains four historic columns and remnants of an historic balustrade. Columns on the second level are more slender than those of the first level and are consistent with the indicated construction date. A recent deck has been added at the east end that extends southward to the adjacent building. A recent metal fire escape extends along the adjacent building, upward from east to west, and provides access to the upper level of the piazza. The two western bays of the south elevation represent an addition. The first level has two rectangular wooden horizontally divided 2/2 sash windows and the upper level has no openings.

The north elevation has four recent (ca. 1950) rectangular wooden windows with horizontally divided 2/2 sash at its first level, a small rectangular 2/2 sash window (ca. 1930) between floor levels corresponding to the interior stair landing, and a single rectangular 9/9 sash window at the second level. The first level of the west elevation represents the rear shed addition and has recent wooden horizontally divided 2/2 sash windows in its two northern bays, a rectangular entrance with a six-panel door, and a small highly-placed six-light casement window to the south. The northern bay of the second level represents the endwall of the historic two-story rear wing and has a single rectangular 6/6 window with a recent shed awning. The southern bay represents the two-story addition and has a single rectangular wooden 1/1 sash window.

The typical Charleston "single house" plan of the original structure includes a central stairhall on each level flanked by single parlors or chambers with secondary rooms to the rear in the historic wing; the front parlor/chamber is placed toward the street with the hallway and remaining rooms extending to the rear. Additions to the south and west have added kitchen, bathroom, and living spaces to the original plan.

A fireplace projects from the north wall of the principal first floor parlor and retains a Greek Revival style wooden mantelpiece with a decorative cast-iron firebox insert. The entrance to the room retains a wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. Windows and the door retain their historic architrave surrounds and a simple beaded chair rail and baseboards extend around the room. Walls and ceiling have a smooth plaster finish with an added picture molding and no cornice. The random width pine floor is covered with carpeting.

An open staircase rises at the west wall of the stairhall to an intermediate landing returning along the south wall to the second floor level. The stair retains an historic balustrade with turned newels

and straight balusters and has a closet enclosed beneath the landing. The principal entrance door has a three-light transom and retains a wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. Historic door surrounds have lost their architrave moldings. A simple beaded baseboard extends around the room. Walls have a smooth plaster finish. The ceiling is covered with fiberboard tiles and the random width pine floor is covered with carpeting (ca. 1975).

The rear parlor has a flush fireplace at its west wall with a late-Victorian style wooden mantelpiece with a mirrored overmantel. The mantelpiece, firebox, and hearth appear to have been installed ca. 1950 and the original chimney has been replaced by a concrete block flue. The entrance from the stairhall retains an historic wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. An wooden door with a large single light over two panels is located at the entrance to the entry hall of the south addition. Window and door surrounds and baseboard appear to have been installed ca. 1950. Walls and ceilings are finished with sheetrock and have plain replacement baseboards. The random width pine floor is covered with carpeting.

The secondary room at the historic rear wing retains none of its historic detailing. Walls and ceilings are finished with sheetrock and have plain replacement baseboards. The random width pine floor is covered with carpeting. A closet and shelving have been added at the east wall.

The south addition contains a narrow entry hall and kitchen. The east addition contains a small bathroom, to the south, and a living room to the north. Walls and ceilings in both rooms are finished with sheetrock and have plain baseboards and window and door surrounds.

A fireplace projects from the north wall of the principal second floor chamber and retains only the entablature of a Greek Revival style wooden mantelpiece; the firebox has been infilled with sheet metal. A closet extends to the east of the fireplace and retains an historic wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. The entrance to the room also retains an historic wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. Windows and doors retains historic architrave surrounds and a simple beaded chair rail and baseboard extend around the room. The walls have a smooth plaster finish. The ceiling is covered with fiberboard tiles and the flooring is random width pine.

A frame partition (1975c) separates the stair well from the hallway. The principal entry has a three-light transom and retains a wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. Walls are finished with sheetrock and have plain baseboards. The ceiling is covered with fiberboard tiles and the flooring is random width pine.

The rear parlor has a flush fireplace at its west wall with a late-Victorian style wooden mantelpiece with a mirrored overmantel. The firebox has been infilled with sheet metal. The entrance from the stairhall retains an historic wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. A ca. 1930 panelled wooden door accesses the bathroom in the south addition and the entrance to the kitchen in the historic rear wing retains an historic wooden door with two horizontal raised panels. Windows retain their historic architrave surrounds and a simple beaded chair rail and baseboards extend around the room. The walls have a smooth plaster finish. The ceiling is covered with fiberboard tiles and the flooring is random width pine.

The secondary room at the historic rear wing has been converted for use as a kitchen. Walls and ceilings have smooth plaster finishes and a simple beaded chair rail and baseboards extend around the room. The flooring is random width pine. A closet has been added at the east wall.

The south addition contains a bathroom. Walls and ceilings in both rooms are finished with sheetrock and have plain baseboards and window and door surrounds.

The existing heating system, consisting of gas space heaters vented through chimneys and flues, appears to have been installed ca. 1950. There is no cooling system. The plumbing system appears to have been reworked about that time to service new kitchens and baths in the rear wing and south addition. The existing lighting and electrical system appear to have been installed ca. 1955.

371 Meeting Street is located on a level site with a three foot seven inch side yard extending to an adjacent structure. A hollow tile storage shed is located at the southwest corner of the short rear lot. No historic landscaping remains.

Historic maps indicate that a small detached service structure, probably a kitchen, was once located to the rear (west) of the existing house. This building was removed between 1934 and 1951.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation has been prepared in compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SHPO), the City of Charleston, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) relevant to the proposed funding assistance by UMTA and EDA to the City for the Visitor Reception and Transportation Center (VRTC). It was determined that the proposed VRTC would have an effect upon sites included or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places: The Charleston Old and Historic District and the William Aiken House and Associated Railroad Structures (NHL). Documentation meeting the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey has been prepared by Preservation Consultants, Inc., for the the Gibbes Tenement, 371 Meeting Street, which will be relocated to as part of the renovation, pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement.

Prepared by: David B. Schneider
Title: Project Manager
Affiliation: Preservation Consultants Inc., Charleston, South Carolina
Date: 21 November 1988

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Historic Plans and Views:

No historic plans or photographs of this structure were located. The 1873 Bird's Eye View of Charleston by C. Drie includes a very small sketch perspective of the house and shows it much as it presently appears. Several maps illustrate the evolution of the structure: the 1852 Bridgens and Allen Map of Charleston, the 1882 City Block Plats, and Sanborn Company Insurance Maps of 1884, 1888, 1902, 1902 corrected through 1934, and 1942 corrected through 1951. All of these maps with the exception of the City Block Plats are on file at the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston. The Block Plats are on file at the City of Charleston Archives.

Transfers:

04/21/1988	B174-311	Louis G. Lilienthal to City of Charleston	\$345,000
11/19/1984	L141-204	Helen Lilienthal to Louis G. Lilienthal, Jr.	\$70,000
06/02/1978	Y115-254	Edwin T. Rabens, Jr. to Helen W. Lilienthal	\$32,000
12/16/1947	Y48-234	John E. Gibbs to Edwin T. Rabens	\$5,000
10/01/1947	D48-008	Coming B. Gibbs to John E. Gibbs division of property at death of Anne Gibbs	---
02/03/1939	V40-038	Mortgage Loan Co. to Anne S. Gibbs	\$1,900
08/21/1930	F35-609	Realty Conservation Co. to Mortgage Loan Co.	\$5 + consid.
04/25/1924	R31-236	Walter B. Wilbur to Realty Conservation Co.	\$10 + consid.
05/16/1912	H26-140	T. B. McSwiney to Carrie E. & Emily D. Moorer (McSwiney executor of Helena O'Donnell estate)	\$2,150
02/03/1909	W23-285	F.K. Myers (Master) to Helena C. O'Donnell	\$2,030
01/27/1891	F21-311	Bernard O'Neill to William Meagher (O'Neill executor of John McKeeghan estate)	\$2,900
05/12/1845	R11-197	Arthur S. Gibbes to John McKeeghan	\$1,700
11/22/1817	V008-218	John Reeves Gibbes to Alexander Garden Trust deed holding interest in property for benefit of John R. and Anne S. Gibbes; Garden released from trust about 1826, Alexander Gibbes (son) became trustee	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Bridgens, R. P. and Robert Allen, *An Original Map of the City of Charleston*. New York, 1852.

Charleston, S.C. City of Charleston Archives. Ward Books 1852-1856.

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Charleston, S.C. Charleston County. Records of Mesne Conveyance.

Charleston, S.C. South Carolina Historical Society. Charleston Fire Department, Assessment of Buildings, 1886.

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Drie, C. Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston. 1873.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Charleston. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884, 1888, 1902, 1934, 1942, 1951.

Secondary Sources:

Grimes, Kimberly and Martha Zierden. A Hub of Human Activity: Archeological Investigations of the Visitor Reception and Transportation Center Site [Draft, 31 October 1988]. Charleston, S.C.: The Charleston Museum, 1988.

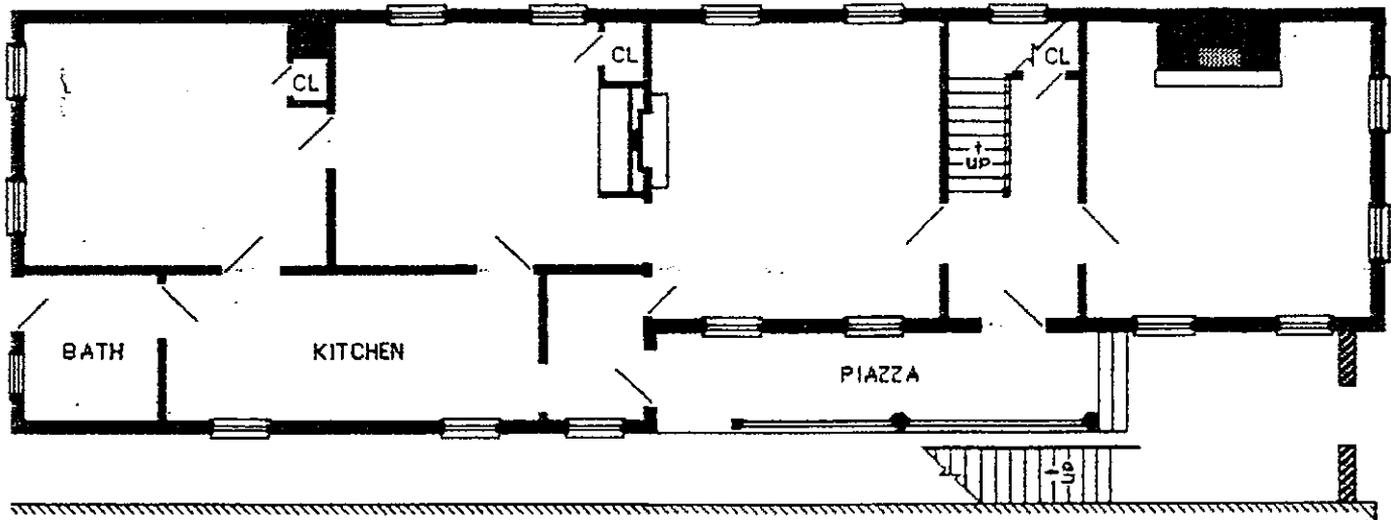
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Stockton, Robert P. The Great Shock. Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1986.

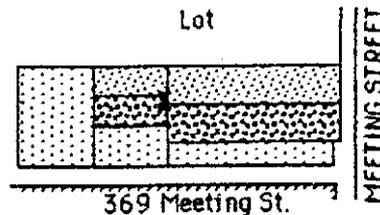
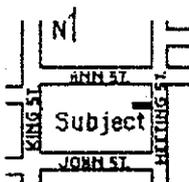
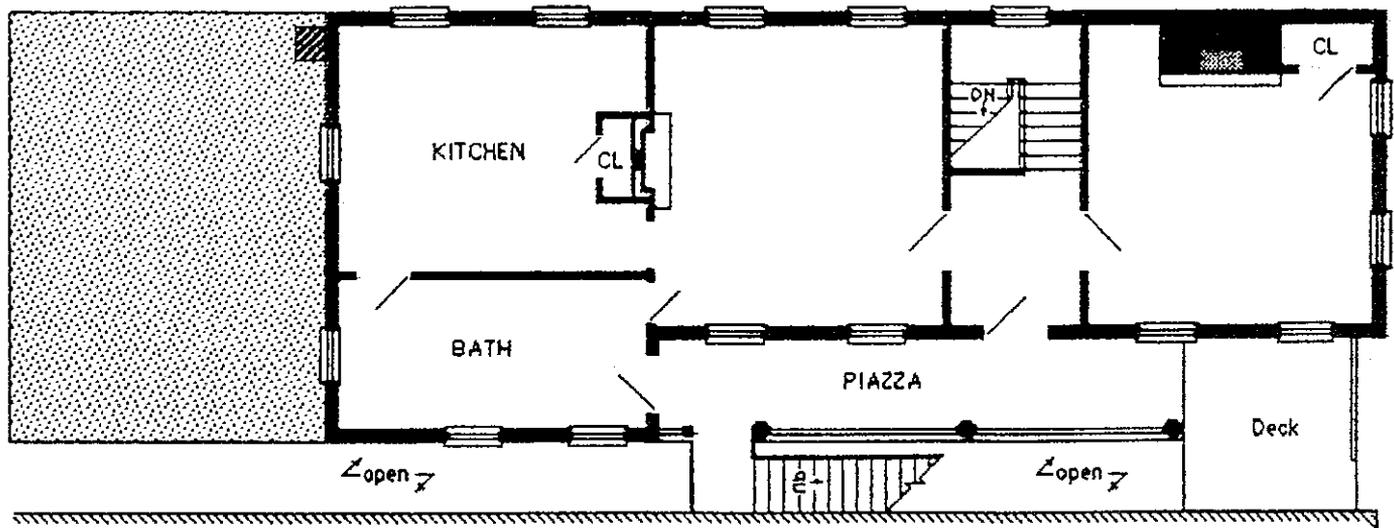
371 MEETING STREET

Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina

FIRST FLOOR PLAN (EXISTING)



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Sketch Plan
Reduction Scale Not Determined

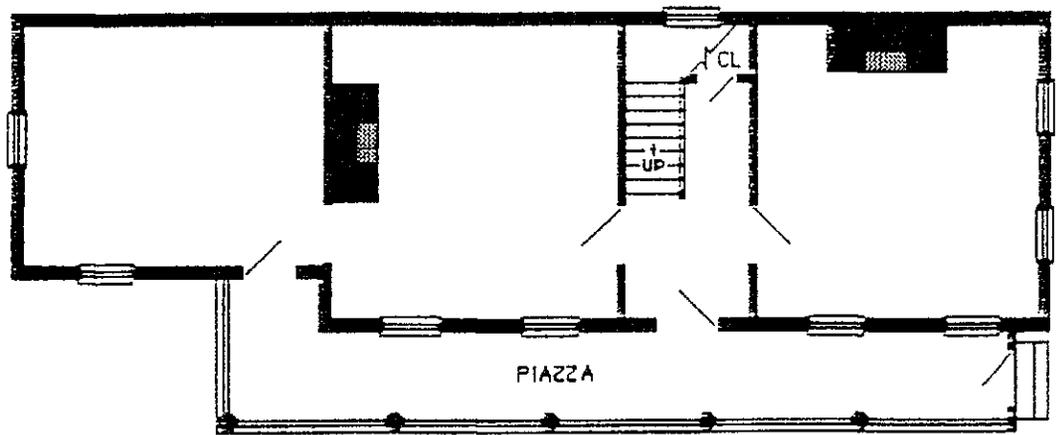
Preservation Consultants, Inc.

DBS, 11/10/88

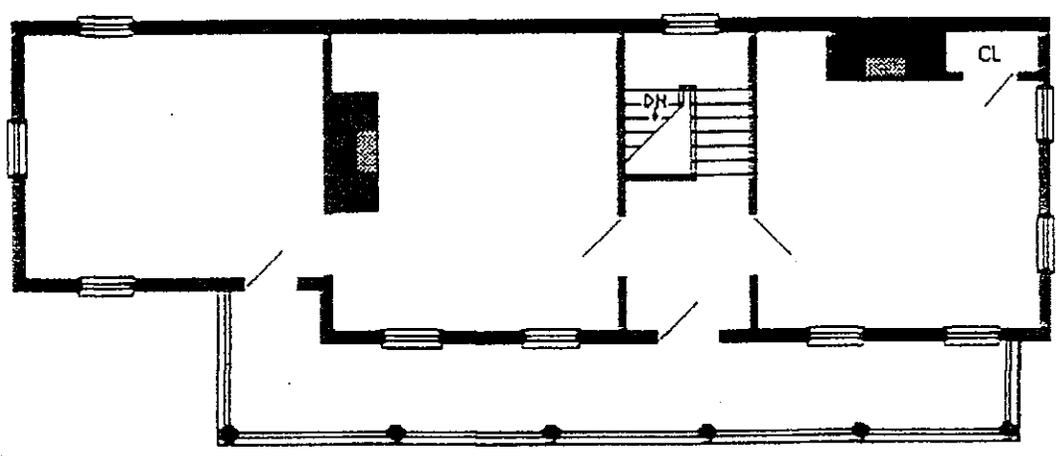
371 MEETING STREET

Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina

FIRST FLOOR PLAN (RESTORED)



SECOND FLOOR PLAN (RESTORED)



NOTE: "Restored" plan based on limited documentary research and limited site investigation

Sketch Plan
Reduction Scale Not Determined

Preservation Consultants, Inc.

DBS, 11/10/88