

'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 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 origin-

al 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 sliver 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 1830s 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

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(Staff Photo by Brad Nettles)

94 Church St., c. 1760-65

28 Jan. 1980