

Crawford-Clarkson House  
Southeast corner of Bull  
and Blanding Streets  
Columbia  
Richland County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-250

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## CRAWFORD-CLARKSON HOUSE

- Location: Southeast corner of Bull and Blanding Streets, Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina
- Present Owners: Mr. Crawford Clarkson and Mrs. Jamee Dreher, nephew and niece of the late Mies Harriat Clarkeon
- Present Occupant: Vacant, except for the two rooms on the ground and top floors rented to elderly ladies.
- Future Use: The South Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects is attempting to purchase the house, restore it, and use it for Chapter Headquarters, renting the ground floor as offices to the State Board of Architectural Examiners and using the top floor for examination rooms.
- Brief Statement of Significance: This house was the only building left standing on Blanding Street after the Burning of Columbia by William T. Sherman in 1865. It is a most unusual house in plan and detail and reflects the taste and mode of living of a prominent city family prior to the Civil War.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The house was built by John A. Crawford, the president of the Commercial Bank, as a wedding gift to his daughter, who married a Clarkson. Crawford's much larger house was diagonally across the street (on the northwest corner) and was burned in 1865. He then moved in with his daughter.
2. Date of erection: The house was built in either 1838 or 1842; family records indicate both dates. It was probably started in 1838 and finished in 1842.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers: Crawford was a widely traveled man and is said to have designed the house himself, incorporating therein features he had seen and admired in his travels. The marble mantels he brought from Italy and the original wallpaper (still in the main rooms) is supposed to have come from Paris. An unusual feature of the house is the great number of closets, some only 12" deep, that are concealed in the most unexpected places. The house was built with slave labor by Crawford.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original property included the whole block and contained greenhouse, slave houses, carriage house, and a very famous garden. Crawford was also an amateur horticulturist. The house has never been altered except by the inclusion of added bath facilities on the southeast corner. See Part II.C.1. of this report for index of original uses of rooms in the house.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Article in the March 25, 1955, issue of the newspaper The State, Columbia, South Carolina, written by Mrs. Margaret Risher Milling, a niece of the late Miss Clarkson.
2. Historic House of South Carolina by Henriette Kershaw Leiding (J. B. Lippencott Co.: 1921).
3. Information supplied to the writer by Mrs. James Dreher (nee Jennie Clarkson), who is one of the heirs anxious to turn the property over to the AIA Chapter.

Prepared by Walter F. Petty  
AIA Preservation Officer  
July 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: Good Greek-Revival, pre-Civil-War house with some unusual features.
2. Condition of fabric: In very bad state of repair.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 40' x 60', two stories on a raised basement, rectangular plan.
2. Foundations: Brick laid in common bond - three stretcher tiers to one header row.
3. Wall construction: Frame, clapboards (hand-hewn heart pine) - lapped horizontal boards, 6" to weather. Simple pilasters at corners.
4. Porches: Along the west side of the house at the first floor level is a simple frame porch, with a delicate wrought-iron railing; this railing is probably the original one. There are two small balconies on the same side of the house at the second floor level. These

are supported by iron trusses and have cast-iron railings, which do not appear to be original to the house. The ground level is slightly sunken beneath the porch.

5. Chimneys: Two plain brick chimneys.

6. Openings:

e. Doorways and doors: Front door, first floor--Double one-panel doors with simple side lights and recessed panel below and horizontal transom above. Entablature with simple rectangular pilasters; on the landing in front of this door are a pair of slender square "columns" (about 12" square) with solid panels in the lower part and glazed on all four sides in the upper part; used to display plants. Family tradition says Crawford kept these filled with blooming flowers during the winter months. The columns are capped by a projection of the entablature. Delicate, iron-supported, wood tread stairs lead to the first floor at front and rear. Rear door, first floor--Single door, side light and transom. Simple pilasters and entablature. Front door, ground floor--Simple, four-panel door with plain side lights.

b. Windows and shutters: First and second floors--Double-hung wood sash, plain trim, six lights over six lights, with louvered shutters. On the west side are large, three-part window and jib door combinations. The door is in the paneled recess below and opens when windows are raised as a jib door to give access to the porch and balconies. Ground floor--Six-light over six-light, double-hung, wood sash, with solid panel shutters. No trim.

7. Roof:

e. Shape, covering: Flat type, standing-seam metal (hand-hammered copper) roof, with a valley down the long axis to a single down spout.

b. Cornice: Simple box cornice, frame parapet.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: The following is the general floor plan of all three stories: A large hall (20' x 60') runs front to rear on the west side of the house. There is a stairway at the rear of this hall, and three rooms open off the hall on the east. Each of these rooms measures 20' x 20'. The ceiling of the main floor is 20' high.

Walter F. Pstty, AIA Preservation Officer, has furnished the following index to the original uses for which the rooms were intended:

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			<u>Ground Floor</u>	<u>Main Floor</u>	<u>Top Floor</u>
	(3)	(4)	(1) Crawford's office	Drawing room	Bed room
	(2)		(2) Family dining	Sitting room	Bed room
E	(1)		(3) Pantry & service	Stste dining	Bed room
			(4) Family living	Hall & ball room	Hall

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The above floor plan has been altered by the addition of bathroom facilities in the southeast corner of the house and by the partitioning off of a fourth room across the hall at the front of the house on the top floor.

2. Stairways: At the rear of the hall, there is a straight run stair from the ground floor to the main floor with a landing that runs across the hall; the stair continues up to the second floor. Open newel and open string; simple scroll brackets; unusual newel-railing-baluster intersections on stairs to avoid ramping the rail; turned newel and rectangular balusters.
3. Flooring: Five-inch wide, tongue and groove pine boards, stained mahogany.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls and ceilings. Some ceilings paneled with simple molded boards. Original wall paper in front and middle rooms on first floor.
5. Doorways and doors: First floor--Doors to main room have one large sunken panel; the panel is natural mahogany and rails, stiles, and trim are painted white; simple pilaster trim with rosette corner blocks. Neo-Grec decorative lead work on center of lintel. Three-light transom over middle door only. Between front and middle rooms are double doors painted white with two vertical sunken panels on each; pilaster trim consists of rosette corner blocks; cast-lead Neo-Grec trim at center of lintel. Second floor--Rooms have both solid panel and louvered doors, with three-light transoms over.
6. Trim: Interior detail is one of restrained Greek richness. Very high baseboards. Six-inch high mahogany board next to floor, surmounted by a double baseboard painted white. Many ingenious closets in house. On the first floor are tall floor-to-ceiling closets flanking the entrance door and in the rear wall at stair landing, extending the full width of the landing. There is a 3' circular opening in

the center of the main-floor hall ceiling with a railing at floor above. The front and middle rooms of the first (main) floor have plaster frieze around ceiling perimeter and corner blocks with rosettes; grapevine frieze with leaves and grapes. On the rear wall of the main-floor middle room is an entrance to the rear room and flanking it is a pair of false windows, glazed with mirrors, to give the room more length.

7. Fireplaces: Main floor--Fireplaces in front and middle rooms are of black and gray veined marble, and have Ionic pilasters and a simple shelf. Coal grates have been installed; there are black stone hearths. Second floor--White marble fireplace.
8. Hardware: Modern.
9. Lighting: Gilded chandelier in front and middle rooms of main floor. Hexagonal candle fixture. Old glazed hanging fixture in center of circular opening in hall ceiling appears to be original.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Faces northwest on city corner; small front and side yards, larger rear yard.
2. Enclosures: Low fence and box plants around yard.
3. Outbuildings: Modern garage. Original kitchen stood in rear yard.
4. Walks, driveways: Cement walkway to front door.
5. Landscaping: Grass, mature shrubs, small trees, flowers.

Prepared by James C. Massey, Architect  
National Park Service  
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