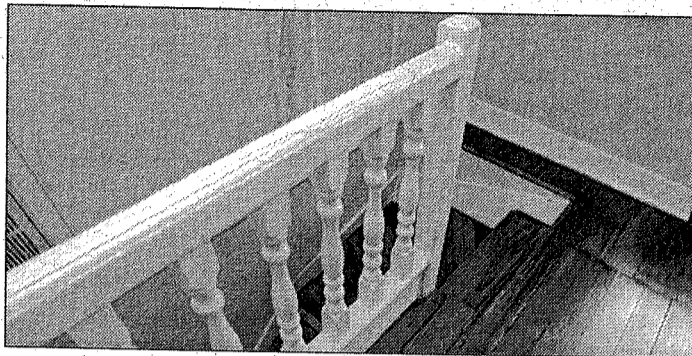


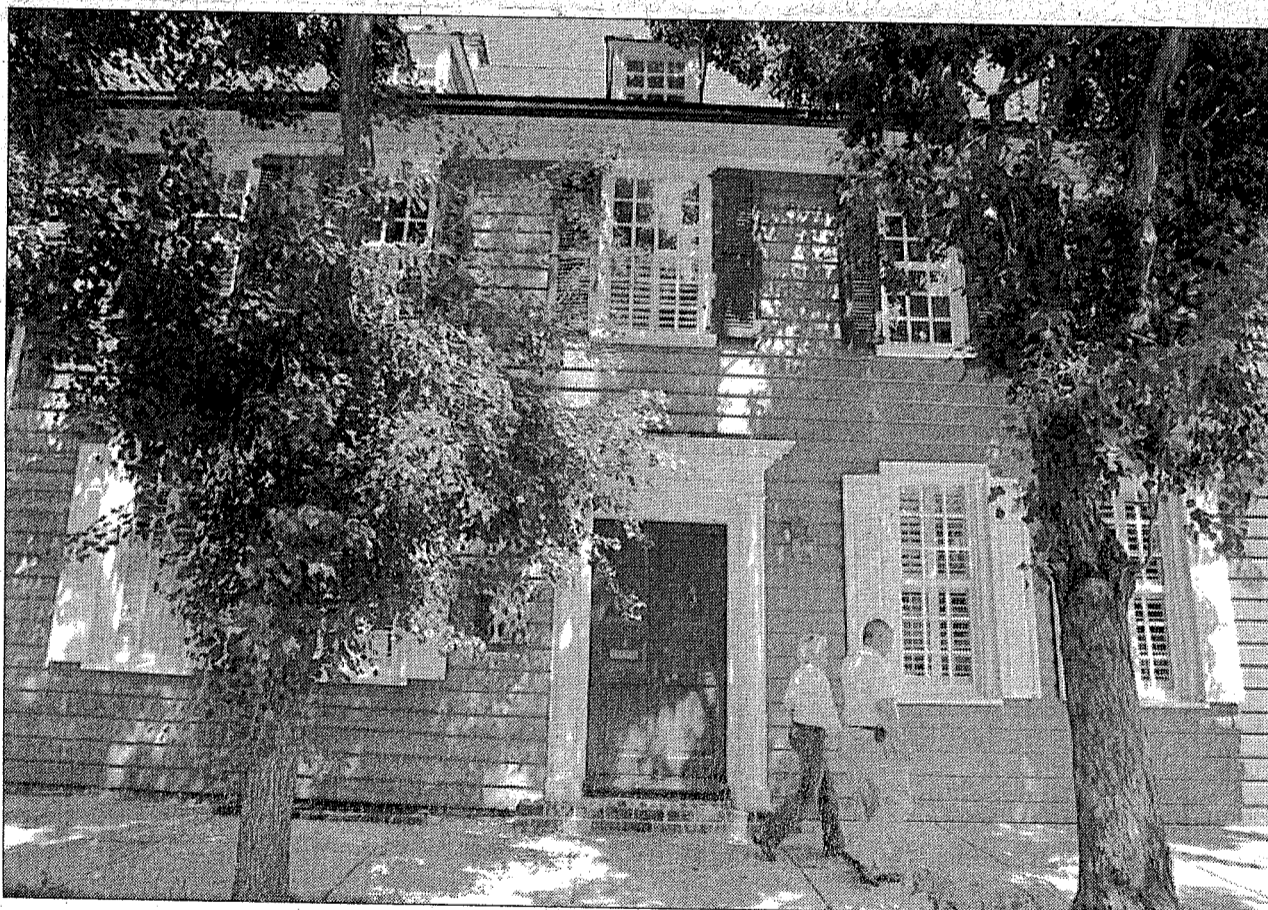
BUSINESS

Saturday, September 16, 2006

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Architectural antique reborn as law office on Broad Street



The blue house at 106 Broad St. was converted into law offices. It could be the oldest wooden house in Charleston — maybe even the state.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRACE BEAHM/STAFF

18th-century, wood-framed home may be S.C.'s oldest

BY KYLE STOCK
The Post and Courier

When the last of the cypress siding was banged onto the building at 106 Broad St., there were no U.S. towns, counties or courts. The nation and the laws that gave it form were still a lifetime away.

But those boards are still there, stubbornly shedding paint as they have for about 300 years.

And now, after more than 30 years as primarily a family residence, the historic three-story structure at the northwest corner of King Street has reverted back to a place of business.

Howell Linkous & Nettles Inc., a boutique law firm that deals in the function and structure of town and county governments, bought the blue building — known as the Lining House — in May for \$1.25 million.

The firm's three lawyers moved in

about two weeks ago from their former offices on Immigration Street. Boxes and unhung artwork clutter the rooms, and the only thing that does not smell like new paint is Mr. Jefferson, the 13-year-old golden retriever that belongs to attorney Alan Linkous.

Doing business in what may be the oldest wood-framed home in the state gives a law firm some cachet. And that's

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Law firm finds home in 18th-century house

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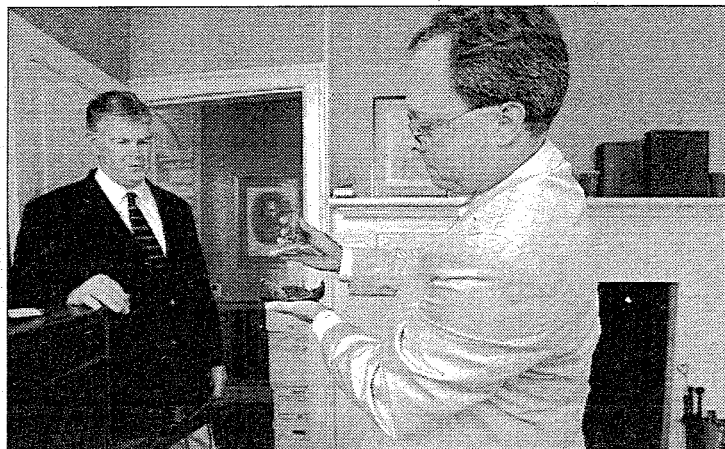
not a bad thing for Howell Linkous & Nettles, which, at five years old, is a relatively new practice.

Veteran Charleston attorney Samuel W. Howell IV, one of the partners, said most other firms that specialize in the same legal disciplines as his are larger organizations with offices of chrome and frosted glass.

"They adopt this attitude of wannabe Charlotte or Atlanta," Howell said. "I think that's completely out of character with our community and completely out of character with our clients. ... We want to practice in an environment that feels like part of the community."

When government officials stop by to sign a bond-sale contract or to close a property purchase, their business shoes will creak over massive floorboards. Their coat-tails will brush the wall paneling where small ridges mark the path of a hand-held plane. And when gathered around the boardroom, some of them may sit in and feel a depression where the foundation has settled around the timbers that once held it higher.

"We could have gone in and



GRACE BEAHM/STAFF

Alan Linkous and partner Robert Nettles look at artifacts found under the 300-year-old house that now serves as the law offices of Howell, Linkous and Nettles.

made it perfectly flat," Linkous said, "but we figured it's part of the character."

The property was likely built around 1715, according to the Preservation Society of Charleston, which bought and refurbished the building in the 1960s.

The art of commerce is nothing new to the downstairs of the Lining House, which was home to a series of drug stores through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The

first of those shops was owned by Dr. John Lining, a pharmacist who was also known for conducting some of the earliest scientific studies of weather. For a short time in the late 1700s, the Gazette of the State of South Carolina, one of the first newspapers in the state, was operated from the property.

Once purchased and refurbished by the Preservation Society at a cost of about \$100,000, it was sold as a residence to the Simons family

in the early 1970s for \$55,000.

A generation of Simons siblings agreed to sell their childhood home to the law firm earlier this year. The Preservation Society, which still has a say in any renovations, said the family sought a buyer sensitive to the home's history. They did not take issue with the fact that the bidder was a business.

"That was part of the history of the building, so it's an evolutionary kind of thing," said Cynthia Cole Jenkins, executive director of the Preservation Society. "The beauty of so many historic buildings is their ability to be adaptively used without much in the way of alterations."

Howell Linkous & Nettles would agree. At the end of a tour of the property this week, the three partners filed in from the brick courtyard, trailed by Mr. Jefferson. One of the lawyers picked up a massive iron bar and slid it into fittings on either side of the door frame. As the dog collapsed in a restful heap, the men trod across the creaky floorboards, back to their telephones and computers.

Reach **Kyle Stock** at 937-5763 or kstock@postandcourier.com.