

undated

THE WILBUR HOUSE
156 Rutledge Avenue

The house at 156 Rutledge Avenue was built around 1808 by William Johnson (1771-1834). Johnson was born on December 12, 1771 at his family's plantation on Goose Creek in St. James Parish. He received his law degree from Princeton University and studied law under Charles Coatesworth Pinckney. He married Sarah Bennett, daughter of lumberman and architect, Thomas Bennett. (Because of this tie, it is thought that perhaps Bennett had a hand in the design or decoration of the house.) Johnson is an uncle of the late Edward McCrady, a local historian.

Johnson served in the S.C. House of Representatives and as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas until 1804 when Thomas Jefferson appointed him Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. (The News and Courier article dated 6/3/68 said 1804. The Evening Post article of the same date said 1801.) He became known as the principal dissenter of the Court because of his opposition to Chief Justice John Marshall. He corresponded with Jefferson for years because of their common interest in agriculture. He was also a friend of President James Madison.

The house was built around 1808 and consisted of only 4 rooms - 2 on each floor separated by the hall and staircase. The back part of the house was added in the 1920's when Miss Aimee Wilbur was in grammar school. (She was not sure of the exact date. The newspaper said, "...in recent years." If you need an exact date I could go to the Historical Society and the fire insurance maps again.)

The house is listed in This is Charleston by Samuel Gaillard Stoney under "Buildings Considered Valuable" which is the third most important category behind "Buildings Considered Nationally Important" and "Buildings Considered Valuable to the City". Stoney said that it is considered one of the 300 most important buildings in the city.

I have copies of two articles in the News and Courier in 1967 and 1968 which deal with the gift of the house to the school. The article with most of the history is on microfilm at the library (October 7, 1940, "Do You Know Your Charleston?" by Kitty Ravenel).

Lois Gualandi