

HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

51 MEETING STREET .: CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29401

JOHN BLAKE HOUSE, c. 1800
58 South Battery
Home of Mrs. Roger P. Hanahan

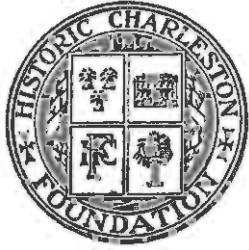
When built about 1800, this house had a sweeping view of the Ashley River. Subsequently, low lying ground has been filled in for later construction.

Edward Blake deeded the large lot at 58 South Battery to his son, Captain John Blake in 1779. A member of the Continental army, John Blake was captured when Charleston fell to the British in 1780, and was placed aboard a prison bulk in Charleston harbor. After the war, John Blake became president of the bank of South Carolina and operated a factor's office. He also served in the South Carolina General Assembly as a legislator and a senator. The South Battery lot remained vacant for two decades and Blake maintained a residence on King Street until he built the house at 58 South Battery, in which he was living in 1800, being listed there in the 1801 city directory.

John Blake left a good inventory of the house when he died in 1810, and it indicates that the south room on the second floor (Library) was the formal drawing room. It was expensively furnished with curtains, carpet, a piano, card table and chairs. The first-floor south room had books and could have been a library while the central room on the first floor (the dining room) apparently was a family sitting room and opened into the dining room (now kitchen) at the rear where the family silver was on display.

The house has withstood the major hurricanes of 1818, 1885, 1893, 1912, and 1940, the Great Earthquake of 1886, and was narrowly missed by tornadoes that lashed the lower city in 1938. Having survived these calamities, the house was recently threatened by neglect until Mrs. Roger P. Hanahan was able to purchase the property in April 1984. The restoration which followed was one of the most ambitious and thorough attempted in recent years. David Hoffman and his firm, Edgewood Builders, were the restoration contractors and their meticulous attention to detail has maintained the integrity of the house while adopting it to twentieth-century living.

The John Blake House is unusual in Charleston because of its "L" shape. It is constructed of cypress and heart pine on a brick basement that in itself, is unusual in much of the old city. However, the land along South Battery is rather low and subject to the force of winds and tides, the latter being the reason why so many houses in this area are raised above ground level.



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Today, the house looks much as it did when advertised for sale in 1816. "That commodious and pleasantly situated house and lot, No. 6 South Bay - the convenience of a landing renders it an eligible situation for a planter".