

## ...House

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built the large semi-circular piazzas on the south side of the house. According to tradition, Williams, who was chairman of the Orphan House Commission, added the oversized piazzas to accommodate ice-cream parties for the orphans.

The traditional date of the house cannot be documented, but it is known that John Edwards was the owner of the site in 1769, and that he was living at the location in 1779, when his will was written.

Edwards, having been arrested by the British occupiers of Charles Town, died in exile in Philadelphia in 1781. His will, probated in 1783, bequeathed "my House... where I now live situate on the West side of Meeting Street," to his widow, Mrs. Rebecca Edwards, during her lifetime.

The house remained in Edwards' family until 1843, when it was bought by Henry W. Conner, a local banker. The property is currently owned by the heirs of Charles R. Allen.

# House Was Constructed In 1770 — Historian

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John Edwards had his residence at 15 Meeting St. built, according to tradition, in 1770.

It has been speculated that the house was built for Edwards by William Miller and John Fullerton, master carpenters.

The speculation is based primarily on a hazy statement by Miller's grandson, William Simmons, in a letter of 1822, that Miller had built "some of the best old houses" in Charleston:

"Governor Edward's, I think, Ash's, E. Rutledge's, Dr. Ramsey's, etc."

There having been no "Governor Edwards" until the 20th century, architectural historian Béatrice St. Julien Ravenel speculates in her book, "Architects of Charleston," that Simmons may have meant Gov. Mathews' large cypress double house at Rutledge Avenue and Wentworth Street.

Others have interpreted the statement to mean the house of John Edwards who, if not governor, was a member of the Privy Council of South Carolina during the Revolution.

The other houses mentioned in Simmons' letter are believed to be the John Ashe House, built before 1784, at 32 South Battery; the Edward Rutledge House, built before 1787, at 115 Broad St.; and the Dr. David Ramsay House, built c. 1740, at 92 Broad St.

Miller and Fullerton worked together in 1766-67 on the brick single house at 39 Meeting St., as a parsonage for St. Michael's Church, and Fullerton

built as his own home the wooden single house at 15 Legare St.

The John Edwards House is generally typical of Charleston double houses built in the 1760s and 70s, though it has some unusual features.

The house is described in "The Dwelling Houses of Charleston," by Alice R. Huger Smith and Daniel E. Huger Smith, and the ironwork of the front steps is featured in Alston Deas' book, "The Early Ironwork of Charleston."

The exterior form of the house, a boxy shape with a hipped roof, a front pediment with a bull's eye window, a symmetrical facade with a central doorway, is similar in appearance to other houses of its period, including the William Gibbes House at 64 South Battery and the Charles Pinckney House at 7 Orange St., both dating from c. 1770.

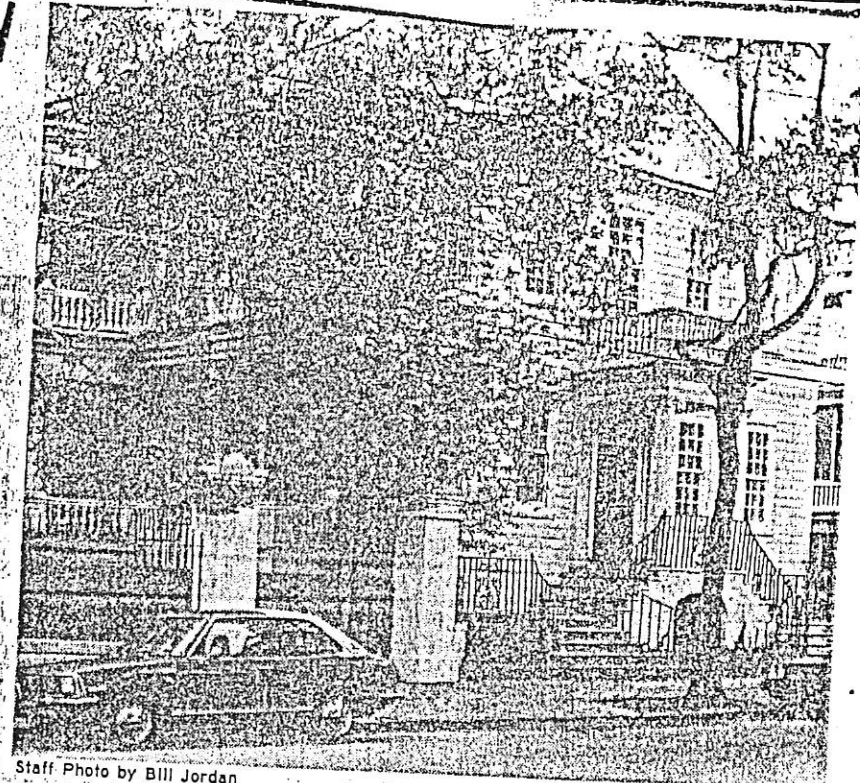
The rustication of the stuccoed brick basement front is not unique (the Gibbes House, for example, has it), but the simulated stonework of the cypress weatherboarding of the facade is unique in Charleston houses surviving from that period.

The front portico is compatible with the original style of the house, but the paneling of the portico ceiling is in the more delicate Adamesque style, indicating the portico was added after the house was built.

Possibly, the portico was added about the same time that the northwest room on the first floor was remodeled in the Adamesque style.

The cornice of the portico, featuring modillions and dentils, is a scaled down version of the house cornice.

The interior plan of the house appears to have been, originally, that of a typical Charleston double house, with four rooms on the first floor, divided by a central entrance stairhall, and four rooms on the second floor, including



Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

## Edwards' Meeting Street Home

large and small drawing rooms extending the full width of the front. The identical plan is found in the Miles Brewton House, c. 1769, at 27 King St., and the Branford-Horry House, c. 1751, at 59 Meeting St.

Sometime after 1917, when the house was described in "The Dwelling Houses of Charleston," the house was altered by the installation of a bathroom and closet in one end of the large drawing room.

Original interior details are typically Georgian features which local builders produced with the aid of pattern books such as Abraham Swan's "The British Architect," published in 1758.

The main staircase, with its spiral newels and two types of spiral balusters, is unusual in Charleston, but similar examples are found in Virginia and New England, and the designs undoubtedly came from pattern books.

Other features of the house, including the mantels, door and window surrounds, paneling, wainscoting, cornices and doors, are similar to such features found in other fine Charleston houses of the period. The interiors are fine enough to place the house in the "front rank" architecturally.

The northwest room of the first floor was remodeled about 1800 with Adamesque features including a wooden cornice with reeding, small modillions, rope molding and dentils, above a frieze of figure-eight meander.

George W. Williams, son of the man by the same name who built the so-called Calhoun Mansion, purchased the property in 1889 and subsequently

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