

Gabriel B. Browne House

32 Society Street

Constructed 1846; rehabilitated 1968; facade restored 1990.

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gebhardt

Gabriel Browne, a commercial merchant at Gibbes Wharf, built this well-detailed brick house on a raised basement in 1846. According to the city census of 1860, Browne was still the owner-occupant of the site. In exterior form, this Greek Revival style house matches those in the eastern block of Hasell Street, but it is a wider building with a more expansive interior than other Ansonborough single houses. The house was purchased by Historic Charleston Foundation in 1965, one of many homes bought by HCF through its landmark Ansonborough Rehabilitation Project, an effort to save Ansonborough homes from further deterioration and possible destruction. The house was then sold in 1968 with protective covenant restrictions that will remain in place for years to come. (Source: *The Buildings of Charleston* and “Do You Know Your Charleston” article.)

Entry

Please note the Murano crystal chandelier. It was in the house when the homeowners purchased the property. The art in the stair hall includes a John Jones depicting enslaved people working in the field and other Gullah art including a signed print by Jonathan Green. The art from the landing to the drawing rooms are works by two Charleston artists Ben Grazano(sp) and Karen Euric (sp) and various Italian artists working in Argentina.

Living Room

The homeowners have lived in a variety of countries and their furnishings reflect the various places where they have lived. The window architraves are from the period and are typical of Greek revival style. The red glass sculptures where done by Anthony Lau a Malaysian artist who lives in Singapore. The Bas relief above the mantle is a certified copy of one that is in the Duomo’s museum in Florence Italy. The clock above the mantle is a Seth Thomas.

The lady of the house is originally from Florence, Italy. The etchings on the south wall and the paintings on the west wall were done by the same Florentine artist named Gianni Caccirini. Recently a self – portrait of the artist was added to the collection of the Uffizi museum in Florence Italy.

The clear glass sculpture in the west corner is a Murano glass work and made by a member of the Seguso Family.

The desk is an Italian reproduction.

Second floor Drawing room/ Library

The chairs were designed by Philippe Starck a French architect and interior designer. The painting of the man and woman on the west wall is a J.C. Leyendecker a popular artist of the Jazz Age of the 1920’s. Note the three statues on the south wall. The middle statue is by extremely talented Russian born French artist Erte. The others are reproductions of his work. Note the antique ships on the shelf above them.

On the east wall behind the glass shelves is an unusual early 19th c. *mate*, an Argentine vessel for drinking tea. Not that it has its original silver straw. The gold watch belonged to the homeowner's great – great uncle. The overhead light was purchased in a gallery in Miami.

Dining room

The chandelier is similar to the one in the entry and is of Murano crystal. The clock is the same age of the house and features a reverse glass (egomise) painting of Andrew Jackson. The painting on the north wall was done by local artist Rhett Thurman. The painted panel is of a De Medici villa called Villa Cafaggiolo that is thirty kilometers from Florence. The family of the lady of the house had a property in the area and she spent much time there when she was growing up.

Kitchen

Note the way that the piazza was enclosed to create the eating area. The paintings were done by the home owners' sister – in – law who is a talented artist. The kitchen house functions as additional living space.

Tour route

Entry

Living room

Drawing room/Library

Stairs Dining room

Kitchen

Exit from the kitchen door to side yard. Exit through gates.

Recommended docents: 6