



129 RUTLEDGE COMPLETED BY 1842

Dwelling owned by Creticos family for 51 years. (Staff Photo by Swain)

# Hospital To Acquire 129 Rutledge

By W.H.J. THOMAS  
Staff Reporter

The Creticos Fruit Store building at the northwest corner of Rutledge and Calhoun, a neighborhood institution for more than half a century, will be purchased early this summer by the St. Francis Xavier Hospital.

One of the dwindling number of corner fruit stores and delicatessens which formerly could be found in all parts of the city, this dwelling stands today in an area rapidly losing its residential character.

This dwelling-store remains one of the earliest surviving structures in its midtown neighborhood, standing as it does near the southeast corner of old Cannonborough, one of the last of the city's suburbs to be developed in the 19th century.

The lot occupied by 129 Rutledge was early the possession of one Patrick Sweeney. He conveyed the property (then measuring about 190 feet on north and south lines and 129 on east and west) to John S. Richardson in 1818, but it

appears that Richardson left it vacant for nearly 25 years before constructing the present corner house.

It is not possible to pin down precisely the date of construction for this building. Many of the early and mid-century city directories did not list structures or residents of the area north of Calhoun Street (or Boundary Street as it was then called). The street guide of 1840-41 excludes this area as well, though it does list Richardson as living on another street which suggests he had not completed this house when this last-mentioned listing was compiled.

However, on Jan. 11, 1842, when Richardson sold this property to F. D. Richardson (relation not determined) for one dollar, the deed of transfer describes the lot as being occupied in its southeast corner by a "three story brick house" and in its southwest corner by "a wooden carriage house".

F. D. Richardson was an attorney in the firm of Smith and Richardson. As he appears in city directories only slightly before this conveyance, it may mean he was still

a young man in 1842 and perhaps the son of John S. Richardson, thus explaining the one dollar purchase cost for a very substantial home.

Except for the Victorian facade on the east side of 129 Rutledge, all the physical details of the house point to 1842 as a quite realistic date. The three-and-a-half-story house is constructed of a bright red brick (quite different from the Charleston "gray" and possibly purchased from Baltimore or Philadelphia) laid in a very neat Flemish bond.

## Do You Know Your Charleston?

Both the window proportions and the general "bulk" of the dwelling suggest the 1840s as we usually find it in Charleston. The absence of fuss and unnecessary details and the down-playing of exterior cornice supports this idea of an 1840ish time of origin.

This comes out even more strongly in the south-side piazzas which project over the sidewalk running along Calhoun. Both in scale and robust-

ness of expression, these wide piazzas with their unfluted, monumental Doric columns possess the characteristic look of Charleston's modified Greek Revival.

Richardson kept the property only eight years, selling it in January, 1850, to D. M. Lafar for \$7,000. By this date portions of the lot west and north had been cut away, and Lafar purchased a lot 117 feet by 120.

Bagget's 1852 directory identifies Lafar as a cooper. The house shortly after passed to the Rev. David X. Lafar, a clergyman who after the Civil War opened the "Rev. D. X. Lafar Academy for Young Ladies" in this dwelling. It appears that he died shortly after 1890 when the house passed to his widow, Martha.

In 1900, Dr. Richard S. Kirk bought the house in a master's sale for \$6,460. During his ownership the building acquired a new tenant when L. Sinkler Gaillard became proprietor of the Auditorium Drug Store (named for the nearby Thomson Auditorium now used by the Charleston Museum.)

Kirk acquired debts amounting to \$11,105 in the form of a bond to A. Toomer Porter

M.D. who assigned it to Porter Academy. On Dec. 21, 1908, to allow for the sale of 129 Rutledge to pay this debt, Kirk transferred the property to Thomas Pinckney and David G. Dwight as trustees.

On June 9, 1909, they sold it to the Home Building Co. for \$9,750. With the limits of the lot now down to 79 feet on Rutledge and 120 on Calhoun, the house and was sold next to the Albemarle Real Estate Corp. for \$10 and "other valuable considerations" on April 23, 1915.

Peter H. Creticos purchased the property on April 21, 1920. The family operated its delicatessen business in this location from that time.

The Victorian facade of the east side may possibly date from the 1886 earthquake but perhaps is a little later. It is doubtful that the store front dates much before the Kirk purchase of 1900. The house does not seem to have had a commercial connection before that date.

A spokesman for St. Francis Hospital stated that there are no immediate plans for 129 Rutledge. The hospital presently borders the house on both north and west sides.