



**PRESERVATION
SOCIETY OF
CHARLESTON**
Established 1920

**97 Rutledge Avenue
George Gibbon House
c. 1885
Residence of Mr. Stevenson Bennett**

Revised 2013 RCK

House History

This 2½ story frame house was constructed circa 1885 over a raised foundation built of Stoney Landing brick, which was made locally in the 1880s in the area of the old Santee Canal. The building reflects the late-Italianate style and features a fine balustraded front stair leading from the street, a bracketed front gable with a semicircular headed window, and double-tiered piazza with similar brackets. The door surround and window hoods of the principle facade also exhibit this bracketed detail. The front door is surmounted by a transom and surrounded by sidelights of etched glass, and the windows on the first level of the east façade are adorned by wrought iron embellishments. Built in the side hall/double parlor plan, the house's main entry opens into a side stair hall that provides access to the primary rooms of the dwelling.

George Gibbon, a merchant from Massachusetts, constructed this house shortly before the birth of his first child and the Great Earthquake in 1886 on land acquired by his wife, Mary Winthrop.¹ The late-nineteenth century dwelling was home to the Gibbon family for more than a century, descending to his daughter Maude Gibbon, who founded the Charleston Symphony in 1919 at age 33 while living at 97 Rutledge.² After a break during the Great Depression, the Symphony was reorganized in 1936, and Gibbon, a violinist and teacher, personally collected musical scores and instruments, and housed guest artists at her Rutledge home including Spanish cellist and conductor Pablo Casals. In 1967 Gibbon began using the building as the offices of the Charleston Symphony and the building functioned similarly to a house-museum. This use continued after Ms. Gibbon's death in 1974, as the house was held in a trust for the Charleston Symphony, and the carriage house served as the organization's headquarters for several years. For the next two decades, the main residence was home to writer Maurice Cohen, who used the rooms as his studio.³

The current owner purchased the property from Gibbon's trust in 2008. After purchasing the home, the owner petitioned to the Board of Zoning Appeals to establish a second residency for the existing carriage house located on the property of 97 Rutledge. The brick building which originally served as a functional component of the larger property, was established as 97 ½ Rutledge and now exists separately from the main house of 97 Rutledge.

¹ Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Deed Book F662, 424.

² "City of Charleston, South Carolina: Rutledge Avenue," United States Census, 1920, Ancestry.com.

³ 1984, 1974 City Directory. Charleston, South Carolina. South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library; *The News and Courier* April 28, 1979, "School Budgeting Bill Runs Into Opposition," Cliff Foster.

Room Descriptions

Front Parlor & Dining Room

- Original ceiling medallion, moldings, door surrounds, and floors.
- Original stenciled mantel in parlor; original mantel with faux marbling in dining room. Bell pulls for servants visible on side of mantels.
- Original pocket doors are proof of how well constructed the house is. Both still slide with ease.
- Posters from the Charleston Symphony Orchestra on Dining Room table. One poster displays a photograph of the orchestra taken in the backyard of the house.

Butler's Pantry

- Note the water pump. The hand pump still works and is connected to the cistern below the house.
- Original floors

Back Parlor

- Untreated plaster walls.
- Note interesting wainscoting and ceiling medallion.
- Please watch your step as you exit to the piazza and down to the Carriage House.