

# John Rutledge House Inn

## History

John Rutledge House tradition (undocumented) says John Rutledge (1739-1800) built this house c. 1763 for his bride, 19-year-old Elizabeth Grimke. It is not known when Rutledge acquired the property, which he sold in 1790. Subsequent documents identify it as "formerly the residence of Mr. Rutledge." Rutledge was a member of the South Carolina Assembly, the Stamp Act Congress, the Continental Congress and the U.S. Constitutional Convention. He was President or "Dictator", of South Carolina, 1776-78, and Governor of the State, 1779-82. He was Chief Justice of South Carolina and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and served a term as Chief Justice of the U.S. , although unconfirmed by the Senate. Rutledge is buried in St . Michael's Churchyard.

Sometime after 1790, the property was acquired by Gen. John McPherson, a Revolutionary Patriot and a prominent figure on the South Carolina turf. He was among several horse breeders credited with improving the state's stock of horses and with maintaining the high standard of racing which made the South Carolina Jockey Club famous in the annals of racing at a time when it was the "sport of gentlemen." The house was sold by his family in 1836 to the Right Rev. John England, Roman Catholic Bishop of Charleston, whose executors sold it in 1843.

Ten years later it was acquired by Thomas Norman Gadsden, a real estate broker and slave trader. Gadsden, in 1853, engaged the Swedish architect, P.H. Hammarskold, to remodel the house, adding terra cotta window cornices similar to those on the Mills House Hotel, and the iron balcony, posts, curving step rail and fence. The two story brick kitchen with Gothic arched windows is also by Hammarskold. The ironwork is attributed to Christopher Werner, as it incorporates two of his favorite motifs: the palmetto tree of South Carolina and the eagle of the United States. The ironwork is also a combination of wrought and cast iron work. The drawing room on the second floor is large and has a coved ceiling. In this room the United States Courts sat for a time after the Civil War, until the Federal Government bought the Charleston Club House, which stood in the present Post Office Park on Meeting Street.

Arthur Barnwell, who acquired the property from Gadsden's family in 1885, re-modeled the interior, installing eight Italian marble mantelpieces from England and parquet floors of three kinds of wood, copied from European palaces. It is said the carpenter, Noisette, took eight years to put in the floors. Barnwell sold the property in 1902 to Robert Goodwyn Rhett, who was Mayor of Charleston, president of the Peoples Bank (which built the Peoples Building) and one of the developers of North Charleston. During Rhett's ownership, William Howard Taft, U.S. President and Chief Justice, was several times a weekend guest. Tradition says that it was during the Rhett's residence here that their butler, William Deas, invented she crab soup.

(Ravenel, Architects, 240, 242-243. Smith & Smith, Dwelling Houses, 254-255. Stoney, This is Charleston, 16. Barry, Mr. Rutledge, passim. Wallace, 256-257, 290-293, 339. Rosen, 129, 143. Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and the People, 161, 172, 225-227, 255, 319-320, 400. Stockton, DYKYC, March 24, 1975. Nielsen, DYKYC, Feb. 10, 1936. Rhett, Gay, Woodward & Hamilton, 2-3. )