

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC William Gibbes House

AND/OR COMMON  
William Gibbes House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER #64 South Battery

CITY, TOWN Charleston VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 001

STATE South Carolina CODE 45 COUNTY Charleston CODE 019

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mr. and Mrs. J. Ashby Farrow

STREET & NUMBER #64 South Battery

CITY, TOWN Charleston VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE South Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, (RMC) Registrar of Nesnes and Conveyances  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 726

CITY, TOWN Charleston STATE South Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Gibbes House, built sometime between 1772 and 1779, and probably before the Revolution, is a large, two-story, frame house, built upon a high English basement of carefully dressed stone. The carefully modulated rhythms of this consummately robust Georgian facade are highlighted by triangular forms and by a series of consoles. The elevation is centered on an attic-story triangular pediment which itself is centered on the triangular pediment of the door surround. The latter is part of a perfectly proportioned little aedicule, composed of four wooden pilasters, the triangular pediment, with mutules, and a carefully carved frieze, with triglyphs and guttae. These larger triangles are echoed in the four windows of the first floor, two on either side of the entrance. The console chord is sounded most forcefully in a pair of heavy and richly-carved consoles with acanthus leaves supporting the base of the attic pediment. It is then reflected diminutively beneath each of the windows at both the first and second floors.

The modillions at the cornice level are carried around all sides of the building, and the building is roofed by a tiled hipped roof. The double staircase is graced by a fine iron rail, the whole of this approach being added about 1794.

The Gibbes House has the usual Georgian four-room double-pile floor plan, known in Charleston simply as a double house. The entrance hall from the south extends through the house and is divided near midpoint by marbellized columns, while the stair hall is located at the north end of this most impressive room. The stairway there is lit by a large palladian window, and features a slender rail with iron ballusters dating from the Civil War period. The beautiful interiors, including doors and mantels, were generally redone in the Adam style, about 1794. The south rooms on both floors, however, are fully panelled, while the north rooms have plaster and wallpapers. The most elaborate room is probably the 20' X 34' Ballroom on the upper floor, where a coved ceiling has its focus in the plaster ceiling medallions and corner fans.

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
—1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1772-1779, 1794

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Gibbes House, built sometime shortly after 1772, and redecorated in 1794, is one of the finest two-story frame residences in America. The grandeur of its classical Georgian elevation is rivalled by the elegance of its very sophisticated Adamesque interiors, featuring richly carved wooden elements, fireplaces and mantles, plaster ceilings, and a dramatic upper floor ball-room, all integrated into the well-known Charleston "double-house" floor plan.

## HISTORY

The William Gibbes House is essentially a fine Georgian house to which has been added somewhat later (c. 1794) Adamesque interior decoration, and a new (1928-30) six-foot extension at the north end of the building.

The lots upon which the house stands were acquired in 1772, and sometime between then and 1779, the house was completed. The forceful heaviness of the Georgian exterior is typical in feeling of the houses of this style during this period. The contrast we find on the interior is remarkable then with its essentially more delicate and detailed grace. This interior feeling was created by the redecoration of the house in 1794 by Mrs. Sarah Smith who acquired the residence for 25000 pounds, and was eager to make the place as up-to-date as possible. By this date, 1794, the fashion for so-called Adamesque decoration had passed from England to her former colony and become well-established.

The development of Charleston along the peninsula between the Ashley and Cooper Rivers took place as creeks dried up or were blocked off and land was gradually reclaimed. Although one cannot point at a given time to the exact shoreline of the end of the peninsula, it is well-known that it moved further and further South. The Gibbes House for instance was, in the late 18th century, near the very tip, with the nearby bank providing a river entrance to the house. What we see today as the main facade, from the street called South Battery, may have been the secondary entrance for a time, with a much more formal entry at the north, or land, side. There, the graceful steps overlooked an oval carriage turn-around in a space created by long flanking outbuildings to the north of the house. Unfortunately, that formal composition is lost today since only one of the outbuildings remains and the roadway

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

*c. 1/2 acre*

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 10

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	7
ZONE	

5	9	9	9	4	0
EASTING					

3	6	2	6	1	8	0
NORTHING						

B 

ZONE	

EASTING					

NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Dillon, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

4/23/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*11/26/80*

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*11-26-80*

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES HISTORIC LANDMARKS

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entrance from the north is blocked by other residences. The floor plan of the house argues against this somewhat, as the entrance hall we see is certainly placed for maximum effect when entered from the south, rather than under the stair as was the case if entered from the north.

The house passed through the Civil War without injury and passed into the hands in this century of the widow of Washington Roebling, the builder of the Brooklyn Bridge. The house remains in the hands of her descendants today, Mr. and Mrs. J. Ashby Farrow.

In 1928, Mrs. Roebling had the house extended by about seven feet at the north side. While this is clearly visible while standing in the garden, the extra space on the inside has been smoothly integrated into the double-pile Georgian plan.

The double marble stairway at the South entrance was added about 1800, by which time we might assume that the land reclamation in that area had progressed far enough to make that entrance a rival to the other land entrance. Access from South Battery then must have been fairly simple by 1800.

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Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), Great Georgian Houses of America (2 vols., 1933-37, New York); Samuel and Narcissa Chamberlain, Southern Interiors of Charleston, South Carolina (New York, n.d.); Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes--South (New York, 1956), Richard Pratt, A Treasury of Early American Homes (New York, 1949); Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, Architecture of Charleston (Charleston, 1945); Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham, Charleston, South Carolina (Washington, D.C., 1927); Alice R. Smith and D. E. Huger Smith, The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina (Philadelphia and London, 1917); South Carolina, A Guide to the Palmetto State (American Guide Series) (New York, 1941); Samuel G. Stoney, This is Charleston (Charleston, 1944); Harriet K. Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic (Philadelphia, 1931); Thomas T. Waterman, The Dwellings of Colonial America (Chapel Hill, 1950); Wayne Andrews, Architecture, Ambition and Americans (New York, 1955).

William Pierson, American Buildings and Their Architects (New York, 1970).

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The William Gibbes House, at #64 South Battery, Charleston, lies within the residentially developed old section of the city, near the southern tip of the Charleston peninsula. Part of a reclaimed area of harbor, the 18th century structure formerly had its formal entrance at the north, its business entrance near the water at the south.

William Gibbes acquired the lot on which the house and its stable-laundry-kitchen block stand in 1772. That piece of land, which is the official boundary of the national landmark consists of that known as #64 South Battery. Frontage on South Battery is approximately 100 feet, while the lot is approximately 200 feet deep. Total acreage is approximately 1/2. Houses stand adjacent to the Gibbes lot at the north, east, and west sides.