

Joseph Manigault House



Welcome to the Joseph Manigault House. Built in 1803, the Joseph Manigault House is a premier example of Adam-style, or Federal, architecture which reflected the virtues of elegance and simplicity associated with the new American republic. Well-suited to Charleston's climate, this planter's townhouse has high ceilings, abundant windows and two-story porches, while a curving central stair accentuates the grace of the interior. It was designed for his brother, Joseph, by amateur architect Gabriel Manigault, who is also credited with designing Charleston's current City Hall. Descendants of French Huguenots who originally settled in Charleston in 1695, the Manigaults amassed great wealth as rice planters and merchants during the 18th century and were one of South Carolina's leading families.



Gate Temple

Joseph Manigault married well. His first wife, Maria Henrietta Middleton, was the daughter of Arthur Middleton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Following her death, he married Charlotte Drayton, with whom he had eight children. The Manigault family lived in the house for almost fifty years, selling it in 1852.

In the early 1920s, two Charleston women, founding one of the nation's first preservation societies, The Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, purchased the house to save it from being destroyed. To pay off the mortgage, the rooms were rented out to single families and there were upwards of ten families living in the house at times. The garden property was sold to Standard Oil Company in 1922 and an ESSO gas station was placed on the southwest corner.



In 1933, the mortgage on the house was foreclosed because of failure to keep up with payments, and it was purchased by the Charleston Museum. In 1937, the Museum convinced Standard Oil to tear down the gas station and donate the land back to the house.



During World War II, the house was used as a USO facility for entertaining the troops. It opened as a historic house museum in 1949 and became a National Historic Landmark in 1974.



Dining Room

The formal dining room became fashionable in America around 1790. The bowed eastern end of the room balances the curve of the porch on the western end. A false door to the right of the fireplace balances the door to the left.

Specific furniture forms for the dining rooms were developed by English designers and widely adopted in America. Two new forms were the sideboard and banquet-length dining table. In wealthy Charleston Homes, dinners were leisurely social affairs, usually served at two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

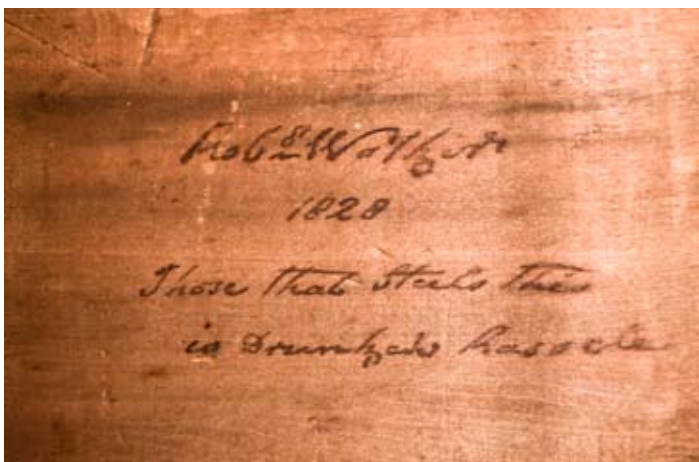




Sideboards

The sideboard on the left was made in Charleston in 1828. An inscription on the bottom of the cellarette drawer reads: “Robt Walker/1828/Those that Steels This/Is Drunken Rascale.” The piece is made from mahogany, satinwood, tulip poplar and white pine.

Resting on the piece are mahogany knife boxes, common early 19th century dining room accessories used to hold and secure silverware. Cabinet makers produced the boxes to exact specifications depending on the number, shape and size of the pieces of silver that were to go into them. These knife boxes could be locked to prevent theft.



The sideboard on the right was made in Charleston sometime between 1790 and 1800. It consists of mahogany, mahogany veneer, cypress and tulip poplar. The displayed silver tea set was made by Gerardus Boyce around 1825 in New York.



Banquet Length Table

The china on the table was produced in England around 1800. It is Derby, made of soft past porcelain. The monogram in the center is “JCL” for Charlestonians James and Catherine Lowndes, who were married in 1799. The original set probably included dinner plates, soup bowls and other dining pieces.

The silver centerpiece, below right, a decorative item, could stand alone or have other adornment. It was made in London around 1816 by Paul Storr.

The glass beaker-type dishes, see example below left, are called wine rinsers and were used to rinse out wine glasses after each wine course. Glass was very expensive and it was impractical to have a separate glass for each course.





Peter Manigault

Above the fireplace is a portrait of Peter Manigault, painted originally by Allan Ramsay in 1751, this is a copy done by Margaret Owens in 1904. The clock that you see on the mantle, descended down through the Manigault family, and is thought to be the same one in the painting. The clock is made of red lacquer with ormolu mounts and brass inlay. It looks to be of the English Baroque style and dates to around 1725.



Hallway

This hallway is particularly spacious for a Charleston historic house. The most spectacular architectural features are the semi-circular bay of the north façade, which was originally the main entrance to the house, and the cantilever staircase. Visitors entered through the French-style wooden doors and walked beneath the free-floating staircase, which has no immediately apparent means of support. Fine details, such as the decorated hall cornice and large ornamental plaster medallion in the stairwell ceiling, reflected the taste of the owner and the architect. The chandelier, of Austrian crystal, is not original to the house, but dates to around the time of its construction.

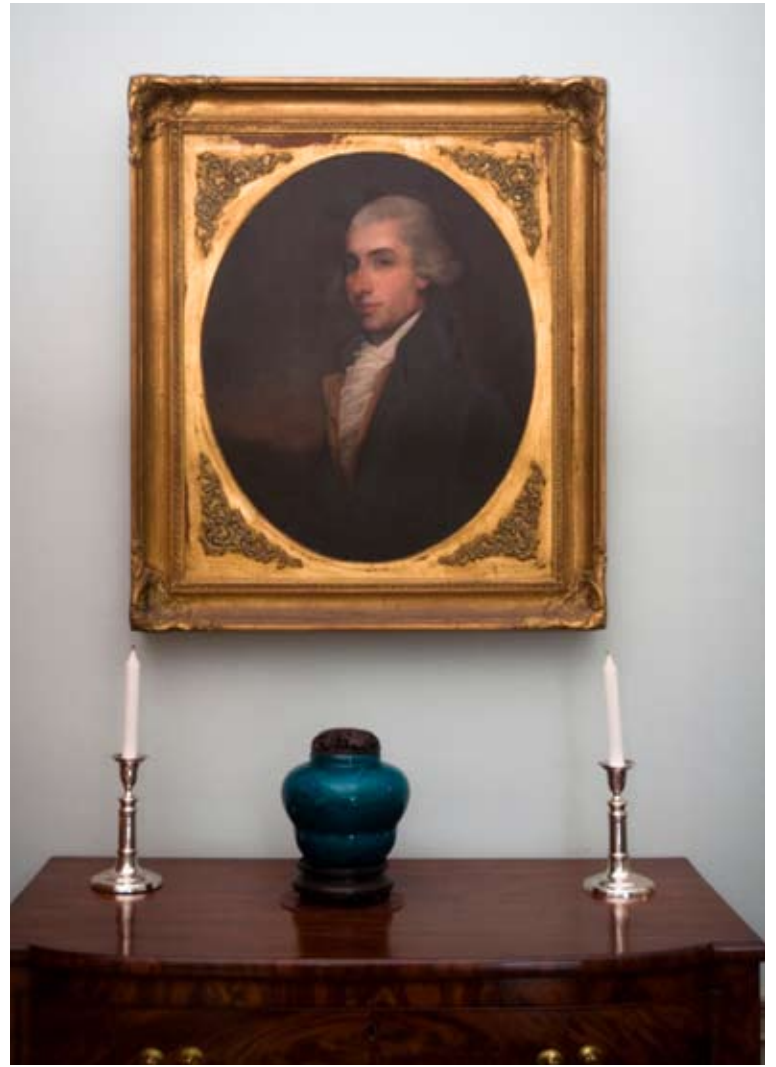
The southern entrance of the house (with the large porch) was probably the secondary entrance to the house. As a secondary entrance, its decoration was considerably plainer than that on the north side of the hall.



Hallway (continued)

The sofa, above left, was made in Charleston around 1785. Made from mahogany with secondary woods of ash and yellow pine, this piece is one of only five known Charleston-made sofas to survive. It was originally part of the furnishings at Middleburg Plantation and descended through the Ball family of Charleston.

The breakfront bookcase, above right, made in Salem, Massachusetts around 1800, was owned by Joseph Manigault. It is constructed from mahogany with secondary woods of white pine and birch. The breakfront holds Chinese export porcelain, ca. 1820, that was also owned by Joseph Manigault and has the Manigault heraldic coat-of-arms imprinted on it. The coat-of-arms bears the family motto, which translates from Latin as “anticipate rather than avenge.”



Library

This room may have served as Joseph Manigault's library and office. It has five doors: two conventional doors, providing access to other parts of the house, and three window doors, which allowed access to the porches.



The portrait of Joseph Manigault at the age of 22, above right, was copied by Alicia Rhett in 1976 from the original, painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1785.

The secretary above left, was produced in Charleston by Robert Walker around 1800. It is made from Mahogany and satinwood with white pine, tulip poplar and red cedar.



Music Room

According to family tradition, musical instruments and indoor games were played in this small room adjoining the library. Thomas Sheraton, an English cabinetmaker who influenced late eighteenth and early nineteenth century designs, advised that music rooms be furnished with “prints of the muses and master of music, chairs and stools of a richer variety of colours may be admitted with propriety.”

The music stand at left of photo was made in Philadelphia between 1820 and 1830.

Harp

The Harp was made c. 1786 by H. Noderman in Paris.

Manigault Family Pieces

On the wall is a portrait of Charlotte Drayton Manigault (1781-1855), who married Joseph in 1800. This is a copy after an oil painting, ca. 1800.

The breakfast table, of mahogany and oak, was made in Philadelphia, ca. 1820-1830.

The breakfast table, book of music, and Chinese painting on the wall belonged to the Manigault family.

The smaller of the two instruments pictured is a flageolet, similar in shape to a recorder, but more closely related to the tin whistle. This flageolet is marked I Butler Eich/&Lesika/Philadelphia. One of the Manigault children played a flageolet.





Drawing Room

According to Thomas Sheraton, “the proportion of a good drawing room should be in length, at least, equal to its width.” This room is 27’ 4” long and 19’ 3” wide with ceilings 13’ 6” in height. In Charleston, drawing rooms were often on the second floor, removed from the dusty, noisy streets below. This room was probably one of the coolest in the house with its high ceiling and windows on three walls. Primarily used for formal entertaining, the drawing room contained the best furniture and most elaborate architectural details.



This portrait of Elizabeth Wragg Manigault, above left, done in oil on canvas was painted by Jeremiah Theus in the mid 18th century. Elizabeth was the mother of Joseph and Gabriel Manigault.

The arm chair and couch, above right, were made in England, ca. 1810-1815, and belonged to Thomas Pinckney, a Revolutionary War patriot and first U.S. ambassador to England. They are japanned in black and gold in the Regency style.



Jib Door

Jib doors opened onto the porches to allow extra space for entertaining and to provide access to outdoor areas during the warm summer months.



Card Room

The Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, a visitor to Charleston in 1795-96, wrote “it is against the excessive heat of summer that all calculations of construction are made. One does not boast in Charleston [of] having the most beautiful house, but the coolest.”

The card room was an intimate room where family members might read, do needlework, take tea, or play cards. It was easy to heat with a coal fire in winter, and had excellent ventilation in summer.

The combination door-and-window gave access to the upper porch. Barrel-vaulted passages with carved over-door fans connected the drawing room, card room, and bedchamber on the south side. When the windows and doors were open, the breeze cooled all three rooms.

This card table, produced in England between 1780 and 1800, is made from mahogany. It has satinwood inlay with three oval medallions each containing an image of an insect.





Couch

This couch, above left, is from the English Regency period, ca. 1810. It is made from rosewood solids and graining over beech, with oak crossbars.

Commode

The commode, above right, is Louis XV in style and was produced in France ca. 1750-1760. It is made from tulipwood with rosewood inlay and a marble top. Before the age of plumbing, a commode was defined as a French furniture form consisting of a chest of drawers on legs.

Lady's Writing Desk

The desk, at right, is often referred to as a "Bonheur-du-jour," an eighteenth-century French term for a lady's writing table with a cabinet of shelves, drawers, or pigeon-holes. It was made in France of burl walnut, around 1800.





Bedroom

Thomas Sheraton wrote in 1803 “as the eastern sun ought to regulate our time of rising in general, bedrooms are properly on that side of the house. In this situation, a bedroom has early light without heat, which can be offensive to none but sluggards.”

Situated on the east side of this house, the bedchamber features less ornamentation than the public rooms. A false door to the right of the fireplace balances the door to the left. A small dressing room occupies the bowed end of the house.





Rice Bed

This mahogany, four-poster bed was produced in Charleston, ca. 1790-1820. Characteristics specific to Charleston-made beds include their large size, moveable headboards to allow a freer circulation of air during warm months, slats instead of rope or canvas to support the bedding, and carved posts decorated with rice stalks and fringed crescents at the base of the reeding.

Clothes Press

This mahogany clothes press, pictured right, was made by Robert Walker in Charleston, ca. 1806-1809. It is the only known example of Charleston furniture that bears the cabinet maker's original paper label.





Dressing room

This dressing room, one of the first examples of such a room known in Charleston, allowed privacy when changing clothes and when using the necessary.