

Colonel Isaac Motte House  
30 Meeting Street  
Charleston  
Charleston County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-263

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## COLONEL ISAAC MOTTE HOUSE

HABS  
SC  
263-26  
171-

Location: 30 Meeting Street, Charleston, Charleston County,  
South Carolina

Present Owner: Mrs. G. Kirkwood King, 30 Meeting Street,  
Charleston, South Carolina

Present Occupant: Mrs. G. Kirkwood King

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
of Significance: A pre-Revolutionary house which belonged to Colonel  
Isaac Motte, a member of the Continental Congress,  
with notable architectural details.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Colonel Isaac Motte is traditionally said to have bought the house, not quite finished, from Thomas Young before the American Revolution. [Alice R. Huger Smith and D. E. Huger Smith, The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina (J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia and London: 1917), page 74.] The house remained the property of Motte's descendants into the 1940's, when it was jointly owned by the brothers, Charles H. Haig and Isaac Motte Haig, who bequeathed their shares respectively to Sarah M. Dawson, and to the Protestant Episcopal Church of South Carolina in trust. In 1947 both half-interests were bought by Marjorie N. Morawetz. [Charleston County Mesne Conveyance, Book Y-46, pages 575 and 579 (Photostats).] Mrs. Morawetz's estate sold the property to Jane H. P. King, the present owner, in 1958. [MCO, W-64, page 353 (Photostat).]
2. Date of erection: Pre-Revolutionary. [Ibid.]
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown.

- B. Historical Events Connected with Structure: Colonel Isaac Motte in 1756 was commissioned an officer of the Royal Americans. In 1775 he was made lieutenant colonel of Moultrie's regiment of Continentals, and later became its colonel. In 1779 he became a privy councillor and in 1780 was a member of the Continental Congress. [Alice R. Huger

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Smith and D. E. Huger Smith, The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina, pages 48-49.]

Prepared by Beatrice St. J. Ravenel  
August 1958

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A handsome traditional eighteenth century mansion with a three-story Charleston piazza and fine original cypress paneling on the interior.
2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original portion, two bays by five bays, is about 26' x 45', exclusive of a somewhat later porch 9' wide. Three-and-a-half stories. The west end, with entrance, faces the street; the south side faces the garden.
2. Foundations: These are about two feet above grade; a low base projects slightly at the west end.
3. Wall construction: Walls are of brick, stuccoed with simulated stone joint markings. The brick is exposed on the south wall of the first story--it is laid in Flemish bond.
4. Porches: A three-story wooden Charleston piazza appears to date from the early nineteenth century; it extends six bays across the south side, and two bays along part of the east end. Columns are solid wood, unfluted, slender Greek Doric; their heights diminish progressively at the upper stories. Entablatures are simple, of three parts, the topmost one with dentils being slightly wider than the others. Wood railings with turned balusters are on the second and third stories. The first story is floored with (modern) concrete, the upper stories with boards 5" to 6" wide. Ceilings are of long moulded paneling. The west end of the first story contains the street entrance.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are located along the north wall, centering on the main rooms. One is stuccoed on the exterior and has a triple hood.

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6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The street entrance is set against horizontal beaded boards, at the end of the piazza. It has antae which carry a three-part entablature with dentils in the cornice. The door has six panels. A central doorway leads from the piazza into the house; it has a simple wood casing set into the masonry opening and an eight-panel door. Similar doorways give access from the piazza to the house at the upper levels.
- b. Windows and shutters: Window openings have low segmental arches with brick infilling between the arch and the rectangular window head; this is stuccoed over except at the first floor of the piazza. Wood architrave trim is set inside the masonry opening. Double-hung sash have nine lights over nine lights. There are paneled shutters at the first story, louvred shutters above. A triple window occupies the front gable.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gabled, covered with sheet metal.
- b. Cornice: A stucco cornice of three straight corbelled brick courses extends around the house at the top of the third story. The rake of the gables, which spring from a slightly higher point above the roof surface, is treated as a pediment, with short returns at the corners.
- c. Dormers: One dormer is centered on the south side.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Each story has a central stair hall with one room on each side. In modern times a small rear wing was added at the east end, for services and utilities. A piazza extends along the south side and returns at the east end up to the service wing. The first two ceiling heights are about 10'-0"; that of the third story is 8'-1".
2. Stairway:
  - a. First floor: The stairway is of the open-well type, with flights of seven, three, and eight risers, respectively. The string is open, with projecting

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treads. There are two balusters with turned and square portions, to each tread. The newel is small, with a turned shaft, and square top and base. The handrail is molded, with straight sections. A paneled wainscot ascends the stairway. There is wood paneling below the outer string.

- b. The stairway is similar at the second story; at the third story it has 15 risers to the attic level.
3. Flooring: Flooring is typically of longleaf pine boards varying from 8" to 10" in width, natural finish. It appears original.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ceilings are plastered and painted; some walls are paneled in wood and other walls are plastered, as described below.
5. Interior finish and trim:
  - a. General: At one time or another all woodwork has been painted. During the late 1940's or early 1950's paint was removed from all or nearly all of the surfaces. Since then some rooms have been painted and others left with the natural woodwork, as described below. Virtually all woodwork is of cypress and is original.
  - b. West room, first floor: Ceiling, walls, and woodwork are painted; floors are natural. The ceiling is plastered. The north wall is paneled in wood, being at the plane of the chimney-face (with closets on each side of the chimney); other walls are plastered above the wainscoting. The woodwork clearly shows the pegging of stiles and rails.

There is a wood cornice consisting of cyma recta, small cyma reversa bed molding, and narrow frieze. The wood wainscot has raised and fielded panels. Door and window openings have architrave trim (without plinth). Doors have six raised and fielded panels; the one leading to the hall is 3'-0" x 6'-9 1/2" x 1 1/4". Each is hung on two HL hinges, not thought to be original. The hall door has a cast-iron box lock. Knobs are brass. There are window seats, with a narrow panel below the stool.

Panels of the north wall are raised and fielded; a narrow vertical panel at each end and on each side

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of the fireplace, above a similar panel in the wainscoting, give the effect of pilasters. Around the fireplace opening is a wide architrave resting on plinths, with crossettes, a very narrow frieze, and mantel shelf with cavetto molding. Hearth tiles are original.

- c. Stair hall, first floor: The ceiling is plastered and painted; walls above the wainscot are plastered and papered. The partitions between the hall and the rooms appear to be of plank construction. The cornice and trim around the openings are similar to those in the west room, but with natural finish.
- d. East room, first floor: This room is similar to the west room in its treatment, with the following exceptions: wall and wainscot panels are flat, and the fireplace has been closed up, with paneling carried across and mantel removed. The closet door at the northeast corner is divided.
- e. West room, second floor: The chimney breast projects into the room, the woodwork has natural finish, and there is a French door at the southwest corner, opening to the piazza. In other respects this room is virtually identical with its counterpart on the first floor.
- f. Stair hall, second floor: This is very similar to the hall below.
- g. East room, second floor: This is very similar to the west room except that the woodwork is painted.
- h. Third floor: Both rooms are similar. Walls and ceiling are plastered and painted, with wood base and chair rail. A simple beaded board forms the cornice, and openings have simple architrave trim. The doors are four-paneled. There is a wood mantel with simple pilasters and molded cornice.  
  
The hall woodwork is natural.
- i. Attic: This has a storage room under the roof on each side of the stair hall, with plastered ceilings. Hall partitions are of vertical cypress boards of varying width up to 13 1/2". Doors are board and batten.

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D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: This house is on an interior lot on the east side of Meeting Street, almost opposite Ladson Street. This is a residential street in the older part of the city, just outside the line of the fortification wall of the original settlement. The frontage is about 60'. The house is built up to the north property line and to the sidewalk line.
2. Enclosures: A brick wall with gable coping extends from the south corner of the house across the front of the lot. At the south end of this wall is an opening with simple brick posts and ornamental wrought-iron gate gives access to a driveway.
3. Outbuildings: Adjoining the house to the east is a brick two-story service building about 18' x 40'. Bricks vary somewhat in size, averaging 9" x 4 1/4" x 2 5/8"; they are laid in English bond. They have been painted at some time but most of it has come off. There is a large central chimney. Fenestration is irregular; windows have six-over-six light, double-hung sash, wood sills, paneled shutters. The hip roof is covered with slate.

In plan there is one room on each side of the chimney, on each floor. This has been modernized for use as a dwelling. The large brick fireplaces appear largely original, and the brick first floor (laid on grade) may be, also. It is thought that the interiors were plastered originally, or at least long ago.

4. Landscaping: The original treatment is not known.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect  
National Park Service  
July 1962

ADDENDUM TO  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1845 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240