

Do You Know Your Charleston?

1/24/1949

150 Wentworth Street



SITE OF PROPOSED 14-STORY APARTMENT—Nestled between a variety of trees at Wentworth and South streets is a house built by Christopher Gustavus Memminger more than 100 years ago. The remarkable collection of trees there were planted by Mr. Memminger, secretary

of the treasury for the Confederacy and founder of the Charleston public school system. This site is the one proposed for erection of a 14-story apartment building. Memminger is reportedly coming here to the summer can be built in pending in city council. The proposal has caused the 1848 Charleston controversy. (Staff Photo by Bailey.)

Home Built by Memminger Is Site Of Proposed 14-Story Apartment

Confederates are building new to its present and brick house at 150 Wentworth street, about which now is making an apartment as to whether it shall be used and replaced by a 14-story apartment house.

Christopher Gustavus Memminger, who built it more than a century ago as a home for his family, moved to numerous Confederate, president of which was the War between the States. Throughout most of his struggle, Mr. Memminger was secretary of the treasury for the Confederacy and his private affairs many of the members of the Confederacy.

After the war, another controversy moved over the house. The Federal government, after the fall of the Confederacy, had declared Mr. Memminger's house forfeit to the government as having been abandoned by its owner.

The controversy was taken over by the school of the Bureau of Refugees and Freedmen and Abandoned Lands and converted into an asylum for negro children. Mr. Memminger protested and after considerable argument he was required to secure a pardon from the Federal government as a general pardon to getting his home back.

When he came back to be obtained by all persons in the former Confederacy who had served more than 12 months in the army and had engaged in rebellion against the United States government. The property was restored to Mr. Memminger January 7, 1865, by R. K. Scott, brevet major of the bureau of abandoned lands, secretary of the bureau of abandoned lands, secretary of the United States government. The property was restored to Mr. Memminger January 7, 1865, by R. K. Scott, brevet major of the bureau of abandoned lands, secretary of the United States government.

The entire house was reconstructed by Mr. Memminger and once again his family occupied the property.

Charles Colwell Pinckney married Amy Memminger, daughter of the builder. Pinckney's daughter, Randolph Pinckney, married Edward W. Hughes, Charleston attorney, referee in bankruptcy and Federal protection officer. For many years Mr. Hughes continued visiting relatives in the charming old residence, with its beautiful grounds. Then, in April, 1903, the property was sold by William Mack Mendenhall, master in equity, to Harry L. Hughes, attorney for the Citizens & Southern Bank of South Carolina, for \$14,000 to satisfy a mortgage. At the same sale he bid in two parcels to Thomas Buhr, property of Mr. Hughes, for \$2,000. The bank sold the property to

John McAllister, Inc., and an effort was made to establish a former home there.

Immediately another controversy arose. Thirty-eight neighbors got up a petition opposing the former home. The zoning authorities refused a permit for operation of the former home, but the McAllisters continued to conduct the former home.

Finally, George H. Memminger, who lives at 51 South street, adjoining the property, brought suit to the court of common pleas to enjoin use of the premises for a funeral home.

In a decree filed January 4, 1943, in the court of common pleas Judge E. F. Henderson granted the injunction sought by Mr. Memminger. The case was appealed to the South Carolina supreme court, which, on September 3, 1943, upheld the lower court. Later, the supreme court refused a rehearing of the case.

Following the court decision, the McAllisters have not held any financial on the premises. James A. McAllister, a member of the company, who moved his residence there during the time it was used as a funeral home, has continued to live there with his family.

Recently, an application was made to the board of referees, pending ordinance by Frank J. Ballew, of the World Agency, representing an undebated client, for a permit to construct a 14-story apartment building on the site.

The board refused the application to city council, which sent it to the city planning and zoning board. That board recommended that the zoning ordinance be amended to permit construction of the building.

At the last meeting of city council a public hearing was held, at which considerable opposition was expressed to the proposed apartment house. It would cost about \$250,000 and would contain, in addition to apartments, nine small professional offices.

After the hearing, city council gave first reading to a bill to amend the zoning ordinance but referred it back to the city planning and zoning commission at the request of the applicant for the permit. The planning and zoning body is to make some recommendations for changes which would be necessary

to permit financing of the apartment house.

The bill may come up for second reading tomorrow night. It is customary for any drastic to take place on a measure on second reading, so it is possible that the bill may be amended to killed tomorrow night.

The builder of the house, Christopher Gustavus Memminger, was born in Germany January 8, 1803. He was a member of the city council of Charleston. He founded the public school system of Charleston.

During the War Between the States, while Mr. Memminger was serving as secretary of the treasury, his family fled to Flat Rock, N. C., at their summer home, north of Charlotte. It was because of this that the Federal government used the protest of abandonment in which the house at 150 Wentworth street.

Mr. Memminger's banking interests, as well as his public spirit, led him to take part in many enterprises. The widening of King street from Fuller to Liberty street is a result of his insistence that a provision be put in all five laws, which the city guaranteed, that all houses rebuilt after the fire of 1848 be placed back several feet.

When the South Carolina railroad was projected, it was on the lot occupied by Mr. Memminger's house that a model railroad was set up. The Charleston Courier for March 10, 1828, carried the following paragraph:

"A model of a rail-road 300 feet in length is now exhibited in Wentworth street, opposite the residence of John Hume, Esq. It is on an inclination of 22 feet to the mile. A few bearing 20 miles of water . . . has been placed upon it which is propelled from steam by only two men the whole length each way. It is open to inspection of the citizens, and has been the object of curiosity to many, who, from the exhibition seen satisfied of the practicability of extending the proposed rail-road from this model. Those who sincerely doubted before have had their doubts removed on this interesting subject."

This paragraph probably fixes the date of construction of the house as subsequent to 1828, as the reduction would have been to Mr. Memminger's home and not to Mr. Hume's had the model railroad been

set up in Mr. Memminger's yard.

The house itself was built in two sections. The rear section extended the larger front section by 20 years. Each section is three stories high, although the front section is higher. This brings the floor level of the front portion above that of the rear, necessitating steps to connect the two portions of the house.

In recent years the grounds have been allowed to deteriorate, but for many years the attractiveness of the yard and lawn were well known. Mr. Memminger began planting the remarkable collection of trees in the garden, which had no flowers except those of the trees.

Among the trees is a large myrtle, probably the largest in Charleston. What is believed to be the largest flowering myrtle also was here. A large camellia tree and a great Kalmia tree also are there.

The national organization of the United Daughters of the Confederacy is considering establishment of a headquarters in state city. Mrs. T. Nichols Himmont, of Charleston, who is a member of the committee appointed to recommend a location for the headquarters, says this building is one of those suggested for such a use in Charleston.

West Ashley Joycece Observe Anniversary

Ladies Night was observed Friday night by the West Ashley Junior chamber of commerce with a banquet at the Old Towne Code Shoppe. The banquet commemorated the 25th anniversary of the national junior chamber and the fourth anniversary of the West Ashley organization.

Jason Auerman, vice president of Lower South Carolina, district of the Joycece, was guest speaker. He was introduced by John Wilkins, chapter president. R. E. Zippert, of North Charleston, state president, presented Mr. Wilkins with a citation and a pin for being voted the outstanding member of his chapter. Certificates and awards also were presented to members for outstanding work during the year.



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