

# Mills, fill and the Anderson Lumber Company

By Peg Eastman

Located at 305 Broad St., the southeast corner of Broad and Chisolm, is a modest wooden building that displays a sign proudly proclaiming "Anderson Lumber 1890." It is located on land that was once part of the public common created in 1768 by Governor Charles Greville Montagu and the South Carolina Legislature to provide a safe and convenient place to dock in the marshland on the west side of town.

The Revolution intervened, and when the City of Charleston was incorporated in 1783, the public common fell under the jurisdiction of City Council. Little was done to the common until 1817, when the city sold a tract between present-day Broad and Tradd streets to Joshua Brown. Brown built a sawmill on the Ashley River and sold his interests to Alexander Hext Chisolm. Around 1829, Chisolm developed a thriving rice and lumber mill complex on the river and built a handsome Greek Revival mansion nearby. By January 1861, according to an article in the *New York Times*, Chisolm's rice mill was the largest in the United States.

Meanwhile, the city continued to subdivide and lease lots on the north side of the colonial common, primarily to lumber interests. The

1872 "Bird's Eye View of Charleston" illustrates the Broad St. extension, Colonial Lake, Chisolm's house and rice mill and holding ponds for timber rafts floated down the Ashley River from inland forests and Edisto Island.

In 1875, Patrick P. Toale leased a tract near what is now Moultrie Playground for another lumber mill. This triggered a lawsuit challenging the city's continuing practice of shrinking the public common. The suit was resolved by an 1881 ordinance that decreed the remaining public common marsh lands be kept for the people of Charleston and that rents shall go back no further than Toale's lease. Toale's mill continued as a bustling concern, and around 1890 the leasehold was transferred to Anderson Lumber Company.

Anderson Lumber Company played a prominent role in creating the built environment of turn-of-the-century Charleston. Their office was located at 305 Broad St. The office interior was unique for it had no plaster walls, only milled wood that showcased the extensive capabilities of the firm.

A 1902 Sanborn Insurance Map that was updated through 1929 shows half the lot bounded by Broad, Ashley, Tradd and Chisolm streets

being used for storage by Anderson Lumber Company and half occupied by private residences. An Anderson descendant recalls that the company used the "Horse Lot" behind their office to house the mules and horses that hauled timber out of the Ashley River. Not surprisingly, the sawdust and wood chips from the mill were the primary fill for the marshland west of Rutledge Avenue.

Although the lumber mill is long gone, it is unfortunate that 305 Broad St. was not mentioned in either the City of Charleston's Tour Guide Training Manual or "The Buildings of Charleston" by Jonathan Poston, for the Anderson family has had a lasting impact not only in Charleston but also in the western part of the state.

The Andersons were Scotch-Irish Dissenters who emigrated from Ireland during the "Great Migration" of the early 18th century. Patriarch John Anderson settled in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. His son Robert fell in love with Ann Thompson shortly before leaving to survey Cherokee country in South Carolina. Ann had no communication from him for two years and presumed him dead when she consented to marry another. By chance, Robert was returning home and heard of the impending

Images of the Anderson Lumber Company as a working mill.

marriage. Hoping it was not too late, Robert spurred his horse and rode frantically to the Thompson farm, arriving on the wedding day. As the guests were beginning to assemble, Ann looked out the window and saw young Anderson galloping up the drive. She rushed downstairs and told her maids, "Yonder comes Robert Anderson and I love his little finger more than the other man's whole body." With that she jumped astride Anderson's horse, married him and moved to South Carolina.

Robert Anderson figured prominently in the development of the Pendleton area, and Anderson County is named in his honor. He received land for his service in the Revolution and founded Westville Plantation in Oconee County. In 1786 Anderson and his friends Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter surveyed the site for the capital building in Columbia. He also served as a judge, state representative and lieutenant governor. After Ann's death, he married Lydia Maverick, widow of a Charleston merchant. Elizabeth Anderson, a daughter from his first marriage, married Lydia Maverick's son and their son, Samuel Augustus Maverick, migrated to

Texas and became one of the largest land and cattle owners in the world. It is said that his lackadaisical overseer failed to brand his cattle and cowboys soon learned that when they saw an unbranded steer, it belonged to the Maverick herd, thus creating "maverick," a word that continues in our language today.

A great grandson of Robert Anderson moved to Charleston in the 1840s. His oldest son, Robert Maxwell Anderson (1860-1914), was another dynamo. He was heavily involved in the lumber industry, serving as president of Anderson Lumber Company and president of Anderson Spool and Bobbin Manufacturing Company. He also engaged in real estate and developed Colonial St. and built a row of houses on the south side of Calhoun St., segregated housing on Maverick St. and numerous houses in downtown Charleston. He was president of the U.S. Industrial Life Insurance Company and vice president of the State Savings Bank.

In the 1890s, Maxwell Anderson acquired a lot on Sullivan's Island at Station 27 with a 75-year lease from the U.S. government. It was a sweetheart deal. Lots cost a dollar per annum, provided a two-

room dwelling was built within a year. Maxwell Anderson constructed a summer cottage for his mother, his brother Pickens built next door and on the "front row," Swinton Anderson built "Cabbage Patch" (named after the novel "Mrs. Wiggs and Her Cabbage Patch"). Anderson Lumber Company barged the building materials from the Broad St. lumberyard and hauled them from the beach to the construction sites. Locals called the cottages "Andersonville."

Anderson Lumber Company was forced to close the mill when the Toale lease expired in 1929 and the buildings were razed. The remains of the boiler house that once powered the mill can be found hidden in the thicket located at the foot of Barre St.. The pond north of Broad St. was filled in and dedicated as Moultrie Playground in 1931. Fortunately, Anderson-built houses still dot the city and are a pleasant reminder of Charleston's turn-of-the-century business community. A family member continues to live at 305 Broad St.

*My appreciation to Bobby Anderson, Dorothy Anderson and Dr. Nic Butler, who contributed to this column.*



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF CHARLESTON, 1872



ANDERSON LUMBER COMPANY, 1890



THE MILL



OFFICE OF THE MILL

One of the buildings on the north side of the Ashley River in Charleston which was built by the Anderson family. In the picture the building is shown from the river, with a view of the mill and the more than 100 acres of land. The Anderson family owned the mill and the land. The Anderson family owned the mill and the land. The Anderson family owned the mill and the land.

IMAGE COURTESY BOBBY ANDERSON