

College of Charleston

History of

104 Rutledge Avenue

A Term Paper for

American Vernacular Architecture and Material Culture

Submitted to Professor Ralph C. Muldrow

Department of Art History

By

Amy A. Geer

Charleston, South Carolina

April 1998

A loyal South Carolina son, Ben Robertson, wrote of his Southern family in 1942:

“We have had wonderful conversation at the houses of my kinfolks, great story telling and discussion and argument, but it has been like the chimney smoke---it has drifted away. What has remained is what we have remembered.”<sup>1</sup>

Truly, one can equate such treasured oral histories of any family’s memoirs. Often this information has faded away and can only be found in dusty deed books. As the case in point, 104 Rutledge Avenue, necessitates further study and research before more information is lost to antiquity.

Harleston Village was subdivided into lots in 1770 by John Harleston who named streets for important men of the time: Lt. William Bull, and also South Carolina statesman John Rutledge.<sup>2</sup> The stuccoed brick house at 104 Rutledge Avenue is built on Harleston tract plan ninety-five situated at the southeast corner of Rutledge and Bull Street according to a conveyance between John Mathews (sometimes spelled Matthewes) and Thomas B. Seabrook in 1815 for the sum of fourteen thousand dollars.<sup>3</sup> John Mathews was the son of George Mathews who died in 1815. George Mathews

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Robertson, Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory. (1942; reprint: Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan H. Poston, The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City’s Architecture. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 479-480.

<sup>3</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1800-1881. Office of Register Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, M 8 p. 368-374.

purchased lot number ninety-five from Ann Ashby, widow of Nicholas Harleston for the sum of four hundred pounds sterling on 19 November 1800.<sup>4</sup> A plan of Harleston surveyed by William Rigbey Naylor in 1770 can be found at the South Carolina Historical Society. It clearly shows lot number ninety-five at the southeast corner of Rutledge and Bull Street. George Mathews is listed as a vendue master in the Charleston City Directory of 1806, residing at the southeast corner of Rutledge and Bull Street i.e., 104 Rutledge Avenue.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the house is at least ten years older than previous documented research indicates, as well as having a different builder.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Bannister Seabrook, the second owner of 104 Rutledge Avenue, was an Edisto Island planter who left the home to his daughter who was Elizabeth C. Seabrook Milne in 1839 in her marriage settlement.<sup>7</sup>

The house then came into the possession of Dr. Joseph Glover who owned five houses in Charleston such as 81 Rutledge Avenue as well as numerous plantations such as Forlorn Hope, Berry Hill, etc. These properties were willed to Dr. Joseph Glover's

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<sup>4</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1719-1809. Office of Register Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, N 7, p.270-271.

<sup>5</sup> Charleston City Directory, 1806, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> "Do You Know Your Charleston?" Post & Courier, 16 December 1935.

<sup>7</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1800-1881. Office of Register Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, W 10, p. 611-615.

five children upon his death in 1840.<sup>8</sup> His son, Dr. Francis Y. Glover of Jacksonborough, inherited 104 Rutledge Avenue as well as West Bank Plantation.

Dr. Francis Y. Glover sold the home in 1857 to Mary Ann Petigru, widow of Captain Tom Petigru of the navy.<sup>9</sup> According to Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle, niece of Mrs. Petigru:

“She lived in Charleston, in her beautiful home with large yard and garden, at the corner of Bull and Rutledge Streets, and was a rich woman, as riches were counted in those days . . . owning a rice plantation, “Pipe Down” on Sandy Island on the Waccamaw.”<sup>10</sup>

Apparently Mrs. Petigru fell on hard times because in the 1859 Charleston City Directory, Francis Glover, planter, is listed as residing at the corner of Rutledge and Bull.<sup>11</sup> In 1863, Dr. Francis Y. Glover conveyed 104 Rutledge Avenue to William M. Tunno for twenty seven thousand dollars.<sup>12</sup> Tunno in turn sold the house in 1866 to

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<sup>8</sup> Suzanne Cameron Linder, Historical Atlas of the Rice Plantations of the ACE River Basin—1860. (South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 1995), 603.

<sup>9</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1800-1881. Office of Register Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, B 14 p. 455.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle, Chronicles of “Chicora Wood.” (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922; reprint, Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1976), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Charleston City Directory, 1859, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1800-1881. Office of Register Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, J 14 p. 256.

Eugenia Huchet.<sup>13</sup> Huchet then sold 104 Rutledge Avenue to Charlotte and Anna Alston in 1868.<sup>14</sup>

Arthur A. Lynah and his wife Eliza DeSaussure Pelzer owned 104 Rutledge for many years.<sup>15</sup> They are accredited with “Victorianizing” the home by adding a three story tower (in which most of the bathrooms are located) as well as two over two windows complete with Queen Anne Style window heads and bracketed cornice.<sup>16</sup> Also probably done at this time, oak parquet was installed over the heart pine floors on the first floor. The original pine floors can be seen on the second and third floors. It is unknown what year the remodeling was done, however, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps dated 1884 clearly show that the tower exists.<sup>17</sup> Later Sanborn Maps reflect the further division of the lot of land the house stands on.<sup>18</sup> The *Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1872* map shows that the lot is still large and undivided.<sup>19</sup>

In 1917, Eliza D. P. Lynah conveyed 104 Rutledge Avenue to William P. Gelzer for ten thousand five hundred dollars.<sup>20</sup> Gelzer conveyed the house in 1918 to Harriet

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Q 14 p. 354.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., G 15 p. 495.

<sup>15</sup> Charleston City Directory, 1900, p. 569.

<sup>16</sup> Poston, The Buildings of Charleston, 559.

<sup>17</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1884. Microfilm, Charleston County Library.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 1888.

<sup>19</sup> C. Drie, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1872*.

<sup>20</sup> General Index to Deeds, Charleston County, 1898-1964. Office of Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, South Carolina, T 28 p. 72.

McLeod Creighton.<sup>21</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Norwood Smoak purchased 104 Rutledge Avenue from the estate of Mrs. Creighton in 1971.<sup>22</sup>

According to Mr. Smoak, in 1976 there was a fire on the third floor of the house. At that time, a calendar was found in the wall which was dated 1888. Also on the third floor are two beautiful Adamesque mantels as well as a clawfoot tub and marble sink located in the bath which is in the tower. The basement of the house was flooded during hurricane Hugo in 1989, and the roof of the tower and kitchen house sustained damage. Apparently it is difficult to locate a skilled roofer to work on the tower due to the fact that Mr. Smoak refers to the tower as “the bane of my existence.”<sup>23</sup>

Also contributing to maintenance problems, in 1996 Formosan termites invaded the basement. In the 1930's, the Creightons had installed partitions in the basement and rented space to physicians. When these partitions had to be removed due to the termite damage, beautiful brickwork was revealed which has been left exposed.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., U 28 p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., J 96 p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> Norwood Smoak. Interview by author 10 April 1998, 104 Rutledge Avenue.

The interior of the home has many other exquisite details including ornate plaster work and crown molding as well as intricately carved marble mantels. 104 Rutledge Avenue is truly an architectural treasure whose history has been obscured for decades. The author will continue to pursue research leading to obtaining elusive photographs depicting the house prior to the Victorian era.

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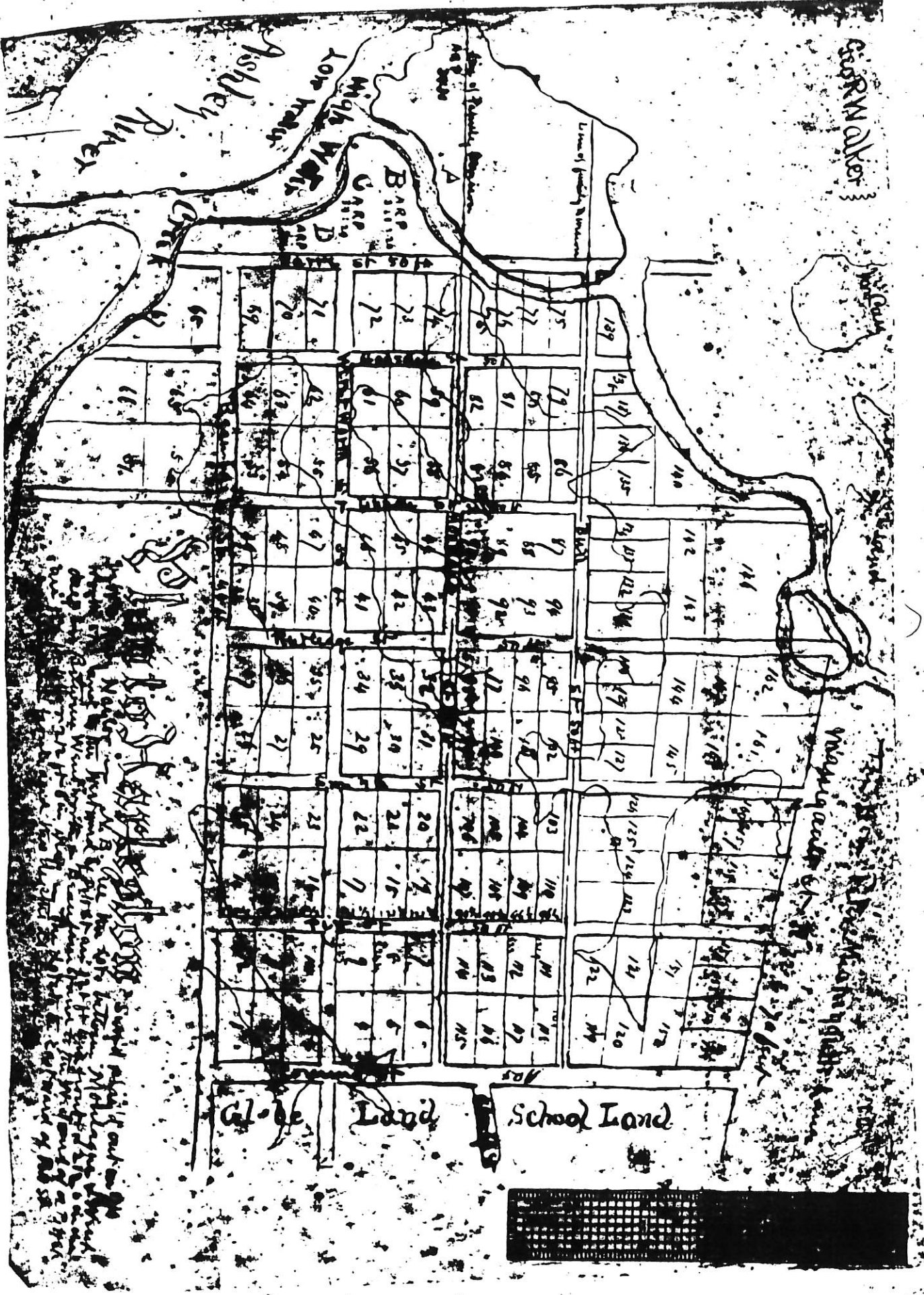
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Geoffrey Walker



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