

8 Water Street:
A Historic Property Analysis

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Map Analysis and History of Water Street

Water Street, formerly Vanderhorst Creek, signifies the development of a rapidly growing city. The history of Water Street reflects defensive measures taken in a time of unrest as well as the necessity for land and property. Water Street, or Vanderhorst Creek, was located outside the original walled city of Charleston. As early as 1710, the wall was in existence and is detailed on a “survey” map by Edward Crisp (map A-1). The southern end of the wall ran along the north shore of Vanderhorst Creek.¹ According to the authors of Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina, Alice and D.E. Huger Smith, “long before the date of Crisp’s survey, many lots had been granted beyond the fortifications, which proves that streets had been run out” before 1710 in the territory which “Crisp leaves almost blank”.² These lots, however, remained primarily unoccupied due to inaccessibility (maps A-2 and A-3).

As the city begins to grow and expand, colonists begin to tear down the wall. Easy access for peninsular expansion soon becomes critical and, unfortunately, difficult, due to Vanderhorst Creek. Early maps of the 1700’s show the creek as untamed and undefined (maps A-1 and A-2).³ By 1751, a portion of Vanderhorst Creek becomes a canal in what is later known as Water Street. According to historian and author, Nicholas Butler, “they built some kind of structure on both sides of the creek to tame the edges of it”.⁴ Around the same time, a bridge was constructed over the 30-foot wide canal located where the bend in Church Street is now situated. A 1788 survey by E. Petrie clearly depicts this canal (map A-4). The canal and bridge together allowed easier access to those Grand Modell lots previously inaccessible. Interestingly, legend says that the large granite posts found along Water Street were used to tie up boats that traveled the canal.⁵

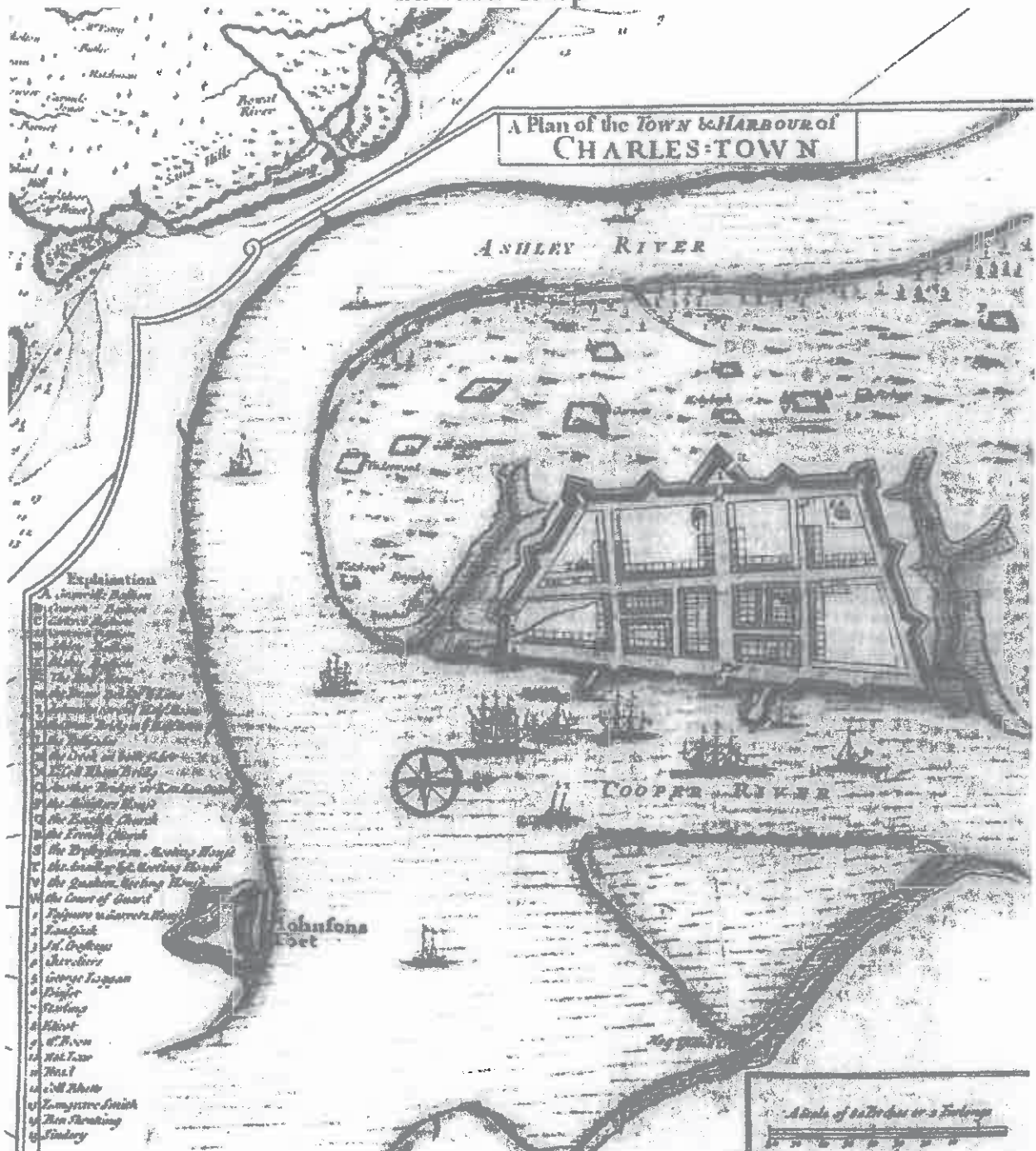
Due to a variety of reasons, including defense and weather, it soon becomes evident that a means of controlled access to and from the canal should be erected. For example, during the

hurricane of 1752, a large ship swept through the creek and grounded on Meeting Street.⁵ Minutes of the Commissioners of Fortifications, 1755-1757, detail the construction of a large flood-gate which would close the mouth of Vanderhorst Creek. This defense measure may be related to the war with France during this time.⁶ Reference to the Flood-Gate appears in a variety of sources. In 1775, Lord William Campbell, the last colonial Governor, escaped imprisonment from local Revolutionary leaders by taking a rowboat down the canal to the British ship *Tamar* which was anchored in the harbor.⁷ A December 31st advertisement in the *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* describes a stolen canoe from within the Flood-Gate.⁸ A \$2 reward would be given if returned to the owner (A-5). Further reference to the Flood-Gate can be found in the February 11-14, 1780 entry in Orderly Book of Benjamin Taliaferro in which the officer is ordered to “send one sentry to the Flood-Gate at the south end of the bay.”⁹ The 1788 Petrie Map shows what may be this Flood-Gate (map A-4).

Charleston experienced rapid expansion and growth in the years following the American Revolution. Although the Water Street canal allowed access to several Grand Modell lots, a few lots remained inaccessible, including lot #102. This particular lot is most likely the Grand Modell lot number associated with the current 8 Water Street property (map A-3). 1787 Legislation was passed for the completing of East Bay Street which, inevitably, required the filling of Vanderhorst Creek.¹⁰ According to Robert Mills, Vanderhorst Creek had been filled somewhere between 1788 and 1792, creating a 30-foot wide Water Street.¹¹ The filling of Vanderhorst Creek finally creates the opportunity for expansion of Bay Street eastward. With the newly accessible lots on Water Street, property begins to sell at a rapid pace. Sometime following 1792, Samuel Beekman acquired the property of 8 Water Street. Although no documentation has been uncovered detailing Mr. Beekman’s acquisition of the said lot, this researcher believes that

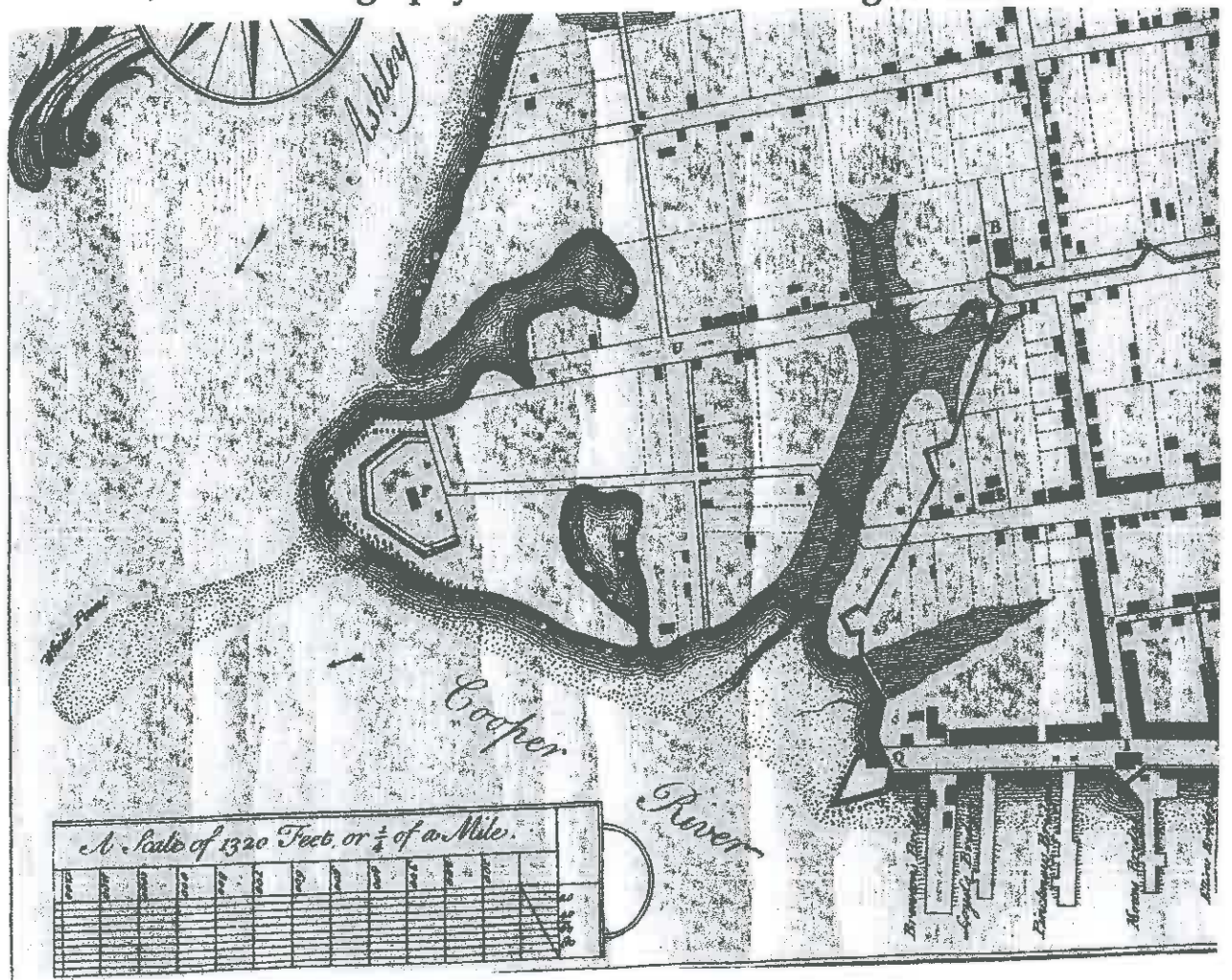
Thomas Rivers, owner of the property to the east, may have parceled off portions of his own property, hence, creating the said lot. The development of Water Street signifies the rapid growth of a colonial settlement to a prolific city prior to and following the American Revolution. A detailed map study of the development of 8 Water Street will be later discussed.

A-1; 1710 "A Plan of the Town & Harbor of Charles-Towne" by Edward Crisp

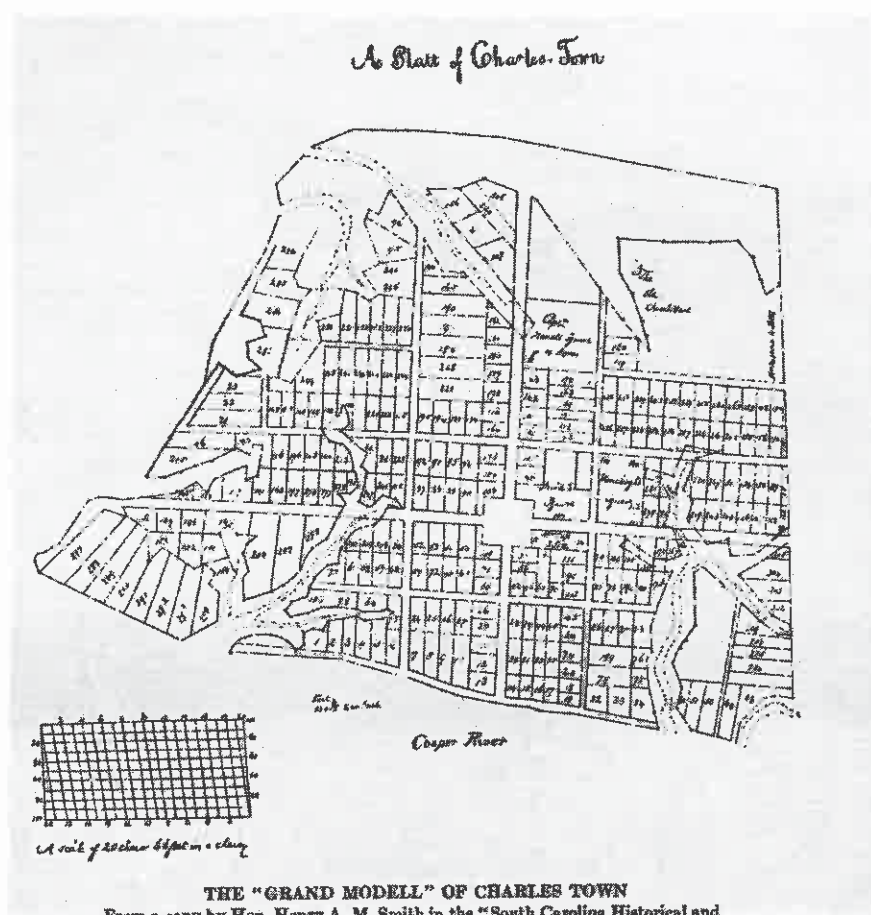


Source: From An Architectural Guide to Charleston, South Carolina, 1700-1900 by Albert Simons

A-2; 1739 "Iconography of Charles-Towne at High Water"



A-3 Grand Modell



Source: Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina

A-4 1788-E.Petrie "Iconography of Charleston"

