

## 81 Ashley Ave.

c. 1856-57

*Valuable Building Lots,*  
**BY THOMAS N. GADSDEN:**  
TO-MORROW, the 24th inst., will be sold, without any  
reserve,  
All that Lot, Piece, or Parcel of LAND, situate, lying  
and being at the north west corner of Lynch and Went-  
worth-streets, measuring in front on Lynch-street, 60  
feet, by 150 feet in depth on Wentworth-street.  
**ALSO,**  
All that LOT OF LAND, immediately to the north of  
the above, measuring in front on Lynch-street 30 ft. 9  
in. by 150 feet deep. **ALSO,**  
All that LOT OF LAND, immediately north of the  
above, measuring in front on Lynch-street 30 ft. 9 in.  
by 150 feet deep.  
Terms—half, cash; balance in one and two years, se-  
cured by bond, bearing interest from date, with a mort-  
gage of the property. Purchasers to pay me for papers.  
N. B.—A Plat can be seen at my office. **F 23**

**S.L. Glover**, an accountant and lumber business owner, sold the same property for \$4600 to contractor/carpenter **Albert Elfe**<sup>1</sup> on October 16, 1852.<sup>2</sup> The deed did not refer to a house on the property, and the position of 81 Ashley Ave. in relation to the larger lot indicates the existing house was built only when the lot was further subdivided. Mr. Elfe already owned the adjoining lot to the north, 89 Ashley Avenue (then known as 19 Lynch Street), where he likely operated a steam mill, and lived there in the 1848 and 1852 city directory (printed in 1851). It seems that Mr. Elfe bought the land neighboring his own house and undertook its development.

On February 23, 1852, a newspaper advertisement in the *Charleston Courier* announced the sale of “Valuable Building Lots” at the northwest corner of Wentworth Street and Lynch (Ashley) Avenue. The seller was not identified. The property, which totaled 120 feet fronting on Ashley Ave. and 150 feet deep, would eventually become 81 and 83 Ashley Ave. The advertisement did not refer to any buildings on the property at the time, clearly establishing an earliest possible date for construction as 1852.



<sup>1</sup> (b. abt. 1805)

<sup>2</sup> Deed book S12, page 561

The first unambiguous reference to the house at 81 Ashley Ave. appeared in the February 27, 1858 edition of the *Charleston Mercury* when the "New and Elegant Mansion" at the northwest corner of Lynch (Ashley Ave.) and Wentworth Streets was listed for sale.<sup>3</sup> According to the advertisement, "This establishment has been finished but recently, and is not only elegant without, but within." The house does not seem to have sold and was perhaps used as rental property by Mr. Elfe while marketing continued.

Mr. Elfe sold the new house to clothing store owner **William Matthiessen** for \$9000 on December 31, 1859.<sup>4</sup> The lot had been reduced to its current size, 74 by 113 feet. The sale included the right to have windows on the north side of any house in hallways or stairs. To preserve privacy, however, the deed specified that any such windows would be glazed using ground glass. Mr. Matthiessen was living in the house when the city performed a census in 1861. When Mr. Matthiessen owned the house, the county tax records reflected that the house was three stories and wooden.

Each of the next several transfers were to short-term owners. First, Mr. Matthiessen sold the house to **Lemuel Crane and James M. Bradley** on November 9, 1865, with buildings for \$30,000.<sup>5</sup> Next, those two men sold the house to **Edward A. Desloude** for \$60,000 on the same day.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Mr. Desloude sold the property to insurance company owner **William Heriot**<sup>7</sup> and others on May 30, 1866.<sup>8</sup> In 1870, Mr. Heriot lived in the house with his wife, Catherine; seven other family members; and seven others including domestic servants and their families.

On April 2, 1872, the house was sold at auction for \$6100 to **John Grimball and Berkeley Grimball**; the sale was recorded on May 1, 1872.<sup>9</sup> An ad (right) appearing in the *Charleston Daily News* a few days ahead of the sale described the

## Private Sales.

*A New and Elegant Mansion, with Southerly front, at Private Sale.*

**By Bennett & Rhett.**

Will be sold, that very fine RESIDENCE, located at the northwest corner of Wentworth and Lynch-streets. This establishment has been finished but recently, and is not only elegant without, but within; contains every item necessary for the comfort and convenience of a large family. There are water privileges and gas introduced throughout the house. It has three fine piazzas, 12 feet deep, and the rooms are ample, with high ceilings, and finished at considerable expense. On the premises are fine accommodations for servants, &c., &c. There is a large cistern, also a good well of water. The Lot, which is considerably higher than the streets around it, measures 72 feet on Lynch by 113 feet on Wentworth-street, more or less. The location is one of the finest in the city. To one wishing to purchase, a fine opportunity is afforded. For further particulars, terms, which will be accommodating, &c., apply as above, at

February 27 stuth NO. 28 BROAD-ST.

**By J. FRASER MATHEWES.**

**R**EFEREE'S SALE—HANDSOME RESIDENCE, desirably located.—Haynesworth, Trustee, vs. Heriot, Trustee, et al.

By virtue of the decree of the Hon. R. P. Graham, Judge of the First Circuit, I will sell on TUESDAY, the 2d day of April next, at the corner of Broad and East Bay streets, at 11 o'clock,

That desirably located LOT and commodious and well finished three story RESIDENCE and outbuildings, northwest corner of Wentworth and Lynch streets, containing eight rooms, pantry, dressing rooms, study, bath rooms and water-works, kitchen, servants' rooms, two good attic house and stable; gas throughout the house. Lot measures 113 feet on Wentworth street, by 74 feet on Lynch street.

Terms—One-third cash; balance in one and two years, secured by bond of the purchaser and mortgage of the premises, with interest. Property to be insured and policy assigned. All previous taxes and first instalment of city tax for 1872 already paid. Purchaser to pay the subsequent instalments and for papers and stamps.

**J. FRASER MATHEWES,**  
mch14-thStu1  
Special Referee.

<sup>3</sup> Feb. 27, 1858, *Charleston Mercury* at 3

<sup>4</sup> Deed book L14, page 163

<sup>5</sup> Deed book A14 (No. 5), page 133

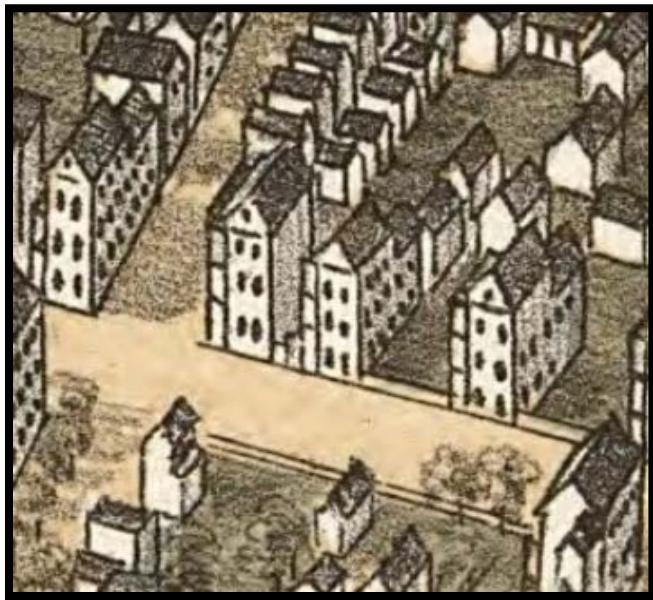
<sup>6</sup> Deed book A14 (No. 5), page 135

<sup>7</sup> (b. Aug. 3, 1812; d. Nov. 5, 1875)

<sup>8</sup> Deed book A14 (No. 7), page 370

<sup>9</sup> Deed book V15, page 159

three-story house with attic rooms as “handsome,” “well-finished,” and “commodious.”<sup>10</sup> During the 1870s, the three-story house was valued between \$6100 and \$5200 according to the tax records for that window.



John Grimball<sup>11</sup> was born on June 23, 1800, and went to New Jersey for college, graduating from Princeton University in 1819. (At the time of his death, he was the school’s oldest living graduate.) When he returned to South Carolina, Mr. Grimball established himself as a rice planter, but his family wealth meant he did not need to rely on his agricultural pursuits to sustain himself: “A large patrimony put him above any scuffle for the almighty dollar; a liberal education had broadened his mind and made him a lover of general culture.” According to his obituary, “with broad intellect, extensive research, and exalted moral character, he lived the life of the ideal Southern planter at his plantation in St. Paul’s Parish, Colleton

district.” Mr. Grimball was active both in state government and local organizations; he served in the Statehouse as a representative and then a state senator and, after the Civil War, became involved in the Library Society. He died on March 7, 1892, at his home.

Mr. Grimball’s son (and co-owner), John Berkeley Grimball,<sup>12</sup> followed in his father’s footsteps. After graduating from the College of Charleston, the younger Mr. Grimball practiced law in Charleston for some time. However, he abandoned that career and instead became a planter. He had travelled to Asheville, North Carolina in the summer of 1899 for health reasons, and died there on July 14, 1899.

Upon the death of both owners, the heirs conveyed the house to **Edmund Paslay Grice** on July 30, 1900.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Grice was born in Laurens, South Carolina on December 31, 1863. He worked with the People’s Bank for more than thirty years, working his way up from the bottom to become vice president of the bank. In addition to being one of the founders of the South Carolina Bankers’ Association, he held positions with many smaller banks in the Lowcountry including the Farmers & Merchants Bank at Moncks Corner, the Bank of St. Stephens, and the Bank of St. George.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after Mr. Grice bought the house, the Sanborn Insurance map for 1902 was released, for the first time including western Harleston Village. At that time, the house was shown as a three story

<sup>10</sup> Charleston Daily News, Mar. 28, 1872, at 2

<sup>11</sup> (b. June 23, 1800; d. Mar. 7, 1892)

<sup>12</sup> (b. Oct. 13, 1833; d. July 14, 1899)

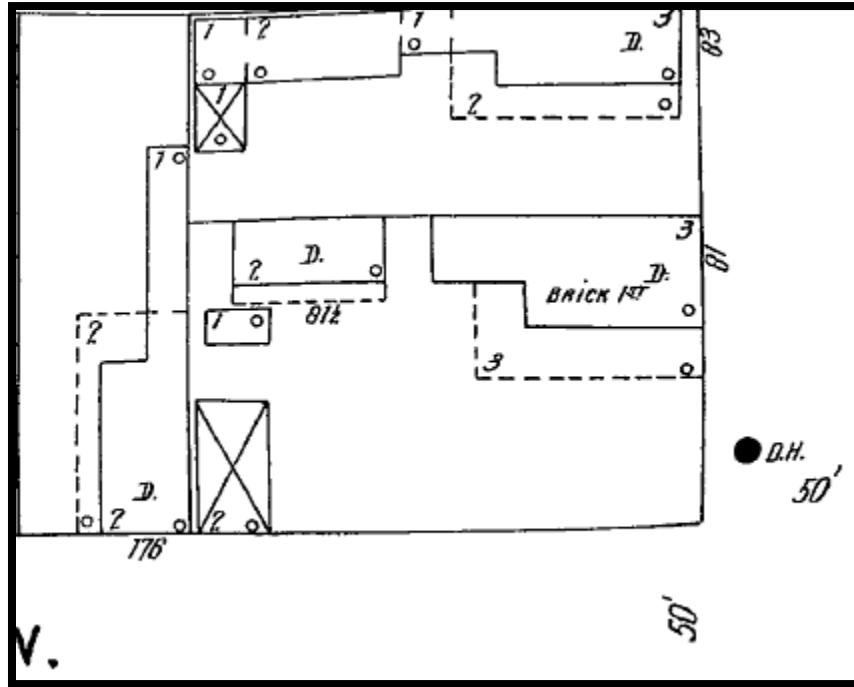
<sup>13</sup> Deed book Q22, page 232

<sup>14</sup> “Edmund P. Grice Claimed by Death,”

house with triple piazzas on the south side. A two-story dependency stood at the northwest corner of the lots numbered 81 1/2. There was a two-story non-residential building fronting on Wentworth Street.

Mr. Grice<sup>15</sup> died at his home on Ashley Ave. and his will was probated in 1923. He left the house

to his wife, Julia,<sup>16</sup> for the term of her life and then to his daughters **Ruth Grice** and **Dorothy Grice**. Mrs. Julia Grice died in 1932, and Ruth Grice conveyed her share of the house to her brother, **George Daniel Grice**, for \$9000 on July 30, 1953.<sup>17</sup> Another sister, Dorothy Grice, who still owned her own one-half interest and lived there at times, conveyed her share to her brother on January 4, 1966.<sup>18</sup>



College, headmaster of the Beaufort Academy, and founder of the Charleston College Preparatory School.<sup>19</sup> He organized and was executive director of the South Carolina Independent School Association. He joined the faculty of the College of Charleston in 1932 and, in 1945, was named president of the college. Because of his efforts, the college obtained a portion of the Fort John Quarantine Station on James Island.

By the 1930s, the house had been converted into three separate units, with the Grice family occupying at least two of them at times. By the 1950s, a fourth unit had been created in the house.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. George Grice<sup>21</sup> died on May 17, 1977, and his will was probated in 1977,<sup>22</sup> leaving a life estate to his sister, Ruth Grice. Ruth died on July 9, 1979, and Mr. Grice's daughter, **Marguerite Grice**

<sup>15</sup> (b. Dec. 31, 1863; d. July 16, 1923)

<sup>16</sup> (b. Julia Bonell, Jan. 18, 1862; Feb. 7, 1932)

<sup>17</sup> Deed book K57, page 617

<sup>18</sup> Deed book R84, page 27

<sup>19</sup> "G.D. Grice, Retired College head, Dies," Charleston Evening Post, May 17, 1977, at 1

<sup>20</sup> Renters included Mrs. Geneva T. Graham (1961); Percival H. Whaley (1961); Josephine Dingle (1968); and Diane Odom (1976).

<sup>21</sup> (b. Nov. 6, 1900; d. May 17, 1977)

<sup>22</sup> Probate file 77-389

**Arnau**,<sup>23</sup> got the house through a conveyance from Dorothy Grice on March 26, 1981.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Arnau sold the house to **Firstart** for \$250,000 on August 17, 1987.<sup>25</sup>

As a result of a lawsuit, a master conveyed the property to **Citadel Federal Savings Bank** on November 29, 1988, for \$500.<sup>26</sup> The bank resold the property to **Richard S. Fitzharris** on January 17, 1989, for \$235,000.<sup>27</sup> Mr. Fitzharris transferred a one-half interest to **Vera B. Fitzharris** on February 28, 1992.<sup>28</sup>

The Fitzharrises sold the house to **George Lutz**, vice president of International Operations, for \$485,000 on December 28, 1993.<sup>29</sup> He conveyed a one-half interest to **Mary Ann G. Lutz** on March 10, 1995.<sup>30</sup> The couple occupied the house.

The Lutzes sold the house to **Dixie Developers, LLC** on May 14, 1998 for \$637,500.<sup>31</sup> The property was subdivided on July 27, 1999, carving off the two-story frame residence facing on Wentworth at the extreme southwest corner of the lot.<sup>32</sup> Several renters occupied the house in 2000.<sup>33</sup>

After just more than one year, Dixie Developers, LLC began a bizarre set of ping-ponging transfers. Dixie Developers, LLC sold the main house and remaining property to **Adam K. and Laura M. Kernen** on October 15, 1999, for \$705,000.<sup>34</sup> The couple and the LLC then traded the house back and forth in a series of five exchanges before the house finally ended with the LLC in 2003.<sup>35</sup>

The house was converted into five condominiums between the main house and dependency on February 25, 2004.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Marguerite "Teba" Grice Arnau was a retired office administrator with Charleston Orthopaedic Associates when she died on December 28, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> [Deed book Z124, page 341 \(Why did Dorothy have an interest?\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Deed book W167, page 834

<sup>26</sup> Deed book W179, page 885

<sup>27</sup> Deed book D181, page 496 (refiled at deed book S181, page 715)

<sup>28</sup> Deed book Z210, page 643

<sup>29</sup> Deed book T236, page 61

<sup>30</sup> Deed book H253, page 44

<sup>31</sup> Deed book T302, page 48

<sup>32</sup> Plat book DC, page 36

<sup>33</sup> Renters included Gregory Devin (1999); Daniel R. Ellison (1999); Quinn White (1999); Mary Combs (2000-01); Ashley L. Neely (1999-2000); Spencer D. White (1999-2000); Christine Will (1999-2000); Kurt A. Weinberger (1998-2001); and Anne W. Wegman (2000-01).

<sup>34</sup> Deed book A336, page 80

<sup>35</sup> Deed book M354, page 599 (Sep. 7, 2000) (to LLC); deed book L412, page 807 (July 30, 2002) (to Kernens); deed book C418, page 810 (Sept. 24, 2002) (to LLC); deed book D456, page 224 (July 7, 2003) (to Kernens); deed book M473, page 506 (Oct. 29, 2003) (to LLC)

<sup>36</sup> Deed book W526, page 759