

18 AMHERST STREET: A HISTORY

Clemson University/ College of Charleston
Master of Science in Historic Preservation
Historical Research Methods

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
18 Amherst Today	4
Architectural Description	5
Hampstead Square	6
Ownership	9
Historic Charleston Foundation	11
Conclusion	13
Annotated Chain of Title	15
List of Figures	21
Bibliography	22

Introduction

Of all the artifacts buildings are said to hold the most historic integrity. While they are often overlooked as historic resources, buildings allow us to understand culture, design, and the lifestyles of those who once inhabited the dwelling. From the study of buildings historians can determine the purpose of a room, how it was used, and how it lived. Materials and minor details reveal the true integrity of a structure, and it is up to preservationists and historians to observe these details and bring their stories to life. The study of 18 Amherst Street tells a familiar tale about former residents, history, and its architectural developments over the course of nearly 200 years.



Figure 1: 18 Amherst Present Day

18 Amherst Today

The building remains in its original lot at the intersection of Amherst Street and Orange Court. It is currently used as a multi-family residential

dwelling. As of 2010 it

was valued at \$82,149 and covers a .9 acre lot. The building is presently owned by East Side Neighborhood Housing. From the exterior, the structure appears to be in good condition and well-maintained.

Architectural Description

This two-story, timber framed dwelling is located in the historic Charleston Hampstead square neighborhood, known today as the East Side. Based off stylistic evidence such as cut nails and lath, it is suspected that the dwelling at 18 Amherst Street was constructed in approximately 1820-1830¹. The house was built as a “single pile dwelling with a central passage plan”², with two later additions to the rear of the house. In plan, the shape of the house is

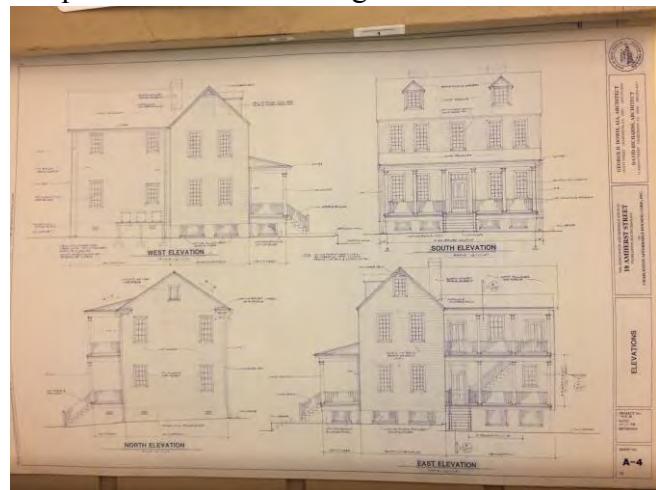


Figure 2: Elevation Drawings, 1993

rectangular, with the main entry facing Amherst Street. The front of the house, and what appears to be the original portion of the house, has a modern asphalt shingle front gable roof, whereas the back addition has a side gabled asphalt roof. On the front of the house is a front facing porch with a low-pitched shed roof also clad with asphalt shingle.



Figure 3: Sketch from 1985 Survey

Source, Carter Truoggs p.250

² ibid., 236

The principal façade of the house faces south towards Amherst Street. Running five bays deep from east to west, the exterior is clad in light blue clapboard siding. There is minimal ornamentation to

and the Lowcountry, 1670-1990: A Field

the front façade and details appear to be light and delicate, this is typical of the Federal style. A transom light mounts the main entrance, and windows on this façade are six over six double-hung sash windows. Two six over six gabled dormers are located on the front building roof.

Following a central passage plan, the main entry way leads to a central hallway. To the East and West ends of the building are two identical parlor rooms with interior fireplaces along the North wall.. The second floor of the front building follows the plan identically. When the rear addition was added to the North end of the house, the house expanded adding to the North end of the house. The rear addition is partitioned into three additional rooms, again following an identical plan for the second floor as well.

Hampstead Square



Figure 4: 1769 Hampstead Plan

18 Amherst Street is located in the center of the historic Hampstead Square Neighborhood. This area is now commonly referenced as the East Side. Merchant and slave broker, Henry Laurens, purchased the land from George Austin with plans to create an ideal community suburb³. Hampstead

³ Susan Millar Williams. ““East Side History Series: Hampstead.” *Trident Technical College Palmer News*. 6 October 2016, <http://ttcpalmernews.blogspot.com/2016/10/east-side-history-series-hampstead.html>

Square was developed on November 30th 1769⁴. Laurens had the land surveyed, and distributed into 140 plots⁵. The plots surrounded the central square of the neighborhood, which was composed of four large square parcels of land with a central garden. The inspiration for Hampstead came from 17th and 18th century English suburbs that Laurens likely encountered while abroad⁶. William Bamfield became partners with Henry Laurens in this venture, and eventually this passed on to their children. A majority of the lots purchased were by wealthy rice planters, or those of prominent families. Some were sold to families of free people of color⁷.

The neighborhood endured the test of time barely surviving the 1886 earthquake,



and wars that tore
through the city. Part
of Hampstead Square
fell casualty to the
damage of the
Revolutionary War
when it began the
central battleground in

Figure 5: Hampstead Mall

⁴ Nic Butler, “The Lot and the Neighborhood.” Butler’s Follynot. February 2015, <https://follynot.org/lot-and-neighborhood/>

⁵ Dale Rosengarten et all, *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side During the Nineteenth Century* (Charleston: Charleston Museum, 1987), 10

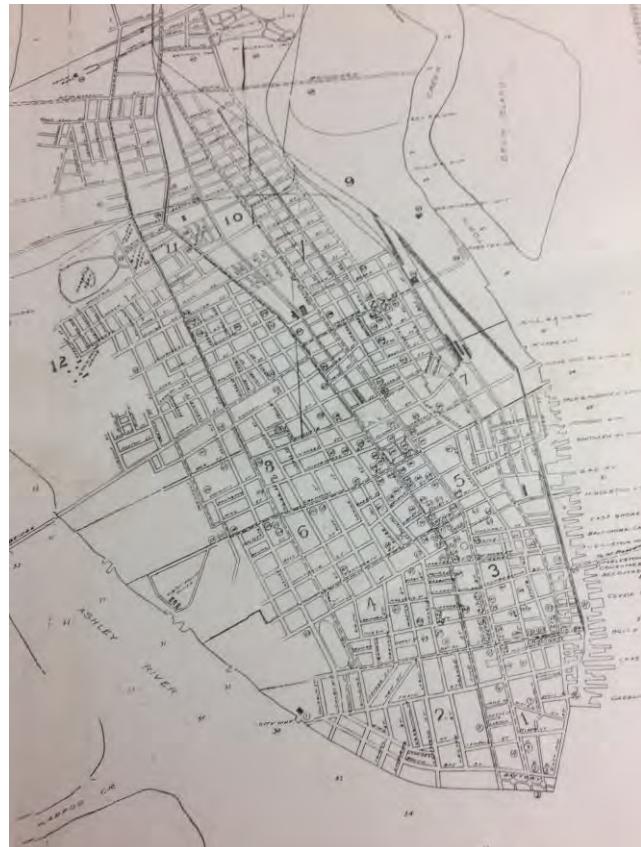
⁶ Ibid. 10

⁷ Ibid. 14

1790⁸. By 1830 a majority of Hampstead Square underwent new residential construction, and officially became a suburb of the city of Charleston in 1849⁹. During the 19th century most of the tenants that inhabited Hampstead Square were immigrants, free people of color, non- house trade slaves. Housing in Hampstead was less expensive in comparison to the rest of the city, and there was minimal regulation when it came to housing because it this particular neighborhood was not a high priority to the city. Tenants were free to build wood houses here when it was not allowed in other wards due to the risk of fire. More African- Americans moved to the neighborhood shortly after the war had ended¹⁰.

The residential population in Hampstead Square grew significantly during these years.

Patterns of growth in the square continued with the new construction of the Northeastern Railroad in 1865, and the Cigar Factory (then a cotton factory) in 1882¹¹. This new wave of residents turned the neighborhood of Hampstead into quite the industrial



⁸ Susan Millar Williams. ““East Side History”
College Palmer News. 6 October 2016, <http://www.palmernews.org/2016/10/east-side-history-series-hampstead.html>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Notes from Susan William’s Presentation

center. Workers sought out housing within the area for a quick and inexpensive commute. The creation of the Cigar Factory and railroad in this area provided new opportunities and jobs for working class immigrants already in the area¹², as well as attracted more to the area. With new attraction to the neighborhood brought changes in traffic patterns, foot traffic, and street formation. Columbus Street was extended as a “thoroughfare” in 1905¹³, and America Street was also extended though the exact time frame is unknown. Today, these are still the main streets we can find running through the East Side.

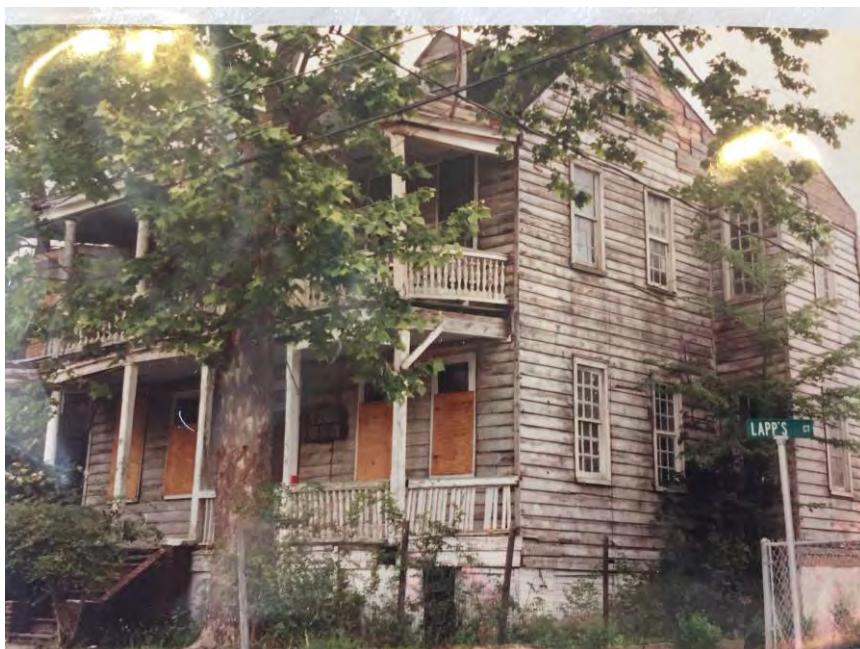


Figure 7: Exterior

By the mid-twentieth century, Hampstead Square was no more and the area has since been referred to as the East Side¹⁴. A majority of the buildings within the East Side are

residential buildings, with some small commercial buildings in between. For the most part the residential buildings appear to be in fair condition, some better than others. There

¹² Dale Rosengarten et all, *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side During the Nineteenth Century* (Charleston: Charleston Museum, 1987),

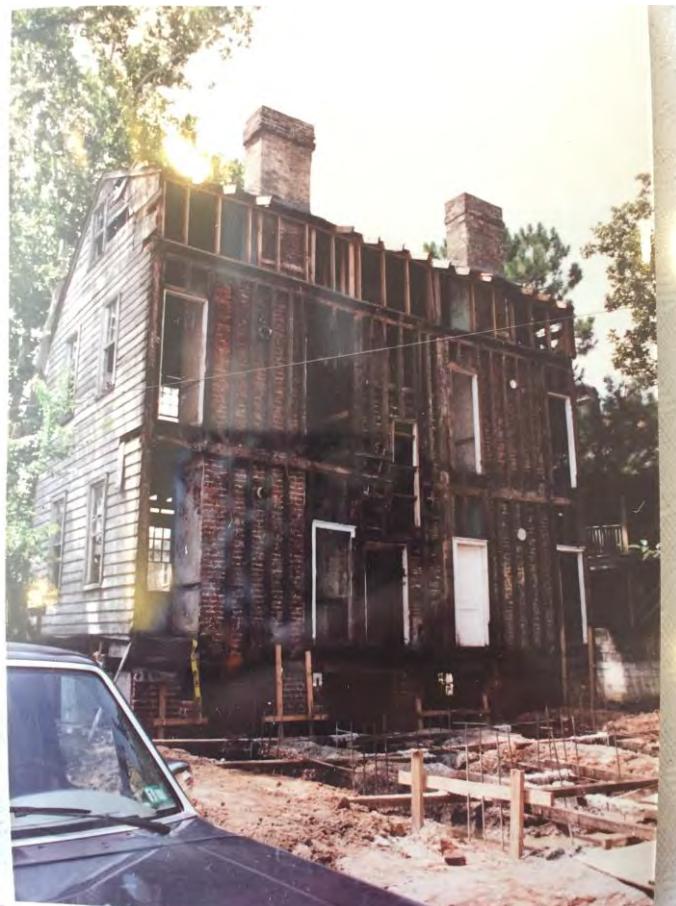
¹³ Susan Millar Williams. ““East Side History Series: Hampstead.” *Trident Technical College Palmer News*. 6 October 2016, <http://ttcpalmernews.blogspot.com/2016/10/east-side-history-series-hampstead.html>

¹⁴ Nic Butler, “The Lot and the Neighborhood.” Butler’s Follynot. February 2015, <https://follynot.org/lot-and-neighborhood/>

is a mix of new and old construction. Unfortunately, the East Side has not been well documented and has often been forgotten about in the past. There has been a shift in preservation initiatives over recent years in support of research and documentation of the East Side, however a majority of its current residents fear this will lead to gentrification and risk losing homes that have been in their families for generations.

Ownership

Since its initial construction in 1820, the rights and ownership of 18 Amherst Street has been passed through many hands, some only for a few months and some for decades. The deed research included in this paper goes back as far as 1852 before the deeds became illegible, but there is documentary evidence that the initial date of construction precedes this date. Based off the known deed research, it can be noted that during 1852 Anthony J. Salinas owned the lot. Salinas was a successful cotton and commission merchant of



Charleston, South Carolina during

Figure 8: Exterior before addition

this time¹⁵. In addition to the property at 18 Amherst Street, Anthony Salinas also owns the lot to the north of 18 Amherst¹⁶, which can be seen in later deeds. Salinas sells the 18 Amherst lot to the Ravenel and Company Trustees in 1852. At the time of sale the lot is measured to be 76'4" x 73'6". It is likely that the Ravenel and Company Trustees purchased this lot for further development of the area. It is unclear whether or not the Ravenel Company developed the property at all. Within a year it was sold to Benjamin D. Lazarus.

In 1856 Martha Rogers purchased the property from Eleazer Phillips. Martha Rogers, the widow of James Rogers, used this property to operate a boarding house according to the 1860 city directory¹⁷, however little information is known about the

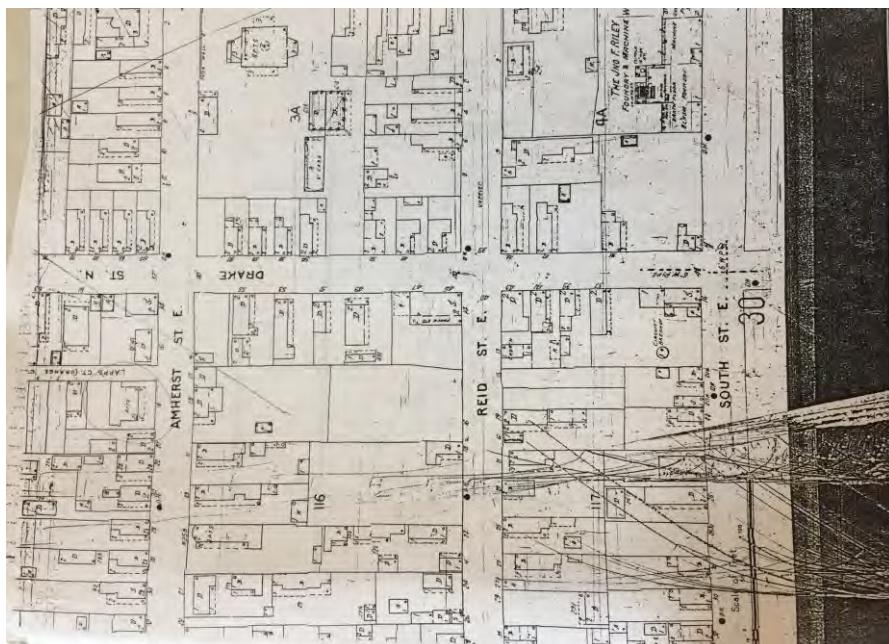


Figure 9: Plat map

boarding house itself. Martha was the mother of Mary J. Rogers-Desportes, who went on to marry William Desportes. In 1868, Martha sold

¹⁵ Nic Butler. "Charleston's Hampstead Square." Charleston Time machine. 23 October 2014, <https://charlestontimemachine.org/2014/10/23/charlestons-hampstead-square/>

¹⁶ Charleston County. Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed Book G168 p.175.

¹⁷ Nic Butler. "Charleston's Hampstead Square." Charleston Time machine. 23 October 2014, <https://charlestontimemachine.org/2014/10/23/charlestons-hampstead-square/>

the ownership of the property to her son-in- law William before she died in 1892.

William Desportes was engineer and official of Charleston Gas Works, a South Carolina industrial company¹⁸. William Desportes kept the property in his family and passed it on in 1916 to his daughter Cornelia P. Desportes. Being an unmarried woman, it is likely that Cornelia inherited the property from her father, who died in approximately 1903. Cornelia Desportes owns the property until 1931 and sells it to her sister Emma Delaphine Coleman. Emma dies in 1934, and leaves the property to her four children equally. The property at 18 Amherst Street stayed within the Desportes family for years until 1943 when it is sold to Melvin Cale.

**Historic
Charleston
Foundation**
As time
progressed the
ownership of 18

Amherst Street

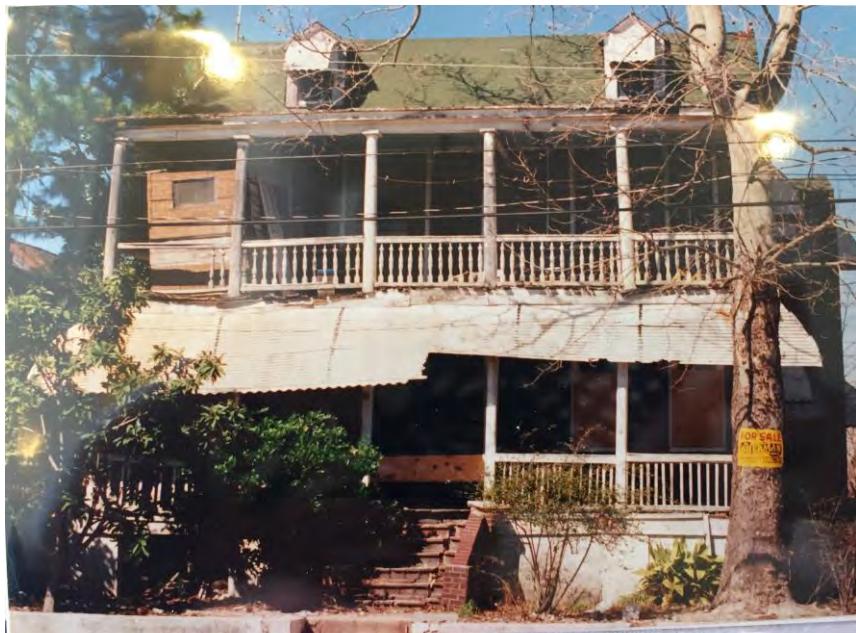


Figure 10: Dilapidated Exterior

continued to be passed on. By 1987, the house at 18 Amherst Street is in questionable condition. During this point in time the house can be estimated to be about 150 years old.

Victoria Strider bequeathed the deed of the house to Historic Charleston Foundation

¹⁸ The Vernacular Architecture of Charleston and the Lowcountry, 1670-1990: A Field Guide, Carter Hudgins p.236

when she passes on June 29, 1987¹⁹. When Historic Charleston Foundation obtained the property, it was important to preserve what was left of the original house. By this point, the house was in dilapidated condition. With a goal of saving as much historic integrity as possible, Historic Charleston Foundation set a rehabilitation plan to bring the property back to life. Historic Charleston Foundation officially purchased the property during July 1987²⁰. By this point the landscaping was overgrown, the doors and windows were

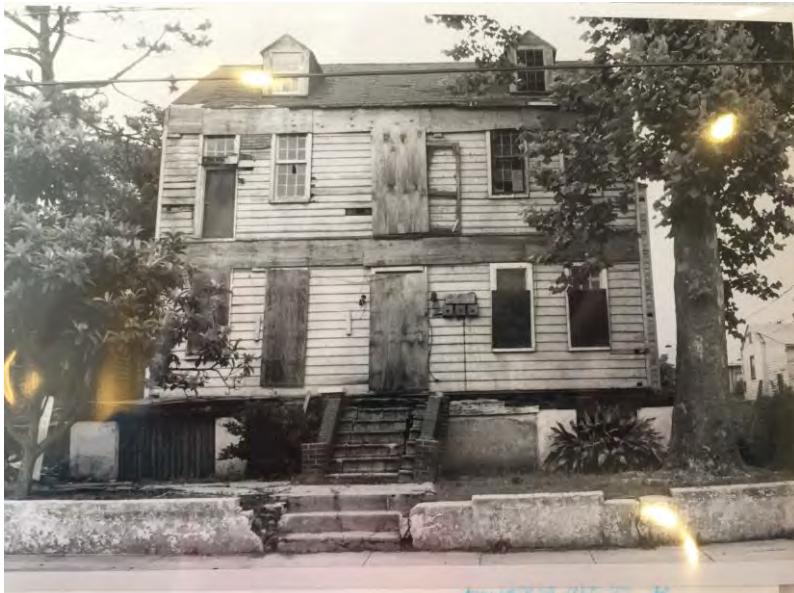


Figure 11: Dilapidated Exterior

boarded up, and overall the house was in disrepair. It would be a large investment to rehabilitate the property; but there was also a very small chance it would sell on its own. There is

record of rehabilitation efforts beginning February 2, 1989²¹ with the total cost estimating to be about \$110,000. By 1991, the dwelling is restored and ready to be sold. Prior to its sale to Charleston Affordable Housing, Historic Charleston Foundation placed a protective covenant on the property, which binds the owner by law to ensure the maintenance and preservation of the property. Charleston Affordable Housing then conveys this property to East Side Neighborhood housing, which owns the property to

¹⁹ RMC, Charleston, SC Deed Book G168 p.175.

²⁰ "Purchaser's Statement" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, 1 July, 1987

²¹ "Memorandum 18 Amherst Street" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, 2 February 1989, p.2

this day. The renovated property is used to provide larger and more affordable housing for low-to moderate-income families on the East Side²².

Each year, Historic Charleston Foundation conducts a report on each of their covenanted properties. This report reviews the condition of the exterior of the property to ensure that the owner is truly up keeping with the maintenance of the historic property. After the initial rehabilitation effort, 18 Amherst Street was continually maintained, negative comments on the report year to year included reports of litter or overgrowth surrounding the lot. The covenant on this lot still stands today.

Conclusion

While, the entirety of the original structure does not remain, portions of the original



Figure 12: 1994 Renovation

structure has
been
rehabilitated
and
preserved
for nearly
200 years.
The property
has been

through many owners, environmental hardships, and economic hardships. Preservation efforts by local groups have allowed the house could be born again. There is a minimal

²² David Slade, “City Buying Up Apartment Buildings.” *Post and Courier* (Charleston, SC), 26 December 2009.

amount of prior written research and information regarding this property, and the East Side in general. While there is still more to be researched about for this property, this report is able to provide a broad and comprehensive history on the structure, its history, and some of its past tenants.

Annotated Chain of Title

Date	Deed	Grantor	Grantee	Type	Lot Size	Price	Comments
1/23/10	O104 p.885	East Side Neighborhood Housing		Conveyance	51'x73' 6"	\$82,149	
10/29/93	T241 p.420	Charleston Affordable Housing	East Side Neighborhood Housing	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"	\$69,200	
6/19/91	U203 p.062	Historic Charleston Foundation	Charleston Affordable Housing	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"	\$50,000	
6/29/87	G168 p. 175	Victoria Strider	Historic Charleston Foundation	Bequest	51'x73' 6"		
12/9/86	X162 p.322	Louis E. Condon	Victoria Strider	Court Order	51'x73' 6"		Court order
3/24/70	F94 p.2	Edith H Tulen & Doris H Smalls	Issac Johnson	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		Renunciation of power
5/6/68	H90 p.357	Edith Tulen	Edith Tulen & Doris Smalls	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		½ interest
4/16/68	B90 p.350	OT Wallace	Edith Tulen	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		Court order vs Melvin Austin
10/14/47	E48 p.184	Harry D Cale	Melvin Austin & Nealy Austin	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		
4/1/46	P46 p.95	J. Earnest Westbury& Emma Lee Westbury	Harry D. Cale	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		
9/17/43	G44 p.205	Melvin Solomon	J. Earnest Westbury & Emma Lee Westbury	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"	\$1800	
9/17/43	F30 p.503	Emma Desportes Coleman/ William Coleman	Melvin Solomon	Conveyance	51'x73' 6"		
2/24/31	E35 p.542	Cornelia P. Desportes	Emma D Coleman		51'x73' 6"		
10/15/30	E25	May	Emma	Bequest	51'x73'	\$2,250	

	p.542	Campbell	Coleman		6"		
2/10/16	H28 p.2	WM A. Desportes	Cornelia P. Desportes		51'x73' 6"	\$800	
5/9/1868	E15 p.455	Martha E. Rogers	WM A. Desportes		51'x73' 6"	\$2500	
3/27/1856	T13 p.28	Eleazer Phillips	Martha E. Rogers		51'x73' 6"		
5/9/1853	X12 p.273	BD Lazarus	Eleazer Phillips		76'4" x73'6"		
5/27/1852	Q12 p.353	Ravenel & Company	BD Lazarus		76'4" x73'6"		
5/26/1852	U12 p.473	AJ Salinas	Ravenel Trustees		76'4" x73'6"		

Annotated Chain of Title

Date: 1852

Grantor: Anthony J. Salinas

Grantee: Ravenel & Company Trustees

Book & Page: U12 p.473

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Anthony J. Salinas owns the lot and sells to the Ravenel trustees. At the time of sale the lot is measured to be 76'4" x 73'6". The lot is sold to the Ravenel & Company trustees for \$1,441.

Date: May 27 1852

Grantor: Ravenel Trustees

Grantee: BD Lazarus

Book & Page: Q12 p.353

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Ravenel & Company Trustees, likely developers, sell the plot to BD Lazarus.

Date: May 9 1853

Grantor: BD Lazarus

Grantee: Eleazer Phillips

Book & Page: X12 p.273

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

BD Lazarus sells the lot to Eleazer Phillips

Date: March 27 1856

Grantor: Eleazer Phillips

Grantee: Martha E. Rogers

Book & Page: T13 p.28

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Eleazer Phillips sells the lot to Martha Rogers, a free black woman, who opens a boarding house here.

Date: May 9 1868

Grantor: Martha E. Rogers

Grantee: WM A. Desportes

Book & Page: E15 p.455

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Martha Rogers sells the property to WM A. Desportes, who owns the property until 1916.

Date: February 2 1916

Grantor: WM A. Desportes

Grantee: Cornelia P. Desportes

Book & Page: H28 p.2

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

WM A. Desportes leaves the property for his daughter Cornelia to keep the property in the family until she sells it in 1931.

Date: February 24 1931

Grantor: Cornelia P. Desportes

Grantee: Emma D. Coleman

Book & Page: E35 p.542

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Cornelia Desportes sells the property to Emma D. Coleman.

Date: October 15 1930

Grantor: May Campbell

Grantee: Emma Coleman

Book & Page: E35 p.542

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

The property was left to Emma Campbell, May Campbell Elizabeth Campbell Graham, JT Campbell and William Campbell. It was agreed between May, Elizabeth, JT, and William that Emma would own the property and the rest would gain $\frac{1}{2}$ interest. The lot as sold for \$1 with undivided one moiety.

Date: September 17 1943

Grantor: Emma Desportes Coleman & William Coleman

Grantee: Melvin Solomon

Book & Page: F30 p.503

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Emma Desportes Coleman died January 1934. She, "divided all property to her daughter Eulalie Coleman Morris until she marries, and provided there in that in case of either whent then her estate is to be equally divided between her children Tom Desportes Coleman, Nealie Coleman, and Eulalie equally." Eulalie died in October 1942 and left the land to Emma Delaphine Morris. The property was owned equally between Tom, Nealie and Emma so they sold it for \$1500.

Date: September 17 1943

Grantor: Melvin Solomon

Grantee: J. Earnest Westbury & Emma Lee Westbury

Book & Page: G44 p.205

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Melvin Solomon sold the lot to the Westburys for \$1800.

Date: April 1 1946

Grantor: J. Earnest Westbury & Emma Lee Westbury

Grantee: Harry D. Cale

Book & Page: D. 46 p.95

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Westburys sold the lot to Harry D. Cale.

Date: October 14 1947

Grantor: Harry D. Cale

Grantee: Melvin Austin & Nealy Austin

Book & Page: E48 p.184

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Cale sold to the Austins.

Date: April 16 1916

Grantor: OT Wallace

Grantee: Edith Tulen

Book & Page: B90 p.350

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Judge OT Wallace ruled in favor of Edith Tulen for the property in a court order vs. Melvin and Nealy Austin.

Date: May 6 1968

Grantor: Edith Tulen

Grantee: Edith Tulen & Doris Smalls

Book & Page: H90 p.357

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Property was now owned at ½ interest between Edith and Doris.

Date: March 24 1970

Grantor: Edith Tulen & Doris Smalls

Grantee: Issac Johnson

Book & Page: F94 p.2

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Sold in renunciation of power.

Date: December 9 1986

Grantor: Louis E. Condon

Grantee: Victoria Strider

Book & Page: X162 p.322

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Judge Louis Condon ruled in favor of Victoria Strider for property in court against Albert Mallard.

Date: June 29 1987

Grantor: Victoria Strider

Grantee: Historic Charleston Foundation

Book & Page: G168 p.175

Type: Bequest

Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Victoria Strider left her property to Historic Charleston Foundation after she died.

Date: June 19 1991

Grantor: Historic Charleston Foundation

Grantee: Charleston Affordable Housing Act
Book & Page: U203 p.062
Type: Real Estate
Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Historic Charleston Foundation sold the property to the Charleston Affordable Housing Act.

Date: October 29 1993
Grantor: Charleston Affordable Housing Act
Grantee: East Side Neighborhood
Book & Page: T241 p.420
Type: Conveyance
Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

Charleston Affordable Housing sold the property to the East Side Neighborhood

Date: January 28 2010
Grantor: East Side Neighborhood
Grantee:
Book & Page: O104 p.885
Type: Conveyance
Lot: Amherst Street NW Orange Court WS

The East Side Neighborhood owns this property.

List of Figures

Fig 1. "18" Amherst Street, 1 December 2016. Photographed by Diana Inthavong.

Fig 2."Elevation Drawings" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, 1993.

Fig 3. "18" Amherst Street- 1985 Survey" *South Carolina Department Archives and History Survey*.

Fig 4."Hampstead Map" *Trident Technical College Palmer News*, 1769.

Fig 5. Jowitt, Thad. *Map of Charleston City Directory and Business Register*,1869.

Fig 6. McCrady Bros & Cheves. *Map of the City of Charleston and Vicinity*, 1919

Fig 7. "18" Amherst" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, ND.

Fig 8. "18" Amherst" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, ND.

Fig 9. "Plat Map" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, ND.

Fig 10. "18" Amherst" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, ND.

Fig 11."18" Amherst" *Historic Charleston Foundation Archives*, 1994.

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