



HISTORIC RESEARCH REPORT

No. 84-86 SOCIETY STREET
CHARLESTON, SC



*1955 photograph of Haverty's Annex, 84 Society Street,
courtesy of the News & Courier*

REPORT BY:

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CONSTRUCTION:

No. 84-86 Society Street was constructed between October 28, 1954 and March 13, 1955 by Theatres Realty Company, known today as The Beach Company and historically operated by members of the Sottile family.¹ Designed in the Art Moderne architectural style, the structure is made of cinder block with a brick veneer, and built as a one-story commercial strip housing three storefronts (Figure 1). Character-defining elements of the Art Moderne style include its low, horizontal plan with principal vertical square columns, a flat roof and metal decking/parapet.

ARCHITECT:

It is unknown if Theatres Realty Company utilized the work of a formal architect for the construction of the building. The 1954 permit for the building's construction, which may have recorded a firm or project contact, was lost in a municipal fire (a permit index does, however, survive, confirming a permit was filed by the company for the property in 1954) and newspaper articles announcing the structure's completion did not attribute the building to a single architect or firm. The design and scale of the structure, however, reflect that of the c.1953 Harold's Cabin that formerly occupied No. 84 Wentworth Street, which was also owned by the Sottile family (Figure 2).² No. 84 Wentworth Street, demolished c. 2003, featured a dual storefront and also contained metal decking, a brick-veneer façade and Art Moderne elements similar to that of No. 84-86 Society Street.

No. 84 Wentworth Street was designed by well-known Charleston architect Augustus E. Constantine (1898-1976), who was frequently commissioned by Theatres Realty Company. No. 84-86 Society Street, however, was not found within Constantine's work portfolio or project resumes at the South Carolina Historical Society.³

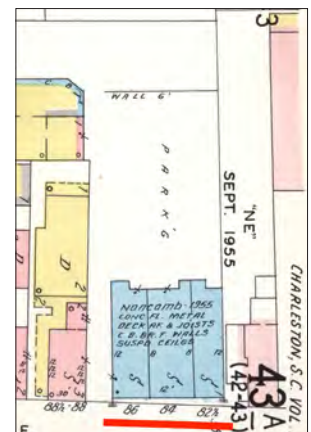


Figure 1: 1955 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Sheet 43, Charleston, SC



Figure 2: LEFT: 1954 photograph of No. 84 Wentworth St.; RIGHT: 1970s photograph of No. 84 Wentworth St. (courtesy of Historic Charleston Foundation)

1 "Permit #26581," 86 Society Street, City of Charleston Records Management, Charleston, SC; "To Rent," 13 March 1955, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

2 "84 Wentworth Street," Property Vertical File, Margaretta Childs Archives, Historic Charleston Foundation, Charleston, SC.

3 A.E. Constantine Papers, 1913-1975, Call No. 1239.00, South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, Charleston, SC.

BRIEF HISTORY:

The property now known as No. 84-86 Society Street was owned by Theatres Realty Company as early as 1927 and was historically occupied by the c. 1911 Victory Theater.⁴ In 1946, Theatres Realty Company demolished the theater to create a large parking lot, as president Albert Sottile claimed post-World War II “government restrictions” prevented a redevelopment of the property.⁵ The *News and Courier* recorded later that year that “material shortages” made it “more profitable to tear down than to build” for most property owners in the city, stating the “demolition of the Victory Theater, at 86 Society Street, illustrates this point.”⁶



INTRODUCING (TOMORROW 9 A. M.)

Haverty's
ESTABLISHED 1885
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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84
SOCIETY ST.**

Doors swing open promptly at 9 a. m. at HAVERTY'S NEW ANNEX... Furniture, Bedding and Appliance Prices have been chopped to the bone at our loss and your gain! FREE SOUVENIRS FOR ADULTS—BALLOONS FOR KIDDIES!

Yes, we finally had to obtain more display space for our growing inventory! . . . At our additional annex space you'll find exciting bargain pick-ups for all your needs! . . . Some new slightly scratched from shipping, some trade-in pieces, some used! All serviceable—and can be with a TINY DOWN PAYMENT—EASY MONTHLY TERMS!

Figure 3: “Haverty’s Annex,” 20 October 1955, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

Eight years later, in 1954, the company submitted a building permit to construct a one-story commercial strip to accommodate Charleston’s growing economy. In a March 13, 1955 advertisement in the *News and Courier*, the Worth Agency, another Sottile-family real estate company, advertised the rental of “three new stores...around the corner from King Street 100% shopping section” on Society Street. With a Greyhound bus station directly across the street, the agency deemed the location as “the busiest spot in the downtown retail business district” and highlighted the structure’s fireproof construction, free parking lot and “modern and attractive front” with stores that could be sold separately or conjoined.⁷ The next month, Seaboard Finance announced their occupancy at No. 84-86 Society Street, as well as “Haverty’s Annex,” a warehouse for Haverty’s Furniture Store at No. 294 King Street, also designed by Constantine (Figure 3).⁸ Today, the property continues to serve as commercial storefronts for local Charleston businesses and remains within Theatre Realty Company’s ownership.

INTEGRITY:

No. 84-86 Society Street has experienced little to no alterations since its 1954-1955 construction. The building’s character-defining original elements, such as the overall footprint, tripartite storefront, brick veneer, metal decking and square Art-Moderne full-height piers are intact and remain in good condition. Building permit and Board of Architectural Review files prove that the structure has only seen minor cosmetic alterations, none of which have jeopardized the exterior historic integrity of the structure.

With the loss of many of its contemporary structures throughout the city, including No. 84 Wentworth Street, No. 84-86 Society Street survives as both a unique and well-preserved example of a mid-century commercial strip in post-World War II Charleston.

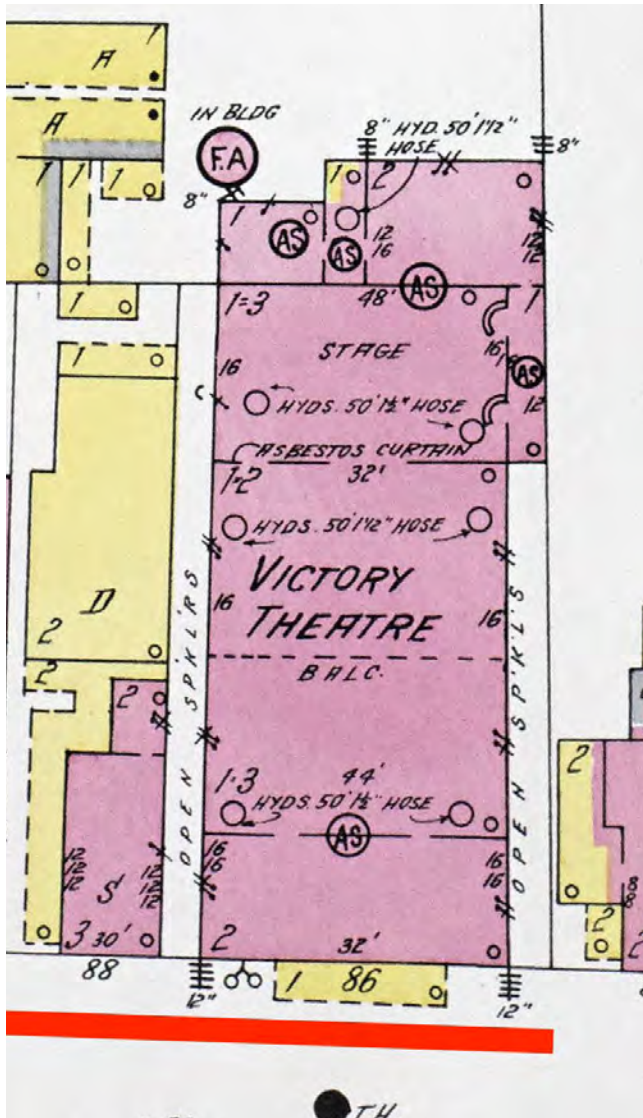
4 Charleston County Register of Deeds, Deed Book N34, Page 576, Charleston County Deed Office, Charleston, SC.

5 “Victory Theater Will be Razed,” 10 October 1946, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

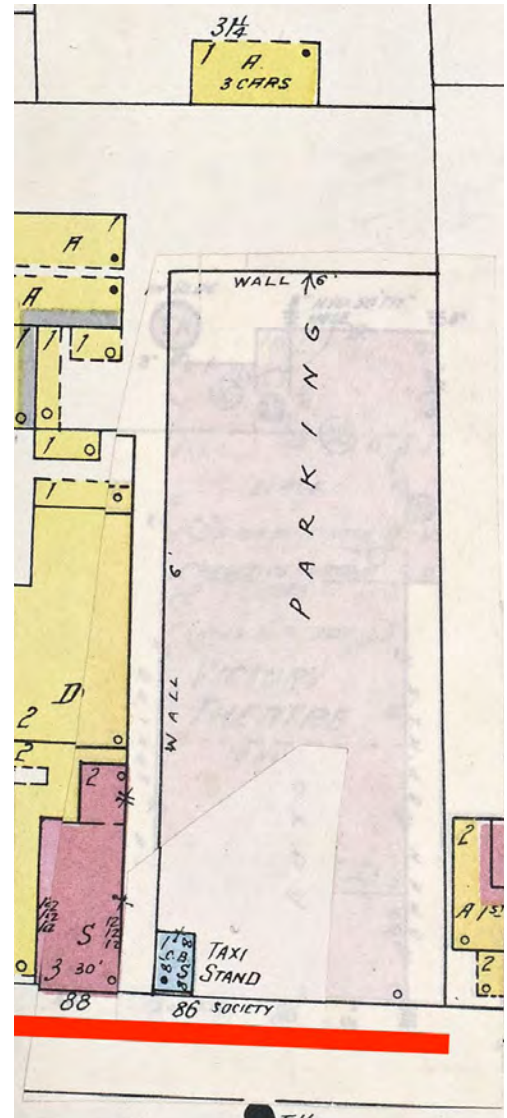
6 “Wrecking Crew Razes Old Victory Theater,” 17 December 1946, *Evening Post*, Charleston, SC.

7 “To Rent,” 13 March 1955, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

8 Seaboard Finance Corporation,” 18 April 1955, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC; “Haverty’s Annex,” 20 October 1955, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.



1944 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Sheet 43, Charleston, SC



1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Sheet 43, Charleston, SC