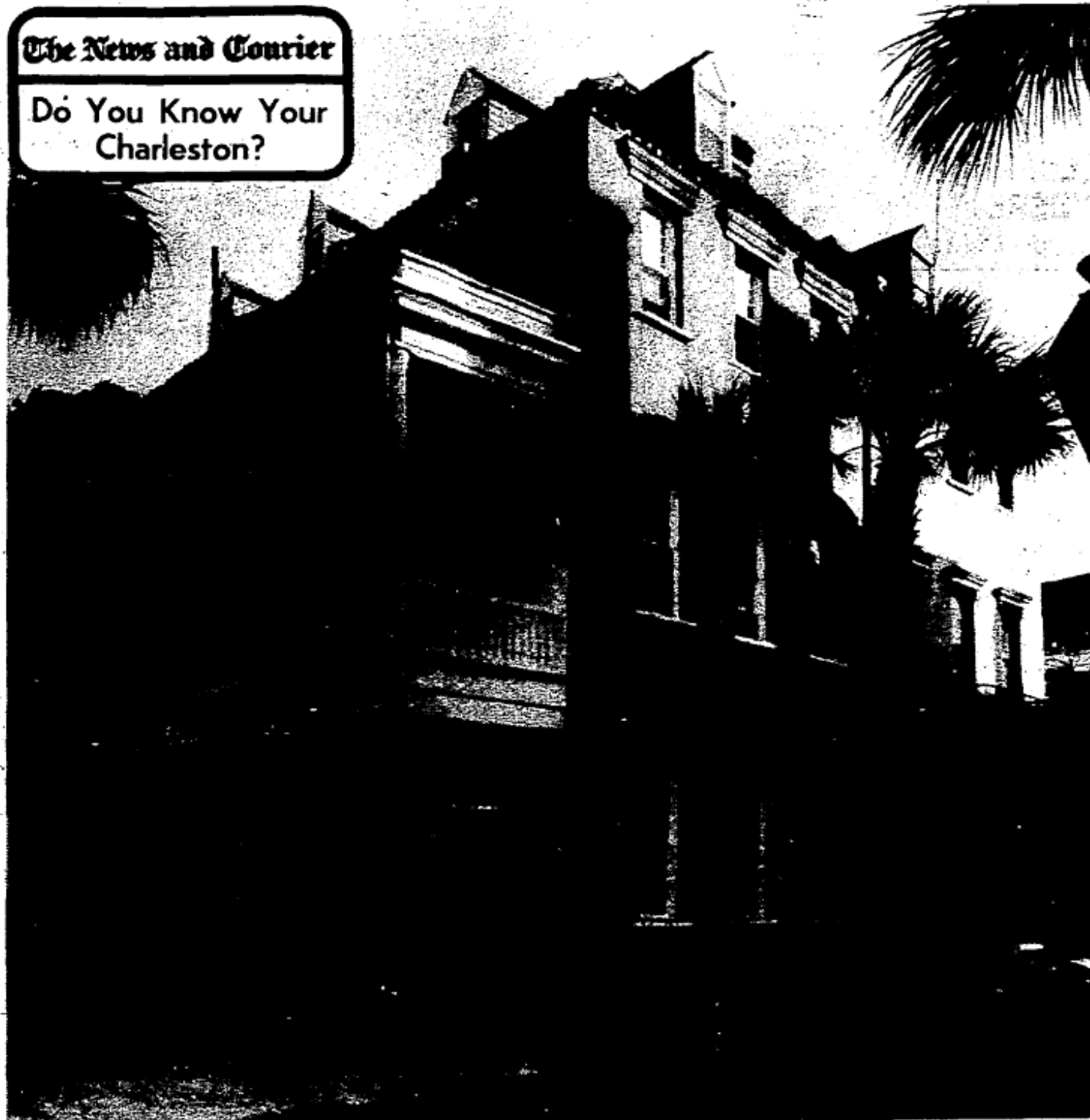


2 Queen St. Residences Were Built By Merchant

The News and Courier

Do You Know Your Charleston?



Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

Residences At 44, 46 Queen St.

By ROBERT P. STOCKTON
Special Writer

The two residences at 44 and 46 Queen St. appear to have been built sometime between 1796 and 1802 by Abraham Sasportas, a French-born Jewish merchant.

Sasportas bought the site of the two houses on Aug. 3, 1796, from Alexander Edwards and his wife, Mary McPherson DeSaussure Edwards.

The site of the two houses was part of a larger tract, consisting of two lots, each measuring 40 feet in front on Queen Street.

Each of the large lots apparently had a single house on it in 1796, as each is described as having a single occupant. The easternmost lot was "occupied by Mrs. Patton," while the westernmost lot was "occupied by Mr. Thomas Elfe."

Elfe would have been Thomas Elfe Jr., as his more famous father, Thomas Elfe, cabinetmaker, had died in 1775. The younger Elfe was also a furniture maker.

Buildings on the lots were possibly some wooden structures depicted on Petrie's fire insurance map of 1788.

The purchase price in 1796, 1,250 Guineas, would indicate that the buildings then on the two large lots were less substantial than the present buildings at 44 and 46 Queen.

After his purchase of the large lots, Sasportas apparently constructed four houses, of which the buildings at 44 and 46 Queen are the only survivors.

Sasportas apparently built the houses as investments, as there is no evidence that he lived in any of them. City directories list him at various locations in the city, including 14 and 15 Queen St., a double tenement on the south side of the street.

Sasportas, in 1802, sold the house now known as 44 Queen St. to the trustees of William Shaw and his sisters. The purchase price was 1,866 Pounds, 13 shillings, four pence, Sterling, a price indicating the exist-

ence of a substantial structure.

As the building at 46 Queen shares common chimneys with 44 Queen, it is evident that both buildings date from the same time.

Abraham Sasportas, builder of the structures, was born in the 1750s in Bordeaux, a Sephardic Jew whose ancestors had fled the Iberian Peninsula because of religious persecution.

Sasportas was in Charlestown by 1778, when he married Rachel DaCosta, daughter of Isaac DaCosta, a merchant of the South Carolina city, and his wife, Sarah Piemienta (Pimento) DaCosta.

In the same year, Sasportas was among "transient Persons" who signed an oath of allegiance to the new State of South Carolina, although the oath invoked the "Holy Evangelists" and affirmed Protestant Christianity as the state religion.

After the fall of Charlestown to the British in 1780, many of the city's Jewish merchants went to Philadelphia where they were founders of Mikveh Israel Congregation. Abraham Sasportas was among them.

He returned to Charleston after the Revolution and reestablished himself as a merchant. During the Francophile years of the 1790s, Sasportas was the agent for French privateers who sold their prizes in Charleston and Georgetown.

In 1803, Sasportas married Charlotte Canter, a daughter of Jacob Canter, a merchant of Denmark and St. Croix. Sometime after 1807, he left the city, possibly returning at that time to France, where he died in 1824.

At his death, Sasportas's estate included his double tenement at 14 and 15 Queen St., a mansion or "Hotel" in Paris and a country estate near Bordeaux. He had previously disposed of all his other Charleston property including 44 Queen's sister structures.

Forty-four and 46 Queen St. are three-and-one-half-story structures of stuccoed brick, with individual hip

roofs. Forty-six retains a tile roof, while 44 has a tin replacement.

The exteriors of the two structures are simply finished, the major original decorative motif on each structure being a chaste cornice of brick dentils.

After the two structures entered separate ownerships, their facades were given different treatments.

After 1819, when John Schirer bought 44 Queen St., he added a wrought iron balcony with his Latinized initials, "I.S.," as a decorative element.

Subsequently, window cornices, in a different style on each of the two houses, were added to the Queen Street facades. A doorway in the lower right bay of 44 Queen (recently restored as a window) also had a 19th-century Italianate cornice.

Exposed portions of the structure in the basement of 44 Queen reveal hand-hewn joists, walls of Charleston grey and orange-red bricks laid in English bond, and arched fireplace foundations of grey brick. The first floor is set close to ground level, over an excavated basement, the site being on relatively high ground.

The floor plans of the two structures are of the Charleston single-house type, with two primary rooms to a floor, separated by a central hallway.

Interior decorative details of 44 Queen are in the Federal style, with many elements apparently dating from a remodeling some 15 or 20 years after the house's construction.

In the rear yard of 46 Queen are two brick outbuildings, one extending northward to the rear of the main building, the other extending east and west along the back of the lot.

In the rear yard of 44 Queen are remains of two brick outbuildings which corresponded, in mirror reverse, to the outbuildings at 46 Queen.

Forty-four Queen is currently the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Green, who purchased the house in 1979 and restored it. Forty-six Queen is an apartment building owned by George M. Duggan.