

**BUILT UPON CHANGE:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF 577, 577 ½, AND 579 KING STREET
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA**



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Charleston Neck is an area of the city that has seen an immeasurable amount of change. Named because it was an area to the north of Charleston where two creeks came together to form a “neck” on the peninsula, many of Charleston’s earliest and wealthiest families would establish estates in this area prior to the Revolution. Cut in half by the “Broad Path” that led out of the city, later known as King Street, this area would face destruction during the Revolution, but would be built up once more by some of Charleston’s elite after the war.

For many years, it was considered its own subsection of Charleston. The official boundary by 1822 was Boundary Street, now Calhoun, north to the city limits. Far enough away from the true heart of the city, the Neck had their own Commissioners and set of rules and legislations specifically for the overseeing of life in this area of Charleston. The “Rules and Regulations for Charleston Neck” set guidelines for everything from the price of bread on the Neck to fines for chimney fires. However, the rules were mainly focused with the control of the enslaved African-American population on the Charleston Neck. When discussing the need to build a guardhouse, the reasoning was “for maintaining of good order thereon, and for the proper government of the numerous black population.”¹

The Charleston Neck was ravaged once more by war with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. While north enough from the water to not feel the damage of the canons, many of the Neck’s residents would feel the financial and emotional toll of the war for many years to come. Tragedy would strike Charleston again in 1886 when a large earthquake would leave its permanent mark on the city and the lives of its inhabitants.

In the late 19th century, the Neck saw a period revitalization, especially in the area of Upper King Street, previously known as the Broad Path in the early days of Charleston’s

colonization. While after the Civil War, many of Charleston's wealthy class left the Neck and used their properties predominantly as rental units, this area of Upper King Street was becoming an area of commercial growth. Many stores would last in the same storefronts for more than twenty years. Many of the storeowners that were coming to this area of King Street were recent immigrants to the United States or the children of immigrants. The changes in ownership from largely American born owners to predominantly foreign-born owners reflected the changing cultural landscape of Charleston in the late 19th and early 20th century.

It is into this context that the structures of 577, 577 ½ and 579 King Street were built. Built and altered in different periods, these buildings and the lot they sit upon are the physical manifestation of the history of this area of Charleston. The property was owned by a prominent



Figure 1: 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street ca. 1985

South Carolina politician, Rawlins Lowndes before he sold a great deal of acreage to Rowland Rugeley in the 1770s. Rowland and his brother, Henry, did not fair well in the Revolutionary War. Rowland died of unknown causes in 1776 and Henry served the British army. He was banished and his lands were confiscated for his actions. In the

early 1800s, the Rugeley lands were subdivided and sold at auction. The property would then fall into the hands of the Bulow family, merchants and planters who bought three lots of the Rugeley lands on the corner of King and Cannon Streets to use as their primary residence. After the untimely death of Thomas Lehre Bulow in 1857, the property was sold to the Lafar family.

The Lafars bore witness to the Civil War and the earthquake of 1886 during their ownership. They also most likely constructed the earliest structure that still stands on this property today, 579 King Street, before selling the property to the Tobin family in 1891. The Tobin family would have an even greater physical impact on the property, constructing 577 and 577 ½ King Streets as well as ushering in the shift to economic use that was taking place on upper King Street. In 1913, the Tobins sold the property to Beatrice Witte Ravenel, a writer of some prominence. Ravenel, however, did not keep the property very long and sold it to M. Dumas and D. Selman. Little is known about these two men who also kept the property for a short period of time before turning it over to the Hottinger family. It would be the Hottingers who would represent the shifting cultural landscape of King Street and Charleston in the early 20th century before they too sold the property to Israel H. Altman, of Altman's Furniture, in the 1960s.

While this property has survived two wars, several natural disasters, and the changing economic and cultural landscape of Charleston throughout its lifetime, there is no telling if it will survive the newest threat to this area: development. Many of the historic properties on upper King Street, such as the ones that are being discussed here, have been neglected for many years by their owners. In the 1990s, the Mayor even had them slated for candidates of "demolition by neglect."² The area is currently ripe for new development. The neighboring lot to the north of 579 King Street is soon destined to become a fifty-room hotel. Across the street from 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street, construction has begun on a ten story, three-hundred room hotel.³

Change is coming to this area of King Street once more. The question is will these buildings once more evolve with those changes as they have many times throughout their history or succumb to them?

CHAPTER 2: THE RUGELEYS

The early ownership of this property is obscure. At present, the farthest back the author was able to trace ownership was to Rawlins Lowndes. Lowndes is a well-known figure in South Carolina politics. Born on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, Rowland immigrated to Charleston

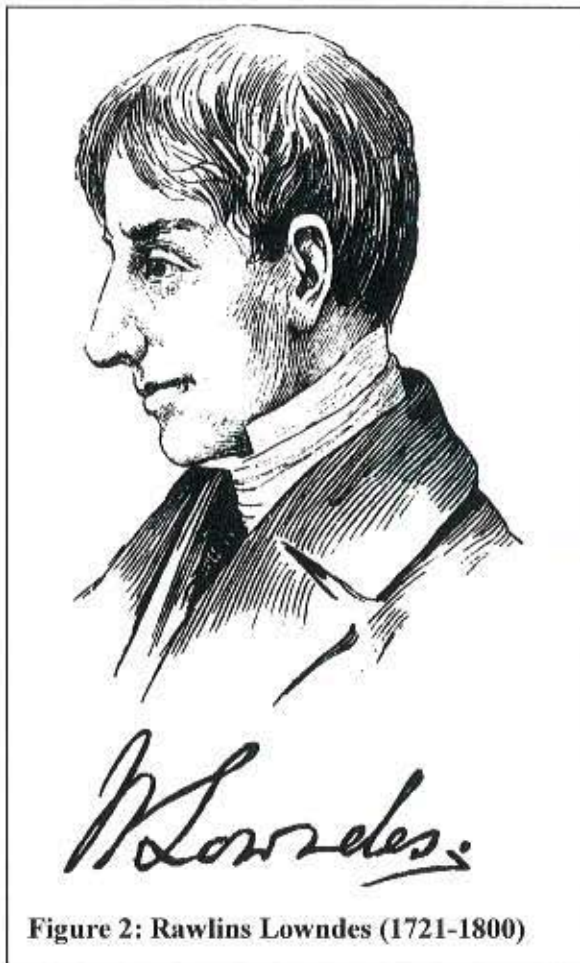


Figure 2: Rawlins Lowndes (1721-1800)

with his father, Charles. A planter who had some financial struggles upon arriving in Charleston, Charles Lowndes committed suicide in 1736. The life of his son would not be overshadowed by tragedy, however. Rawlins was elected to the Commons House of Assembly in 1749. He took a brief interlude to Britain in 1754, but returned to Charleston in 1755 and began to take his place among South Carolina's elite class. In 1763, he was elected Speaker of the House and would serve intermittently in that role until 1774 when he was elected to the revolutionary General Committee and the Provincial Congress. In 1778,

Lowndes became South Carolina's second president; however, when Charleston fell he accepted British protection and was forced to regain his citizenship after the war was over. He did not reenter politics until 1787 when he was elected to the General Assembly where he led a fierce opposition against the United States Constitution and became known as the only Anti-Federalist from the South Carolina low-country.⁴

Where exactly Rawlins Lowndes acquired the current property being researched from is uncertain. What is certain is that between the years 1772 and 1776 there were several transactions made between Rawlins Lowndes and Rowland Rugeley for tracts of land on the Charleston Neck. Rowland Rugeley and his brother, Henry Rugeley, were born in Britain and immigrated to Charleston in 1766. The Rugeley's would amount a great deal of land on the Charleston Neck. Four transactions of land were made between Lowndes and Rugeley from 1772 to 1776. The sales vary in acreage and the descriptions of the lots are vague. However, all of the deeds specify that the properties are on the Broad Path, which later would come to be known as King Street, or on the Charleston Neck. The deeds also state that the lots the Rugeley's were acquiring were bordering or intersecting the lands of Daniel Cannon and Bernard Elliot. The two men Cannon Street and Elliotsborough would be named for respectively.^{5 6 7}

At this time in Charleston history, it was fashionable for the wealthy to acquire land on the Charleston Neck. The Rugeley's followed suit and each brother had a large estate on their lands on the Neck.⁸ Their ideal way of life was soon uprooted as conflict broke out in the colonies. With their strong connection to Britain, the Rugeley brothers became loyalists during the American Revolution and suffered dearly for it.

With their ties to Britain, it was understood where the Rugeley's loyalties would lie in the coming onslaught of hostilities. It was possible that at any time they could have been called back to Britain to serve her military or to inherit titles or property.⁹ Rowland Rugeley was spared the embarrassment that would fall upon the family during the war as died in 1776 of unknown causes.¹⁰ Henry, however, was commissioned as a major than as a colonel by Cornwallis.¹¹ Henry was stationed at his plantation near Camden. While he fortified the site, he came under attack by the forces of Colonel William Washington. Unbeknownst to Henry, Washington did

not actually have sufficient weapons to take Henry's stockade. Under the cover of night, Washington approached Henry's fortifications with what appeared to be a cannon, but what were actually only logs attached to a cart. Henry fell for the ruse and surrendered without firing a single shot. Cornwallis wrote to General Tarleton of the incident, "Rugeley won't ever be made Brigadier, if he can't spot a cannon when he sees one." Henry's plantation was destroyed and he was held prisoner in Virginia for the remainder of the war.

When American troops regained Charleston, the Rugeley estates on the Charleston Neck were destroyed.¹² Henry Rugeley's lands were confiscated and he was banished. He died at St. Ives in Britain on December 18, 1796. His death notice stated that he had, "Returned to England because of ill health."¹³ In 1806, the Charleston courts subdivided the Rugeley lands and sold the lots at auction. However, due to complications and suits filed by Rugeley heirs, it was not until 1834 that the property of interest in this paper was finally able to change ownership and fell into the hands of the Bulow family.

CHAPTER 3: THE BULOWS

The Bulow family immigrated to the colonies in the mid-18th century when Rev. Joachim Bulow came from Germany to Newberry County, South Carolina. In 1761 he established one of the earliest Lutheran congregations in the area, St. Paul Lutheran Church. Originally a log structure, it was replaced with a frame church after the Revolution. Joachim later moved his family to Charleston around 1795 and resided there until his death.¹⁴

Joachim's son, John Joachim Bulow, was the one to purchase five lots of the Rugeley lands in 1806, though he was not able to take ownership of them until 1834.¹⁵ He purchased

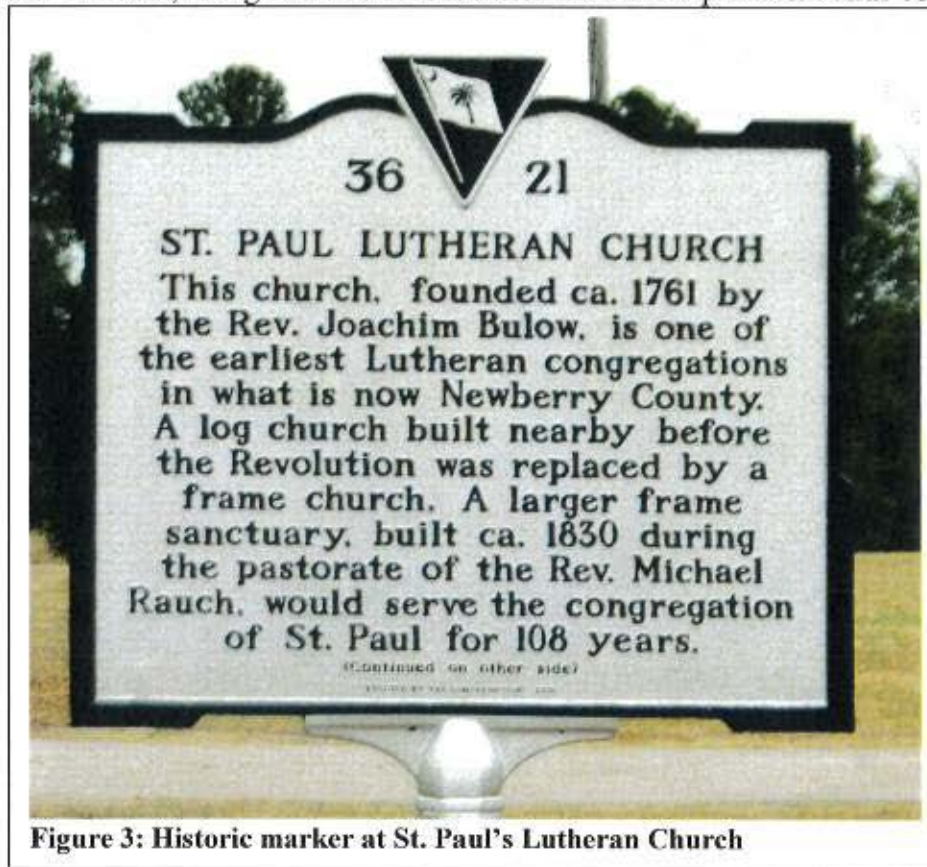


Figure 3: Historic marker at St. Paul's Lutheran Church

three lots on King Street (#s 15, 16, and 17) and two on St. Philips Street (#s 76 and 33).¹⁶ By 1837, John had made the corner of King and Cannon Streets his primary residence.¹⁷

A prominent planter and merchant, John had purchased

John Drayton's Savannah Plantation and adjoining lands on Rantowles Creek outside Charleston in 1818. He was married to Caroline Amelia, daughter of Colonel Thomas Lehre. Caroline was twenty years younger than John. They traveled widely and were named on passenger lists of

ships sailing from England to New York City.¹⁸ The couple had three children together: Caroline Amelia Bulow (later Seabrook), John J. Bulow (who died in 1822 at the age of fourteen months), and Thomas Lehre Bulow who was born sometime in 1822. John's wife died in 1827 and was interred at the Cathedral Church of Saint Luke and Saint Paul in Charleston, next to her first son.¹⁹ When John died on June 23rd, 1841, he was laid to rest beside his wife and son.

Upon John's death, much of his real estate including the Savannah Plantation and his house on the corner of King and Cannon Streets passed to his son, Thomas Lehre Bulow.²⁰ There is not much known about Thomas L. Bulow. He is listed as a "planter in st andrew's par" in the City Directories and took up residence at his father's home after his passing.²¹ Up until 1855, the City Directories still list Thomas's residence as the corner of King and Cannon streets.²²

On March 6th, 1844, Thomas married Martha Carolina Ball at St. Philip's Church.²³ While two sons resulted from the marriage, Thomas Lionel Bulow and Charles Bulow, the union was not a happy one. In 1855, the couple made a formal agreement of separation. The language in



Figure 4: Grave of John Joachim Bulow

the contract was decidedly harsh. According to the contract, "The said Thomas Lehre Bulow shall and will from henceforth for and during his natural life, live separate and apart from his

said wife Martha Carolina Bulow and shall not, nor will not hereafter cohabit, abide or [illegible] with her as his wife, nor frequent her company of conversation at any time or hereafter...than as he may or might lawfully do with a stranger.”²⁴

Thomas died in 1857 of gastritis, inflammation of the stomach, and his estate was passed to his two sons. However, both of his sons were minors at the time of his death, thus the executor listed in the will, Joseph A. Winthrop, was given the power of guardianship and granted the right to sell off property as he saw fit. Therefore, in 1860 one of the lots that had been purchased from the Rugeley estate, #16 on King Street, was sold to John J. Lafar.²⁵

Plats created on the block between Cannon and Spring Streets after Thomas's death depict the “Lands belonging to the Estate of T. L. Bulow.” They show the house on the corner of King and Cannon in great detail. Located on lot #15 of the Rugeley lands, the Bulow's had constructed a 2 ½ story wood structure on a brick foundation. Set close to the street, it was centered on the lot. To the rear and north of the building were a kitchen house and a building that was used for servants' rooms, a carriage house, and stables. Contiguous with the west wall of the stable building is a privy and to the north wall is a shed. What would have been lot #16 of the Rugeley lands appears empty of structures at the time it was sold John J. Lafar.²⁶

CHAPTER 4: THE LAFARS

The Lafars purchased the King Street property in a tumultuous time. In December 1860 the Ordinance of Secession was signed in Charleston only four months after John J. Lafar²⁷ purchased the property on King Street from Joseph A. Winthrop.²⁸ By April of 1861, Confederate forces were firing upon Fort Sumter.²⁹ For the next four years, Charleston was a city continuously under siege. In the midst of this chaos, tragedy struck the Lafar family.

Three years after John J. Lafar purchased the property, he died on or around March 30th, 1863. Having been born in Charleston in 1823, he was only forty at the time of his death. The circumstances surrounding his death are hard to come by. No will could be found. There were also no death notices or records from that time period in the city's death records for John J. Lafar. There was only an inventory of his estate citing the village of Williamston³⁰ and several petitions made by his widow following his death. The lack of records could be because of the timing of his death, at the height of the Civil War. The city's records from that period may be deficient. It is also possible that John J. Lafar did not die in Charleston. The Lafars, like many families at the time, could have sought refuge in Columbia. However, that theory is suspect as John J. is buried in Magnolia Cemetery.

What is well known is the aftermath of John J. Lafar's death. John had left his widow, Ann C. Lafar, with four children, ranging from the ages of fifteen to six years old. In the years following John's death, Ann petitioned the state of South Carolina to gain control of her late husband's financial assets. As all of John's heirs were minors at the time of his death, Ann petitioned the state to grant her "letters of administration of the estate of her said deceased husband."³¹ This was not the only petition Ann would make to the state regarding her husband's estate. In 1868, Ann filed petitions stating that the war had had a great impact on the family

financially. Though the petition is almost illegible, there are sections stating that the Federal troops had “manumitted” the family’s slave, Betty, money from Charleston banks were unattainable because of the war, and “rents or incomes from the Real Estate on King Street near Cannon when received have been used for payment” of expenses the family incurred during the war.³² Whether or not Ann was compensated for the struggles she faced during the war is uncertain.

In the years following the Civil War, Ann did not use the property on King Street as her primary residence as the City Directories for her period of ownership cite her residence as being 24 Montague. It can be assumed through the petitions she placed after John’s

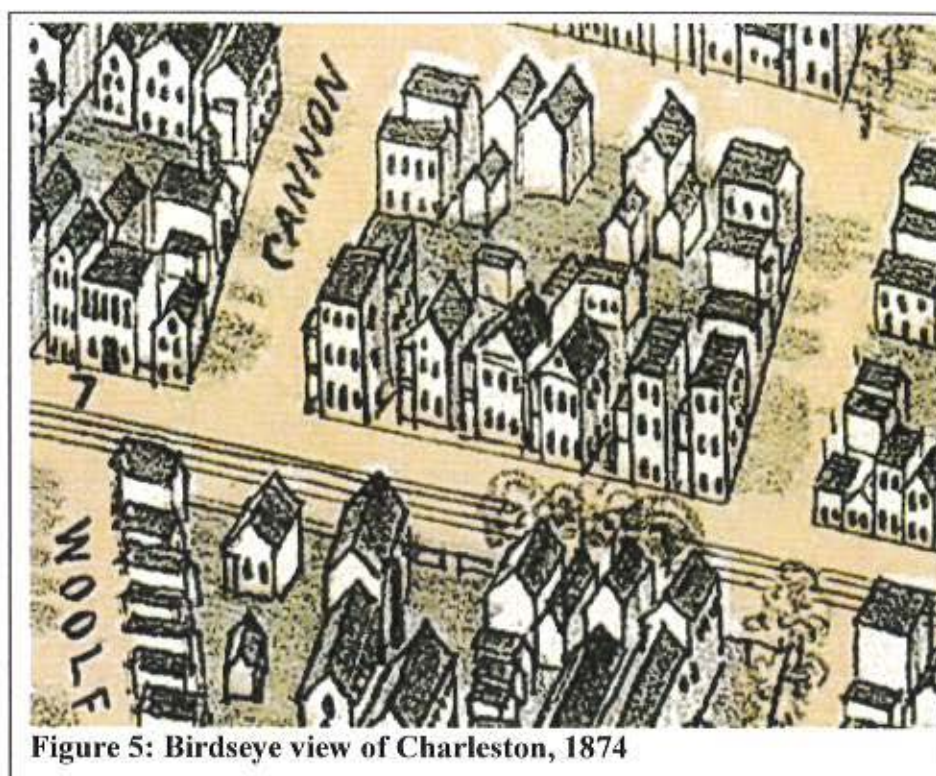


Figure 5: Birdseye view of Charleston, 1874

death that the property was used primarily for rental income.³³

It is most likely during the period of ownership under the Lafar’s that the first structure appears on this property of King Street. On the plats of T. L. Bulow’s estate, there were no other buildings constructed prior to the sale of the lot to the Lafars. The older of the two buildings that sits on the lot, has the core of a Charleston single-house. On the 1874 birdseye view of

Charleston map, there are a number of single houses on the block between Cannon and Spring Streets. The original structure of 579 King Street is most likely the third from the left. The building has a unique dormer on the ridge of the roof towards the rear of the structure with small windows on each side to allow for ventilation. The dormer is still there today and is slightly visible on the birdseye view. The building was 2 ½ stories tall upon a raised basement. It had a center stair hall plan with a two-story piazza on the south façade. There were two interior chimneys on the north side of the building, providing fireplaces for the west and east rooms. The original structure had a side gabled roof, sheathed with slate shingles.

Charleston plummeted into chaos once again in August 1886 when a large earthquake and a series of aftershocks reeked havoc on the city. The destruction was immense. There was barely any part of the city that escaped destruction. On Upper King Street, fires broke out when kerosene lamps in stores were knocked to the ground. Trying to escape the blaze, residents of the northern peninsula headed south. "A river of humanity poured down King Street toward Marion Square, a ten-acre park that was also called Citadel Green. A five-year-old girl was trampled."³⁴ The Lafars, like many families in Charleston, did not escape the earthquake unscathed. Relief vouchers were set up by the city to allow citizens with damaged property to make the necessary repairs at the city's expense. On November 3rd, 1886, Ann C. Lafar received a voucher for 579 King Street for the amount of \$200.³⁵

In 1891, Ann and her children, who were now old enough to have claims in the property, sold their combined interests to John F. Tobin. It appears that Ann never remarried after her husband's death and was often cited as the widow of John J. Lafar in the City Directories. She died in 1910 at the age of eighty-five.³⁶

CHAPTER 5: THE TOBINS

A year after John F. Tobin purchased the properties, two new addresses appeared on the lot, 577 and 577 ½. In 1892, the city directories show the first entry for the address 577 King Street.³⁷ A year later, 577 ½ appears.³⁸ These two new buildings were built to be contiguous with the south wall of 579 King Street. The buildings of 577 and 577 ½ have a continuous and very similar street façade and the buildings abut against each other. They share a cornice line that has ornate pressed metal brackets with the figures of some type of animal appearing at intervals along the cornice. Each building has three bays. The windows are two-over-two sash windows with pressed metal window hoods. The building's features are typical of the Victorian style. The two structures have flat roofs that pitch towards each other and appear to slope towards the back of the building.

It was probably at this time that 579 King Street had major changes made to its structure. The two-story piazza along the south side of the building was enclosed. The center hall plan, while still maintained on the second story, was removed from the raised basement and an entrance was instead made on the street façade. The raised basement floor was lowered to street level and the first floor was converted into a commercial space. While the hearths were still visible, the walls separating the space were removed as was the staircase providing access to the upper stories. The original bead board walls that were used as sheathing for this commercial space are still visible today. A full third story was also added to the front of the structure. This new addition has a flat roof that is disguised by a parapet, ornamented with Victorian brackets and decoration. Pressed metal window hoods were added to the third story windows on the street façade. It is possible they were on the second story windows as well, but that they have since disappeared from the structure.

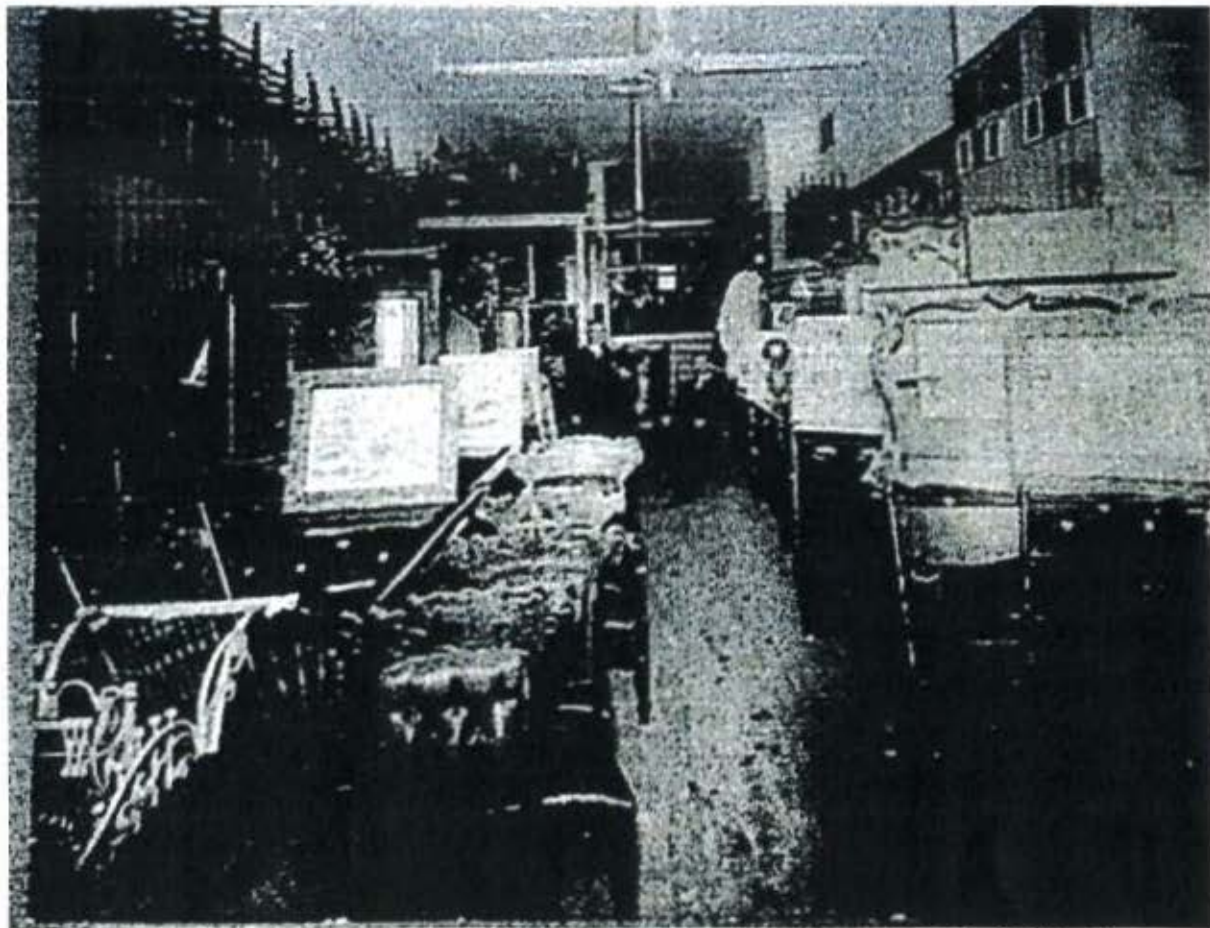


Figure 6: The interior of 579 King Street during its operation as T.P. DeGafferelly furniture store, sometime between 1892 and 1921

Tobin's ownership would represent a new phase in the history of Upper King Street and the property. This area of Charleston was becoming predominantly a commercial district. This is not only reflected in the changes made to the buildings, with commercial uses on the street level and tenants living above, but it is reflected in the changing landscape of the surrounding buildings as well. Many of the neighboring buildings would go through a similar transformation making this area a retail district.

John F. Tobin ran a plumbing business for many years on Upper King Street. In 1891, before the assumed construction of 577 and 577 ½ King Street, Tobin ran his business out of 579 King Street. When 577 King Street was completed, he moved and worked out of that address until 1898 when he would again move to 577 ½. In that same year, his business became known

as “J. F. Tobin and Brothers, plumbers.”³⁹ When Tobin would later sell the King Street properties, his son would also be named on the deed. In 1898, perhaps his son became a partner in the business.

While there were several different kinds of businesses that operated in these buildings



Figure 7: Eudora DeGafferelly and Thomas P. DeGafferelly

during the years of Tobin’s ownership, there were a few types of retail that seemed to be popular for this area of King Street. Hardware stores were a popular enterprise for 577 King Street, beginning in 1899 with H. McGee Sanders, who ran a hardware store in that building until 1902.⁴⁰ After Sanders, W.W. McGget and J.F. Cordes ran Charleston Hardware Company out of 577 King Street for ten years from 1903 until 1913. Furniture was also a major commercial venture for this property and would remain so even after

Tobin’s ownership was over. The prominent furniture retailer on this property during Tobin’s ownership was T.P. DeGafferelly.

Though T. P. DeGafferelly did not own the property on King Street, he is still a prominent figure in its history and may have spent more time in the building than any of the

other owners from the early 20th century. From 1892 to 1921, Thomas Purse DeGafferelly ran a furniture store out of 579 King Street and at the time of his death was reputed to be the oldest real estate dealer in South Carolina.

Born in Charleston in 1849, DeGafferelly's grandfather had immigrated from France years earlier and opened a school in Stoll's Alley. DeGafferelly would bear witness to many of the upheavals that took place in Charleston and South Carolina in the 19th century. During the Civil War, DeGafferelly, then a teenager, and his family evacuated to Columbia and witnessed the invasion of the city by Federal troops. DeGafferelly returned to Charleston and recalled that during the earthquake of 1886, some of his neighbors across the street were killed.

DeGafferelly married Eudora Bowers James and lived with their family upstairs, above the store on King Street. The letter head for T. P. DeGafferelly's store describes the business as follows, "Dealer in furniture, organs, mattresses, bed springs, baby carriages, stoves, and all kinds of house furnishing articles." DeGafferelly also became active in real estate after he took over the business of Isaac Wilson in 1879.⁴¹ While John F. Tobin and his son sold the properties on King Street in 1913, T. P. DeGafferelly did leave the property until 1921.⁴² Tobin's legacy of transitioning the property into retail use would remain very prominent even after the change of ownership.

CHAPTER 6: BEATRICE WITTE RAVENEL TO M. DUMAS & D. SELMAN

Beatrice Witte Ravenel is another example of an absentee owner, like Ann C. Lafar before her. A woman of some renown, she did not reside or run a business at 577, 577 ½, or 579 King Street, but more than likely used it primarily for rental profit. Ravenel was born in Charleston in 1870. She was the third daughter in a family of six girls. Her family was primarily of Huguenot ancestry. After completing her preliminary education in Charleston, Ravenel enrolled in the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women, Harvard Annex, later known as Radcliffe College. She focused her studies primarily in literature and writing. Upon her return to Charleston, she married her first husband, Francis-Gualdo Ravenel. After his death, Ravenel began to support herself financially by writing.



Figure 8: Beatrice Witte Ravenel

In 1925, she published her only book, *The Arrow of Lightning*. She also began to write editorials and articles for magazines, but she best known for poetry. In 1926, she married her first husband's first cousin, Samuel Prioleau Ravenel. After this marriage, Ravenel wrote very little but she is still recognized as a local poet of some renown among Southern writers.⁴³

The Tobins sold the property on King Street to Ravenel for five dollars on March 3rd, 1913. This was the first deed to mention all three addresses: 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street. Attached to the deed between the Tobins and Ravenel is a plat. This plat is the first to show the new buildings, 577 and 577 ½. Surveyed March 26th, 1913 by Louis J. Dawson, the plat shows the properties of 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street “as per lines of occupation.” The building of 577 appears to be a great deal larger than the other two buildings from east to west. There is also a back building to the rear and north border of the property behind 579.⁴⁴

Beatrice Ravenel only owned the property for five years before she sold it to two men in 1918. M. Dumas and D. Selman bought the property from Ravenel for \$24,000, however it was understood at the time that only \$6,000 had actually been paid. It was also understood that the two buyers were taking on a mortgage that Ravenel had given to John F. Tobin and William J. Tobin in 1913.⁴⁵ No connection could be confirmed, but it is possible that the M. Dumas mentioned in the deeds for this King Street property is the same M. Dumas who is responsible for M. Dumas & Sons on Lower King. M. Dumas and D. Selman would not keep the property for very long, either. In 1922, they sold the property for \$5.00 and “other valuable considerations.”⁴⁶

CHAPTER 7: THE HOTTINGERS

Not only had the area of Upper King Street and the Charleston Neck become a place of business, but also it became largely populated by recent immigrants to the United States in the early 20th century. On August 11th, 1922, M. Dumas and D. Selman sold 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street to C. F. Hottinger for the meager price of \$5.00, but also with the understanding that Hottinger would take responsibility for the mortgage between Ravenel and the Tobins.⁴⁷

C. F. Hottinger immigrated to the United States from Germany in the late 19th century. His wife, Adela, though born in the United States, was the daughter of German immigrants. Hottinger was listed on the 1920 Federal Census as being a merchant specializing in the sale of hardware.⁴⁸ Hottinger began running a hardware store out of 577 King Street seven years before he bought that building and the two adjoining properties. First known as Standard Hardware Company, Hottinger changed the name to C. F. Hottinger Hardware Company in 1917.⁴⁹ Hottinger was carrying on a tradition of hardware retailers operating out of 577 King Street and perhaps after becoming successful, he decided he could afford to take on the mortgage for the three properties.

Hottinger was far from the only immigrant to operate a business on King Street during this time period. Hyman Reznick, a Polish immigrant who came to the United States in 1917, ran a clothing store at 579 King Street for ten years from 1923 to 1932. He later operated a dry goods store at 225 Meeting Street with his son, Moses. A merchant to the end, Reznick died at the rear of his store on Hasell Street in 1957 when he was 81 years old.⁵⁰

Another growing trend among the King Street properties of 577, 577 ½, and 579 was the operation of shoe stores. The first retailer for the specific purpose of selling or manufacturing shoes appeared at 577 ½ in 1923.⁵¹ Though New York Shoe Factory would only operate at this

address for two years, other shoe stores would quickly follow. From 1925 to 1927, there was a retailer called Economy Shoe Store at 577 ½ and from 1934 to 1951 Fashion Shoe store was a fixture at 579 King Street.⁵²

It would be these later tenants who would leave their mark on the exterior of 579 King

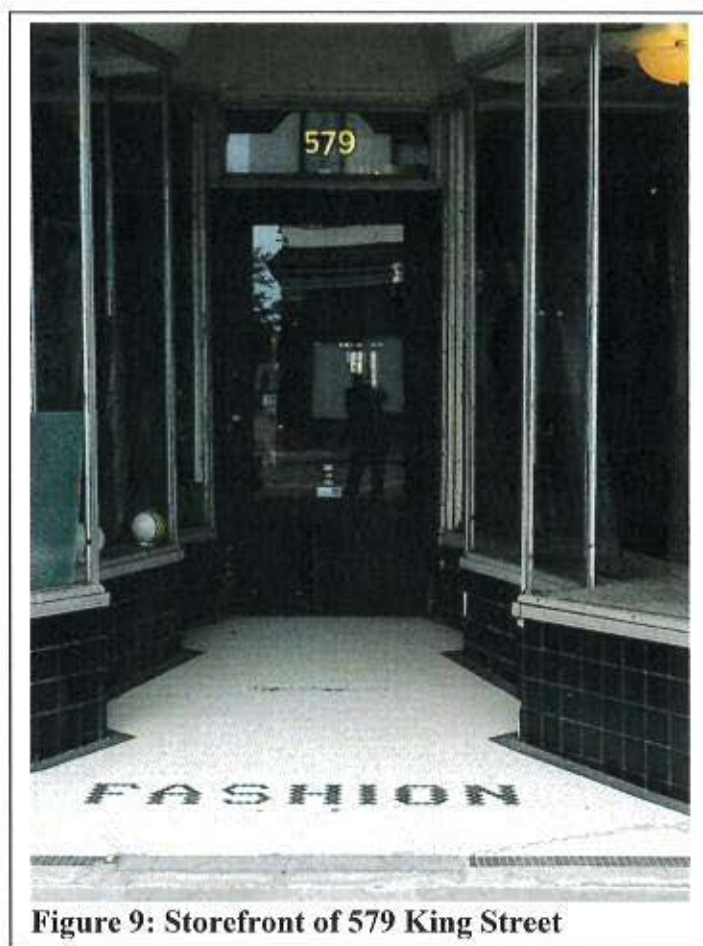


Figure 9: Storefront of 579 King Street

Street by making yet another alteration to the façade. Like many storefronts on King Street and throughout Charleston, the tenants altered the street facing façade, giving it a more contemporary look. Large glass windows span the street front until sharp angles recess into the centered entrance to the store. Square black tiles were placed around the foundation of the building, following the sharp angles to the front door. Between the door and the sidewalk was also tiled with smaller

black and white tiles. This is where the tenants personalized the exterior, spelling out “fashion” in the tiles, leaving their mark on the building.

When C. F. Hottinger died, he left his property, including 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street, to his wife. During her lifetime, she had made it known that wished to leave the above properties to her son, also C. F. Hottinger, and his children. However, she was not able to make this gift before her death and the property was left to her daughter, Adela Hottinger Geils. In

1965, Geils carried out her mother's wishes and sold her share of the King Street properties to her brother and his two, Christopher Frederick Hottinger, Jr. and Carolyn Hottinger Garner, for \$5.00.⁵³ Three years later, however, in 1968, C. F. Hottinger and his children sold their combined shares in the property to Israel H. Altman for \$50,000.⁵⁴ As two of the Hottinger grandchildren lived out state, their personal or financial interests in the properties were probably not strong. The Hottinger hardware store was not in operation by the time the properties were sold to Altman and probably had not been since the death of C.F. Hottinger senior.

CHAPTER 8: THE ALTMANS

Born Strul Alterman in Kalushine, Poland on May 15, 1912, Israel H. Altman arrived in New York City via France in 1920.⁵⁵ Altman, along with his two brothers, Sam and Isadore, founded Altman's Furniture Company in Charleston in 1928. In 1952, they moved their business to 575 King Street, the building to the south of 577 King Street. This was their fourth store location.⁵⁶

As the previous business of T. P. DeGafferelly shows, furniture stores were not a new phenomenon for this area of King Street. Even after DeGafferelly closed shop, other furniture stores were operating out of 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street. In the 1950s, a store called Empire Furniture Company was run out of 577. In 1961, Stelling Furniture Mart was listed as a tenant at 577 King Street in the City Directories.⁵⁷

On August 19th, 1968, Altman purchased 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street from the Hottinger family.⁵⁸ It is possible that Altman did this to eliminate any competition from other furniture stores in the neighboring vicinity. Altman did not do much with the King Street properties. While 579 continued to be rented out in the 1960s, the building was vacant from 1970 to 1975. During this same time period, the other two buildings, 577 and 577 ½ were being used as overflow for Altman's Furniture. From 1975 onward, 579 King Street was also used as overflow. In 1984, Israel H. Altman sold 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street to Charles Reality Company, Inc.⁵⁹

The latest tenant at 579 King Street is Bob Hines. Having rented the property for almost twenty years, he runs a glass studio out of the first floor of the building. Hines has proven to be a valuable caretaker for the property. He has made few alterations to the historic character of the first floor store at 579; in fact it has changed little since the time of Fashion Shoes. While the

current tenant appreciates the historic integrity of the building, there is little he can do to protect the building from owners who would be interested in developing the property.⁶⁰

In 2006, Altman Furniture closed. “Facing stiff competition and with no successors, one of the city’s oldest retail merchants is shutting its doors,” wrote the *Post and Courier* of the store’s closing. The store could not compete against larger stores and many of their clientele was getting older. While Samuel Altman insisted that the family had no plans to sell the building, he also made it clear that they were very interested in taking advantage of new development opportunities that were taking place on upper King Street.⁶¹

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Change is coming to upper King Street. Construction has already begun on the anticipated Midtown project and these buildings discussed here will no longer have grocery stores or hardware companies as neighbors, but luxury hotels.

The properties of 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street have faced change before, in fact they were born into it. Their architecture characteristics and evolution are hallmarks to their tumultuous past. While the beginning of the property is vague, what is clear is that this property can help portray some of the overly themes of Charleston's history. From the Revolutionary War to the influx of immigrants in the early 20th century, this property has been the setting for changing cultural landscape of our city. However, when they are labeled "insignificant" to the historical context of the city and left to be demolished by neglect, they face succumbing to the changes that are now coming to this area of Charleston instead doing what they have for decades: adapting.



Figure 10: 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street are barely visible through Midtown construction.

APPENDIX 1: ANNOTATED CHAIN OF TITLE

RAWLINS LOWNDES TO ROWLAND RUGELEY

December 4 & 5, 1772 – F4, 75 – Lease and Release

November 20 & 21, 1775 – V4, 107 – Lease and Release

March 18 & 19, 1776 – T4, 115 – Lease and Release

Between the years of 1772 to 1776, Rowland Rugeley made a number of land purchases from Rawlins Lowndes in the area of the Charleston Neck. They are all described as being on the “Broad Road” leading out of Charleston. They make note of the lands of Danial Cannon and Bernard Elliot, but no other exact locations are given. The Rugeley’s, we know amassed a great amount of land on the Charleston Neck in the area that is now Upper King Street, but is not currently possible to determine which one of these purchases is the lot that would become 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street.

MASTER IN EQUITY TO JOHN J. BULOW

March 22, 1834 – G10, 115 – Conveyance

Rowland Rugeley’s lands were seized by the court of Charleston and put up for auction in 1806. At that time certain lots were purchased by John J. Bulow, however sale was prevented at the time by actions brought against the court by the Rugeley’s heirs. Finally, in 1834, Bulow was able to purchase lots # 15, 16, and 17 on King Street and lots # 76 and 33 on St. Philips Street, formally part of the Rugeley lands, for two thousand dollars.

JOHN JOACHIM BULOW TO THOMAS L. BULOW

1841 – Will Book 42, 293 – Will

In his will, John Joachim Bulow left to his son Thomas Lehre Bulow his house at the corner of King and Cannon Streets along with the lot it sat upon. He also left him the lots adjoining it to the north, which “are known in the...plan of H and R Rugelys lands as numbered fifteen Sixteen and Seventeen.”

JOSEPH A. WINTHROP, EXECUTOR, TO JOHN J. LAFAR

August 11, 1860 – Y13, 546 – Conveyance

The last will and testament of Thomas Lehre Bulow, admitted to Probate July 18th, 1857, states that his executor, Joseph A. Winthrop may sell all or any of his estate “real or

personal.” In 1860, Winthrop sold to John J. Lafar a lot on the west side of King Street measuring 58 ft. by about 200 ft. deep and formerly having been referenced as lot #16 on the plat of the Rugeley lands. Attached to the deed is a statement by Bulow’s widow, Caroline, acknowledging that she had previously given up her rights to the property in a formal separation from her husband.

ANN C. LAFAR TO JOHN F. TOBIN
January 27, 1891 – H21, 33 – Conveyance

John J. Lafar died on or about March 30th, 1863. Having only children who were minors, his estate passed to his wife. Now that all of his children are of age, his widow and all of his heirs who have claims in the estate are conveying the property to John F. Tobin for the amount of \$5,500. The lot is numbered as 579.

JOHN F. TOBIN, WILLIAM J. TOBIN TO BEATRICE WITTE RAVENEL
March 3, 1913 – N26, 269 – Conveyance

John F. Tobin and his son William sold the property for five dollars to Beatrice Witte Ravenel. This is the first deed to mention three addresses, 577, 577 ½, and 579 King Street. The measurements are 57 ft. by 200 ft. The deed still makes reference to the lot being numbered as #16 on the plat of the Rugeley lands. There is another plat attached with this deed, dated March 26th, 1913 by Louis J. Dawson. There is also mention made to a right of way on Cannon street for access to the back of the building.

BEATRICE WITTE RAVENEL TO M. DUMAS, D. SELMAN
July 18, 1918 – T28, 209 – Conveyance

The lot size and description of the property in this deed is almost identical to the previous deed. It also mentioned the two plats from the prior deed. M. Dumas and D. Selman purchased this property from Ravenel for \$24,000. However, it was understood that the whole amount had not been paid. Only \$6,000 had been paid, and the two lessees were taking on the mortgage given by Ravenel to John F. Tobin and William J. Tobin on the March 31st, 1913 (RMC U26, page 44). The original amount of the mortgage, \$20,000 had been reduced to \$17,000 and the lessees paid the interest.

M. DUMAS, D. SELMAN TO C. F. HOTTINGER
August 11, 1922 – G31, 505 – Conveyance

The property was sold to C. F. Hottinger for \$5.00 and “other valuable considerations.” The description of the property remains identical. The property still contains 577, 577 ½, and 579 and the measurements of the property still are 57 ft. by 199. In buying the property, Hottinger also assumed responsibility for the mortgage between Ravenel and the Tobin’s.

ADELA HOTTINGER GEILS TO C.F. HOTTINGER, CAROLOYN HOTTINGER GARNER, CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK HOTTINGER JR.
March 17, 1965 – M82, 90 – Conveyance

When C. F. Hottinger died, the property was left to his wife, Adela G. Hottinger. According to this deed, written by Adela’s daughter, Adela Hottinger Geils, “My mother...during her lifetime expressed the wish to give unto her son, C.F. Hottinger, the below described property, but she was never able to make said gift.” The elder Adela died and her property was left to the younger namesake. In 1965, Adela Hottinger Geils conveyed for the amount of five dollars the property of her parents to her brother and his children.

C.F. HOTTINGER, CAROLOYN HOTTINGER GARNER, CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK HOTTINGER JR. TO ISRAEL H. ALTMAN
August 19, 1968 – W90, 233 – Conveyance

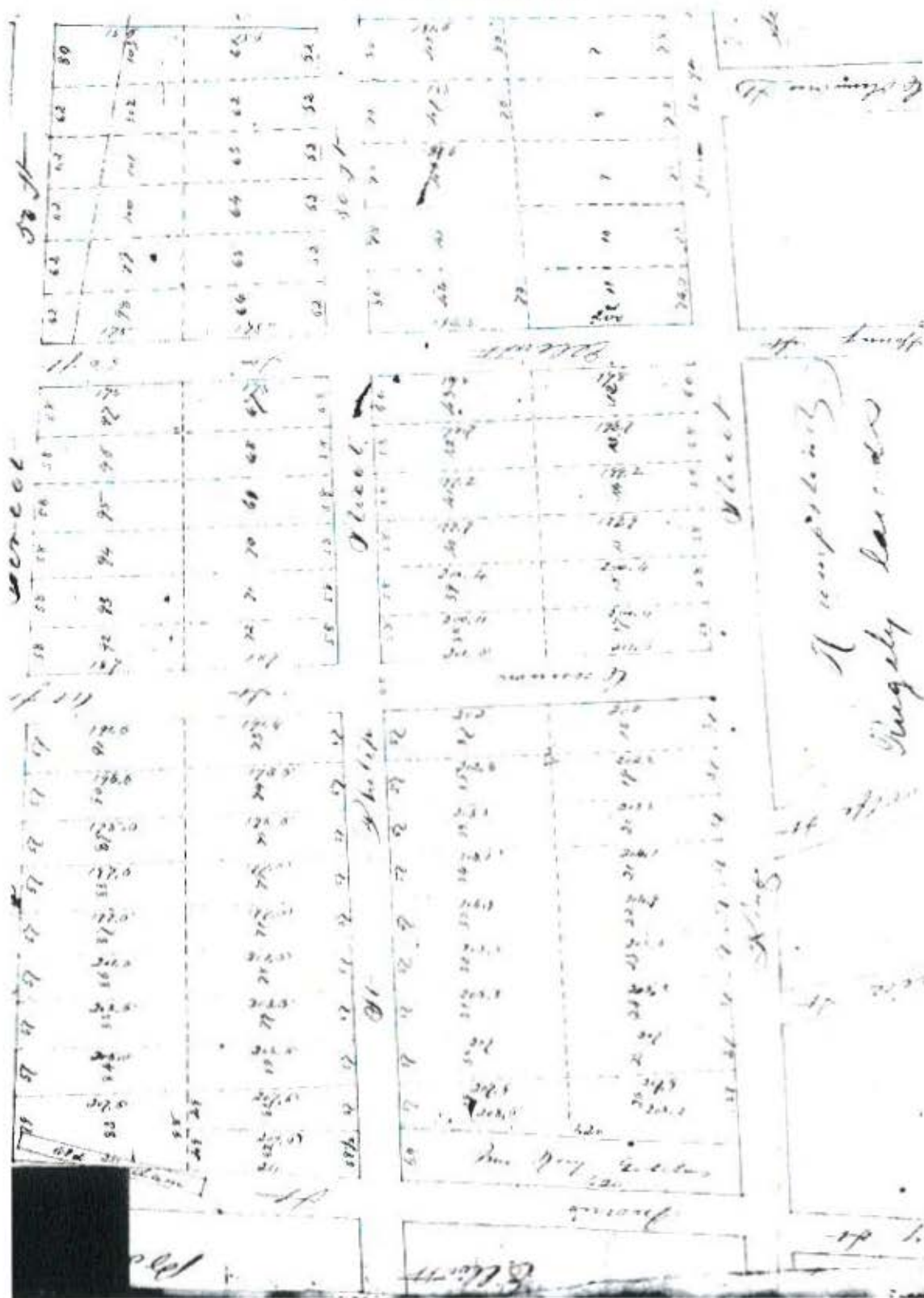
The three Hottinger’s who had shared interests in the property made the decision to sell the property to Israel H. Altman, the owner of Altman Furniture, the business to the south on the corner of King and Cannon. The property sold for the highest price in its history, \$50,000. Two of the Hottinger heirs were not living in South Carolina and attached to the deed are notarized signatures from Maine and California.

ISRAEL H. ALTMAN TO CHARLES REALTY COMPANY, INC.

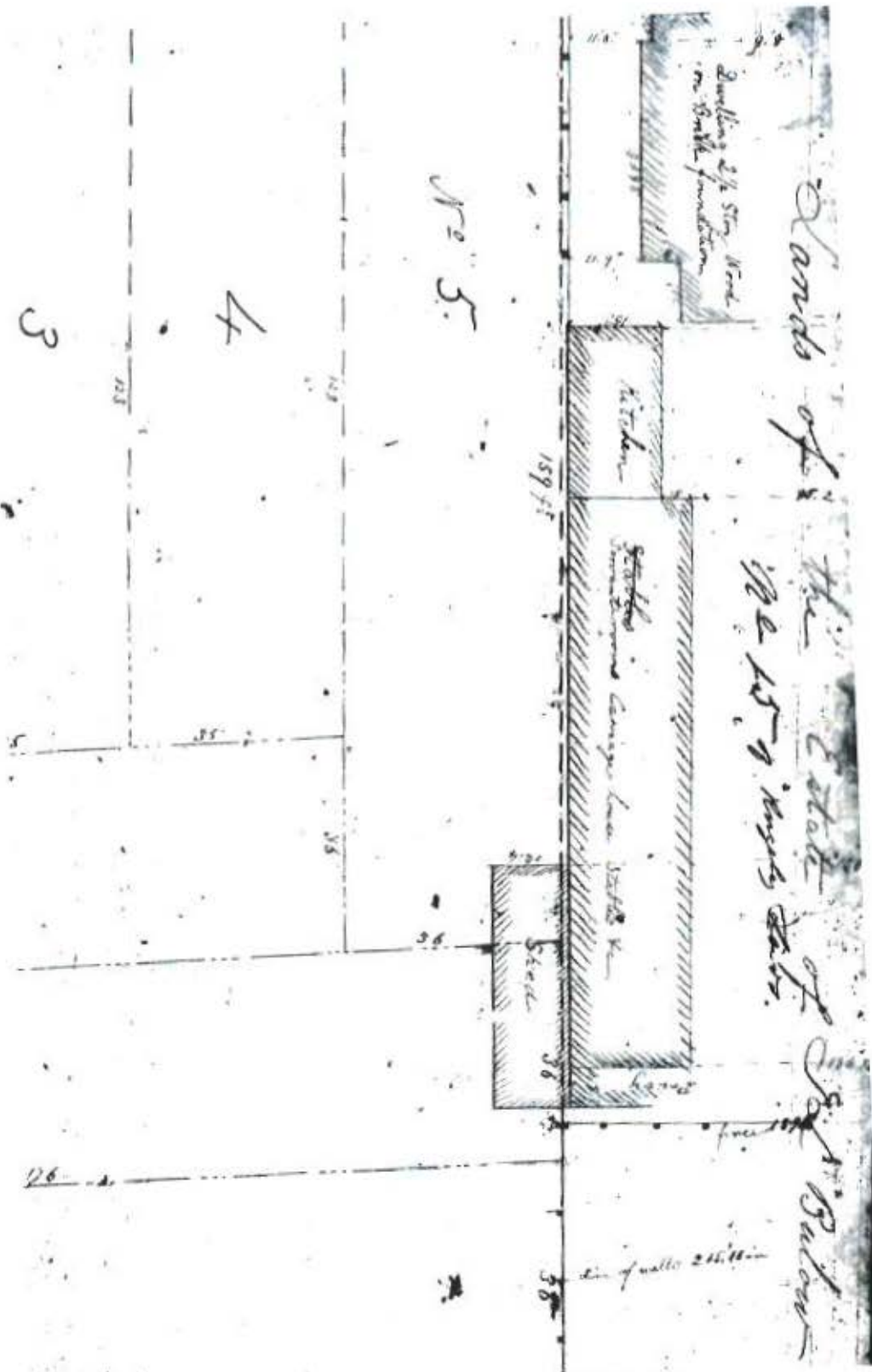
May 18, 1984 – G137, 12 – Conveyance

No price was given for the exchange from Israel Altman to Charles Realty Company, Inc. However, the owners of Charles Realty are in fact the sons of Israel Altman. They still own the property today.

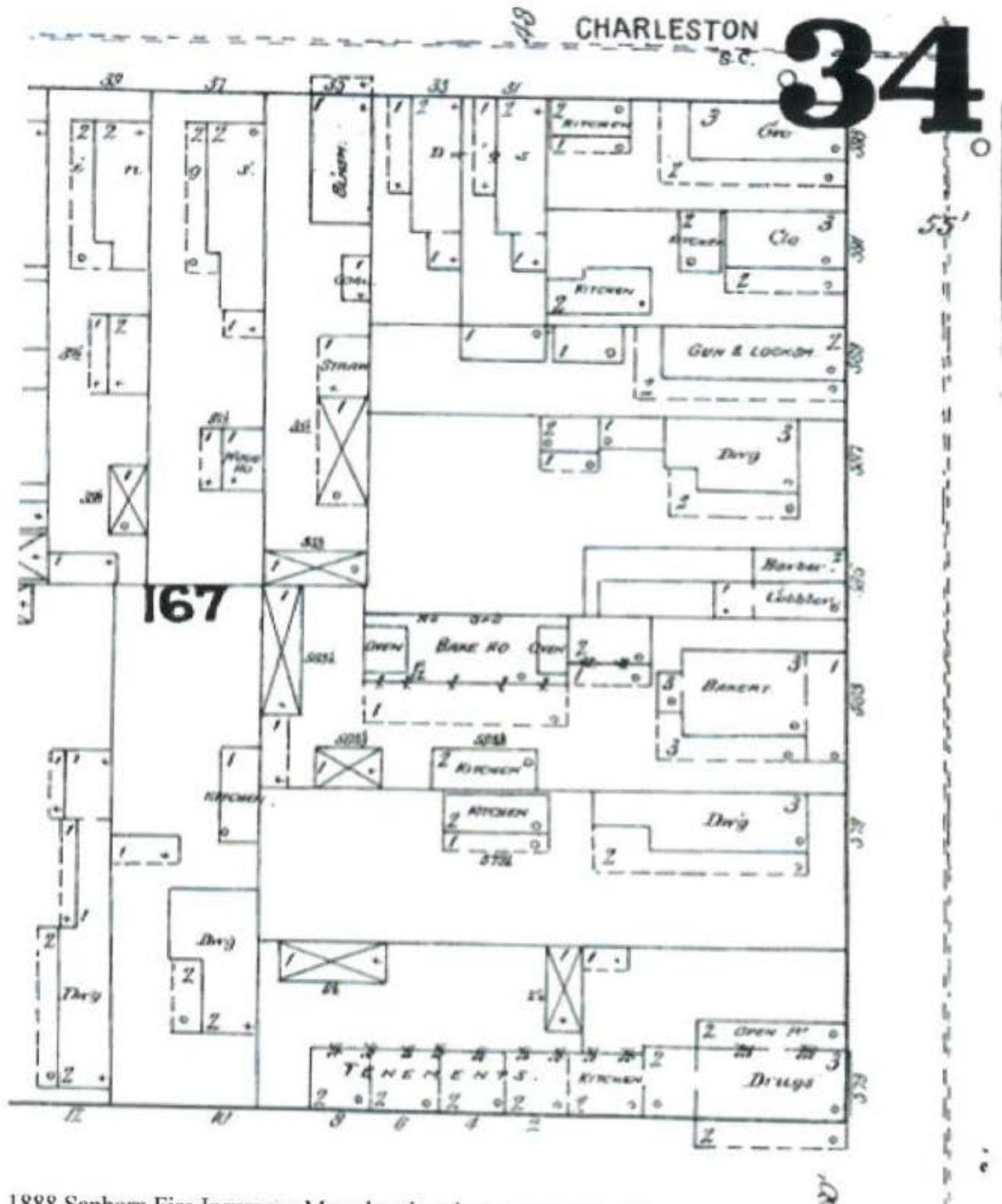
APPENDIX 2: MAPS



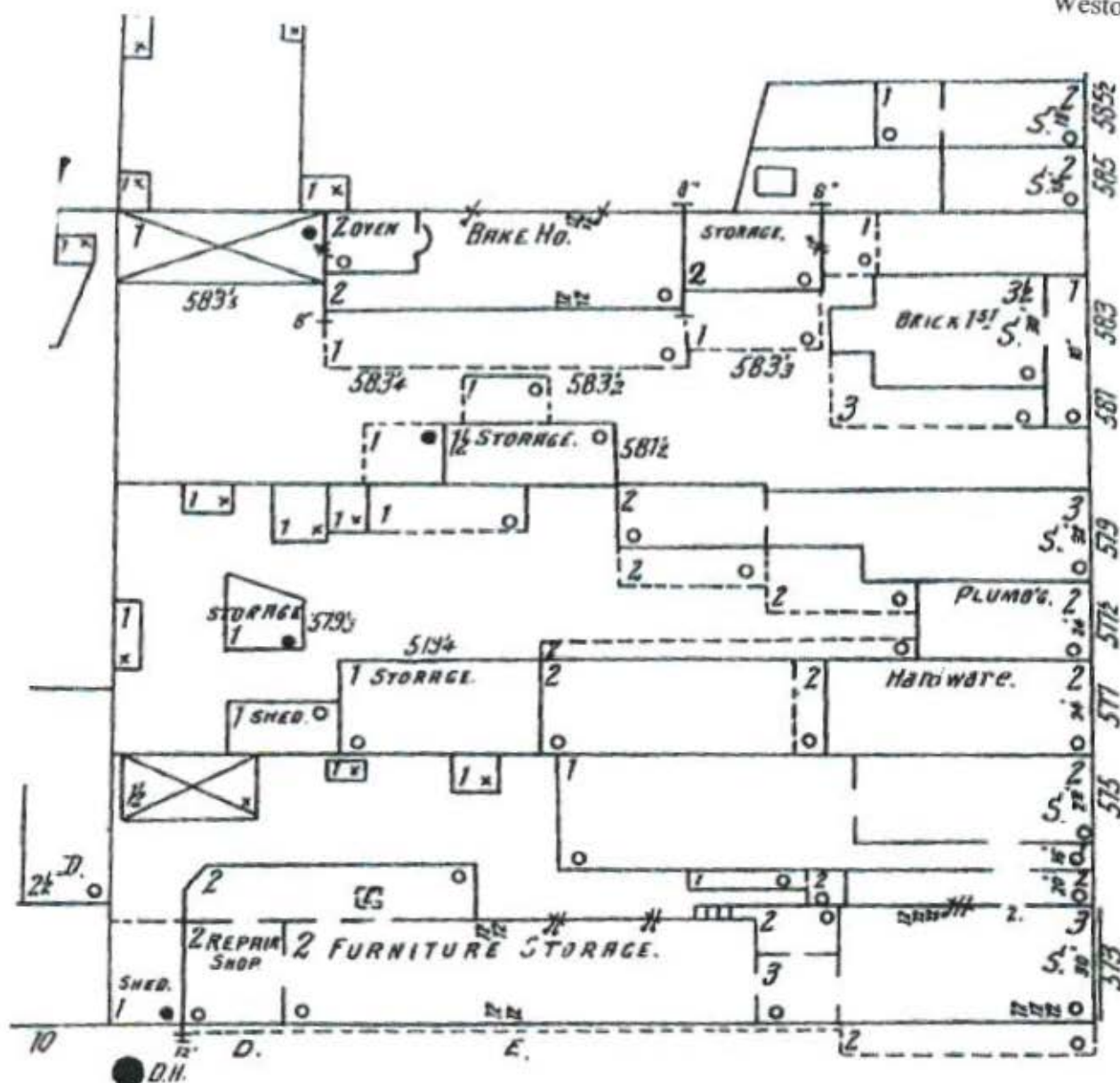
1804 Joseph Purcell plat showing the subdivided lands of the Rugeleys.



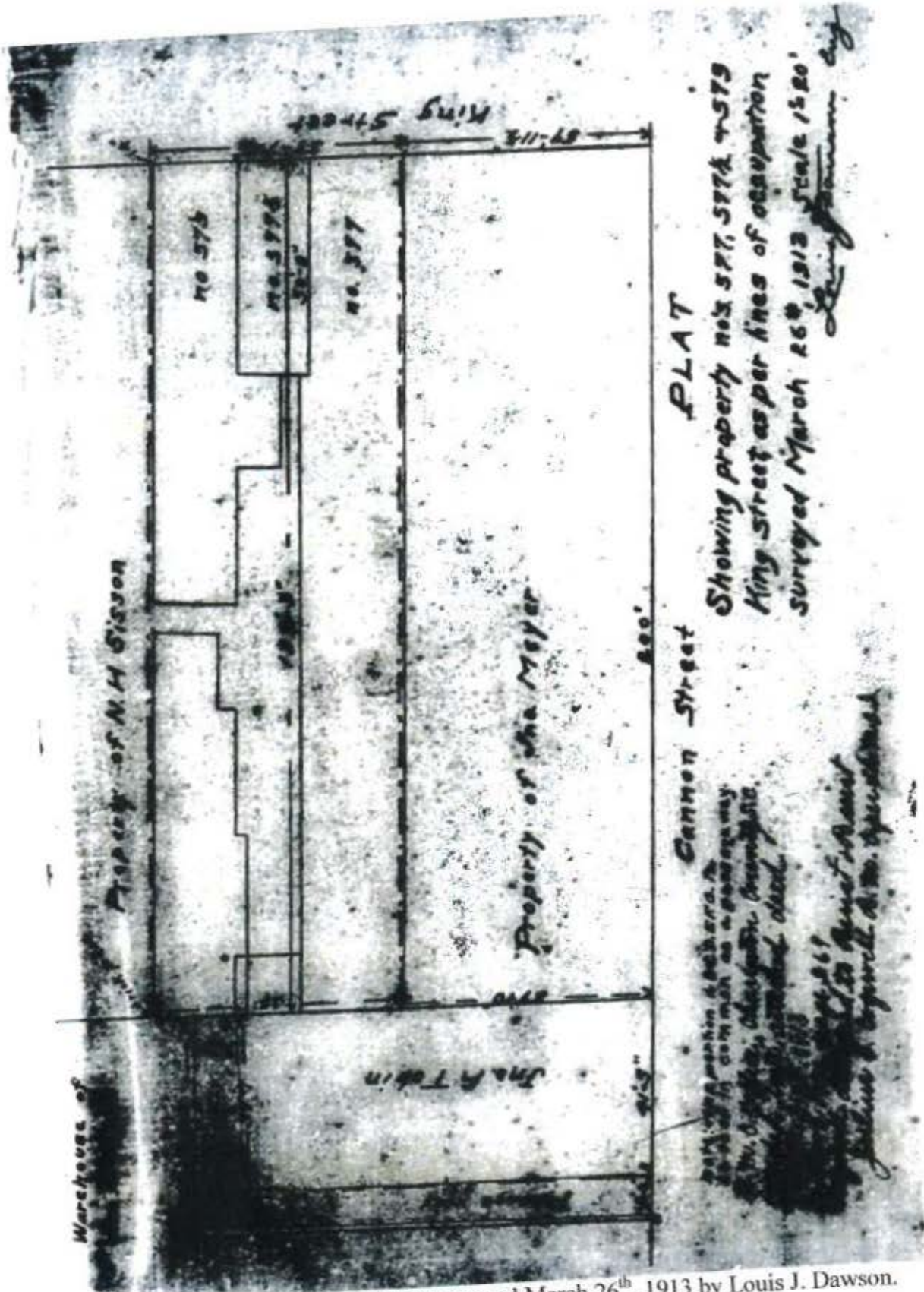
1858 plan of 15 lots on Spring Street, showing the Estate of T. L. Bulow.



1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the corner of Cannon and King Streets.



1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the corner of Cannon and King Streets.



Plat of 577, 577 1/2, and 579 King Street surveyed March 26th, 1913 by Louis J. Dawson.

NOTES

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² Joseph P. Riley, Jr. to Charles Chase, Yvonne Fortenberry, Doug Smits and William Regan, November 19, 1992, Charleston, South Carolina.

³ Warren L. Wise, "Charleston's Massive Midtown Hotel to Begin Rising Soon," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C), August 18, 2013.

⁴ "Lowndes, Rawlins (1721-1800)," in *Encyclopedia of the Age of Political Revolutions and New Ideologies, 1760-1815*, ed. Gregory Fremont-Barnes (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), pg. 435.

⁵ Charleston County. Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, S.C. Deed Book V4, p.107.

⁶ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book T4, p.119.

⁷ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book F4, p.75.

⁸ Arda Talbot Allen, *Twenty-one Sons for Texas*. (San Antonio: Naylor, 1959), pg. 8.

⁹ Ibid. 7.

¹⁰ Flora, Joseph M., and Amber Vogel, ed. *Southern Writers: A New Biographical Dictionary*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. s.v. "Rowland Rugeley (ca.1735-1776)."

¹¹ Arda Talbot Allen, *Twenty-one Sons for Texas*. (San Antonio: Naylor, 1959), pg. 9.

¹² Ibid. 10.

¹³ Ibid. 93.

¹⁴ W. P. Houseal, "St. Paul's Lutheran Church," in *Newberry County, South Carolina: Historical and Genealogical Annals*, by George Leland Summer (Baltimore, Maryland: Clearfield Company, 1950), pg. 131.

¹⁵ Not to be confused with John Joachim Bulow, Jr. of Florida, who is the nephew of the John Joachim Bulow of Charleston and the son of the subject of this paper's brother, Charles Bulow.

¹⁶ RMC, S.C. Deed Book G10, p.115.

¹⁷ *Charleston City Directory, 1837-1838*, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.

¹⁸ *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897*, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36. National Archives at Washington, D.C.

<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/ssc.dll?h=1022183420&db=nypl&indiv=try> [accessed October 31, 2013]

¹⁹ Brent Holcomb, *Marriage and Death Notices from the Southern Christian Advocate* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1979), pg. 11.

²⁰ "Last Will and Testament of John Joachim Bulow," Wills of Charleston County, 1671-1868, Will Book 42, 293. Charleston County Probate Court.

²¹ *Charleston City Directory, 1852*, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.

²² *Charleston City Directory, 1855*, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.

²³ Brent Holcomb, *Marriage and Death Notices from the Southern Christian Advocate* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1979), pg. 197.

²⁴ "A tripartite indenture" between Martha Caroline Bulow and Thomas Lehre Bulow, ca. 1855. From *Bulow Family Legal Papers, 1840-1876*, South Carolina Historical Society.

²⁵ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book Y13, p.514.

²⁶ Plat of 15 lots on Spring Street between King and St. Philips Streets, McCrady Plat Collection, Charleston, S.C. Plat no.6732. [microfilm] South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.

²⁷ Not to be confused with his cousin John J. Lafar, also of Charleston, who is famous for the manufacturing of slave tags.

²⁸ Robert N. Rosen, *Confederate Charleston: An Illustrated History of the City and the People during the Civil War* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), pg. 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 56.

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³¹ “Petition of Ann C. Lafar” [microfilm], Estate Files, Reel 11, Case 157-021. Charleston County Probate Court.

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³⁴ Susan Millar Williams and Stephen G. Hoffius, *Upheaval in Charleston: Earthquake and Murder on the Eve of Jim Crow* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), pg. 19.

³⁵ Nicholas Michael Butler, ed., *The City of Charleston's Executive Relief Committee for the Earthquake of 1886: Money Vouchers for Work Done, September 1886 through June 1887* (Charleston, S.C.: Charleston County Public Library, 2007).

³⁶ The cause of death was listed as “senility.” *South Carolina Death Records, 1821-1960*. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

³⁷ *Charleston City Directory, 1892*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.

³⁸ *Charleston City Directory, 1893*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.

³⁹ *Charleston City Directory, 1898*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.

⁴⁰ *Charleston City Directory, 1902*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.

⁴¹ Biographical information on T.P. DeGafferelly. From vertical file on 579 King Street at the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

⁴² *Charleston City Directory, 1921*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.

⁴³ “Local Poet Rediscovered” by Karen Greene, 23 February 1975. From Ravenel family history and genealogy research files at the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

⁴⁴ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book N26, p.269.

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- ⁴⁵ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book U26, p.44.
- ⁴⁶ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book G31, p.505.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ *U.S. Census, 1920: Population, Charleston City*. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.
- ⁴⁹ *Charleston City Directory, 1917*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.
- ⁵⁰ "Hyman Reznick, Local Merchant Dies at Age 81," *The News and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), October 16, 1957.
- ⁵¹ *Charleston City Directory, 1923*, Special Collections Dept. of the College of Charleston, Addlestone Library, Charleston, S.C.
- ⁵² *Charleston City Directory, 1951*, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.
- ⁵³ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book M82, p.90.
- ⁵⁴ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book W90, p.233.
- ⁵⁵ Petition for Naturalization by Israel Herman Altman, 30 August 1920. *South Carolina Naturalization Records 1888-1991*. U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service.
- ⁵⁶ "Furniture Firm Starts 34th Year," *The News and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), August 19, 1962.
- ⁵⁷ *Charleston City Directory, 1961*, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C.
- ⁵⁸ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book W90, p.233.
- ⁵⁹ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book G137, p.12.
- ⁶⁰ Bob Hines, interview by author, Charleston, S.C., November 24, 2013.
- ⁶¹ John P. McDermott, "King St. Fixture Closing Its Doors," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), December 17, 2005.

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