

48 Laurens Street



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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>The Walled City of Charles Town</i>	3
<i>Gadsden's Green</i>	4
<i>No. 48 Laurens: An Architectural Survey</i>	6
<i>A Place to Call Home</i>	7
<i>Closing</i>	14
<i>Appendix</i>	15

Introduction

The city of Charleston, South Carolina is one of the nation's finest examples of America's colonial past. A living city that has incorporated historic construction and tradition into its everyday life, each street is lined with traces of the victories and defeats of a 300-year-old city that millions travel to experience each year. Each street, lane and alley serve as extensive branches of a larger family tree, as family lineages and younger generations still hold proud the homes and business their ancestors created and developed centuries earlier along the coastline and lush lands of the peninsula. Behind each door lie stories of families, of natural disasters and wars, and of architectural progression and preservation. The historical discoveries of America's best-preserved city are endless.

The research and information compiled in this report has been conducted through an Historic Charleston Foundation internship and is the result of the desire to uncover and understand the history and people that shaped No. 48 Laurens Street. It discusses the architectural development and family ownership that possessed No. 48 Laurens Street from its beginnings as an original lot granted by King Charles II's Lord Proprietors to becoming a waterfront residence for some of Charleston's most influential businessmen. In a section of the city so rich in both colonial and modern history, this paper is written to showcase a building that has help defined Ansonborough for the past two hundred years. Before one can truly understand the history behind No. 48 Laurens Street, one must be familiar with the history of the Holy City and the neighborhood in which the structure resides.

The Walled City of Charles Town

Charleston, South Carolina began as a piece of uncharted territory, fertile land shaped by winding waterways and a lush coast line untouched by the civilized hand. This land soon became the desire of foreign influence, and in 1663, King Charles II of England granted land known as Carolina to eight of his proprietors, many of whose names can still be seen through the towns and counties of the Charleston area today. By the 1690s, this southern peninsula had already welcomed its first colonists and was divided into lots, granted to those appointed by the King's Lord Proprietors. (*Fig. 1*) These lots defined the urban design of the town's original streetscape, creating the foundation of Charleston's city plan as we see today.

As the most southern English capital in the American colonies and with the constant threat of the nearby Spanish and French, by 1704 Charles Towne became the only English walled city in North America.¹ (*Fig. 2*) Built to protect the most intensely developed area of the colony, these walls bounded Charles Town for the first fifty years of its existence and controlled the societal and architectural development. As the need for the city's fortifications declined, the walls were taken down and by 1740, Charles Town was once again a peninsula able to expand and progress to the lands once ostracized by

¹ Butler, Nic. "Rediscovering Charleston's Colonial Fortifications." Walled City Task Force. 2010. <http://walledcitytaskforce.org/>.

the brick blockades. Waterways were filled in, new streets were added, population increased and Charles Town was on its way to becoming a city.

The site of Revolutionary and Civil War combats, national political victories and some of the country's first historic preservation movements, Charleston is known for its architectural prestige, southern tradition and historic richness. Wars, fires and hurricanes have consistently defined Charleston's landscape since its initial settlement in the late 1600s. City blocks have burned to the ground, canon balls have impaled church steeples and hurricanes have gutted antebellum mansions. No matter the disaster, devastation or dispute, however, Charleston has always regrouped and rebuilt. Now a city of over 90,000², dark alleys, narrow lanes and main thoroughfares serve as daily reminders of those who created a foundation for this city. Houses, commercial buildings and religious structures stand as evidence of the hard work of those men and women who have roamed the same streets, walked the same sidewalks. Charleston's history, although tumultuous and consistently threatened by modern development, has propelled this city into an international destination of rich national significance and prominence.

Gadsden's Green

Although the neighborhood of Ansonborough, sometimes referred to as Charleston's first suburb, was outside the original epicenter of the colonial city and tidal creeks in the area made it slow for settlement, the lands that Laurens and Alexander Streets now occupy have a rich colonial history. According to the Bates-Leland 1686 map of Charles Towne (*Fig. 1*) this area was first recorded as Captain Coming's land, and was later passed onto French Huguenot Isaac Mazyck in 1696, one of the largest landholders in Carolina of his time. It wasn't until 1720, however, that these lands first experienced the beginning developments of what now defines Ansonborough.

In 1720, Christopher Gadsden purchased 40 acres high land and marsh and divided it into 197 buildings lots and six wharf lots.³ Encircled today by Laurens, Anson and Calhoun Streets and running towards the Cooper River, this area became Gadsden's Village of Middlesex, also known as Gadsden's Green or Federal Green as it was during the time of the adoption of the Federal Constitution. (*Fig. 3*) Inspired during the rise towards America's independence, Gadsden's Village of Middlesex consisted of streets names such as So Be It Entry, in defiance of the British and Wilkes Street, named after Englishman John Wilkes who publically criticized the Crown. An 1802 map shows Middle and Pitt, now Laurens, Streets as the southern most boundary of Gadsden's Federal Green, as the directory of that same year has both streets listed, but with no numerical addresses. (*Fig. 4*)

After the death of Christopher Gadsden in 1806, lots were continuously leased and developed, as Gadsden's Green had become home to a sprawling city and a region of most desired. An early nineteenth century newspaper advertisement described Gadsden's Green as "...situated in one of the most desirable and healthy situations in the neighborhood of Charleston" with "having a full view of Bar and Shipping," and

² Poston, John. *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. 1997. 30.

³ Charleston County. Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC) Charleston, S.C. Deed Book I3, p. 63.

“commanding view of the Harbor,”⁴ and on June 11, 1807, after a suit involving the Gadsden family and Christopher Gadsden’s estate executors, fifteen lots of land went up for sale, including those on current day Laurens and Alexander Streets.⁵

It is also during this time period that Charleston City directory began recording Laurens Street as a registered address. Directories prior to 1807, Laurens was identified as Pitt Street, first laid out by Gadsden in Middlesex, but was later changed to Laurens, as a way to decipher the lands between Gadsden’s Middlesex and Henry Lauren’s lands.⁶

In 1813, an advertisement for No. 48 Laurens Street in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* described a waterfront property, suitable for a family and comparable to the breezy atmosphere of Sullivan’s Island. Several eighteenth and nineteenth century newspaper articles marketed the corner of Lauren and Middle (now Alexander) Streets as perfect for a merchant hoping to watch his ships, a planter wishing for an airy environment to keep a garden or crops, or a large family hoping to find a sanitary and healthy part of the city to raise children. Now surrounded by urban sprawl and two hundred years of land and building development, Ansonborough sits enclosed, several blocks from a coastline it once looked after.

Despite its changing history and modern threats, Laurens Street is home to some the city’s most significant architecture. Spared by the great fire of 1838, which ravaged the area just one block south⁷, the corner of Laurens and Alexander Streets is home to some of the only late eighteenth and early nineteenth century houses that survive in the area. No. 48 Laurens, with its original marble mantles and towering east piazza, this nineteenth century residence will forever be an everlasting symbol of the historic Charleston character.

⁴ “For Private Sale.” *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. March 23, 1813.

⁵ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 148.

⁶ “Middlesex.” *History of Ansonborough and Nearby Neighborhoods: Ansonborough*. Charleston, South Carolina: Charleston County Public Library. www.ccpl.org.

⁷ “Charleston Great Fires.” *Experience*. Historic Charleston Foundation. Charleston, South Carolina. www.historiccharleston.org.

48 Laurens Street: An Architectural Survey

Historic Charleston Foundation Archives

No. 48 Laurens Street, also known as the Simon Jude Chancognie House, is a three-story wooden Charleston single house located on the north side of Laurens Street. Topped with a hipped roof and complemented with an east-facing two-story piazza, this early nineteenth century residence retains Neo-Classical detailing with a Greek revival doorway in the piazza screen. Visible from the Alexander Street elevation is a classical addition built around the turn of the twentieth century.⁸

Upon entering the residence from the piazza door, rooms to take notice of include the front room on both the first and second floors facing south for their ornamentation. The first floor front room displays an intricately carved baseboard, chair rail and window frames, as well as a plaster acanthus leaf motif lining the ceiling. The second floor south room is home to an Adam style marble mantel.

No. 48 Laurens Street has been deemed a perfect “scale model” in Adamesque style compared to other houses of the same period, such as Gadsden’s Mansion at No. 329 Easy Bay Street and the James Missroon House at No. 40 East Bay Street.⁹

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⁸ Poston, John. *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. 1997. 414.

⁹ “140-Year-Old Home.” *News and Courier*. March 4, 1961.

A Place to Call Home

In 1795, property owner Christopher Gadsden conveyed a lease to Charleston carpenter John Cross on a property at the south boundary line of Middlesex. Described as Lot #42 on lands belonging to Gadsden and bounded southward on Pitt Street and eastward on Middle Street, the deed conveying this lease to Cross confirmed the existence of a two-story tenement already erected on the property.¹⁰ According to city directories from this time period, this tenement served as the home of many before the 1807 purchase of Simon Judge Chancognie. As early as 1797, city directories show John Cross living at Pitt Street and in 1801, Susannah Cross, daughter of John, is recorded as living at No. 7 Pitt Street, the same address that would be shared by Chancognie just six years later.¹¹ Whether Cross himself actually resided at No. 7 Pitt Street is unknown, as directories from the years 1802 to 1803 show John Cross living at No. 3 Pitt Street. Cross perhaps leased the land from Gadsden and built a house for his daughter, just a few lots away from his residence.

On June 15 of 1805, Cross ran an advertisement in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* for a three year and three month lease of a two story-wooden house that included five rooms and three fireplaces on the corner of Pitt and Middle Streets. (Fig. 5) Nearly five days later, another Charlestonian carpenter, Edward Thwing, answered the advertisement and purchased the lease for \$500.00¹², only to sell it to a man that would change the landscape of this land forever only six days later.

Simon Judge Chancognie, a French merchant and powerful consular, rented and resided at the property on current day No. 48 Laurens Street for two years before formerly purchasing the land.¹³ The property sale went up for sale during Changonie's occupancy, as article on September 9, 1805 in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* not only mentions the sale of the house, but a kitchen and carriage house as well. It wasn't until the year 1807 the property would change owners, nearly a century after Christopher Gadsden first purchased the land. (Fig. 6)

Christopher Gadsden passed away in April of 1806, placing ownership of his estate onto his executors: son Phillip Gadsden, son-in-law Thomas Morris and William Drayton. One year later, however, legal records show Martha Gadsden, Charles Gadsden and Mary Morris filed suit against these executors, claiming that the gifts and legacies under Gadsden's will exceeded the actual income and proceeds of the estate and ultimately put the lands up for sale.¹⁴ On June 18, 1807, eleven lots on Gadsden's Green were to be sold at public auction. Lot #42, No. 7 Pitt Street, would be finally sold to Chancognie. (Fig. 7)

With new ownership came a new address, and the year 1807 not only brought a change in legal possession of No. 7 Pitt Street, but it also marked the year Laurens Street

¹⁰ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 148.

¹¹ Hagy, James W. *People and Professions of Charleston, South Carolina, 1782-1802*. Baltimore: Clearfield Co, 1992.

¹² RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book Q7, p. 112.

¹³ Hagy, James W. *City Directories for Charleston, South Carolina for the Years 1803, 1806, 1807, 1809, and 1813*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000.

¹⁴ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 148.

was first established. In the 1807 city directory, Chancognie is recorded living at No. 13 Laurens Street and Pitt Street is no longer recorded.

Chancognie continued to reside on this property for the next ten years, but it was only five years into his ownership that advertisements for the sale of the property started to appear in newspapers. These articles not only mentioned a new house located on the premise but also mentioned the owner's need to leave the county, providing insight into a somewhat mysterious history. Based on research, Chancognie came to South Carolina from France by the turn of the nineteenth century and was soon naturalized as an American citizen. He was involved in maritime relations and had a counting house at No. 5 Fitzsimmons Wharf, the current location of the U.S. Customs House on East Bay Street, up until 1816 when Chancognie starts to disappear from city documents and records. Based on newspaper articles and descriptions of this year, Chancognie was selling everything from the "neatest furniture" inside his residence on Laurens Street to his business on the Charleston coast.¹⁵ Perhaps Chancognie had further business to take care of in France.

Although Chancognie began his residence on Laurens Street in the two-story tenement of John Cross, upon purchasing the lot, Chancognie redeveloped the property while also purchasing another. The area of Middle and Laurens Street during the early nineteenth century was home to many tradesmen and merchants and in 1811, Chancognie purchased the lot of land directly behind his property on No. 1 Middle Street.¹⁶ Two years later, Chancognie sold the lot for nearly \$2,000.00 more than he had originally purchased. As directories never show Chancognie actually living at No. 1 Middle Street, Chancognie perhaps thought of it as an investment, purchasing the lot, redeveloping the property with a nicer residence and renting the space only to sell it for a much higher price. No. 5 Alexander Street, today, may not have been a sister property of No. 48 Laurens Street after all, but rather a business indenture for a home owner who saw potential profit.

Today, the construction date of No. 48 Laurens is somewhat unknown and existing history records do not provide details on any specific dates to which the three-story house replaced the two-story tenement. Deed records show Chancognie selling No. 48 Laurens Street in 1817 for \$6,000.00 more than when he bought it from the Gadsden's in 1807¹⁷, confirming that Chancognie changed and enhanced the property. On March 23, 1813 an article advertising the sale of the house in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* further confirms a construction date of a new house on the property around 1810-1811, the same time frame in which he purchased No. 1 Middle Street, stating that the "whole of the buildings is about three years old..." (Fig. 8) An 1815 article also confirms the property was redeveloped by describing a three-story, rather than two-story, house on the lot.¹⁸ Due to many similarities in interior and exterior aspects of both homes, such as the interior woodwork, Chancognie could have hired the same carpenter for both homes. Whether he built the houses on both properties at the same time or the one at Laurens Street first, records confirm that the house that now stands at No. 48 Laurens Street is an original Chancognie construction and it was, in fact, his home.

¹⁵ "Advertisement for Sale." *City Gazette And Daily Advertiser*. May 12, 1815.

¹⁶ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book F8, p. 374.

¹⁷ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 150.

¹⁸ "For Private Sale." *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. August 7, 1815.

At the time of Chancognie's new three-story residence, the house consisted six well finished rooms with marble chimney pieces and stucco cornices, a dry cellar and outbuildings of Philadelphia brick, including a kitchen, pantry house, wash house with four rooms, a large stable and chair house. There was also a "handsome garden and orchard" on the eastern end of the property with "neatly organized fruit and flower trees with an excellent well of water" and an upper piazza with "a full view of Cooper River, the Bar and Harbor, and is well situated for a planter, whose property is situated on Cooper River."¹⁹ What is most astonishing today is that the cornices and mantle pieces explained in this article still grace this residence more two hundred years later and the piazza, one of the only east facing piazza's on the block, may have been intentional. As the properties now on Laurens and Alexander were almost waterfront property and Chancognie's main line of business was on the Cooper River, the merchant may have constructed his house with the intent of looking after his business from the height of this second story piazza. !

With new development consistently altering the streetscapes of this region, the address of Laurens Street changed frequently. At the time Chancognie sold his Laurens Street property, the residence was listed as No. 16 Laurens Street.²⁰ In 1817, after several years of sale advertisements and mentions of Chancognie unable to stay in Charleston, Henry Bryce, a merchant on Martin's Wharf, purchased No. 16 Laurens Street for his widowed sister-in-law Mary.²¹ Mary Elizabeth Scot married Nichol Bryce, a vendue master and auctioneer, in 1807 and eight years later, at age 36, Nichol deceased, leaving Mary with a three-year-old son, Henry. Homeowner Henry Bryce was never recorded at living at this residence and may have purchased this grand house for his grieving sister-in-law and nephew. On December 24, 1818, Henry died at age six and a formal funeral was held at Mary Bryce's home at No. 16 Laurens Street, further confirming the structure as her residence.²²

Two years later, Henry Bryce sold the property in December of 1819 to William Broadfoot and Samuel McNeal for exactly \$1,000.00 less than what he bought it for.²³ There is no record of the property changing, as an 1822 advertisement in the *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* for sale of "the former Simon Jude Chancognie house" describes both the interior and exterior plan of the property just as it was explained in articles ten years prior. This was, however, during America's first major financial crisis, the Panic of 1819.

Despite economic turmoil, William Broadfoot and Samual McNeal of Broadfoot & McNeal Counting House located at No. 72 East Bay Street purchased and resided at the property. The 1822 city directory records both Broadfoot and McNeal (also referred to as McNeil or McNeal) living at the Laurens Street house, but by 1825, neither men are listed in the directory records. Deed documents do show, however, that at the end of 1822

¹⁹ "For Private Sale." *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. July 23, 1819.

²⁰ *Charleston City Directory, 1816-1829*. South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, SC.

²¹ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 150.

²² Jersey, Elizabeth H. "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette of Charleston, S. C." *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* Vol. 45, No. 3. South Carolina Historical Society, July 1944., p. 145. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27571795>.

²³ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E9, p. 152.

both gentlemen entered into a mortgage agreement with Edward Peter Simons for the property.²⁴ Although research does not confirm whether William Broadfoot and Samuel McNeal lived the house for the entire decade in which they almost owned the property, records prove they were given financial support on retaining the property. Five years later, in 1827, the bank foreclosed on the mortgage of Broadfoot and McNeal, and the property was sold to William Patton, his wife Elizabeth and their children.²⁵

William Patton, a wealthy merchant heavily involved in the Charleston slave trade and in charge of several large cargo ships and imports, may have bought the property for the same reason it was originally intended, for his steam packet office was also located at Fitzsimmons Wharf and Union Wharf, situated between current day Market and Laurens Streets. Controlling Charleston's most active port in the nineteenth century, Patton owned lands as far north as Asheville and Black Mountain, North Carolina. Several reports done on the area claim that Patton built a home in Black Mountain and spent many summers in the area, as well as established several lodges in the 1840s in Black Mountain, some which still exist today, to profit from the tourism that sparked in western North Carolina.²⁶ During his time involved in North Carolina, Patton and his wife resided on the corner of Laurens and Middle Streets from 1829 to 1856, making the Pattons perhaps the first full family to call No. 48 Laurens home.

Although there is not much documentation on the appearance of the property during this time, directories do show the Patton's residence on Laurens Street changing addresses frequently. From the years 1829 to 1835, the Pattons were recorded as living at No. 26 Laurens Street and from 1840 to 1849, the residence was registered as No. 16 Laurens Street. Almost ten years later, the house was recorded as No. 24 Laurens Street and would remain this address for the next twenty years. The Bridgens & Allen Map of 1852 show three buildings situated on the lot. The years following, from 1853 to 1854, there is also a 35% increase in taxes on Patton's Laurens Street property, which may mean the family enhanced or developed certain pieces of the property.²⁷ By 1858, both Elizabeth and William Patton had deceased and in 1867, John D. Lesemann purchased the property.²⁸ Between the years 1858 and 1867, however, there are no Pattons listed in the city directories. Whether the house sat vacant or the executors of the estate rented the property is still a question, but by the 1870s, a large family was also able to call Laurens Street home.

John D. Lesemann was a merchant of Lesemann & Luder, whole grocers and liquor dealers at No. 195 East Bay Street,²⁹ and he and his wife Johanna, both native Charlestonians, are recorded at living on the west corner of Laurens and Middle Streets from 1868 to 1884. Tax assessment records document the property as consisting of three wooden structures and no major changes to the size of the lot since Chancognie's purchase half a century prior.

²⁴ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book C9, p.33.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Arthur, John Preston. *History of Western North Carolina*. Published in 1914. Republished by New River Notes, 1998. chapter XXIII. <http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/wnc23.htm>.

²⁷ *City of Charleston, City Tax Assessment Ward Books, Charleston, SC*. Ward Book 3, 1852. [microfilm] South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library.

²⁸ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book A14, p. 767.

²⁹ *Charleston City Directory, 1868*. [microfilm] South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, SC.

The year 1886 brought much change to Johanna's life and to the house on No. 34 Laurens Street. The Earthquake of 1886 devastated the city of Charleston, destroying the streetscape and ravaging buildings throughout the peninsula. Although No. 34 Laurens Street survived the earthquake unscathed, except for a chimney that was in need of being repaired, homeowner John D. Lesemann died that same year at age 55.³⁰ From this year on, Johanna's children returned to live with their mother and the large three-story residence finally received its last address change to No. 48 Laurens Street. Lesemann's estate was handed over to Johanna and from 1886 to the time she sold the property in 1899, the residence was filled with the grown Lesemann children.

In the 1886 directory, children August Lesemann at age 20, J. Deidrich Leseman at age 19 and Henry Lesemann, age 17, all clerks, resided with their mother at No. 48 Laurens Street. By 1888, oldest child Emily Lesemann, age 24 and a teacher at the Germany Academy located at No. 63 St. Philip Street, joined her family, and in 1889 until about the mid 1890s, son and clerk Adolf C. Lesemann, age 16, as well as two other Lesemann relatives, are also additionally recorded, making No. 48 Laurens Street a home of almost ten individuals.

Before the turn of the twentieth century, most of the children of Johanna Lesemann appear to have moved out. In the 1899 directory, she is accompanied only by sons Adolf C. and Jacob Lesemann, (Fig. 9) involved in travel sales, and daughter Johanna "Nannie" Lesemann Rugheimer and her husband J.P. Rugheimer, a merchant tailor on King Street and present location at the Fulton Lane Inn.³¹ On November 23 of that same year, Johanna Lesemann conveyed the property to Mary L. Corbett and died eight years later on May 17 at No. 3 Wentworth Street at the age of 68.³²

After the purchase of No. 48 Laurens Street by Ms. Corbett, widow of Henry E. Corbett, the property sat vacant in 1900, but by 1901, although Ms. Corbett is not recorded in city directories as living at this residence, Colonel James Armstrong, harbormaster at No. 2 Exchange, resided in the house.³³ From 1907 to 1910 both Mary and Colonel Armstrong, then commercial editor of the *News and Courier*, lived at No 48 Laurens Street, along with Joseph A. Armstrong, marine reporter for the newspaper as well.

During the Lesemann and Corbett occupation, significant changes to the rear of the residence seemed to have taken place based on maps plats from the time period. In an 1882 plat in the City Engineer's Plat Book, No. 48 Laurens Street has an east-facing piazza with a two-story addition at the rear. By 1888, however, Sanborn Maps show that this rear addition had been removed and an extension to the piazza in the rear had been added. This rear piazza disappears by 1902 and another two-story addition with a one-story hyphen was put in its place. (Fig. 10) Whether Corbett built it for her to reside in while the main house was rented or Johanna Lesemann constructed the addition to make room for her and her nine children is still in question.

³⁰ "John D. Lesemann." The Charleston Death Card File, 1819-1926. South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library.

³¹ Trouche, Michael. "Do You Know Your Charleston?" *News and Courier*. December 12, 1983.

³² "Johanna Lesemann." The Charleston Death Card File, 1819-1926. South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library.

³³ *Charleston City Directory*, 1902. [microfilm] South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, SC.

On November 2, 1911, Mary passed away and left her estate to her heirs Richard E. Corbett and daughter Cleo C. Collins.³⁴ After she passed, Annie T. Corbett, widow of James. E. Corbett, resided at the home until 1936, when the property was deemed vacant and was sold to Adelaine E. Kennedy.³⁵ Before Adelaine's purchase, the one story carriage house was demolished and not recorded in the 1929 Sanborn Map. (Fig. 10)

For almost twenty years, Urban M. and Adelaide E. Kennedy, along with their two children, resided at this house. Urban Kennedy was a furniture salesman at No. 645 King Street and later an inspector Office of Price Administration, Rent Control Division, served to regulate prices after the outbreak of World War II. The Kennedys were one of the few families in the area with registered telephone numbers.³⁶ An 1940 image from Gibbes Museum of Art captures the property of No. 48 Laurens Street as lived in by the Kennedys, including the kitchen house that would remain on the property until 1966 and a two-story addition on the rear. (Fig. 11) Although bottom floor windows appear boarded up and shutters are closed, the exterior of the main home looks almost exactly as it does today.

The home built by Simon Jude Chancogne and the meticulous detail in the interior ornamentation had survived over a century of natural disasters, wars and human occupation, and in 1959, No. 48 Laurens Street was acquired for its representation of Charlestonian history. With the goal of encouraging contemporary use of architecturally and historically valuable old buildings, Historic Charleston Foundation purchased the property, as well as several other nineteenth century houses in Ansonborough as part of the Anson Rehabilitation Project.³⁷ After HCF's purchase, the house stood vacant for possibly almost two years, but on February 9, 1961, James and Edna S. O'Hear purchased the property and restored it for their residence, stating "...vast amount of work required to put it in good livable condition."³⁸ During a time period where many houses in Ansonborough were threatened with demolition having stood vacant or fallen into disrepair, the property may not have been lived in by the Kennedys towards the end of their ownership or they could not afford to keep it up. An aerial picture of the area in 1960 shows the drastic changes that took place in the neighborhood to make room for the Gaillard Auditorium. (Fig. 12)

By 1966, the roof of the two-story brick kitchen house at the rear of the property had caved in and the south wall was in severe disrepair. The clay-tiled roof could be salvaged and on March 18, 1969, Edna O'Hear sold the brick dependency building and driveway in rear of the property for \$3000.³⁹ Tax assessment records from that same year document only one building on the property.

On March 16, 1977, Phyllis W. Ewing purchased the property and one year later began a garden to bring back the historic landscape of the eastern side yard.⁴⁰ In 1984, the two-story appendage in the rear of the home, which by that time had became only one story, was demolished and a three-story kitchen wing was added to the house in its place,

³⁴ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book B39, p. 357.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Charleston City Directory, 1938*. South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, SC.

³⁷ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book S68, p. 186.

³⁸ "48 Laurens Street. Property Files. Historic Charleston Foundation. Charleston, South Carolina.

³⁹ RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book K112, p. 207.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the addition we see standing today. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the yard of No. 48 Laurens street welcomed modern additions, as a greenhouse sat on a earlier building's foundation in the northwest corner of the property, a pool was placed along the north boundary line near the location of the old kitchen house and a the boat storage was positioned in the northeast corner of the property, once home to property's stables or carriage house. In 1997, S.D. Thomas bought the property for \$440,000⁴¹ and its current owners, the Falks, purchased the property in February of 2010.

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41 RMC, Charleston, S.C. Deed Book R279, p. 136.

Closing

A city rich with historical evidence of times past, both on the streets and within the century old structures that line them, Charleston prides itself on family tradition and commemoration of those who have come before us. From street names to plaques on exterior street fronts, everyday Charlestonians acknowledge the accomplishments and legacy of the men and women who formed and defended a city threatened by wars, natural disasters and modern development. Recognized for successes in unique aspects of Charleston's culture, No. 48 Laurens Street saw a diverse group of powerful and influential individuals throughout the centuries, all of whom called this land on the corner of Laurens and Alexander Streets their own.

Today, Chancognie's ornate cornices still grace the interior of the structure's space, the marble mantles remain bold accents and the piazza still looks out onto a picturesque garden; the exterior almost a perfect mirror image of the original 1810-1811 structure. Throughout the structure's two hundred year existence, generations of merchants paced the piazza, widowed mothers found a home amongst their children and a history of dedicated homeowners brought the property back to life. No. 48 Laurens Street will continue to serve as a symbol of Charleston's past and a home for Charleston's future generations.

Appendix

48 Laurens Timeline

1795: **Aug. 26:** Christopher Gadsden and John Cross entered into a lease indenture of a lot of land, Lot #42 according to Joseph R. Purcell's 1806 Plat of Christopher Gadsden's estate, with a two-story wooden tenement.

1796: The City of Charleston Directory recorded John Cross living on Pitt Street.

1801: Directory shows Susannah Cross living at No. 7 Pitt Street.

1802-3: Charleston directories show John Cross living at No. 3 Pitt Street.

1805: **June 15, *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*:** Ad by John Cross for a three year and three month lease of a two-story wooden house with five rooms and three fireplaces on the corner of Pitt and Middle.

June 20: Edward Thwing rented the property from John Cross with wooden house on it, for \$500.

June 26: Edward Thwing assigned the lease of the lot on Pitt Street to Simon Jude Chancognie.

Sept. 20, *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*: Ad for sale by Edward Thwing of a two-story wooden house, at corner of Middle Street, with six rooms, a kitchen and carriage house.

1806: Simon Jude Chancognie was recorded at living at No. 7 N. Pitt.

1807: The address then changes, as Simon Jude Chancognie was then listed at No. 13 Laurens Street.

June 11, *City Gazette and Advertiser*: Lots 32-42, according to Joseph R. Purcell's 1806 Plat of Christopher Gadsden's estate, went up for sale. No. 48 Laurens was Lot 42.

June 18: Simon Jude Chancognie bought the property.

1809: Chancognie is recorded living at No. 15 Laurens Street.

1810: Possible construction of the house now standing at No. 48 Laurens Street.

1813: Chancognie is recorded living at No. 16 Laurens Street.

January 30 and March 23, *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*: This property was advertised for sale and described as containing about 100 ft. on Laurens Street and about 65 ft. on Middle Street with a wooden dwelling and outbuildings.

1815: **Aug. 7, City Gazette and Daily Advertiser:** No. 16 Laurens Street was still advertised for sale.

1816: City of Charleston directories record Chancognie still living on Laurens Street.

1817: **January 11:** Chancognie sold the property to Henry Bryce.

1819: City of Charleston directories record Mary Elizabeth Bryce as living at No. 16 Laurens as a widow.

December 16: Henry Bryce sold the property to William Broadfoot & Samuel McNeal.

1822: City of Charleston directories record William Broadfoot and Samuel McNeil living at No. 2 Laurens Street.

October 25: Edward Peter Simons secured a mortgage with William Broadfoot & Samuel McNeal for the property

1827: **May 23:** Broadfoot and McNeal sold the property to William Patton, his wife and children.

1829-1856: City directories show William Patton, a merchant on Fitzsimmons' Wharf, residing at the west corner of Middle and Laurens Streets.

1856: No. 16 Laurens Street, comprising of three wooden buildings, was owned by the trust of Elizabeth Patton.

1867: **April 4:** John B. Lesemann bought the property.

1868-1884: John D. Lesemann of H. Gerdts & Co., is recorded at living on the west corner of Laurens and Middle Streets in the city directory.

1886-1888: Earthquake records show Johanna Lessman, widow of John, living in the frame house that is in good condition at No. 48 Laurens Street.

City directories record August H.D. Lesemann, J.D. Lesemann, Henry W. Lesemann, J. Deidrich Lesemann, Miss Emily Lesemann and Johanna Lesemann all residing at No. 48 Laurens Street.

1892-1893: City directories record owner Johanna Lesemann, Adolf C. Lesemann, Henry W. Lesemann and Jacob D. Lesemann residing at No. 48 Laurens Street.

1899: Along with owner Johanna D. Lesemann living at No. 48 Laurens, city directories show J.P. and Nannie Rugheimer, Adolf C. Lesemann, Louis D. Lesemann living there as well.

November 23: Johanna Lesemann conveyed the property to Mary L. Corbett.

1900: In a 1900 directory, the property was registered as vacant.

1901: Colonel James Armstrong resided at No. 48 Laurens, according to a 1901 city directory.

1907-10: Mary L. Corbett, widow of Henry E. Corbett, was registered in city directories living at No. 48 Laurens Street with James Armstrong and Joseph A. Armstrong.

1911: **November 2:** Ms. Corbett passed away in and left her estate to her heirs, Richard E. Corbett and daughter Cleo C. Collins.

1917-1919: James Armstrong is still registered in the city directories as living at No. 48 Laurens Street along with Annie Corbett.

1934: Mrs. Annie T. Corbett is still registered at No. 48 Laurens Street in the city directory.

1936: In the 1936 directory, the property is listed as vacant.

November 13: Adelaine E. Kennedy bought the property for nearly \$6000 less than the purchase price over a century ago.

1938-1958: Urban M. and Adelaide E. Kennedy, along with two children under, lived at the Laurens residence.

1956: A two-story servant's quarters, with a hipped tiled roof and big fireplace still stood on the property.

1959: **November 16:** Historic Charleston Foundation bought the property.

1961: According to city directories, the house at No. 48 Laurens Street was not occupied.

February 9: James and Edna S. O'Hear purchased the property and restored it for their residence.

1960-65: In the 1960 Charleston Ward Books, No. 48 Laurens Street was assessed as three wood buildings.

1969: Assessed as 1 building, equaling 1000.

March 18: Mrs. O'Hear sold the brick dependency building and driveway in rear for \$3000.

1976: Charleston ward books record No. 48 Laurens Street as one wooden building.

1977: **March 16:** Phyllis W. Ewing purchased the property. All dependency buildings were gone.

1984: An originally two-story, but then only one, brick addition from the late 1800s, early 1900s was demolished and a three-story kitchen wing was added to the house in its place.

1991: A greenhouse, pool and the boat storage were present on the property.

1997: **February 4:** S.D. Thomas bought the property for \$440,000.

2010: **February 23:** Robert B. Falk, Jr. bought the property.

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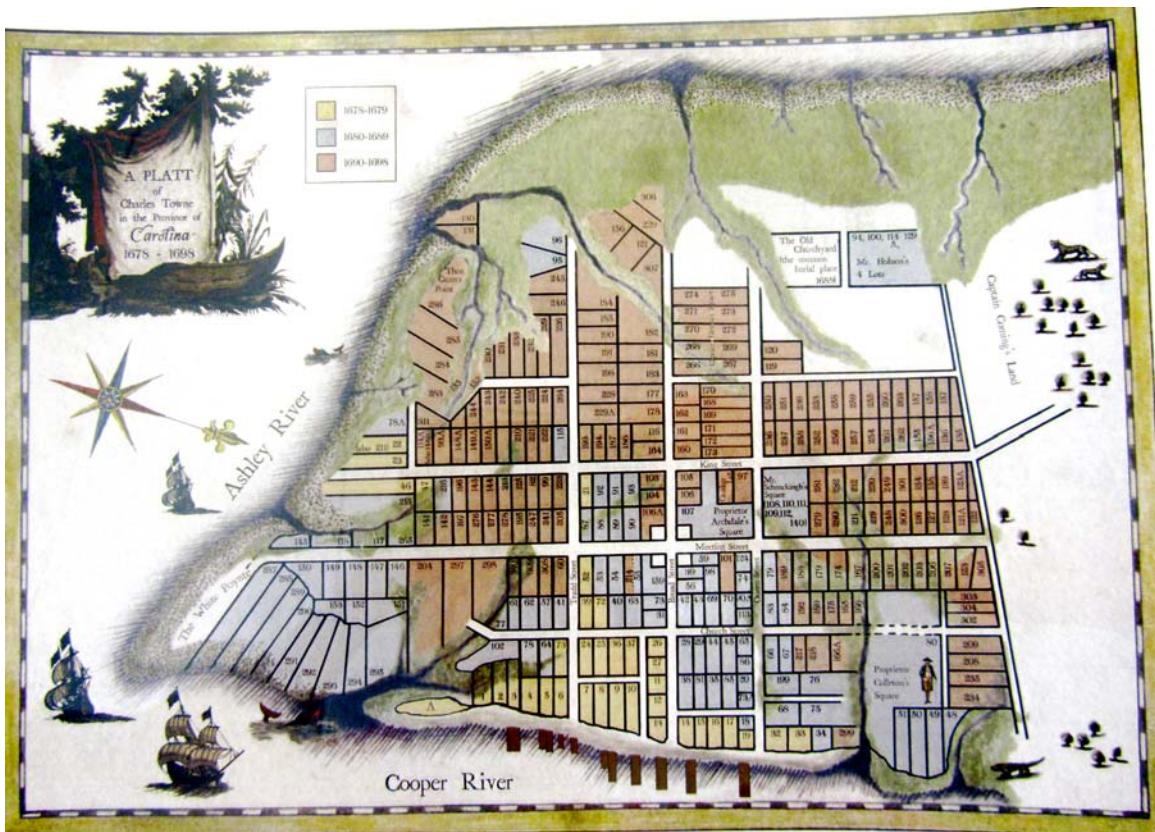


Figure 1: "A Platt of Charles Towne in the Province of Carolina, 1678-1698." Maps f Charleston County. South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, SC.



Figure 2: Detail from the 1711 "Crisp Map" of Charles Towne. <http://walledcitytaskforce.org/>.

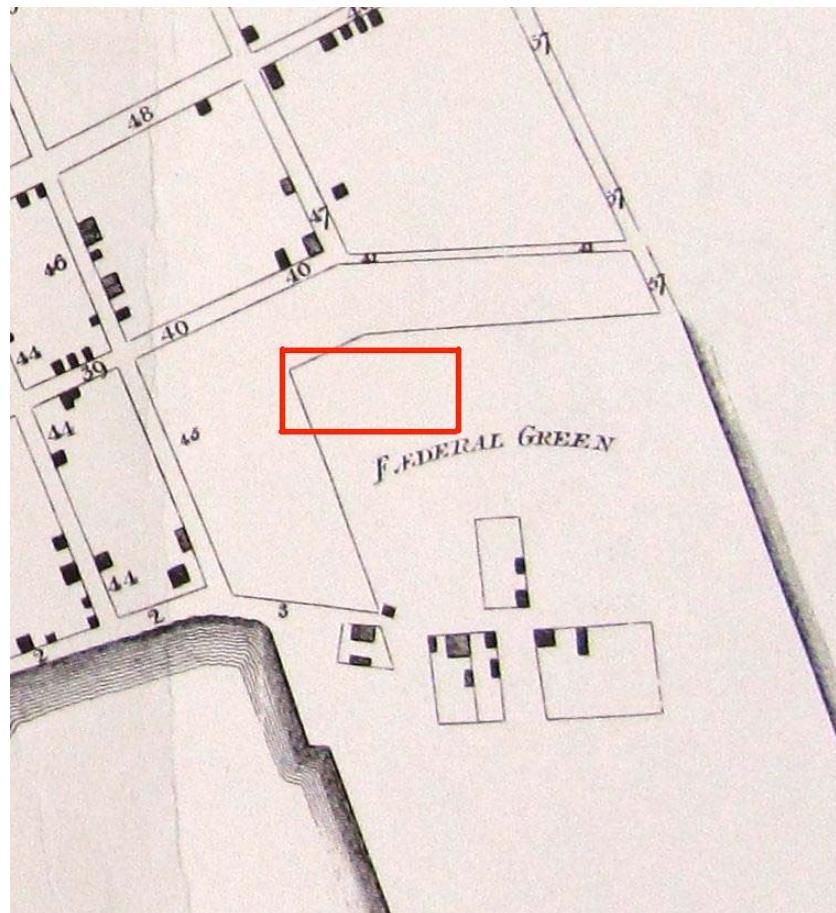


Figure 3: Detail from “Charleston 1788 Ichnography Map.” South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library.

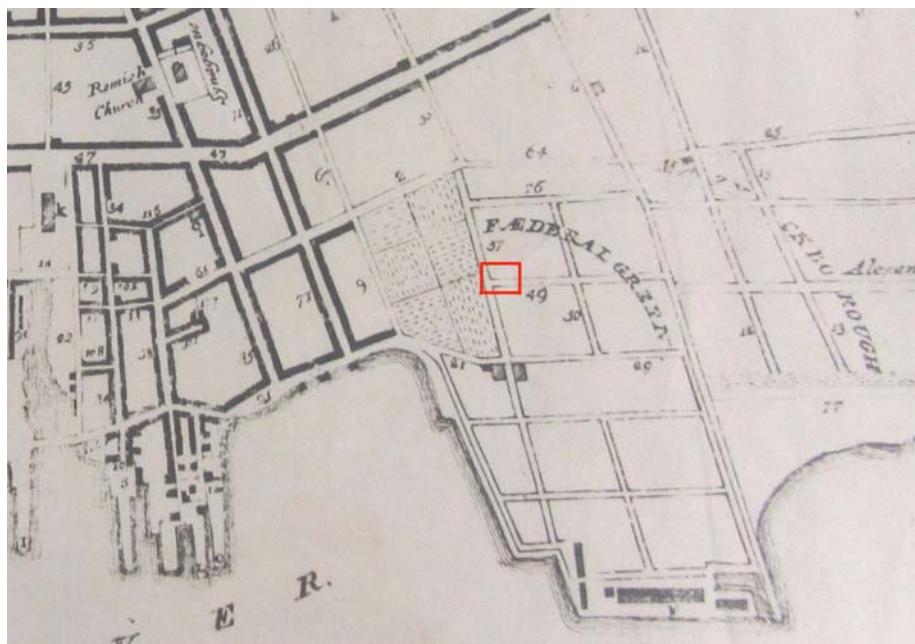


Figure 4: Detail from “Plan of the City of Charleston, South Carolina,” 1802. South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library.

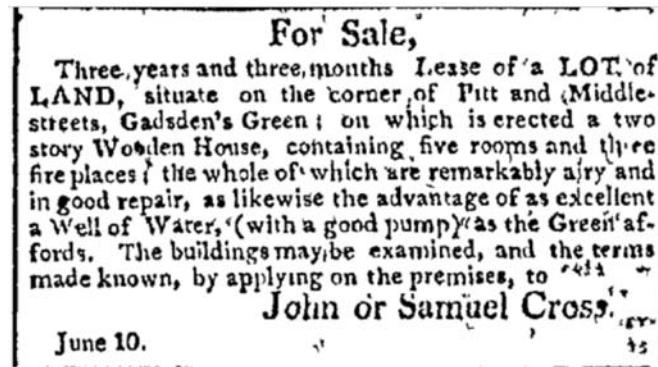


Figure 5: Advertisement from the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. June 15, 1805. Charleston, SC. America's Historical Newspapers.

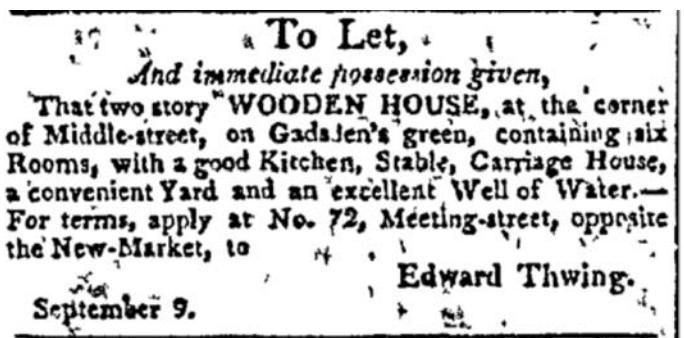


Figure 6: Advertisement from the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. September 9, 1805. Charleston, SC. America's Historical Newspapers.



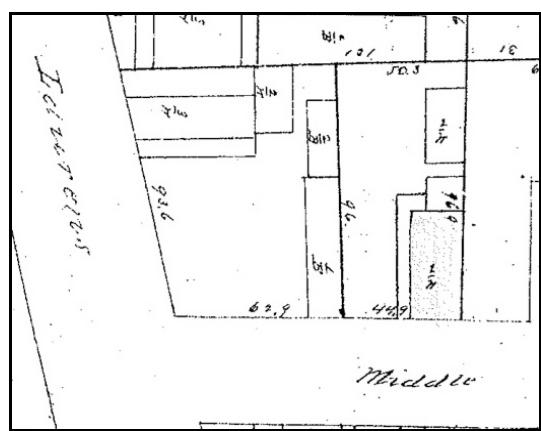
Figure 7: Joseph R. Purcell. Plat of the Estate of Christopher Gadsden. RMC, Charleston, S.C. Plat Book C, p. 3.

FOR PRIVATE SALE,
All that valuable wooden DWELLING-HOUSE, OUT
BUILDINGS, and LOT of LAND, the corner of Laurens
and Middle-street, Gadsden's Green. The Lot contains
about 100 feet front, on Laurens-street, and about 65
feet on Middle-street. The House contains 6 well finish-
ed Rooms, with Marble Chimney-Pieces and Stucco Cor-
nices, with Piazza and Balcony, commanding a hand-
some prospect of the Harbor and the neighboring Islands.
Under the House is a good dry Cellar. The
out buildings are of brick, viz Kitchen and Wash-House,
with four Servants' Rooms, a Pantry and Bathing-House.
There is also a handsome Garden and Orchard, neatly
laid out, and planted with a variety of fruit and flower-
ing Trees. On the premises is an excellent well of wa-
ter. The whole of the buildings are about three years
old, and in complete repair; and being situated in one
of the most desirable and healthy situations in the neigh-
borhood of Charleston, would be a great acquisition to
the family of a Planter or a Merchant, as it would save
the trouble and expense of removing to Sullivan's Island
in the summer time.

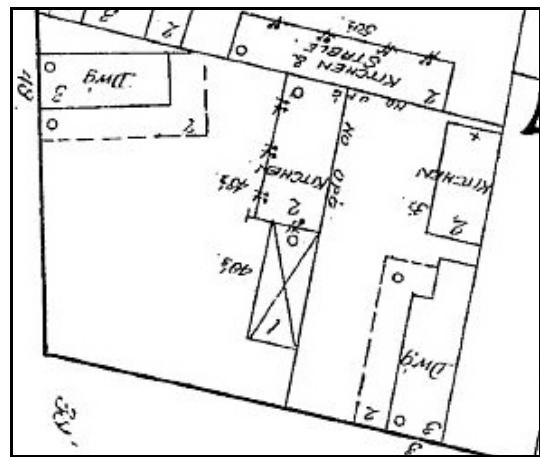
Figure 8: Advertisement from the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. March 23, 1813. Charleston, SC. America's Historical Newspapers



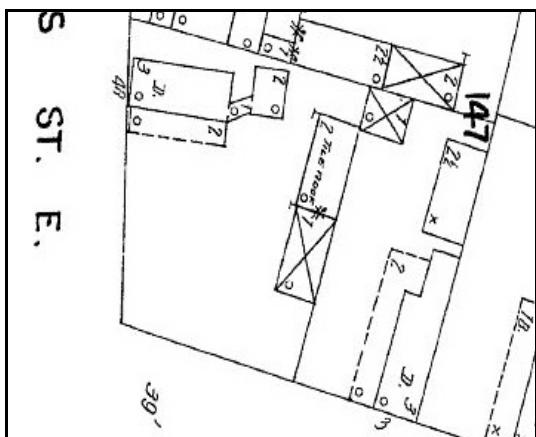
Figure 9: (left) Jacob D. Lesemann; (right) A.C. Lesemann. Photos from 1902 Interstate and West Indian Exposition. Photos courtesy of the South Carolina Room. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, S.C.



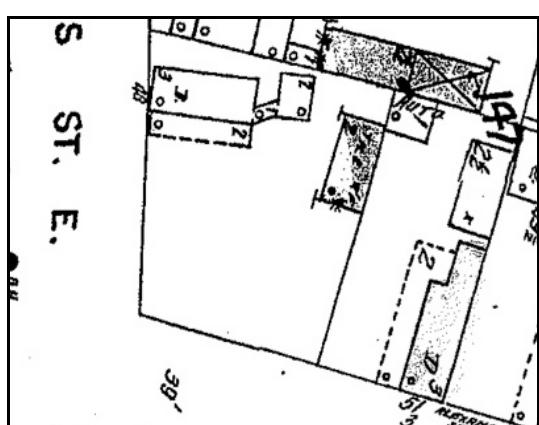
A. 1882



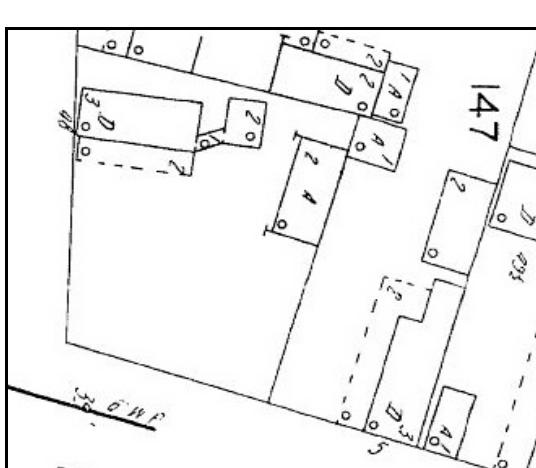
B. 1888



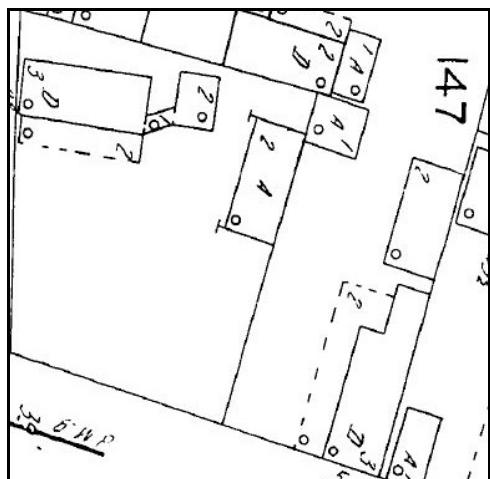
C. 1902



D. 1929



E. 1944



F. 1951

Figure 10: A. 1882 Plat from the City Engineers Plat Book. RMC, Charleston, S.C.; B-F. Sanborn Maps. Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, S.C. www.sanborn.umi.com. No. 48 Laurens Street recorded in upper left corner of each map.



Figure 11: Photograph taken by John Mead Howells. Photo courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art.



Figure 12: Photograph by R. A. Nettles, *News and Courier*, 1961; Photo courtesy of the Photo Collections of the Margaretta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation.