

# 3 & 5 Desportes Court

Charleston SC, 29403



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December 7, 2015

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## Architectural Description and Introduction

Numbers 3 and 5 are on the west side of Desportes Court, which is located off of the north side of Duncan Street, between Coming and Pitt Streets. The Court is narrow and somewhat easy to overlook when walking down Duncan Street. It is paved with brick and contains much foliage and surrounding trees, providing a well shaded space to live. The court is quiet and mostly uninhabited, however it receives a moderate amount of visitors due to a few surprising places of interest located on the court. The attractions, located on the east side of the court, include a museum dedicated to a prominent member of the Baha'i faith at number 2 and a restored example of a native type of architecture called a "Freedman's Cottage" or Charleston Cottage located at number 4-6. Desportes Court is located in a neighborhood of Charleston called Radcliffborough. Radcliffborough consists of a variety of people, many of which are students mixed among households and families of varying economic and racial backgrounds.

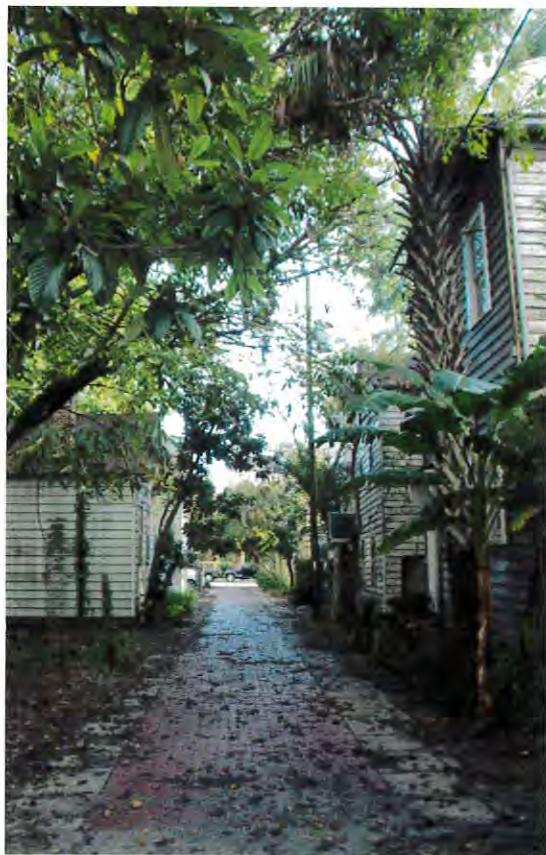


Figure 1-Desportes Court

The house at 3 Desportes Court is a two story, low gabled roof, wood framed structure with weatherboard siding showing signs of rot. The single house has four 6/6 widows on its primary façade facing east, with two on each floor. The front entrance has an extended pediment supported by two thin square columns, leading to an enclosed piazza. The second story appears to have a piazza as well, but is falling into the first story enclosed entranceway and in some areas has been supported by plyboard. Another entrance on the side of the house facing south does not seem to allow entry into the house either as the wall seems to be collapsing. The house seems to be vacant as there are broken windows and there appears to be no way to get

into the house, due to its dilapidated state at both entrance points. At the time of the second site visit one of the first story windows was open. Upon looking inside there appears to be someone living in the living room area; it is not known if it is the owner or perhaps someone squatting in the house. The house seems

to only be accessible through the windows.



Figure 2- 3 Desportes Ct.



Figure 3- 3 Desportes Ct. Interior View

The single house at 5 Desportes Court is a wood frame structure on a brick foundation, with a low gabled roof and replaced weatherboard. There are two 6/6 windows on each floor of the primary façade, facing east on the court. A front entrance to the left leads to a double pizza with the first floor being



Figure 4- 5 Desportes Ct.

enclosed. The front door is framed with two Victorian brackets and has slight coverage from a small, low pitched, corrugated metal shed roof. The house is in good shape and seems to be well taken care of.

The investigation of properties 3 and 5 on Desportes Court, began with an exhaustive research of deeds to uncover ownership over the years and to create a chain of title. This proved to be difficult in some cases as there was not always a clear path to the next owner or missing information blocking the route. Both

properties had many people moving in and out over the years, but with the ownership mainly staying in one family for a significant number of years before exchanging hands to an outside person. Often times other members of a certain family also lived in the court at a different residence or even on nearby streets such as Duncan or Coming. By researching the names taken from the deeds, as well as census records and city directories, a list of names was compiled leading to information on many of the families who lived at these properties. Maps and property files held by the city of Charleston provided information on individual properties and architectural details. That being said however, much of this information has not been recorded or there are significant gaps. What has been found makes the case that alleys and courts deserve to investigated more and their stories shared.

## Background

The Charleston area was first settled by English colonists in 1670, while it was inhabited by Native Americans as far back as 12,000 years. The settlers originally occupied the west bank of the Ashley River, naming it Albemarle Point. Later the early settlers would move to an area that was known as Oyster Point located where the Ashley and Wando (now called the Cooper River) rivers met. It was decided that the new town they inhabited was to be called “Charles Town,” after King Charles II.<sup>1</sup> Slavery existed in the area from the very beginning, “On August 23, 1670, five months after the original settlement, the first slave was brought to Charles Town from Virginia... A few weeks later, three other slaves arrived from Bermuda. Others, many others, followed.”<sup>2</sup> The layout of the original Charles Town was set up in a grid-like pattern with straight streets running parallel and perpendicular to each other. This plan was known as the “Grand Modell.” In the late 1600’s a wall was being built around the town serving as fortifications against outside threats.<sup>3</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the streets expanded with the main thoroughfares being Tradd Street, Dock Street (present day Queen Street) and Cooper Street (now Broad Street), all running east to west. Eventually the streets running north to south were extended and suburban areas formed. Indigo and rice production began to bring much wealth to the area during this time, “South Carolina provided some of the largest private fortunes in America as well as the highest per capita income on the continent during the Colonial period.”<sup>4</sup> As the plantations expanded, the institution of slavery continued to grow enormously, making Charleston the prime slaveport in America.<sup>5</sup> By the time the revolution began there were many wealthy merchants and planters in Charles Town. In June of 1776 Col. William Moultrie made history

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<sup>1</sup> The Historic Charleston Foundation, City of Charleston Tour Guide Training Manual. (South Carolina: City of Charleston Office of Tourism Management, 2011), p.26-27.

<sup>2</sup> Robert N. Rosen, A Short History of Charleston. (Charleston, SC: Peninsula Press, 1992), p.67

<sup>3</sup> HCF, The City of Charleston Tour Guide Training Manual. p.27.

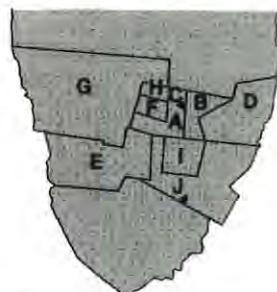
<sup>4</sup> HCF, The City of Charleston Tour Guide Training Manual. p.31.

<sup>5</sup> Rosen, A Short History of Charleston, p.68.

when he successfully prevented a British attempt to sail into and take Charleston Harbor. A second attempt by the British proved more successful a few years later when Charles Town was seized and forced to surrender.<sup>6</sup>

It was after the Revolutionary War that the city changed its name to its current Charleston, on August 13, 1783. Three years later it was decided to move South Carolina's capital from Charleston to a new city to be called Columbia. Around this time the demographics of Charleston began to shift from mainly whites to a black majority, which made some of the elites uneasy.<sup>7</sup> In 1786, Thomas Radcliffe surveyed land north of the city that was to be Radcliffborough.

Radcliffeborough (originally Radcliffeboro)" began as farmland that was sectioned off by Thomas Radcliffe to form an eight block neighborhood. After Radcliffe was lost at sea, his wife Lucretia continued to develop the area in 1806. A significant portion of this land was donated to be the site for the Third Episcopal Church, now Church of St. Paul's in 1811. The church was the place of worship among many rice planters living in the uptown part of Charleston.<sup>8</sup> During the early part and through the mid 1800's the neighborhood was occupied by many free black families and slaves living independently from their masters, "Larger lots, such as those at Warren and Coming Streets, were sometimes subdivided for the construction of small single houses for newly freed slaves. Duncan Street and Desportes Court remained residential enclaves for working African American."<sup>9</sup> It is during this time and beyond that the most information about the families residing at 3 and 5 Desportes Court can be found.



- A. Wragg Lands
- B. Wragg Borough
- C. Joseph Manigault's Mansion
- D. Mazyckborough
- E. Harleston Village
- F. Radcliffe's Borough
- G. Cannon Borough
- H. Elliott Borough
- I. Ansonborough
- J. Market St.

Figure 5- Radcliffeborough Location

<sup>6</sup> HCF, The City of Charleston Tour Guide Training Manual. p.32.

<sup>7</sup> HCF, The City of Charleston Tour Guide Training Manual. p.32.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan H. Poston, The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), p.617.

<sup>9</sup> Poston, Buildings of Charleston, p.628.

## Property & Architectural History

Desportes Court is first listed in the index of Charleston's Sanborn maps in 1888, but is listed under Duncan Street as, "Court (arbitrary)." It does not show up on the actual 1888 map, however, since no street can be seen coming off of Duncan. It is next listed in a Sanborn index in 1902, but is spelled "Des Partes Court" and still is not drawn on the map. Not until 1951, does the court get drawn in, but continues to be spelled Des Partes in the index. This omission on the official maps probably speaks to the lack of importance placed on the court in the overall view of

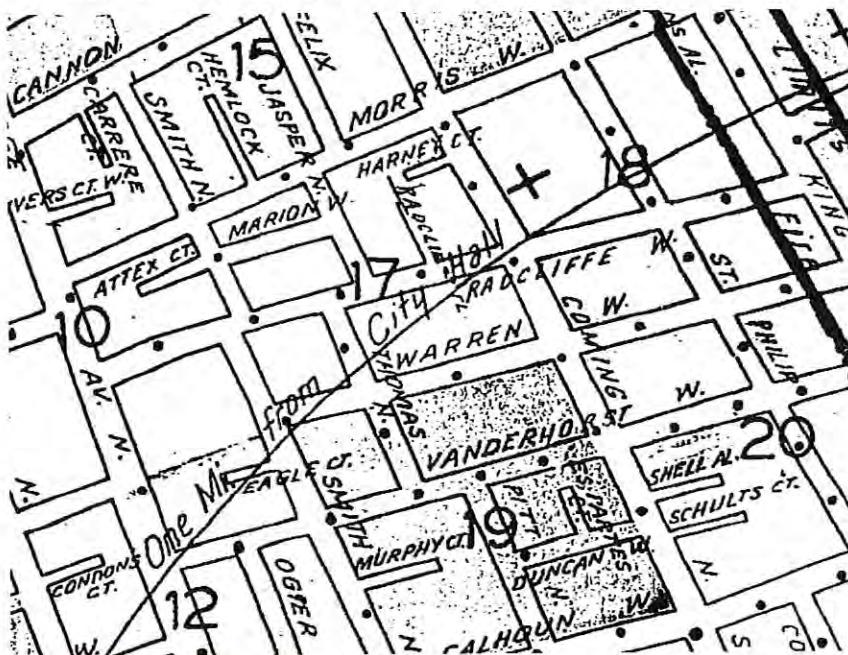


Figure 6- 1951 Sanborn Map

deeds from other properties which reference Luce Desportes.

Inspection of the John McCrady Plat Collection does not bring light to the layout of the properties either, unfortunately. The McCrady index does not list Desportes, but after looking

Charleston, considering the age of the court. The first deed describing the properties names Luce Desportes as obtaining the land from Peter Desgraves in August of 1831.<sup>10</sup> The amount of land was comprised all of what was to be Desportes Court when looking at the

<sup>10</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book C10, p.29.

under a number of names of known occupants, Jacob Weston is listed under plat 3722. This lead comes up short however, as the properties on the plat are three located on Coming Street, indicating Jacob Weston owned several other properties besides 3 Desportes Court.<sup>11</sup> When looking at the 1852 Bridges and Allen Map and the 1872 Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, Desportes Court is absent as well. Duncan Street can be seen, but there is no indication of the court coming off of its north side.

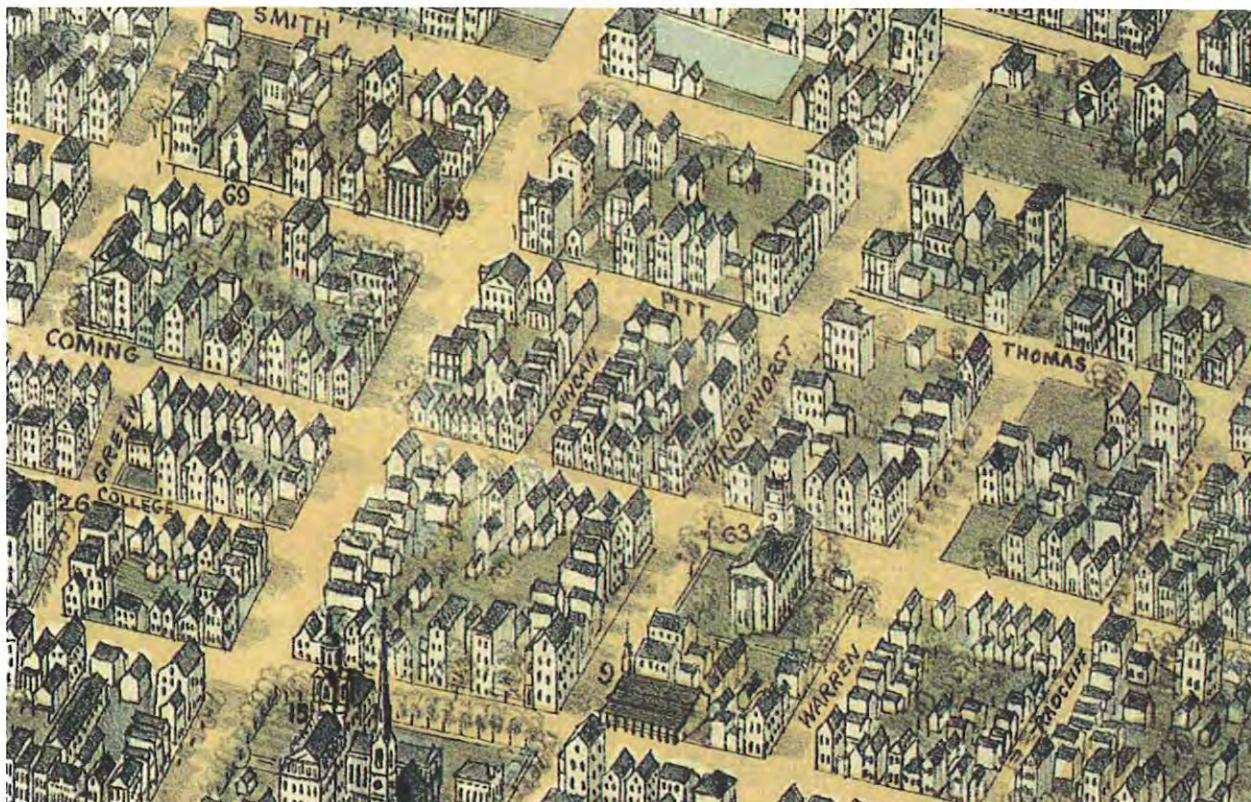
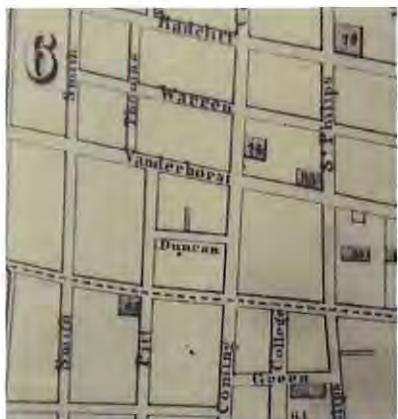


Figure 7- Detail of 1872 Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston

One map from the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows the presence of the court is the 1869 Map of Charleston for the City Directory and Business Registry; this map, clearly shows the presence of a court connecting to Duncan Street. Again however, the name of the court is not identified.

<sup>11</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, McCrady Plat 3722



**Figure 8- 1869 Map of Charleston for the City Directory and Business Registry**

The structures sitting on each property themselves are equally hard to find in legal or historical records. A survey of damages resulting from the 1886 earthquake provides some insight into the size they would have been at that time as well as some of their building materials. Three Desportes Court, listed as the J.Fletcher dwelling, was described as having "frame" for the building and "shingle" for the roof under the materials

category. The structure dimensions are listed as 24 feet long, 16 feet wide and 20 feet high. Five Desportes Court, is described as also having frame and shingle for materials. The dimensions listed for this structure are 30 feet long, 16 feet wide and 22 feet high. Both structures are described as “good” in each area of the condition assessment and no recommendations are listed to make the structure safe.<sup>12</sup>

Obtaining records from the City of Charleston Records Management Office and the Charleston Board of Architectural Review does not fill gaps in the architectural information, but it does help by pointing to minor alterations completed on the houses starting during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the present. 3 Desportes Court had repairs to its weatherboard in May of 1932, by then owner Joshua White. The next repair listed was under Azalea White in 1945 for “Repairs to a two story frame dwelling” and in 1965 Mildred Davis had repairs and painting to her porch.<sup>13</sup> A Hurricane Hugo damage assessment from October of 1989 describes the building material as wood and having a wood piazza.<sup>14</sup> There is only minor damage listed to the downspouts, gutters and chimneys as a result of the hurricane. An undated photo in the BAR file for the house shows

<sup>12</sup> Records of Earthquake Damages, 1886. On microfiche, Historic Charleston Foundation Archives.

<sup>13</sup> City of Charleston, City of Charleston Building Permit, Charleston, SC, Application number 11020

<sup>14</sup> Records of Hurricane Hugo Damages, 1989. Historic Charleston Foundation Archives.

the south façade of the residence in very poor condition, with the second story piazza and back enclosed structure collapsing and falling into the first story below. Also included in the file is an application submitted for approval by then property owner Sterannah Riley, in which she requests the “removal of falling debris off property.”<sup>15</sup> The application is approved on August 22, 2011 with the following recommendations listed, “removal of collapsed portions only- no demolition except to secure remainder of the building.” It is unclear when this damage occurred or if any of the repair or clearing of debris took place, as the structure continues today to look much like it did in the documentation photo. It can be deduced that this damage happened



Figure 9- Photo of 3 Desportes Ct. from BAR file

sometime after 1996 however, because it was not listed in repairs needed for then owner Betty Hills.<sup>16</sup>

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and city records for 5 Desportes Court provides a little more information on what has happened to the house over the

years. In 1944 Louise A. Vaughn followed by Pearl Wheeler in 1947, had what was described as, “repairs to a two story frame dwelling”, although the specifics of these repairs are not described.<sup>17</sup> Eugene Capers had the exterior and interior painted and rotten weatherboards replaced in the early seventies.<sup>18</sup> In April of 1976 a city of Charleston building permit submitted

<sup>15</sup> City of Charleston, Board of Architectural Review, Charleston SC. Application number SR-11-931

<sup>16</sup> City of Charleston, Board of Architectural Review, Charleston SC. Application number SR-96-409

<sup>17</sup> City of Charleston, City of Charleston Building Permit, Charleston, SC, Application number 10215

<sup>18</sup> City of Charleston, City of Charleston Building Permit, Charleston, SC, Application number 12826

by the Rudolph Agency requests the building to be demolished with remarks instructing to “demolish what is left of the building.” It is unclear if this actually happened, as a survey recorded by Geier Brown Renfrow Architects of Washington, D.C. in 1985 lists the date of construction “c. 1880” and the structures condition is listed as poor.<sup>19</sup> After these records, there is no mention of changes until the current owner John Michel receives approval for replacement of non-original windows to match the second floor and for the replacement of standing seam metal on the roof.<sup>20</sup>

The surveys provided by Geier Brown Renfro Architects in 1885, provide the best look into what these residences looked like at any given period of time. 3 Desportes Court, owned then by Angela Saxby, is described as, “2x4 bay 2-s. gabled wood frame dwelling , two rooms around a central chimney plan w/a 1x1 bay 2-s. shed roofed rear wing; 2-s. side porches containing exterior stair- case, sq. col’s & balusters. Jack mold cornice, no horiz. cornice @ gable end; 6/6 light sash, 2/2 light sash @ 1<sup>st</sup>-s st. façade, weatherboard.” The condition is listed as good.<sup>21</sup> 5 Desportes Court is listed as being in poor condition and is described as, “2x4 bay 2-s. gabled wood frame tenement, 1 apt. ea. s.; w/ 3x1 bay 2-s. side porches containing exterior wood staircase. Low pitched gable end w/horizontal cornice, weatherboard tympanum; crown mould cornices; piazza screen entrance w/ large Victorian bracket volutes, paneled pilaster door frame.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Survey of 5 Desportes Court, Vertical files located at the SC Room, Charleston County Public Library

<sup>20</sup> City of Charleston, City of Charleston Building Permit, Charleston, SC, Application number not listed

<sup>21</sup> Survey of 3 Desportes Court, Vertical files located at the SC Room, Charleston County Public Library

<sup>22</sup> Survey of 5 Desportes Court, Vertical files located at the SC Room, Charleston County Public Library

## Occupant History

The first occupant of Desportes Court was the person after which the court was named. Her name was Luce Desportes and she was a manumitted slave. Most of the deeds for properties on the court over the years reference that the land originally belonged to her as well as her children. On page 29 of deed book C-10 at Charleston's Register Mesne Conveyance is an original document declaring the manumission of Luce from Peter Desportes. The document is in French and then translated into English on the second half. The document is dated September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1831 however this is the date it was recorded and not the actual day of the declaration. The document states, "I the undersigned, by these presents do make free and manumit from all slavery and servitude my mulattoe girl slave named Luce about five years of age the daughter of my negroe woman slave named Angelique. It being my intention that the said Luce shall enjoy her liberty and all the privileges which appertains to the free people of this Colony of St. Domingo, my reason doing so being from the attachment which I have for said child as granted 14 July 1793 in first year of the French Republic... Peter Desportes hereby certify to all whom it may concern that the forgoing certificate of manumission was given by me on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of July 1793t my said mulattoe girl slave Luce who was then five years of age that the said certificate could not at the time be drawn with more legal formalities owing to the dissolution of all public authorities from the confusion caused by the French Revolution- and further declare that I freely and voluntarily executed the said certificate from the good will and affection I had for the said child Luce..."<sup>23</sup>

The deed located on the next page of the book is the original deed for the properties on Desportes court, listing six lots in total. The property was sold to Luce by Peter Desgraves for the amount of 9,365 dollars and is dated August 6, 1831.<sup>24</sup> A newspaper article in the Charleston News in Courier from 1980

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<sup>23</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book C10, p.29

<sup>24</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book C10, p.30

describes Peter Desgraves as acquiring these properties in 1829. He apparently was refugee from the slave revolution in Santo Domingo and had been living in Charleston for the past 20 years.<sup>25</sup> In the deed it appears that the measurements of each lot is described, however not all of it is legible due to the age of the document. The document also states that the properties are to go to Luce's children upon her death. The children listed are Henry, Catherine Mary Caroline, Helen, Emeline and Adeline Desportes.<sup>26</sup>

From its beginnings through most of the twentieth century, the court was mostly inhabited with African Americans, mainly termed "negro" and "mulatto" in census records of the time. However, 1861 it is known that one white person is living in the court, along with 27 slaves and 17 free people of color.<sup>27</sup>

### 3 Desportes Court

The first deed for the property of 3 Desportes Court lists Robert C. Brodie and his wife Mary Catherine Caroline as owners selling the property to Jacob Weston. It is known from the first deed recorded selling all six lots to Luce Desportes that Mary Catherine Caroline was Luce's daughter. The document is dated from August 3, 1854. Jacob Weston is listed as buying the property for the amount of \$520.00.<sup>28</sup> It is unclear whether Jacob actually lived on the property or if he merely owned it and perhaps rented it out. There is no documentation showing that someone else was living there during this time. However, a city directory from 1859 listed his home as being located at 46 Coming Street. Jacob and two of his brothers, Samuel Weston and James Johnston worked as tailors during this time. The same directory shows that both Samuel and Jacob had a business called S & J Tailors that was located at 100 Queen Street.<sup>29</sup> It is known that the great fire of 1861 affected the area of their business and forced them

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<sup>25</sup> News Article, "Prominent Journalist Built Greek Revival House," Charleston News and Courier, March 3, 1980, in America's Historical Newspaper Database. {Accessed on November 11, 2015}

<sup>26</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book C10, p.30

<sup>27</sup> Daniel M. Smith, African-Americans and Charleston: Histories Intertwined. (Charleston, SC: Publisher unknown, 2010), page unknown.

<sup>28</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book V12, p.239

<sup>29</sup> Charleston City Directory, 1859 [Microfilm], South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.

to relocate to 17 Mazyck Street. In an ad placed in the Charleston Daily Courier on January 4, 1862 they attempted to inform their customers that they had moved to a new location and hope to, "merit a continuation of patronage."

Dissolution

**THE CO-PARTNERSHIP HERETOFORE EXISTING** between S. & J. WESTON, TAILORS, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. JACOB WESTON is authorized to settle accounts.

SAMUEL WESTON,  
JACOB WESTON.

December 31, 1861.

**SAMUEL WESTON,**

**ONE OF THE SUFFERERS BY THE LATE FIRE,** in returning thanks to his patrons, would give notice that he will continue the business of the late firm of S. & J. WESTON, TAILORS, on his own account, at 17 Mazyck-street, West side, four doors above Magazine, where he hopes, by attention, to merit a continuation of patronage.

3\* January 1

Figure 10- Advertisements for Samuel and Jacob Weston

Their brother James worked elsewhere as a tailor according to an ad placed in the Charleston Daily Courier in April of that year, also letting customers know that he has moved locations, in this case from 11 Henrietta Street to 18 Beaufain Street. The Weston's were a very well-known and influential family in Charleston at the time, especially considering that they were black.

The property remained in the Weston's name until the year of 1883,

when it changed hands to

**JAMES JOHNSTON,**  
**TAILOR,**

HAS REMOVED FROM 11 HENRIETTA-STREET to 18 BEAUFAIN, OPPOSITE ARCHDALE-STREET, where he will be happy to see his former customers.

April 15

Figure 11- Advertisement for James Johnston

Jane C. Fletcher. It was bought and sold a few more times before the turn of the century, after which time

the deed trail seems to stop until the current owner. This may indicate that it stayed in the last family or perhaps that there was poor record keeping for the property. The current owner is Angela Saxby.<sup>30</sup>

## 5 Desportes

The first known person to live in 5 Desportes Court after members of the Desportes family is listed as Frances Nipson, who sold the property in 1855 to James A. Tupper.<sup>31</sup> (**DEED R13-17**). It is known that Mr. Nipson was a Health Detective by profession. In a newspaper article from 1906 in the Charleston News and Courier, under the Court of Common Pleas area, Nipson is listed as winning a case and being awarded one hundred dollars. The case involved an accident in which Nipson was struck and by a trolley car and injured.<sup>32</sup> Later in 1907, Nipson was listed as dying at eighty years old in the obituary section of the Evening Post. The section recognizes him for his service with the health department for twenty-five years and for being, “a veteran of the Mexican and civil war.”<sup>33</sup>

The property gets bought and sold many times after this, mainly staying within the Edwards family, who also occupied another house right across the court on the east side. In 1945 the property is owned by Julia Dunne, living with her two daughters Minnie Palmer and Pearl Wheeler. In October of 1945, Pearl submitted a letter to the city Council requesting an inspection by the Board of Health, because of health concerns of Desportes residents due to stagnant water, writing, “When Duncan Street was paved the City closed our two drains and as a result whenever it rains, water settles in the court.”<sup>34</sup> The back of the letter is signed by all the residents of the court at the time, including Azalee White, living at 3 Desportes.<sup>35</sup> Other documents relating to the request within the City of Charleston, discuss what to do

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<sup>30</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, S.C. Property Card for parcel ID 4601603047.

<sup>31</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book R13, p.17

<sup>32</sup> News Article, “Court of Common Pleas: Interesting Case Involving Identity of Prisoner,” Charleston News and Courier, October 24, 1906, in America’s Historical Newspaper Database. {Accessed on November 3, 2015}

<sup>33</sup> News Article, “Francis Nipson Dead,” The Evening Post, June 4, 1907, in America’s Historical Newspaper Database. {Accessed on November 3, 2015}

<sup>34</sup> See appendix A, Letter one of nine

<sup>35</sup> See appendix A, Letter two of nine

about the situation, in one letter even saying, “The thing that concerns me, is how to tell these negroes they will have to pay for it, whether cash or will they have a little time, but I hope some scheme can be worked out...This court has been cleaned out of very undesirable negroes, and is much better than it has been in years.<sup>36</sup> However, it appears by the chain of letters, that the issue does not actually get fixed by the city until 1960, when their mother has passed away and the property is now owned by the two daughters.<sup>37</sup>

After Pearl Wheeler and Minnie Palmer, 5 Desportes Court changes hands a few more times until being sold its current owner, John Michel in 1988.<sup>38</sup> Michel is a sculptor who is a former art teacher at the College of Charleston. His sculptures around the Charleston area include the Washington Square statue of George Washington and then statue of Colonel William Moultrie, overlooking the harbor in White Point Garden.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See appendix A, Letter three through nine

<sup>37</sup> City of Charleston, Records Management Office, Charleston, S.C. File of letters between the City and Pearl Wheeler, 1945-1960.

<sup>38</sup> RMC, Charleston SC, Deed Book T178, p.757

<sup>39</sup> News Article, “Revolutionary War hero statue takes long enough, but Patriot gets his due,” Post and Courier, June 24, 2007, in America’s Historical Newspaper Database. {Accessed on November 18, 2015}

## Weston Family

The Westons were considered the most prominent black family in Charleston during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however that was not always the case. Most of the Westons were originally slaves that lived and worked on the rice plantation of Plowden Weston located in Georgetown County. Plowden Weston considered himself a great humanist believing that a master's first concern should be for the well-being and care of his slaves. He even wrote on his beliefs and theories about how an overseer should govern and care for his slaves, down to food allowance and punishment.<sup>40</sup> For all of his humanist views however, he was a secessionist and a staunch opponent of the abolition of slavery, believing that, "The poorest and meanest citizen, while he maintains his absolute superiority over the Negro, also preserved an absolute equality with the great and illustrious of his own race. With an inferior race to keep in subjugation, it was abominable and atrocious to have the smallest inequality among themselves."<sup>41</sup> Samuel and Jacob Weston worked on the plantation as did their brother Antony Weston. The exact role of Samuel and Jacob is unknown, however Antony was an experienced Millwright and was apparently much favored by his master, sometimes receiving gifts from him while being allowed control over his time during about half of the year. He was held in so much favor that after Plowden Weston died his will stated Antony "was to be allowed to continue the privilege of controlling half his time for six years while he trained the other Weston slaves to take his place, and then be given all his time, and if possible, emancipated-a boon Weston gave to only two other slaves, both house servants who had given him exemplary attention."<sup>42</sup> The two other servants to be freed were Lydia Weston and Nancy Weston, sister

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony Q. Devereaux, *The Rice Princes: A Rice Epoch Revisited*. (Columbia, SC: State Printing Co., 1973), p.83-85.

<sup>41</sup> Devereaux, *The Rice Princes*. p. 96

<sup>42</sup> Michael P. Johnson & James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1984), p.243.

of Antony. The terms of the will allowed Antony to become a free man in 1833, although the laws of the time did not allow freedom to come without complications.

Once emancipated, Antony married a house servant of Plowden Weston, named Maria. It is speculated that he probably used his earnings to buy her freedom. Notes included on legal documents relating to the Weston family say that Maria and Antony were married November 22, 1827 in Georgetown, South Carolina.<sup>43</sup> Antony also paid for the freedom of his brothers Samuel and Jacob. Antony soon became very successful as a millwright in Charleston, having a business located on Calhoun Street. Although they did not make as much money as their brother, Samuel and Jacob found success as tailors. An 1860 map shows the locations of where they worked.<sup>44</sup> Although Antony had been manumitted by Plowden Weston in his will he was not in fact legally a free man. In 1820 a law was passed, “prohibiting manumission except by the legislative decree, forbidding immigration on pain of enslavement, and limiting the movement of free Negroes across state lines.<sup>45</sup> Antony had all of his real estate put in his wife’s name and also allowed her to handle any monetary affairs, because she had a stronger claim to freedom under the law than he did. The estimated worth of their real estate by 1860 was \$40,075. In addition to property, Antony owned fourteen slaves, also held in the name of his wife Maria.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 12- Nancy Weston

<sup>43</sup> Simons, Siegling & Cappelmann case records, 1872-1928, John Weston and Samuel Weston family papers, Box 33, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>44</sup> See appendix A, Map of 1860

<sup>45</sup> The Charleston Museum, Between the Tracks: Charleston’s East Side During the Nineteenth Century (Charleston, SC: The Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987), p.780.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson & Roark, Black Masters. p.244.

It was not completely uncommon for people of color to own slaves in Charleston during this time. Though the practice was not always good-natured in motivation and sometimes driven purely by exploitation, often family members were sold to trusted people or relatives to ensure their safety and a certain amount of independence. Parents often relinquished the legal title of their children to those in a better position than themselves to provide this kind of protection.<sup>47</sup> For example Samuel Weston took on this responsibility for the family of Elias Beard, who was a slave to the estate of Plowden Weston. They most likely knew each other from the plantation where Samuel was also formerly enslaved. Beard saved \$700 to pay for the transaction and then asked Samuel to act as his agent. After the purchase took place Samuel interfered little in the family's affairs and allowed them to do as they pleased.<sup>48</sup> This was often the case in these situations, where many times the slaves conducted themselves as if they were free persons of color, because they were owned by someone who gave them free reign over their lives.

**Table 9**  
**Relative Percentage of Population Groups by Ward, 1861**

Ward	Whites		Slaves		Free Colored		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1	2681	61.2	1578	36.0	121	2.7	4380
2	3102	48.4	3137	49.0	161	2.5	6400
3	4522	63.5	2221	31.2	370	5.2	7113
4	5926	53.3	4365	39.2	815	7.3	11106
5	2739	48.0	2111	37.0	853	14.9	5703
6	3476	52.5	2381	35.9	760	11.4	6617
7	1924	70.3	609	22.2	201	7.3	2734
8	2555	59.6	1253	28.7	504	11.5	4356

(Fard 1861)

**Figure 13- Table: Relative Percentage of Population Groups by Ward, 1861**

These people often flew under the radar: holding jobs, buying homes and even paying the taxes that free blacks did. This was possible to do in the city, but practically impossible for a slave in a more rural setting. Another Weston family member named Lydia was able to fade into the hustle and bustle of

<sup>47</sup> Larry Koger, Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1985), p.70.

<sup>48</sup> Koger, Black Slaveowners. p.71.

the city and live freely undiscovered by the authorities. Like Antony she was emancipated illegally by Plowden Weston, but she lived her life as a free woman which was easier to do unnoticed in Charleston than in most places because of the large number of free blacks, "Freedom then, was never just a legal category or construct but was, instead, a lived experience. And no matter how fragile it may have been, for many women, the benefits of virtual freedom were preferable to living in bondage, waiting for an official act of manumission that was unlikely to happen."<sup>49</sup> Although much of these people went unnoticed, it did not necessarily make them safe. If they were caught without a master they could be seized and sold into slavery or simply claimed as the property of the person who exposed them. Additionally, the person who provided that identification to the authorities was awarded half of the proceeds gained in the sale.<sup>50</sup>

Often a white guardian was needed to vouch for people of color in Charleston, as a black person's word was not taken. This was not the case for the Weston family however, who were as much of Charleston' aristocracy as a black family could be. For example, Samuel Weston's daughter Hannah was falsely identified as being a slave by a white woman at the beach on Sullivan's Island which escalated into a rumor making its way around Charleston. Samuel wished to stop the spread of this rumor an took it straight to the mayor of all people, "To stand before the mayor in the midst of the enslavement crisis and demand that he correct a rumor took audacity, for Weston had been freed after 1820 and was subject to the law that was sending refugees streaming from the city."<sup>51</sup> As testament to the prominence of the Weston family in Charleston, the mayor ordered the *Courier* to print a notice in the paper the falsity of the baseless rumor and it was even added in print, "These Westons are very respectable colored persons and esteemed in the community for their character and deportment at all times."<sup>52</sup> Risking his stature and even his freedom to clear the name of his daughter in such a public way speaks volumes to how Samuel

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<sup>49</sup> Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p.69.

<sup>50</sup> Charleston Museum, *Between the Tracks*, p.78.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson & Roark, *Black Masters*. p.251.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson & Roark, *Black Masters*. p.251.

viewed himself and his influence, "Far from claiming white laws, Samuel Weston protected himself and his family with the traditional defenses of the free mulatto elite: cool nerves, a steely confidence, an insider's knowledge of how to make the system work, and powerful white friends."<sup>53</sup> A similar scenario occurred years later in 1902, involving Antony Weston and his daughter. This time however, it is daughter clearing father's name in a heading titled *Weston is not a Slave* in the Charleston News and Courier, "To the Editor of The News and Courier: IN an article copied from the Christian Workman it is stated that the wife of Anthony Weston told Mr. George Williams that his property was put in her name because he was a slave. That was a great mistake. It was only done so by advice of a distinguished white friend, for the reason that a man of large business should secure his wife for in some instances advantages may be attempted on him by dishonest men." The statement is signed Moninnia H. Weston and is dated October 12.

Weston was not a Slave.  
To the Editor of The News and Courier:  
In an article copied from the Christian Workman, it is stated that the wife of Anthony Weston told Mr. George Williams that his property was put in her name because he was a slave. That was a great mistake. It was only done so by advice of a distinguished white friend, for the reason that a man of large business should secure his wife, for in some instances, advantages may be attempted on him by dishonest men.  
Moninnia H. Weston.  
Charleston, October 12.

Figure 14- Weston was not a Slave

<sup>53</sup> Johnson & Roark, Black Masters. p.251.

The Weston family continued to be important in Charleston, but they are not documented as much after the death of Samuel in February of 1882 as seen on his death certificate<sup>54</sup> and Antony in 1876 as shown on his death card.

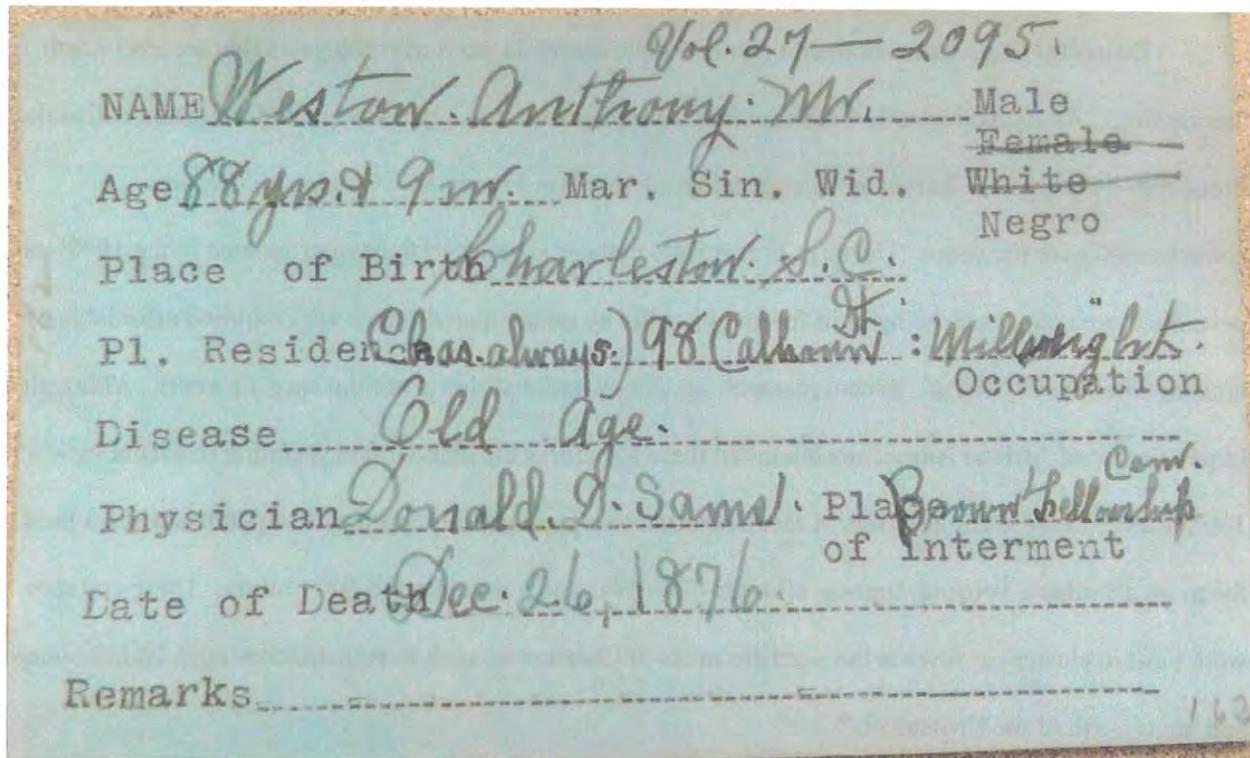


Figure 15- Antony Weston Death Card

Weston family legal papers show attempts to figure out the number and names of his children. It is not known what these documents were for, but perhaps they were used in an attempt to get in touch with his children after his death<sup>55</sup> Another document in the file, dated 1887, attempts to do the same for Lydia Weston, which the set of notes says died in Cleveland Ohio in 1864, before listing her children's whereabouts.<sup>56</sup> Although it is apparent that there is still much information to learn about the Weston family, it is clear from what is found that they were quite the resilient and determined family who seemed to come out on top with all many odds against them.

<sup>54</sup> See appendix A, Death Certificate of Samuel Weston

<sup>55</sup> See appendix A, Weston Legal Papers

<sup>56</sup> See appendix A, Weston Legal Papers

## Broader Picture of Desportes Court

### 4-6 Desportes Court

Desportes Court has contained other residents and residences over the years that are also worth mentioning. A notable house is 4-6 Desportes Court, because it is a type unique to Charleston called the Freedman's Cottage or Charleston Cottage although the term Freedman's Cottage has become controversial over the years. The term Freedman's cottage is believed to have originated in the 1970's to describe these cottages as being built for and possibly by emancipated slaves who required affordable housing after the Civil War. Recent research has uncovered that this is not the case, however. Although a large number of African Americans inhabited these structures the demographics among residents varied.<sup>57</sup> The building of these cottages was in fact a reaction to a population increase on the peninsula and a need for more affordable housing, starting after the Civil War and going into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These cottages were built in clusters or rows in the northern areas of Charleston, such as Radcliffeborough, Elliotborough and areas north of the Crosstown.<sup>58</sup>

The Freedman's cottage is sometimes described as a one-story version of the Charleston Single House because of its street facing gable and street entrance to a side piazza. The structures are typically two rooms deep and one room wide, with a fireplace located between the two rooms, although sometimes with a fireplace in each room. The entrance off the street to the piazza often had a screen door and there were usually two doors off the piazza leading to each room. The piazza often served as a kind of a hallway because there was not one on the interior of the house. These structures were typically very small and often had additions built on over the years. A common solution for adding space was enclosing

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<sup>57</sup> Lora Cunningham and Ryan Pierce, Jackson Street Freedman's Cottages, College of Charleston and Clemson University, 2009. Historic Charleston Foundation (Property Files), p.5.

<sup>58</sup> Katherine Saunders, Freedman's Cottages, (Historic Charleston Foundation, n.d.), p.1.

a portion of the piazza, creating an “L” shape.<sup>59</sup> The cottage on Desportes Court deviated from these typical plans, however. Although it has the “L” shape, each end is equidistant, giving it a unique shape unlike other examples.<sup>60</sup> This house is also important because it is one of the last of its kind. Many of the others have been demolished due to their location in low income neighborhoods and Charleston’s property values that continue to rise.<sup>61</sup>

This particular cottage located on Desportes Court was built in 1881, replacing a two-story wooden residence that burned down. The construction of the cottage was commissioned by Morris Charles Edwards, son of Louisa and Morris Edwards who lived at 5 Desportes Court, where the younger



Figure 16- 4-6 Desportes Ct.

Morris grew up. Morris and his wife Josephine lived in the house until he died of “consumption and exhaustion” in 1989. A handful of other residents lived at the house until it was purchased in 1995 by the current owner who performed a number of repairs to stabilize it in 2001.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 17- Louis G. Gregory

## 2 Desportes

Residing on the east side of the court on the southern end is 2 Desportes, which is famous for being the childhood home of one of the original members of the Baha’i faith, Louis G. Gregory. Gregory was born in 1874 to Ebenezer and Mary Elizabeth George, former slaves.

<sup>59</sup> Cunningham and Pierce, Jackson Street Freedman’s Cottages, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> Lissa D’Aquisto Felzer, The Charleston “Freedman’s Cottage”: An Architectural Tradition. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008), p.57.

<sup>61</sup> Saunders, Freedman’s Cottages, p.1.

<sup>62</sup> Felzer, The Charleston “Freedman’s Cottage,” p.57.

Gregory graduated from Charleston's Avery Institute in 1891 and then later from Fisk University, before returning to Charleston to teach at the Avery Institute. He then moved to Washington DC to attend Howard University's Law School where he received his degree in 1902.<sup>63</sup>

It was while he was living in Washington DC working as a lawyer that he became interested in the Baha'i religion and teachings. Baha'i is a religion that started in Persia (modern day Iran) about 150 years ago. The religion emphasizes the centrality of justice to all human endeavors, the fundamental equality between men and women and condemns holding prejudices against anyone. It is a religion that, "those who have studied... have noted that its teachings are very much in tune with the concerns of present day. Its social teachings include such principles as the equality of men and women and the need for world peace,"<sup>64</sup> The message of harmony between all people spoke to Gregory who was involved in much work focusing on injustice and racial inequality in his law practice. His belief in this message was so powerful that he left his practice to travel both internationally and domestically spreading the teachings of the Baha'i faith. He eventually was elected to the nine-member national administration board of the religion which he held for 24 years before dying in 1951.

The boyhood residence of the former leader in the Baha'i faith is now a museum devoted to the religion and Louis Gregory's life. Members of Charleston's Baha'i community purchased the property in 1988 and requested that the court be bricked and better lighted, as well as a sign added to the structure to display its significance. This may be the reason the court is now bricked, although no information directly linking this was found. A third story was added to the structure after it was purchased. A conference room and prayer area can be found inside, as well as some of Gregory's personal belongings, photos and correspondence.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> News articles about 2 Desportes Court and Louis Gregory, from The Post and Courier and The Washington Post, 1994 and 2003. From vertical files located at South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston.

<sup>64</sup> Moojan Momen, *A Short Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 1997), p.2.

<sup>65</sup> Vertical File on 2 Desportes, SC Historical Society

## Concluding Analysis

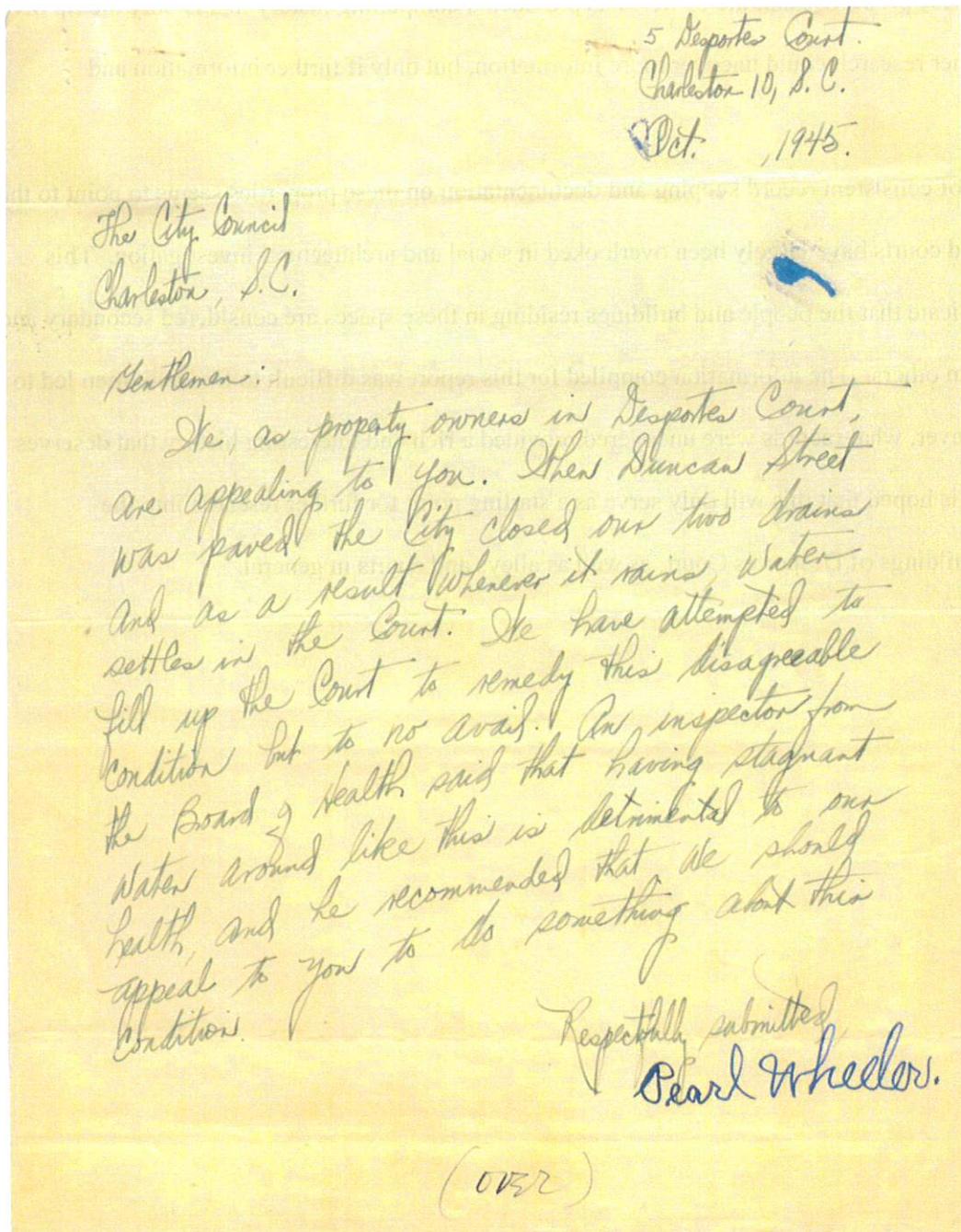
The properties of 3 and 5 Desportes Court have experienced multiple changes and many residents since first being established in 1831 when Luce Desportes purchased the six court lots for \$9,365. The investigation of these properties and the owners has provided a compelling history that is only the tip of the iceberg. Further research could uncover more information, but only if further information and documents exist.

The lack of consistent record keeping and documentation on these properties seems to point to the fact that alleys and courts have largely been overlooked in social and architectural investigation. This omission may indicate that the people and buildings residing in these spaces are considered secondary and less important than others. The information compiled for this report was difficult to find and often led to a dead end. However, what records were uncovered provided a rich and interesting history that deserves to be reported. It is hoped that this will only serve as a starting point for further research into the inhabitants and buildings of Desportes Court, as well as alleys and courts in general.

## APPENDIX A

### Letters from Pearl Wheeler and City of Charleston

Page 1



Alphyse Scouافت نوم 9 Desportes

Mary E Campbell 12 Desportes Ct

Abil Phoenix

6 Desportes  
Emily Washington 10 Desportes cort.

Ransom Duffy 9 Desportes cort

Agate White 3 Desportes count

Emma J. Jenkins #1 Desportes Ct.

Pearl Wheeler 5 Desportes Ct.

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
SOUTH CAROLINA



A. J. TAMSBERG  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

OFFICE OF CLERK OF COUNCIL  
CITY HALL

January 11, 1946

Mr. B. M. Thomson  
City Engineer  
City Hall  
Charleston, South Carolina

Dear Sir:

I am enclosing herewith a petition  
from residents of Desportes Court, which was  
submitted to City Council January 8th.

Council referred the petition to  
you and requested that you make a report on  
your findings.

Yours very truly,

*A. J. Tamsberg*  
A. J. Tamsberg  
Clerk of Council

AJT/lc

To the Honorable  
The Mayor and City Council of Charleston, S.C.

We the undersigned, residents and property owners of homes in Desportes Court, running north from Duncan Street, between Pitt and Coming Streets, hereby respectfully request your Honorable Body to have this court paved. This court is about eighteen 5/10 (18.5) feet wide. We would state that we have had the sewerage connections and drains in this court for some years past. In rainy weather it is very hard and disagreeable to get in and out of this Court, due to the muddy condition of same.

Respectfully submitted,

<u>Emma J. Jenkins</u>	Owner	<u>1</u>	Desportes Court.
<u>Mrs. A. H. Ford</u>	"	<u>2</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Opie Lee White</u>	"	<u>3</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Essie Pearse</u>	"	<u>6</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Carl G. Wheeler</u>	"	<u>5</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Viola L. Duvall</u>	"	<u>9</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Renton Duffy</u>	"	<u>7</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Emily Washington</u>	"	<u>8</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Emily Washington</u>	"	<u>10</u>	Desportes Court
<u>Mary Campbell</u>	"	<u>12</u>	Desportes Court.

January 14, 1946

Mr. J. G. Hopke, Managing Clerk,  
§ Buist & Buist,  
30 Broad Street,  
Charleston, S. C.

Dear Sir:

I have a request of Friday, January 11, 1946, from the City Council, for estimate for drain construction in Desporters Court, investigated by us Friday morning.

I am enclosing a copy of my estimate, which I delivered to Mr. Tamsberg Saturday, January 12, 1946. If I can give you any other information in this matter please call me.

Yours very truly,

B. M. Thomson,  
City Engineer.

Encl.  
BMT:SH

Charleston, S.C.  
Tuesday- June 18th. 1946.

Hon. E. E. Wehmann,  
Mayor- City of Charleston:

Dear Mr. Mayor:--

The enclosed is the petition from property owners on Desportes Court, on Duncan St., about which I spoke to you recently. Now, I would like to help these negroes get this court paved, but I realize that it is not strictly a public street, never having been accepted as such, but it has been used as a court for many, many years.

The thing that concerns me, is how to tell these negroes they will have to pay for it, whether cash or will they have a little time, but I hope some scheme can be worked out.

This court has been cleaned out of very undesirable negroes, and is much better than it has been in years.

Kindly refer this to necessary committee, while we are at work on the streets.

Yours very sincerely,  
Alderman Ward 8.

January 27, 1960

Alderman Fred J. Martschink, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on Streets  
Post Office Box 581  
Charleston, South Carolina

Dear Alderman Martschink:

The Committee on Ways and Means, at its meeting January 26,  
referred to the Committee on Streets and the Corporation  
Counsel the question of acceptance of various deeds covering  
adjacent property owned as interests in Desportes Court.

Onward

Yours very truly,

A. J. Tamsberg  
Clerk of Council

AJT:J  
cc: Mr. Morris D. Rosen, Corporation Counsel

*W. K. Comr*

February 4, 1960

Mr. Morris D. Rosen, Corporation Counsel  
45 Broad Street  
Charleston, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Rosen:

The Committee on Streets, at a meeting February 3, requested that the Corporation Counsel make further investigations into the situation which has led to the delivery of deeds covering Desportes Court to your office and that you advise the Committee of your findings.

Yours very truly,

A. J. Tamsberg  
Clerk of Council

AJT:j

cc: Hon. J. Palmer Gaillard, Jr., Mayor  
Alderman Fred J. Martschink, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on Streets  
Mr. H. B. Good, City Engineer  
Alderman Clarence W. Legerton, Jr.

Duncan St.

March 22, 1960

Mr. H. B. Good, City Engineer  
City Hall  
Charleston, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Good:

The Committee on Streets, at its meeting March 21, discussed the situation relating to Desportes Court. It is the Committee's understanding that a blocked surface drain is the cause of the difficulty. The Committee felt that if this is true, it would be more to the City's advantage to perform this work than to undertake the acceptance of the Court as a public street. The Committee, therefore, authorized that city forces undertake the clearing of this blockage. The Committee understands that only labor will be necessary and that no materials are involved.

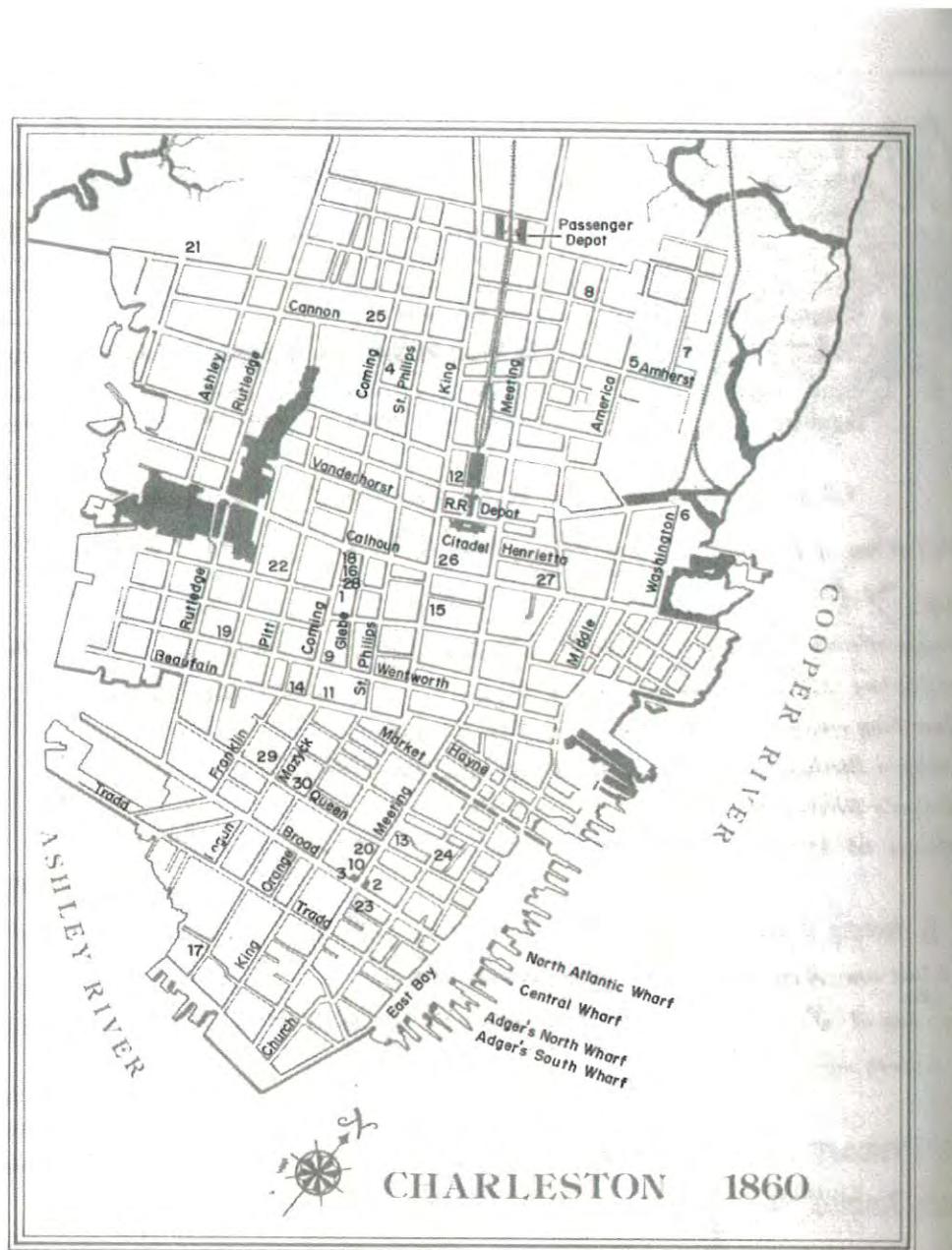
Yours very truly,

A. J. Tameberg  
Clerk of Council

AJT:j

cc: Hon. J. Palmer Gaillard, Jr., Mayor  
Alderman Fred J. Martschink, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on Streets  
Mr. J. M. Brannon

## Map of 1860- Occupations



### KEY TO MAP OF CHARLESTON

1. Jeanette Boneau	11. Richard Holloway	21. Henry T. Peake
2. City Hall	12. Robert Houston	22. John Schnierle
3. Court House	13. Institute Hall	23. St. Michael's Episcopal Church
4. John DeLarge	14. James D. Johnson	24. St. Philip's Episcopal Church
5. Joseph Dereef	15. Johnson's Tailor Shop	25. Thomas L. Webb
6. Richard E. Dereef	16. Benjamin K. Kinloch	26. Anthony Weston
7. James Eason	17. Charles Macbeth	27. Furman Weston
8. Eason's Foundry	18. William McKinlay	28. Jacob Weston
9. Grace Episcopal Church	19. Christopher G. Memminger	29. Samuel Weston
10. Hibernian Hall	20. Mills House	30. Westons' Tailor Shop

# Death Certificate of Samuel Weston



## Health Department of the City of Charleston.

All Permits for the Removal of the body of any deceased person from the City of Charleston for Interment, and all Burial Permits and Permits for the Disinterment of the remains of deceased persons in the City of Charleston, shall be granted and signed by the Register.

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No Permit for Burial can be Obtained Without a Proper Certificate.

All Physicians practicing in Charleston (including those in public institutions) are requested to register their names in the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### CERTIFICATE OF DEATH.

1. Full Name of Deceased, *Samuel Weston* (Write nothing but  
the name of the deceased and nothing else, except the name  
of the person who signed this paper.)

2. Age, 78 years — months — days Color

3. ~~Employment~~ *Minister* (Employment or business in this place) Occupation *Minister*

4. Birthplace *Charleston* (Where born in the United  
States, if not born there.)

5. How long resident in this City *always*

6. Father's Birthplace *Charleston*

7. Mother's Birthplace *Charleston*

8. Place of Death, *No 17 Magazine* Street *2<sup>nd</sup> Ward*

9. I hereby certify that I attended deceased from Nov 1880 to July 18 1882  
that I last saw him alive on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of July 1882 that he died on the  
15<sup>th</sup> day of Oct. 1882 about 7 o'clock A.M. or P.M. and that the cause of  
death was old age.

Time from Attack till Death  
With opposite each cause of death, is checked for record.

First Primary, *old age*

Second Primary, *Insufficiency of Breathing*

First Immediate, *Insufficiency of Breathing*

All the above information should be furnished by the Physician

Place of Burial *Brown Fellowship*

Signed by

Date of Burial

*H. H. Neiger, M.D.*

*Medical Attendant*

Underwriter

Address

Place of Business

Weston Legal Papers

Samuel Weston

Samuel Weston died Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 1882 [W. d.]  
His wife died before him  
His children alive are  
W. O. Weston & wife  
Hannah J. Allen & wife  
June Patterson & wife  
Mary Magrath & wife  
Joanna Weston (widow) alone  
Timothy Weston is dead —  
——  
Samuel Weston left now all  
his estate except this alone —  
The child who is dead (J. L. Weston) —  
left no children.  
The children are alive — the two that  
made up his estate are J. L. Weston.  
W. O. Weston, 130 Cathcart, Charleston, W. Va.  
Hannah J. Allen, 43 Maggott St. " " "  
June Patterson, " " " " "  
Mary Magrath, " " " " "  
Joanna Weston — Society Hill " " "  
Timothy Weston died since him & was unmarried.  
Timothy Weston died Oct 26<sup>th</sup> 1888. —  
He had no other child ever dying before  
him except his son Timothy —

Lydia Weston

{ 1887 }

her

Lydia Weston - Mrs. Cardozo  
Mother of the following named  
children "to wit": ~~who~~ died  
at Cleveland Ohio 1864

Lydia Cardozo. Eldest daughter  
died in Columbia S.C. 1864 = 70

Henry Cardozo Eldest son  
died in Columbia S.C. 1866 or 87

Two more sons 30. Widows in Washington  
Estaner - now wife of Dr. G.  
McKinney - now residing in  
Washington D.C. (over 30)

Francis Cardozo - now  
residing in Washington D.C.

(over 30)

## APPENDIX B

### Chain of Title- 3 Desportes Ct.

#### **August 06/1831**

Grantor: Peter Desgraves

Grantee: Luce Desportes

Book & Page: C10-30

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Includes all of Desportes Court, cannot read all measurements

Six lots of land sold to Luce Desportes for the amount of \$9,365.

“...presents that for and in consideration of the sum of nine thousand three hundred and sixty five dollars to me Peter Desgraves of the City of Charleston in the state aforesaid in hand paid by Luce Desportes a free woman of colour... confirm unto the said Luce Desportes all of those six lots land situate lying and being near Saint Pauls Church Radclifffborough...”

#### **August 03/1854**

Grantor: Robert C. Brodie and wife Mary Catherine Caroline

Grantee: Jacob Weston

Book & Page: V12-239

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 34'-6" on Desportes x 42' deep

\* Could not read this deed

According to Buist and Buist the property was sold to Jacob Weston \$520 and says, “This deed was made under proceedings in the Court of Equity instituted by Robert C. Brodie and Mary Catherine his wife, born Desportes against Jacob Weston , Trustee and others the children of Luce Desportes , deceased. No purpose of these proceedings was to sell under the direction of the court certain lands of which the lot under examination is a part, been surveyed by Peter Desgraves Aug 6-1831...”

#### **November 30/1883**

Grantor: Caroline S. Weston

Grantee: Jane Corbett Fletcher

Book & Page: C20-21

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 34'-6" on Desportes x 42' deep

Caroline Weston sells to Jane Corbett Fletcher for the amount of \$300. The deed also mentions at the top that upon Jacob Weston’s death the property was left to Caroline S. Weston, Samuel Weston and James Johnston. Caroline was left sole surviving executor upon the deaths of Samuel and James.

#### **September 30/1895**

Grantor: James W. Haynes (Jane C. Haynes- deceased)

Grantee: Joseph R. Fletcher

Book & Page: E22-111

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 34'-6" on Desportes Ct. x 42' deep

James W. Haynes sold the property to his son, Joseph R. Fletcher for the amount of \$5.00. The deed says Jane C. Haynes died and left the property to James and her son Joseph, her only surviving heirs.

**December 04/1895**

Grantor: W. Gibbs Whaley

Grantee: Joshua White

Book & Page: B21-281

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 34'-6" on Desportes Ct. x 42' deep

Original printed text has been crossed out and added by hand is: "... sold by W. Gibbs Whaley Master, in as for as by reference thereto on file in said court, will appear; and the said master being by said decree directed to execute a conveyance of the herein after described onto one Joshua White upon the payment by him to the said master of four hundred and fifty dollars..."

\*There are no more recent deeds that could be found for this property although it is believed that it stayed in this family mainly. The most recent occupant listed on the Real Property Records title of ownership is Angela Saxby, but with no mention of deed book or page.

**Chain of Title- 5 Desportes Ct.**

**August 06/1831**

Grantor: Peter Desgraves

Grantee: Luce Desportes

Book & Page: C10-30

Type: Conveyance

Lot: Includes all of Desportes Court, cannot read all measurements

Six lots of land sold to Luce Desportes for the amount of \$9,365.

"...presents that for and in consideration of the sum of nine thousand three hundred and sixty five dollars to me Peter Desgraves of the City of Charleston in the state aforesaid in hand paid by Luce Desportes a free woman of colour... confirm unto the said Luce Desportes all of those six lots land situate lying and being near Saint Pauls Church Radclifborough..."

**July 25/1855**

Grantor: Francis Nipson

Grantee: James A. Tupper

Book & Page: R13-17

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

Francis Nipson sells the property to James A. Tupper for the amount of \$462.00.

**December 31/1871**

Grantor: Elizabeth & Samuel Tupper

Grantee: Louisa Edwards, Morris Edwards, James Edwards, Amarintha Edwards, Christina Gibbs, Ellen Ashe

Book & Page: B16-245

Type: Conveyance of Will (?)

Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

"Whereas James Tupper late deceased was in his lifetime, and at the time of his death seized and possessed of the two several lots of land and premises hereinafter more particularly described. Which said lots of land were held by him in trust for Morris Edwards since deceased and who died leaving surviving him as his heirs at conv and legal representatives, his widow Louisa Edwards and her five children Morris Edwards, James E. Edwards, Christina Gibbs, formerly Edwards wife of Gibbs, Amarintha Edwards and Ellen Ashe, formerly Edwards wife of John Ashe..."

**April 15/1881**

Grantor: Louisa Edwards, James Edwards, Amarintha Edwards, Christina Gibbs, Ellen Ashe, Morris Edwards

Grantee: James Edwards

Book & Page: D18-551

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

"Whereas said James Edwards has agreed to purchase the shares of his co-tenants aforesaid... the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars..."

**April 15/1881**

Grantor: James Edwards

Grantee: Morris Edwards

Book & Page: U18-179

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 23'-8" on east line and 28' deep- \*\* double check on this

James Edwards sold the property to his brother Morris Edwards for the amount of \$55.00.

**February 2/1913**

Grantor: Andrew Kroeg Jr.

Grantee: Ransom Duffy

Book & Page: G26-326

Type: Conveyance

Lot: 28' on east line and 73' deep- \*\*double check on this\

Andrew Kroeg Jr. sold to Ransom Duffy for the amount of \$5.00 and other valuable considerations.

**May 1/1919**

Grantor: Ransom Duffy  
Grantee: Julia Dunne  
Book & Page: H29-32  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 28' on east line and 73' deep- \*\*double check on this

Ransom Duffy sold to Julia Dunne for the amount of \$5.00.

**January 12/1959**

Grantor: Minnie Palmer  
Grantee: Pearl Wheeler  
Book & Page: T66-133  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

Property was left to both Pearl Wheeler and Minnie Palmer upon their mother's death (Julia Dunn).

**February 17/1972**

Grantor: Pearl Wheeler  
Grantee: Eugene E. Capers  
Book & Page: V98-140  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

**July 18/1984**

Grantor: Eugene E. Capers  
Grantee: Eugene Capers, Jr.  
Book & Page: E139-772  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

**October 15/1984**

Grantor: Eugene Capers, Jr.  
Grantee: H& M Partnership  
Book & Page: S140-127  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

**October 15/1988**

Grantor: H& M Partnership  
Grantee: John Michel  
Book & Page: T178-757  
Type: Conveyance  
Lot: 46'-4" on north line, 44'-4" on south line, 23'-8" on east line, 22'-8" on west line

## List of Images

1. Desportes Court: Photo taken by author.
2. 3 Desportes Ct: Photo taken by author.
3. 3 Desportes Ct. Interior View: Photo taken by author.
4. 5 Desportes Ct.: Photo taken by author.
5. Radcliffeborough Location: Rosen, Robert. *A Short History of Charleston*. Charleston, SC: Peninsula Press, 1992, p.86.
6. 1951 Sanborn Map: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951, Library of Congress
7. Detail of 1872 Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, 1872, Library of Congress
8. 1869 Map of Charleston for the City Directory and Business Registry, 1869, photo taken at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Libraries
9. Photo of 3 Desportes Ct. from BAR file: City of Charleston. Board of Architectural Review, Charleston, S.C.
10. Advertisements for Samuel and Jacob Weston: *Charleston Courier*, January 4, 1862, pg.2
11. Advertisement of James Johnston: *Charleston Courier*, April 21, 1862, pg. 2
12. Nancy Weston: Myers, Amrita Chakrabarti. *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011, page unknown.
13. Relative Percentage of Population Groups by Ward, 1861: *Charleston Museum, The, Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side During the Nineteenth Century* (Charleston, SC: The Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987), p. 73.
14. Weston was not a Slave: *Charleston News and Courier*, October 16, 1903, pg. 3.
15. Antony Weston Death Card: photo taken at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Libraries
16. 4-6 Desportes Ct.: Felzer, Lissa D'Aquisto. *The Charleston "Freedman's Cottage": An Architectural Tradition*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008, pg. 57
17. Louis G. Gregory: Photo from internet.

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