



SITE OF OLD FORT—The building above stands on the site of Fort Mechanic, which was built in 1796.² It is being used now by the United States navy, so that for the second time the location has military significance. (Staff Photo by Peeler)

Visanska Mansion, Built in 1920, Houses Navy Supervisor of Shipbuilding

19 East Battery
April 13, 1942
N.Y.C.
City Park

On the site is the two-story yellow-brick structure at 19 East Battery, built in 1920 as the home of Mr. and Mrs. Julius M. Visanska, and now used by the navy as headquarters for the supervisor of shipbuilding.

The first time this site was used was in 1796 when Fort Mechanic was built at the time when war with France seemed imminent. The fort took its name from the mechanics (as workmen and artisans were then generally called) who voluntarily gave their labor and materials to build it.

At least one other building stood on the site between the time of the fort and the construction of the Visanska dwelling. Today, when office space is at a premium in Charleston, the house is one of several being utilized by navy personnel.

At the time it was built, the structure was said to be one of the most expensive in Charleston. It has parquetry floors, wide piazzas, and a decorative loggia which shows the influence of the architecture of Mediterranean countries as featured in the building's design.

Albert Simons, architect, now of the firm of Simons and Lapham, drew the plans for the structure. It rests on a foundation of piles and the outside is of glazed brick.

Today office equipment has replaced the household furnishings with which the residence was at one time equipped.

According to tradition, the site has always attracted public attention either for military reasons or otherwise. After the fort was torn down some time prior to 1820, a section of the ground upon which it stood was sold to Mrs. Elizabeth Holmes for \$6,000 and she constructed the Holmes house there.

Negroes from the Holmes plantation on the Cooper river are supposed to have built that house, a large brick structure covered with stucco. The front, which was narrow and four stories tall, gave the impression of great height and was shaped like a bay window. This house was not built on piles as is the present one. Instead its foundation rested on planks laid flat and as a result of settling of the ground and of the earthquake of 1866, the house developed a decided tilt.

In November 1909, Charles R. Holmes sold the house and lot to Robert P. Tucker for \$17,725 and it was torn down. A few years later Mr. Visanska bought the lot and the present house was begun in 1920.

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