

214 Wentworth Street

c. 1856



The house at 214 Wentworth Street is an antebellum house moved to its current location on property reclaimed during the mid-20th century from its original position on President Street.

The house was built either by Henry Muckenfuss, a brick mason, or his son, Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss.¹ Henry Muckenfuss bought adjacent parcels at the northwest corner of Doughty and President Streets in 1802 and 1803.² The combined property ran 320 feet along President Street and 120 feet deep; it abutted the Cannonborough Wharf & Mill Co. mill pond to the south and west.³ Although the deeds were executed in 1802 and

1803, they were not recorded until October 25, 1845. The reason for the delay is unknown, but it is possibly related to the start of construction along President St. between Doughty St. and Bee St.

The earliest reference to a house along that block was in 1849 when Henry Muckenfuss's son Benjamin was listed in the city directory as residing at an unnumbered house on President St. Because Henry Muckenfuss owned most of the block, it is impossible to know whether his son was living at the house which would one day become 214 Wentworth St. or another. By the time of the 1852 tax assessment, several houses were standing on the Muckenfuss property including two-story houses belonging to Henry Muckenfuss, Hannah Pelzer (the mother-in-law of Benjamin Muckenfuss), William McIntosh, and William Quinnan. Benjamin Muckenfuss did not appear in the 1855 directory on President St., but his omission might have been inadvertent. Regardless, he had returned by the time of the 1856 edition, the first edition to record reliable house numbers for the block, and was living at 15 President St.

Henry Muckenfuss died on July 28, 1857,⁴ leaving his estate to his three children: Henry W. Muckenfuss, Jr.; Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss; and Louisa Reeder. On September 1, 1858, Louisa⁵ and her

¹ Benjamin Samuel Desel Muckenfuss was born on September 11, 1810, to Henry Muckenfuss and Frances Darrell Muckenfuss. He married Louisa A. Pelzer (1812-1873).

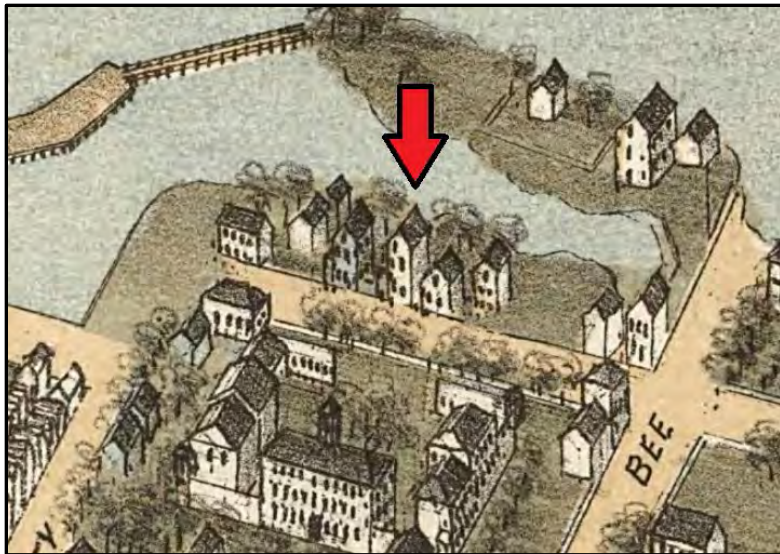
² Charleston County deed book T11, page 59 (Daniel Cannon's sale of the corner lot); Charleston County deed book T11, page 58 (James Spears' sales of the next lot to the north).

³ Charleston County deed book W13, page 680

⁴ Edgefield Advertiser, Aug. 5, 1857, at 2.

husband, Manning B. Reeder,⁶ joined with her brother Henry W. Muckenfuss, Jr. in conveying their father's property to their brother, Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss. According to the city directories of 1859 and 1860, Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss had relocated to another house likely built by him or his family at 7 President St., and there were no entries regarding 15 President St. at all.

The City of Charleston undertook a municipal census in 1861 which recorded owners and family heads for each house in Charleston. In that survey, Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss appeared as the resident of 15 President St. while his son Charles H. Muckenfuss lived next door at 13 President St. Following the Civil War, city directories were published more frequently, and consistent patterns of neighboring occupants can confirm the accuracy of house numbers. The first *postbellum* reference to 15 President Street came in the 1866 Charleston directory; Benjamin's son, Charles H. Muckenfuss, was occupying the house.⁷ Beginning in 1867, a string of occupants, apparently unrelated to the Muckenfuss family, occupied the house, probably as tenants. They included clerk C.J. Fuller and planter H.E. Swinton (1867); watchman A. Reid (1869-1872); and telegraph repairman Charles Howard Bold and his father, planter Howard E. Bold⁸ (1875-1883).



The first image of 15 President St. came during this period in the 1872 Bird's Eye View of Charleston. The map includes the block of President St. between Doughty St. and Bee St. near the western edge of the peninsula long before reclamation projects built out the peninsula to present-day Lockwood Boulevard. Indeed, the houses on President St. backed up to a small inlet off the harbor.⁹ Across President St., the houses faced the rear of the Porter Military Academy.

⁵ Louisa was born on November 23, 1814, to Henry Muckenfuss and his wife, Frances Darrell. Louisa married Manning Reeder on May 10, 1836, and died on February 26, 1884. The couple are both buried at Bethel Methodist Church.

⁶ Manning B. Reeder was born in South Carolina on November 17, 1811, and died on February 25, 1871.

⁷ Charles was the son of Benjamin S.D. Muckenfuss. Charles was born on October 25, 1835. He was involved in real estate and insurance after retiring from the Confederate Army. He died on June 3, 1914, and is buried at Bethel Methodist where he had been very involved. *Charleston News & Courier*, June 4, 1914, at 10.

⁸ Howard Bold was born in 1823 and died on August 10, 1910. He is buried at St. Helens Church, Camden County, Georgia. He had married Sara Ann Chaplin, and at times, members of the Chaplin family shared the house on President St.

⁹ Many years later, in 1963, the City of Charleston had to convey a quitclaim deed to Harry Moseley, the owner of 59 President St., to clear title to the property; its historical inclusion of marshland under City ownership had clouded the title. Laurens H. Irby, "Uptown Corner Rezoning Wins Council Approval," *Charleston News & Courier*, Nov. 13, 1963, at 8-C.

Although that illustration of Charleston is considered very reliable at a general level, only notable buildings are rendered with any accurate detailing. The row of houses on President St., at best, represents the number of houses standing by 1872 and not their actual characteristics. The single house at 15 President St. would have been near the midpoint of the block. Based on its position relative to the main building at the military academy, it is perhaps the single house nearest the center of the block, but precisely identifying any specific house on the 1872 map is not possible.

While still using 15 President St. as a rental property, Benjamin Muckenfuss sold the house to Mrs. Frances A. Moseley¹⁰ on January 22, 1878, for \$500. Although the deed made no mention of a house,¹¹ a \$500 price in that period would have been consistent with the cost of a lot improved with a small dwelling. For example, the unimproved lot¹² to the west, created by the filling of Cannon's Mill Pond, was subsequently added to 15 President St. when it was also acquired from Benjamin Muckenfuss for an additional \$50 on November 16, 1885.¹³

It seems that the house was bought by Mrs. Moseley as a rental property instead of as a personal home; the Moseley family lived in Williamsburg County, South Carolina. Moreover, the same tenants, Howard Bold and his family, occupied the house both immediately before and after the sale to Mrs. Moseley in 1878. Subsequent occupants included Walker, Evans & Cogswell clerk William J. Edwards (1883); bookbinder James M. Edwards (1886); salesman for Walker, Evans & Cogswell George H. Edwards and teacher Miss Annie E. Edward (1888); Miss Susan M. Clement (1889); assistant manager with Charleston Iron Works Robert M. McDermid (1890); and railway postal clerk William J. Ballentine(1891-1893).

Starting by 1894, the house at 15 President St. was the home of the family of Walker, Evans & Cogswell bookbinding foreman Jehu W.¹⁴ and Sarah Nicholes. After living in the house as renters for nearly a decade, by 1902, Jehu W. Nicholes and his immediate family had relocated to 27 President (later renumbered as 73 President). However, 15 President Street continued to have family ties to the Nicholes family. For example, starting by 1903, it was home to William Henry Holl and his wife, Victoria.¹⁵ Mr. Holl's sister was married to one of Jehu Nicholes' sons.¹⁶ Mr. Holl was the head of the car painting department of the Charleston Consolidated Railway & Lighting Co. (the operator of the Charleston trolley system).¹⁷ They remained until 1910.

¹⁰ Frances A. Barr Moseley was born on February 6, 1844, to James Barr and Elizabeth Watson and died on January 17, 1928. She is buried at Salters Cemetery in Williamsburg County, South Carolina.

¹¹ Charleston County deed book O17, page 3.

¹² The newly created property conveyed to the rear of 59 President St. was one of many lots being sold by the lumber mill and shown on a plat of 1854. Charleston County plat book A1, page 114.

¹³ Charleston County deed book H20, page 320.

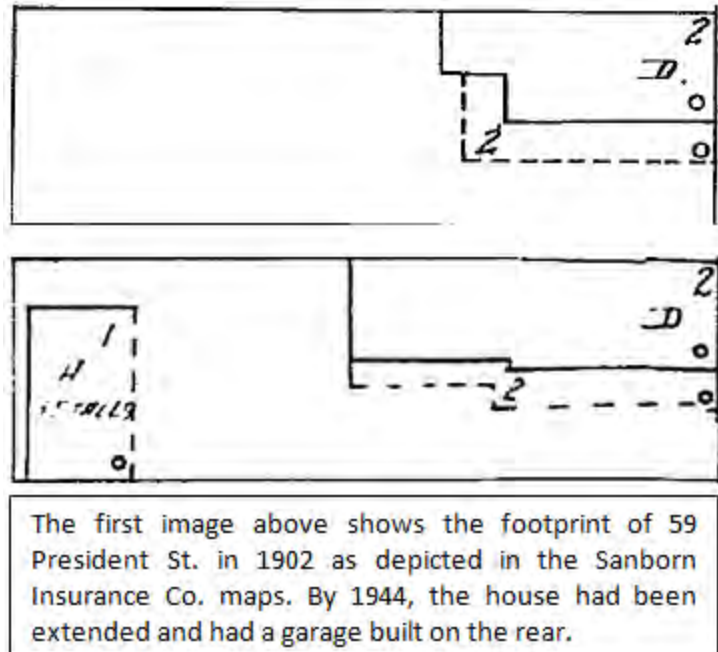
¹⁴ Jehu and Sarah later moved to 27 President where he died on May 25, 1921.

¹⁵ William Henry Holl was born on September 26, 1858, to Isaac Holl in Pennsylvania. He died on May 9, 1940, and is buried at Magnolia Cemetery. His wife, Victoria L. Rodgers Holl was born on December 25, 1862, and died on February 10, 1920. She is also buried at Magnolia Cemetery.

¹⁶ Eva Holl, the sister of William H. Holl, married Joseph Whaley Nicholes on April 18, 1906.

¹⁷ Charleston News & Courier, May 10, 1940, at 2.

During the Nicholes' occupation of the house, its footprint was recorded for the first time in a highly reliable source. In 1902, the Sanborn Insurance Co. prepared an exhaustive map of Charleston which documented the footprint, height, and materials of each building in Charleston. The house was originally a shorter Charleston single house than it is today. According to a 1902 Sanborn Insurance Co. map, the piazzas wrapped around to the rear of the house and terminated into a small extension. The extension does not appear to have been significantly longer than the width of the piazzas which adjoined it. But, by 1944, when the insurance map was reprinted, the house had had an addition. Although hardly certain, the expansion might have taken place in 1929; a \$500 building permit was reported on June 21, 1929, in the local newspaper, a sizeable amount for that time consistent with a large addition.



On April 27, 1910, Jehu Nicholes' daughter, May,¹⁸ married Southern Railway clerk James Watson Moseley,¹⁹ a son of Frances Moseley, the house's owner. From at least 1911 until James' death in 1929, the house (renumbered from 15 President St. to 59 President St. in 1921) was home to the couple. After thirty years of ownership, Frances Moseley conveyed the house to her daughter-in-law, May Nicholes Moseley, on April 15, 1918.²⁰

After the death of James Moseley on May 28, 1929, his widow was joined at 59 President St. by her sister Florence Mathews;²¹ her brother-in-law, assistant city attorney Brice H. Mathews;²² and her brother, Henry Nicholes. On February 26, 1937, Mr. Brice H. Mathews died of influenza at the house,²³ and the two sisters, May and Florence, remained at the house, at times joined by other family members through at least 1942.

¹⁸ May Eloise Moseley (nee Nicholes) was born on June 5, 1889, and she died on February 1, 1962. She and her husband are both buried at Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹⁹ James Watson Moseley, Sr. was born on December 14, 1884, in Salters, South Carolina to Rodolph Moseley and Frances A. Barr.

²⁰ Charleston County deed book S28, page 139.

²¹ Florence was born to Jehu Wilson Nicholes and Sarah Jane Wescoat on Edisto Island on November 8, 1870.

²² Mr. Mathews was born on December 28, 1869, in Howard County, Maryland to Judge William Mathews and Harriett Ann Howard.

²³ Mr. Mathews was a graduate of the University of South Carolina and practiced law in Charleston. Following a career with many years as the assistant city attorney for Charleston, he was made a city magistrate in March 1935 and held the post until his death. He is buried at Magnolia. "Brice H. Mathews, Recorder, Is Dead," Charleston News & Courier, Feb. 27, 1937, at 2.

Florence died on May 2, 1943, and was replaced in the house by May's brother, produce broker Julius W. Nicholes, at least in 1944-1945. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, May's son, service station owner James W. Moseley, Jr.,²⁴ occupied the house with his own wife, Lennie Platt Moseley. Still, May remained in the house, and other family members rotated through.

On February 1, 1962, Mrs. May Moseley died, and the property was transferred to her son, Harry W. Moseley, and the City of Charleston confirmed that it was surrendering all rights to the former marshlands by a quitclaim deed to him on November 13, 1963.²⁵ The need for a quitclaim deed might have been prompted by an interest in selling the house. At the same time, an ad ran in the local paper for the house's sale which described it as being used as apartments "behind the proposed Medical Center." The Medical University had just acquired the property of the old Porter Military Academy across the street for use as its main campus. The day after securing the quitclaim deed, on November 14, 1963, Harry Moseley sold 59 President St. to Mamie L. Ilderton for \$17,000.²⁶



In this 1963 aerial photograph of the Porter Military Academy campus, 59 President St. (marked with an arrow), overlooked the rear of the main building.

Thereafter, the house started to be rented to people who were not relatives for the first time since the late 19th century. On April 19, 1964, the house was again advertised for \$17,500 as a two-unit apartment house with nine rooms and three baths in the medical district. Mamie Ilderton sold the house to John R. Vaughn, Jr. on May 1, 1964, for \$17,500.²⁷ Renters during this period included Cherry Rhude (1968) and student George Moore (1969).

Mr. Vaughn sold the house to the Medical University of South Carolina on January 13, 1970, for \$20,500.²⁸ Following a few years of vacancy, the Medical University began using the house for office space including the school's internal audit office and its microfilm office. The school used the house as offices from 1973 to 1976 before the house again was vacant (1977-1980).

²⁴ James Watson Moseley, Jr. was born on November 8, 1912. He had married Lennie Platt. He died on February 21, 1962, and is buried at Magnolia Cemetery. He was survived by his two sons, James Watson Moseley, III and Brice Howard Moseley.

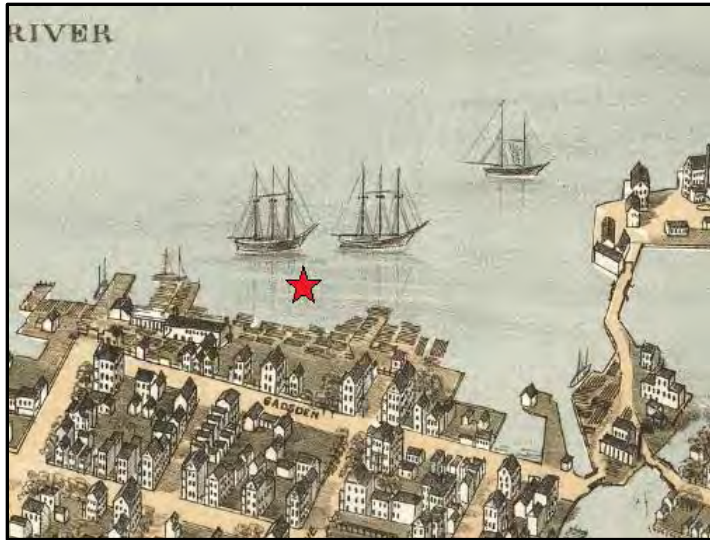
²⁵ Charleston County deed book X77, page 344.

²⁶ Charleston County deed book X77, page 345.

²⁷ Charleston County deed book H80, page 48.

²⁸ Charleston County deed book W93, page 179.

The Medical University was interested in expanding its campus across President Street, and the school was interested in the vacant land more than the historic houses it had acquired along President Street. The Medical University advertised the houses for sale, and a group of local professionals developed a plan for relocating them. The new location of the group of houses was to be a few blocks to the southwest at the western end of Wentworth and Montagu Streets.



In the 1872 Bird's Eye View of Charleston, Wentworth Street extended only to Gadsden Street. The location of 214 Wentworth Street was fully underwater in a cove between Harleston Village and the West Point Rice Mill (17 Lockwood Boulevard), but slowly the land was being reclaimed. The City of Charleston sold the new land near Halsey Boulevard to Mrs. Lucille Hyde Wehman on January 30, 1946, for \$400.²⁹ The western end of Wentworth St. was still marsh until the 1950s. By 1953, Barre Street was created as the land edged

westward, but more than one lot beyond it was still marsh in 1955.³⁰ Halsey Street was opened in 1958 as the landfill continued to move westward.³¹ Mrs. Weyman sold the property to Frances F. and H.B. Limehouse for \$97,500 on November 18, 1980.³²

The three developers with the plan for relocating the houses bought the row of houses from the Medical University in early 1981 and secured financing of \$655,000 for their plans in February 1981.³³ The partnership (made up of realtor Hillyer Rudisill, dentist Bernard Ray, and pathology researcher Russell A. Vincent) bought the newly reclaimed land at the end of Wentworth and Montagu Streets from H.B. Limehouse on February 27, 1981.³⁴ On May 1981, the Charleston Board of Architectural Review approved the move of the seven houses from President Street (along with one from Spring Street).³⁵ On December 11, 1981, Presidential Row, a partnership, conveyed the property to Presidential Row, Inc., a South Carolina corporation.³⁶

²⁹ Charleston County deed book C47, page 21.

³⁰ "Mayor Morrison Calls Landfill Operation 'Solid Accomplishment' Of Administration," Charleston News & Courier, Feb. 7, 1955, at 7.

³¹ "New Street Completion Set For Mar. 1," Charleston News & Courier, Feb. 3, 1958, at 14.

³² Charleston County deed book X123, page 124.

³³ Mary A. Glass, "President Street Relocation Project Loan Pact Signed," Charleston News & Courier, Feb. 18, 1981, at 1B.

³⁴ Charleston County deed book U124, page 187.

³⁵ "Plans Set For 'Presidential Row,'" Charleston News & Courier, June 1, 1981, at A1.

³⁶ Charleston County deed book G127, page 228.

The developers of Presidential Row, their name for the new residential area, had envisioned placing the eight houses along Lockwood Boulevard and then building twelve condominiums along Wentworth and Montagu Streets.³⁷ Instead, the Board of Architectural Review required the eight houses to be relocated on those lateral streets in two groups of four with the condominiums built overlooking the harbor on Lockwood, essentially reversing the plans of the developers. Work progressed slowly, and the plans for the twelve new condos were approved in July 1982.³⁸ Unfortunately for the developers, the changes imposed by the B.A.R. and skyrocketing interest rates as high as 21% eventually led the developer to file for bankruptcy protection in the 1983.³⁹



The bank acquired the landfill property during a foreclosure on September 1, 1983,⁴⁰ and a new developer, Linco Development, Inc., bought the land from Citizens Savings Bank on March 20, 1984, for \$707,200.⁴¹ Linco Development sought permission to demolish the four houses on Montagu and increase the number of condos to eighteen.⁴² The B.A.R. approved the plans in February 1984,⁴³ but work progressed slowly. Only one house was promptly restored upon the buildings' move to their new location.

³⁷ Skip Johnson, "Presidential Row Sold At Auction Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, Mar. 22, 1983, at A1.

³⁸ Julia Coaxum, "BAR Approves Design Of 12 Condominiums," *Charleston News & Courier*, July 29, 1982, at 11-C.

³⁹ Skip Johnson, "Presidential Row Scheduled To Be Sold At Public Auction," *Charleston News & Courier*, Mar. 20, 1983, at A1.

⁴⁰ Charleston County deed book A133, page 160.

⁴¹ Charleston County deed book V135, page 375.

⁴² Marsha White, "Presidential Row Wins Rezoning Bid," *Charleston News & Courier*, January 19, 1984, at B1.

⁴³ Marsha White, "Presidential Row House Gets Stay Of Demolition," *Charleston News & Courier*, Feb. 9, 1984 at B1.

The restoration was not apparently carried out by the new developer of the project. The newly created 214 Wentworth Street was sold to J. Thomas Lindley on January 24, 1985.⁴⁴ A real estate advertisement for the house at 214 Wentworth St. in September 1986 mentioned that the restoration was under way and listing the house for sale for \$185,000.⁴⁵ The house seems not to have sold, and it was instead next sold on March 10, 1993, to Bruce and Johanna Everson for \$215,000.⁴⁶

Today, the house at 214 Wentworth Street remains a classic example of a two-story Charleston single house. The house has a two-story piazza running along its west façade, the typical arrangement one would expect of a Charleston single house regardless of its relocation. The typical piazza screen for the first floor is recessed beyond the first window of the house and is approached by a set of stairs set within the footprint of the house. Victorian brackets flank the piazza door. During an architectural survey completed in 1973, the house was reported to have wainscoting, period interior doors, old windows (two-over-two), simple ceiling cornices, chair rails, and base molds. During the restoration of the house in its new location, the two-over-two windows were replaced with six-over-six windows, and exterior stairs were removed. Otherwise, the house's exterior was not altered, and it retains the typical characteristics of a 19th century Charleston single house.

⁴⁴ Charleston County deed book X142, page 486.

⁴⁵ Charleston News & Courier, Sept. 14, 1986, at 15-F.

⁴⁶ Charleston County deed book M224, page 103.