

Francis Deigman House

36 South Street

c. 1858-1860



In the 1852 Bridgens & Allen map, James Rhett's house on America Street was still standing. The grounds to the north included the end of Vardell Creek that had not yet been filled in and still flowed approximately along the back property line of the lot upon which 36 South Street would be built a few years later. When Mr. Smith died, his "elegant mansion" and 24 new building lots were sold at a public auction in January 1858,¹ including Lot 11 and also Lot

12 (each 32 by 94 feet) upon which 36 South Street would be built. **Francis Deigman**, a ship carpenter who owned a ship yard at Town Creek, was the highest bidder, but the sale was not recorded until May 1888 (probably in anticipation of a sale outside the family).²

¹ Charleston Mercury, Jan. 18, 1858, at 3

² The deed was listed as having been recorded in Deed Book D13, page 33; however, that reference must have been a mistake since no book D13 was ever created, and deed recorded in 1888 would not have been recorded in a book that early.

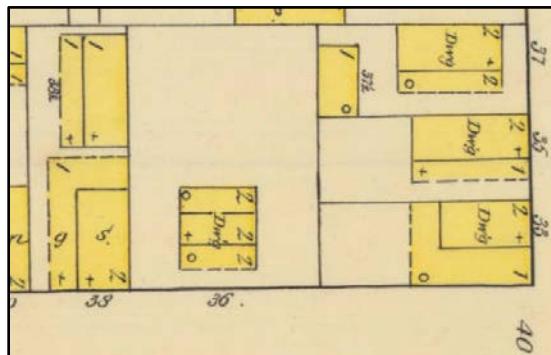
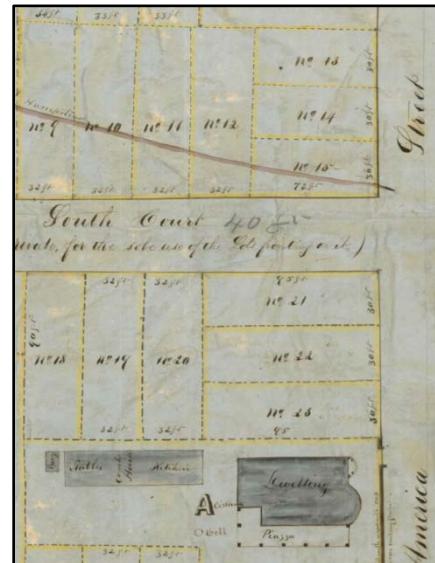
Mr. Deigman seems to have quickly improved his new land with a dwelling which he rented out by 1860.³ Mr. Deigman sold Lots 11 and 12 with the house to a son, **Charles Deigman**, for \$1000 in February 1869.⁴ The city directory listed ship carpenter Charles E.⁵ and Eliza⁶ Deigman at 2 America Street, but the listing was perhaps a mistake; the house was known as 2 South Street then. The family appeared at the house for the 1870 census.

Houses sprang up along South Street after the breakup of the Rhett estate. When the Bird's Eye View map was drawn in 1872, South Street had been extended to America Street, and 36 South Street was in place. The house stands out among generic icons because of its lateral orientation.

Charles Deignan was living in the house when he died in 1886, and his widow, Eliza, remained until 1889. Sometime between September 1887

and September 1888, Mr. Deigman's estate pulled a permit for a \$300 cottage at 36 South Street.⁷ A

\$300 cottage would have been a good-quality dwelling; other \$300 permits in the same year were for simple, two-story dwellings. The newspaper blurb might have



³ In the 1860 census, the Coyley family occupied the house along with Ms. McNamara. In the 1861 municipal census, Mr. Kiley (the same family listed as "Coyley" in 1860?) was listed.

⁴ Deed book L15, page 127

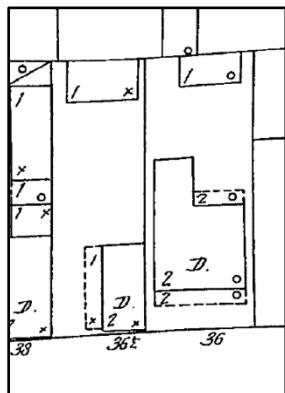
⁵ (b. Oct. 22, 1818; d. Sept. 10, 1886)

⁶ (b. 1829; d. Oct. 18, 1891)

⁷ "Building Up the City," News and Courier, Sept. 3, 1888, at 1

been meant to reflect a large addition to the thirty year old dwelling. In June 1888, the Sanborn maps showed the small house with an addition to the north side that nearly doubled the size of the house in the middle of a double lot.

Charles Deigman's daughters **Pauline E. Deignman-Malone-Duff** and **Matilda E. Deigman** received the house from their father's estate but sold it for \$2250 in November 1889 to **Kate C. (nee Webb) Dunning** (right) who held it in trust for her children Vermelle V. Dunning and William H. Dunning.⁸ Mrs. Dunning lived in the house at various times, as did other members of her extended family. By 1896, she had begun using the house as a rental property.⁹ Eventually the property was taken out of the trust and sold for \$2000 to the remarried **Kate C. Webb-Dunning-Fortune**, in June 1909 along with another house on Reid Street. Mrs. Fortune sold the house in May 1910 to **H.R. Peecksen** for \$1435.¹⁰



During her ownership, Mrs. Fortune had been responsible for subdividing the lot so that an additional house could be squeezed in at 36 1/2 South Street. Luke O'Brien bought a 28 foot wide section of Lot 11 in May 1893.¹¹ He built the existing 36 1/2 South Street as a two-story house for \$400 in September 1894.¹² Because the new house would not have fit into the side yard, 36 South Street clearly had to have been moved by Mrs. Dunning before 36 1/2 South Street was begun. By the time of the 1902 Sanborn maps, the by-then-enlarged-again house had been relocated to the east to make room for the new house at 36 1/2 South Street.

Mr. Peecksen seems to have used the house as a rental property throughout his ownership. Although some families remained for a few years, most of the occupants were short-timers. The house was possibly rented out with as little as a single room being rented to an entire family; in the 1940 census,

⁸ Deed book E21, page 36

⁹ Renters included Thomas P. Lynch (1897), Henry C. Sumter (1899-1900), William Logan (1901-02), and Lawrence W. Hammond (1904-13).

¹⁰ Deed book R25, page 194

¹¹ Deed book N21, page 354

¹² Charleston News & Courier, Sep. 5, 1894, at 4

there were *seven* families living in the house counting *twenty-nine* individuals as occupants.

The estate of H.R. Peecksen conveyed the house for \$10,395 along with several other pieces of real estate in July 1940 to **J. Bradley Peecksen**,¹³ who continued it as a rental.¹⁴ Likewise, **Gladys Freeman** bought the house in July 1971 for \$3000¹⁵ and used it as a rental property too.¹⁶ The house took a turn for the worse; Ms. Freeman was cited by the city in 1978 for the condition of the house and ordered by the court to make repairs within thirty days.¹⁷

Ms. Freeman sold the house for \$100,000 to **JJR Development LLC** in June 2016.¹⁸ It was then quickly flipped less than two months later to **Alice Deborah Canty** for \$200,000 in August 2016.¹⁹ She also flipped the house one year later to **Craig and Lori Evans** for \$260,000 in August 2017.²⁰

When the house was photographed in 1985 for an architectural survey (right, top), it already had its current appearance. The front piazzas have been almost entirely enclosed. An ell built on the northwest corner of the house seems



¹³ Deed book Z41, page 250

¹⁴ Tenants included Girlie Hall (1940), Shellie Oliver (1940), Joseph Jones (1948), Joseph Brown (1955), Ezekiel Flagg (1955), and David Simmons (1970).

¹⁵ Deed book A97, page 403

¹⁶ Tenants included James Leroy (1973), Yvonne Rivers (1976), H. White (1981), Elijah Tucker (1985), Joseph Davis (1989-93), Lee A. Kleckley (1992-2000), Jeanette Smalls (1998), Patrice Smith (2000-15), Ruby Smalls (2003-04), Timothy Weber (2013-15).

¹⁷ Jerry Adams, "Property Owners Ordered To Make Repairs," News and Courier, June 29, 1978, at 2B

¹⁸ Deed book 565, page 654

¹⁹ Deed book 577, page 412

²⁰ Deed book 661, page 985

to have been removed. In the 1955 edition of the Sanborn maps, the detached, rear one-story building was removed.