



**Historical  
Research Methods**

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**A History of 51 America  
Street  
Charleston, South Carolina**

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## **Introduction**

At 51 America Street in the Eastside neighborhood of Charleston, South Carolina sits a typical Charleston single house with a South-facing double-story piazza. Constructed in the mid-nineteenth century, this house has survived war, the Great Earthquake of 1886, civic change, and now neighborhood gentrification. This property was part of an originally planned suburban neighborhood but today sits in the middle of the city's booming housing development.

### **A Brief History of the Eastside Neighborhood**

The history of Charleston's Eastside, or Hampstead Village as it was historically known, begins at the close of the Colonial era:

Throughout the Colonial era, the peninsula above Beaufain Street was countryside, occupied by plantations and small farms. Many large landholdings were subsequently divided among heirs. As the city spread northward, these tracts were subdivided and developed along the lines of English "villages."<sup>1</sup>

Moving into the mid-eighteenth century, Hampstead was composed of several groupings of acreage owned by various investors. These investors wanted to model their lands after those that had already been laid out across town in the neighborhoods of Ansonborough and Harleston Village, featuring larger lots with wider streets. In the Eastside, "First to be laid out was the Village of Hampstead. A prominent merchant and slave broker, Henry Laurens deliberately

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<sup>1</sup> Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side during the Nineteenth Century*. Page 9. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.

assembled some 99 acres to subdivide and sell. [...] Laurens had these properties resurveyed, divided into 140 lots, and named “the Village of Hampstead.”<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1800’s, large houses (such as the Manigault and Aiken-Rhett houses) were being built by prominent families in Hampstead. Relatively inexpensive land and larger lots became a main draw for people relocating to the area from the city. Slowly, growth in the neighborhood started expanding northward:

[Through the 1830s and 1840s] more southerly streets remained more densely occupied, with King and Meeting street addresses accounting for the majority of directory listings. [...] To the north, Nassau, Reid, and Woolfe became well populated, while Columbus, and especially America, experienced a building boom. A major force behind this construction was the displacement of people by the fire of 1838, which ravaged Ansonborough, destroying 50 or more homes of “small value.”<sup>3</sup>

The story of 51 America begins around this time with William Wittaker.

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<sup>2</sup> Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side during the Nineteenth Century*. Page 10. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side during the Nineteenth Century*. Page 24. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.



## 51 America Street – An Architectural and Owner History

America Street in the mid-nineteenth century was a bustling suburb of development. As seen in Figure 1, America Street experienced a surge of growth beginning in 1849.

Table 3  
Number of Households by Street Listed in the City Directories

	1809		1822		1831		1849		1852	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Alexander	1	2.2	15	4.5	12	4.9	7	3.0	15	3.1
America	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.8	4	1.7	27	5.6
Amherst	0	0.0	1	0.3	4	1.6	1	0.4	2	0.4
Ann	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	3.7	4	1.7	4	0.8
Blake	0	0.0	2	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Boundary	0	0.0	20	6.0	6	2.4	0	0.0	37	7.6
Chapel	0	0.0	6	1.8	9	3.7	0	0.0	5	1.0
Charlotte	6	13.3	21	6.3	24	9.8	21	9.2	17	3.5
Cooper	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Columbus	0	0.0	4	1.2	3	1.2	3	1.3	15	3.1
Drake	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Elizabeth	0	0.0	11	3.3	9	3.7	9	3.9	9	1.8
Hanover	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Henrietta	0	0.0	16	4.8	20	8.2	1	0.4	10	2.0
Hutson	0	0.0	3	0.9	2	0.8	1	0.4	0	0.0
John	3	4.4	10	3.0	9	3.7	10	4.3	8	1.6
Judith	0	0.0	1	0.3	8	3.2	11	4.8	6	1.2
King	7	15.5	134	40.6	40	16.4	110	48.2	255	46.7
Mary	0	0.0	6	1.8	12	4.9	8	3.5	19	3.9
Meeting	0	0.0	35	10.6	32	13.1	7	3.0	43	8.9
Nassau	0	0.0	4	1.2	8	3.2	18	7.8	16	3.3
Reid	0	0.0	4	1.2	4	1.6	6	2.6	11	2.2
South	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Washington	4	8.8	10	3.0	8	3.2	0	0.0	9	1.8
Woolfe	0	0.0	5	1.5	3	1.2	7	3.0	3	0.6
*Hampstead*	25	55.5	17	5.1	18	7.4				
*Mazyckborough*	0	0.0	3	0.9	1	0.4				
*Wraggsborough*	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0				

The commercial thoroughfares, King and Meeting, accounted for 40 and 10 percent, respectively, of all addresses listed in the 1822 Directory. Following these, the most densely occupied streets were in what would become Ward 5: Charlotte, Henrietta, Alexander, Elizabeth,

Figure 1

Prior to 1849, all indicators point to a large block of ownership from Reid Street to Amherst Street on the West side of America Street by William Whitacker (Wittaker). Wittaker was a Hampstead grocer whose store resided on the corner of Elizabeth and Henrietta Streets. (See Figure 2)

Table 2  
Grocers on the East Side Listed in the City Directories

<u>1809</u>	
Good, Francis	Hampstead
Raine, Thomas	Hampstead
<u>1822</u>	
Dunn, D.	cor Charlotte and Washington
Graham, Michael	cor Boundary and Meeting
Hilson, John	Henrietta
Kiellin, Charles	Boundary
Marshall, John H.	cor Elizabeth and Charlotte
McGranagan, William	cor Elizabeth and Boundary
O'Neill, Patrick	cor Boundary and Washington
Quin, Thomas	cor Boundary and Meeting
Ribbecks, Frederick	west end Boundary
Rumpp, G. H.	cor Meeting and Woolfe
Schults, William	Henrietta
Wallace, John	cor Charlotte and Washington
Wood, William	cor Henrietta and Elizabeth
<u>1831</u>	
Good, Francis	cor Meeting and Woolfe
Gradick, C. C.	cor Elizabeth and John
Hilson, John	Meeting near Reid
Neye, Harmon	cor Boundary and Meeting
Selin, Peter	cor Meeting and Reid
Stockfleat, John	cor Elizabeth and Henrietta
Wittaker, William	cor Elizabeth and Henrietta
<u>1849</u>	
Aherns, C.	America
Borner, F.	cor Meeting and John
Koennecker, Albert	cor Elizabeth and John
Prigge, C.	Elizabeth
Sahlman	cor Meeting and Reid

20

Figure 2

In the 1830 Census, Wittaker is listed as owning six slaves and having four freed white persons in his household. (See Figure 3)

NAMES or HEADS OF FAMILIES.	FREE WHITE PERSONS, (INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES.)																								SLAVES											
	MALES												FEMALES												SLAVES											
	Under five years of age.	5 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 to 94	95 to 104	105 to 114	115 to 124	125 to 134	Under five years of age.	5 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 to 94	95 to 104	105 to 114	115 to 124	125 to 134								
	Or under and under 5 years of age.	Or 5 years and under 14 years of age.	Or 15 years and under 24 years of age.	Or 25 years and under 34 years of age.	Or 35 years and under 44 years of age.	Or 45 years and under 54 years of age.	Or 55 years and under 64 years of age.	Or 65 years and under 74 years of age.	Or 75 years and under 84 years of age.	Or 85 years and under 94 years of age.	Or 95 years and under 104 years of age.	Or 105 years and under 114 years of age.	Or 115 years and under 124 years of age.	Or 125 years and under 134 years of age.	Or under and under 5 years of age.	Or 5 years and under 14 years of age.	Or 15 years and under 24 years of age.	Or 25 years and under 34 years of age.	Or 35 years and under 44 years of age.	Or 45 years and under 54 years of age.	Or 55 years and under 64 years of age.	Or 65 years and under 74 years of age.	Or 75 years and under 84 years of age.	Or 85 years and under 94 years of age.	Or 95 years and under 104 years of age.	Or 105 years and under 114 years of age.	Or 115 years and under 124 years of age.	Or 125 years and under 134 years of age.								
—Emself—	28	11	10	11	15	8	6	6	1						14	6	13	11	20	10	11	4	2	1	1	1	1	1								
Ray, all three																																				
John Henry																																				
James Pitt																																				
Martha Harrison																																				
John Franklin																																				
William Pittman	1					1										1						1														

Figure 3



Henry Sevens purchased the land (now known as #27 America) from William Wittaker's estate. In 1848, Henry Sevens sold this same land to Henry Kuck(e) for \$950. While it is unclear when the original structure was erected on the parcel of land, the April 1848 deed for the property states that the lot contained a two-story building (see Figure 4).

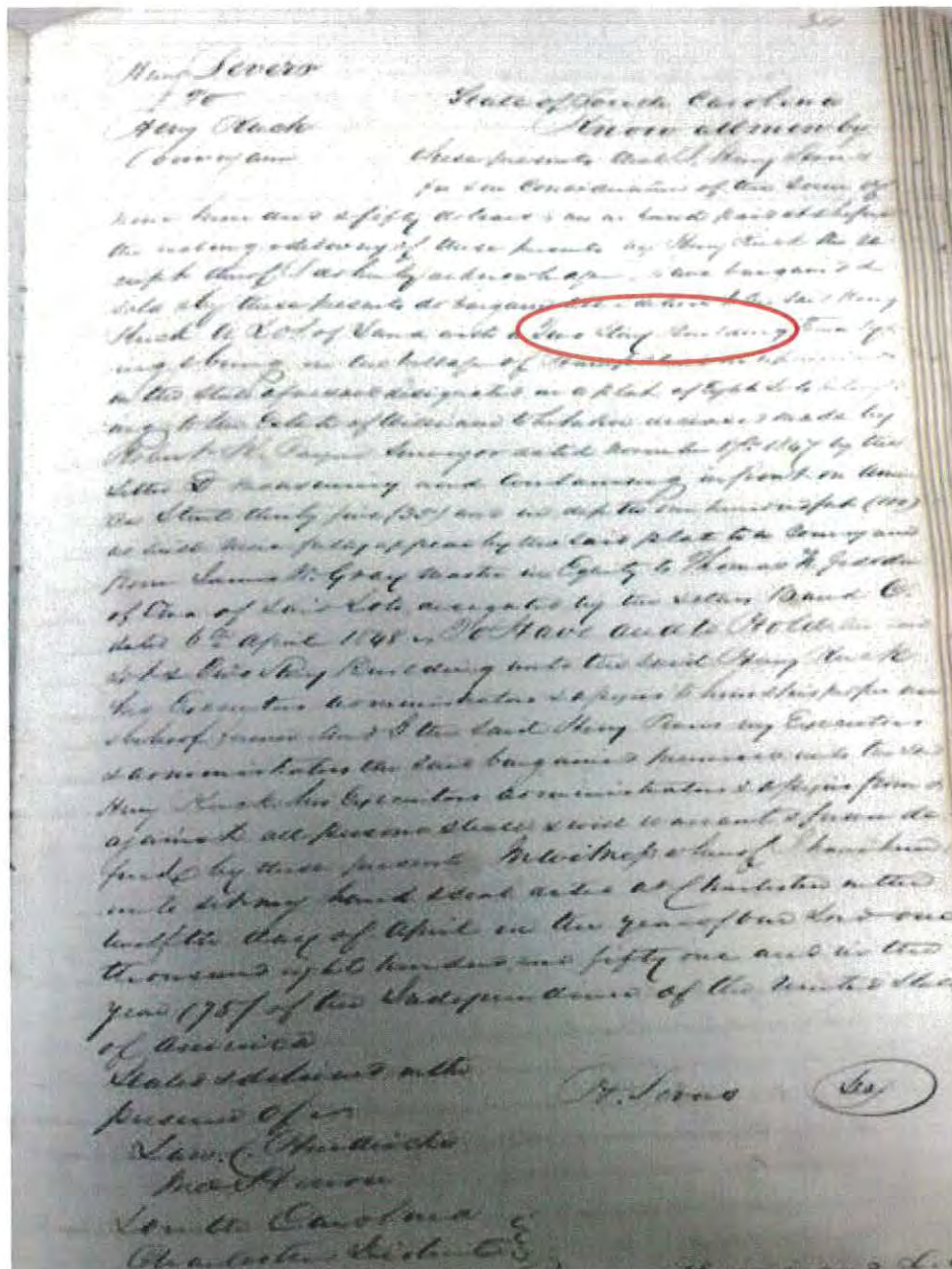


Figure 4

The deed in Figure 4 is for “a lot of land with a two story building [...] being the in Village of Hampstead [...] designated in a plat of eight lots belonging to the estate of William Whitaker” and the plat referenced from 1847 by Robert K. Payne shows the lot fronting thirty-five feet on America Street and extending back one hundred feet in depth (see Figure 5). After extensive research of the vast array of resources available at the South Carolina Room of the Charleston County Public Library as well as Ancestry.com and through cross and direct indexes in the Register of Mesne Conveyance (RMC), no additional information was found on Henry Sevens or exactly when he came to be in possession of the lot today known as 51 America Street, beyond sometime between 1847-April 1848.

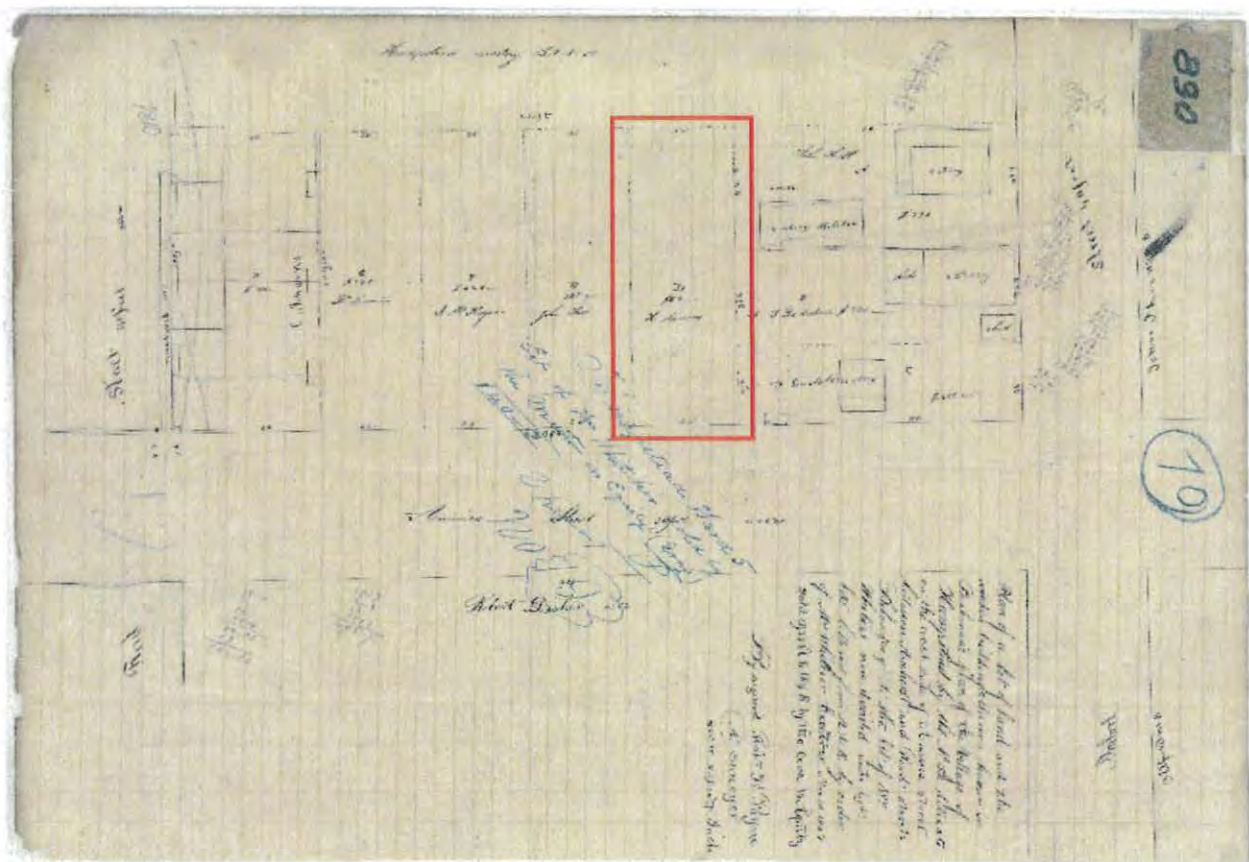


Figure 5



Henry Sevens sold 51 America Street to German immigrant Henry Kuck (Kucke) in April 1849 for \$950 through a simple conveyance. In April 1849, the lot at 51 America contained a two-story wooden building on a lot with thirty-five feet of frontage on America Street and extending one-hundred feet in depth.<sup>4</sup> In April 1849 Henry Kuck also purchased the neighboring lot to the South, today known as 53 America Street, for \$440 from Christian Erickson through a simple conveyance.<sup>5</sup> While there was initially some confusion as to which lot was considered 51 America, the plat from the McCrady collection (Figure 5) and Google Earth confirm that the lot now known as 51 America Street is in fact that lot described in the deed above that passed from Henry Sevens to Henry Kuck. Henry Kuck was married to Maria Kuck, also a German immigrant, and together they had one daughter that survived into adulthood, Adeline (Adaline).<sup>6</sup> In the City Directory, Henry Kuck's residence is most often listed as 76 Cannon.<sup>7</sup> Kuck most likely used 51 America for rental income and resided with his family at 76 Cannon.

At this time, many immigrants were moving into the Hampstead neighborhood: "German and especially Irish immigrants in increasing numbers staked a claim on the Neck, competing for jobs with black people, slave and free."<sup>8</sup> As shown in Figure 6, there was a definite melting pot of inhabitants in the Eastside at the time of the 1861 City of Charleston Census. As can be seen

<sup>4</sup> Charleston County. Records of the Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, South Carolina. Deed Book M12, p. 311

<sup>5</sup> Charleston County. Records of the Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, South Carolina. Deed Book D12, p. 249 - 250

<sup>6</sup> Ancestry.com. *South Carolina, Death Records, 1821-1961* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> "U.S. City Directory 1892 - Charleston, S.C." Ancestry. 2011. Accessed November 15, 2016.

[http://search.ancestryinstitution.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=Lck131&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Maria&gsfn\\_x=0&gsln=Kuck&gsln\\_x=0&msypn\\_\\_ftp=Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, USA&msypn=21847&msypn\\_PInfo=8-|0|1652393|0|2|0|43|0|552|21847|0|0|&MSAV=0&catbucket=rstp&uidh=fh5&pcat=ROOT\\_CATEGORY&h=767665324&db=USDirectories&indiv=1&ml\\_rpos=5](http://search.ancestryinstitution.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=Lck131&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Maria&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Kuck&gsln_x=0&msypn__ftp=Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, USA&msypn=21847&msypn_PInfo=8-|0|1652393|0|2|0|43|0|552|21847|0|0|&MSAV=0&catbucket=rstp&uidh=fh5&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=767665324&db=USDirectories&indiv=1&ml_rpos=5)

<sup>8</sup> Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side during the Nineteenth Century*. Page 14. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.

on the 1852 Bridgens and Allen Map, there is clearly a structure (and a back building) on the lot known today as 51 America Street (see Figure 7).

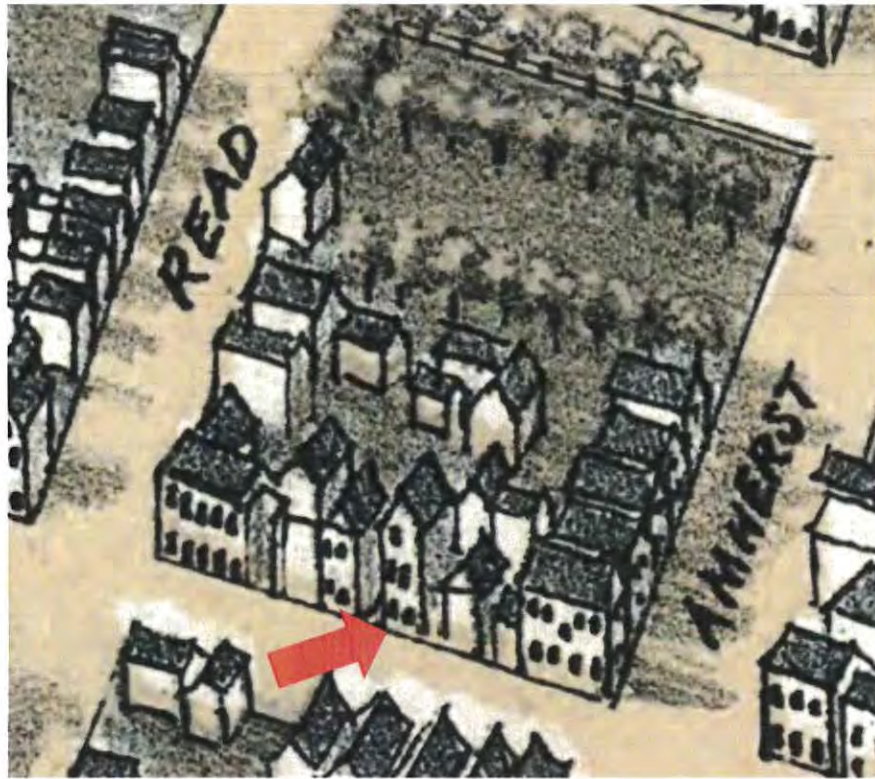
STREETS.	WHITE PERSONS.	SLAVES.	FREE COLORED.	TOTAL.
Aiken	19	14	5	38
Alexander	153	174	37	364
Allway	45	...	...	45
America	274	144	77	495

*Figure 6*



*Figure 7*

As seen again in the 1872 Bird's Eye View Map of Charleston, there is still a structure on the lot now known as 51 America Street (see Figure 8).



*Figure 8*

As seen in the Lamble Plats of 1880 and 1883, the land that comprises 51 America has generally been on high ground (see Figures 9 and 10, respectively). Thus, it would make sense that Henry Kuck would figure this area for a desirable rental property.





*Figure 9*



*Figure 10*

Henry Kuck died sometime in the late nineteenth century, prior to 1886. Since this was a common name at the time of his death, it was not possible to find any record of his exact date or cause of death. He died prior to 1886 since the 1886 Ward Book lists the estate of Henry Kuck as the owner of 51 America Street, then assessed at \$800 (see Figure 12).

It is not surprising that during the 1886 earthquake, Henry's widow, Maria, or their daughter, Adaline Messervy, were not listed as residents of 51 America since there is no record of them residing on property.<sup>9</sup> While there is no money voucher for work completed after the earthquake at the property, there is a record of earthquake damages. The owner/ occupant at the time is listed simply as Menirva. The North, South, East, and West façades of the house are all

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<sup>9</sup> South Carolina Room, Record of Earthquake Damages, p.154

listed in “good” condition and the condition of the chimneys/ flues is listed as “repaired.”

Damages from the earthquake are listed at \$50. As can be seen in the June 1888 Sanborn Map below, there is still a two-story wooden dwelling with attached piazza standing at 51 America two years after the earthquake. (See Figure 11)

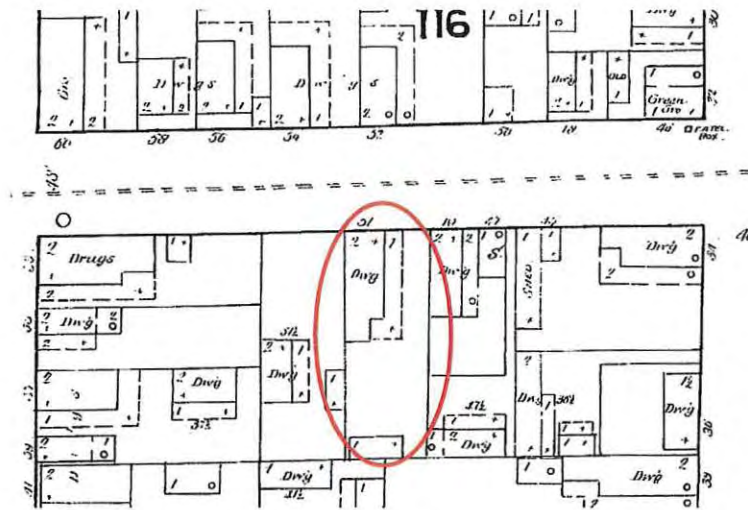


Figure 11

James Carey	2 35 100v	900v	600v
S. L. Schlegel	2 33 100v	200v	100v
<u>Reid Street</u>			
Miss Josephine Wacker	2 32 00v	1000v	500v
Miss Helen	2 36 50	300v	100v
Miss Josephine Wacker	2 35 100v	100v	500v
Miss Horgan	2 35 100v	1200v	500v
Est. Henry Kerk	2 35 100v	600v	500v
do	2 35 100v	600v	1100v

Figure 12



Again, the estate of Henry Kuck is listed as the owner of record in the 1890 Ward book. 51 America Street has an assessed value of \$850 at this time (see Figure 13) and housed two white residents.

Handwritten page from the 1890 Ward book for Ward 9, South Side. The page lists property owners, lot numbers, dimensions, and assessed values. A red arrow points to the entry for 'Kuck's Est Henry'.

Owner	Lot	Dim	Assessed Value
Wm. Schlegel	2	35 x 100	1400
<b>Ward 9 South Side</b>			
Wm. Lord	2	35 x 50	200
Butcher Hogan	2	35 x 50	100
Do	2	35 x 100	300
Kuck's Est Henry	2	35 x 100	300
Do	2	35 x 100	300
Wm. Paulman	2	35 x 50	200

Figure 13

In the 1894 Ward book, two white residents are listed as inhabiting the property. Adaline E. Messervy is listed as the owner of record and the property is valued at \$900.<sup>10</sup> In the 1898 Ward book, Adaline E. Messervy is still listed as the owner of record at 51 America Street, with two white residents listed as inhabitants. The lot size is still 35 feet by 100 feet in depth at this time and the property is assessed at \$790.<sup>11</sup> The now-widowed Maria Kuck lived with daughter

<sup>10</sup> South Carolina Room, 1894 Ward Book for the City of Charleston, Ward 9, p. 20

<sup>11</sup> South Carolina Room, 1898 Ward Book for the City of Charleston, Ward 9, p. 20

Adaline and her husband, John W. Messervy.<sup>12</sup> 76 Cannon Street is most often seen as the address of the Messervys and Maria, while 51 America is not listed as their address is any Charleston City Directory.<sup>13</sup> While 76 Cannon was a property also listed as a residence for Henry and Maria Kuck in many former City Directories, it is likely that Adaline also inherited this property from her father and used 51 America as a rental property while living at 76 Cannon with her family, similar to her father.

While Adaline Messervy was still listed as the owner of 51 America in the 1898 Ward Book, a property deed says differently.<sup>14</sup> According to deeds, W.G. Jeffords bought 51 America to settle city taxes sometime before September 30, 1897. While not much is known about Jeffords' personal life, he had some sort of discretionary income since he was able to attend the Charleston Exposition in 1901. Pictured below is his badge for the 1901 Exposition. (See Figure 14)



*Figure 14*

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<sup>12</sup> Year: 1900; Census Place: Charleston Ward 11, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 1521; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 0109; FHL microfilm: 1241521

<sup>13</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>14</sup> South Carolina Room, 1898 Ward Book for the City of Charleston, Ward 9, p. 20

Jeffords sold the property to R.P. Tucker on September 30, 1897 for \$40.<sup>15</sup> Tucker then sold the property (now known as 109 America) to William W. Mazyck a month later, on October 27, 1897.<sup>16</sup> (Interestingly, in both the Tucker and Mazyck transactions, the lot gains five feet of frontage on America Street for a total of 40 feet in width.) As shown on the 1902 Sanborn Fire Map, there is still a two-story wooden structure with a one-story attached piazza at 51 America at the beginning of the century. (See Figure 15)

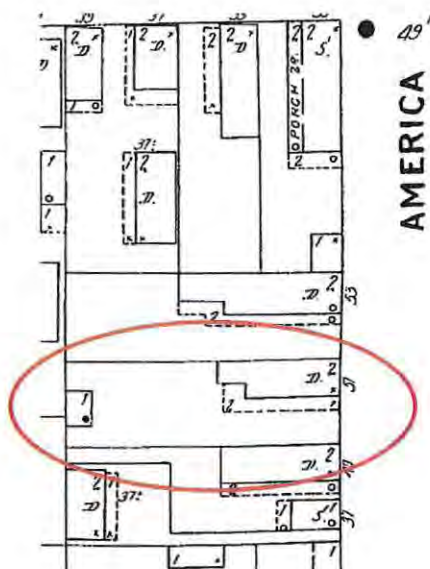


Figure 15

As of the 1910 U.S. Census, William Mazyck was living at what was then known at 109 America Street (today known as 51 America Street).<sup>17</sup> Mazyck is listed as a “Mulatto” male who was a “Hackman”, taking odd jobs to make ends meet. He owned his house free and outright and was able to read and write. He lived at 109 America with his wife, Emeline, and their seven children.

<sup>15</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book H23, p.300

<sup>16</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book N23, p. 300

<sup>17</sup> Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Year: 1910; Census Place: Charleston Ward 9, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: T624\_1452; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 0048; FHL microfilm: 1375465



William Mazyck and his wife, Emmaline, sold the property, known at the time of conveyance as 51 America, to John W. Messervy (Adaline's husband) on November 4, 1905 (see Figure 18).<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, after extensive searching in the South Carolina Room, no will for John W. Messervy was found. It is believed that John Messervy left his property at 51 America to his wife, Adaline. At some point, Adaline's daughter-in-law, Essie Messervy, comes to be owner of 51 America through Adaline's will. Essie is listed as an antiques dealer and is never listed in any City Directory as residing at 51 America. Likely, she utilized this property for rental income as her family did before her.<sup>19</sup> Similarly to her father- and mother-in-law, Essie and her husband John E. Messervy are usually listed as residing as 76 Cannon.<sup>20</sup> The Messervys are also believed to have had some sort of discretionary income as they, too, attended the 1901 Charleston Exposition. Pictured below are the badges for John E. and Dr. John W. Messervy. (See Figures 16 and 17, respectively)



*Figure 16*



*Figure 17*

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<sup>18</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book W24, p. 133

<sup>19</sup> Year: 1930; Census Place: Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 2189; Page: 5B; Enumeration District: 0002; Image: 282.0; FHL microfilm: 2341923

<sup>20</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

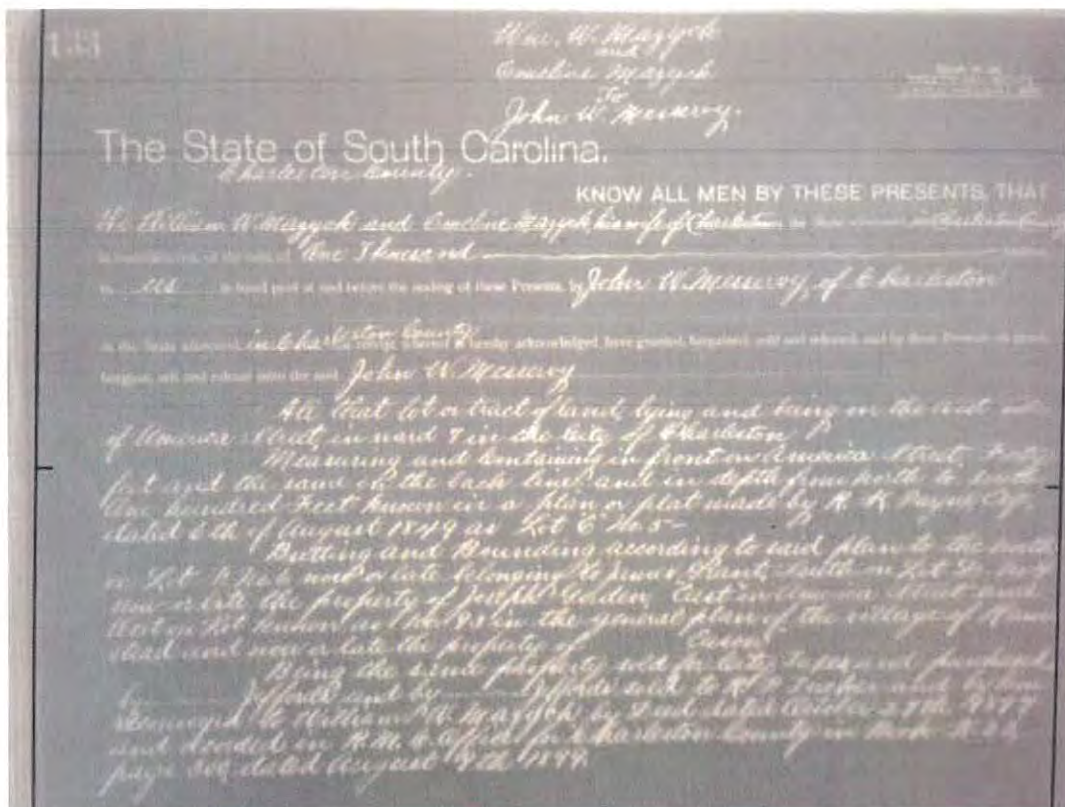


Figure 18

On July 22, 1947, Essie Messervy sold 51 America (now back to its original 35 feet of frontage on America Street) to Samuel Simmons by simple conveyance.<sup>21</sup> According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Simmons rented property further North on America Street before purchasing 51 America.<sup>22</sup> Simmons was an African-American male who was a government laborer. He completed the first year of high school before dropping out to work full-time. In 1940, he earned \$576 working full-time and paid \$5 a month in rent to live on America Street.

<sup>21</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book B47, p. 399

<sup>22</sup> Ancestry.com. 1940 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Year: 1940; Census Place: Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: T627\_3794; Page: 9A; Enumeration District: 10-35

During Simmons' ownership of the property, America Street (and the Eastside in general) was underwent drastic changes:

At the beginning of the twentieth century America Street was a thoroughfare of black and white residents mixed with many small businesses and fruit stores, but at the end of the century it was almost entirely black. It was part of the East Side section known as Little Mexico, an area that ran eastward from Meeting Street to East Bay. By the 1970s it was filled with badly deteriorated houses and a number of attempts were made to re-instate the area. In 1973 a group was formed for the Bicentennial celebration to fund improvements within a 24 block area under the name of the America Street Renovation Funding Committee. Progress was slow as many problems barred the way to rehabilitation including the fact that many of the dilapidated buildings were more than 100 years old and preservation issues arose in addition to legal issues and individual desires. Real results were seen in 1999, however, as a result of Cathy Kleiman's organization "Charleston Affordable Housing." Help came also from funds raised by Edwin McCain's America Street Foundation. A musician, McCain organized benefit concerts to aid in renovations. The area above Hampstead Square during the latter part of the century was plagued with drug dealing problems which a group of upstanding citizens and the police department determined to rectify. The lower part of America Street saw much change in the 1940s when the city built a housing project there and much displacement when the crosstown joined the Cooper River Bridge at Lee Street.<sup>23</sup>

Simmons owned 51 America for some time before eventually selling the property on April 16, 1999 to Hampstead Properties, LLC for \$24,000.<sup>24</sup> Hampstead Properties did not hold onto the property long before selling to John E.F. Maybank II on December 17, 1999 for \$46,000.<sup>25</sup> Maybank sold the property through a simple conveyance (most likely to his LLC) on January 17, 2001 to 51 America LLC for \$5.<sup>26</sup> 51 America LLC sold the property to Daniel Radziminski on August 3, 2001 for \$165,000.<sup>27</sup> Radziminski sold the property to Jennifer McStotts on August 13, 2004 through a simple conveyance for \$166,000.<sup>28</sup> McStotts sold the

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<sup>23</sup> E. Milby Burton. Charleston Streets.

<sup>24</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book V324, p. 734

<sup>25</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book P339, p. 699

<sup>26</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book G363, p. 694

<sup>27</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book E379, p. 568

<sup>28</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book X505, p. 370



property through a simple conveyance on August 28, 2009 to Tim Cuzmar, the current owner, for \$164,000.<sup>29</sup>

### Residents of 51 America Street – A History

51 America appears to most often been used as a rental income property, in which the owners of the property likely did not reside. Beginning with the 1861 City of Charleston Census, Patrick Kenely is listed as the occupant of what is then known as 27 America Street. (See Figure 19)<sup>30</sup> (Of note: Kuck rented out his neighboring property to a free person of color, further supporting the idea of the Eastside as a mixed-race, working class neighborhood in the nineteenth century.)

No.	BRICK	WOOD	OWNERS	OCCUPANTS
WEST SIDE, WARD No. 5.				
1		1	George S. Bryan.	Robert Duncan, f. p. c.
3		1	George S. Bryan.	Selina Lake, f. p. c.
5		1	Albert Fincken.	Daphne Moultrie, f. p. c.
7		1	Albert Fincken.	Slaves.
9		1	Clement H. Stevens.	Slaves.
11		1	Clement H. Stevens.	Stephen D. Kirk's w'd yd.
13		1	William Keiley.	H. Levin.
15		1	William Keiley.	
17		1	Dudley B. Comstock.	Dudley B. Comstock.
19		1	John Fredk. Steinmeyer.	Calvin R. Simons.
21		1	Henry Gerdt.	William Bringworth.
23		1	J. G. Crane.	Unoccupied.
25		1	William J. England.	Patrick Holleran.
27		1	Henry Kuck.	Patrick Kenely.
29		1	Henry Kuck.	Isaac Cleaveland, f. p. c.

Figure 19

<sup>29</sup> RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book 0081, p. 110

<sup>30</sup> <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imps/census/census.html>, Charleston, S.C. City Council, Census of the City of Charleston for the Year 1861.

Patrick Kenely (Kennelly) was an Irish immigrant. He found work as a watchman and resided at what was then known as 27 America with his wife, Mary, and their son, John.<sup>31</sup>

According to The Old Codgers' Charleston Address Book, J.M. Addison resided at the property from 1901-1910, Mrs. Isabelle Addison resided at 51 America in 1930, Cleveland Wilson/ Raymond Huston resided at the property in 1940, Oswald Heyward resided onsite from 1970 – 1980, and Margaret Poole began living at 51 America Street in 1990.<sup>32</sup>

Joseph M. Addison (along with his wife Isabelle) are recorded as living at 51 America as early as 1900. Joseph's occupations included clerk and foreman, common jobs among this working-class neighborhood.<sup>33</sup> Joseph Addison died May 4, 1915 and Isabelle remained in the house.<sup>34</sup> Isabelle Addison died September 19, 1931, while still a resident of 51 America, paving the way for a new resident to move in.<sup>35</sup>

As of the 1940 U.S. Census (and as early as 1935), Cleveland Wilson, a white male, resided at 51 America Street. Cleveland lived at the property, along with his wife, Francis, and children, Cleveland, Deloris, Bobby G., and Karen.<sup>36</sup> Cleveland was another tenant that fit into the working class neighborhood known as the Eastside. After dropping out of school after the third grade, Cleveland went on to find work as a carpenter, working 52 weeks a year and earning

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<sup>31</sup> Year: 1880; Census Place: Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 1222; Family History Film: 1255222; Page: 301B; Enumeration District: 067

<sup>32</sup> Betty Brenner, J. Francis Brenner. The Old Codgers' Charleston Address Book, Vol. I, Is. I; The Old Codgers Inc., January 2000, Charleston, S.C.

<sup>33</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Year: 1940; Census Place: Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: T627\_3794; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 10-35

an annual salary of \$1,560 in 1940. He rented 51 America from Adaline or Essie Messervy for \$13 a month.<sup>37</sup>

After searching Ancestry.com and resources at the South Carolina Room, no definitive information on Raymond Huston or Oswald Heyward could be found.

Margaret Poole moved into 51 America Street by 1990. She still resided there in 1998.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Push for 53 America and America Street Today**

The America Street Foundation was started by singer Edwin McCain in conjunction with Cathy Kleiman, former director of Charleston Affordable Housing (CAH), to revitalize what was at the time (1990s – early 2000s) an extremely troubled street.<sup>39</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, America Street was rife with crime and had fallen a long way from being the melting pot of immigrants and free blacks that populated the neighborhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The America Street Initiative and America Street Foundation attempted to create affordable housing on America Street through redevelopment of decrepit properties. McCain held benefit concerts in Charleston and North Carolina to raise funds to purchase the properties along America Street. Unfortunately, the Foundation and CAH fell on hard times when they

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<sup>37</sup> Year: 1940; Census Place: Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: T627\_3794; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 10-35

<sup>38</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S. Phone and Address Directories, 1993-2002* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. City: Charleston; State: South Carolina; Year(s): 1998

<sup>39</sup> Findlay, Prentiss. "Housing Benefit to Rock N.C." *The Post and Courier*, September 11, 1999. Accessed November 28, 2016.



received “higher-than-expected bids to fix houses at 36, 40, and 53 America Street.”<sup>40</sup> CAH soon started running a monthly deficit and failed to achieve its original goal of kick starting the revitalization of the street.

In 2000, CAH sold 53 America Street. After scrutiny from state and local governments, CAH was not able to find an affordable solution to fix the house left vacant by its former owner after a man punched through a window and assaulted the former owner.<sup>41</sup> CAH could never find a satisfactory compromise between renovating the house and maintaining enough of its historical integrity.

Today, 51 (as well as 53) America Street thrive. Both have been restored and are now attractive residences. The Eastside as well has turned a corner in the process of revitalization. Young couples and families are now moving into the Eastside at an almost daily rate and restore and rebuild houses that have fallen into disrepair.

### **Conclusion and Areas for Further Research**

Hampstead began as a neighborhood boasting larger lots that served as an escape from the bustling center of eighteenth century Charleston. The neighborhood quickly became a haven for the working-class immigrant and free black population of Charleston soon after it was founded due to its relative affordability and proximity to the industrial center of the city.

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<sup>40</sup> Findlay, Prentiss. "Housing Benefit to Rock N.C." The Post and Courier, September 11, 1999. Accessed November 28, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Menchaca, Ron. "Housing Group to Sell Home" The Post and Courier, September 14, 2000. Accessed November 28, 2016.

51 America Street, and the surrounding neighborhood, are currently in the throes of gentrification. The drug dealers, criminals, and vandals that once ran rampant throughout the neighborhood in the mid-twentieth century have now been all but driven out. Unfortunately, it seems long-standing residents have won one battle only to fight another. While many of its twentieth-century residents remain, new life in the form of new owners and new development is quickly enveloping the neighborhood. Owners that bought property in the twentieth century in the Eastside for its affordability are now concerned with gentrification driving up their property values. More established residents of the neighborhood now fear being driven out by a surge in property values and associated taxes. For better or for worse, 51 America Street is well on its way to getting back to its origination as part of the idyllic neighborhood that Henry Laurens envisioned centuries ago.

While there is some information on the Eastside readily available, the area has significantly less accessible historical resources than do neighborhoods located on Charleston's lower peninsula. Records for the Eastside and its residents are not as common or were considered not as important as they were for wealthier neighborhoods and their residents. With the Eastside also being a newer neighborhood than those inside the original walled city, its history does not extend back as far as other areas on the peninsula. With all the crime and poverty in the area over the last century, detailed architectural and residential records are scarce, especially for the vernacular residences of the working class.

## A. List of Illustrations

1. Figure 1: Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side During the Nineteenth Century*. Page 23. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.
2. Figure 2: Rosengarten, Dale. *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side during the Nineteenth Century*. Page 20. Charleston, SC: Charleston Museum and Avery Research Center, 1987.
3. Figure 3: 1830 Census; 1830; Census Place: *Charleston Neck, Charleston, South Carolina*; Series: *M19*; Roll: *170*; Page: *118*; Family History Library Film: *0022504*
4. Figure 4: RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book M12, p. 311
5. Figure 5: 1847 Plat by R.K. Payne, Westside of America Street from Reid to Amherst Street, Estate of William Whittaker, McCrady Plat Collection, RMC
6. Figure 6: 1861 City of Charleston Census data
7. Figure 7: 1852 Bridgens and Allen Map of Charleston
8. Figure 8: 1872 Birdseye View of Charleston
9. Figure 9: 1880 Lamble Plat of Ward 7 of Charleston
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11. Figure 11: 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Charleston
12. Figure 12: 1886 Ward book, City of Charleston, Ward 9, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library
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14. Figure 14: 1901 Charleston Exposition badge photograph, Wm. G. Jeffords
15. Figure 15: 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Charleston
16. Figure 16: 1901 Charleston Exposition badge photograph, John E. Messervy
17. Figure 17: 1901 Charleston Exposition badge photograph, Dr. John W. Messervy
18. Figure 18: RMC. Charleston, S.C. Deed Book W24, p. 133



19. Figure 19: 1861 City of Charleston Census data

## B. Annotated Chain of Title

### **1847 – April 1848**

Grantor: Estate of William Whittaker

Grantee: Henry Sevens

Book & Page: Unsure

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Henry Sevens purchased the property today known as 51 America from the estate of William Whittaker sometime between 1847 and 1848. All evidence points to Whittaker owning a large block of land on the West side of America Street, from Reid to Amherst Street.

### **April 6, 1848**

Grantor: Henry Sevens

Grantee: Henry Kucke

Book & Page: M12-311

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Henry Kucke bought the property today known as 51 America Street from Henry Sevens for \$950 in April 1848. The property contained a two-story wooden structure.

### **1861**

City Census for 1860

This property is labeled as 27 America. Although Henry Kucke is listed as the owner, Patrick Kenely (an Irish immigrant) is listed as the inhabitant. According to Census data, 274 white persons, 144 slaves, and 77 free persons of color lived on America Street at this time.

### **1886**

1886 Earthquake Data

Menirva is listed as the occupant of 51 America during the earthquake. The structure sustained \$50 worth of damage and the North, South, East, and West facades are all listed in "good" condition. The condition of the chimneys/ flues is listed as "repaired."

### **1888**

1888 Sanborn Map

51 America is listed as a two-story wooden building with an attached one-story south-facing piazza and a detached one-story building at the rear of the property.

**Late 1890s**

Grantor: Estate of Henry Kucke

Grantee: Adaline Messervy

Book & Page: Unsure

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

According to the 1898 Ward book, Adaline Messervy is listed as owner of the lot at 51 America, although this is in direct conflict with a deed stating otherwise.

**Late 1890s**

Grantor: City Taxes

Grantee: W.G. Jeffords, Jr.

Book & Page: Unsure

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

According to a 1905 deed for the sale of the property at 51 America, Jeffords acquired the property in the late 1890s, which was being sold for city taxes. Most likely, this property was being sold to settle the estate of Henry Kucke.

**September 30, 1897**

Grantor: W.G. Jeffords, Jr.

Grantee: R.P. Tucker

Book & Page: H23-11

Type: Conveyance Lot: 40' x 100'

W.G. Jeffords sold his property to R.P. Tucker for \$40. Throughout the deed, it states Jeffords was unmarried. 51 America Street was known as #109 America Street at this time.

**October 27, 1897**

Grantor: R.P. Tucker

Grantee: William W. Mazyck

Book & Page: N23-300

Type: Conveyance Lot: 40' x 100'

RP Tucker sold his property, known as #109 America, to William W. Mazyck in October 1897.

**1902**

1902 Sanborn Map

51 America is listed as a two-story wooden building with an attached one-story south-facing piazza and a detached one-story building at the rear of the property.



**November 4, 1905**

Grantor: William W. Mazyck

Grantee: Adeline Messervy

Book & Page: W24-133

Type: Conveyance Lot: 40' x 100'

William Mazyck sold this property to John W. Messervy in November 1905. This deed referenced a plat by RK Payne from August 6, 1849 as depicting the property as Lot E No. 5. This deed also places the property in ward 7. Now known as 51 America Street,

“being the same property sold for city taxes and purchased by Jeffords and by Jeffords sold to R.P. Tucker and by him reconvened to William W. Mazyck by deed dated October 27, 1897 and recorded in Book N. 23, page 300 dated August 9, 1899.”

**Unsure**

Grantor: Adeline Messervy

Grantee: Essie L. Messervy

Book & Page:

Type: Will Lot:

It is unclear how Adeline Messervy acquired the property from John W. Messervy but believed that it was left to her intestate. Adeline's will left the property at 51 America Street to her daughter-in-law, Essie Messervy.

**July 22, 1947**

Grantor: Essie L. Messervy

Grantee: Samuel Simmons

Book & Page: B47-399

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Samuel Simmons purchased a smaller parcel (35' x 100') at 51 America Street from Essie L. Messervy in July 1947.

**April 16, 1999**

Grantor: Samuel Simmons

Grantee: Hampstead Property LLC

Book & Page: V324-734

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Samuel Simmons sold the property at 51 America Street to Hampstead Property LLC in April 1999 for \$24,000.

**December 17, 1999**

Grantor: Hampstead Properties LLC

Grantee: J. Maybank

Book & Page: P339-699

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Hampstead Properties sold 51 America Street to John E.F. Maybank II in December 1999 by a simple conveyance for \$46,000.

**January 17, 2001**

Grantor: John E.F. Maybank III

Grantee: 51 America LLC

Book & Page: G363-694

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

John Maybank sold 51 America Street to 51 America LLC (most likely his LLC) by a simple conveyance in January 2001 for \$5.

**August 3, 2001**

Grantor: 51 America LLC

Grantee: Daniel Radziminski

Book & Page: E379-568

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

51 America LLC sold 51 America Street to Daniel Radziminski in August 2001 under a simple conveyance for \$165,000.

**August 13, 2004**

Grantor: Daniel Radziminski

Grantee: Jennifer McStotts

Book & Page: X505-370

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Daniel Radziminski sold 51 America Street to Jennifer McStotts in August 2004 by a simple conveyance for \$166,000.

**August 28, 2009**

Grantor: Jennifer McStotts

Grantee: Tim Cuzmar

Book & Page: O081-110

Type: Conveyance Lot: 35' x 100'

Jennifer McStotts sold 51 America Street to Tim Cuzmar in August 2009 by a simple conveyance for \$164,000.



### C. Timeline of 51 America Street

1840s – 1897: 27 America

1897 – 1905: 109 America

1905 – Present Day: 51 America

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