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61 Meeting Street

61 MEETING STREET

1888 SANBORN MAP

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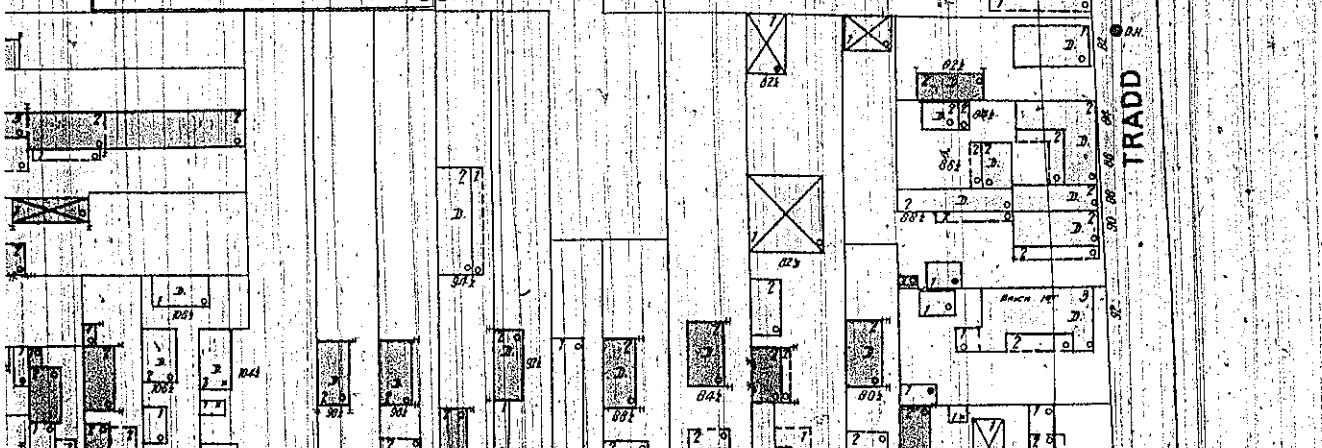
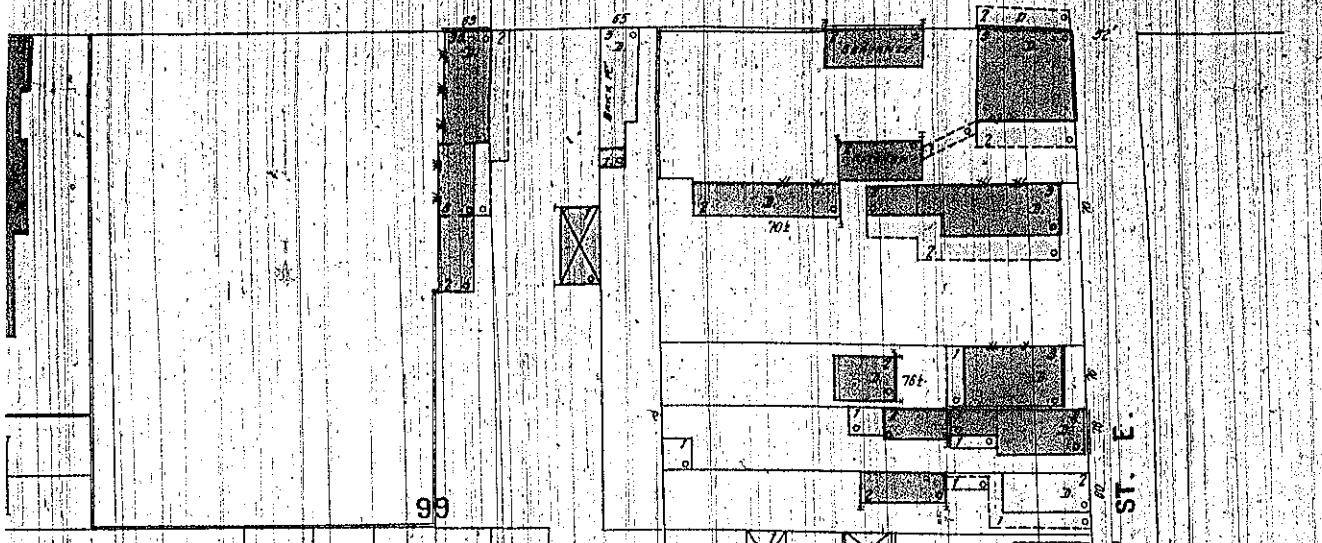
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61 MEETING STREET

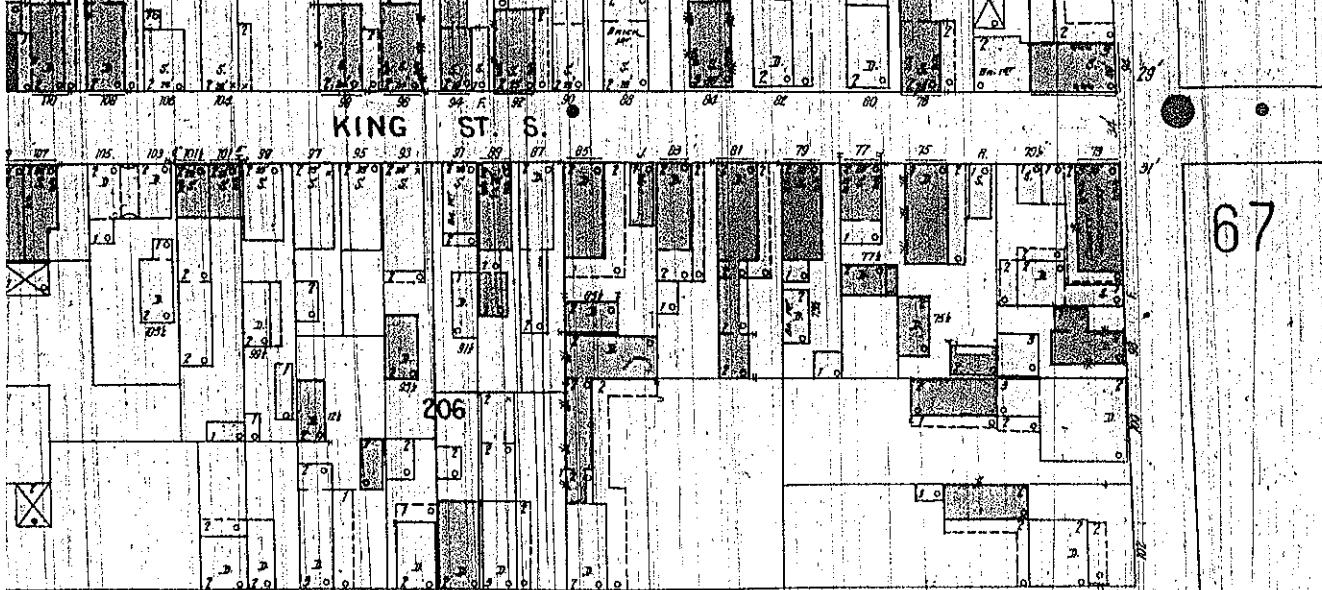
1902 SANBORN MAP

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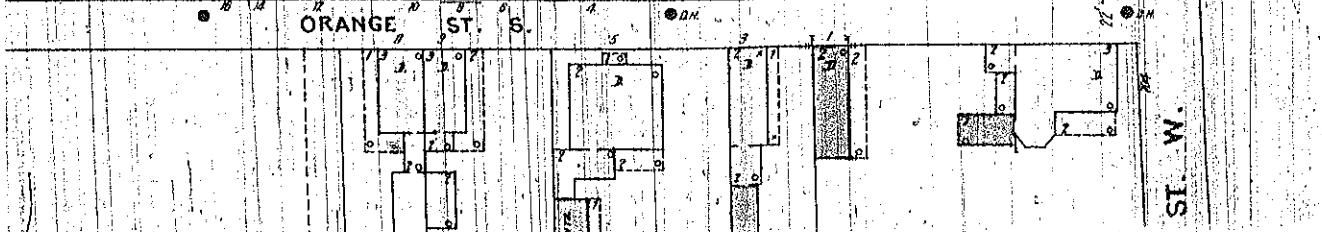
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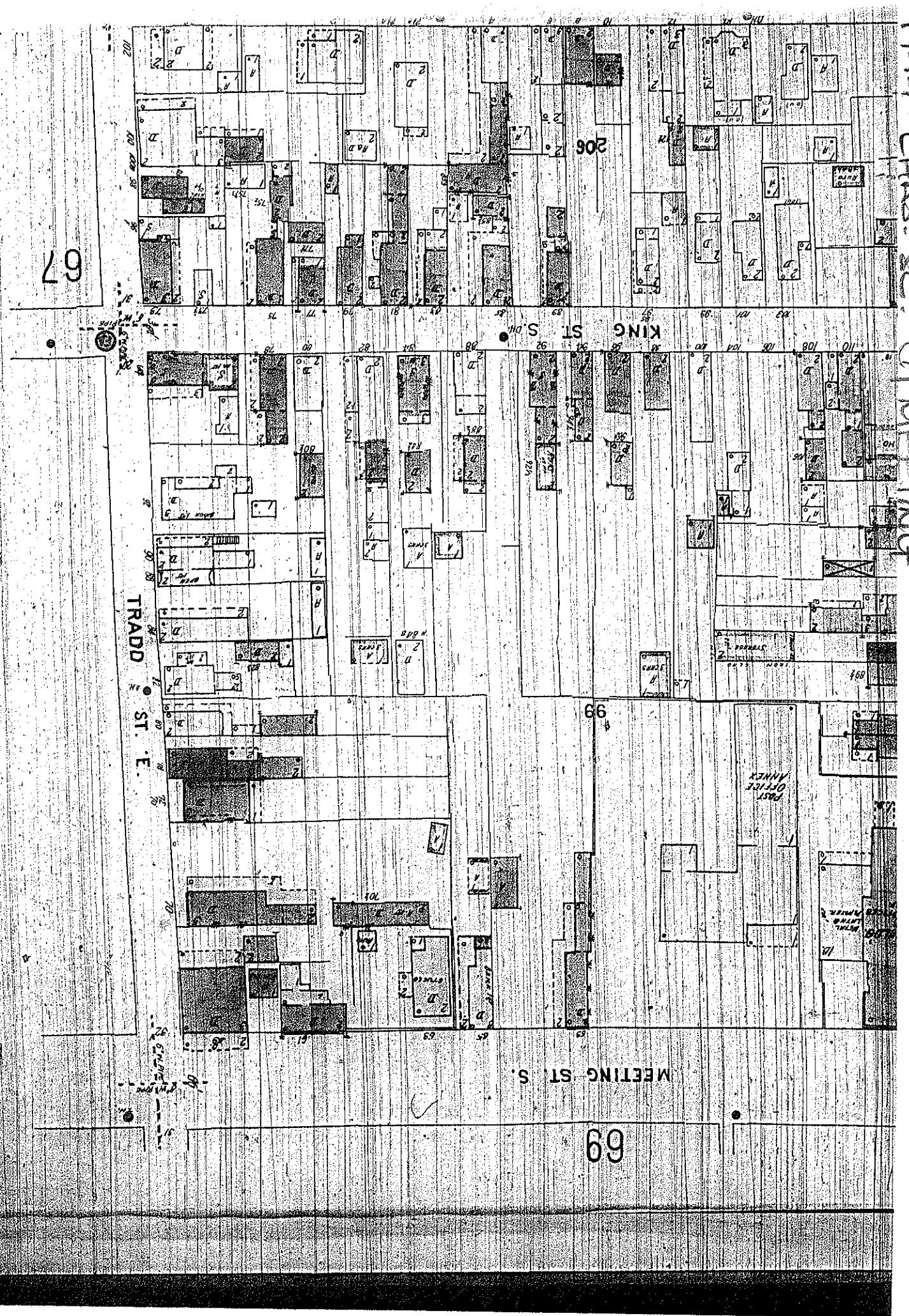
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MEETING ST S.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS
POST OFFICE
COURT HOUSE OFFICES
BAPTIST CHURCH

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ORANGE ST S.

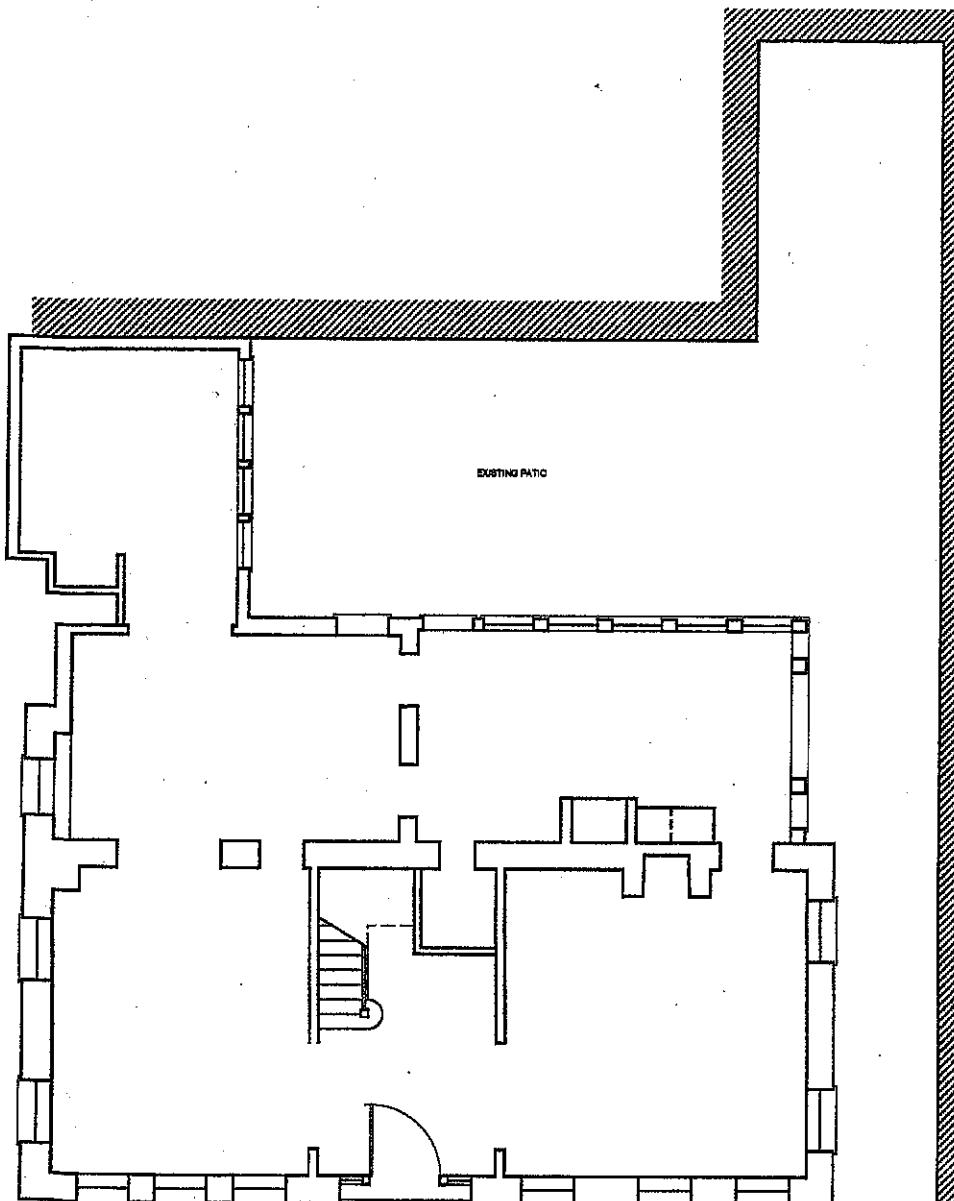
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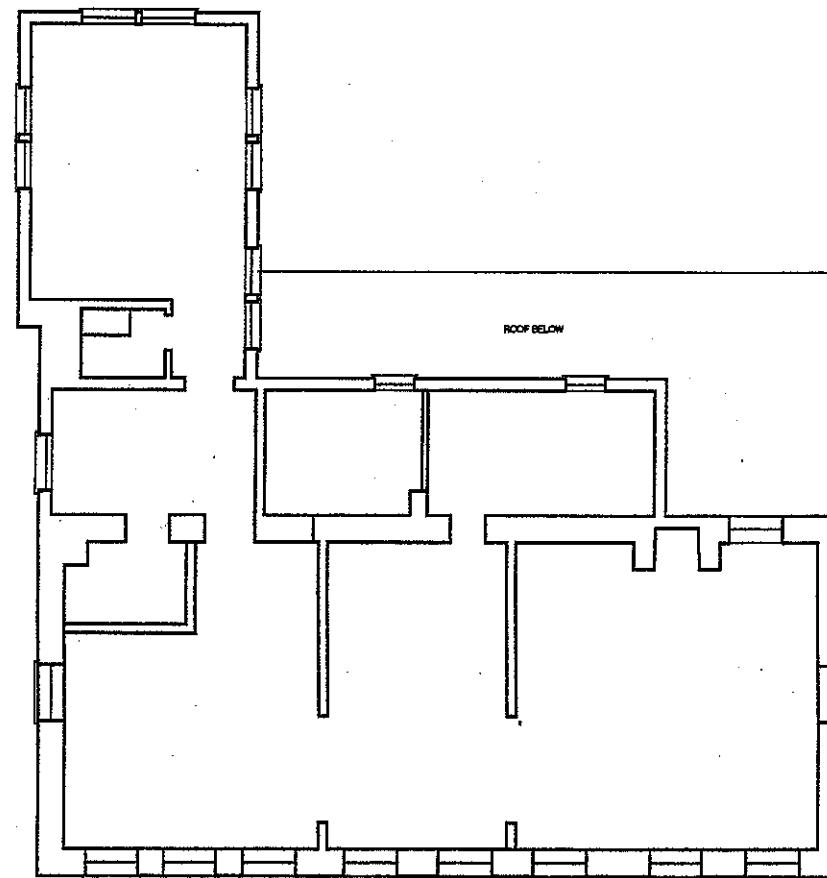
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61 MEETING STREET



MEETING STREET
FIRST FLOOR - EXISTING



SECOND FLOOR - EXISTING

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North Elevation



Garden Elevation

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JIt was a nightly television news story laced with a profound irony, which evoked the poetic sensibilities of correspondent Charles Kuralt.

Before the voyeuristic lens of CBS television cameras, quietly tucked between the weathered memorials of Charleston's Magnolia Cemetery, graveside services for Julius Waties Waring, a retired 87-year-old federal judge and aristocratic Charlestonian, were dutifully performed on January 17, 1968. As the group of mourners reverently huddled around the clumps of dirt dug to accommodate Waring's casket, a startling contrast became painfully evident: 200 blacks, but only 15 whites, witnessed the judge's ceremony first-hand.

"There are few white mourners here today," Kuralt told viewers. "Many people have paid a price for their Civil Rights advocacy, a United States District Court judge among them." To Kuralt, and millions of national viewers, Waring's funeral was hauntingly symbolic of America's 300-year struggle for racial equality. On that day, the South's ignoble legacy of institutional racism, slave trading, and **WHITE ONLY** signs symbolically crumbled.

Although Judge Waring had departed Charleston some 16 years before his death, volcanic emotions erupted after his funeral. "The judge comes home," wrote Waring colleague Ruby Cornwell to the *News & Courier*. "We are honored to have you rest here in our midst." Elsewhere, Waring's former law partner D.A. Brockinton, Sr. reportedly stated, "That was just a chapter in my life that's over and done with, like a bad dream." Others



Rights crusade. To African Americans, Waring was a sympathizer who relinquished his social standing among Charleston's so-called "bluebloods" to promote the cause of personal liberties. "Judge Waring is held in very high esteem," observed the NAACP's Reverend I.D. Newman in 1968. "Perhaps more so than any individual outside the Negro race, for his contribution to the dignity of the Negro which ranks him with the great men of American history, such as presidents Lincoln, Kennedy, and Johnson."

As 2002 looms on the calendar, a half-century will have passed since Judge Waring left his beloved Charleston for a self-imposed exile on the island of

martyrdom. In 1945—just three years after he was appointed federal judge—Waring, a handsome, strapping six-footer, possessed a durably boyish face that concealed his 65 years. With his piercing blue eyes framed by a signature brown fedora, Waring's public persona was meticulously packaged in a three-piece suit, the workday uniform of a 1940s-era Broad Street attorney.

At first, Waring consciously lived up to his carefully cultivated facade, maintaining an air of respectability for Charleston society. He boasted the genetic endowment of an authentic Charlestonian: In the 17th century, the Waties and Waring clans, Anglo-Welsh settlers, planted their roots in the Carolina colony. Ultimately,

Charleston society reviled Waring as a traitor to the city's ancient, Anglo-Saxon code of social conduct.

were not so tactful. An unnamed Charleston matron lambasted Kuralt's "impassioned and soulful dissertation" in a letter to CBS News, concluding that it "left me—for one—slightly nauseated."

Quintessentially, Charleston society reviled Waring as a traitor to the city's ancient, Anglo-Saxon code of social conduct, a man who defiantly rebuked personal pleasantries in favor of a one-man Civil

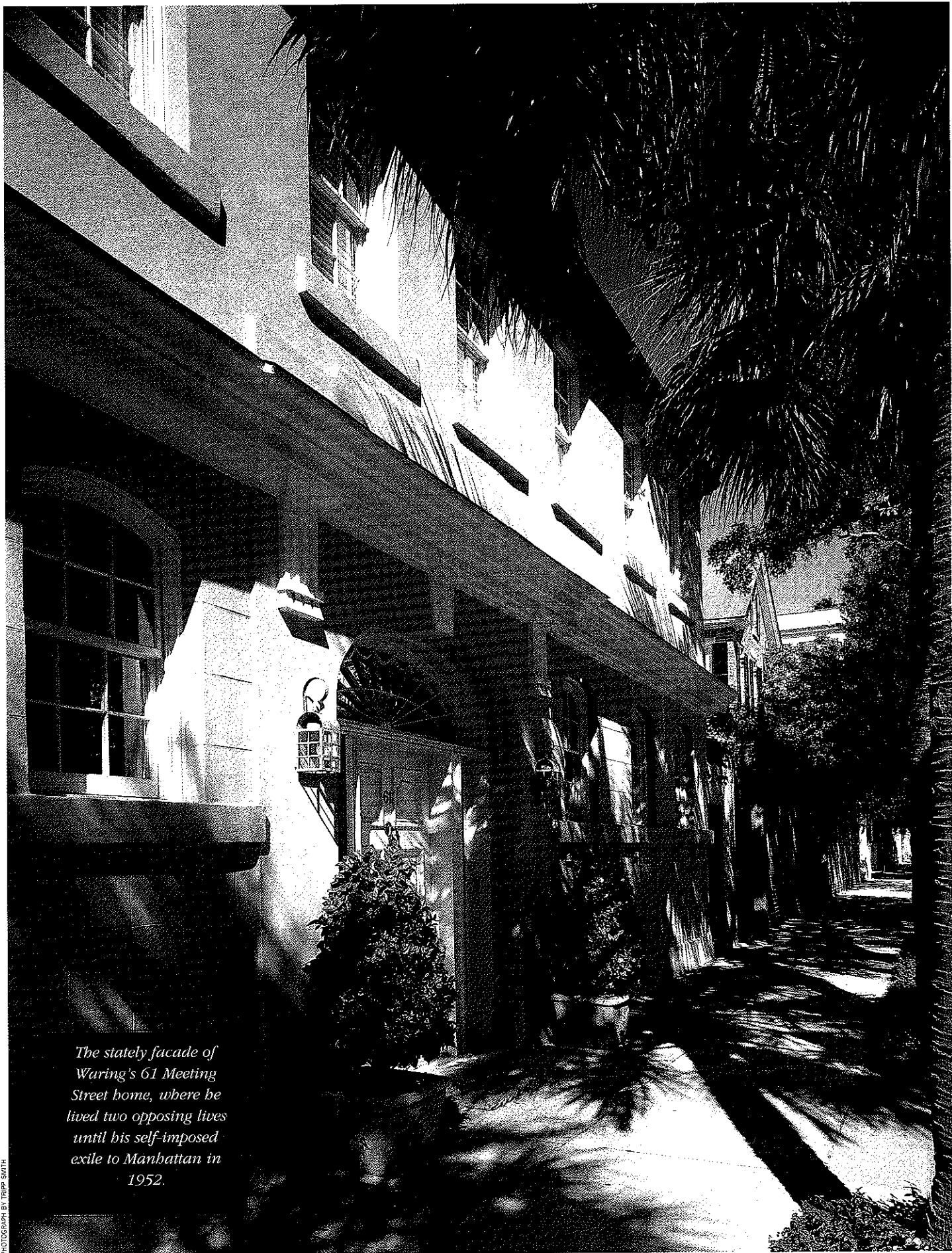
Manhattan." In the aftermath of the social revolution that transformed American life in the latter half of the 20th century, Waring remains an enigmatic figure, one of the most compelling personalities in Charleston's 331-year history.

South of Broad

On the surface, J. Waties Waring seemed an infinitely unlikely candidate for Civil Rights

their descendants—Edward Peery Waring and Anna Thomasine Waties—would bear four children, including the infant Waties on July 27, 1880.

In the 1890s, Charleston was still reeling from the economic aftermath of the Civil War. Although phosphate mining helped restore economic stability for the region's middle class, 54 percent of Charleston's 52,000 residents were African Americans,



*The stately facade of
Waring's 61 Meeting
Street home, where he
lived two opposing lives
until his self-imposed
exile to Manhattan in
1952.*

who controlled a mere four percent of the city's wealth.

From infancy, Waring's perceptions of blacks were molded by the paternalistic culture of 19th-century Charleston. "As a child, I had a Negro nurse who was an ex-slave of the Warings, whose name was Hannah," he recalled in an interview with New York City's Columbia University in 1956. "Negroes in the South generally didn't have last names. Most of the Negroes I knew were ex-slaves, and you loved them. We didn't give them any rights, but they never asked for any rights, and I didn't question it. I was raised in the atmosphere that we ought to take care of these people."

Waring's cultural biases originally came into question at the University School, an 80-student private institution. The school's headmaster, Walter McKenny, exercised a profound influence over the young Waties, mentoring him in the classics and Jeffersonian concepts of equal protection under the law. Ultimately, Waring became an advocate of individual liberties, questioning state's rights advocate John C. Calhoun while embracing Unionist sympa-



Waring's first wife, Annie S. Gammell, was a socially connected woman and devoted wife. In 1945 after 32 years of marriage, Waring asked for a divorce.

Street. By Charleston standards, the young Warings had arrived South of Broad. Their social status rocketed with memberships in the elite Charleston Light Dragoons and St. Cecilia's Society. With a Gatsbyesque flair, the Warings retreated to the security of their own social circle. Annie played the role of the devoted wife, catering to Waties'

every whim. In time, the Warings produced one daughter, Anne.

Waring's career-building break came with his participation in Charleston's Democratic Party politics. When city alderman Burnet Rhett Maybank was elected mayor in 1931, Waring served as the key advisor and campaigner, for which he was awarded the position of corporation counsel for the city of Charleston. In 1932, the People's Bank failed during the Great Depression, and the tandem team of Waring and Maybank engineered the city's recovery from bankruptcy.

Predictably, Waring's politics took a decidedly racist turn, reflecting the segregationist politics of the Jim Crow era. His cronies included the demagogic Senator Ellison DuRant Smith, affectionately called "Cotton Ed," who openly chastised blacks, attacking anti-lynching legislation on Capitol Hill. Smith's grandstanding extended to the 1936 Democratic Convention in

Predictably, Waring's politics took a decidedly racist turn, reflecting the segregationist politics of the Jim Crow Era.

thizer and Charleston native James L. Petigru, whose famous pronouncement, "South Carolina is too small for a republic, and too large for an ~~slave~~ ~~negro~~ ~~colored~~ ~~anywhere~~," is quoted to this day.

After graduating second in his class at the College of Charleston in 1900, Waring joined the firm of J.P. Kennedy Bryan, a Princeton-educated trial attorney. In the years that followed, the young Waties flourished as an assembly-line attorney. "I picked up scraps, odds and ends," Waring recalled. "I got \$10 and \$15 fees, and sometime as high as \$25—that is, if the client seemed to be more wealthy."

In 1913, Waring married Annie S. Gammell, a socially connected woman one year his senior. Two years later, the couple moved into a ~~luxury~~, ~~stately~~, ~~stately~~, ~~lavish~~, former carriage house at 61 Meeting



Philadelphia, where he tore up his ballot and walked out because a black man appeared on the speaker's program.

Ironically, Cotton Ed played an instrumental role in securing the federal judgeship for Waring in South Carolina's eastern district. Despite Justice Department investigations into Waring's "cool, aloof" manner and allegedly dictatorial courtroom demeanor, Waring was granted an appointment by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942, serving in the federal office building on Meeting and Broad streets as the nation braced for the horrors of World War II.

At age 62, Waring was a staggeringly successful attorney who attained an unequalled social standing in Charleston's insulated upper-middle class. Somehow, that proved unsettling to Waties as the Jeffersonian principles of his youth were revived by two life-altering episodes. First, the judge began holding court in federal jurisdictions like New York, New Jersey, and San Francisco, which offered him a view into the racially liberal attitudes of juries outside the segre-

gated South. Second, he was forced to leave



gained scents. Then, with cyclonic intensity, Elizabeth Avery Hoffman blew into Waring's life.

"Something Came Over Him."

Based in the wealthy auto industry enclave of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Elizabeth summured in Charleston with her second husband, Henry Hoffman, who owned a mansion on Broad Street. Although Elizabeth

Elizabeth from above, the
the Waring household
the Hoffman household
and Elizabeth's first
affair, as presented in the
historical fiction *Charleston's
Secret: Elizabeth's Divorce*.

increasingly Elizabeth flirted with Waring. "I was the toast of Charleston," boasted Hoffman. "They love rich Northerners, and I was party material." Later, play-

revering African American syndicated newspaper columnist Carl Rowan commented on his first encounter with Elizabeth: "She walked down the stairs with an elegance that Charleston's finest society could envy, and accorded me a

The Hoffmans dined in Nevada, and Elizabeth and Waring quickly married, taking up residence in Annie's house at 61 Meeting Street and relegating the former Mrs. Waring to a carriage house on Trade Street.

The Waring divorce scandalized the



The Waring divorce scandalized the social orbit South of Broad.

speculate that Waring met the comely Elizabeth on different New York business trips, evidently no one knows when they were originally introduced.

Following the social rituals of 1940s Charleston, the Hoffmans and Warings played bridge together. Despite Waring's reputation as a compulsive skirt chaser,

welcome fit for a cavalier."

In February 1945, after 32 years of marriage, Waring told Annie that he wanted a divorce. With a settlement of \$20,000 in cash and \$1,000 paid-up life insurance policy, the couple obtained a quickie Florida divorce in June, at a time when South Carolina laws banned the legal dissolution of marriage.

social orbit South of Broad. The *News and Courier* published a two-paragraph item on the divorce June 9th, as local wags mocked Elizabeth as "some bridge player." One anonymous local attorney allegedly told *Collier's* magazine that "something come over him," an insinuation of mental infirmity or demonic possession, that sparked heated denials by Waring's nephew Thomas, editor for the *News and Courier*. Reportedly, Judge Waring's resignation from the South Carolina Society was greeted with cheers. Now divorced, he was banished from the St. Cecilia's Society and the Charleston Club.

Increasingly, Waring sought out intellectual pursuits, voraciously reading books like *The Mind of the South*, by W.J. Cash, and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, both damning indictments of Southern racism. "I couldn't take it, at first," Waring told *Collier's* Samuel Grafton



COLLIER'S, APRIL 29, 1950

Featured in the April 29, 1950 edition of Collier's, Mr. & Mrs. Waring review their scrapbook of numerous, and not always favorable, letters and press clippings.

"Segregation Is Per Se Inequality"

Beginning in 1945, Waring's reputation as a liberal reformer was cemented through a series of judicial rulings that would alter the course of American society. Initially, Judge Waring eliminated the traditional system of segregated seating for white and African American jurors. Then,

the legal foundation for public school integration with 1951's landmark *Briggs v. Elliot*, the decision that challenged Clarendon County Board of Education separate but equal policy for school segregation. In a dissenting vote against two of South Carolina's federal judges, Waring stated that "segregation is per se inequality," a statement that led to the NAACP's dismantling of segregated schools just three years later in the his-

"It is time for South Carolina to rejoin the Union. It is time to... adopt the American way of conducting elections." — J. Waties Waring

in 1950. "I used to say it wasn't true, it couldn't be. I'd put the books down, so troubled I couldn't look at them. We'd get in our car and drive through the night, just thinking and talking."

"Locally, speculation centers on the belief that Elizabeth converted Judge Waring to the campaign for Civil Rights," explains Ted Phillips, author of a forthcoming book about the deceased of Magnolia Cemetery. "In reality, he was already moving towards the side of desegregation and equal rights for African Americans; she merely nudged Waring towards the direction of the 'religion' of civil rights."

he upheld a Supreme Court mandate of equal pay for public school teachers, regardless of race.

His next judgement was revolutionary: in *Elmore v. Rice*, Waring ruled that the Constitution called for universal suffrage free of racial bias. Thus, the South Carolina Democratic Primary—once an all-white institution—was opened to blacks. "It is time for South Carolina to rejoin the Union," wrote Waring. "It is time to fall in step with the other states and to adopt the American way of conducting elections." The *New York Times* lauded Waring's 1947 decision, calling it a "gain for fair play."

In his most dramatic ruling, the judge laid

historic *Brown v. Board of Education*. Waring passed out copies of his dissenting opinion, giving Elizabeth an autographed copy, which read, "To my precious Elizabeth: This could not have been done without your love and encouragement and support."

President Harry Truman praised Waring as a "very great judge," although Waring returned the compliment with criticism of Truman's allegedly timid enforcement of integration statutes. In an earlier 1948 address to the New York Lawyer's Guild, Waring declared, "My people have one outstanding fault, the terrible fault of prejudice. That's not the kind of conception that we should show the world."

“Judge Waring’s impact will only grow in the 21st century, as America evolves into a multi-racial society.”—Ted Phillips

Later, in a 1950 address to the African American chapter of the Coming Street YWCA, the second Mrs. Waring lambasted Southern whites as a "sick, confused, and decadent people, full of pride and complacency, introverted, morally weak, and low," comparing the government of the South to the dictatorships of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. In a subsequent appearance on the NBC television news panel *Meet the Press*, Elizabeth persisted that interracial marriage should be solely the province of consenting adults, not the government. Frequently, the Warings were featured in *Time*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and on ABC television.

As the rhetoric escalated, Elizabeth was jostled on city streets and dubbed "the Witch of Meeting Street." The judge became a social pariah; whites eschewed the Waring household from 1947 on, to the extreme of avoiding eye contact with the couple in public. Stacks of hate mail accumulated on Waring's desk, and a

By 1950, Judge Waring was a social pariah in Charleston. In fact, in their feature article, Collier's dubbed him the "Lonesomest Man in Town."

tsunami of obscene phone calls ensued. A cross was burned on Waring's lawn; in October 1950, a reported drive-by shooting mandated the deployment of federal marshals to safeguard the couple. "We do not live in darkest Africa," commented Waring. "We live in darkest South Carolina."

During the paranoid political climate of post World War II McCarthyism, an irate First District Congressman L. Mendel Rivers, Sr. blasted Waring, predicting "blood in the streets" and calling for his impeachment. Meanwhile, the Waring's social isolation was complete. The couple frequently entertained local and national Civil Rights figures, including a Charleston County schoolteacher named Septima Clark and an ambitious NAACP attorney.

Thurgood Marshall, who would become the nation's first African American Supreme Court justice.

Ultimately, racial tensions eroded the combative spirit of the 71-year-old Waring, who announced his retirement from the federal bench in 1951. In the Upstate, the *Lancaster News* editorialized that Waring's decision to leave South Carolina for a small Park Avenue apartment in New York City was "a good move on his part, and most quarters will breathe long sighs of relief, for his presence in the state in this position was bound, from time to time, to ruffle the waters of politics and people's serenity."

Until his death, Waring visited Charleston just once, for a November 1954 NAACP banquet at Buist Elementary School on Calhoun Street. Just one month later, Annie died in Charleston—five of her six pallbearers were Warings. The judge succumbed to cancer in New York in 1968, and, some 10 months later, Elizabeth died in a nursing home.

The Waring Legacy

For a cemetery characterized by Victorian headstones, the Waring plot at Magnolia remains eerily lonely, the stark, elegantly carved gray-granite headstone shaded by a lone magnolia tree. Nearby, the Washington Light Dragoons obelisk dwarfs Waties and Elizabeth's graves. Somehow, the understatement of the Waring memorial belies the significance of Judge Waring's life on our country's, as well as Charleston's, social landscape.

In purely historic terms, Waring's integrationist stance toppled the legal dominoes of the South's Jim Crow laws, leading to a meltdown of statutes that unconstitutionally enforced America's brand of apartheid. As the first federal judge since Reconstruction to stand for equal protection under the law for all citizens, regardless of race, Waring literally paved the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the human rights crusades of Atlanta's native son, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Judge Waring's impact will only grow in the 21st century, as America evolves into a multi-racial society," concludes Phillips. "Our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be discussing his legacy decades from now. Historically, he's outlasted the segregationist politicians and Southern demagogues."

Before an October lecture at the College of Charleston to discuss his book, *The Atlantic Sound*, author Caryl Philips polled Charlestonians, asking them to identify J. Waties Waring—virtually no one knew the name.



Lonesomest Man in Town

By SAMUEL GRAFTON

Regular contributor KEITH F. WEST writes frequently on social and political issues facing the Lowcountry.

Judge Bolsters Quest for Civil Rights

61 Meeting Street

Home of Federal Judge J. Waties Waring and his wife Elizabeth, who were the first prominent whites in Charleston to accept blacks as guests in their home. Judge Waring was ostracized by his fellow Charlestonians, first for divorcing his wife of 32 years to marry Elizabeth (a Northerner who divorced her husband to marry the judge) and then for his rulings against discrimination and segregation, beginning in 1945.



83 Broad Street

Federal Courthouse (second floor) and Post Office (first floor) were built in 1896–97. Judge J. Waties Waring ruled here (1947) that all-white Democratic primaries were illegal. He encouraged Thurgood Marshall to attack school segregation in *Briggs v. Elliott*. Marshall lost before a three-judge panel (1951), but Waring's dissent was echoed in an appeal—*Brown v. Board of Education*. Judge Waring's courtroom was located behind the upper row of four windows on the right.



Excerpt, *African-Americans in Charleston: Histories Intertwined* by Daniel M. Smith.