Constructing Free Identity:
The Invention and Adaptation of the Charleston Freedman's Cottage

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Introduction

In the decades following the Civil War, black Charlestonians began to construct a free identity steeped in the local architectural traditions of the old southern city. Employing the small unassuming structure commonly referred to as the freedman's cottage, African-Americans enlisted the architectural cues of their immediate environment to build new identities as free men and women. Nowhere is this notion of free identity more apparent than in some of the city's earliest suburbs, commonly referred to as the Charleston "Neck."[1] Walking down a portion of President Street in the historic Neck's Westside neighborhood, the history of the late nineteenth-century suburb is still palpable. Children play basketball and ride their bikes, while groups of neighbors sit at picnic tables casually talking and laughing in front of rows of colorful houses. Spaced in narrow urban lots, small one-story freedman's cottages parade down the street, each with their own charming character and century-old story. Concealed between the narrow yards and small houses, a small lane, now named Woodall Court, transports the visitor back to a time when the now seemingly humble houses symbolized the new found freedom of the city's African-American population (Figure 1). Peering down the lane, one sees a band of small freedman's cottages lining the dense urban space. Large banana trees and thick green ferns contrast with the colorful structures that date back to the early decades of the twentieth century. The dwellings, remarkably similar in appearance though built by different owners, evoke a continuity of form, including long side porches fronted by white doors. Originally occupied by African-Americans and often passed through

[1] Historically the term "Neck" has referred to the portions of the Charleston peninsula north of Boundary Creek. Through time the shifting nature of development has redefined the Charleston Neck. By the end of the twentieth century, the term referred to the industrial areas and neighborhoods just south of North Charleston.

generations of the same Charleston families, the dwellings of Woodall Court are typical of the many historic freedman's cottages that densely populate the northern end of the Charleston peninsula.

9 Woodall Court is an example of the typical Charleston freedman's cottage, consisting of three one-story rooms arranged in a linear fashion and separated by central fireplaces (Figure 2). A side gabled roof made of metal covers the primarily wooden structure. With the gable end of the house facing the street, the freedman's cottage has a north-south orientation. The front façade includes an attic vent centered above two double-hung windows. Along the right side, a privacy screen and door fronts a long side porch or piazza, similar to those found on the dominant Charleston dwelling, the single house. The side piazza follows half of the length of the house and leads to two doors that open onto the front two rooms. A small, narrow room completes the other half of the structures length, enlarging the livable space inside the residence. Two posts support the overhanging roof of the side piazza, and a simple balustrade encloses the outdoor space. Although the freedman's cottage exhibits minimal exterior ornamentation, a transom window and decorative hood crown the front doorway. As an urban type, the structure aligns with the far right property line, leaving room for a small side yard. The front of the house meets the small court with steps leading up to the front door. Oriented with its gable end to the street, the structure easily fits into the long, narrow city lots. Arranged side by side in the city's post-Civil War neighborhoods, freedman's cottages establish a visual rhythm which shapes the sense of local community and tradition surviving in the streets today.

The freedman's cottage echoes the form and placement of the larger and more common Charleston house type, known as the "single house," a two- or three-storied structure one-room wide and two-rooms deep (Figure 3). Standing with its gable end towards the street, the single house characterizes Charleston's built environment as the most popular dwelling solution in the nineteenth-century city. While the single house consistently appears in the literature addressing Charleston's vernacular architecture, the freedman's cottage has escaped notice and research. Essential histories of Charleston architecture such as Albert Simons' *An Architectural Guide to Charleston Architecture* and Jonathan Poston's *The Buildings of Charleston* have focused primarily on the old and historic districts of the city in the periods dating from the American Revolution up to the Civil War. Few published histories of the city's architecture have mentioned the freedman's cottage, and a comprehensive history of the structure as its own contributing type has yet to be told.

Other recent studies have focused on the history of post-emancipation blacks in Charleston, such as Wilbert Jenkins' *Seizing the New Day* and Bernard Powers' *Black Charlestonians*, but the questions of what free blacks in Charleston chose to build and inhabit have gone unasked. Although these traditional histories successfully portray the new political, economic, and social circumstances of Reconstruction Charleston, it is unfortunate that such a prominent house type, which offers so much insight into the city's African-American history, as well as the city's larger architectural story, remains consistently ignored. Stylistically the freedman's cottage is not far removed from the single house, but contextually the structure is one of the few housing types specifically associated with African-Americans in the United States.

Very little has been written about the small vernacular housing associated with African-Americans in the southern United States; John Michael Vlach's research on shotgun houses in New Orleans is the major exception. The shotgun house remains the major identifiable architectural typology connected with African-Americans, defined as one-room in width and one- to three-rooms deep (Figure 4).[2] Vlach's research traces the history of the American housing type through its French, Native American, and ultimately West African architectural heritage.[3] Vlach argues that the shotgun house was an African derived dwelling, associated with an African architectural heritage and influenced by the slave trade, free blacks, and the practical needs occurring within the local context of New Orleans and Haiti.[4] The shotgun house is synonymous with the folk traditions of the American South and like the Charleston freedman's cottage, may have been born out of the adaptation of established house forms. However, while the nineteenth-century Louisiana shotgun house represents a conglomeration of different cultures and the persistence of African architecture, the freedman's cottage remains uniquely Charleston in form, directly responding to the vernacular traditions of the city.

Relying on little published research, this thesis attempts to generate a history of the freedman's cottage form and its unique place within the context of post-emancipation Charleston. The widespread appearance of the freedman's cottage into the twentieth century reflects the way in which African-Americans utilized local architectural traditions to create not only their own building form, but an identity steeped in newfound freedom. The freedman's cottage was not only an adaptive strategy used to fashion a communal

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[2] John Michael Vlach, "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy" in *Common Places*, ed. Dell Upton (Athens: University of Georgia Press: 1986), 59.
[3] Vlach, "The Shotgun House," 59.
[4] Vlach, "The Shotgun House," 59.

architectural dialogue among African-Americans, but among the city's white population as well. Instead of acculturating into society, African-Americans appropriated established forms to declare their independence and shape a sense of community that continues in those same neighborhoods today.

The first chapter of this thesis establishes the geographic context of the freedman's cottage. The location of the structures within the city says a great deal about their associations with the African-American population and the attempts by the free black community to found a collective identity. Most of the existing freedman's cottages appear in the historic Charleston "Neck," the northern part of the peninsula (Figure 5). The majority of the existing structures survive in the East Side neighborhood and in the areas encircling Hampton Park Terrace, where they are often found in rows lining the streets. These areas became the focus of this study, which traces the story of the Neck and its development into a primarily African-American community during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The shifting residential patterns in the city and the relationship between white and black urban space demonstrate how antebellum Charleston changed from mixed residential areas to the increasingly segregated city of the present. Using other southern cities as means for comparison, the reshaping of residential patterns and the appearance of the freedman's cottage on the edges of the city's changing boundaries help to construct a larger socio-cultural history of post-Civil War Charleston.

With a history of the Charleston Neck as a background, the next chapter establishes a cohesive freedman's cottage typology. After investigating current theories of how the freedman's cottage form evolved, it became clear that the structure represents

both the adoption of local ideas and the creation of African-American group identity. The second chapter examines the freedman's cottage form through a statistical analysis. Using the model set forth by archaeologists in the study of architecture, I developed a basic analysis which organizes a sample of freedman's cottages according to four exterior traits. One hundred images of freedman's cottages were compiled and then classified according to roof type, window type and position, chimney position, and the existence and location of the piazza door. The structures were then grouped together by their geographic proximity to each other in order to determine existing commonalities and change over geography. The approach highlighted in chapter two will determine the existence of shared architectural characteristics that can be found in one of Charleston's most common house forms. Comparing the freedman's cottage form with that of the prominent single house and other common structures found within the city's landscape will define the relationship between the freedman's cottage and the local vernacular.

After determining the formal characteristics of the freedman's cottage, a discussion of the culture surrounding the appearance and evolution of the structures comprises the core of the last chapter. Confirming the relationship between the freedman's cottage and the single house is instrumental in the understanding of local architectural traditions available in the city at the time. African-Americans looked to the prevalent single house as a model for the reordering of space and constructed an identity based on the free associations that came with the larger structures. Unlike the shotgun houses of other southern cities, the freedman's cottage was a housing solution physically related to the local context and directly linked to the attempts of black Charlestonians to develop a new identity and community. This chapter introduces a variety of interpretative

historical frames that may explain the development of the freedman's cottage and its association with the city's African-Americans.

To acquire an understanding of what the freedman's cottage is and how it functioned, I relied on a previous documentation study compiled while I was a senior at College of Charleston. Since hundreds of freedman's cottages survive in Charleston, I attempted to document through photographs the exteriors of nearly two hundred of the structures and then classified them by characteristic traits. The sampling of this 2004 survey provided the basic historical background and directed this thesis in terms of finding the appropriate avenues to explore. Under the guidance of Katherine Saunders and Historic Charleston Foundation, I undertook a new study during the summer of 2006 focusing on the relationships between freedman's cottages and the people who built and lived in the structures. Primary research including the investigation of deed and census records, measured drawings and the documentation of existing structures, as well as talking to residents, who call these century-old dwellings home, comprised the basis of this study, while offering great insight into the importance of the freedman's cottage to the Charleston community.

This thesis is offered as a beginning to the understanding of the freedman's cottage and its value to the architectural and cultural history of Charleston. It focuses on the geographic and historical context as well as the form of the structures, a form directed by the political and social atmosphere of a post-Civil War southern city and the spirit of its local architectural traditions.

Chapter 1: Geography

As the once prosperous, cosmopolitan capital of the South, Charleston emerged from the Civil War a defeated city. The destructive capacity of the Civil War was plainly visible in the burned and ravaged landscape, but as the institution of slavery came to an end, new racial tensions rose from the ashes as free African-Americans began to define their place within the politics and culture of the city. In the first years of Reconstruction little changed in the built environment of Charleston. White Charlestonians and newly freed slaves lived side by side in much of the city, echoing the mixed residential patterns of the antebellum period.[5] However, through the last decades of the nineteenth century, the racism of post-Reconstruction era politics began reshaping the city's racial geography. Due to the availability of cheap land and inexpensive rents, African-Americans and poor whites moved northward up the Charleston peninsula, while the wealthy white elite stayed in the city's downtown or fled to the safety of new "white only" suburbs.

Charleston's political atmosphere influenced the appearance and location of a new type of small framed dwelling: the freedman's cottage. Freedman's cottages appeared almost exclusively in those regions newly settled by African-Americans and poor whites in the northern part of the peninsula. During the period between 1860 and 1880, Charleston's black population shifted northward as former plantation and farm land was sold off and subdivided for new residences and industry.[6] In 1860, nearly 58.6 percent of the city's African-Americans resided in the lower four wards, while twenty years later blacks comprised over 60 percent of the sixth and eighth wards on the upper peninsula,

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[5] Bernard E. Powers, Jr., *Black Charlestonians: A Social History, 1822-1885* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 246.
[6] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 252.

making African-Americans the majority of the population in the northern parts of the city.[7] During the period following the Civil War, the architecture of the freedman's cottage became associated with the expanding black population of Charleston's northern neighborhoods and signaled an attempt by African-Americans to fashion an identity as free people within the racist urban landscape of an old southern city. An understanding of the impact of the newly freed African-American population and the structures they built depends on the reconstruction of Charleston's residential patterns. Knowing how and where blacks and whites shared and shaped urban space throughout the Charleston peninsula is essential for the development of the city's African-American history and culture.

Referred to as the Charleston "Neck," the land of the upper peninsula developed as land speculation in the area became profitable for the expanding class of wealthy planters.[8] As the first suburbs of Charleston began to develop in the 1760's, Boundary Creek became the northern border of the city, leaving the area north of the creek as the location of the most available and affordable land (Figure 5).[9] Originally settled as a network of plantations along the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, the land area identified as the Neck was primarily owned by the prominent English families who settled in Charleston during the early eighteenth century.[10] After the American Revolution, the network of large agricultural estates was slowly broken up, eventually allowing for the expansion of the Neck between the two rivers. In 1785, as suburban growth gradually spread north, the city's main north and south thoroughfares, Meeting and King Streets,

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[7] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 252.
[8] Dale Rosengarten, et al, *Between the Tracks: Charleston's East Side During the Nineteenth Century* (Charleston: The Charleston Museum, 1987), 16.
[9] City of Charleston, South Carolina, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula* (2004), 16.
[10] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 17.

extended up the peninsula, producing two of Charleston's earliest suburban neighborhoods, Mazcykborough in 1786 and Wraggborough twenty years later.[11]

As Charleston advanced in size in the eighteenth century, the city remained concentrated in its settlement pattern, with the city limits officially expanding to Boundary Street, now Calhoun Street, in the late decades of the century.[12] Through the 1840s, the developed portions of the Charleston Neck remained primarily plantation acreage, while most of the steady growth occurred north of Calhoun Street and to the west side of King Street leading up to Washington Race Course on the western portion of the peninsula.[13] Prior to the Civil War, the city annexed the Neck creating four new wards, but not until a decade later did the area see a real surge in population growth (Figure 6).[14] After the Civil War devastated much of the downtown, many Charleston citizens moved to the Neck in an effort to rebuild, and despite the economic instability of the time, speculators looked to build new suburbs as the city expanded north.[15] By 1880 most of the large plantation estates had been subdivided into a configuration of smaller lots that echoed those of the old city.[16] Keeping with the vernacular traditions of housing, the Charleston single house and its variants made up the typical dwellings of the Neck neighborhoods.

Even though the Neck's development depended on the speculative character of the real estate owned by wealthy whites, the new neighborhoods catered to the lower social classes of the city. Before the Civil War, African-Americans made up the majority

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[11] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 19.
[12] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 7.
[13] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 19.
[14] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 21.
[15] Walter J. Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 175.
[16] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 23.

of the population in Charleston, occupying a large portion of the city's housing. Unable to shelter all of their slaves within the urban confines of Charleston's large houses and lots, slave owners bought property in the Neck to meet the growing housing demand. By 1861, an estimated 10 percent of Charleston's nearly twenty thousand slaves lived away from their owner.[17] Slaves allowed to move outside of their owner's house and lot preferred to live on the Neck, where a large community of both free and enslaved blacks could exist without the constant supervision of their white overseers. Due to the area's readily available land and the lack of building restrictions, white owners built inexpensive wooden tenements to house their slaves.[18] By the 1850s, the Neck was filled with small wooden buildings occupied by a mix of owners and renters, including poor whites, free blacks, and slaves.[19] According to the city census completed in 1848, "the Neck is becoming rapidly filled with small, cheap wooden houses, which attract a large population."[20] Looking to remove the presence of the enslaved from the polite, fashionable downtown, slave owners built tenements in areas intended for those of a lower social rank.

Prior to the Civil War there were many reasons for the Neck's popularity among lower and enslaved classes. As suspicions of African-Americans increased after the threat of a large scale slave revolt in 1822, the enslaved population looked to the Neck as a

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[17] Maurie D. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 189.

[18] After a fire burned nearly one-third of Charleston, an 1838 ordinance was passed prohibiting the erection of wooden structures within the city limits.

[19] McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston,* 190

[20] J. L. Dawson and H.W. DeSaussure, *Census of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, for the Year 1848, Exhibiting the Condition and Prospects of the City, Illustrated by Many Statistical Details, Prepared Under the Authority of the City Council* (Charleston: J.B. Nixon, 1849), v, 1-2.

haven from white supervision.[21] Police surveillance in the Neck was minimal in the area and prior to 1832 the Neck was only policed by citizen patrols.[22] A greater freedom in daily life surfaced in the lower class neighborhoods of the Neck, a freedom which African-Americans and newly-arrived European immigrants found especially appealing. As Charleston became more attractive to Irish and German immigrants during the 1840s, the Neck increasingly became associated with the lower social classes.[23] Poor immigrants and free and enslaved blacks were drawn to the Neck due to the readily accessible real estate at lower prices and rents, as well as a respite from the police presence and control.[24] The availability of land and the affordability of building in wood outside of the city limits made the Neck a promising and attractive enclave for the working class.[25]

It is no surprise that after the Civil War ended, African-Americans looked to the Charleston Neck as a place to work and live. Without the financial means to build or rent houses on the larger, more expensive lots of the city core, freedmen looked to small freedman's cottages within the suburban fringe as their new homes. Freedman's cottages exist in two major areas in Charleston: the East Side, a community on the eastern most part of the peninsula and the area adjacent to Hampton Park Terrace, located to the south of Washington Race Course (Figure 7). Considered part of the Charleston Neck, both areas of the city have similar histories revolving around the African-American community's attempts to settle and relocate in Charleston in the decades surrounding the

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[21] Once a slave, Denmark Vesey purchased his freedom in 1800, establishing himself as a skilled carpenter and craftsman. Twenty-two years later Vesey and twenty-eight others were found guilty of planning a large-scale slave revolt and were subsequently hanged. See McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 71.
[22] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 20.
[23] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 19.
[24] McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 190.
[25] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 20.

Civil War. For African-Americans the Neck offered a life free from the watchful eyes of white authority and the opportunity to expand personal independence.[26]

The East Side

The neighborhood located on the eastern side of the Neck, the East Side, emerged as one of the earliest suburban projects in the nineteenth-century city (Figure 8). As the commercial and industrial center of Charleston moved north to the eastern shore of the Cooper River, housing for workers followed, encouraged by the inexpensive prices of land. The low real estate costs, as well as the availability of large open spaces, lenient building restrictions, and convenient access to the harbors, promoted the commercial settlement of the Neck by large manufacturers.[27] Iron foundries, a large gas works, and other manufacturing enterprises moved to the city's East Side, followed by housing for the growing laboring classes.[28] When the South Carolina and Northeastern Railroads were built between King and Meeting Streets, the availability of efficient transportation became yet another advantage used to promote the area as a place for both industrial and residential purposes (Figure 9). By the 1850s Charleston's East Side population boomed with the increased building of houses along newly laid streets. The development of the eighteenth-century East Side was characterized by the large estates of wealthy land owners, including grand brick houses on large lots. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the average East Side lot measured twenty-five feet in width and up to one hundred feet in depth; while the most common structures in East Side neighborhoods were single houses built along one property line with their gable ends turned towards the

[26] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 9.
[27] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 22.
[28] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 22.

street.[29] Just a century earlier the East Side was sparsely settled with wealthy planters, but by the eve of the Civil War, the neighborhood functioned as Charleston's center for industry and the home for an expanding class of African-American and immigrant workers.[30]

The African-American population grew at tremendous rates on the East Side after the Civil War. By 1850, the Charleston peninsula was divided into eight wards, with wards five and seven making up the growing East Side. Ward five contained 572 black households in 1860 and 1,064 in 1870, while ward seven included 351 black households in 1860 compared to 571 ten years later (Figure 6).[31] The large jump in the area's African-American population can be attributed to the large in-migration of freed slaves from the countryside, as well as the inclusion of black households in the census.[32] The influx of these new urban residents resulted in a serious housing shortage in the two decades following the war. By the 1880s a surge in building activity occurred in the East Side, filling in most of the vacant land.[33] New buildings appeared on small lots in between existing structures and small freedman's cottages were cramped along side one another on once empty streets. It is no coincidence that many of the existing freedman's cottages on the East Side date to the 1880s and 1890s, the same time as building surged triggered by the housing needs of newly free African-Americans.[34]

Along with African-Americans, Irish immigrants moved into the city's East Side in the decades preceding the Civil War, living in clustered areas in close proximity to

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[29] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 29.
[30] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 22.
[31] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 27.
[32] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 27.
[33] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 29.
[34] Dates supplied by the City of Charleston's Preservation and Planning Office.

African-Americans.[35] By 1860, when nearly two-thirds of free blacks lived on the Neck, Irish immigrants also flocked to the area in search of cheap housing and jobs in the manufacturing industry.[36] For the Irish immigrants the Neck presented an opportunity for social mobility, while providing affordable housing in an area less crowded than the city's downtown.[37] For the most part, blacks and white immigrants lived side by side creating mixed neighborhoods that survived even after the Civil War.

Hampton Park Terrace and Other Western Neck Neighborhoods

Unlike the city's East Side, post-war development on the western portions of the Charleston Neck continued to be limited until the twentieth century. In the first few years of the new century, the western peninsula received a boost in development interest due to the city's decision to hold the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition in Washington Village in 1902 (Figure 10).[38] Although nearly five hundred thousand people visited the exposition, the failure to attract long term capital caused the fair to close and the buildings to be demolished within the year.[39] The unsuccessful exposition did little to boost the city's sluggish economy, but the fair did facilitate suburban growth in the central and western parts of the Neck, including Hampton Park, the city's most picturesque landscape.

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[35] Dee Dee Joyce, "White, Worker, Irish and Confederate: Irish Workers' Constructed Identity in Late Antebellum Charleston, South Carolina" (Ph.D diss., Binghampton University, 1981), 221.
[36] Joyce, "White, Worker, Irish and Confederate," 226.
[37] Joyce, "White, Worker, Irish and Confederate," 227.
[38] For information on the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition see Bruce Harvey's "Architecture of the Future at the Charleston Exposition, 1901-1902" in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VII: Exploring Everyday Landscapes*, eds. Annamarie Adams and Sally McMurray (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1997).
[39] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 49.

More than a decade after the failed exposition, two local businessmen, James Allan and W.C. Wilbur, started buying the lots in and around the new park in speculation of a development that would cater to Charleston's upper middle class.[40] By 1913, the planned landscape took form as a neighborhood consisting of 251 lots bounded by the newly finished Hampton Park and the relocated Citadel (Figure 11). In 1922 almost two hundred houses had been built inside the city's most stylish suburb, with the architecture of the newly constructed homes diverging from the traditional vernacular of the city.[41] George Trescott, a prominent Charleston builder and real estate developer bought many of the suburban lots, eventually reselling the lots or building houses on them, including his own house at 477 Huger Street. Situated on an average sized lot, approximately fifty feet in width and 115 feet in depth, Trescott's house was typical of the early twentieth-century residences that lined the streets of the suburb. The frame, two-story foursquare house with a hipped roof, one-story porch, and a symmetrical plan was the most common dwelling type in the neighborhood, probably due to the large number of houses built by Trescott within the suburb.

At a time when African-Americans were settling the Neck in response to the availability of cheap land, Hampton Park Terrace turned into a haven for white middle class families who wanted to remove themselves from the struggles of the urban landscape. As advertising began for the suburb, agents for the community offered an idealized portrait of life in the quiet tree lined neighborhood. The ads announced "It's just a step- from the noise of the city, from its confinement, its crowds and bad air- to the

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[40] National Register of Historic Places Inventory and Nomination Form, *Hampton Park Terrace* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), Section 8, pg. 33.

[41] National Register of Historic Places, *Hampton Park Terrace*, Section 8, pg. 32.

open fresh beauty of Hampton Park Terrace."[42] Part of the area's retreat from the crowded city included several restrictions that upheld the suburb's associations with the wealthier white class. Houses were required to cost at least $1800 and sale or rental of property to "persons of African descent" was strictly prohibited (Figure 12).[43] Although Hampton Park Terrace was an enclave for wealthy white Charlestonians, the areas encircling the neighborhood continued to function as the heart of the city's African-American community. While the East Side found some racial diversity in white immigrants and black residents, the western part of the Neck grew as a segregated landscape, both racially and economically. Prior to the development of Hampton Park Terrace, the African-American neighborhoods of the western Neck developed in the decades following the Civil War. In order to assist in the expansion of the area, the city created a number of new streets between the existing thoroughfares of Rutledge, Congress, Huger, and President and rectangular blocks that would continue north up the peninsula (Figure 7).[44] The new blocks were divided into narrow lots, smaller than the lots of the city's lower wards or those found in Hampton Park Terrace. The typical lot size in the areas of the northwestern Neck ranged from twenty to forty feet in width to sixty to ninety feet in depth, with many of the larger lots containing two or three freedman's cottages, single houses or other small wooden dwellings. A gradual shift of the African-American population to these newly urbanized parts of the city continued

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[42] Advertisements in *News and Courier*, 26 March 1912, quoted in National Register of Historic Places Inventory and Nomination Form, *Hampton Park Terrace* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), Section 8, pg. 34.
[43] *News and Courier*, 4 February 1912.
[44] City of Charleston, *Survey of the Upper Peninsula*, 52.

throughout the twentieth century and the area surrounding Hampton Park Terrace grew as one of the largest concentrated neighborhoods of African-Americans in Charleston.[45]

Residential Patterns of the Reconstructed City

Influenced by class and race, the twentieth-century settlement patterns of Charleston followed similar arrangements occurring in other cities of the reconstructed South. The relationships between race, class, and space played definitive roles in the development of the new southern city. Like Charleston, post-war Charlotte, North Carolina remained a relatively mixed city after the war. Thomas Hanchett, author of *Sorting out the New South City*, described the residential patterns of the industrial capital of North Carolina in the 1870s as a "scattering of salt and pepper."[46] Compared to the city's more divided land use of today, post-Civil War Charlotte maintained a mixed race pattern in its residential areas. In the beginning decades of the twentieth century, encouraged by an increasing racist rhetoric and strictly enforced Jim Crow laws, space was reordered.[47] As downtown interests kept black storekeepers and tenants from pursuing opportunities in the area, white property owners contributed to improved housing in other sections of Charlotte. By renting new rows of shotgun houses to the African-American community, wealthy and powerful white citizens deliberately directed the first segregation of black and white neighborhoods. Shotgun houses were introduced in Charlotte around the turn of the twentieth century due to the economy of the small house. Built by white investors as rental properties, most of the shotgun houses in the city

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[45] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 251-252.
[46] Thomas Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 3.
[47] Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 116.

were constructed for laborers working within the service industry. Rows of new and neat shotgun structures were appealing due to the affordability and cleanliness of the dwellings and within the next few years the rentable houses became an important tool in segregating neighborhoods in Charlotte (Figure 13).[48]

Hanchett's examination of the evolving residential patterns in Charlotte can be used to understand the urban patterns found in Charleston. Although Charleston remained a somewhat integrated city following the Civil War, the gradual commercial and residential growth of the Neck provided the impetus for an increasingly segregated society. Rich and poor, black and white, lived side by side in the first years of Reconstruction, with development largely following the city's antebellum settlement patterns. Before the war, many urban slaves lived in and around their masters' homes, with the large properties typically consisting of a variety of supportive buildings crowded behind the main house.[49] Slaves lived and worked in close proximity with whites and after the war came to an end, little changed in the urban landscape of the city. Newly freed slaves living in the backhouses and alleys of downtown Charleston remained the norm as freedmen often rented from whites or lived with their employer.[50] Although small clusters of the black population had begun to emerge by the 1880s, the severe division between whites and blacks was a consequence of twentieth-century politics. By the twentieth century, residential intermingling within the city disappeared and separate residential districts for blacks appeared on the edges of the community.[51] While shotgun houses were built in Charlotte and other southern cities for African-Americans,

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[48] Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 116.
[49] McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 160.
[50] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 246.
[51] Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 116.

freedman's cottages dominated the architectural landscape of Charleston neighborhoods associated with the free black population.

Chapter 2: Form

Although freedman's cottages line the streets of Charleston's Neck, little documentation or research has been undertaken to understand the structures. Due to historians' focus on the older, larger high-style houses of the city core, the appearance and function of the freedman's cottage in the nineteenth century remains a mystery. Clearly the structures belong to a subset of the well-studied single house, but more research needs to be completed in order to recognize the changes in form over time.

The Charleston freedman's cottage represents a variation of the well-established single house type that defined the city's domestic architecture by the middle of the nineteenth century. The two- or three-story, one-room wide single house with long side piazza is an icon of Charleston architecture that shows up in almost every book and postcard of the city's famous streetscapes. Built over a period of roughly sixty years, from 1880 to 1940, the Charleston freedman's cottage is a one-story, two- or three-room structure constructed of wood. Standing with its gable end oriented towards the street, an open piazza runs along the side of the house fronted by a privacy screen and door (Figure 14). The interior of a freedman's cottage varies, but one usually enters into the house by way of the piazza through a door into each room. Often the rooms are separated by central fireplaces and additions to the structures are frequently placed onto the back, elongating the dwellings within the confines of their narrow urban lots.

9 Woodall Court is an example of a typical freedman's cottage in its layout of rooms (Figures 2 & 15). The rooms are arranged in a linear fashion with the front room separated from the back two rooms by a small bathroom. The three core spaces are all of a similar size measuring 12 by 11'6", 12 by 10'3½", and 12 by 11'2½". One enters the

house from the street onto the piazza through one of two doors. The first door leads directly into the front room, while the second leads to a small entranceway, giving the visitor the option to enter the front room, bathroom, or central room. The last room leads to a narrow, enclosed space behind the piazza, which functions as a kitchen, with a door leading out to a small back yard. A similar arrangement of spaces is also found in 177 Fishburne Street, which originally contained three linear rooms and a long, side piazza serving each space (Figure 16).

Although the linear floor plan of 9 Woodall Court and 177 Fishburne Street is the most common, it would be unfair to characterize this arrangement as the only model for the type. While freedman's cottages maintain similar arrangements of façade characteristics, the interior space can vary. Alternative floor plans include an L-shaped floor plan, like the one found at 9 Desportes Court, or the clustering of rooms like those of 456 Race Street (Figures 17 & 18). 9 Desportes Court has an L-shaped plan made up of one large room with two side fireplaces. The large open space of the residence may have lent itself to a multipurpose use, with cooking occurring on the larger, back fireplace and sleeping taking place at either end of the structure. The piazza also follows an L-shape and contains two doors, each leading into a separate end of the house. The L-shaped plan is a rare occurrence among existing freedman's cottages and can be found in only two other known structures, however, there are other examples that stray from the common linear arrangement. For example, 456 Race Street is made up of a cluster of rooms, with one room to the front and the other two rooms side by side behind the first. A shallow piazza, much smaller than those found on a majority of freedman's cottages, is located on the left of the structure. Two later additions have been added onto the back

and side of the house, expanding the original floor plan. All four plans shown here demonstrate the variety in form and layout occurring within the Charleston freedman's cottage type. While the interior arrangement of rooms can vary, the freedman's cottage façade follows a similar fashion, echoing the single house filled streetscape of other parts of the city.

Sorting out the freedman's cottage typology requires both a historical and statistical approach to the vernacular house form. Since the freedman's cottage appears throughout the city's northern parts over an approximately sixty year span, concluding whether or not the structure fits into a specific typology depends on the analysis of architectural variation. The primary focus of this chapter is to define the relationship between the freedman's cottage and other established house forms in Charleston during the nineteenth century and to understand how the vernacular builder combined local aesthetics and traditions to form a new house type. After distinguishing the freedman's cottage as a unique house form, it is necessary to determine whether the structure can be characterized into distinctive types tied to location or date. Since many of the dates associated with freedman's cottages are not supported by conclusive evidence, finding patterns in relation to geographic location provides the means in which to decipher stylistic change.

Following the precedent set by archaeologists in the study of architecture as it appears in the archaeological record, the measurement of variation within a set of documented freedman's cottages comprises the core of the field research central to this thesis, a larger discussion of which appears in Appendix A. In order to measure the exterior variation of the freedman's cottage, I developed a basic statistical analysis which

organizes the buildings according to common characteristics. Measuring exterior variation determines what formal features tie the large body of freedman's cottages together as a type. Traditionally architectural historians have thought explicitly in terms of variation in design and then placed houses into standard, often rigid classification groups.[52] Architectural variation is often determined and measured by the classification of houses into certain subsets. However, with a basic statistical assessment that measures variation within the same type, the common form of the freedman's cottage can be illuminated, forming a clearer understanding of the typology across the city.

The sample of freedman's cottages used in analysis comes from photographs prepared during an earlier documentation study.[53] One hundred images of freedman's cottages collected from Charleston's East Side, Westside, and North Central neighborhoods were assembled as a representative set.[54] Using the address of each structure as the basis for analysis, the photographs are classified by street location. Grouping the structures by their geographical proximity to one another demonstrates variation in design over the city's landscape.[55] After the data set was assembled, it was necessary to provide criteria in which to base the geographic analysis. Looking at the exterior of freedman's cottages in the sample, four common characteristics emerged, including roof type (type A), window type and position (type B), chimney position (type

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[52] Fraser D. Neiman, "Temporal Patterning in House Plans from the 17th Century Chesapeake" in *The Archaeology of Seventeenth Century Virginia*, eds. Thomas Reinhart and Dennis Pogue (Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1993), 254-256.

[53] Many of the freedman's cottage photographs were borrowed from Historic Charleston Foundation's archives. As an undergraduate student at the College of Charleston, I also documented over two hundred existing freedman's cottages, many of which I used for this study.

[54] Westside and North Central are contemporary names used to describe the neighborhoods surrounding Hampton Park Terrace.

[55] An analysis of change over time would provide important answers in terms of design variation, but given the unreliable dates on record for many of the structures, the means to assess the buildings chronologically is simply outside the scope of this project. Due to the short time span within which freedman's cottages were built, roughly a sixty year period, exactness of dates is extremely important in order to present accurate results.

C) and the existence and location of the piazza screen and door (type D). These criteria allowed the comparison within a single attribute group between structures by their geographic location within the city. Analysis of these one hundred buildings suggests that the following features are typical of the freedman's cottage: one-story (100%), frame construction (99%), side piazza (100%), piazza screen and door (67%), gable roof with fully enclosed pediment or a pediment with returns (73%), two separate windows on the gable end (55%).

From the data analysis, it is clear that geographic location played little role in shaping the physical form of the buildings. Although the limitations of the data set only provide a glimpse into the larger trends that may have helped form the freedman's cottage type, this typological assessment highlights the appearance of key features of the structures. Geography seems to matter little in the formal characteristics of the structures in this survey, but a full inventory of existing freedman's cottages would determine whether these trends are true throughout the city. The data collected here does not convincingly demonstrate a distinguishable type that varied by neighborhood; however the data does show that certain features, such as the appearance of a side piazza with a door screen or a gable roof with a fully enclosed pediment or returns, do appear to be definitive features of the freedman's cottage. Clearly there were essential architectural attributes being utilized by local builders in individual ways. It is apparent from this study that the exterior form of the freedman's cottage was made up of a number of formal elements consistent with the local vernacular language and arranged to form a popular building type that appears throughout a number of Charleston's neighborhoods.

This preliminary typological assessment demonstrates the kind of formal trends that emerge over a comparison of space. While the results share some insight into the typology of the freedman's cottage, a much more exhaustive study needs to be completed in order to enrich the temporal and spatial history of the structures. Unfortunately due to the lack of formal historical inquiries regarding the hundreds of freedman's cottages still existing in the city, the exact dates of most structures simply do not exist. Though the City of Charleston does list dates of freedman's cottages within their property records, further investigation has concluded that some of those dates are inaccurate, in some cases nearly twenty years later than the proposed date of the structure. For example through the use of city ward books and deed research, the building date of 9 Woodall Court was narrowed to the approximate year of 1918, however Charleston's property records list 1935 as the building date for this house. Since the time period in which the structures were built is much too narrow for error, the exactness of building dates remains necessary in any further statistical analysis. In future investigation, the placement of the chimney and its change over time, would provide interesting insight into the evolution of the freedman's cottage, but first one would have to acquire accurate dates in order to do so.

With the data compiled here, more sophisticated methods could be applied to further the understanding of the structures. An advanced technique known as multiple correspondence analysis, which is designed to analyze multiple variables at the same time, would allow the testing for relationships among all attributes of the data sample. By comparing the multiple attributes, for example, a relationship between when or where builders were building ornamented gabled roofs with internal chimneys would appear. The multiple correspondence analysis would also allow the investigator to further

examine whether there is a basic freedman's cottage typology occurring within the city or whether the appearance of the structures is linked to different variables being used by a specific person or place. However, this type of analysis requires more data and an amount of time beyond the scope of this thesis. In the future multiple correspondence analysis could provide valuable answers to the question of how the freedman's cottage type formed and evolved.

The Freedman's Cottage and other Charleston House Types

Before the Civil War, enslaved blacks would have been intimately familiar with the local vernacular of the city, living and working within the grand mansions, single houses, and numerous outbuildings of the city's urban plantations. Defining relationships between the freedman's cottage and slavery-era buildings that might have served as prototypes will help classify the freedman's cottage type and identify its roots and use of local traditions.

The Kitchen House

According to Gene Waddell, one of the only historians to include the freedman's cottage in an architectural survey of Charleston, the structures may relate to the kitchen houses of the urban back lot. Waddell asserts that the central position of chimneys in some freedman's cottages relates more to the similar plan of nineteenth-century kitchen buildings rather than the side chimney arrangement found in most single houses (Figures 19 & 20).[56] However, examples of freedman's cottages that utilize side chimneys do

[56] Gene Waddell, *Charleston Architecture, 1670-1869* (Charleston: Wyrick and Company, 2003), 72.

indeed exist and the physical appearance of the structures displays an obvious resemblance to the exterior of the single house rather than the form of kitchen buildings.[57] Unlike the one-story freedman's cottage, nineteenth-century urban kitchen houses are commonly two stories, while they also lack the street orientation and side piazza that characterize both the freedman's cottage and single house (Figure 21).[58] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, kitchen buildings comprised an important position in the Charleston back lot. Located away from the main house, kitchens functioned both as spaces used for cooking and as living areas for the enslaved. Generally kitchen houses consisted of one- or two-rooms with central or side hearths on the ground floor and rooms above functioning as slave quarters.[59] The spatial patterns of urban kitchen buildings differ from those of freedman's cottages, in that kitchens functioned as both domestic and residential spaces, utilized only by those of an enslaved class (Figure 22). While slaves would have been closely familiar with the kitchen houses of the Charleston yard, it does not seem likely that the form provided the basic model for the freedman's cottage.

Slave Quarters

The small, framed freedman's cottages built after emancipation would not have been far removed from another domestic building associated with slavery, the plantation slave cabin. The typical wooden slave quarters of the nineteenth century held similar

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[57] 11% of the buildings in the field survey contain side chimneys.
[58] For more on the Charleston Back lot see Gina Haney's "In Complete Order: Social Control and Architectural Organization in the Charleston Back Lot" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1996) or Bernard Herman's article "Slave and Servant Housing in Charleston, 1770-1820" in *Historical Archaeology* 33 (1999): 88-101.
[59] Haney, "In Complete Order," 25.

attributes to the urban dwellings associated with freed African-Americans decades later. At McLeod Plantation on James Island, just ten miles from the heart of the city's downtown, the small, framed slave cottages still survive in rows, reminding one of the similarities between the architecture of the city and country, before and after the war (Figure 23). The twenty by twelve foot wooden structures, with gabled roofs and exterior end chimneys, are not far removed from the two-room freedman's cottages. Yet the McLeod slave cabins do not have exterior piazzas, resulting in a different entrance pattern and orientation.[60] The end chimney arrangement of the McLeod structures also varies from the chimney position of those found in freedman's cottages, which are located in the center or on the long side of the house. As a common and accessible form, the small, wooden dwelling with a gable roof would have been familiar to those who built the structures within the city after the war. The recognizable form of small cottage architecture would have evoked a sense of familiarity, but within the new framework of the post-war urban landscape, the freedman's cottage symbolized free identity, an identity suppressed by the slave quarter and plantation life of the antebellum period.

The Charleston Single House

Neither the kitchen building, nor the slave quarter of antebellum Charleston were prototypes for the freedman's cottage. Rather, the freedman's cottage should be acknowledged as a subset of the single house due to its resemblance to the local type in its street orientation, one-room wide plan, and characteristic side piazza. While this understanding of the freedman's cottage and single house relationship is correct in its

[60] McLeod Plantation Drawings, Historic Charleston Foundation Archives.

basic formal assumption, the freedman's cottage should not be seen as the architectural representation of the dominant white upper class. Instead the structure symbolizes the African-American's employment of local, established forms in ways that suited their circumstances.

Found on every street of almost every historic neighborhood, the Charleston single house remains the most distinctive urban architectural typology, reflecting the taste, values, and politics of the antebellum city and distinguishing the city's architecture from that of the rest of the country (Figure 3). Charleston historian, Gene Waddell, describes the basic interior plan of the single house as "two or more stories of the same plan with a central stair hall between two rooms on each floor and an entrance opening directly into the hall."[61] With its gable end facing the street, the typical single house has long piazzas running the length of the residence on each story, overlooking a garden space within the deep and narrow urban lot. The unique physical characteristics of the single house are indicative of a particular locale, its climate and geography; however the structure also belongs to the quest for social order in the antebellum period.[62]

The arrangement of the single house within the narrow city lots has been characterized as the urban equivalent of a lowcountry plantation.[63] As an architectural attempt to control the basic antebellum relationships between white and black, the single house reflects the rituals of a slave holding society, negotiating the rules of access and authority. Though most discussions of the Charleston single house focus strictly on formal characteristics, Bernard Herman characterizes the dwellings as an "architectural

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[61] Gene Waddell, "The Charleston Single House" *Preservation Progress* 22 (March 1977): 4-8.
[62] Elizabeth Quasebarth, "The Charleston Single House" (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1985), 1.
[63] See Bernard Herman's "The Embedded Landscapes of the Charleston Single House, 1780-1820" in *Exploring Everyday Landscapes: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VII* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1997): 41-57.

strategy focused on the maintenance of complex social relationships" rather than a basic building type.[64] For Herman, the single house should be understood not as an isolated structure but as part of an intricate architectural system within a city lot.[65] As an opportunity to explore the concept of "embedded landscapes," Herman presents the single house as a place of social organization supporting the local versions of hierarchy.[66] The arrangement of the single house and its lot continued from the street to the back yard in decreasing formality, shifting from a level of polite living and socializing to a purely utilitarian work space.[67] In the daily life of antebellum Charleston, the slave would have experienced the single house in quite a different way than the elite white member of society. Through the carriageway access, the slave moved from the street to the work yard below the eyesight of the master's house, while guests of the main house entered through the door fronting the piazza. The placement of rooms within the dwelling and the relationship between the house and yard facilitated the hierarchical use of space, its procession, and circulation.[68] It is clear from both a formal and contextual perspective that the Charleston single house remains a unique example of an architectural type adapted to both the city's physical arrangement and the local social hierarchy. In the same vein as the larger model, the freedman's cottage created the architectural setting for social relationships. However, while the single house contributes to the idea of social control by the city's elite, the freedman's cottage signifies the construction of a free,

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[64] Herman "The Embedded Landscapes," 43.
[65] Herman "The Embedded Landscapes," 43.
[66] Herman "The Embedded Landscapes," 43. Herman's discussion of the Charleston single house as an embedded landscape derives from a concept out of Ian Hodder's Reading *the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Dell Upton's *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1986).
[67] Herman "The Embedded Landscapes," 51.
[68] Herman "The Embedded Landscapes," 54.

black identity in the post-war period. Although it is true that newly freed slaves would have been familiar with both kitchen buildings and slave quarters, symbols of their enslaved past, they would also have known single houses, symbols of free life.

Appropriation of the Charleston Vernacular and Free Identity

Like the single house, the freedman's cottage relied on local traditions and technology passed down through generations, determining the success of the form throughout the city. The single house dominated the Charleston landscape by the middle of the nineteenth century, and it is safe to assume that African-Americans found themselves familiar with the form and techniques of the building type (Figure 25). With the imprint of local architectural traditions in their minds, the free African-American population appropriated the single house form to meet their needs and financial means. Looking at the single house as a model for free identity in the city, African-Americans constructed an architectural response to their new position in society.[69]

As the most prevalent architectural form within the city, both before and after the Civil War, the single house came to epitomize free urban identity for African-Americans, who were forming their own building language in the late nineteenth century. Architecture played an important role in the reconstruction of the South as large numbers of African-Americans moved into urban areas after the war ended, instigating a housing shortage affecting all major cities of the South.[70] The simple form of the freedman's cottage provided an affordable approach for the new population's housing. The layout of

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[69] Out of twenty-two listings for active builders and contractors in the 1910 Charleston City Directory, eight were African-American.

[70] Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Seizing the New Day: African Americans in Post-Civil War Charleston* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 103-104

a small, two- or three-room structure would not have varied much from place to place, but the fact that African-Americans chose to arrange their cottages in the traditional Charleston manner suggests an attempt to appropriate the local architectural identity. The economical freedman's cottage may have elicited a sense of new found freedom to a generation of once enslaved individuals.

The development of the freedman's cottage through the use of local Charleston forms follows Thomas Hubka's analysis of the relationship between the vernacular designer and traditional architectural ideas in his essay "Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form." Hubka recognizes the vernacular designer's approach to architecture as one that takes established design motifs available in the local context in order to manipulate them to solve new problems.[71] The builders and designers of vernacular buildings are often left out of the historical record due to their anonymity, but folk designers solve problems in much the same way as modern architects, through the disassembly of existing forms and the reordering of those ideas.[72] Claude Levi-Strauss coined the term *bricoleur* to describe one that works within a limited field of precontrived ideas in order to generate new ones.[73] Without the need to determine completely innovative forms, the bricoleur is able to concentrate on specific problems that need repair or change. The Charleston freedman's cottage embodies the way African-Americans readily adapted established forms, such as the Charleston single house, in an affordable and useful way. With the single house as a model, the vernacular

[71] Thomas Hubka, "Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form" in *Common Places: Readings in Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton (Athens: University of Georgia, 1986), 426.
[72] Hubka, "Just Folks Designing," 430.
[73] Hubka, "Just Folks Designing," 430.

builder cut down the scale of the house, leaving a basic two- or three-room structure which would provide affordability and functionality to the residing family.

In the adoption of the freedman's cottage form, African-Americans sacrificed the large amount of space that is found in the typical single house. While the freedman's cottage was originally a two- or three-room structure, the single house maintained at least six rooms (Figures 26 & 27). The large interior of the single house was based upon a hierarchy of rooms, combining commercial, social, and domestic life into the functional building type.[74] A room's use was dictated by its position within the plan of the structure, with the most public and formal spaces occupying the front or street side of the house, while the more private rooms were found at the back, overlooking the yard and service buildings (Figure 28).[75] The most formal room in the single house, the parlor or "best room," was located in the front of the residence, on either the first or second floors (Figure 29). In houses close to the commercial center, the first floor room fronting the street would have been used as a shop or office, a trend echoed throughout the mercantile culture of Philadelphia, Baltimore, and London.[76] The position of the first floor office or commercial space offered easy access to the invited visitor, who entered from the street onto the piazza, into the formal stair hall, and directly into the front room, following a clearly delineated path that required both invitation from the head of the household and familiarity with local social customs and their architectural setting. The front parlor would have been the most formal room, with a high degree of interior ornament, including white stucco finishing with classical motifs.[77] The back room of the first floor

[74] Herman, "The Embedded Landscapes," 48.
[75] Quasebarth, "The Charleston Single House," 44.
[76] Herman, "The Embedded Landscapes," 46.
[77] Quasebarth, "The Charleston Single House," 44.

would have been used as a dining room due to its close proximity to the separate kitchen building.[78] As one ascended up the bisecting stair passage to the second floor, the semi-public space of the house would emerge with a parlor or formal dining room overlooking the street and the best bed chamber located to the rear.[79] The third floor with the least amount of ornament and formality and the highest degree of privacy, would have contained two sleeping chambers. The hierarchy of rooms maintained a deliberate social order, divided by public social behavior and private comfort. While the first floor was often the most public with convenient access to the outside, the degree of privacy increased with the ascending stairs. The single house was divided into specific rooms, all speaking to the local ideas of social customs and hierarchy.

The large number of rooms and strict spatial hierarchy of the single house was absent from the small space of the freedman's cottage. The smaller, less expensive version of the single house required the sacrifice of strictly defined space found in the larger models (Figure 30). Although there is no documentary evidence explaining how space within the freedman's cottage was utilized by its residents, the two- or three-room layout suggests a multipurpose function. Living and sleeping would have occurred in the same space, with the room nearest to the street maintaining the least amount of privacy. The back room may have functioned as a kitchen with access to the yard, which may have been included in the activities of food preparation. While the freedman's cottage followed the same street orientation and façade characteristics as the single house, the interior space was based on an economical and multipurpose arrangement of rooms rather than the social hierarchy of space.

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[78] Quasebarth, "The Charleston Single House," 48.
[79] Quasebarth, "The Charleston Single House," 48.

Chapter 3: Culture

It is unclear how or when the term "freedman's cottage" was conceived, but it most likely appeared during the second half of the twentieth century, becoming a recognizable part of Charleston's architectural idiom. Rightly associated with the free African-American community, the freedman's cottage stands as a unique housing type contributing as much to African-American architectural history as the New Orleans shotgun house and epitomizing the significant influence of African-Americans on the post-emancipation cityscape. While there is some evidence that the freedman's cottage was a form occasionally utilized by lower class whites, the structures were primarily built for the large African-American population entering Charleston after the Civil War and came to represent a new urban identity for the newly freed community.

Developed by prominent African-American businessman Reverend Wallace Williams, Woodall Court reflects the importance of the freedman's cottage form within the racial landscape of the city. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Reverend Williams bought land to the east of President Street and divided the property into lots, later selling them to African-Americans, who built a number of freedman's cottages along the court between the years of 1918 and 1925 (Figure 31).[80] Many of the original freedman's cottages still stand on Woodall Court, allowing for close dissection of form and plan. The inspection of 9 Woodall Court, built around 1918, reveals the varying forms of freedman's cottages from court to court, street to street, and neighborhood to neighborhood around the city. Originally built as a three-room structure with a half-

[80] Much of the information about Woodall Court, previously called Williams Court, comes from deed and land records, as well as ward books. I also spoke to a longtime resident of Woodall Court, Mr. Walter Lee Smith, who retold many stories about the development of the court and its early African-American residents. According to Mr. Smith, many of the area's first residents played a large part in the construction of their own houses.

enclosed porch, 9 Woodall Court differs from the typical model of the freedman's cottage as a two-room dwelling (Figure 2). By 1918, a two-room house would have been functionally inadequate, a fact that explains the addition of an extra room on the back of many early twentieth century structures. Entering into the house through two doors from the piazza, the circulation is similar to other freedman's cottages, except that the back room and the enclosed porch, which now functions as a kitchen, are only accessible from the interior of the house or the back door (Figure 15). Typical ornamentation for a house of its size and period decorate both the exterior and interior, including simple treatment of the fireplaces and the use of beadboard.[81] Other freedman's cottages along Woodall Court follow the same basic plan as number nine, with most of the houses constructed around the same time probably by African-Americans (Figures 32 & 33).

The freedman's cottages of Woodall Court speak of the type's long association with Charleston's African-American community. Despite its important position within the city's cultural history, the freedman's cottage has yet to be placed within the larger architectural context. This chapter will offer a variety of interpretative historical frames that could explain the invention and proliferation of the freedman's cottage in Charleston. The first section explores the appearance of freedman's cottages along the network of courts in the city's Neck. The development of urban courts perpetuated the adoption of the freedman's cottage by African-Americans, who settled along the small streets and established a cohesive building type that became identifiable with the community. The next section uses the idea of costly signaling to suggest how African-Americans shaped social relationships among their peer group through the use of local architectural fashion.

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[81] Interestingly enough, the fireplace surrounds in each room differ in detail and may have been scavenged from dilapidated houses in the area.

With the utilization of the freedman's cottage form, African-Americans demonstrated their knowledge of Charleston's building traditions and established an architectural type based on free identity and the knowledge of social principles. The theory of costly signaling demonstrates that Charleston's African-American community may have maintained control over their domestic spaces and the adoption of the freedman's cottage type. However, the third section of this chapter makes the issue of agency much more complex, linking the appearance of the freedman's cottage to white-owned tenement housing in the post-Civil War city. The use of the freedman's cottage by white Charlestonians suggests that while African-Americans are rightly associated with the type, white residents were also familiar with the cultural implications of the local vernacular. From the multifaceted issue of agency, the chapter moves to the history of housing during the period of Reconstruction. As the African-American population began to shift after emancipation, urban housing was in short supply, with major cities in the United States looking towards small, inexpensive residences to meet the new demand. Like the New Orleans shotgun house or the board house found in the Caribbean, the freedman's cottage responded to local circumstances and created an architectural type that spoke of freedom and identity. In the final section of this chapter, the freedman's cottage is approached from a traditional architectural history perspective, discussing the structure as a part of the larger cultural iconography of nineteenth-century America.

Charleston Courts

Before Reconstruction, the African-American population lived throughout the city with slaves often residing in the back lot of their master. This residential pattern

continued even after the Civil War as the stagnant economy ensured the regular contact of both races.[82] Moving into the twentieth century, the housing pattern slowly shifted towards the racially divided landscape seen today, as suburban developments like Hampton Park Terrace or the East Side began to follow socioeconomic lines.[83] In the Charleston Neck, African-Americans often settled within the small, tightly packed courts and lanes of lower class neighborhoods (Figure 1). Along with typical Charleston single houses, the small, unassuming freedman's cottages became a housing type associated with Charleston's courts. The city's courts developed as places of communal interaction, providing African-Americans with a safe haven removed from the eyes of white supervision.[84] Prominent in other American cities, courts or alleyways were usually made up of smaller houses with the larger residences lining the main street.[85] In the heart of antebellum Charleston, alleys worked in much the same way, as modest brick and wooden tenements lined the hidden courts, while grand Georgian mansions dotted the busy thoroughfares. However, as the expansion of new streets and housing occurred in the northern part of the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the housing found on courts resembled the structures facing the larger streets due to the geographic division of socio-economic classes at the time.

In his essay, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," scholar James Borchert theorizes that Washington D.C.'s alley environment was constructed around a series of interrelated social networks acting as support systems and organizing forces for those

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[82] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 246.
[83] Powers, *Black Charlestonians*, 247.
[84] James Borchert, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," in *Common Places: Readings in Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 281.
[85] Borchert, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," 282.

who lived within the neighborhoods.[86] Since the alley dwellers in Washington were most often black immigrants to the city, the issues of racism, employment, and local politics made it necessary for the development of a social safety net ensuring survival.[87] Alley communities took care of one another and maintained order within the hostile environment, while the physical isolation of an alley allowed for interaction strictly among those who lived there.[88]As homes were built to face alleys, the space between them grew as communal places, helping to institute valuable social connections and friendships. The same establishment of African-American community and identity occurred in the system of courts on the Charleston Neck. Limited by racism and a lack of stable jobs in the city's post-war economy, African-Americans used courts as a place to construct and reinforce social order. Families passed houses on through many generations, knowing that the independence of the court provided social protection and relationships valuable to the security of the community.

At the turn of the twentieth century, African-Americans built and rented freedman's cottages located along courts in the Neck area, perpetuating the racial division of Charleston. Charleston courts were a prominent feature in the development of the northern peninsula, further dividing the large city blocks. Courts were a fraction of the size of the city's streets, sometimes only measuring ten or fourteen feet in comparison with the larger fifty or sixty foot streets. The small size of courts allowed for a spatial and communal intimacy not found on the larger thoroughfares. Freedman's cottages were often clustered along the city's courts in narrow lots, creating a spatial uniformity and a retreat from the commotion of the city.

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[86] Borchert, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," 284.
[87] Borchert, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," 284.
[88] Borchert, "Alley Landscapes of Washington," 286.

The clustering of the black population along courts may partly explain the prevalence of the freedman's cottage type in the Neck. Although there is evidence that developers built freedman's cottages as a source of cheap rental housing geared towards the lower class residents of the city, African-Americans who built their own houses adapted the same common architectural forms. Soon the freedman's cottage not only became an affordable means of owning one's house but grew as an architectural type associated with a certain culture. Whether the name "freedman's cottage" grew as a derogatory term coined by whites or a proud term used by blacks to demonstrate independence, the freedman's cottage remained a house deeply rooted in African-American self-identification.

Costly Signaling and Fashionable Architecture

The archaeological theory of costly signaling explains the appearance of fashionable consumer goods in the archaeological record of eighteenth-century slave settlements in the Chesapeake and can be used to understand the appearance of small freedman's cottages in the post-emancipation landscape of Charleston.[89] Archaeologist Jillian Galle uses the signaling theory to explain the slave consumption of an increased quantity of costly goods in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake. Galle asserts that slaves were aware of changing fashions and found ways to acquire clothing buckles, metal buttons, and tea and table wares that were outside of the essential goods provided by their owners.[90] This class based consumption functioned as forms of display and

[89] See Jillian Galle's dissertation, "Strategic Consumption: Archaeological evidence for costly signaling among enslaved men and women in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2006).
[90] Galle, "Strategic Consumption," 277.

communication among a social group in order to establish vital relationships. In the Chesapeake, slaves used material goods as ways to communicate their abilities and achievements, such as wealth, physical strength, and familiarity with and access to the social rituals of the elite class.[91] Through the act of consumption, slaves found an effective means to express their personal qualities to not only their peer group, but to higher class whites, who would have relied on signals to decide which slaves would provide valuable business partnerships.[92] In the eighteenth-century Chesapeake, slaves sent signals by way of costly goods to secure their position within their own peer group as well as within the regional structure of slavery.

Using Galle's theory of costly signaling as applied to the slaves of the eighteenth-century Chesapeake as a model, the idea of emancipated African-Americans using architectural signaling in order to form relationships and communication among their social group seems plausible. While some African-Americans lived in freedman's cottages after the Civil War, other newly freed slaves remained in the urban confines of their former master's yard. Many of Charleston's blacks remained in the same domestic quarters in which they had lived in prior to emancipation, while others remained in the crowded tenements built by whites on the city's East Side. However, the African-Americans who chose to live in the small, one-story versions of the single house may have been signaling to the black community, displaying their knowledge of local architectural traditions and elite fashions. In order to carve out a place in a society that still denied political and economical access to newly freed African-Americans, those who lived in freedman's cottages may have signaled both to their own peer group and to the

[91] Galle, "Strategic Consumption," 44.
[92] Galle, "Strategic Consumption," 74.

local white establishment that they possessed the knowledge and ability to understand and maintain local architectural customs. The appearance of the freedman's cottage suggests that African-Americans were attempting to establish themselves within a white community by their association with the architectural model of free identity.

Eickmeyer Tenements

Although freedman's cottages are primarily connected with African-Americans, other groups recognized the form as an efficient and profitable house type. On the city's East Side, immigrants lived and worked side by side with the African-American community. Even though Charleston's immigrant population was relatively small compared to the larger cities of the North; white immigrants from Ireland and Germany contributed to the diverse landscape of the working class community. The city's East Side provided affordable land to the working classes, and immigrants took advantage of the relatively underdeveloped area.[93] After the Civil War, the growth of the immigrant population declined, but those who remained on the city's East Side took advantage of new business opportunities that catered to the African-American community. It is safe to imagine that white immigrants would have been familiar with the freedman's cottage form, even living within the structures in some instances.

The white working class would have been well aware of the associations of the small freedman's cottage with the African-American community, and some evidence suggests that white immigrants built freedman's cottages as rental housing for the area's growing black population. Born in Germany, William Eickmeyer, owned thirteen small

[93] Rosengarten, *Between the Tracks*, 125.

freedman's cottages and rented them out to African-Americans in his own neighborhood. On the corner of Cedar and Meeting Streets, in the northern most part of the Charleston peninsula, the Eickmeyer Tenements housed a number of African-American families during the early decades of the twentieth century (Figure 34)[94]. Eickmeyer, who owned a grocery store across the street at 620 Meeting Street, lived above his place of business with the ability to watch his tenants, while his store certainly served the neighboring community of African-Americans. The thirteen small freedman's cottages were approximately thirteen by twenty feet, appearing to be smaller versions of the type that exists on the rest of the Neck (Figure 35). Located in a tight arrangement, the structures were placed with their gable end facing Meeting Street. The Eickmeyer Tenements demonstrate the proliferation of the freedman's cottage as an architectural type associated with the free black population. The fact that a German immigrant understood the implications of the form and its connections with African-Americans, a group that would have been the majority of renters throughout the city, enforces the idea that free blacks were identifying with and choosing to live in the one-story versions of the single house. As a keen businessman, Eickmeyer would have intentionally used the recognizable freedman's cottage as rental housing explicitly intended for African-Americans.

Reconstruction Housing

As large numbers of African-Americans moved into the urban environment during Reconstruction, the adoption of local architectural forms proved to be an easy response to the problem of new housing. Before the Civil War, both enslaved and free

[94] Information concerning the residents of the Eickmeyer Tenements comes from the 1910 United States Census.

African-Americans lived in single house type residences which were either rented or owned depending on the status of the individual or family living there. It seems probable that African-American builders would have been familiar with this form and the adoption of the single house façade for their own houses can be expected. After the war, when many African-American families could not afford the expense of a large two-story house, the one-story freedman's cottage emerged as an inexpensive housing option that appeared similar to the larger houses dotting the Charleston landscape. The freedman's cottage form grew out of the need to adapt to both the financial circumstances of an unstable social system and a way of life that had been well-established in the city.

The proliferation of the vernacular freedman's cottage plays into the notion of adaptation in the turbulent society of the post-antebellum South. As African-Americans migrated to the urban centers at the War's end, housing for the population was in short supply. All over the country, cities looked towards quick and inexpensive housing to meet the needs of the growing African-American communities. The newly established Freedman's Bureau and United States Army made an attempt to curtail the mass immigration in urban centers, but the changing demographic of America's cities would be forever changed.[95] During the years of Reconstruction, housing surfaced as a constant dilemma, with many cities, like Charlotte and Atlanta looking towards small shotgun structures as answers to the housing crisis.

Regarded as the most significant African-American contribution to America's architectural culture, the shotgun house developed as a typical form of shelter for those of low economic means in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Spreading from Haiti to

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[95] Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 20.

New Orleans and throughout the Southern United States, the shotgun dwelling, a small rectangular structure, one-room wide and one- to three-rooms deep, is steeped in the culture of slavery, representing the translation of architectural ideas from West Africa, the West Indies and the United States (Figures 36 & 37).[96] The shotgun house provided an affordable form of shelter, often built or rented by African-Americans from the nineteenth century onwards. In eighteenth-century New Orleans, the free black community maintained the ability to buy or build their own houses and adopted the functional shotgun style form for their new environment.[97] A century later, poor African-Americans moving to Charlotte, North Carolina found long, narrow shotgun houses lining the streets of new districts aimed at housing the growing black population. Often built by prominent white businessmen, Charlotte's shotgun houses provided an economical arrangement for rental accommodations.[98] In both cities, the shotgun house answered the problem of a severe housing shortage caused by an increasing African-American population, a trend that can be found in most other major cities of the southeastern United States, such as Richmond, Louisville, and Houston, all of which sustained a large number of shotgun housing meant for the working class. Understanding the prominence of the shotgun house in the postbellum landscape of the South, it is striking that no evidence of the structures appears in Charleston. While shotgun houses were built in almost every major city in the South, builders in Charleston ignored the form, instead adapting the freedman's cottage type as their primary housing solution.

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[96] For a more thorough examination of the shotgun house, see John Michael Vlach's "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy" in *Common Places*, ed. Dell Upton (Athens: University of Georgia Press: 1986), 58-78.
[97] Vlach, "The Shotgun House," 62-63.
[98] Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 122.

Unlike the shotgun house, the freedman's cottage is unique to its locality and developed through the adaptation of local vernacular forms and traditions.

Like the shotgun house, the board house emerged as a common house type in the Caribbean during its post-emancipation period. On the small island of San Andrés off the coast of Columbia, small, framed board houses were constructed following slave emancipation in 1850.[99] After planters left the island due to the collapse of the plantation economy, lands were distributed to former slaves, where they developed their own profitable economy based on the cultivation of coconuts.[100] In the midst of social and economic productivity, former slaves built comfortable wooden dwellings, consisting of two- or three-rooms, a gabled roof, and a long piazza (Figure 38). Widely adopted by the builders of San Andrés, the small cottages underwent an evolution over the course of a century, using the basic two-room module as a starting point to build and expand into larger residences.[101] Similar to the freedman's cottage, the houses of San Andrés emerged as a cultural tradition steeped in the local context and provided a common architectural language to connect a community of freed slaves.

The freedman's cottage represents an African-American building typology that speaks of both a specific time and locale. The type belongs specifically to the Charleston landscape and symbolizes the attempts made by local African-Americans to develop their own sense of identity through architecture. The forms of the buildings appear local, but the socio-economic conditions of the post-emancipation environment are shared across international borders. Bernard Herman discusses the embedded landscapes of the

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[99] Jay Edwards, "The Evolution of a Vernacular Tradition," in S. Jeffrey K. Wilkerson, ed. *Cultural Traditions and Caribbean Identity: the Question of Patrimony* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1980), 291-339.

[100] Edwards, "The Evolution of a Vernacular Tradition," 77.

[101] Edwards, "The Evolution of a Vernacular Tradition," 78.

Charleston single house as a structure that is at the same time local and international. The distinctive single house and its local exterior are united with the townhouses of the northern United States and England in their architectural adherence to international values and fashion. The hierarchy and decoration of interior spaces in the single house reflects the transatlantic nature of mercantilism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The same style of ornament in Charleston single houses can be found in its English contemporaries, as can the hierarchy of rooms within the houses. Like the single house, the freedman's cottage is not an isolated phenomenon, other examples of post-emancipation architecture built by freed slaves of African descent share common attributes with the small Charleston dwellings. The previously discussed shotgun house, a form derivative of West African and Caribbean traditions, and the board house of the Caribbean, are examples of small, one-story, timber-framed structures built by former slaves after emancipation. The freedman's cottage and its distant cousins share common formal characteristics, but more importantly the structures provided a means in which newly freed slave populations created their own architectural language that spoke of freedom and cultural identity.

The Cottage Aesthetic

Through the process of invention and adaptation, the Charleston freedman's cottage was a part of the local African-American cultural iconography. The freedman's cottage represented not only the free identity of African-Americans but stood as an architectural phenomenon implying a set of social attributes accepted and reinterpreted by black Charlestonians. The propagation of the freedman's cottage form throughout the

African-American parts of the city signifies an attempt by blacks to appropriate a traditional architectural type in order to counter a disadvantaged position within society. As a means to gain social recognition within the post-Civil War South, domestic architecture was reinvented to promote and strengthen the African-American population. Through a consistent iconography of a socially acceptable domestic architecture and behavior, the black community attempted to mediate conflict and stereotypes and created a local version of the domestic cottage narrative so popular in American middle class households of the time.[102]

During the nineteenth century, as Andrew Jackson Downing spread his domestic gospel around the young republic, the popularity of an ideal way of life with picturesque housing and gardens took hold of a public searching enthusiastically for a tasteful and uniquely American version of the modern home. Downing, along with numerous other domestic philosophers such as Catherine E. Beecher and William H. Ranlett, looked to the establishment of the single family home as a way to spread morality and taste to a burgeoning population. The home rose as the center of morality and social reform, as well as a symbol of a purely American ideology that recognized the clean, orderly, and tasteful single family dwelling as a democratic right. While Downing and his contemporaries focused on white middle class families, the end of the Civil War brought about an attempt to entice a new sector of the population into the cult of domesticity.

The identification of domestic architecture with black virtue can be traced back to the years before the Civil War, as Frederick Douglass set out to associate an orderly, moral, and tasteful domestic environment with the enlightenment and acceptance of

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[102] For further discussion of the domestic iconography of African-American architecture see Barbara Bulison Mooney's article "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography" *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61 (March 2002).

African-Americans.[103] Douglass attempted to establish black participation within society through the adherence to conventional architectural and social principles. After the Civil War African-Americans had an opportunity to create their own domestic settings, a chance that did not go unnoticed by political reformers and the United States government. General Clinton B. Fisk's *Plain Counsels for Freedmen* set out to provide an architectural and behavioral program for African-Americans after the war. Fisk stressed industriousness, sobriety, economy, and piety, and listed the principles of a successful domestic setting as comfort, cleanliness and beauty.[104] The Superintendent of Education in Florida, C. Thurston Chase, also strove to bring appropriate housing to newly freed African-Americans. Under the United States government, Chase compiled cottage and school house designs deemed suitable for the black population. Stressing Christian morals, cleanliness, and a healthy lifestyle, the manual promoted the idea of the good house as a means to social elevation and acceptance (Figure 39).[105] Chase asserts, "As a rule, the man is a better, more stable citizen who owns a home of his own. That house, though it be only an humble cabin, is his castle."[106] The importance of the domestic impulse and the notion of tasteful cottage living was promoted throughout the South to an African-American population looking for a means of sufficient shelter.

The freedman's cottage, adopted from the conventional characteristics of the single house, fits the idea of a comfortable, framed cottage dwelling, efficient in its function and communicative of its social purpose. However, while the federal government promoted the ideas of cottage living during the turbulent years of post-war

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[103] Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage," 49.
[104] Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage," 52-3.
[105] C. Thurston Chase, *A Manual on School-Houses and Cottages for the People of the South* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 66.
[106] Chase, *A Manual on School Houses and Cottages*, 67.

America, freedmen in Charleston would have appropriated the visual symbols of the cottage out of necessity and familiarity rather than ideology. Without the financial means or opportunity to build the wide range of Victorian housing options, the freedman's cottage was built as a cost-effective version of other Charleston housing. Although it is unknown if the government's attempts at Reconstruction housing were influential in Charleston, it seems that the widespread appearance of the freedman's cottage is tied to the familiarity and economy of the structures, rather than government intervention.

By associating themselves with the freedman's cottage, black Charlestonians attempted to carve out their place within the post-emancipation atmosphere of the city, making the form representative of their own culture. The history of the freedman's cottage within the architectural spectrum of post-war Charleston remains vague. Few histories have acknowledged the presence of the small houses, as most historians have found the larger Georgian structures of greater interest. Like the celebrated Charleston single house, the freedman's cottage is a unique local type and represents the adaptation of traditional and locally recognized forms already available in the city landscape.

Conclusion

John Michael Vlach classifies the New Orleans shotgun house as an attempt by African-Americans to make sense of their new environment through the development of a building form that was both familiar and practical. At the center of the shotgun's history is the survival of Africanisms, or African derived architecture in the New World, supported by the blend of local building mentalities and different cultures. While Vlach makes a case for the persistence of African house forms in Haiti and New Orleans, the Charleston freedman's cottage directly adapted to local circumstances through the use of the established single house as an architectural model. Both the freedman's cottage and the chattle house of the Caribbean suggest the adaptation to the local environment by those of African descent, rather than the propagation of an architecture which ultimately originated from West African traditions. The survival of African heritage in the New Orleans shotgun house helps characterize the type as the most important residential form associated with African-Americans. However, the Charleston freedman's cottage is unique in its construction of free identity through the appropriation of traditional and local forms, and therefore deserves a place beside the shotgun house within architectural history.

The Charleston freedman's cottage is an urban dwelling which takes formal influence from the recognizable vernacular of the city. Although the structure derives from the single house, the freedman's cottage embodies the spirit of newly liberated African-Americans, transforming the urban landscape of Charleston's post-Civil War neighborhoods. Removed from the grand houses of the eighteenth-century city core, the freedman's cottage epitomizes the spirit of African-American builders and their attempts

to create an architecture representative of free ideals and community. Influenced by traditions, economic considerations, and the new urban dynamic of the reconstructed South, the freedman's cottage should be recognized as a valuable African-American contribution to domestic architecture.

The history of Charleston after the Civil War has been thoroughly documented by contemporary scholars. We have detailed histories of the lives of both white and black members of society and their responses to emancipation and Reconstruction. Many histories detailing the lives of both urban and plantation slaves or the pioneering blacks of the mid-twentieth century have been published, but few stories regarding the post-emancipation African-Americans' attempts to shape new lives and identity have been told. After emancipation blacks continued to play a leading role in Charleston's economic order and built a community based on shared free identity that influenced the physical appearance of the city's northern neighborhoods well into the twentieth century.

Today the legacy of post-emancipation blacks is readily apparent in the hundreds of freedman's cottages still lining Charleston streets. Unfortunately the lack of historical research and attempts at preserving the small vernacular structures remain inadequate, and until a greater appreciation of the freedman's cottage form and its place within the city's larger historical context is gained, the structures remain on the verge of extinction. Due to the ambiguity of the freedman's cottage's history, the preservation of the hundreds of structures that still survive in the city's downtown districts continues to be at great risk. As Charleston expands and real estate prices in the area soar, the historical integrity of the small freedman's cottages in the city's historic suburbs remains in danger, while demolition lingers in the face of new real estate developments.

No where else is the discrepancy between the understanding of the local freedman's cottage and the academic architecture of the city more apparent than in the district surrounding historic Hampton Park Terrace. Although Hampton Park Terrace was designated as a historic district by the State Historic Preservation Office in 1994, the nomination excluded many freedman's cottages from the district. Basing the nomination around the Arts and Crafts style occurring in Charleston in the early decades of the twentieth century, freedman's cottages, which predate the historic bungalows, were not incorporated into the historic district. Although three freedman's cottages gained inclusion in the nomination inventory, most freedman's cottages are referred to as "non contributing structures."[107] One might argue that part of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States promoted the use of vernacular traditions and designs. Freedman's cottages demonstrate these qualities; therefore inclusion in the historic district would seem plausible. However the freedman's cottages that surround Hampton Park Terrace or still exist on the East Side deserve their own historic district, one focused on the history of African-American architecture and its effect on Charleston's cultural landscape. Until the freedman's cottage becomes respected as an architectural type and as an important component of local history, the perpetuation of neglect and demolition of the structures will continue.

Even though Charleston has one of the premier preservation movements in the United States, the African-American architectural story remains in the background of most mainstream efforts. As the most prominent African-American house form, the freedman's cottage should be integrated into the city's architectural narrative. An

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[107] National Register of Historic Places Inventory and Nomination Form, *Hampton Park Terrace* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 1.

important part of African-American history, the structures are vital to the community's cultural consideration and understanding of the past. Recognizing and preserving the historical value of the typology, along with finding alternative uses for the abandoned structures, could secure the future survival of the freedman's cottage.

This thesis is just a beginning in the definition and understanding of the freedman's cottage and offers an introductory explanation of its development and proliferation in the city. Though it is important to recognize the freedman's cottage as an example of Charleston architecture, its value to the larger architectural history of the South remains evident in the free black identity it came to represent. With a fuller comprehension of Charleston's built environment as a goal, the freedman's cottage deserves a place among the single houses, double houses, and plantation estates that currently occupy the front row of the city's architectural story.

Appendix A

Statistical Analysis Method and Findings

The roof type of the house was broken down into four different categories: the gable end with a fully enclosed pediment or a pediment with returns (Figure 30 &31), the gable end with no ornamentation (Figure 32), a roof that spans both building and piazza (Figure 33), or a gable end not visible from the photographic evidence. Throughout all geographic locations, the gable end with a fully enclosed pediment or one with returns was the most common characteristic, found in more than 70 percent of the structures. Therefore it safe to assume that this feature is the most prevalent roof type among freedman's cottages (Table 1). While the gable end without ornamentation was found in only 20 percent of the surveyed structures, it was much more common than a roof spanning both the piazza and building, which occurred in only four of the one hundred buildings. The infrequency of these two roof types further supports the evidence that the form of the freedman's cottage most often includes an ornamented gable end with a separate roof over the side piazza.

For attribute B, window type and position, nine common traits emerged as possible characteristics for the structures in the data set. The B attributes are as follows: B1 two separated windows six over six (Figure 34), B2 two separated windows two over two (Figure 35), B3 two separated windows one over one (Figure 36), B4 paired windows six over six (Figure 37), B5 paired windows two over two (Figure 38), B6 paired windows one over one, B7 bay window (Figure 39), B8 tripartite window (Figure 40), B0 windows not visible. The most common attribute, two separate six over six windows, tends to predominate in most areas, but the tripartite window is specific to two

different parts of the city, sections 4 and 5, in the areas surrounding Hampton Park Terrace (Table 2). The appearance of the tripartite window in one clustered area could be explained as a trend that may be specific to the same builder, a moment in time, or a fashion popular among neighbors.

The chimney position of each house was the most difficult attribute to decipher from photographic evidence. Chimney location was split into three types, C1 internal chimney (Figure 41), C2 side chimney (Figure 42), or C0 chimney not visible. Unfortunately many times the chimney stack no longer exists or is not seen in the pictures available for this project. This presented a difficult task in which many chimneys and flues had to be listed as not visible. Closer investigation of each building is necessary to extract a more representative set of structures with remaining chimneys. However, in looking at the data, chimney location does seem to be largely internal, but when comparing geographic location no obvious trends emerged (Table 3). Side chimneys were found most often in sections four and five, but since the sample data is skewed towards a larger number of houses in that area, the results cannot be accepted as typical.

Like the position of the chimney, the existence of the piazza screen and door seems to favor one attribute in most locations. Reminiscent of the single house, the side piazza and piazza entry are the most distinguishable traits of the freedman's cottage form. Divided into six different characteristics, D1 open piazza with no screen or door and side entry (Figure 43), D2 piazza door with no transom window (Figure 44), D3 piazza door with transom (Figure 45), D4 direct entry into house of any fashion (Figure 46), D5 no door and closed piazza (Figure 47) and D6 set back piazza door (Figure 48), the piazza door and its ornamentation demonstrates the formal relationship between the freedman's

cottage and the single house. While most of the structures maintain a piazza door fronting the side porch, the majority of doors do not include any ornamentation such as a transom window or decorative hood (Table 4). Like the chimney location, there does not seem to be any clear delineation in this characteristic according to geography, as the position of the piazza door varies evenly throughout the city's neighborhoods. Tracking the existence and location of the piazza door is difficult due to the major interior and exterior changes which have occurred in many of the structures in order to provide a modernized and livable space. Many of the side piazzas have been enclosed, offering a larger amount of square footage. There is also evidence of freedman's cottages being constructed with half-enclosed piazzas, making room for modern conveniences in the early part of the twentieth century.[1]

[1] In examination of 9 Woodall Court, the back section of the side piazza seems to have been enclosed at the time of construction. Now used as a kitchen and laundry room, the enclosed space would have provided additional floor space to the three room house.

Street by location	A1	A2	A3	A0
1				
Cannon St.	1	0	0	0
Coming St.	2	0	0	0
2				
Ashton St.	6	3	0	0
Norman St.	2	0	0	0
3				
Bogard St.	2	0	0	0
Kennedy St.	1	0	1	0
4				
Woodall Ct.	6	1	0	0
President St.	6	0	1	1
Fishburne St.	3	1	0	0
Orr's Ct.	1	0	0	0
Larnes St.	3	1	0	0
Court St.	2	2	0	0
Race St.	2	1	1	0
Sumter St.	5	0	0	0
Congress St.	4	1	0	0
Hagood St.	1	0	0	0
Carondolet St.	0	4	0	0
Carolina St.	1	0	0	0
Ashley Ave.	5	1	0	1
5				
Huger St.	1	0	0	0
Moultrie St.	1	1	0	0
Cleveland St.	2	0	0	1
Maverick St.	2	0	0	0
6				
H St.	1	1	0	0
F St.	3	1	0	0
7				
Jackson St.	3	1	0	0
Cooper St.	4	0	1	0
8				
Nassau St.	1	1	0	0
Amherst St.	1	0	0	0
America St.	1	0	0	0
	73	20	4	3

Table 1. Roof Type.

Street by location	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B0
1									
Cannon St.	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coming St.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2									
Ashton St.	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
Norman St.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
3									
Bogard St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Kennedy St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
4									
Woodall Ct.	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0
President St.	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Fishburne St.	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Orr's Ct.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Larnes St.	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Court St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
Race St.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Sumter St.	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Congress St.	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hagood St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Carondolet St.	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Carolina St.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ashley Ave.	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
5									
Huger St.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moultrie St.	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cleveland St.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Maverick St.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6									
H St.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F St.	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
7									
Jackson St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Cooper St.	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
8									
Nassau St.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Amherst St.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
America St.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	39%	14%	2%	10%	1%	0%	1%	15%	18%

Table 2. Window Type.

Street by location	C1	C2	C0
1			
Cannon St.	0	1	0
Coming St.	1	0	1
2			
Ashton St.	3	0	6
Norman St.	0	0	2
3			
Bogard St.	0	2	0
Kennedy St.	1	0	1
4			
Woodall Ct.	1	0	6
President St.	0	3	5
Fishburne St.	3	0	1
Orr's Ct.	0	1	0
Larnes St.	2	0	2
Court St.	0	0	4
Race St.	1	0	3
Sumter St.	1	0	4
Congress St.	2	0	3
Hagood St.	0	1	0
Carondolet St.	2	0	2
Carolina St.	0	0	1
Ashley Ave.	2	0	5
5			
Huger St.	0	1	0
Moultrie St.	0	0	2
Cleveland St.	1	0	2
Maverick St.	1	1	0
6			
H St.	0	0	2
F St.	1	1	2
7			
Jackson St.	0	0	4
Cooper St.	2	0	3
8			
Nassau St.	2	0	0
Amherst St.	0	0	1
America St.	0	0	1
	26%	11%	63%

Table 3. Chimney Position.

Street by location	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
1						
Cannon St.	1	0	0	0	0	0
Coming St.	0	2	0	0	0	0
2						
Ashton St.	3	3	2	1	0	0
Norman St.	0	2	0	0	0	0
3						
Bogard St.	0	1	0	0	0	1
Kennedy St.	1	0	0	0	1	0
4						
Woodall Ct.	1	6	0	0	0	0
President St.	0	3	5	0	0	0
Fishburne St.	0	2	0	1	0	1
Orr's Ct.	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lames St.	1	2	0	0	0	1
Court St.	2	1	1	0	0	0
Race St.	1	1	0	0	0	2
Sumter St.	0	2	2	0	1	0
Congress St.	0	4	0	0	0	1
Hagood St.	0	0	0	0	1	0
Carondolet St.	0	3	0	0	0	1
Carolina St.	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ashley Ave.	2	2	1	0	0	2
5						
Huger St.	1	0	0	0	0	0
Moultrie St.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Cleveland St.	1	1	0	0	0	1
Maverick St.	0	0	2	0	0	0
6						
H St.	0	0	2	0	0	0
F St.	2	2	0	0	0	0
7						
Jackson St.	1	3	0	0	0	0
Cooper St.	0	3	1	0	1	0
8						
Nassau St.	0	2	0	0	0	0
Amherst St.	0	1	0	0	0	0
America St.	0	1	0	0	0	0
	17%	49%	18%	2%	4%	10%

Table 4. Piazza Door Type.

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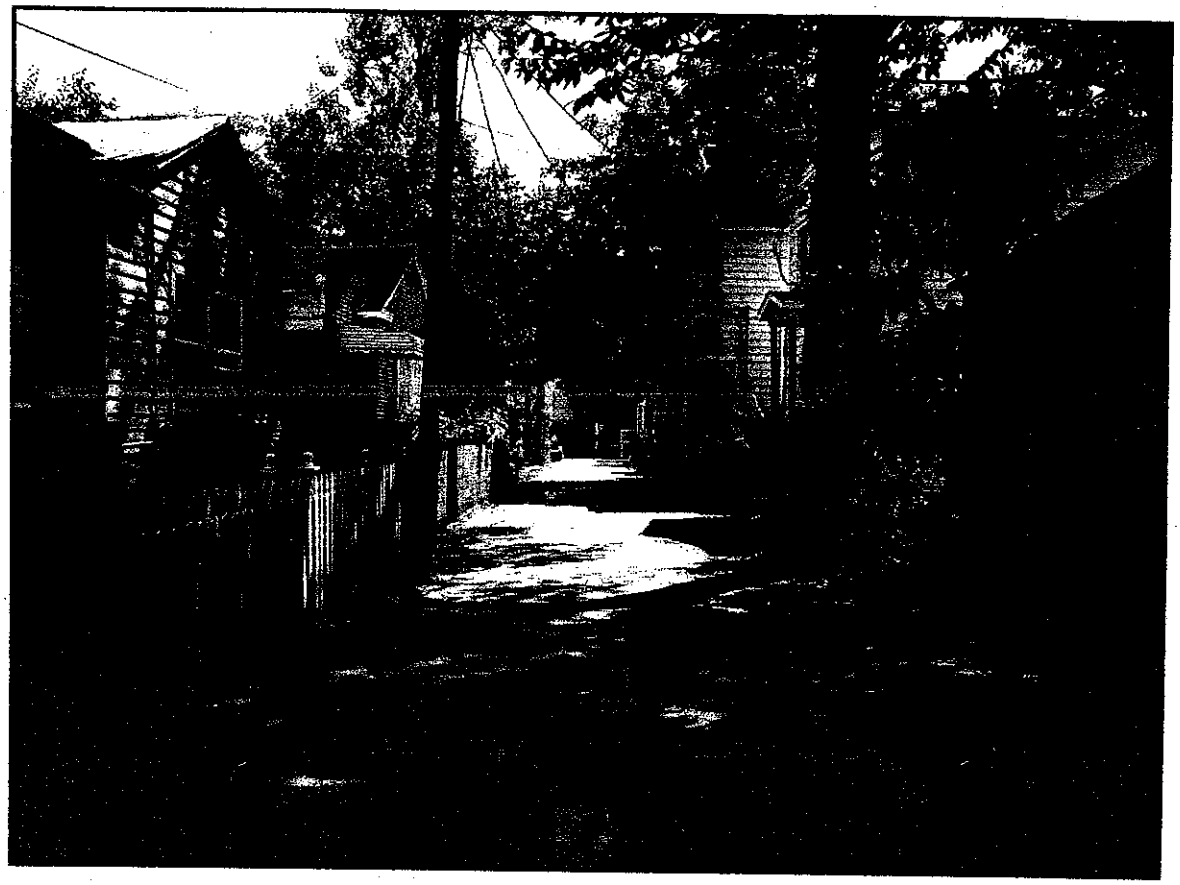


Figure 1 Woodall Court on the Charleston Neck.

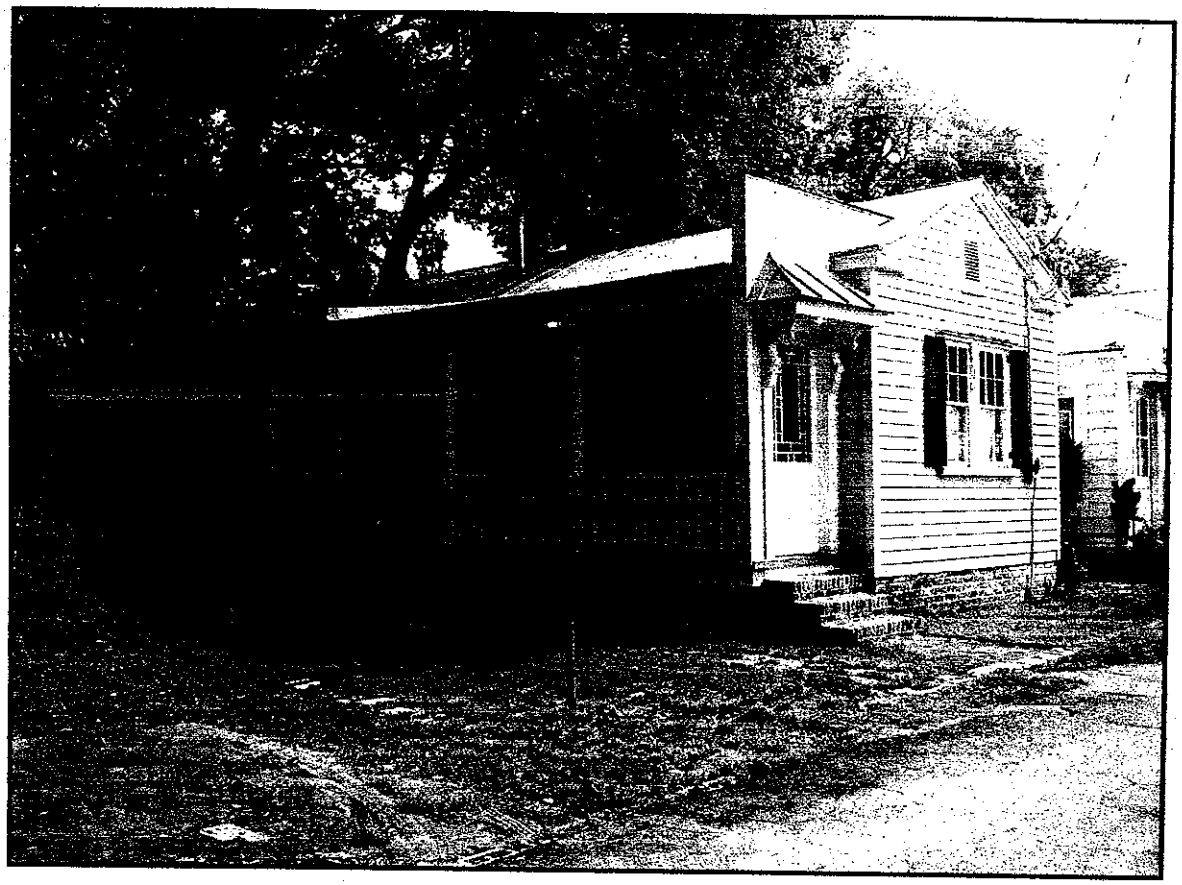


Figure 2 9 Woodall Court, Charleston, South Carolina.

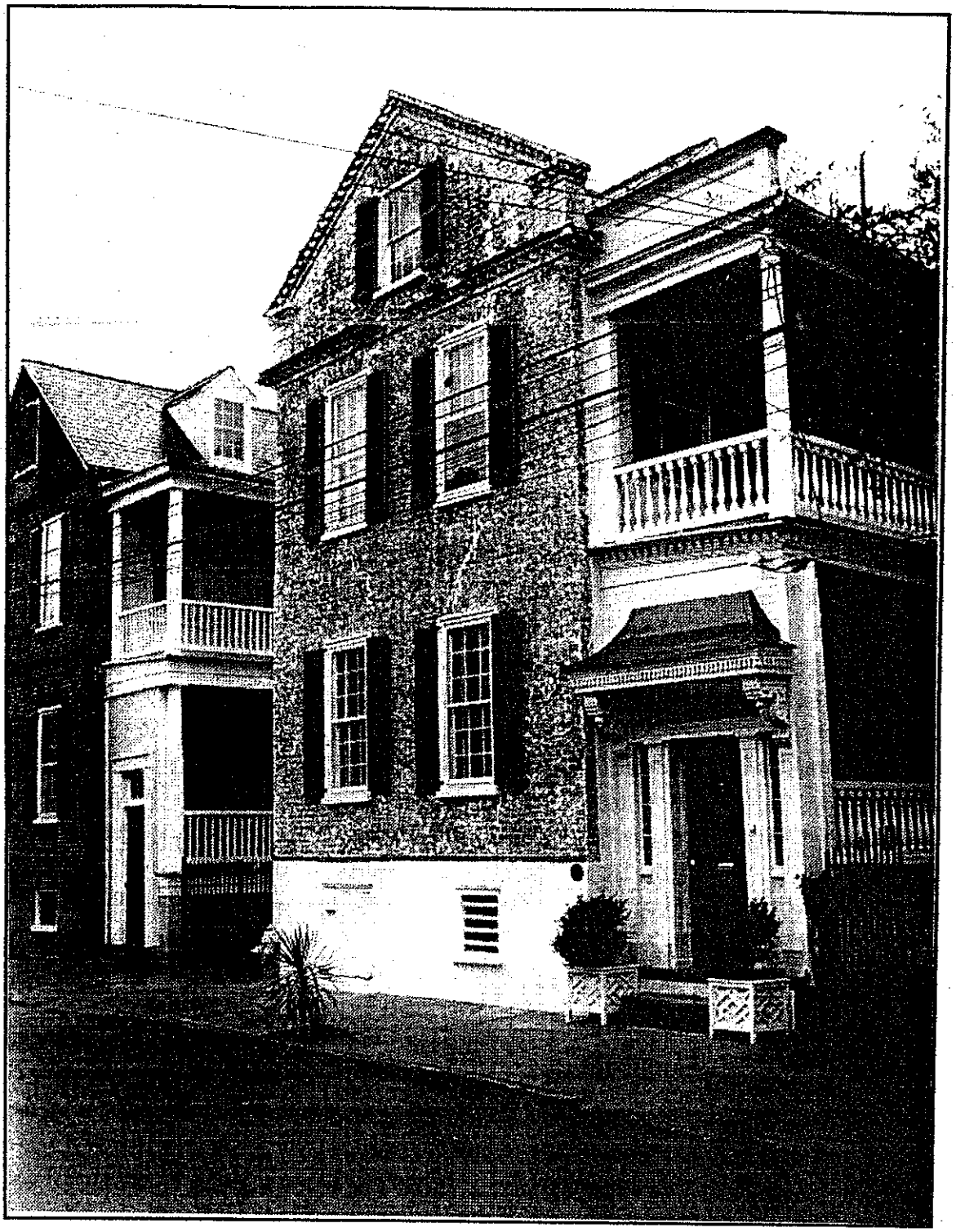


Figure 3 Typical nineteenth-century single houses in Charleston's Ansonborough neighborhood.

Figure 4. Shotgun House in New Orleans, Louisiana.

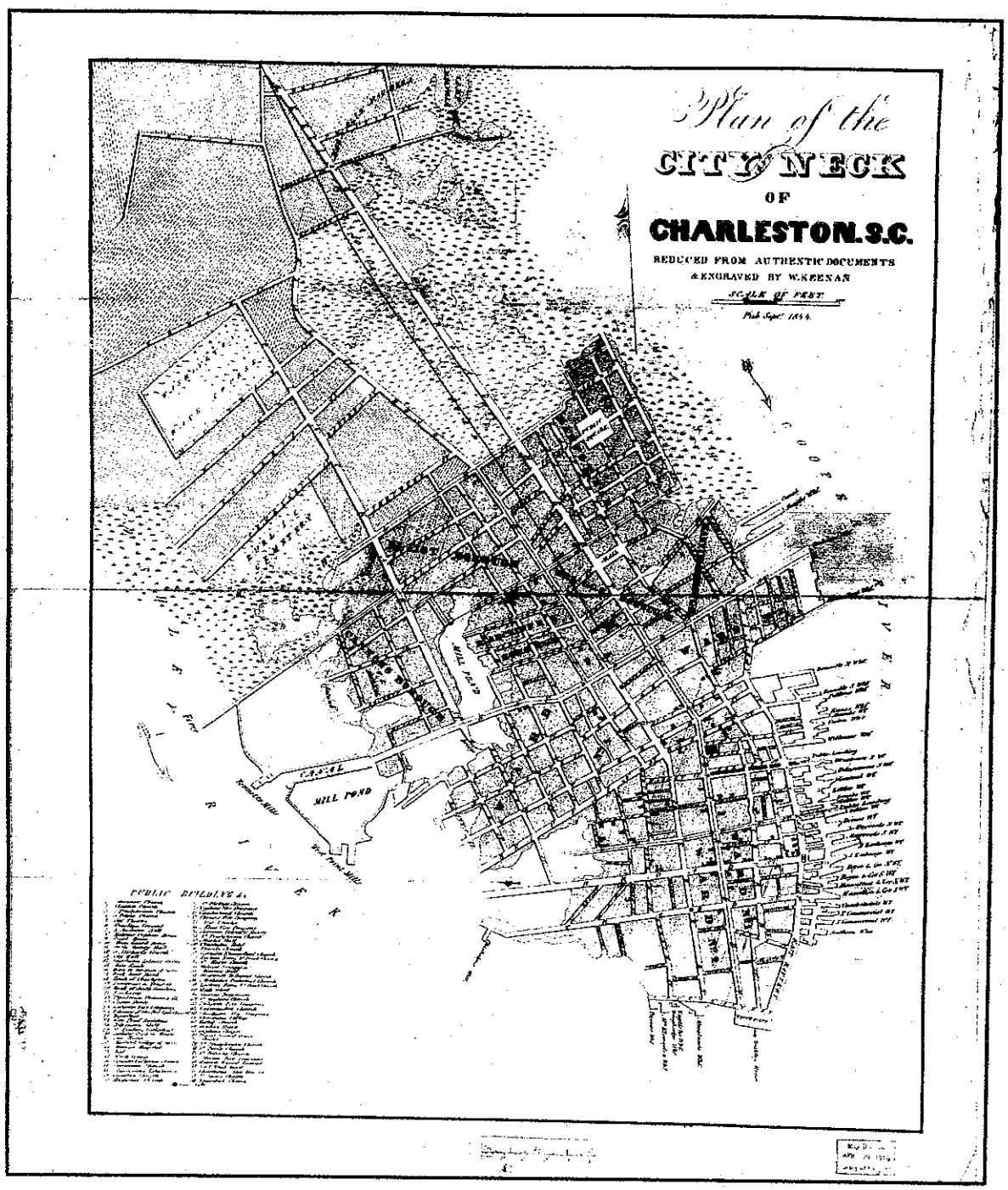


Figure 5 Plan of Charleston and the "Neck" in 1844. The "Neck" is the land north of Boundary Street, which stretches between the Ashley and Cooper Rivers.

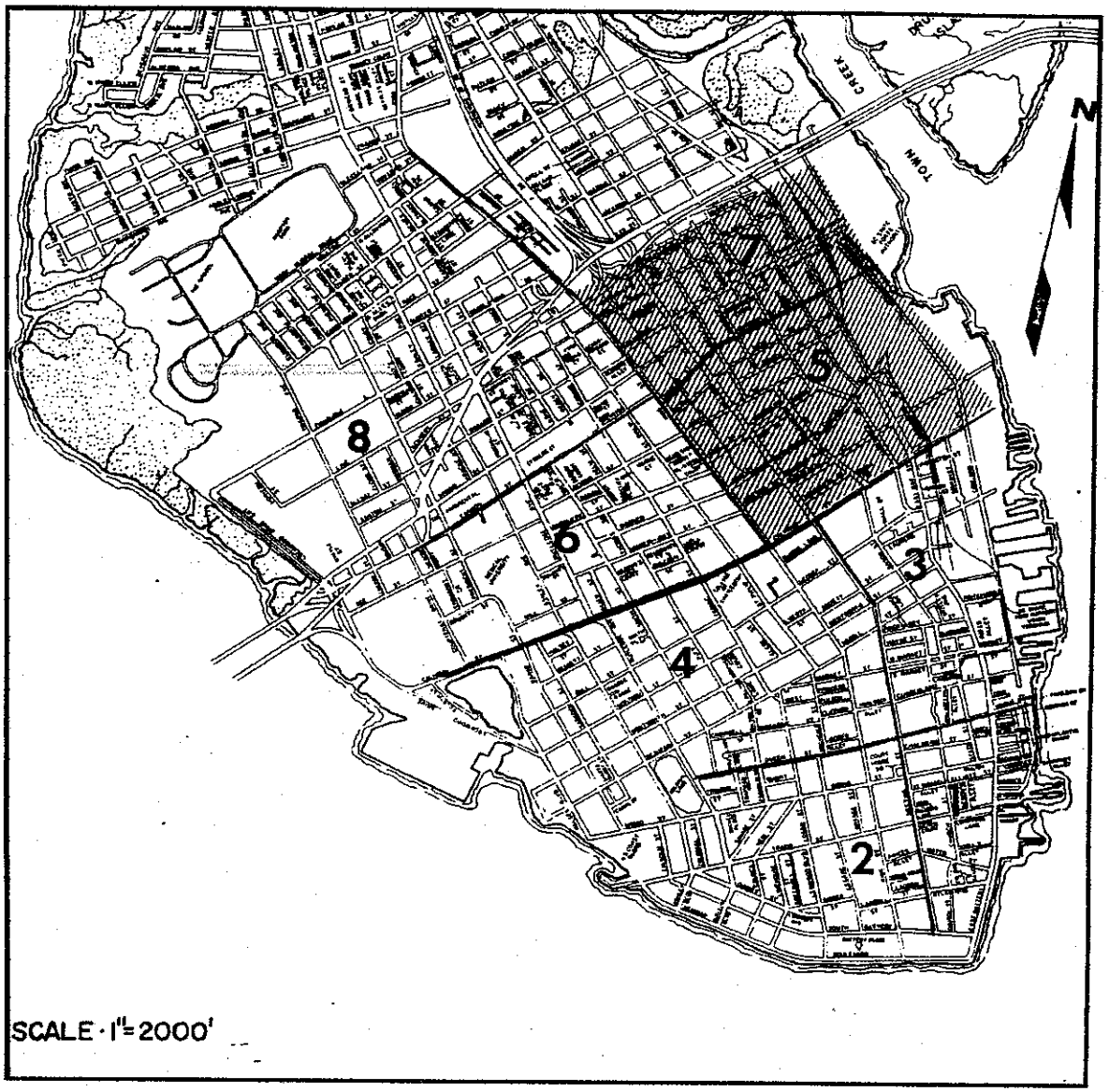


Figure 6 1850 Ward Map of Charleston, the shaded areas make up the East Side wards.

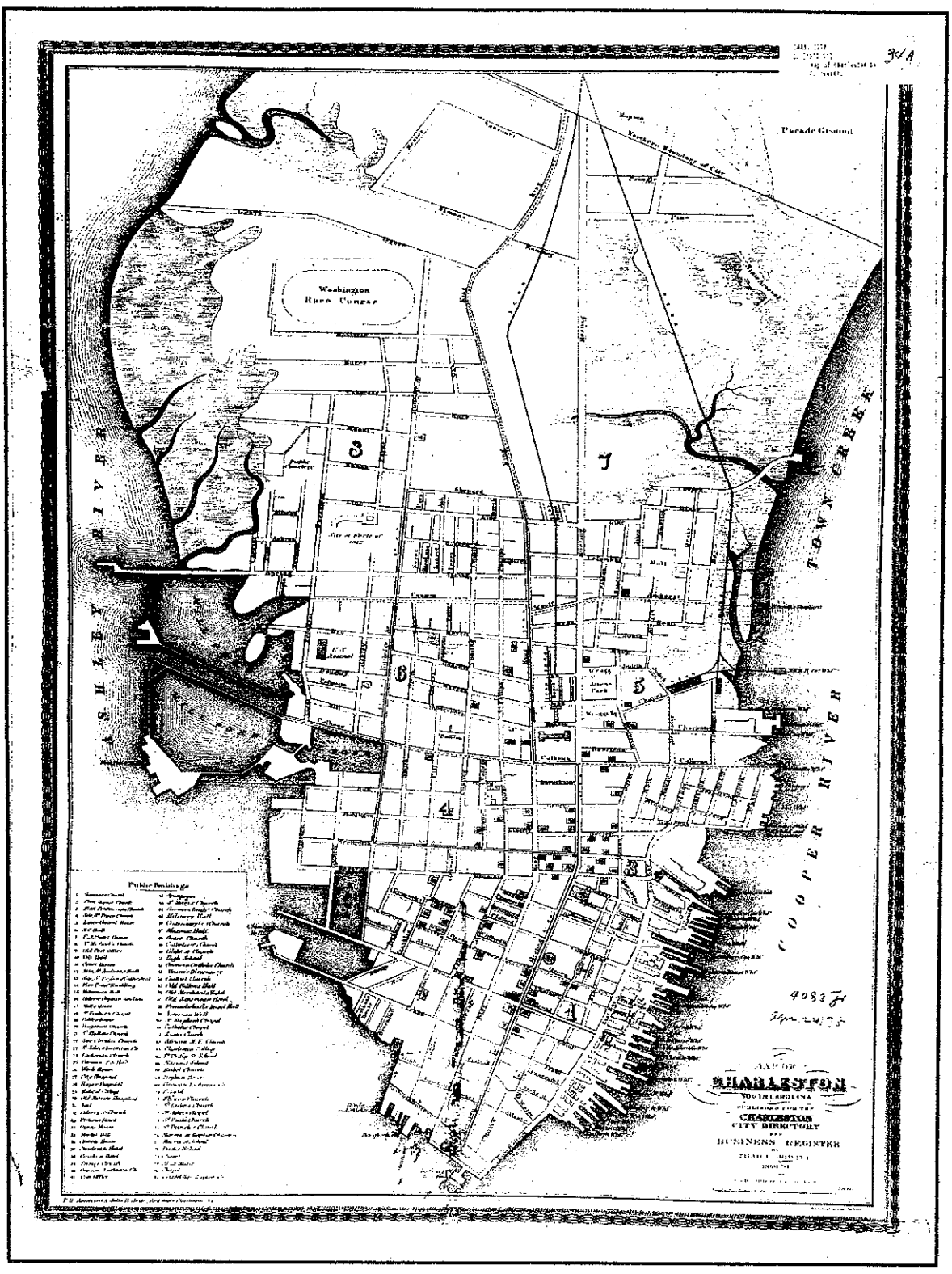


Figure 7 Map of Charleston, 1869-70..The East Side is made up of Wards 5 and 7, while Hampton Park Terrace is constructed south of the Washington Race Course.

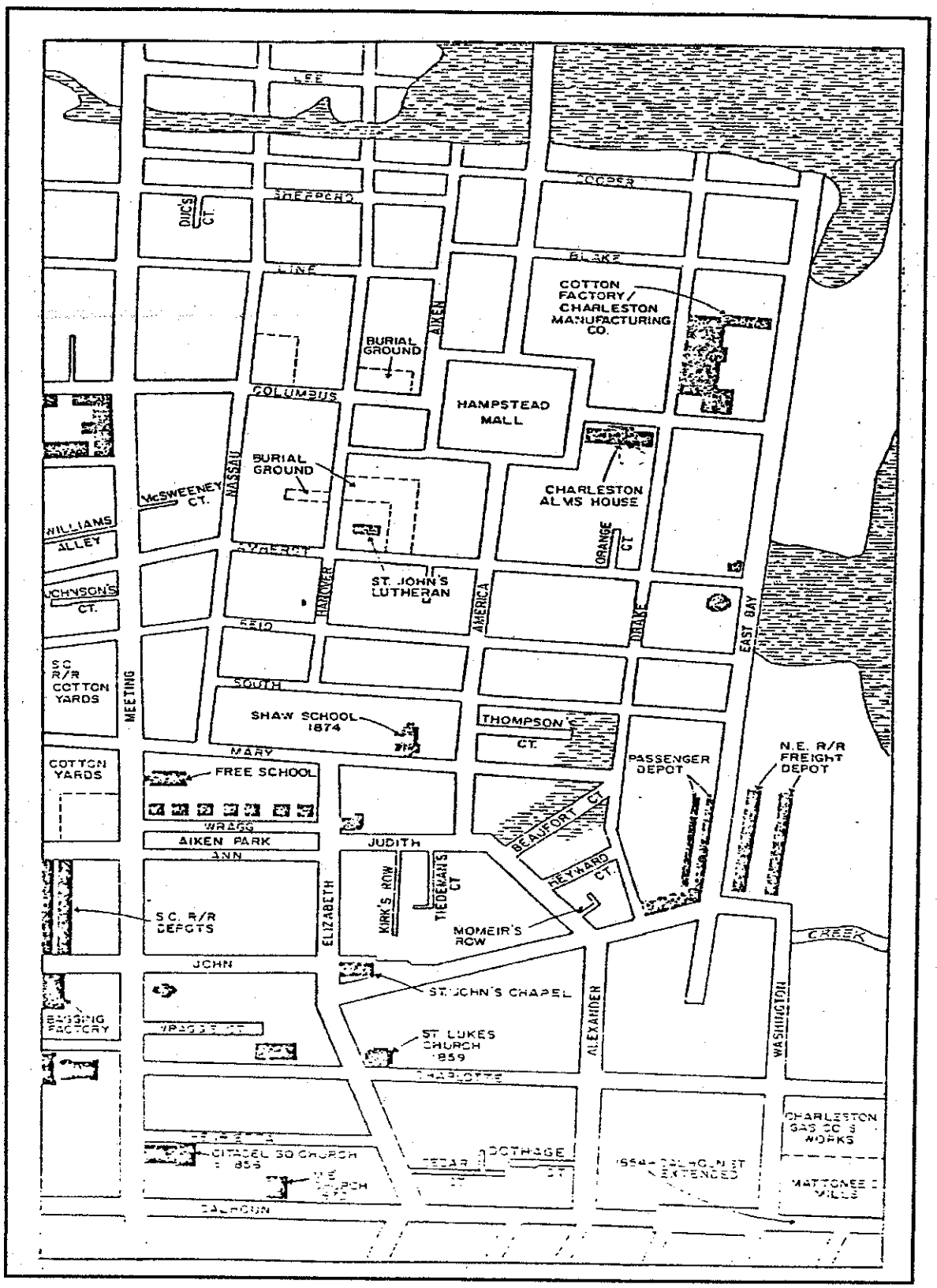


Figure 8 Map of Charleston's East Side in 1852.

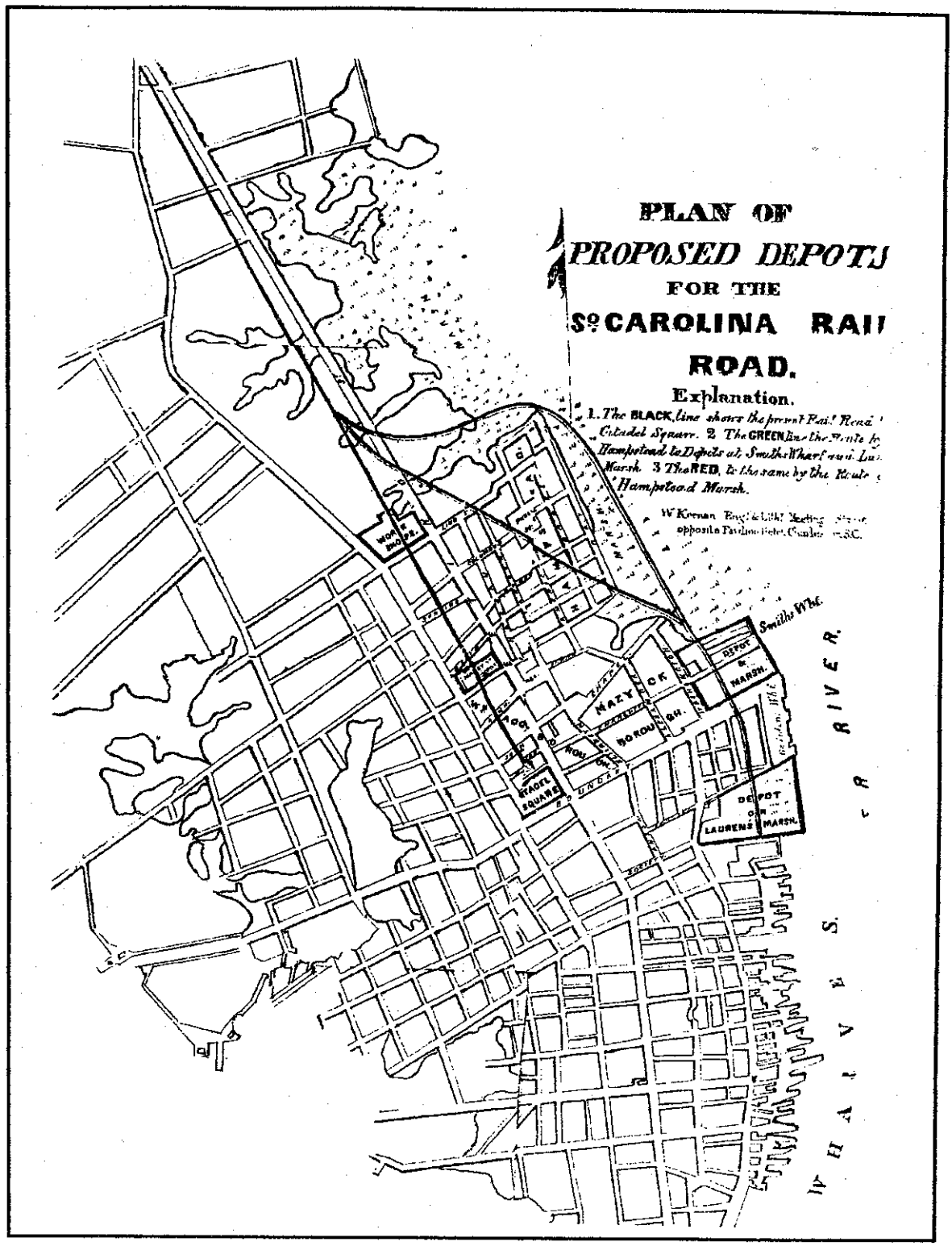


Figure 9 Proposed South Carolina Railroad depots located on Charleston's East Side.

Figure 10 Sunken gardens and Auditorium Building at the 1902 South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition, located in the western "Neck".

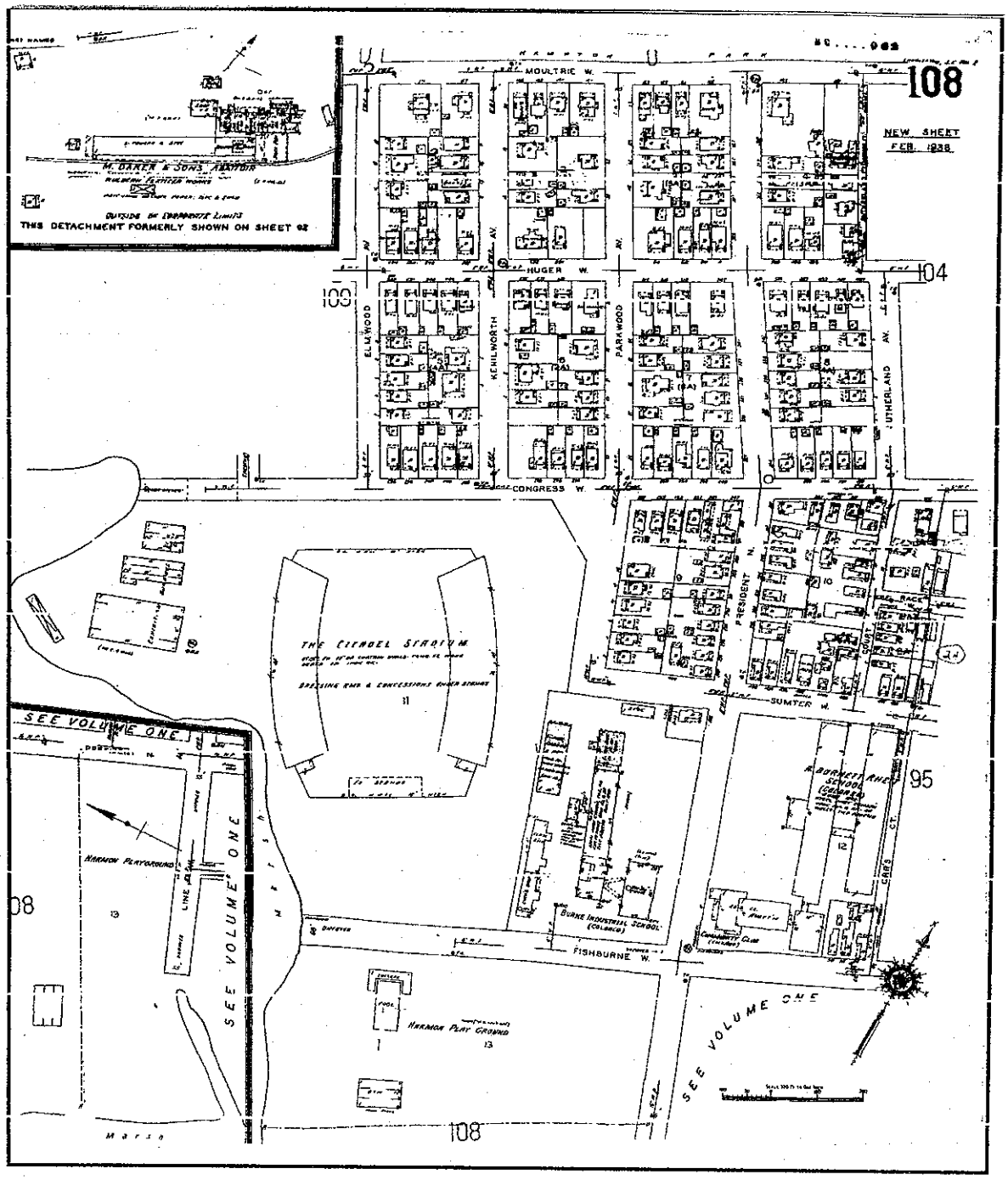
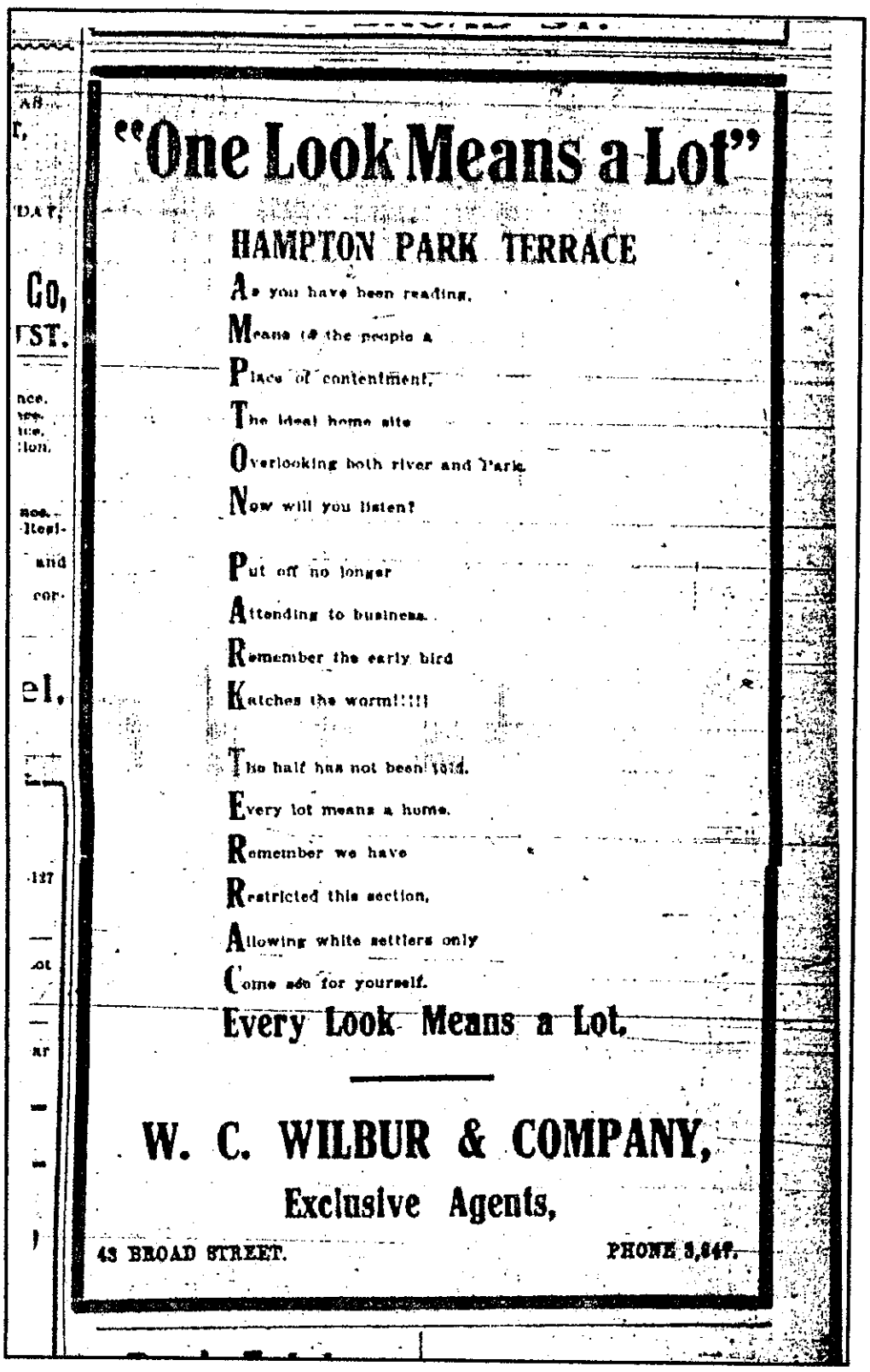


Figure 11 1938 Sanborn Insurance map showing portions of the Hampton Park Terrace neighborhood.



"One Look Means a Lot"

HAMPTON PARK TERRACE

As you have been reading,
Means to the people a
Place of contentment,
The ideal home site
Overlooking both river and Park.
Now will you listen?

Put off no longer
Attending to business.
Remember the early bird
Katches the worm!!!!

The half has not been told.
Every lot means a home.
Remember we have
Restricted this section,
Allowing white settlers only
Come see for yourself.

Every Look Means a Lot.

W. C. WILBUR & COMPANY,

Exclusive Agents,

43 BROAD STREET. PHONE 3,647.

Figure 12 Advertisement for Hampton Park Terrace in the 1923 *News and Courier*.

Figure 13 Shotgun House, Charlotte, North Carolina.

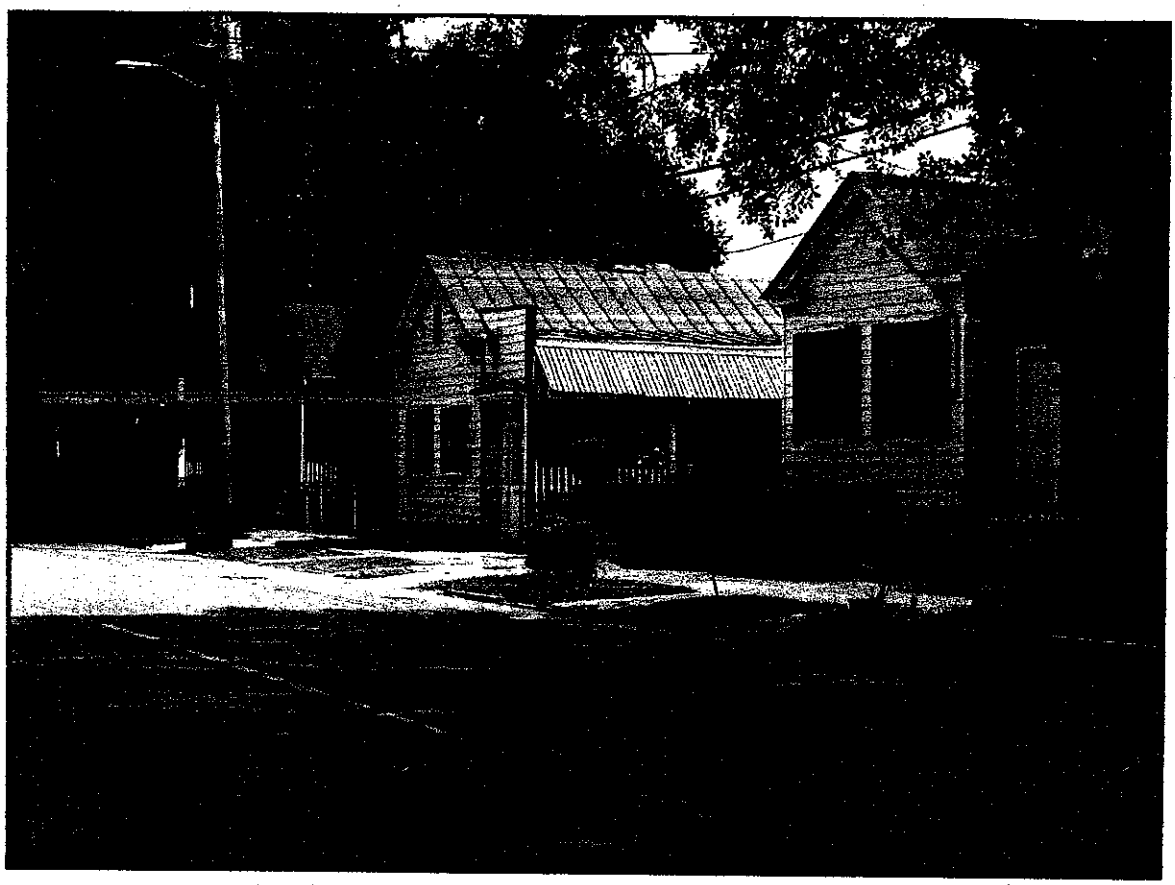


Figure 14 Row of freedman's cottages on President Street.

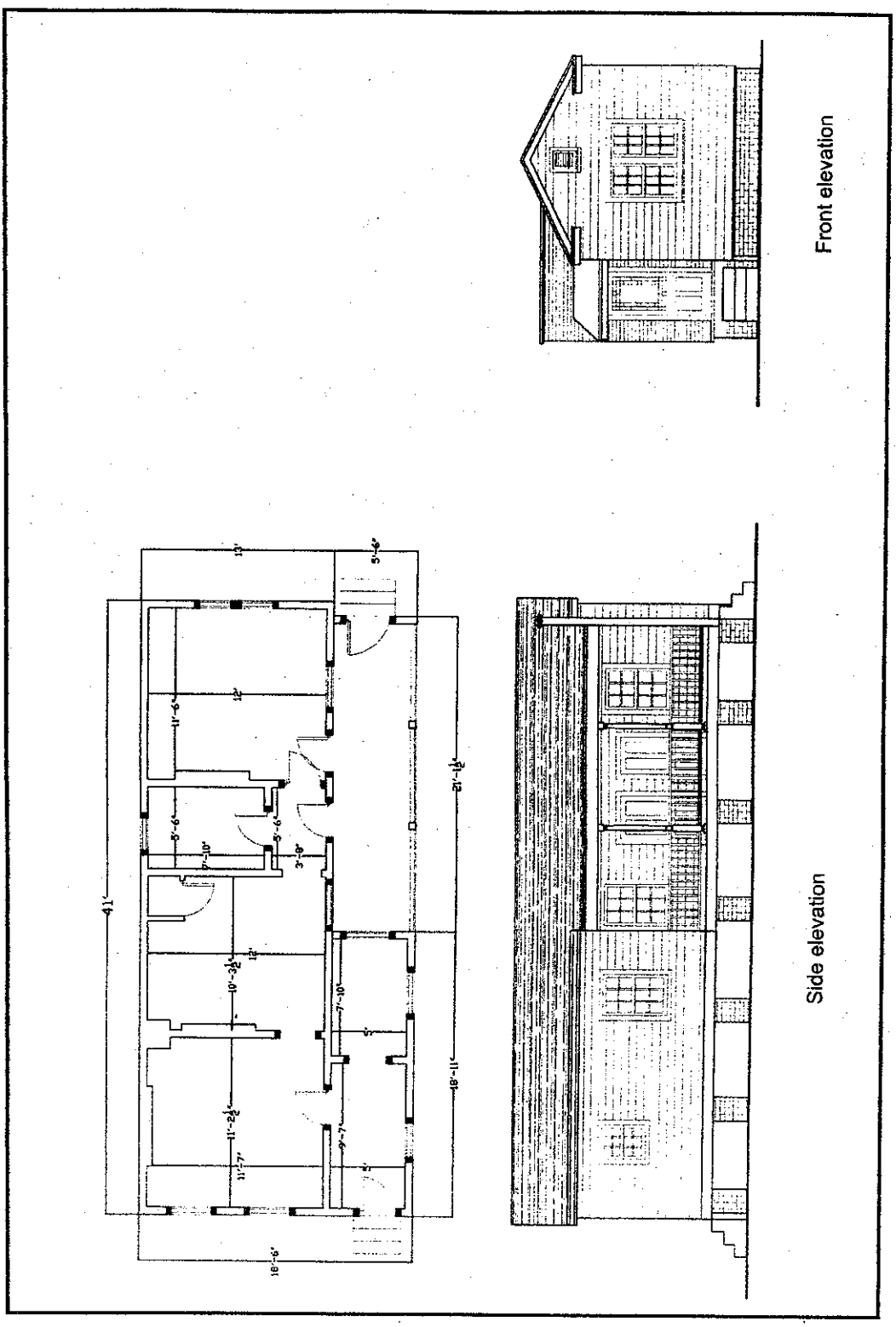


Figure 15 Plan of 9 Woodall Court.

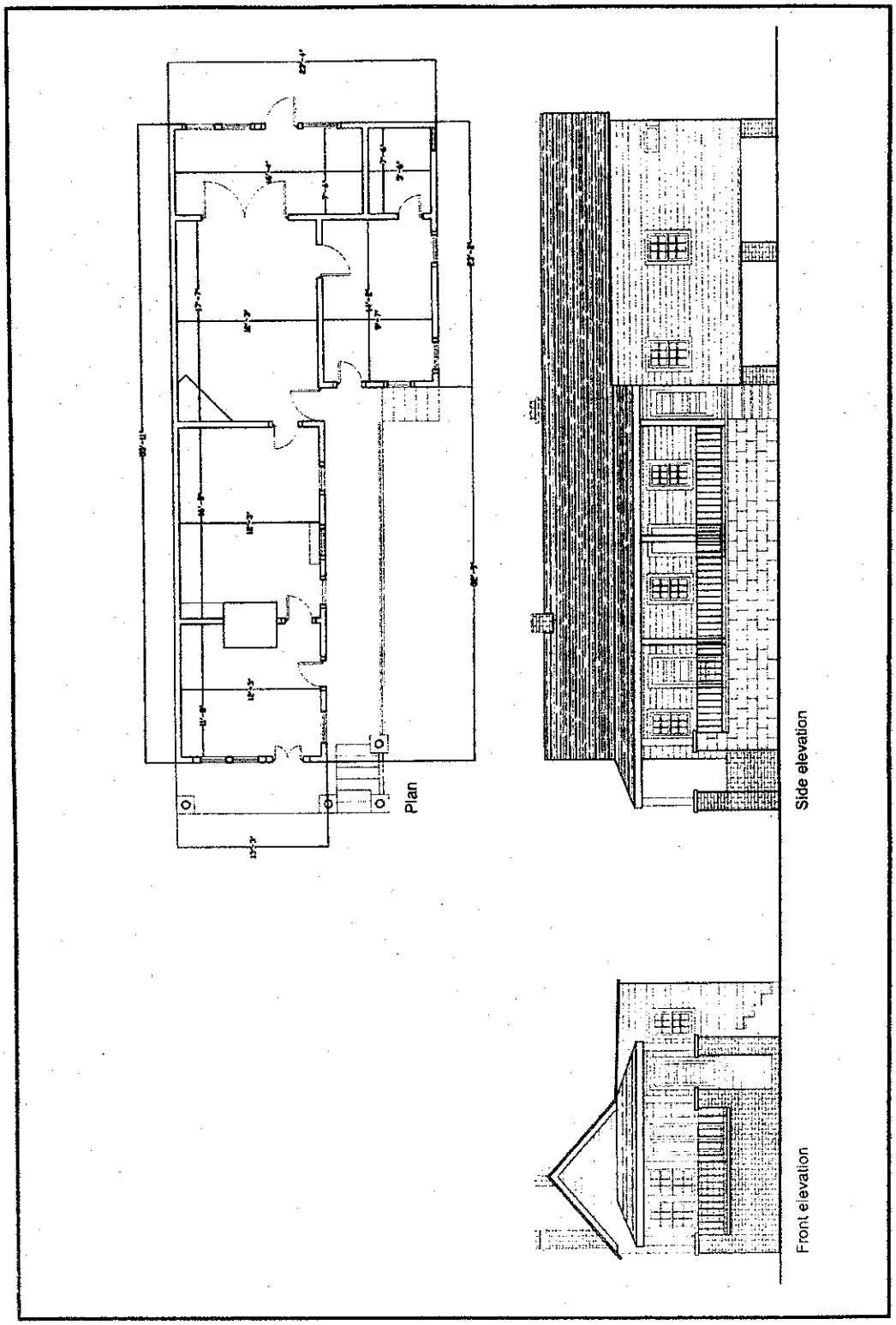


Figure 16 Plan of 177 Fishburne Street.

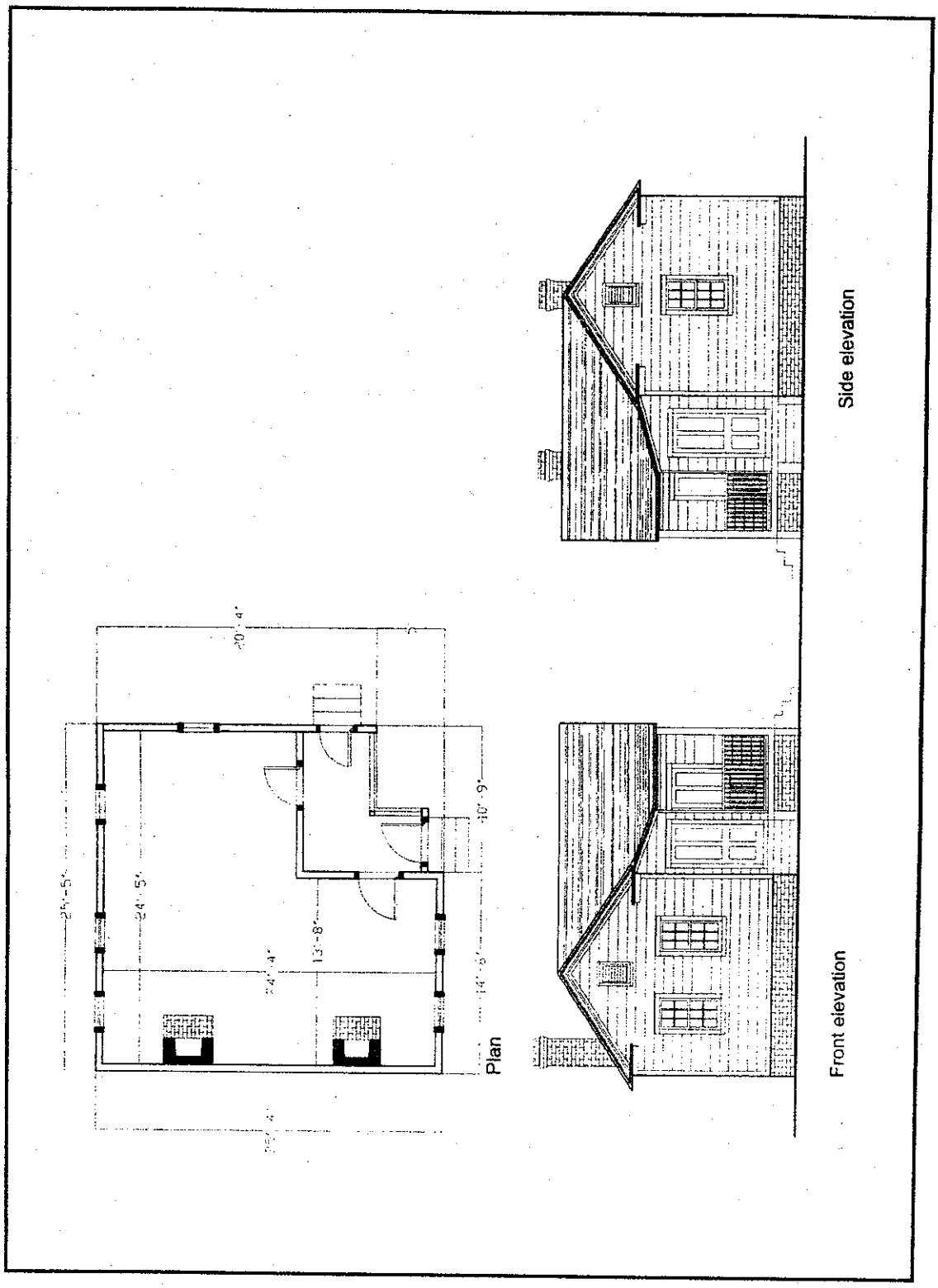
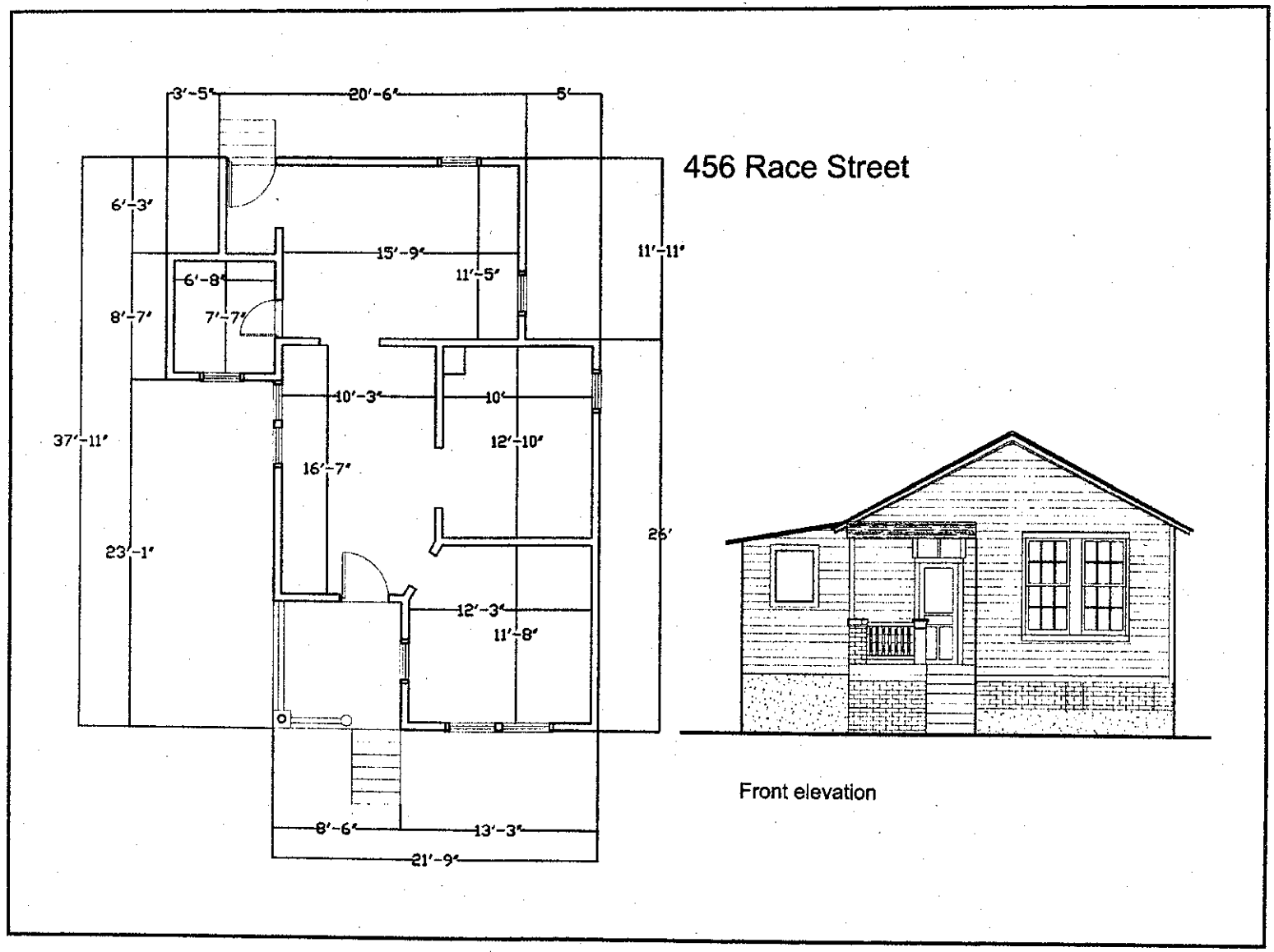


Figure 17 Plan of 9 Desportes Court.

Figure 18 Plan of 456 Race Street.



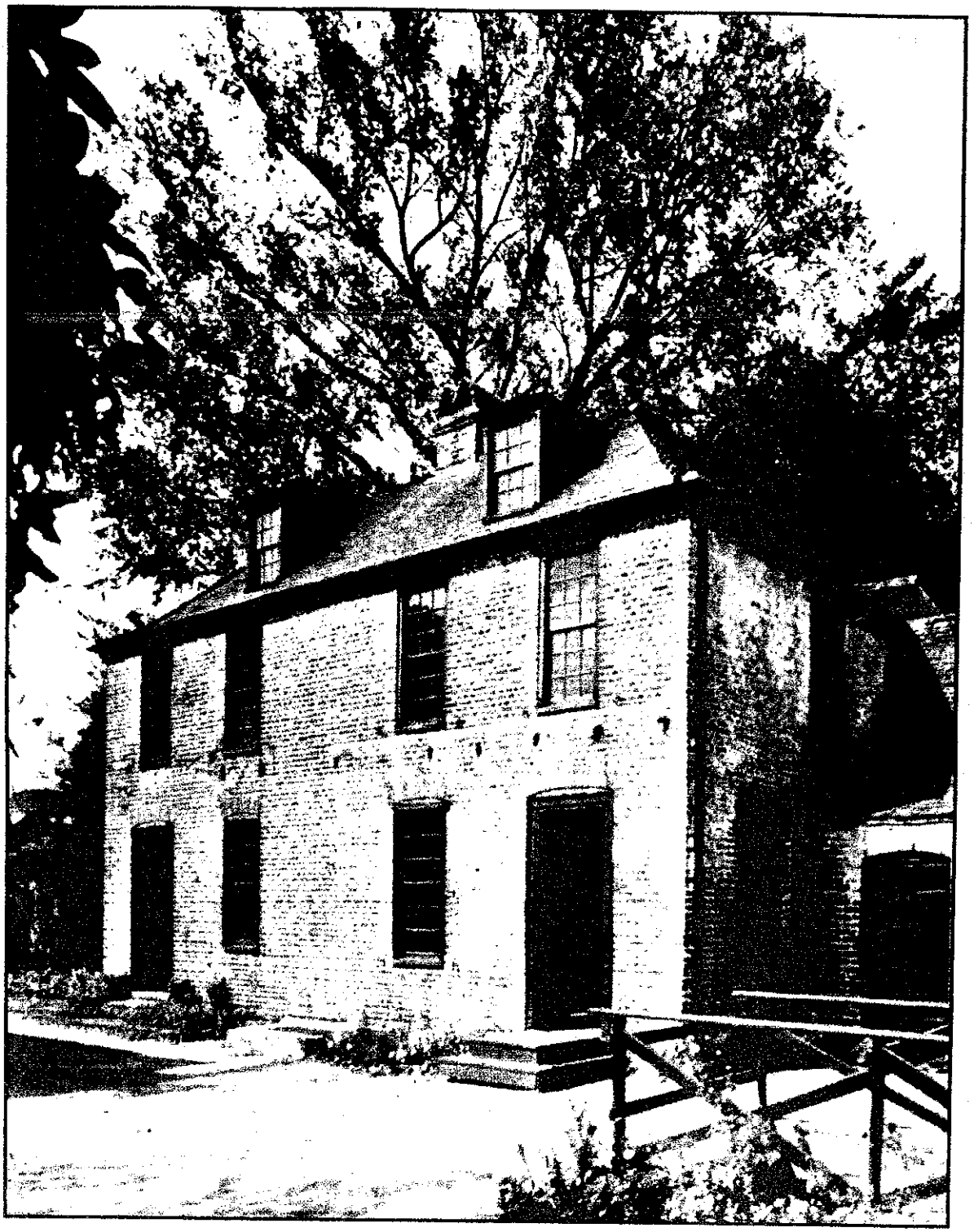


Figure 19 Kitchen building, Heyward Washington house, ca. 1740.

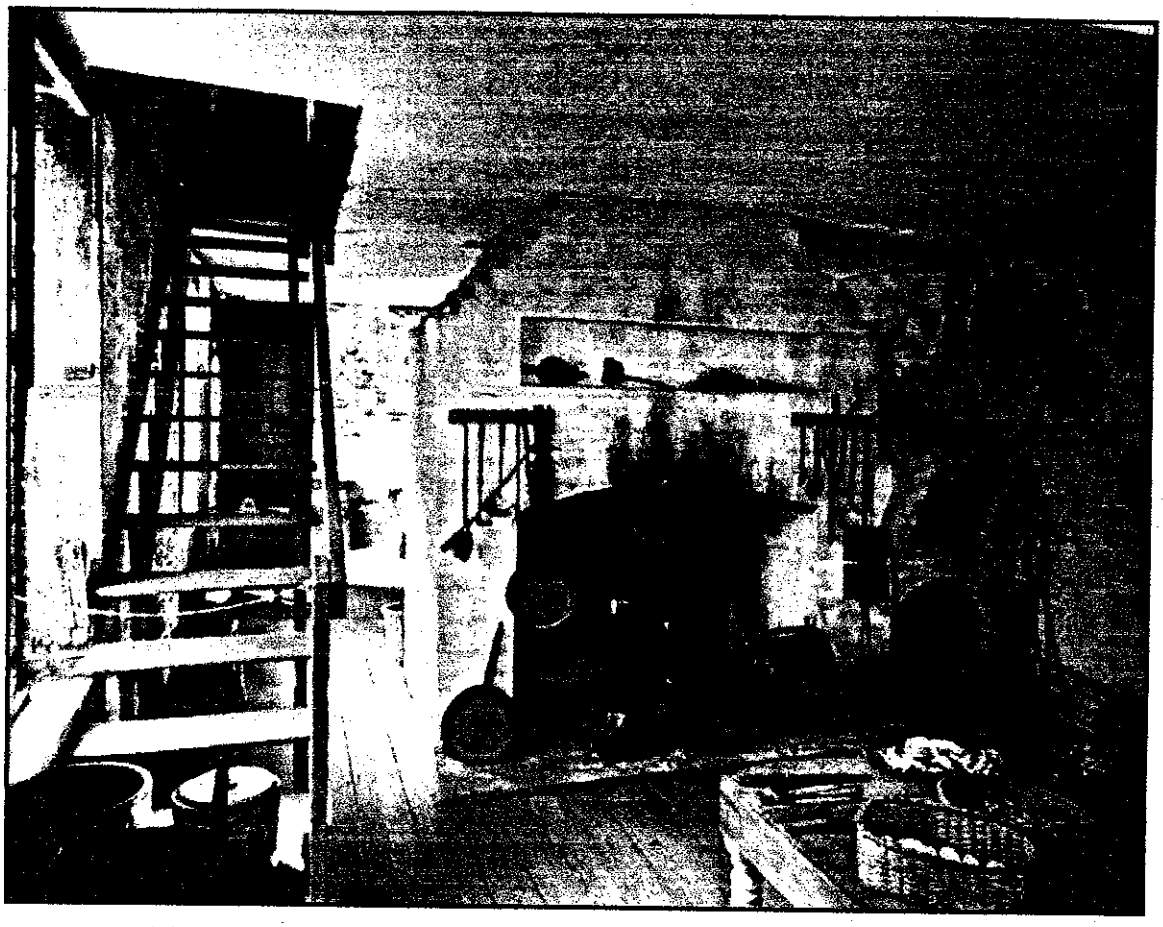


Figure 20 Interior of kitchen building, Heyward Washington house, ca. 1740.

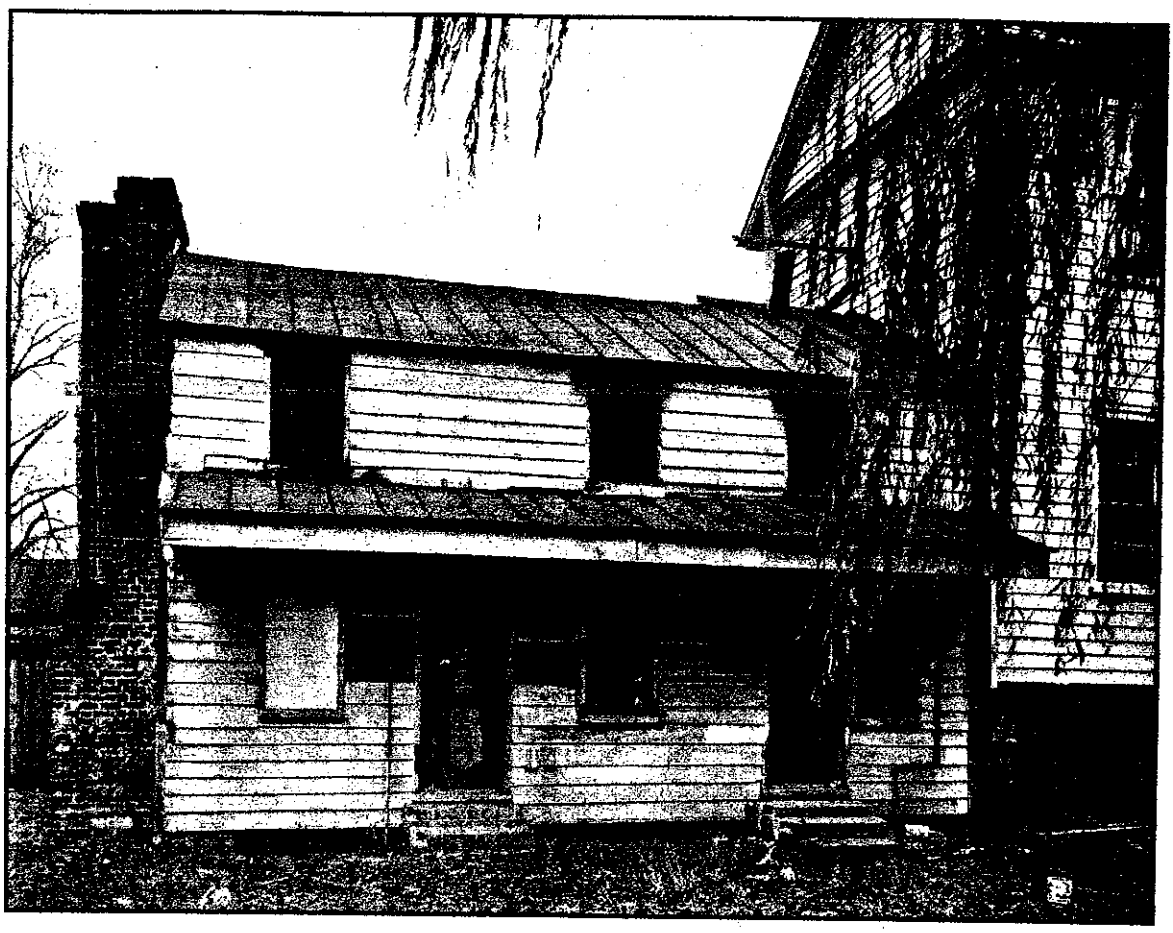


Figure 21 Typical frame kitchen house on Judith Street, ca. 1817-1820.

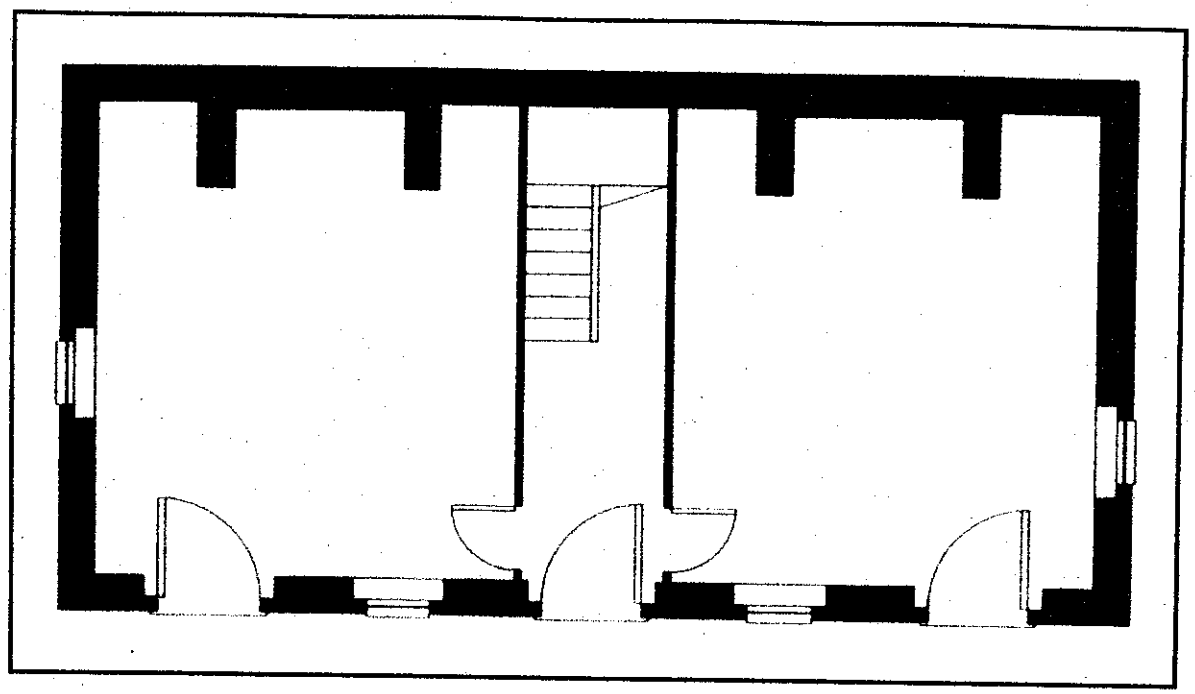


Figure 22 Plan of kitchen building, John Robinson House, ca. 1814.

Figure 23 Typical nineteenth-century slave cabin, McLeod Plantation, James Island, South Carolina.

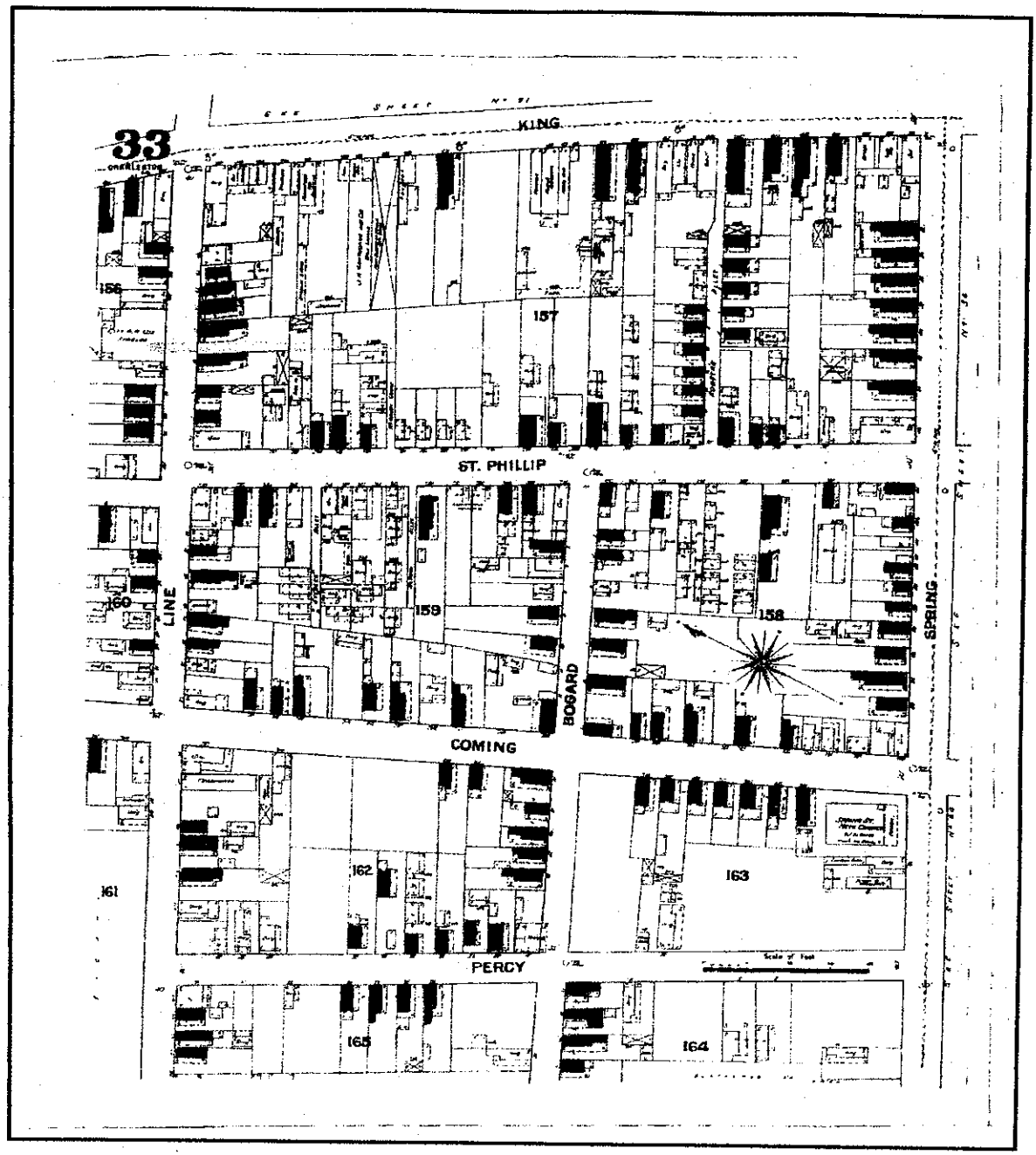


Figure 24 Sanborn Insurance map from 1888 showing the predominance of the single house form in the nineteenth century.

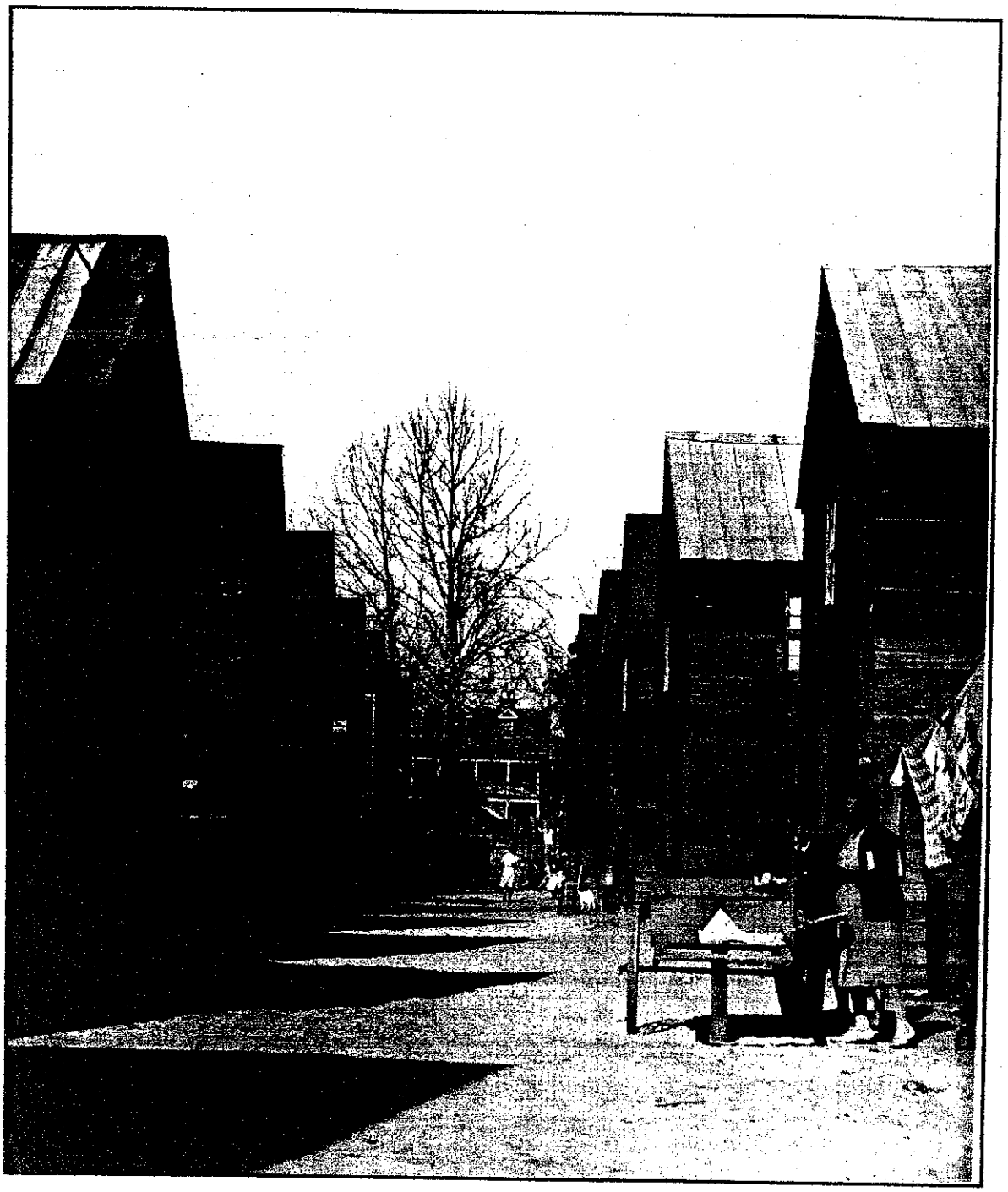


Figure 25 Cromwell Alley, now Cromwell Street. Photograph showing the modest single houses which would have been familiar to African-Americans.

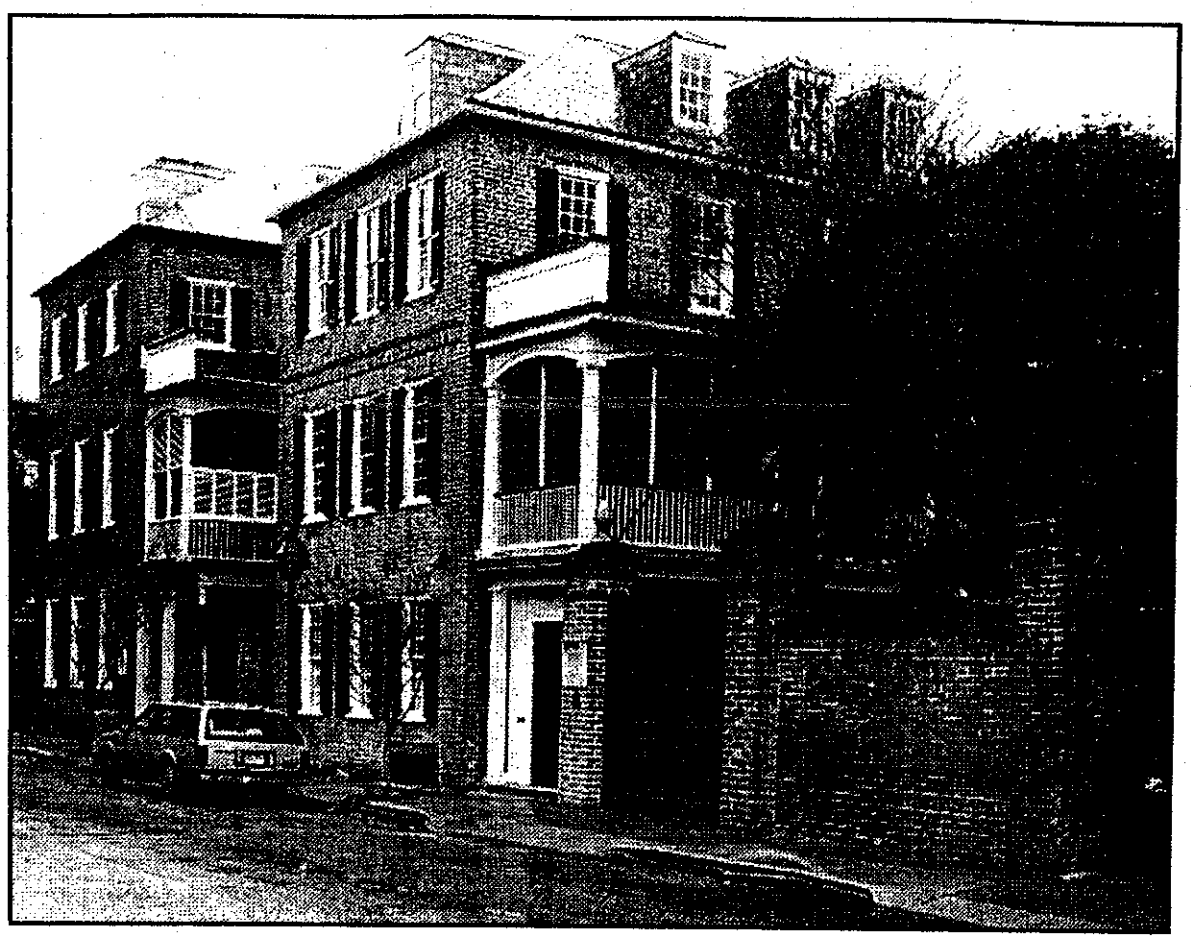


Figure 26 Single houses, 90 and 92 Church Street.

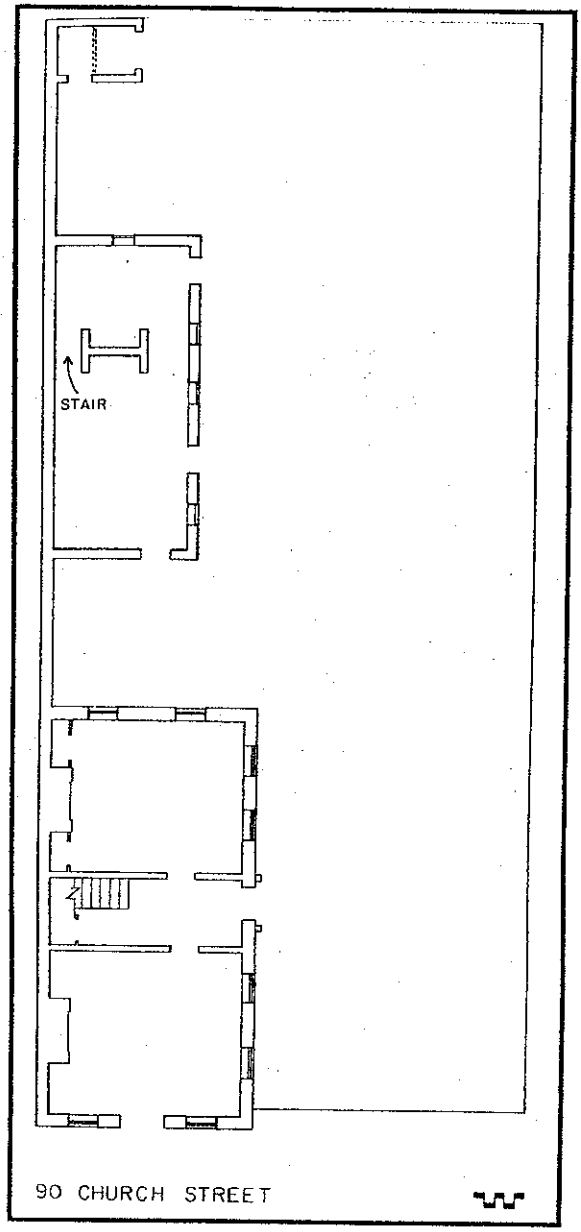


Figure 27 Plan of 90 Church Street.

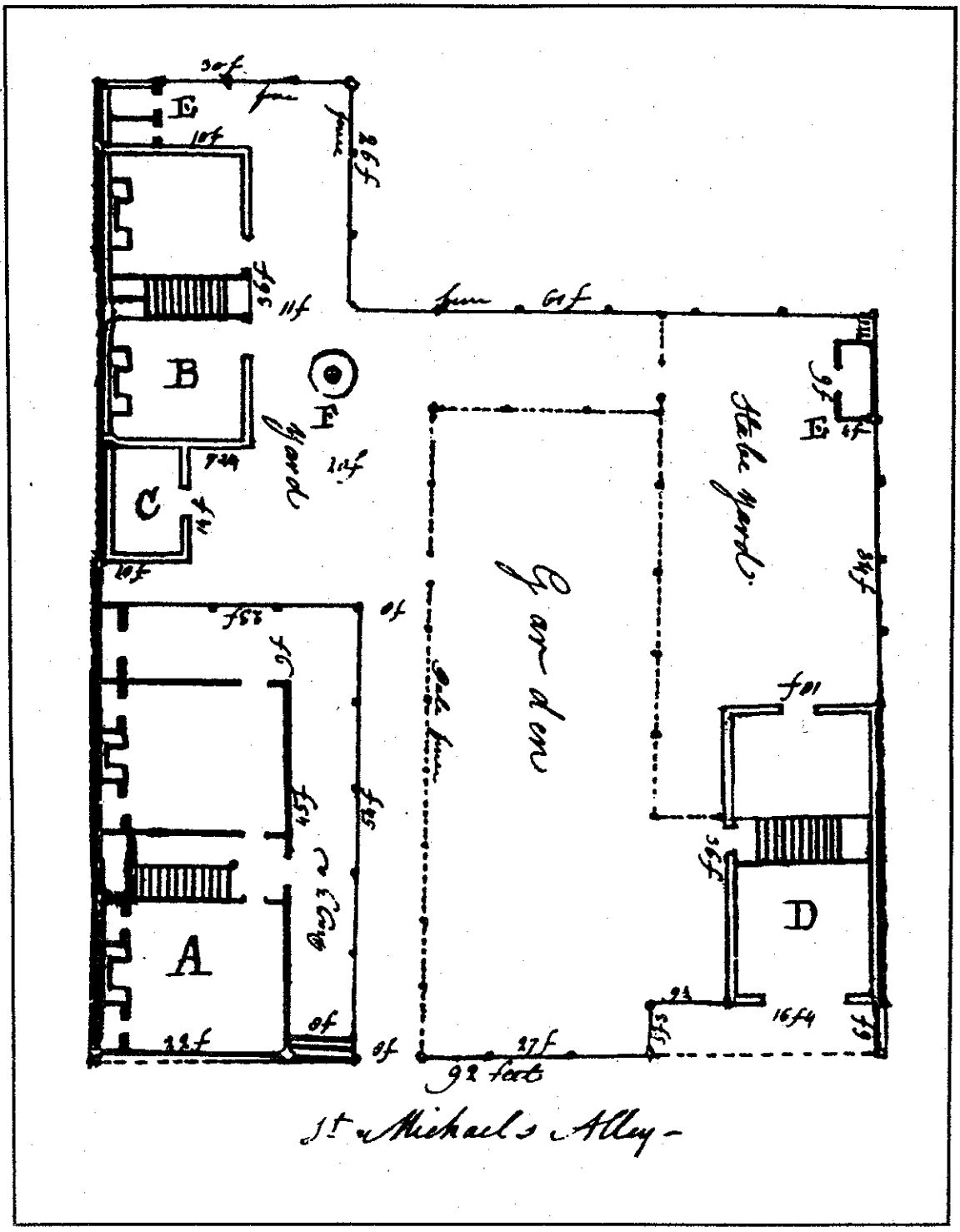


Figure 28 Charleston single house lot and plan, 176 Meeting Street.

Figure 29 View of a parlor, William Pinckney Shingler House, 1857.

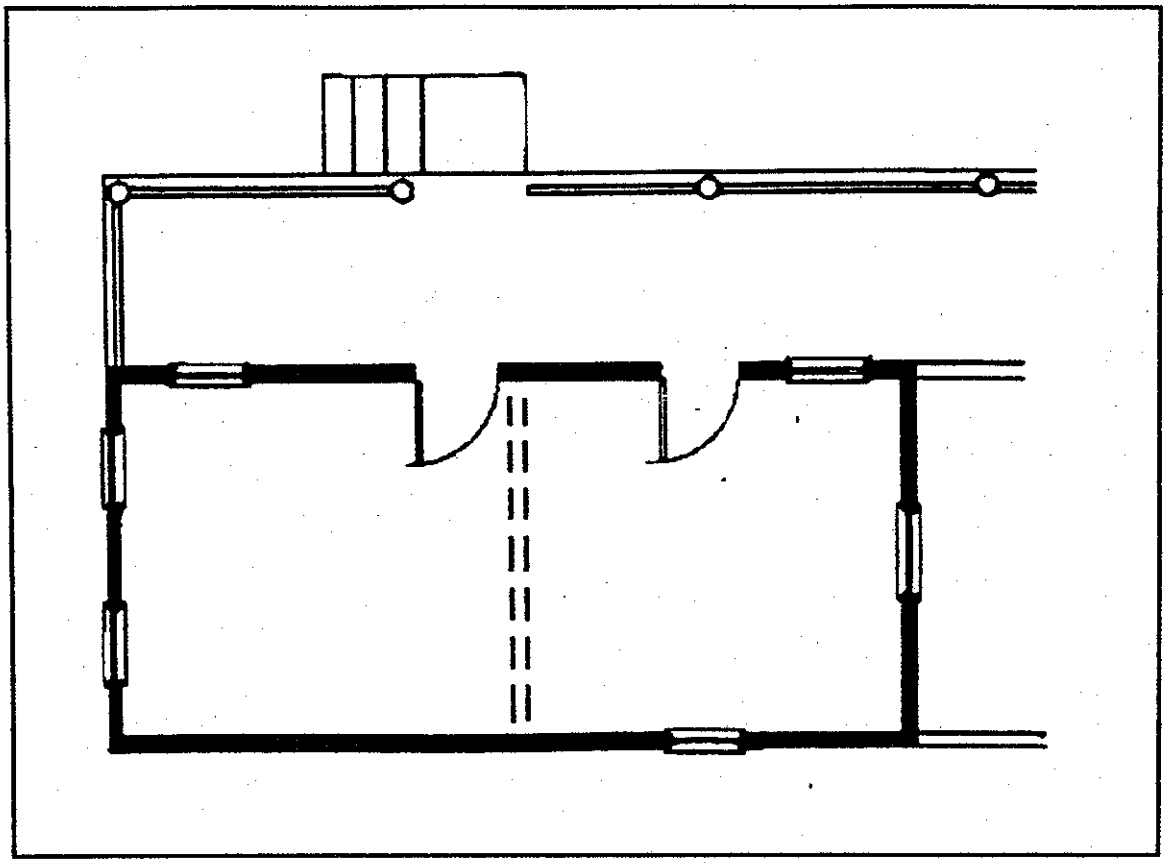


Figure 30 Plan of the Denmark Vesey freedman's cottage.

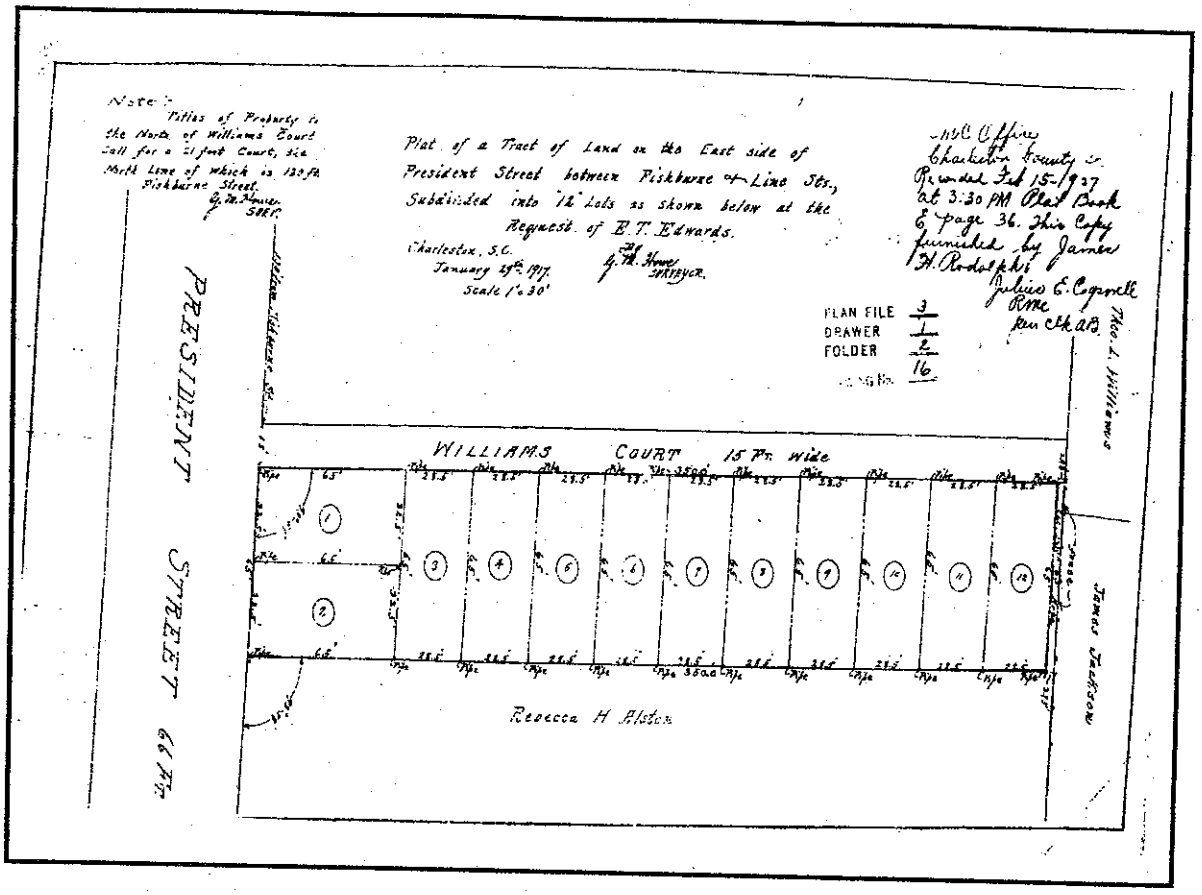


Figure 31 Lots on Williams, now Woodall Court, drawn by G.M. Howe, Surveyor in 1917.

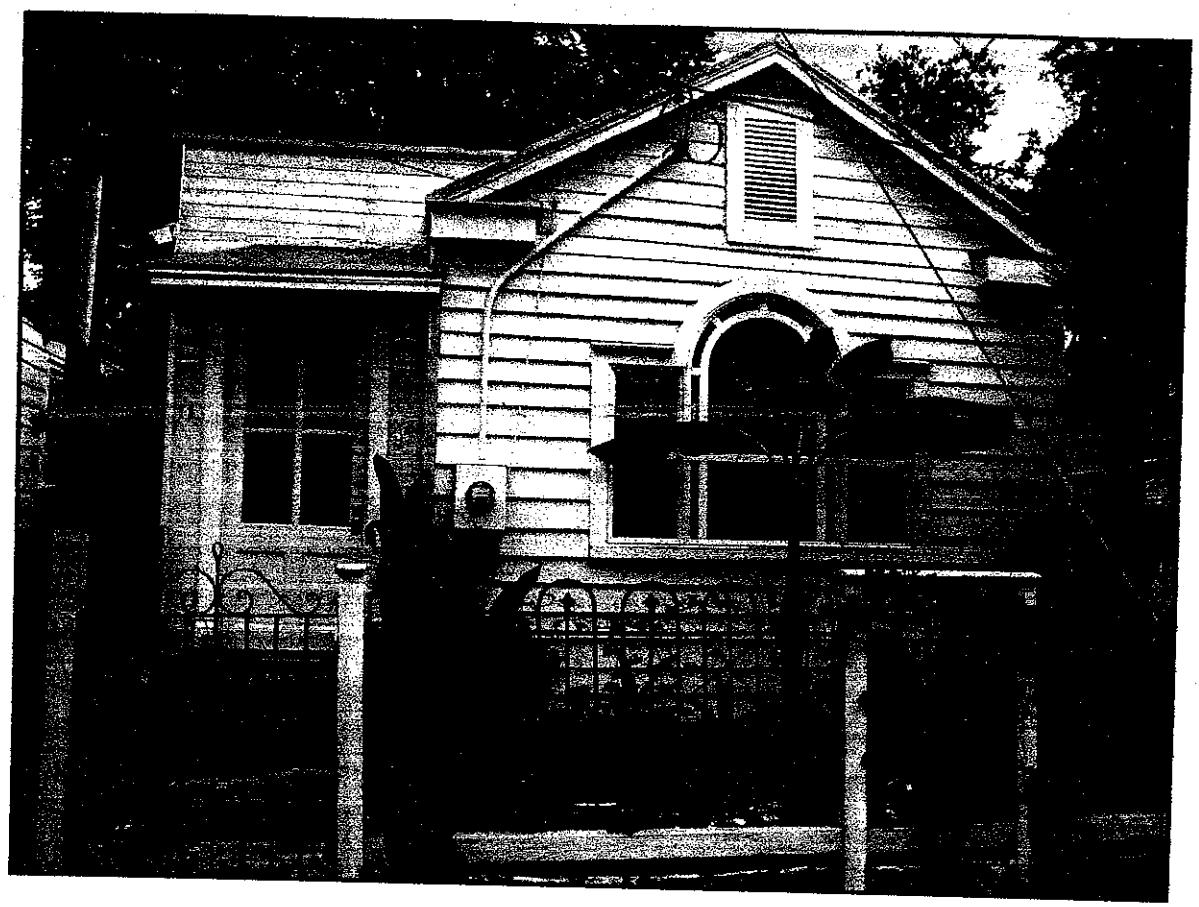


Figure 32 Freedman's cottage on Woodall Court.

Figure 33 Freedman's cottage on Woodall Court.

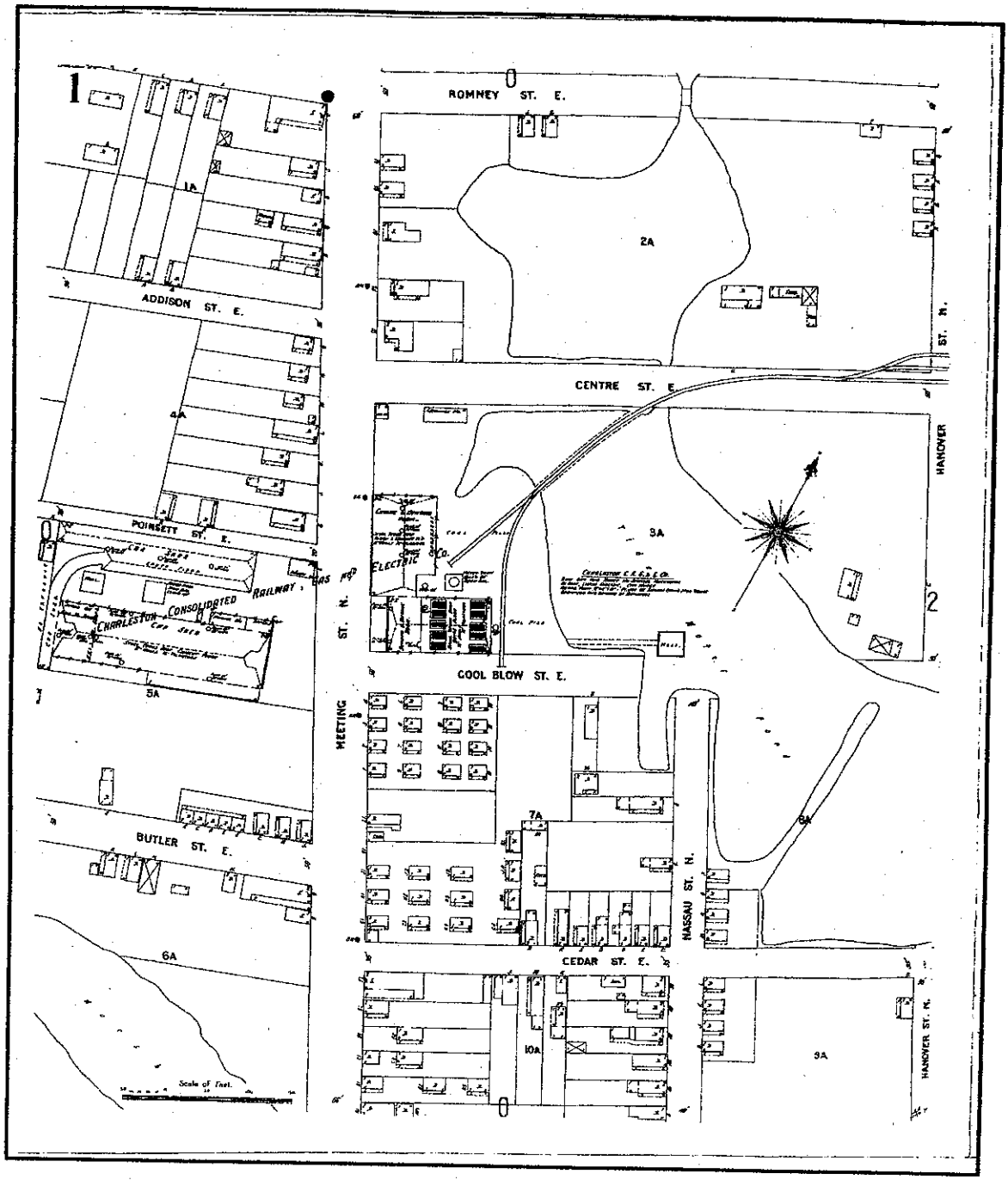
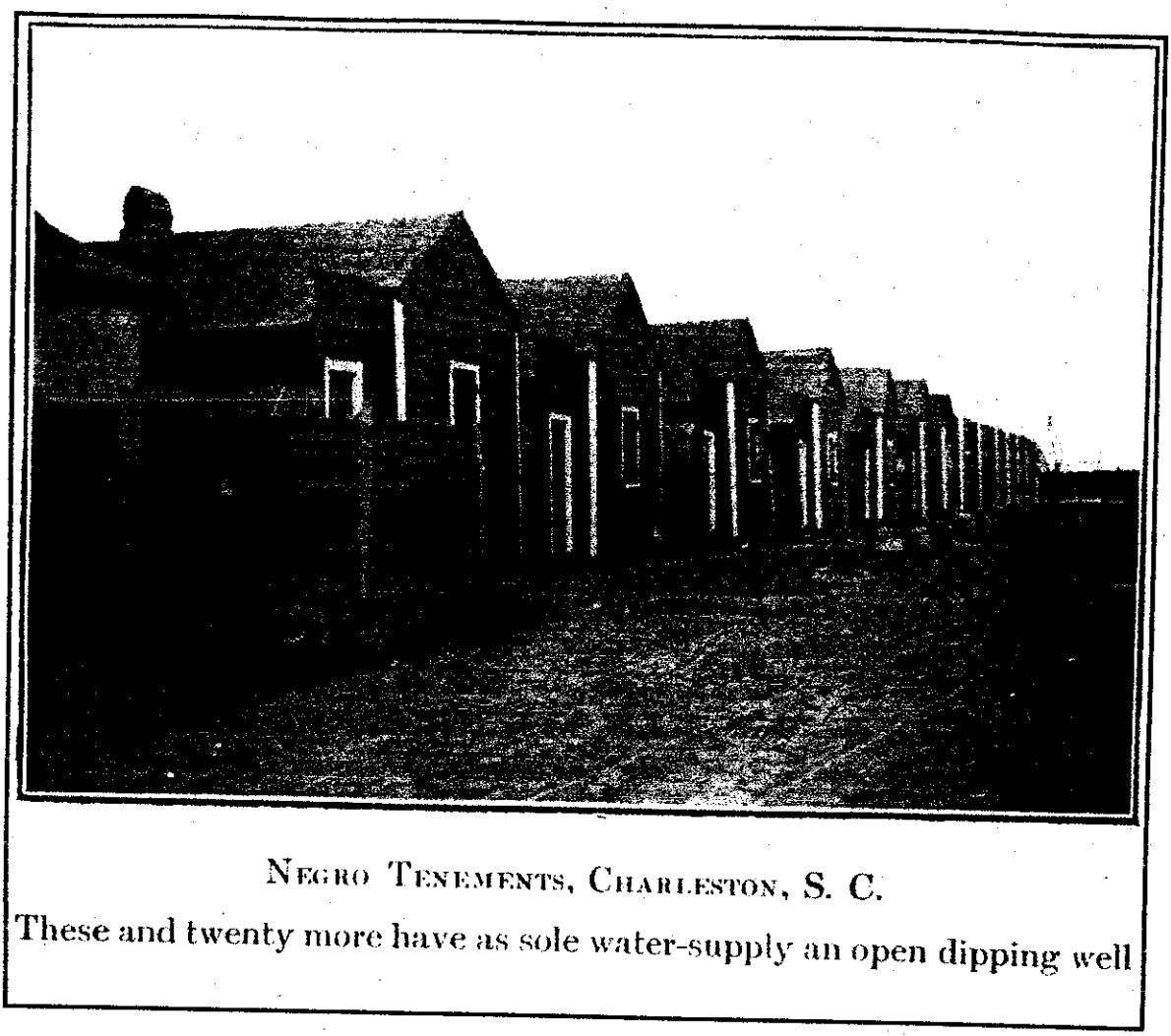


Figure 34 Sanborn Insurance map from 1910, the Eickmeyer Tenements are located on the corner of Cedar and Meeting Streets.



NEGRO TENEMENTS, CHARLESTON, S. C.

These and twenty more have as sole water-supply an open dipping well

Figure 35 "Negro Tenements, Charleston, S.C." Similar freedman's cottages may have been constructed for William Eickmeyer.

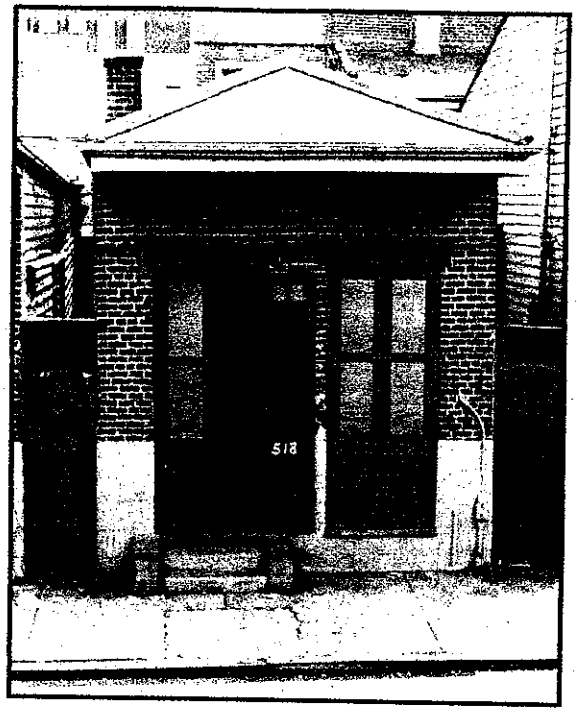


Figure 36 New Orleans shotgun house.

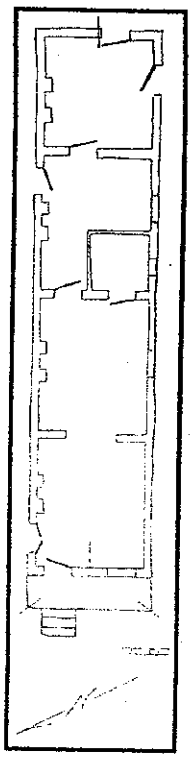


Figure 37 Plan of New Orleans shogun house.

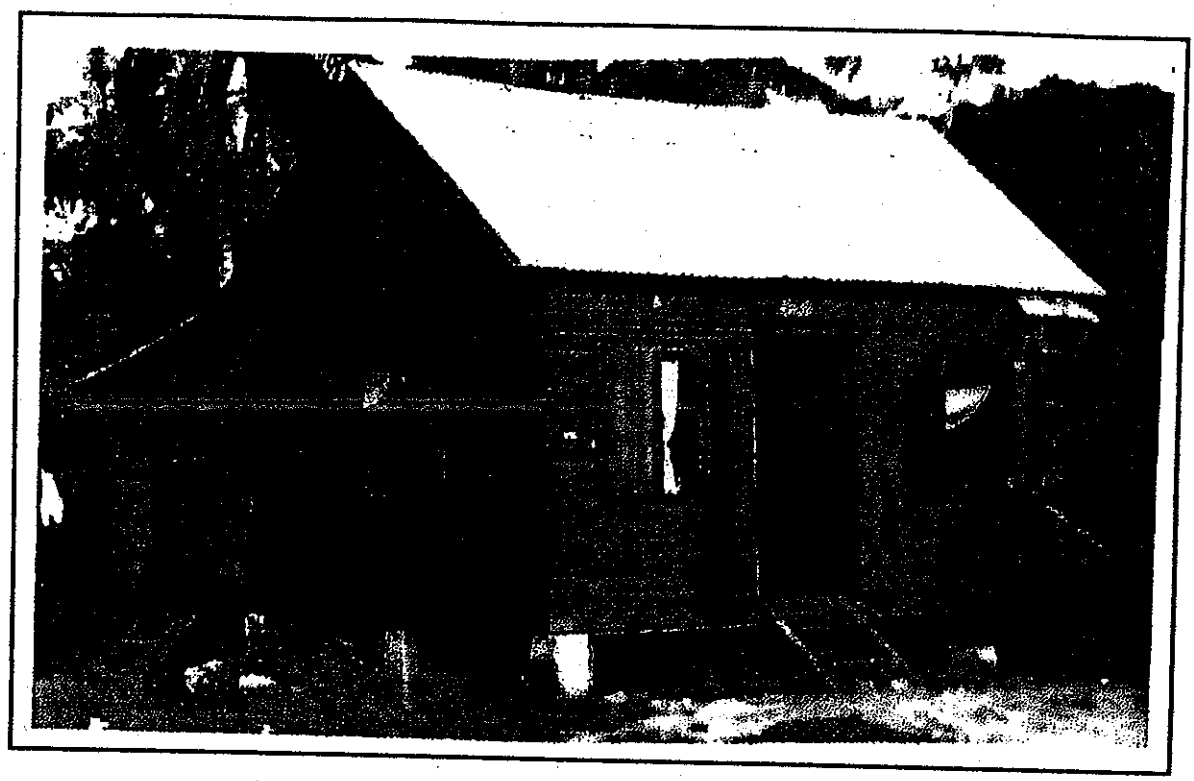


Figure 38 Single-story board house, San Andrés Island.

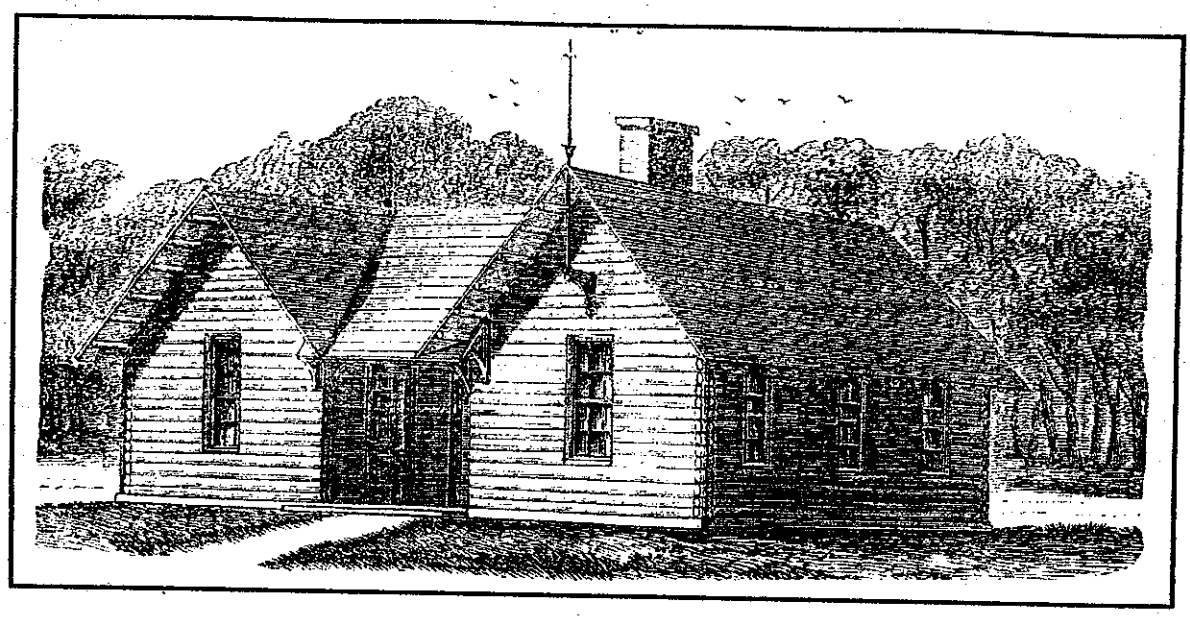


Figure 39 "Design for a Saddle-back Log House" from C. Thurston Chase's *A Manual on School-houses and Cottages for the People of the South,* 1867.

Figure 40 Example of gable roof with returns, 170 Fishburne Street.

Figure 41 Example of gable roof with fully enclosed pediment, 5 Ashton Street.

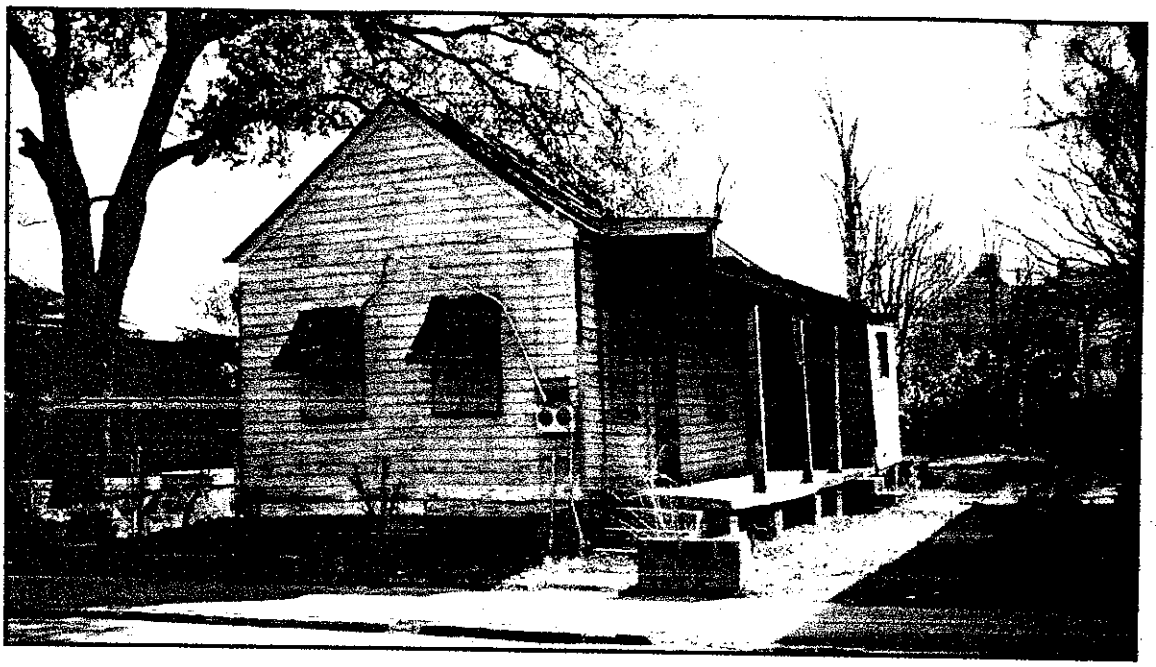


Figure 42 Example of unornamented gable roof, 7 Ashton Street.

Figure 43 Example of roof spanning both house and piazza, 456 Race Street.

Figure 44 Example of two separated six over six windows, 187 Coming Street.

Figure 45 Example of two separated two over two windows, 148 Congress Street.

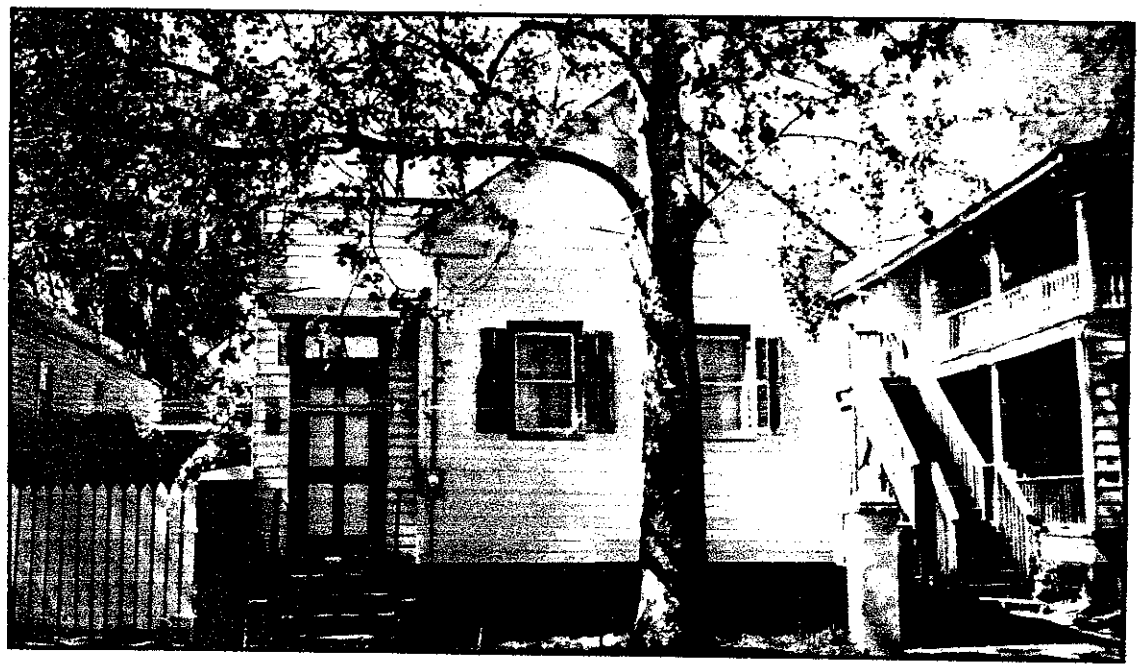


Figure 46 Example of two separate one over one windows, 16 Moultrie Street.

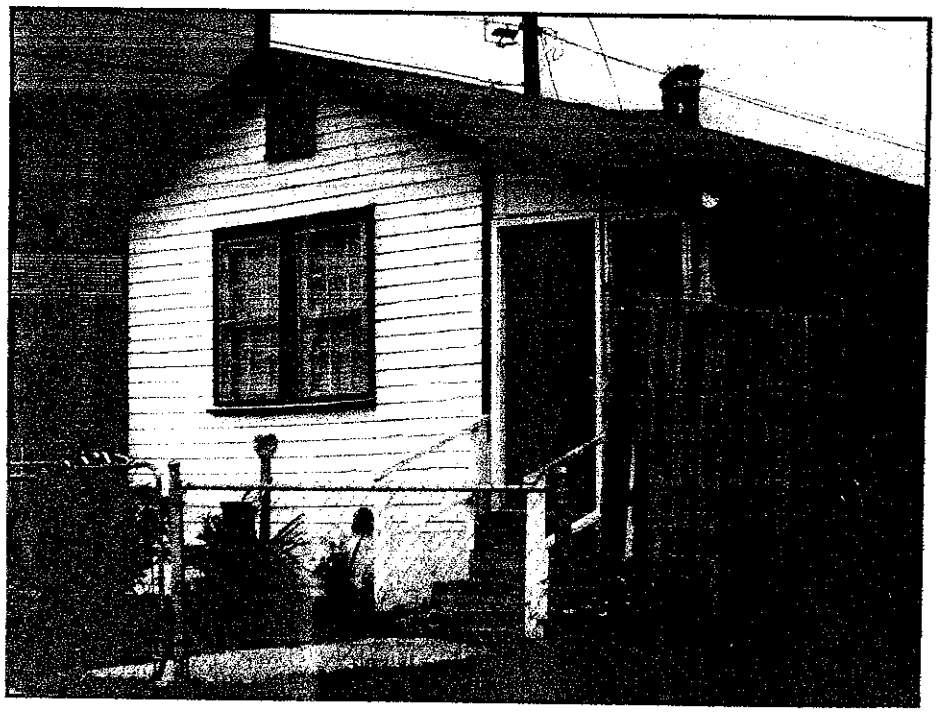


Figure 47 Example of paired six over six windows, 202 Nassau Street.

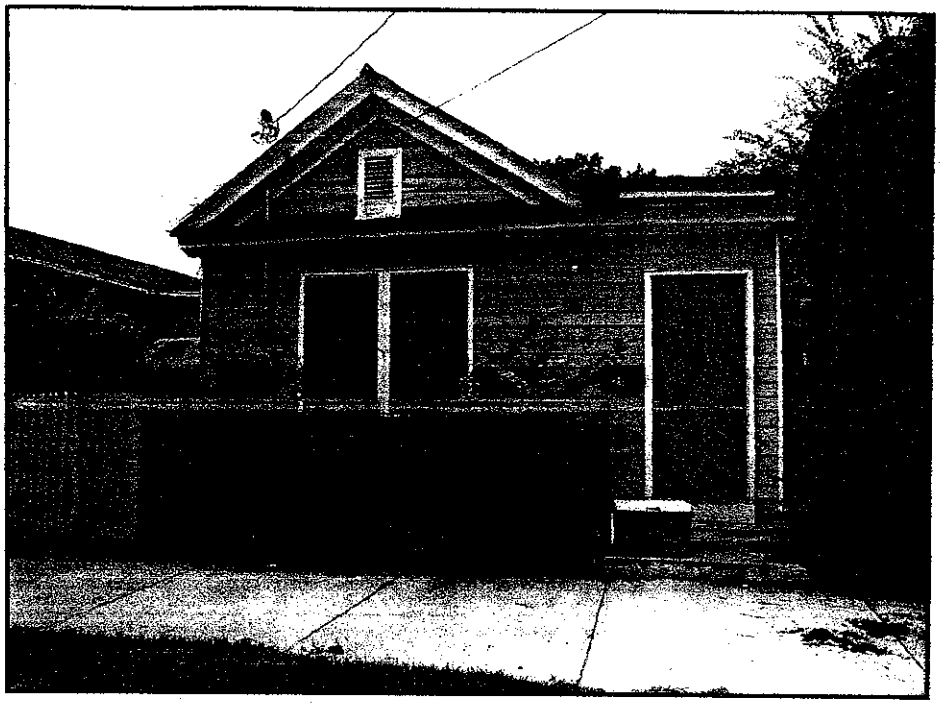


Figure 48 Example of paired two over two windows, 211 Fishburne Street.

Figure 49 Example of a bay window, 6 Larnes Street.

Figure 50 Example of a tripartite window, 7 Woodall Court.

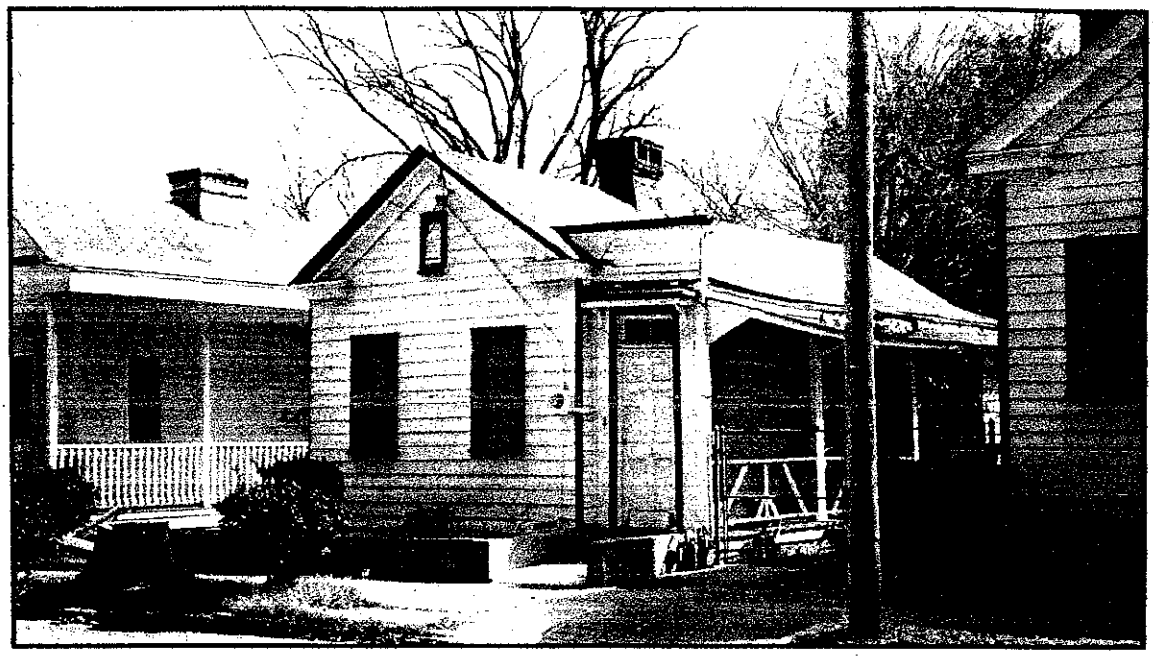


Figure 51 Example of an internal chimney, 9 Maverick Street.

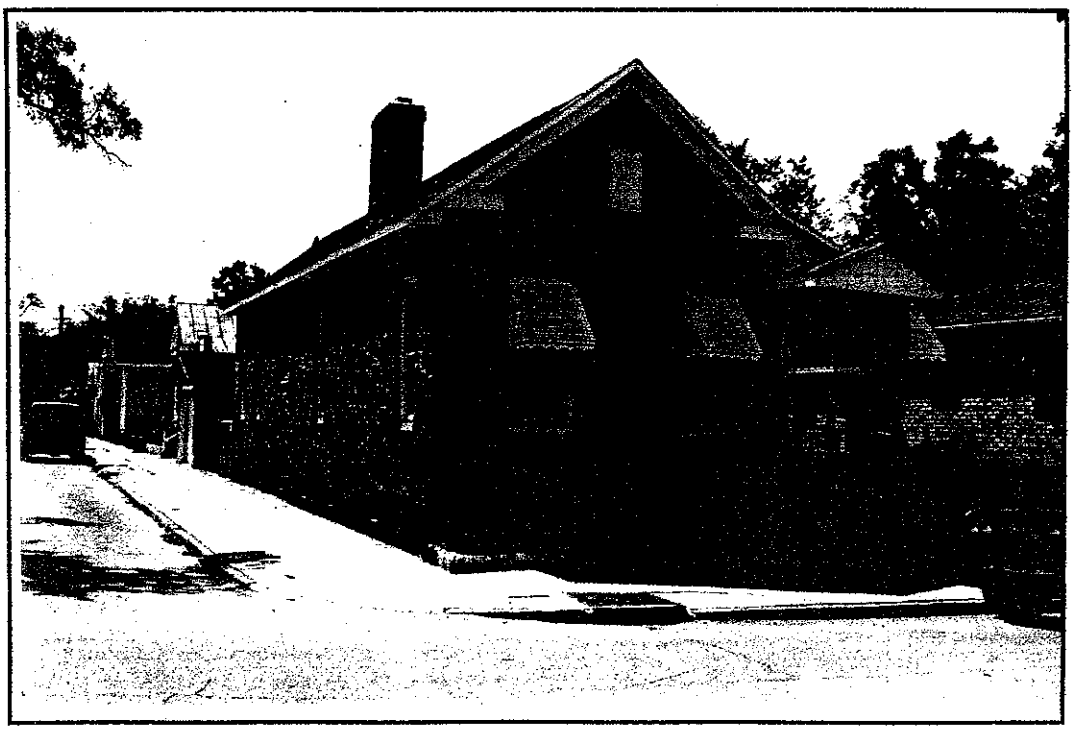


Figure 52 Example of a side chimney, 356 Huger Street.

Figure 53 Example of side entry, 7 Court Street.

Figure 54 Example of a piazza door with no transom window, 400 Sumter Street.

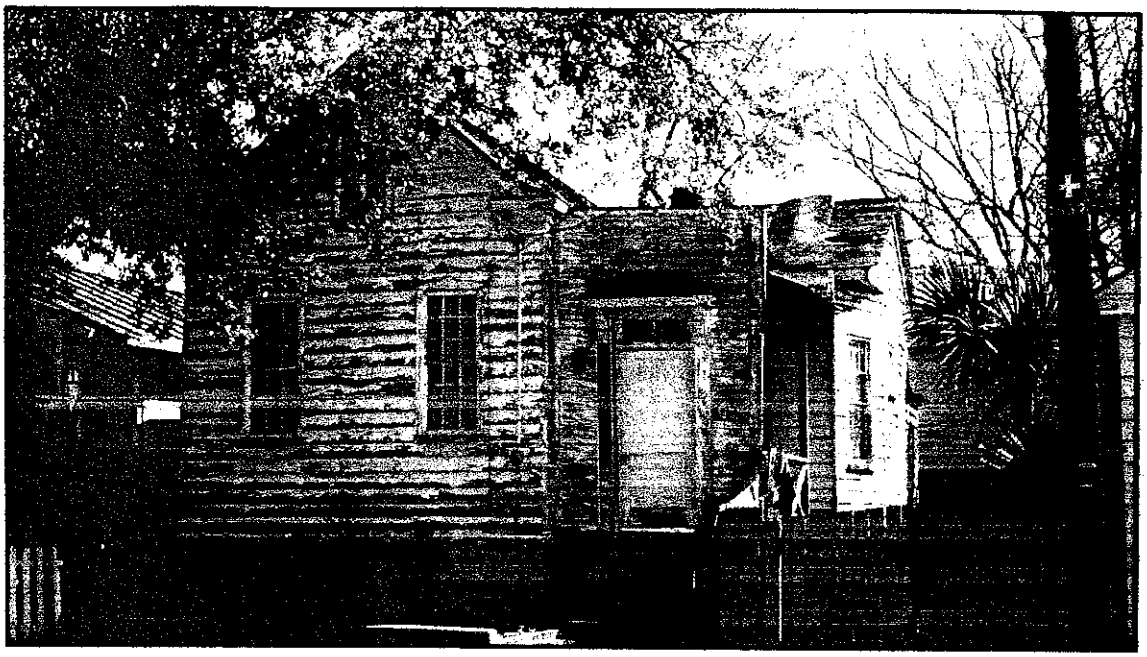


Figure 55 Example of piazza door with a decorative transom window, 379 Sumter Street.

Figure 56 Example of direct entry into the house, 177 Fishburne Street.

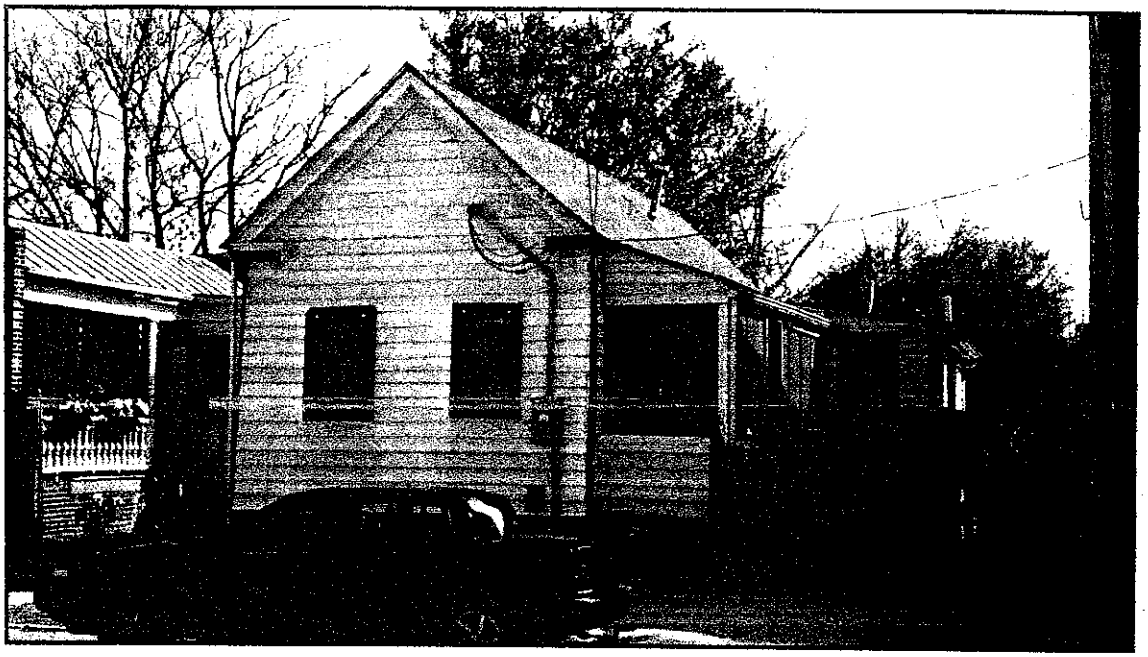


Figure 57 Example of a closed piazza with no door, 383 Sumter Street.

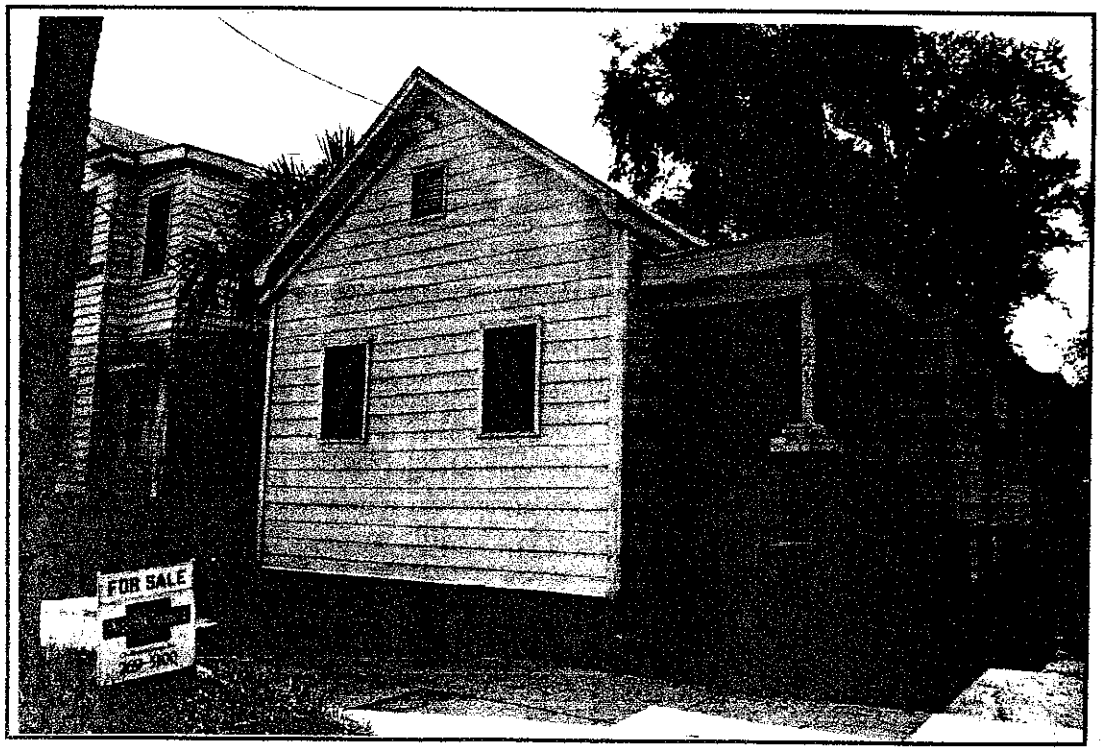


Figure 58 Example of set back piazza door, 221 Fishburne Street.