

John Bulow Tenement

174 St. Philip

c. 1834

The Charleston single house at 174 St. Philip Street might be a replacement for an earlier house built on one of the original Rugely Tracts lots. For all but three years when it was temporarily subdivided, Lot 33 has been 57' by 202' since it was drawn in an 1804 plat.

Rowland Rugely owned a very large section of Radcliffeborough. In 1765 Mr. Rugely had immigrated to South Carolina with a loan from his father and the promise of help from the colonial governor, Lord Charles Montagu. Gov. Montagu awarded Mr. Rugeley the office of register, and in 1769 Mr. Rugeley became a member of the Royal Council. He purchased several large tracts of land around Charleston for planting but never had the funds to develop them.



Mr. Rugely executed a will on December 22, 1776, and he left one-half of his lands to his brother Henry and the other half to his other siblings William, Mathew, Ann, Francis, and Elizabeth, and he then died a few days later. An agent for Henry Rugely auctioned off his one-half interest on February 17, 1806, but "difficulties were thought to exist which prevented the making of titles," and the title to several of the lots became impossibly confused.

Eventually a lawsuit was filed over the competing claims, and **John Joachim Bulow**¹ paid \$2000 for three lots at the northwest corner of King Street and Cannon Street² (where he built his family's house) and two more lots on St. Philip Street including Lot 33.³ On March 22, 1834, the deed was finally recorded establishing Mr. Bulow as the clear owner of Lot 33.⁴

Mr. John Bulow was a wealthy planter with sizeable real estate holdings on the peninsula as well as plantations around the state. The lack of consistent street numbers and the general dearth of records from the early 19th century make tracking a house in the Upper Peninsula very difficult and some details are left to conjecture. Mr. Bulow signed his will in 1840 which already referred to a wooden house on Lot 33. Generally, real estate development occurred around the same time as transfers. If 174 St. Philip Street fits that pattern, the house was likely built circa 1834 but was standing by 1840.

When John Bulow died in 1841, he left much of his property including Lot 33 to his son Thomas Lehre Bulow. By 1852, the wooden house was assessed at \$2000. Following the death of Mr. Thomas

¹ John Bulow died on June 23, 1841. "Obituary," Charleston Courier, Aug. 6, 1841, at 3

² Lots 15, 16, and 17 were each 58' along King Street by 200' deep.

³ Lot 76 was on the west side of St. Philip Street (57' by 190'), and Lot 33 was on the east side of St. Philip (57' by 202'). The plat of the Rugely Lands was recorded in deed book W8, page 385.

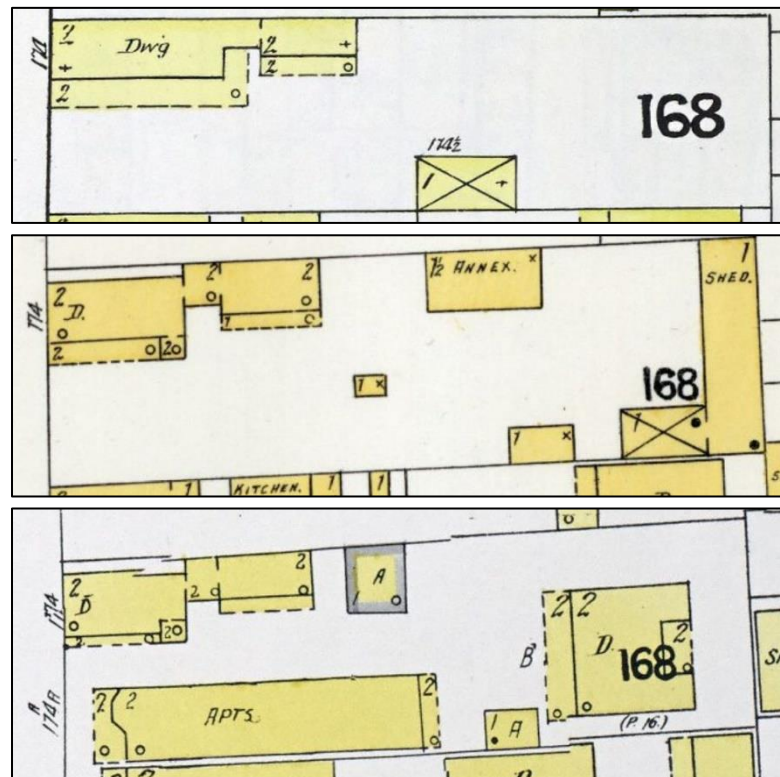
⁴ Deed book G10, page 115

Bulow, his executor sold the house to its first owner-occupant, **Emma McCall**, for \$3300 on November 28, 1859.⁵ Ms. McCall, a cook and restaurant owner,⁶ was a free person of color who occupied the house in at least 1861.

Ms. McCall sold the property to East Bay Street grocer **William Marscher** in 1863 for \$10,000.⁷ The deed did not specify the currency, but the tripling of the price in such a short time was likely caused by the use of Confederate currency. Mr. Marscher occupied the house in 1866-1867, but he seems to have relocated elsewhere and converted the house back to rental use.⁸

Mr. Marscher sold to the property to **Fred Himmelreich** for \$3000 in 1878.⁹ Mr. Himmelreich lived at the house until at least 1887. He, by then a widower, sold the house to **Charles Roessler**¹⁰ for \$2500 in 1889.¹¹

Mr. Roessler was making other changes in his life at the same time; only a few days after buying 174 St. Philip Street, he amicably ended his partnership in the hardware business with his son, Louis C.A. Roessler.¹² Charles Roessler conveyed the house in July 1891 for \$2550 to his daughter-in-law **Caroline M.A. Roessler**.¹³



Between 1888 and 1902, many additions were made behind 174 St. Philip Street. Those dependencies were wiped away and replaced by two apartment buildings by 1944.

⁵ Deed book L14, page 137

⁶ "A Pleasant Party," Daily News, Nov. 4, 1865, at 6

⁷ Deed book J14, page 203 (recorded October 23, 1863)

⁸ Likely tenants included A. Rosenkrantz (1867), Thomas Dickson (1869-1872), William Fisher (1872), Samuel Prince (1874-1875), William Aldrich (1874-1875), Elliott West (1877), and Livingston J. West (1877).

⁹ Deed book J17, page 257 (recorded February 1, 1878)

¹⁰ Charles Roessler had sons named Louis and Charles. The buyer of the house was most likely Charles Roessler, Sr. First, his son would have been somewhat young, and second, Charles, Jr. did not live in the house at least in the 1900 census.

¹¹ Deed book W20, page 289 (recorded May 20, 1889)

¹² New and Courier, June 3, 1889, at 2

¹³ Deed book N21, page 28 (recorded July 27, 1891)

If the house is not the original house, it was likely replaced by the Roessler family: Between the 1888 and 1902 editions of the maps, the main part of the house was truncated and had oddly slid away from the north property line by about two feet. In addition, the 1872 Bird's Eye View of Charleston seems to show a two-story house with a flat roof rather than a pitched roof. Also, the extant house has at least *some* Victorian details such as the brackets under the eaves.

On the other hand, the 1888 Sanborn map is certainly not error-free (the 1872 Bird's Eye View even less so) and details like eave brackets could easily be added to reflect current style. The assessment for the house remained consistent, changing no more or less than neighboring houses did during reassessments. Physical evidence strongly suggests that the house is antebellum and not a late Victorian house. The exterior siding is wooden clapboard with a bead long the edge—and strong indicator of early 19th century materials—and the attic floor is wide pine planks. In addition, the framing in the attic was pegged together with Roman numbers marked on the members for use in assembling the structure, both of which are also rare by the mid-19th century.



The Roesslers were definitely owner-occupants who made the house their family home the entire time the family owned the house. Eventually, Mrs. Roessler sold the house to **Rebecca Reznick** on August 21, 1913, beginning a string of short ownerships and ping-pong transfers.¹⁴ First, less than two years after buying the house, Ms. Reznick sold the property to **Sam Banov** for \$6500 on July 6, 1915.¹⁵ He likewise held the house for less than two years before selling to **Samuel Solomon** for \$5500 on April 5, 1917.¹⁶ Then, after just three years, the house was reconveyed to **Ms. Reznick** again on April 8, 1920.¹⁷

In 1922, Ms. Reznick added two independent apartment buildings to the lot. The date of construction can be precisely identified. First, the units appear for the first time in the 1923 assessment. Second, and more precisely, Hughes Co. filed a lien against the lot to collect the unpaid \$734 on the

¹⁴ Deed book Y26, page 56

¹⁵ Deed book O27, page 277

¹⁶ Deed book E28, page 330

¹⁷ Deed book E30, page 96

supply of \$1650 of materials for new buildings in May, June, and July 1922.¹⁸ At nearly the same time, Mrs. Reznick sold the lots with the newly christened 174, 174A, and 174 ½ St. Philip Street to her husband, **Hyman Reznick**, on September 19, 1922.¹⁹

Mr. Reznick temporarily split the property. In 1932, he conveyed an L-shaped portion with the two new apartment houses to Sam Solomon in trust for the benefit of his son, **Moses**

Reznick.²⁰ On the same day, he conveyed the northwest portion with the older house back to his wife.²¹ Although the two new buildings were obviously used as rental properties, the Reznick family lived at 174 St. Philip Street themselves while the family was the owner, starting by 1914.

Both parts were conveyed by Mrs. Reznick and her son's trustee to **Sam Altman, Isadore Altman, and I. Herman Altman** on December 4, 1935.²² The three men sold the complex of dwellings to **Charles Realty Co.** for \$3500 on November 10, 1939, along with lots of other properties.²³ The parcel was intensively used as a rental property. In fact, there were seven families living in different buildings in the 1940 census.

The lot and house at 174 St. Philip Street was sold by the company to **St. Philip's Square, LLC** on December 10, 1997, for \$450,000.²⁴ In 2020, the three buildings are all used as rental properties.



In 1922, two separate rental buildings were added to the property: a narrow unit in the side yard (left) and a large, square unit at the back of the lot (right).

¹⁸ Deed book K31, page 180 (filed Sept. 6, 1922)

¹⁹ Deed book F31, page 252

²⁰ Deed book Z36, page 331 (recorded Mar. 31, 1932)

²¹ Deed book V36, page 6

²² Deed book N38, page 363

²³ Deed book B41, page 528

²⁴ Deed book F294, page 614.