

332 MEETING STREET:

North East Corner
Of Meeting Street
And Henrietta Street

Emily E. Martin
HP 611
October 11, 2007

Current Site and Building Description

The site of the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building, 334 Meeting Street, is situated north of Calhoun Street in the area known as Wraggborough. The principle façade of the building follows Meeting Street on the west side and is bounded to the south by Henrietta Street and to the north by Charlotte Street. According to an unrecorded plat prepared by James G. Pennington, P.L.S. dated September 27, 1999, the site is shown as 2.18 acres.¹ The site contains three separate zoning classifications: general business (GB), diverse residential 1F (DR-1F), and diverse residential 2F (DR-2F). Diverse residential districts allow single, two-family, or multi-family dwellings; the difference between a DR-1F and DR-2F is the density of units per acre.²

The seven-story building (six-story with utilities penthouse) occupies the front portion of the property with a 151-car parking lot behind. There is a small plaza in front of the building, giving a view of the neighboring Citadel Square Baptist Church steeple from both directions on Meeting Street. The building contains approximately 107,758 gross square feet, 90,151 rentable square feet, and 69,096 usable square feet. The face of the building is clad in brick and marble, possibly the most exposed marble on the façade of a building in the city of Charleston.³ Due to multiple reasons, the building has been unoccupied since 1999.

This particular report will intensely focus on the north east corner of Meeting Street and Henrietta Street. That corner's address was 332 Meeting Street prior to the United States Government purchasing that parcel along with several butting adjacent parcels to provide space for the L. Mendel Rivers Federal building along with parking.

¹ Maher, Michael. Noted in a document prepared by the Charleston Civic Design Center courtesy of Historic Charleston Foundation.

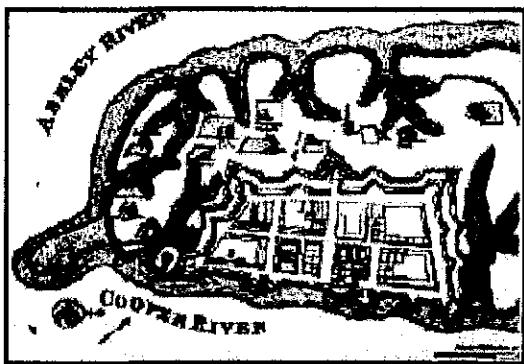
² GSA, L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building Online Auction, property information.

³ Behr, Robert. *Should the Mendel Rivers Building be Saved?* Post and Courier.

History of Wraggborough

The land that contains the present day Wraggborough sits on a large tract of land originally granted to Richard Cole by the Crown. Richard Cole was the carpenter of the ship *Carolina*, which brought the colonists from England to the New World.⁴ The land was granted to Samuel Wragg in 1715 and later passed to Joseph Wragg, hence the beginning of the Wragg family legacy in this area of the peninsula.

The Wragg tract sat well above Boundary Street (Calhoun Street), which was not part of the original "Grand Modell" plan set forth in 1680. According to Edward Crisp's survey map of 1704, a walled fortification surrounded some of the streets set forth in the "Grand Modell."⁵ Development was sparse in other areas of the peninsula including the Wragg lands. As is natural in every young city, the boundaries of development began to expand with time.



*Edward Crisp Map, 1704 of
Charleston and her fortifications,
courtesy of
<http://www.scottishritecalifornia.org>*

Known for being entrepreneurial merchants, both Samuel and Joseph Wragg were independent slave traders.⁶ Many self-made men like the Wraggs moved just outside of the city limits where they would invest their new fortune in land to become Charleston's gentry.

⁴ Do you Know Your Charleston? *Post and Courier*.

⁵ Poston, Jonathan. The Buildings of Charleston.

⁶ Funk, James. Three Rivers Form an Ocean.

Samuel Wragg, a member of the colonial council, gained notoriety in another way. On a June morning in 1718, Samuel Wragg and his four-year old son William along with about eight ships full of Charleston's most prominent citizens were seized and held hostage. The taker of these hostages was Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard the Pirate. The governor of Charles Town received a ransom message from Blackbeard asking for medicine; meanwhile, Blackbeard's fleet blocked traffic entering and leaving Charleston harbor. The conditions were if the governor did not comply, Wragg and the others from the ships would be beheaded. Upon receiving a chest full of medicine, mainly mercury, Wragg and the others were returned safely to dry land. This careless act by Blackbeard was the beginning of his downfall. Shortly thereafter, Blackbeard was taken down in North Carolina.⁷

In 1758, Joseph Wragg partitioned his land and distributed it among his heirs. John Wragg, the eldest son, received 79 acres of land between the Cooper River and the Broad Path, now known as King Street. John Wragg died in 1796, leaving no heirs. His siblings and their children had the land surveyed and turned into a suburban development by surveyor Joseph Purcell in 1801.⁸ The streets were named for Joseph Wragg's children and remain to this day John, Judith, Mary, Ann, Charlotte, Elizabeth, and Henrietta streets. The family also donated two green spaces to the city known as Wragg Square and Wragg Mall.

In its infancy, the development became known for its plethora of grand family homes. Notable homes such as the Manigault House, the Aiken-Rhett House, and the Gibbes House dotted the landscape with large suburban homes. Tenements were also built along some streets such as Aiken's Row on Wragg Square and the William Henry

⁷ Rosen, Robert. A Short History of Charleston.

⁸ Charleston County Public Library. The Charleston Multimedia Project. www.ccpl.com.

Houston tenements on John Street. Soon, this area was truly a thriving community with churches, grocers, rail depots and other businesses.

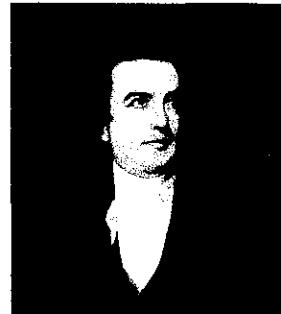
One street of particular interest to the 332 Meeting Street property is southern bounding Henrietta Street. This street is only one block in length and was home to many free blacks before the Civil War. Septima Clark, an important civil rights leader, lived at 16 Henrietta Street in her early adulthood. Unfortunately, 16 Henrietta Street along with all but three antebellum homes have not survived.⁹

Platt of Wragg Land, courtesy of Charleston County RMC

⁹ Poston, Jonathan. The Buildings of Charleston.

Reverend William May Wightman

According to the 1849 City of Charleston Directory as well as deed book L11 page 100, Reverend William Wightman purchased and resided in a three story wooden house at 332 Meeting Street. The official records show



*Reverend William
May Wightman,
photo courtesy of
Wofford College*

Wightman owning the property from February 3, 1843 until July 1, 1858. He most likely lived in the residence for only short periods of time due to his various duties relating to the Methodist Conference. Better known as the president of Wofford College from 1853 to 1859, Reverend Wightman was truly a renaissance man.

Born to devout Methodists William and Matilda Wightman, young William was the eldest born January 28, 1809. His mother, Matilda Wightman was a native of Plymouth, England and had reputedly sat on the lap of John Wesley once as a child. Her parents were also friends of early British Methodist leader Adam Clarke.¹⁰ William grew up in Charleston, South Carolina with eight siblings.

Wightman graduated from College of Charleston in 1827, and joined the South Carolina Annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church a year later. During his six-year tenure with the conference, he served appointments on the Pee Dee circuit and in Charleston, Orangeburg, Santee, Camden, and Abbeville. In 1834, he moved his concentration to Virginia, serving as the financial agent for Randolph-Macon College, the oldest Methodist College in the south. He helped raise \$20,000 to fulfill the Conference's pledge to endow the chair at Randolph-Macon. He also served as a professor of English literature at Randolph-Macon for two years.

¹⁰ Wofford College. *Biography of William Wightman*. www.wofford.edu.

Upon his return to South Carolina in 1839, Wightman became the presiding elder of the Cokesbury District. He became the editor of the South Christian Advocate in 1840 where he served for ten years. The Advocate served as his pulpit to reach Methodists all over the southeast.

Throughout his years as a minister, presiding elder, professor, and editor, he grew in stature to become the leading member of the South Carolina Annual Conference. He was initially elected a delegate to the General Conference in 1840. He was a member of the 1844 conference when American Methodism split into northern and southern branches. This split within the church had to do with the obvious issue of the time, slavery. The next year, he was at the Conference where the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was founded in Louisville, Kentucky. He was a member of every succeeding General Conference until elected bishop.

In a letter from Governor James Henry Hammond, Reverend Wightman was praised for being a supporter of the split of the southern Methodist Church.



*Governor James H. Hammond,
Photo courtesy of
www.schway.net*

"I felt grateful to the Methodist for the length they had gone to sustain slavery. I saw the difficulties they would have to encounter to sustain themselves in the Border States and I felt definite that they should have all the support which the people of the South could afford them...the North used every effort to swindle the South...I wish I were one (a Methodist). I believe you to be the genuine Franciscans of the Protestant Religion."¹¹

-A letter dated June 7, 1844 from South Carolina Governor James H. Hammond (1842-1844)

¹¹ William, M. Wightman. *Letter Written to Rev. Wightman by Governor Hammond*. William Wightman Papers. The South Carolina Historical Society.

It is uncertain when Wightman and Reverend Benjamin Wofford, founder of Wofford College, became friends, but the two most likely grew close during Wightman's years as a financial agent at Randolph-Macon. In his journal, Wightman notes that had and Wofford had many conversations regarding education which may have been the precursor to Benjamin Wofford establishing and endowing a college.

Upon his death, Benjamin Wofford named Wightman to the board of trustees at his forming college in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Wofford also bequeathed \$100,000 to the founding of a college "for literary, classical, and scientific education in his native district." Wightman became the president of the board when it met at Spartanburg's Central Methodist Church in April 1851. The laying of the cornerstone of Main Building at the campus took place on July 4, 1851 with Wightman giving the keynote address. He described a vision of the college's place in Methodist higher education, fulfilling the dream of Reverend Benjamin Wofford.

Reverend Wightman was elected as the first president of Wofford College at the board of trustees meeting in November of 1853. He welcomed the first seven students on August 1, 1854. During his tenure as the president of Wofford College, he raised thousands of dollars throughout the state of South Carolina to increase the endowment.

After resigning his presidency in 1859, Wightman served in various other capacities including chancellor of Southern University in Greensboro, Alabama. He returned to Charleston in 1866 when he was elected bishop at the General Conference. He had sold his house at 332 Meeting Street and had moved to 79 Anson Street in Ansonborough. Until his death in 1882, he presided over conference around the south. His last South Carolina Conference was in 1879. He died on February 15, 1882 in Charleston and was buried in Magnolia Cemetery. His final honor was from the bells of Saint Michael's Episcopalian tolling, a rare honor bestowed upon this important Methodist leader.¹²

¹² Wofford College. *Biography of William Wightman*. www.wofford.edu.

History of 332 Meeting Street

The history of 332 Meeting Street is of particular interest especially since the actual address no longer exists. The property was swallowed into a large plat, now 334 Meeting Street, when the United States Government acquired it as well as numerous lots surrounding it.

As discussed before, the land was originally granted to Robert Cole by the Crown in or around 1670. It remained in his hands until the Wraggs acquired the land in 1715. It was held within the Wragg family until around 1801 when the decedents of Samuel and Joseph Wragg had the land surveyed properly, parceled into lots, and many were sold to independent investors.

Within this research, the oldest record found on this particular parcel is that of a release issued by Sheriff C.J. Steedman to C.G. Memminger from August 5, 1828.¹³ The property then passed through several owners, which can be observed on the chain of title record.¹⁴ There was no known building on this property during this time period.

The first written document containing a dwelling on the property is a deed between grantor William Prothro and grantee Marmaduke J. Mendenhall dated March 24, 1838.¹⁵ The structure was just noted as a dwelling on the property. By 1858, the dwelling was noted as being "a three story wooden building with other buildings." The deed noting the dwelling was between grantor Reverend William M. Wightman and grantee Joseph A. Simmons, dated July 1, 1858.¹⁶ This building remained in various evolutions on the site until it was demolished in the 1940's to make way for a new United States Post Office.

¹³ Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance. Deed Book X9 Page 346.

¹⁴ See Appendix

¹⁵ Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance. Deed Book T10 Page 409.

¹⁶ Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance. Deed Book F14 Page 122.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show an evolution of this building over time.¹⁷ The 1888 map shows a four story wooden dwelling with a three-story front piazza. It appears that there is an attached back building of two stories, possibly a kitchen. There is also a stable behind the house.

By 1902, the dwelling is three stories with a two story front piazza. One can draw the conclusion that the fourth story may have been taken down by the hurricane of 1893. The basic footprint of the house remains the same. By 1929, the house has been remodeled in the back. The two story kitchen house appears to have been demolished and replaced with a two story back piazza as well as two additional small one story buildings. The stable has also had a small addition.

The 1944, Sanborn reveals the conversion of the stable into a garage suitable for three cars. This map also shows both piazzas enclosed. The 1951 Sanborn Map shows that all buildings on the site have been demolished, and the 1955 map indicates the use of 332, 334, and 340 Meeting Street as one large parking lot. The final Sanborn Map from 1967 shows a sketch of the plan of the Federal Office Building and its parking area.

The property of the United States Government, 334 Meeting Street, extends to the south east to 10 Henrietta Street and the north east to 51 Charlotte Street. Nearly fourteen properties in total were demolished along Henrietta Street to create the large piece of property now known as 334 Meeting Street. According to the Charleston City Ward Books, the majority of these properties were purchased by the United States Government between 1938 and 1941. Several were indicated as condemned properties.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Appendix

¹⁸ Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance. Ward books.

Current State of 334 Meeting Street

L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building c. 1964

Currently, the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building, 334 Meeting Street, is for sale via an online auction being facilitated by the United States General Services Administration. The minimum opening bid is set at \$12 million with the minimum bid increment set at \$250,000. In April 2007, the City of Charleston offered the United States Government \$11.5 million, but the offer was rejected. The city also offered an exchange plan with the Federal Government, but the deal fell through. In the plan, the city would take over 334 Meeting Street and the Federal Government would take over a building around Broad Street closer to the courthouse.¹⁹

The building has been sitting vacant since 1999, when it sustained damages from Hurricane Floyd. The wind damage revealed an asbestos problem within the structure of the building. According to Robert Mitchell, councilman for the Mazcyk-Wraggborough Garden District, it would cost the city \$2 million to remove the asbestos and demolish the building.²⁰ There are many proponents for demolishing and building and still others who feel it should stay as one of the city's few modern buildings.

If the City of Charleston had acquired 334 Meeting Street, there were several campaigns of designers, politicians, and activist citizens with their own plans for the site on Meeting Street. The Committee to Save the City proposed a plan to replace the majority of the buildings on Marion Square, including the Federal Building. The new building would imitate the now demolished Charleston Hotel with a large front colonnade.²¹ The City of Charleston Civic Design Group proposed an urban

¹⁹ Slade, David. Post and Courier. *City to offer \$11.5M for Rivers Federal Building.*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See Appendix

revitalization plan for the site that, though broad, emphasized the importance of filling the building with people in mixed use capacities such as residential and retail.²²

The L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building is certainly a conversation piece along the perimeter of Marion Square. Edward Gilbreth, a columnist with the Post and Courier wrote, "The Federal Building in particular is simply...what is the correct word? Hideous perhaps?"²³ Others do truly see a beautiful example of responsible 20th century architecture. News and Courier Columnist Ashley Cooper stated that local architect John Califf imitated architectural forms from historic buildings in the city.²⁴ The arches at the base of the building reflect the piazza from 70 Ashley Avenue. The bricks are laid in Flemish bond similar to the neighboring Joseph Manigault House. The marble window surrounds, the panels, and the lineage reflect 21 Legare Street as well as the now demolished 213 King Street.²⁵

The fate of the building and the site still remain in question. The GSA auction closes on October 24, 2007, and as of the publication of this paper, no bid has been made. Judging from the amount of time it took from the building's closure as office space to going on the auction block, any immediate changes seem nearly impossible. The area of Marion Square is changing quickly with many other proposals for building demolition and development. Until a decision is made, however, the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building will remain an eye sore to some while others will wax poetic on its forward thinking 1960's design. No matter what happens, it will remain a topic of conversation and even heated debate.

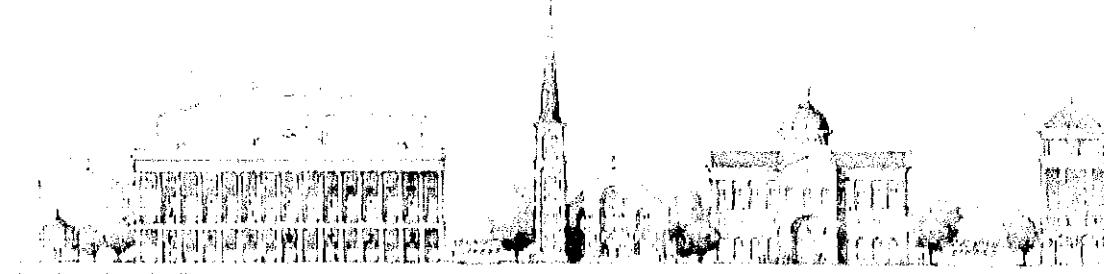
²² Maher, Michael. Noted in a document prepared by the Charleston Civic Design Center courtesy of Historic Charleston Foundation.

²³ Behr, Robert. Post and Courier. *Should the Mendel Rivers Building be Saved?*

²⁴ Historic Charleston Foundation. www.historiccharleston.org.

²⁵ Maher, Michael. Noted in a document prepared by the Charleston Civic Design Center courtesy of Historic Charleston Foundation.

Appendix



Architectural rendering by DDG

ON THE EAST SIDE OF MARION SQUARE, THE FEDERAL BUILDING

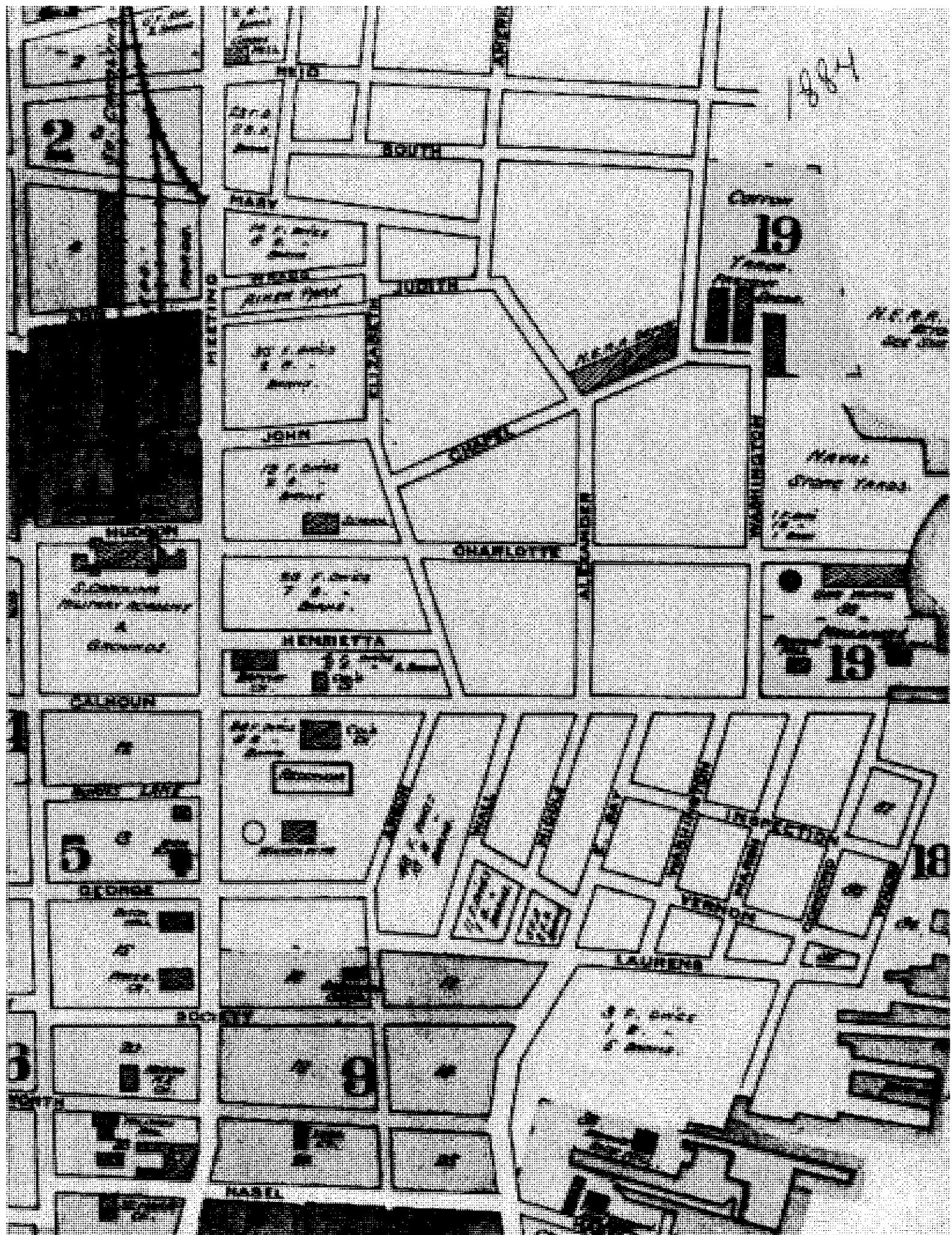
was overwhelmingly important in the survey conducted by the Federal District Neighborhood Association. The neighborhood is eager to see it replaced. The proposed building, modeled on the Chardinon Hotel, could be a restated level similar to those in other cities (for urban Bishop Gadsden). It would be set back in order not to block the spire of the Christ Episcopal Church to replace the present one, or design a new building could accommodate this. At the far right a tower building opposite to the Holiday Inn is proposed to provide gateway definition of Calhoun Street and a sense of enclosure for Marion Square.

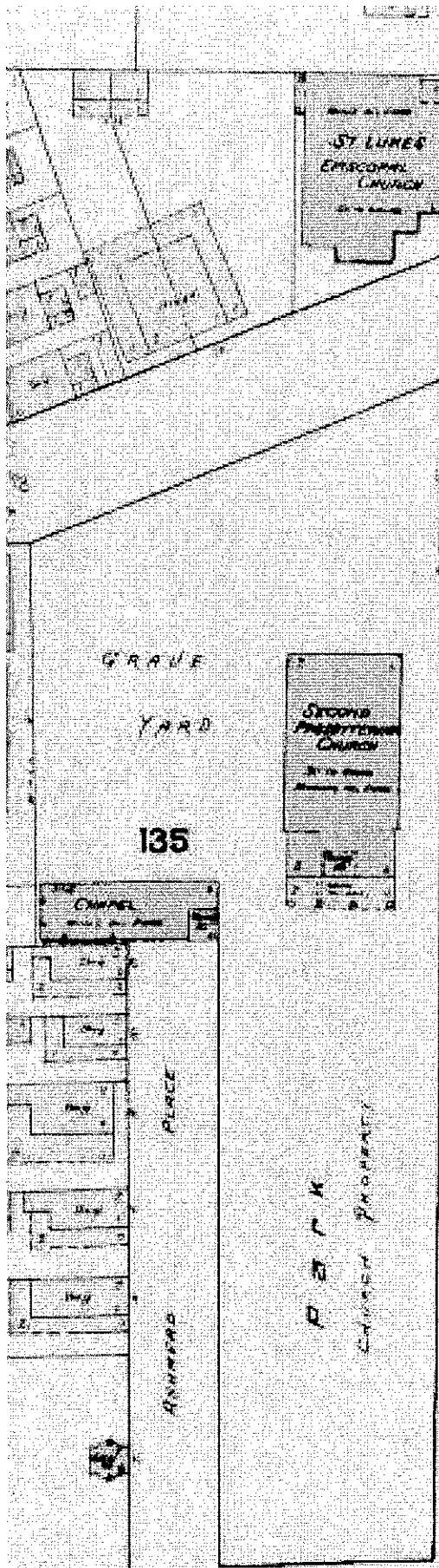
Chain-of-Title Record

Property Address: 334 Meeting Street,
corner of Meeting Street and Henrietta Street

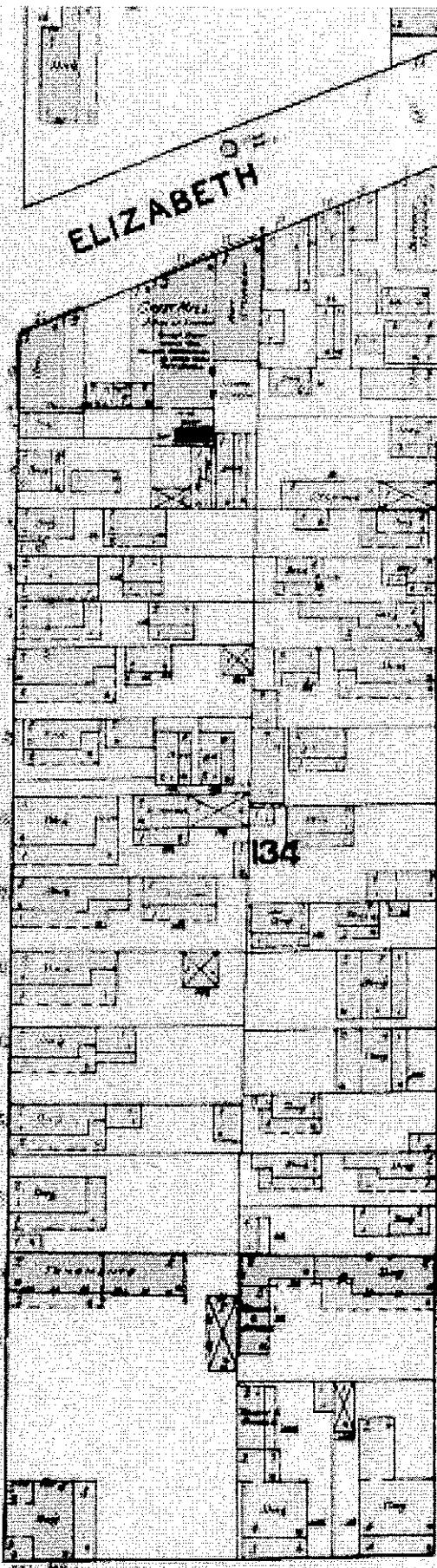
Date	Book & Page	Grantor - Seller	Grantee - Buyer	Type	Comments
March 3, 1941	K 42-263	P.M. Clement	United States of America	Conv.	
June 10, 1935	K38-416	Leila G. Dangerfield for Edward A. Burdett	P.M. Clement	Conv.	Paid \$3,750.00. Leila was willed property from her son Edward A. Burdett
April 29, 1931	E35-620	Leila G. Dangerfield	Edward A. Burdett	Conv.	
February 9, 1931	U35-321	J.J. Comer	Leila G. Dangerfield	Conv.	
December 1, 1920	E30-316	Jane M. Inabinett	J.J. Comer	Conv.	
April 6, 1904	S24-20	Louise M. Dotterer	Jane M. Inabinett	Mass Conv.	\$ 5,000 for lot with a 3 story wooden house and other buildings
November 30, 1864	U14-276	Joseph A. Simmons	Thomas D. Dotterer	Conv.	3 story wooden house and other buildings
July 1, 1858	F14-122	Rev. William M. Wightman	Joseph A. Simmons	Conv.	3 story wooden house and other buildings, lot 54 x 98 feet
February 3, 1843	L11-100	James W. Gray (Master in Equity) for Wm. Hieronymous	Rev. William M. Wightman	Public Auction	Wm. T. Hieronymous indebted to Marmaduke J. Mendenhall
May 1, 1840	E11-107	Marmaduke J. Mendenhall	William T. Hieronymous	Conv.	

March 24, 1838	T10-409	William Prothro	Marmaduke J. Mendenhall	Conv.	Lot with dwelling
October 30, 1837	R10-583	Alexander Black	William Prothro	Conv.	Paid \$2,175.00
July 22, 1837	R10-444	S.E. Meyers	Alexander Black	Conv.	Lot with dwelling
April 1, 1836	N10-149	John B. Thompson	S.E. Meyers	Conv.	Paid \$3,750.00
February 11, 1836	L10-379	B.F. Hunt	John B. Thompson	Conv.	
August 11, 1828	T10-434	C.G. Memminger	B.F. Hunt	Conv.	
August 5, 1828	X9-346	Sheriff C.J. Steedman	C.G. Memminger	Release	

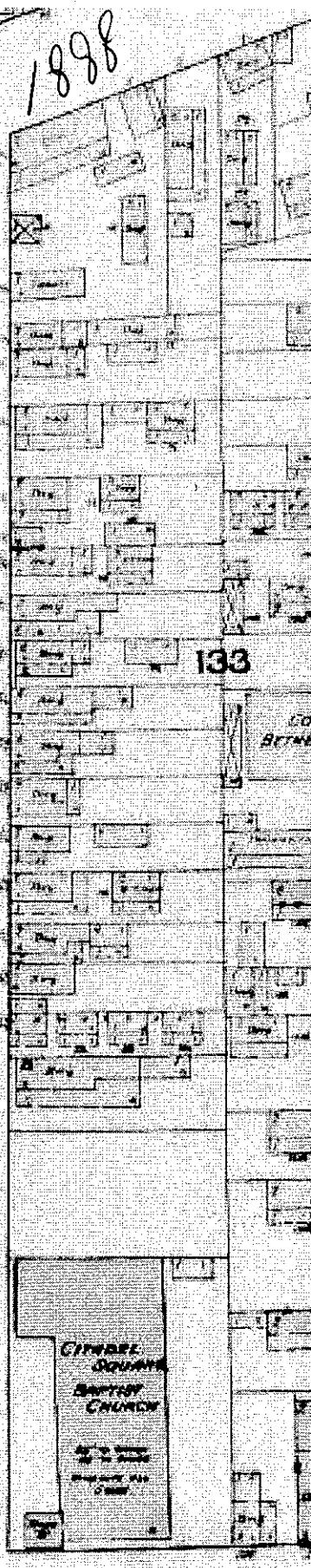




CHARLOTTE



HENRIETTA



MEETING

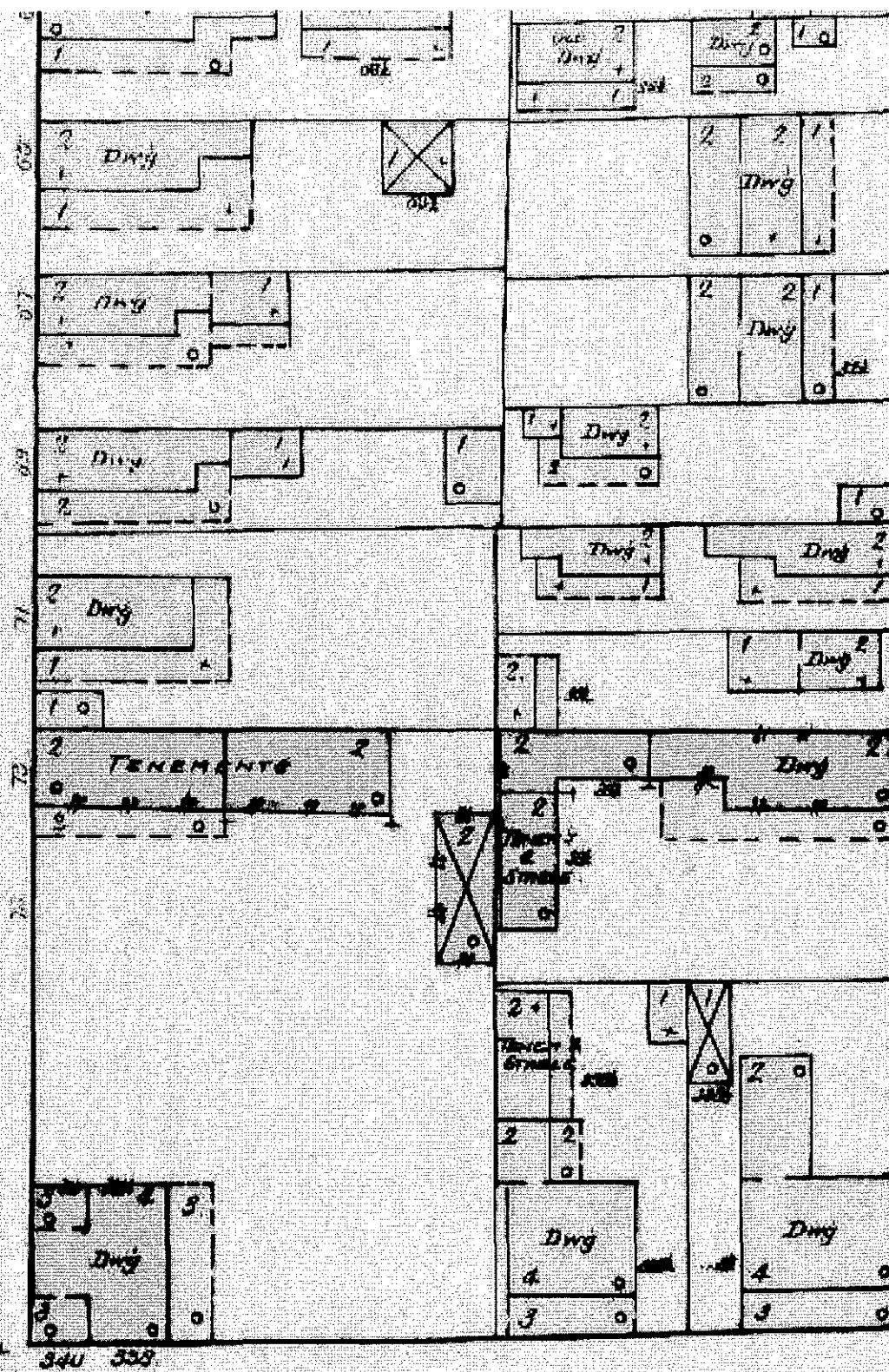
SHEET

NO. 2 OF 3

55 SHEET

CHURCH PROPERTY

A decorative flourish consisting of three stylized, overlapping oval shapes.



MEETING

12" x 12" PIPE

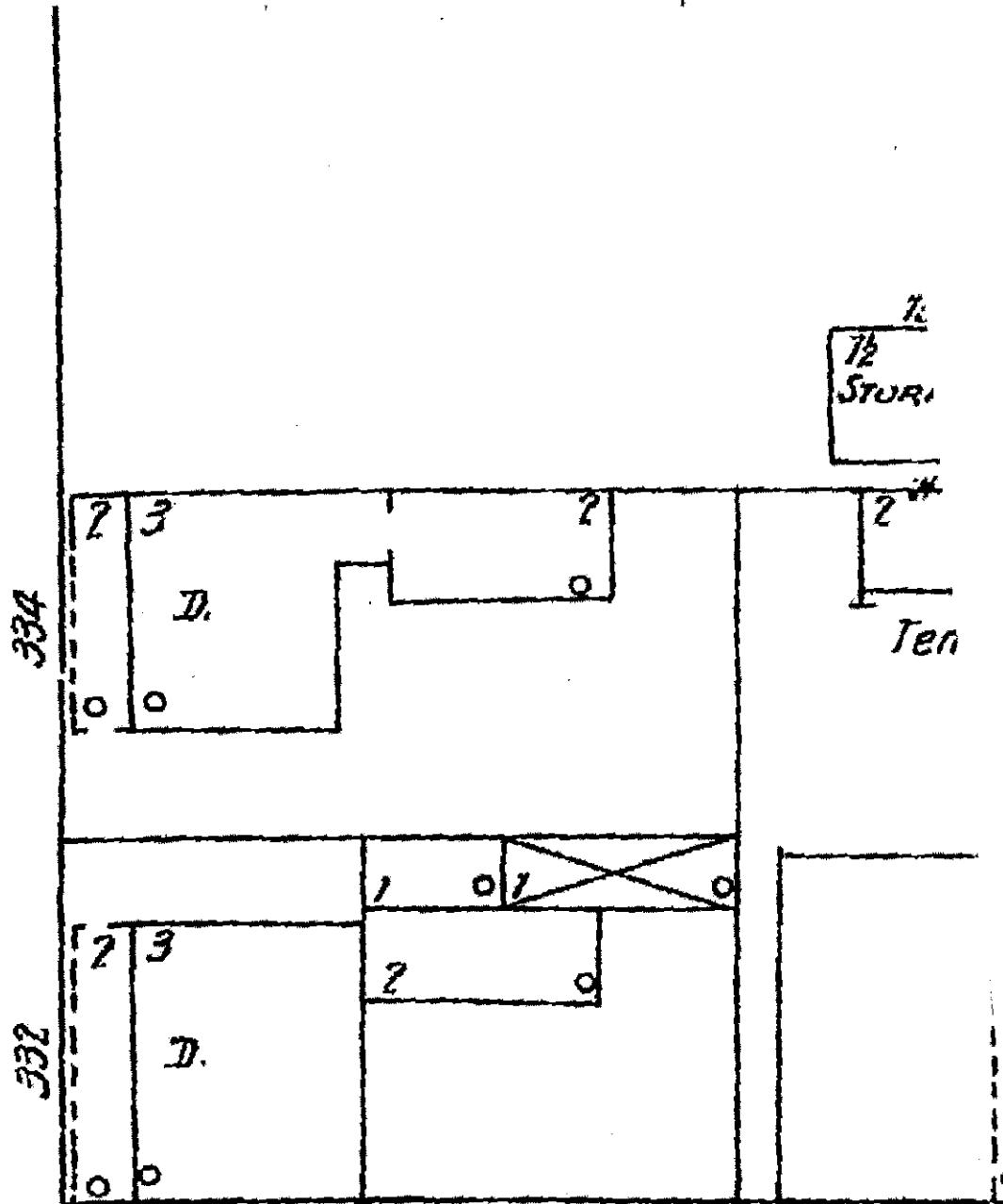
S H E E T

No. 3.

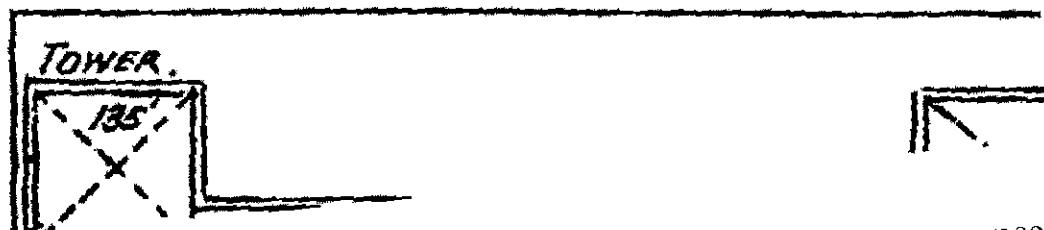
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MEETING STÍ ZÍ

1902



46

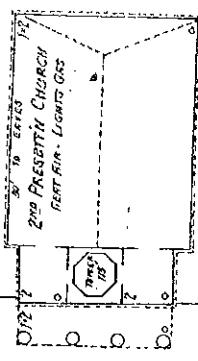


GRAVE YARD

135

ASHMEAD PL. E.

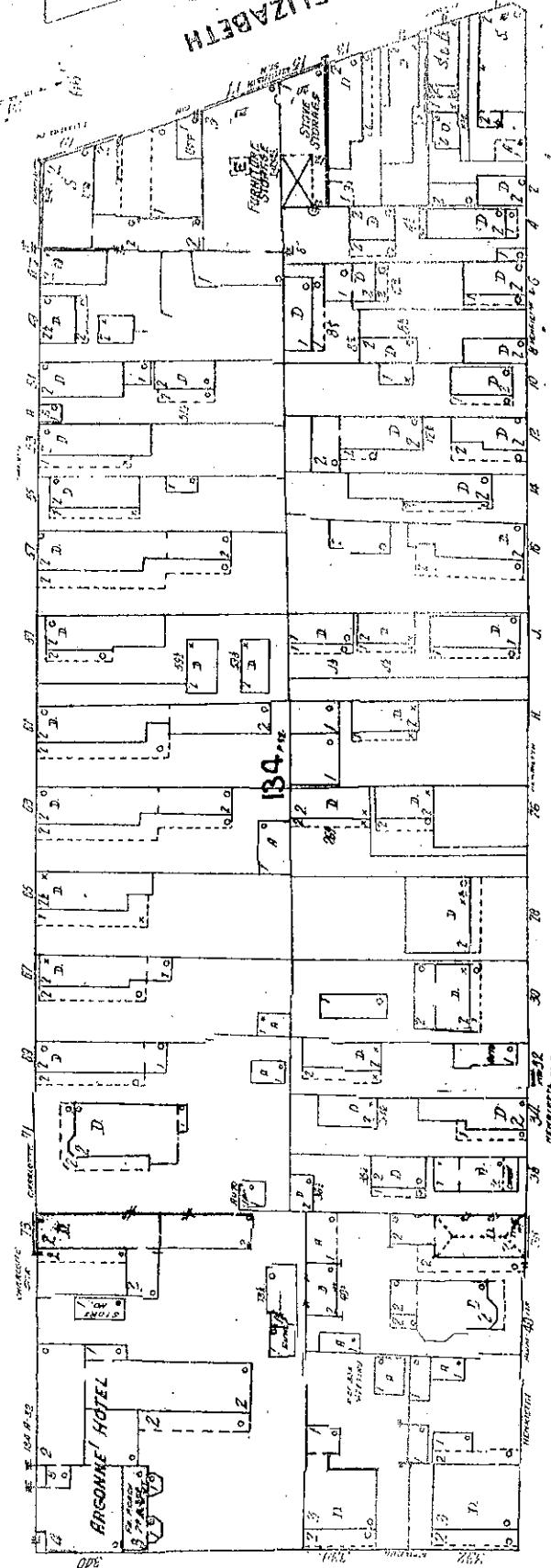
WRAGG SQUARE



CHARLOTTE ST. E.

6 W PINE

135



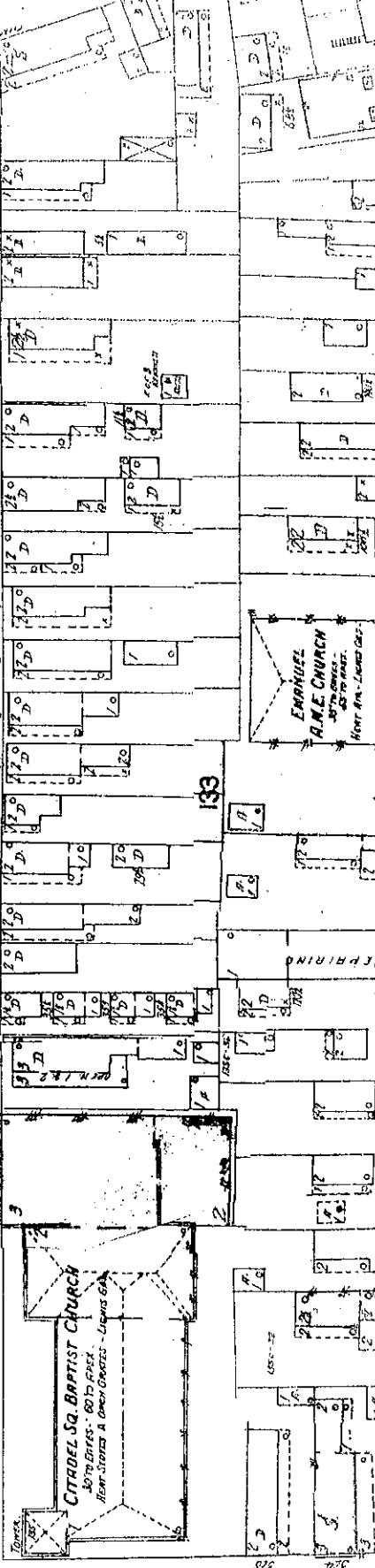
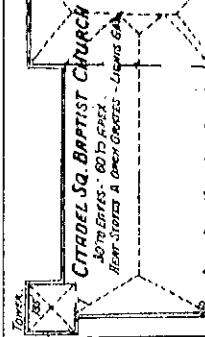
MEETING ST. N.

31

HENRIETTA ST. E.

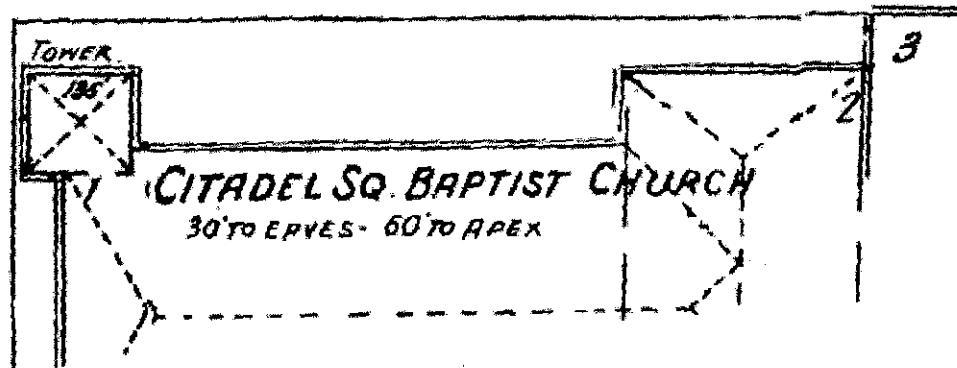
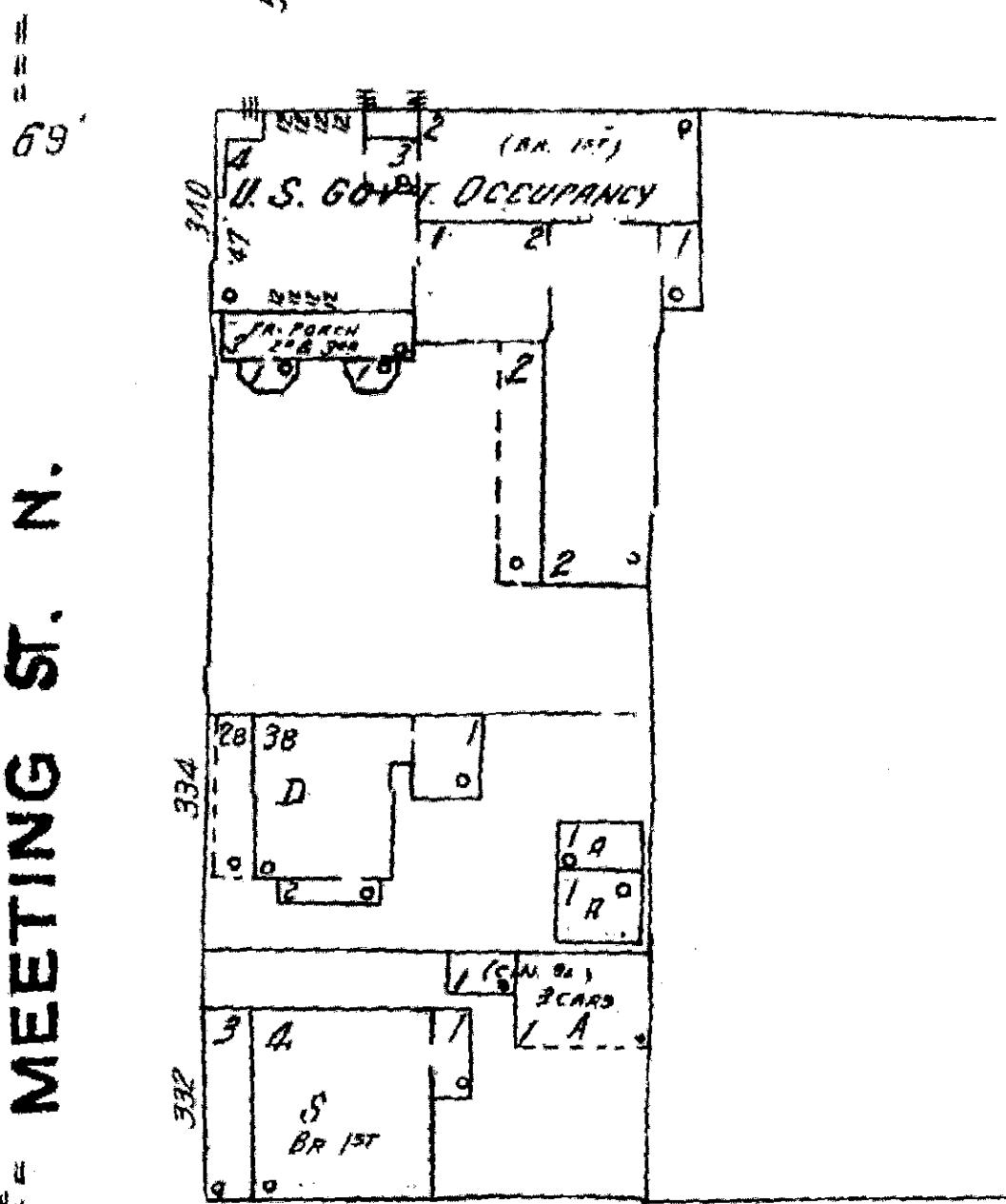
6 W PINE

135



MEETING ST. N.

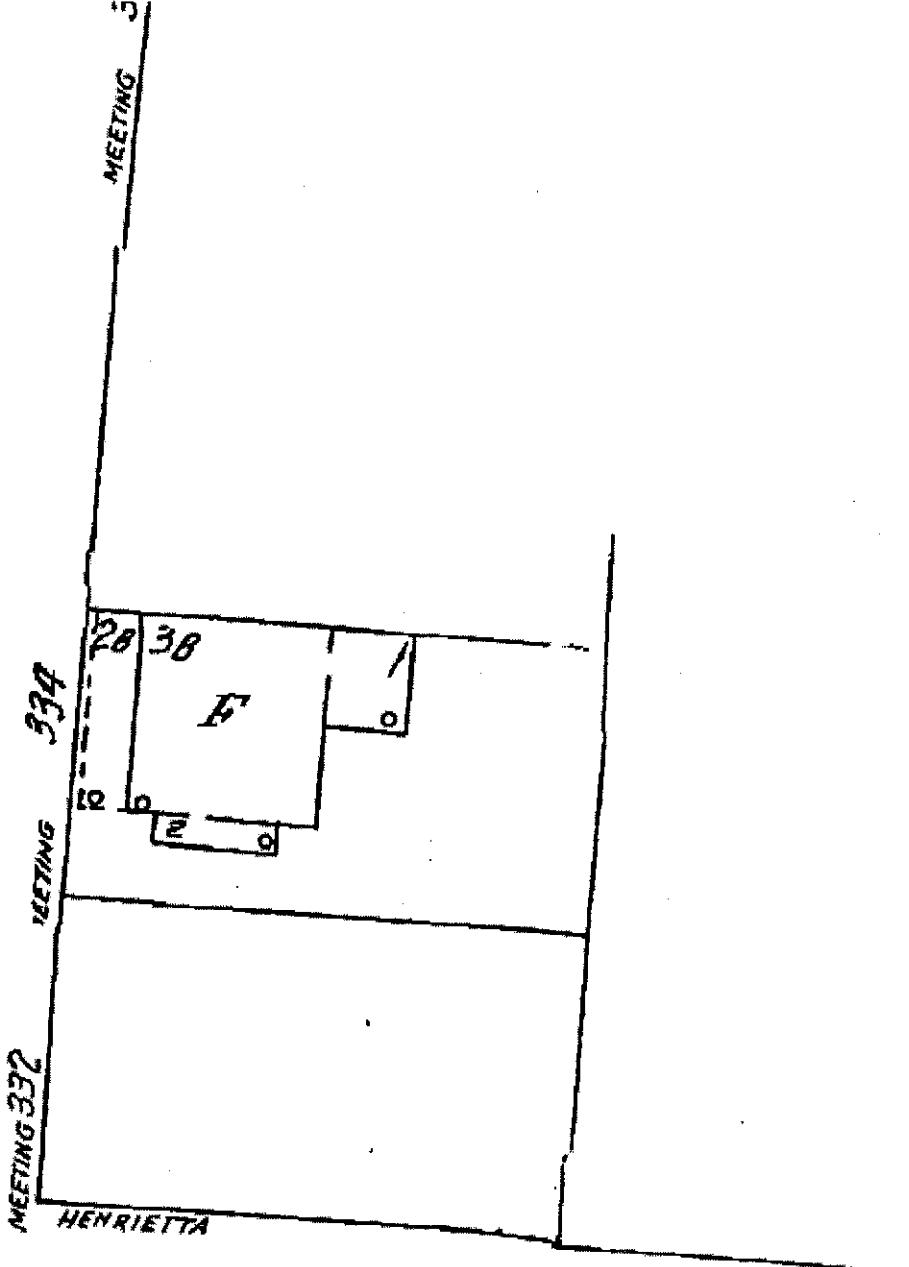
12" N PIPE
6" W PIPE



~~1952~~ 1951

MEETING ST. N.

= 12" W. PIPE =
= 6" W. PIPE =

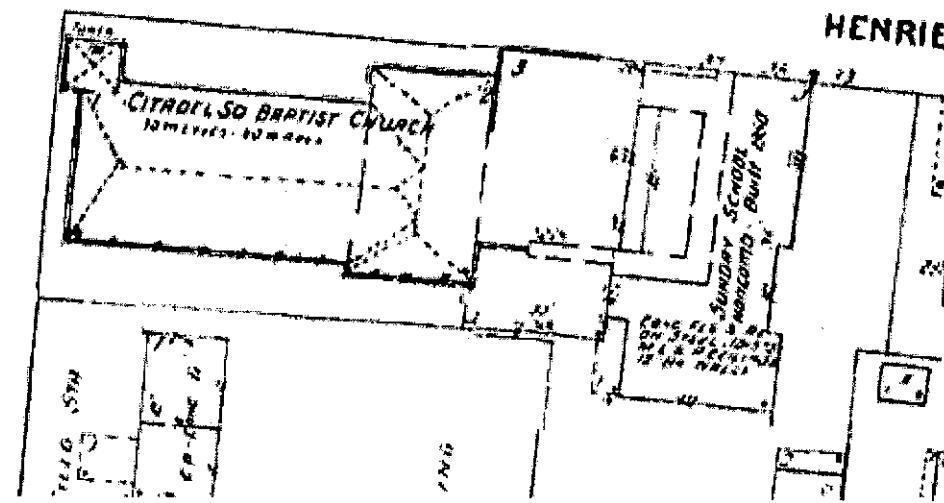


1950

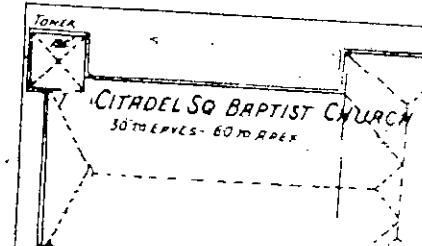
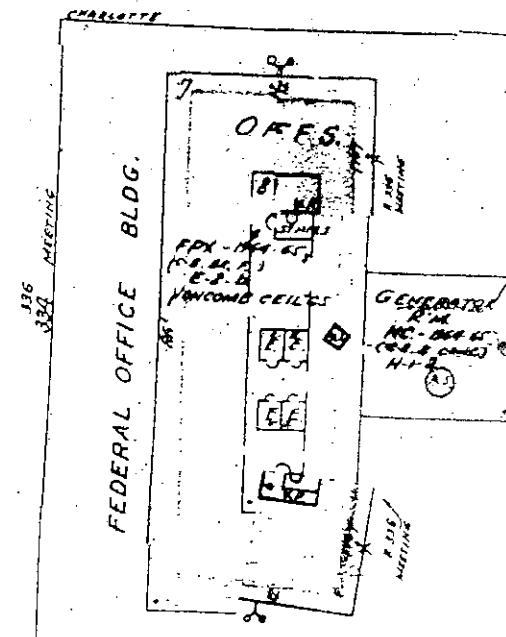
HUDSON ST. E.

31

MEETING ST. N.



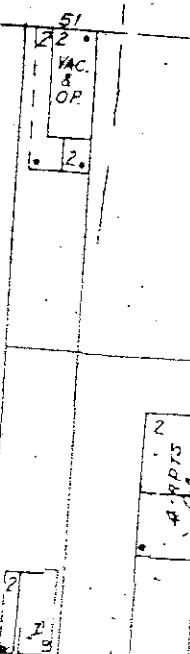
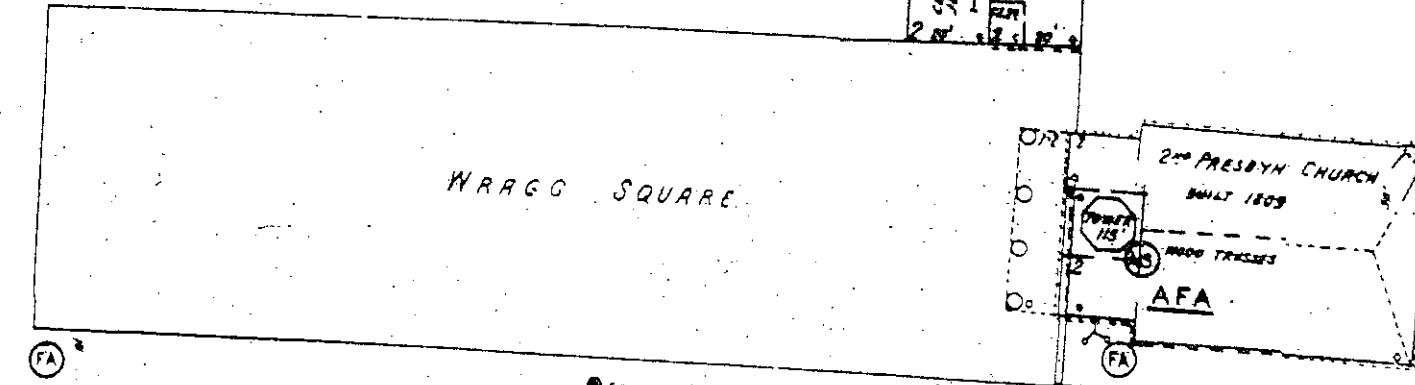
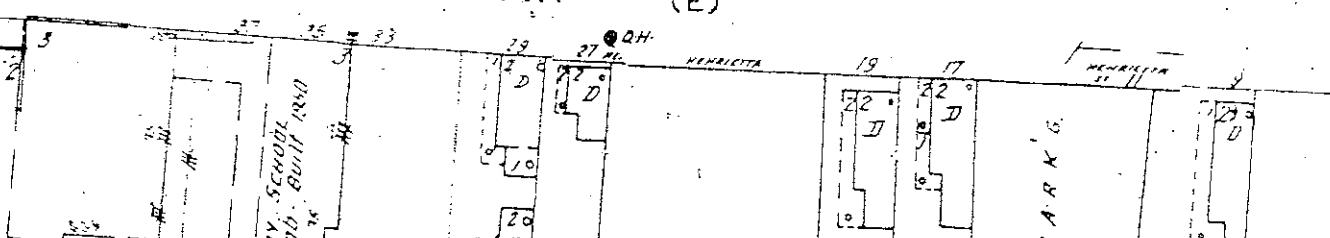
MEETING (N.)



W RAGG SQUARE

CHARLOTTE ST. E.

HENRIETTA (E)



1/16" = 100' FEET

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