

Trio Of Houses Reflects Mid-Century Prosperity

NYC

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Twenty-second in a series of articles on the early dwellings along Beaufain and Wentworth streets. The twenty-third will appear on Monday.)

By W. H. J. THOMAS

The three brick dwellings that stand closely placed together at 64, 66 and 68 Beaufain St. were constructed at a time when the economy of the city was beginning to show

a general prosperity that resulted from new business prompted by the success of the railroads and inland trade, a continuing success with staple agriculture and an adequate foreign trade.

The prosperity naturally gave way to expansion of neighborhoods and it was during this period that the early Harleston Green district reached a full development. It was also during the late 1840s and 1850s that this general prosperity and neighborhood expansion led local businessmen into developing rows or groups of separate but very similar houses for resale, a practice apparently new for this largely suburban area. It is interesting to note that many of these homes constructed by investors were quite large, well-finished residences, but the prosperity of local persons may have made this quality of product necessary.

Each of the remaining groups in the city shows a good reflection of fashion for that time, as builders were obviously concerned with interesting buyers, while the more typical conservative Charlestonian building for himself was happy to utilize general patterns of earlier generations.

A local gentleman who appears to have been quite active in the development of lots and the construction of a fair number of dwellings for speculative purposes was Francis Quinlan McHugh. An attorney at law, McHugh through the 1840s was purchasing lots all along Beaufain Street and up Coming Street, buying four, five or six vacant lots at a time, then selling each with a new home on it within a year or two.

On Oct. 6, 1849, McHugh paid \$3,000 for that portion of the north side of Beaufain now occupied by the three stucco-faced brick dwellings. The lot extended on the street side 147 feet from Coming to Kirkland Lane, up Coming 53 feet, then west 227 feet, and 180 feet along Kirkland Lane.

Some construction had taken place by 1851, because on Dec. 10 of that year, McHugh conveyed the most westerly portion of this parcel to Thomas Divine, a mason, for \$2,500.

As stated in the deed, the property as conveyed with "the further consideration that Said Thomas Divine Shall forthwith build on the eastern line a dwelling house and out building with flat roofs and without any windows or openings on said East line and also that the Said Thomas Divine completes forthwith the Buildings erected by him for Said F. Q. McHugh in Beaufain Street according to agreement for which said Divine has been already paid in full."

It appears the two similar houses at 64 and 66 Beaufain

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were built for McHugh and may be dated 1852, since they are mentioned as under construction during the previous year. We find McHugh listed as a resident of 64 Beaufain in the city directory for 1852. Since the property at 68 Beaufain was conveyed to Divine before construction of a house, it would be most accurate to call Divine the builder of this somewhat different two-story residence.

It was also in the 1850s that McHugh sold the middle dwelling at 66 Beaufain to Mary McHugh. From this date, Francis McHugh is listed as occupying a residence on the south side of Beaufain, this being 63 Beaufain, the two-and-a-half-story brick and stucco dwelling that was constructed about 1849, listed through this period in the name of Maria Theresa McHugh.

The narrowness of the three

pressive real estate transac-

tions at mid-century, file 21

pages of the index for con-

veyances for Charleston dur-

ing this period.

Gadsden, a long-time resi-

dent of South Battery, does

not appear to have occupied

this house during his

ownership but kept it as an

investment.

A few days after this con-

veyance, Divine also sold his

dwelling at 68 Beaufain

(where he is listed as a resi-

dent in 1852, along with

Michael Divine and John

Divine, also both masons),

this transaction on April 19,

1853, the purchaser being

Theodore Huchet, a local mer-

chant, who paid \$9,000 for the

property. Huchet's family liv-

ed there until 1879 when it was

sold to the Peoples National

Bank for \$2,600.

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THREE DWELLINGS WERE BUILT IN 1850s

68, 66 and 64 Beaufain developed by Francis McHugh. (Staff Photo by Burbage)

lots dictates that the dwellings

be of "single house" plan, but

even then the two buildings

put up by McHugh appear

to have a special slimmness.

— and this at a time when

the squat design was popular.

Each is made with bricks

laid in common bond and with

thick brownstone lintels and

sills to the windows (that con-

cesses to fashion), with a

slight decorative ribbing near

the parapet. The long piazzas

are more shallow than usual

but this is not out of keeping

with the narrowness and

height of each building. The

carved wooden overhang

above the entrance of 66 is

probably a post-Civil War ad-

dition.

The smaller house at 68

Beaufain, with its pressed tin

window ornaments (and the

"flat roof" that McHugh

seemed to consider worthy of

mention), takes advantage of

a slightly larger lot to spread

itself out and enjoy the more

popular proportions of the