

75 Cannon Street

c. 1825-1848

The two-and-a-half story Charleston single house with double piazzas at 75 Cannon Street is one of the oldest houses on Cannon Street, likely built in the 1820s by Christian D. Happoldt. Although built as a fine house for its owners in the Butchertown area of the Charleston Neck, the house became a rental property during the Civil War, a use that continues today.



When James Sparrow sued Frederic Schwach to foreclose on a \$4000 debt, the property was put up for sale at a public auction on March 5, 1821. **Archibald McVicar**, a Scottish butcher who had arrived in Charleston in 1811, placed the high bid of \$3800, and the transfer was recorded on May 5, 1822.¹ The property was much larger—about 100 feet along Cannon Street and about 310 feet along Smith Street—than its current size. Initially, the lot included both the existing frontage on Cannon Street and the adjacent property on the corner on Smith Street; the lot ran south all the way to the marshy edge of a large mill pond.

Mr. McVicar died on August 24, 1823, and his executors sold the property to another butcher, **Christian D. Happoldt**, on April 16, 1825, for \$3000.² The deed described Mr. McVicar as having lived in the Charleston Neck but did not give any more details of his address. (In the 1822 Charleston directory, Mr. McVicar was listed as living on Nassau Street, also considered to be in the Charleston Neck area at that time.)

¹ Deed book H9, page 304

² Deed book O9, page 366

Mr. Happoldt lived on Cannon Street in Butchertown in the 1825 city directory, but that publication was printed in November 1824, six months before Mr. Happoldt bought 75 Cannon Street. It is possible that Mr. Happoldt was already occupying the house as a renter after Mr. McVicar's death, but it is also possible that he simply was already living elsewhere on the street.

In the 1830 census, there were at least three houses along Cannon Street occupied by members of the Happoldt family, including Christian. The individuals were listed as living on the south side of Cannon Street from at least 1828 through 1840 but the directories did not refer to specific house numbers.

Christian Happoldt died between 1840 (when his name was included in a notice of a German society) and 1841 (when a notice to his estate's creditors described him as being "late of Charleston Neck").³ His estate was not quickly

ALSO,
A LOT, at the corner of Cannon and Smith streets, measuring on Cannon street 81 feet, and on Smith street 300 feet. On this Lot is a two story Dwelling, with Kitchen, Stables, and other outbuildings, in complete order.

closed, and an advertisement appeared on January 14, 1848,

advertising a sale of the property that had belonged to Mr. Happoldt.⁴ The ad referred to the lot with dimensions of 81 by 300 at the corner of Smith and Cannon (although the deed described the lot as 81 by 314 feet). The notice mentioned a "two story Dwelling, with Kitchen, Stables, and other outbuildings, in complete order." Thus, the house was built no later than 1848.

The house was sold to **Alexander Owen** on February 1, 1848, for \$2800⁵ but there was apparently a problem with the sale. To confirm that the estate had indeed sold the property to Mr. Owen, Mr. Happoldt's widow, Sarah E. Happoldt, executed a second deed on May 22, 1852.⁶

Alexander Owens, another butcher, himself lived on Cannon Street near Felix Street in 1859, while the nearby house was being used as a rental property. From at least 1859 through 1890, the house was the home of Dr. States Lockwood.⁷ Dr. Lockwood was born in Charleston on July 10, 1823, and graduated from the

³ Charleston Courier, Jan. 7, 1840, at 2; Charleston Courier, Sept. 20, 1841, at 3

⁴ Charleston Courier, Jan. 14, 1848, at 3

⁵ Deed book A12, page 213. The deed was recorded on April 6, 1848.

⁶ Deed book T12, page 192. The same property was quitclaimed by A.M. Beach on January 22, 1853. Deed book T12, page 596

⁷ (d. Sep. 1890)

Medical College in 1848. His special interest was obstetrics and attended over fifteen hundred cases of labor. During the Civil War, he was surgeon in attendance at a local Confederate hospital, and for several years in charge of laborers in the fortifications surrounding Charleston. In 1855, he married Anna M. Lockwood, who died in 1865. In 1867, he married Sophia A. Lockwood. Both were daughters of Thomas Perkins Lockwood.⁸

The estate of Alexander Owens sold the house for \$3000 to **Charles Otto Witte** on March 11, 1863, following an auction on February 27, 1863.⁹ That sale, however, was for an even more reduced property than Mr. Owen had bought; the sale included a parcel of only 50 by 125 feet (the present size of the lot). A newspaper notice of the sale described the property as a “neat two and half story Dwelling, Double Piazzas to the west, Kitchen, Carriage House and Stables thereon.”¹⁰

Mr. Witte was a very successful German businessman and banker who owned a great many properties all across town, and 75 Cannon Street was just one more house used for income.¹¹ Dr. Lockwood continued to occupy 75 Cannon Street despite the sale of the house to Mr. Witte, remaining until at least 1890.

Meanwhile, Mr. Witte put several dozen pieces of real estate into a trust for the benefit of his four daughters. After his death on March 2, 1908, the four children agreed on how to distribute the many properties amongst themselves, and 75 Cannon Street was allocated to **Carlotta Witte VanBoskerck** on June 22, 1908.¹² At least during her ownership, the house was a duplex divided into units between the floors.¹³

Carlotta Witte VanBoskerck sold it to **Ezra Prystowsky** on July 16, 1919.¹⁴ The use as a rental continued with a separate unit in the attic.¹⁵ When Ezra Prystowsky died, his wife, Mollie, was to receive rent for the house from the couple's children who would receive the house upon their mother's death. However, one of

⁸ William B. Atkinson, *The Physicians and Surgeons of the United States* 500 (1878)

⁹ Deed book R14, page 168

¹⁰ Charleston Mercury, February 27, 1863, at 2

¹¹ Renters included T.L. Jacques (1907).

¹² Deed book F25, page 297

¹³ Renters included L.P. Hudson (1908), C.W. Lemacks (1912), and Andrew J. Britton (1918-19).

¹⁴ Deed book Z28, page 141

¹⁵ Renters in the house included Beulah Edwards (1923), James G. Reeden (1923), Jacob Campbell (1925), J.F.H.C. Nolte (1928), Edith Thornstenson (1930), Paul Tropolo (1931), Christopher Wait (1935), George A. Cone (1938-42), Charles Nettles (1940), John Blackwell (1942), Ellen Irwin (1938), Karl Von Mutius (1938), James and Blanche Walker (1940), and Charles and Zada Nettles (1940).

the four sons, Mike Prystowsky, died on February 3, 1929, and the rent stopped being paid. The remaining family members decided to sell the house for \$3750 on March 11, 1941, to **Florence E. Smalls Green**.¹⁶

Although Ms. Green died on May 3, 1957, while living elsewhere in town, **John H. Green, Jr. and Roland Green** received the house through the probate process many years later, apparently in 1980.¹⁷ It seems that the house had been used as a rental property both before and after Ms. Green's death.¹⁸

Julia M. Pritchard brought a lawsuit against several members of the Green family, and the house was put up for sale as a public auction as a result on April 7, 1981. Ms. Pritchard was the highest bidder at the court sale and closed on the house on May 28, 1981,¹⁹ but she almost immediately resold it to **Dorothy's Funeral Home, Inc.** on June 5, 1981.²⁰

In the 1980s, the house saw significant deterioration. In 1985, the City included 75 Cannon Street as one of several hundred dilapidated houses needing work. According to the City's code enforcement officer, the problems at 75 Cannon Street dated back about four



¹⁶ Deed book Z41, page 646

¹⁷ Probate 80-1007

¹⁸ Residents included Jake Brown Leroy White (1948), John Gadsden (1948), Isaac Bowman (1948), (1955), Elizabeth Bradley (1955), Joseph Fields (1955), Frank Judd (1958-61), Mabel Frazier (1958-61), Ethel Riddle (1961), Mary Simmons (1969-70), Ethel Jenkins (1972-74), Frank Judge (1968-75), and Mrs. Alberta Wright (1968-75).

¹⁹ Deed book N125, page 20

²⁰ Deed book P125, page 65

years and were caused by an heirs problem and change of ownership.²¹ Work did not progress, however, and the owner sought permission to demolish the house to make way for a parking lot to serve the funeral home across the street.²² The City authorized the acquisition of the house to either restore as part of a housing program or for resale, but the owner steadfastly objected to the condemnation of the house. The owner claimed that she could not restore the house because the porches were too rotten to allow a contractor to enter the house, but the BAR refused to permit their removal. The owner also entertained the idea of having the house moved somewhere else. Eventually the porches were allowed to be removed, but they had to be recreated. Work had still not begun by 1989.²³ The owner continued to fight the City; she believed that she was being targeted by the City because of the influx of white residents back to the peninsula.²⁴

The house has been used as a rental property since its restoration.

²¹ Mark Scandling, "Dilapidated Houses Like Blemishes On Fine Old Face," *Charleston Evening Post*, July 10, 1985, at 7A

²² "City, Property Owner At Odds Over Rehabilitation Of House," *Charleston Evening Post*, May 13, 1987, at A1.

²³ "Owners fight to keep rights," *Charleston Post & Courier*, Mar. 29, 1989, at A1

²⁴ Monique Fields, "Exterior of House on Cannon repaired," *Charleston Evening Post*, July 18, 1991.