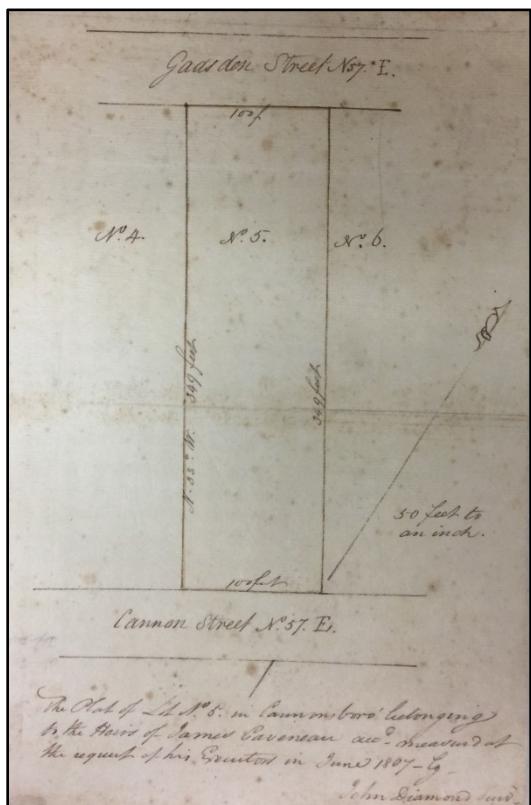


## 76 Cannon Street

John L. and Mary M. Linsser House  
c. 1811

In the late 18th century, **Daniel Cannon** carved his large swath of property into large lots and sold them off. The house at 76 Cannon Street was built on the southeast portion of Lot 5—100 feet wide on Cannon Street and 350 feet deep, running all the way through the block to Spring Street (known as Gadsden Street at the time). Through later subdivisions, the single lot would become 76 Cannon Street, 78 Cannon Street, 99 Spring Street, and 101 Spring Street.



The deed for Daniel Cannon's first sale of Lot 5 has not been located, but **James Caveneau** had certainly acquired it before 1795; on October 1, 1794, when Mr. Cannon agreed to sell Lot 4 (to the west), that deed named Mr. Caveneau among the adjacent property owners.<sup>1</sup> When Mr. Caveneau died, his executors had a plat of Lot 5 prepared in June 1807 which did not include any indication of any improvements.<sup>2</sup> They auctioned the property, and **James Harvey and Leslie Thompson** placed the high bid of \$1600, acquiring the property on June 25, 1807.<sup>3</sup>

When Messrs. Harvey and Thompson defaulted on their mortgage, the lot was sold to **Dr. Philip Moser** at an auction taking place on October 1, 1810, for \$2680. The sale was

recorded on March 20, 1811, most likely to give Dr. Moser the time to first pay off the purchase price.<sup>4</sup> Soon Dr. Moser resold the property for \$6000 to the editor of the *Charleston City Gazette*, printer **Ebenezer Smith Thomas**, on July 19, 1811. Not only does the enormous increase in value in less than a year suggest that Dr. Moser

<sup>1</sup> Deed book O6, page 209

<sup>2</sup> Deed book E8, page 92

<sup>3</sup> Deed book U7, page 214

<sup>4</sup> Deed book D8, page 93

had the house built, the deed to Mr. Thomas included a reference to a building on the lot for the first time.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Thomas sold Lot 5 for \$5000 to **John Lewis Linsser** on February 25, 1812.<sup>6</sup> According to the 1813 city directory, Mr. Linsser (misspelled as John L. Lindsay) was living on Cannon Street and working as a butcher. Mr. Linsser was a German immigrant, born on August 26, 1782, who had arrived in Charleston in about 1804. Once in Charleston, he must have been extremely successful; not only was he able to purchase a fine house, but according to the 1820 census, his household included not just his family but also eight slaves. Mr. Linsser died on June 25, 1839, leaving Mary Margaret Linsser<sup>7</sup> as his widow. She remained in the house until at least 1861 when she was recorded in a municipal census at 50 Cannon Street (as the house was known before a street renumbering).

Mrs. Linsser died in the early 1860s, and her estate was opened in August 1863. On February 27, 1861, Mrs. Linsser had executed a will leaving her house to **James and Geraldine Beattie**. (The relationship between the Linsser and Beattie families is unknown, but one of the Beatties' children had "Linsser" as a middle name.) Mrs. Linsser also left five shares in the Bank of Charleston to the Beatties specifically to fund repairs to the house. Some of the details on the house including its piazza screen and porch columns were likely reworked at that time; they are stylistically certainly not original to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century house.

James Beattie,<sup>8</sup> a butcher, does not appear to have lived in the house himself and instead used it as a rental property while he bounced back and forth to Florida.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Beattie had moved to Alachua County, Florida by 1857 and was conducting experiments with producing syrup from Chinese cane.<sup>10</sup> Then, he was back in Charleston by July 24, 1860, when his contact information was given as Cannon Street in a real estate listing; he and his family lived in Ward 8 for the 1860 census, but the precise address is unknown. In the June 1870 census, James

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<sup>5</sup> Deed book D8, page 312

<sup>6</sup> Deed book E8, page 92

<sup>7</sup> b. abt. 1792

<sup>8</sup> b. abt. 1824; d. abt. 1873

<sup>9</sup> Renters included E. Bull (1867), J.T. Erwin (1869-1872), Lewis E. Conner (1875), William McKee (1878-1879), and Henry Cutter (1880-1881).

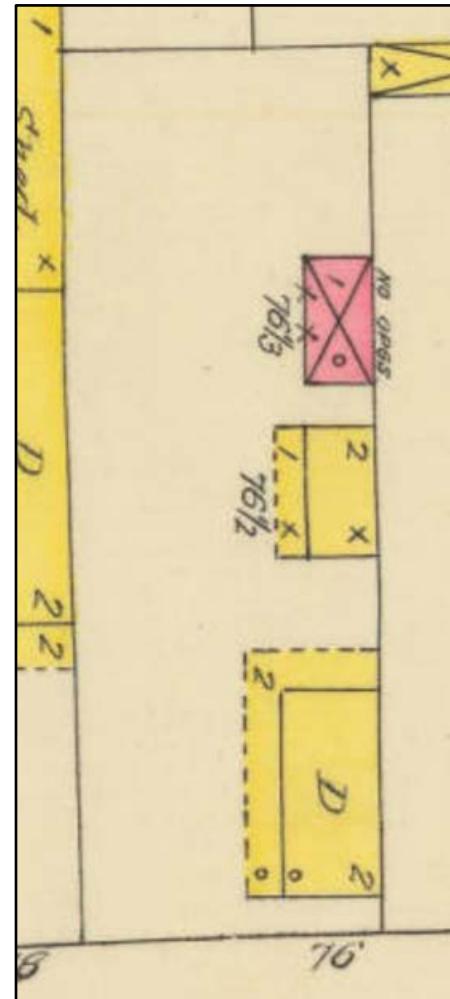
<sup>10</sup> Charleston Courier, Oct. 28, 1857, at 2

and his wife, Geraldine (Lutz) Beattie,<sup>11</sup> were again living in Alachua, Florida with their children.

On December 29, 1870, a deed (made March 11, 1868) was recorded by which James Beattie gave the house at "50" Cannon and some other lands to **Geraldine** for her life and then to any of their own children plus his children from an earlier marriage to Mary Ann Teresa Kinsey.<sup>12</sup> The deed to Geraldine did not include specific measurements and referred only to the house that had belonged to Mary "Lindsay."

It seems that there was some lawsuit over the property, and a judicial sale was held on December 7, 1880, at which 76 Cannon Street was sold separately from the house at 78 Cannon Street for the first time.<sup>13</sup> **David Maybank**,<sup>14</sup> a cotton factor, was the highest bidder for 76 Cannon Street at \$2400, and the sale of the lot—reduced to its current 55 feet by 205 feet—was recorded on January 6, 1881.<sup>15</sup> He lived there from 1882 to 1886 at least, although he transferred the house to **Mary Pope (Frampton) Maybank**<sup>16</sup> on May 23, 1882.<sup>17</sup>

On March 4, 1887, Mrs. Maybank sold the house for \$3050 to **John Wilke Messervy**.<sup>18</sup> Soon after the Messervys' purchase, the house was recorded in the June 1888 edition of the Sanborn Insurance Co. maps. The house was shown in place with a two-story dependency behind it with a one-story masonry structure even further back on the lot.



<sup>11</sup> b. abt. 1833, Charleston; d. Feb. 2, 1908, Charleston

<sup>12</sup> Deed book W15, page 68

<sup>13</sup> Charleston News & Courier, Nov. 23, 1880, at 3

<sup>14</sup> b. Dec. 10, 1841; d. June 13, 1925

<sup>15</sup> Deed book W18, page 1

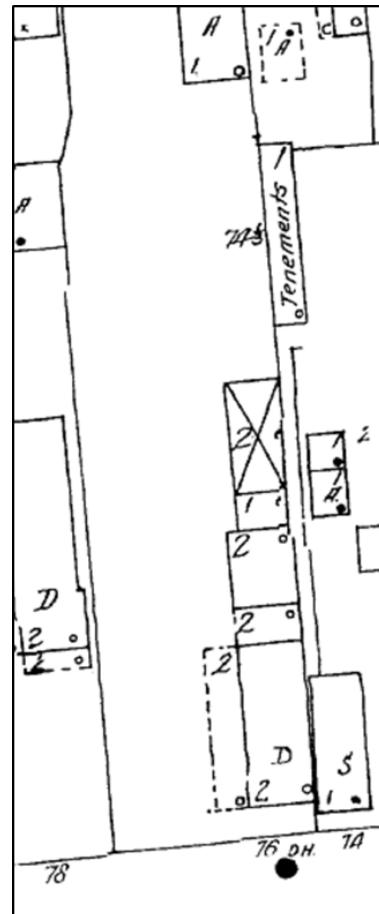
<sup>16</sup> d. Aug. 23, 1929, Hendersonville, N.C.

<sup>17</sup> Deed book L18, 314

<sup>18</sup> Deed book G19, page 282

Immediately upon purchase, Mr. Messervy<sup>19</sup> and his wife, Adeline E. (Kuck) Messervy,<sup>20</sup> began a long occupancy of the house. Mr. Messervy was trained at the Medical College and worked as a pharmacist for ten years before changing careers entirely and starting in the horse and mule trade. When he died on January 15, 1932, his wife remained in the house for several more years. In her later years, she inherited stock in the Arcade & Attica Railroad, becoming its only female director in 1941. In addition, she was also elected to membership in the New York Jockey Club following the death of her husband. Mrs. Messervy was active in politics too, holding Republican leadership positions and trying to get a two-party system going in the South for those opposed to the New Deal.

In 1944, the Sanborn Insurance Co. released a new edition of its maps. By the time of the new edition, the buildings at 76 Cannon Street had been joined together with infill to make one long building. By that time, the house had been converted into apartments. Mrs. Messervy had moved to Rutledge Ave. and short-time occupants lived at 76 Cannon Street instead.



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<sup>19</sup> b. Apr. 15, 1854

<sup>20</sup> b. Dec. 1, 1856; d. Mar. 30, 1941

Mrs. Messervy sold it to **Joseph L. Roper** for \$7200 on July 6, 1950.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Roper operated an auto shop at the house known as Roper's Automobile Repairs and also lived in the house with his family. During his ownership, the house retained as many as six rental units in the main house and back buildings. Mr. Roper died on January 13, 1973, and the house was inherited by his wife, **Phoebe Roper**, and his son, **Joseph Roper, Jr.** After a series of transfers of fractional interests, **Rev. Alonzo Middleton and Margaret Jenkins** own the house (75%/25% respectively).<sup>22</sup>



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<sup>21</sup> Deed book G52, page 379

<sup>22</sup> Phoebe Roper transferred her one-half interest to Alonzo Middleton and Margaret Jenkins on April 7, 1982, for love and affection. (Deed book C128, page 229) Joseph Roper, Jr. conveyed a one-half interest in his own one-half interest to Miriam Roper on December 7, 1987. (Deed book Y170, page 116) Joseph, Jr. and Miriam both sold their one-quarter interests to Alonzo Middleton on September 8, 1993, for \$30,000 each. (Deed book R231, page 739; deed book R231, page 779)