

## Rev. Joseph A. Robinson House

88 Cannon Street

c. 1867

Jonathan Lefar, the executor of Francis J. Cobia,<sup>1</sup> sold the fifth lot east of Rutledge with buildings for \$1570 to **Mathew W. Cross** on May 30, 1860.<sup>2</sup> The seller financed half the purchase price.<sup>3</sup>

Two weeks earlier a newspaper advertisement appeared for the lot which included “[w]ith the old BUILDING thereon.”<sup>4</sup> No information has been found about the building on the lot. George Fleming was a free black butcher who lived in the old building in the 1860 census and had the house burglarized in January 1860.<sup>5</sup> In the 1861 municipal census Sarah Robinson, a free person of color, occupied 60 Cannon Street then. It is not clear whether the house was in good condition or not.



*Estate Sale, by order of the Executor and consent of the Ordinary.*  
**BY J. E. BOWERS.**  
Will be sold, on TUESDAY, 22d instant, at 11 o'clock, in front of the Exchange,  
All that LOT OF LAND, with the old BUILDING thereon, on the North side of Cannon-street, fifth Lot East of Rutledge, measuring and containing in front and back line fifty feet, by one hundred and seventy-five feet deep, be the same more or less. The Lot is much higher than the street, with a large brick well and good water.

The “old building” was likely demolished and replaced soon after the Civil War. In January 1867, The Home Loan & Building Association loaned \$2000 to Mr. Cross and included a term in the mortgage they received back that required any

<sup>1</sup> (b. Apr. 4, 1787; d. Apr. 18, 1860)

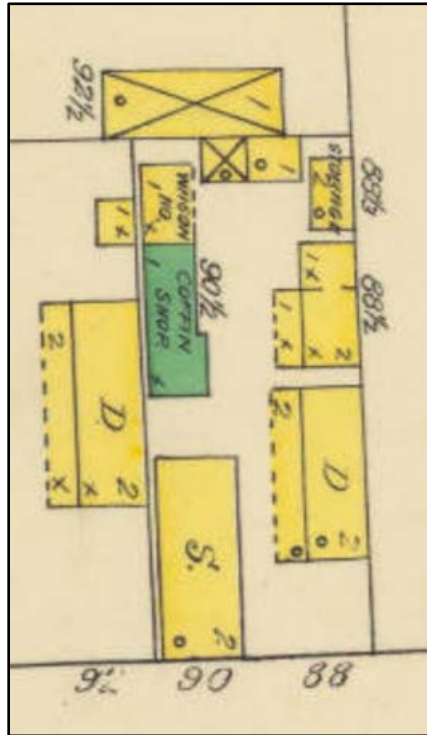
<sup>2</sup> Deed book L14, page 304

<sup>3</sup> Deed book O14, page 189

<sup>4</sup> Charleston Mercury, May 15, 1860, at 3

<sup>5</sup> “Burglary—The Perpetrators Caught,” Charleston Mercury, Jan. 8, 1861, at 2

buildings to carry fire insurance.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Cross fell behind in his payments, and the property was foreclosed upon with sale on December 6, 1870. The 50 by 175 foot property sold for \$500 on December 13, 1870,<sup>7</sup> to **Joseph A. Robinson**.<sup>8</sup>



Rev. Robinson developed his property into a commercial hub. By the 1888 Sanborn maps, he had added several buildings on the lot including a coffin shop, storage building, and wagon house. Mr. Robinson's family business, a funeral parlor, was operated out of the adjacent two-story building that he added to the yard at 90 Cannon Street. The house at 88 Cannon Street was a two-story single house with a two-story piazza. Immediately behind the house was a two-story dependency with a one-story piazza. Since then, the dependency has been joined with the main house and the piazzas have been wrapped across the front. (The portion of the piazza ceiling across the front of the house differs from the portion along the side.)

Rev. Robinson lived there until his death in 1918, with other members of the family staying until 1923. By 1927, the house seems to have been used a rental property.

The commercial half of the property was inherited by Elias H. Robinson, but another family member, George Robinson, had gotten the right to use a bedroom in the building. On June 13, 1934, the right to use the bedroom was removed, and the estate of Rev. Robinson quitclaimed 90 Cannon Street to Elias H. Robinson, clearly separating the two addresses for the first time.<sup>9</sup>

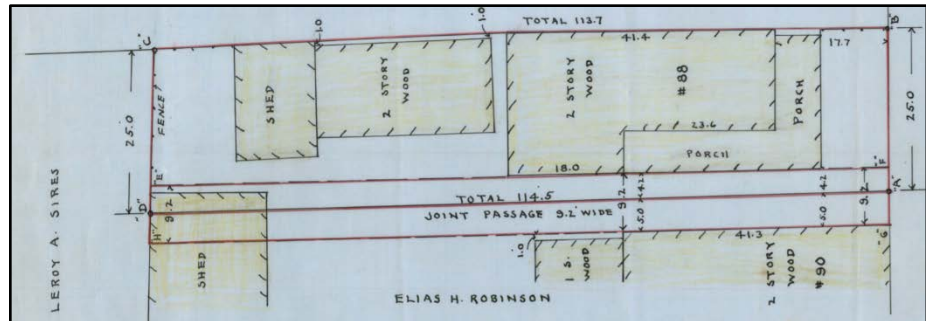
<sup>6</sup> The mortgage was for \$2000 and required him to insure the house against fire. Deed book C15, page 233

<sup>7</sup> Deed book V15, page 58

<sup>8</sup> Joseph A. Robinson was born in July 1844 and died on June 10, 1918.

<sup>9</sup> Deed book B29, page 203

On March 2, 1945, Rev. Robinson's son, Dr. Joseph A. Robinson (who had graduated from Howard University's medical school in 1893 with honors) sold just 88 Cannon Street half of the lot for \$3000 to railroad worker **John H. Schroder**; Mr. Schroder was already familiar with his new house since he had been a renter since at 1930.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Schroder died on February 10, 1949, and his only heir was his half-sister, **Alice B. Schroder**. Ms. Schroder sold the house to **Dorothy Gailliard Alston** on May 6, 1950 for \$4100.<sup>11</sup> However, as part of that sale, Ms. Schroder carved out a 5 foot path along the base of 90 Cannon Street which could be jointly used by the two properties to access the rear of the parcel.



The house seems to have stopped being used as a partial rental in the early 1970s, and the Alston family occupied the house.

Theodore G. Alston, Dorothy's husband, died in March 1991, and Dorothy died on June 4, 2004. The house is today home to **Leon Alston**,<sup>12</sup> a contractor who owns Leon's Home Improvements, LLC, who received the house on February 23, 2009 from Dorothy's estate.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Deed book R45, page 91

<sup>11</sup> Deed book Z51, page 119

<sup>12</sup> (b. January 7, 1945, to Theodore and Dorothy Alston)

<sup>13</sup> Deed book 0036, page 540