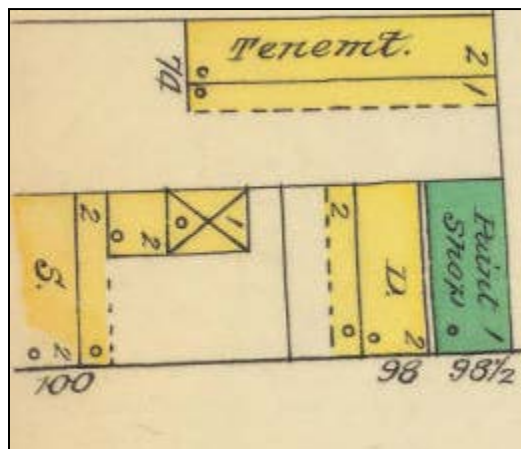


98 Cannon Street

c. 1884-85



The house at 98 Cannon Street is a simple two-story Charleston single house with a double piazza. Although small, the house has at least some signs of quality design including a handful of remaining turned spindles on the piazza and console brackets supporting the small hood over the piazza screen's door.



William J. Bee bought the property on September 1, 1855,¹ but he did not construct the existing building for many years. Mr. Bee used the property as security for a mortgage taken on October 17, 1884, in favor of Jonathan C. Cochran, most likely to fund the construction of the existing house. The property pledged as security for the loan was 40 by 47 feet with buildings on it except for a store which bridged the property line between what would become the neighboring lot at 98 1/2 Cannon Street to the east. The adjacent lot and the store were being sold in another transaction, and the store was going to be removed.²

There was a breach of the note, and on May 5, 1885, the property was sold at a public auction. On April 1, 1885, a real estate listing had appeared in the Charleston News & Courier which described the house as having a house "being a new and well-finished two-story Residence." The new house had "4 upright rooms, pantry, and double piazzas" as well as a good cistern on the 40 by 47 foot lot. **Jonathan Messervey** was the high bidder at \$1280.

¹ Deed book R13, page 38

² Deed book D20, page 377

The house was used as an income property by Mr. Messervey for nearly twenty years.³ On January 30, 1911, Jonathan Messervey sold the house for \$1750 to **Thomas Tillinghast**.⁴ Thomas and Lottie Tillinghast lived in the house themselves and would be both the first and last owner-occupants.

J.W. Messervey had to sue Lottie Tillinghast (the executor for Thomas Tillinghast) and secured a judgment. The sheriff then had to seize property belonging to the estate of Thomas Tillinghast to satisfy the judgment. An auction was held on February 5, 1917, and the house was sold on March 6, 1917, for \$2500 to **Ezra Prystowsky**.⁵ Ezra Prystowsky conveyed the house to his children, **Moses Prystowsky and Raye Prystowsky**, on June 26, 1922.⁶ Throughout the ownership by the family, the house was an income property which was steadily rented out to a series of short-term occupants.⁷ Raye Prystowsky died, and the house became the property of Moses M. Prystowsky alone.

The house has a troubled history with at least two major crimes occurring in the house. The first occurred during the Prystowskys' ownership. On Christmas night 1939, Ben Mack was stabbed in the jugular at the house.⁸ According to his inquest testimony, Solomon Brown had spent the day in the country with his girlfriend, Lucille Glover, before returning to her home at 98 Cannon Street where they sat with others "talking and having a nice time."⁹ Mr. Mack, who had been drinking, came into the house and went to sleep on a bed. When he awoke, Mr. Mack asked Ms. Glover to go to the door with him, but Mr. Solomon told Ms. Glover not to. Mr. Mack confronted Mr. Mack: "Ben said I [Mr. Brown] was bad but he [Mr. Mack] was going to see which one was the baddest one night. I told him he might rule Ashley Avenue but he wouldn't rule there." Then Mr. Brown pulled his knife out, and Ben ran out of the door. When Mr. Mack returned, Mr. Brown opened a knife and "jugged him one time" before leaving Mr. Mack to die.

³ Residents included George A. Zimmerman (1890-94), C.J. Laurey (1894-95), Maurice P. Bowen (1896-97), T.A. (possibly F.A.) Nelson (1898-99), Hattie Robinson (1901-07), George Lowe (1908-10), and James Pinckney (1911-12).

⁴ Deed book W25, page 185

⁵ Deed book F28, page 127

⁶ Deed book G31, page 457

⁷ Residents included Lawrence Major (1918-20), S.J. Young (1921), Mary Young (1922-23), Rebecca Drews (1924), Walter Shine (1925-30), Arthur Payne (1927), Frank Smalls (1930-32), Joe Smith (1931), Evelina Small (1931-33), Jake Scott (1931), Robert Singleton (1934-38), Henry Benson (1938), Nathan Scott (1938), Doris Scott (1938-39), Ruth Brown (1939), Lucille Glover (1939), Nathan Scott (1940), Jessie Capers (1940), Robert Singleton (1940), and William Brown (1940-42).

⁸ "Seven Deaths Over Week-End," Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 26, 1939, at 2

⁹ "Solomon Brown Held in Prison," Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 28, 1939, at 12

Mr. Moses Prystowsky sold the house to **Joseph L. Miller** on March 15, 1944 for \$4500.¹⁰ On January 17, 1961, a life estate in 98 Cannon Street and several other properties was given to Joseph L. Miller and Herline Miller with the follow-up owner being **Clyde E. Strickland**.¹¹

Not long into the Millers' ownership, a second serious crime occurred at the house when a woman was attacked by a group of men following a New Year's Eve party.¹² Robert Rose had volunteered the use of his bedroom, and he was one of the five sexual assailants on January 1, 1965. The men were tried for rape, but the defense attorney called the victim a "passion flower with a bad reputation" and argued that merely saying "no" or protesting was not adequate: "She must struggle to the wall and be in fear of her life."¹³ In the end, the attackers avoided a mandatory penalty of death in the electric chair and were convicted of assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature.¹⁴

After Mr. Strickland died in New York, **Sandra Nichols** received as a beneficiary of Mr. Strickland's estate on April 5, 2002.¹⁵ Throughout the extended family's ownership, the house was regularly used as a rental property as a duplex. The final occupants appearing a directory lived in the house in 1998.¹⁶

North Sky, LLC bought the house from Sandra Nichols for \$145,000 on December 23, 2002.¹⁷ The house has been vacant since 1999.

¹⁰ Deed book O44, page 231

¹¹ Deed book P72, page 107

¹² Glenn Robertson, "Directed Verdict Will Acquit One Man In Rape Case," Charleston Evening Post, Sept. 23, 1965, at B1

¹³ Glenn Robertson, "Lawyers Complete Summations In Rape Case Here," Charleston Evening Post, Sept. 24, 1965, at B1

¹⁴ "5 Men Convicted On Assault Counts," Charleston Evening Post, Sept. 25, 1965, at B1.

¹⁵ Deed book K402, page 136

¹⁶ Residents included George Hampton (1948), Tom and Sarah Fields (1953), George Groves (1955), Jessie J. and Lizzie Washington (1958), Mrs. Mary Rose (1964), Arthur and Robert Rose (1965), Mrs. Julia Groves (1971-78), Mrs. Mary Young (1972), Betty Maddox (1974), L. Jenkins (1975-77), James Jenkins (1978), Norma Forrester (1981), Thomas Brown (1984-86), Elizabeth Brown (1989-90), Thomas Brown (1989-90), Linda A. Ancrum (1991), and Willie and Evelyn Chisolm (1995-98).

¹⁷ Deed book P430, page 147

