

# The Bagwell-Elliott Building 573 Meeting Street

---

Architectural/Historical Notes

Robert P. Stockton

March 3, 2017

## The Building

The building at 573 Meeting Street was built by the Grant Realty Corporation in 1946-47, as a one-story commercial warehouse structure. The long-time occupant was the Bagwell-Elliott Company, purveyors of automobile parts, which was listed there by 1948 and purchased the property in 1949.

Bagwell-Elliott soon discovered an oddity: the north side of their building was tied into the south wall of the building next door at 575 Meeting, which also was owned by the Grant Realty Corporation. They did not own the north wall of their building. The solution was to purchase from Grant Realty Corporation one-half of the south wall of 575 Meeting.



Figure 1: 573 Meeting Street (center) and 575 Meeting Street (left); conjoined structures.

-- Photo by Leroy Burnell, Post and Courier

There has been speculation that the building at 573 Meeting was designed by Augustus Constantine, a prolific Charleston architect of the period. However, a monograph on Constantine's work by Lissa Felzer rejects that premise. According to Felzer, Constantine did plans in 1945 for James G. Sherrer, the president of the Grant Realty Corporation, for a shop building at 573 Meeting Street. However, according to Felzer, the project was "unexecuted."<sup>1</sup> It is also difficult to believe that architect Constantine would have designed such a banal building or would have consented to have his building tied into the older building next door.

The Bagwell-Elliott Building is constructed of brick and there are many places where subsequent modifications utilized concrete block. The brick façade, laid in standard bond, with raised one-course bands, vaguely suggestive of rustication, and by large openings at pedestrian level. A dark red brick (now mostly painted over) was used in the façade, while a more variegated paler brick was used on the south wall, which was laid in American bond (Figure 2). The interior of the building is very utilitarian. The interior has no particular historical distinction, other than the old, poorly laid, exterior brick wall of the

adjacent building, into which the 1940s building was tied (Figure 3). The building appears to have a raised concrete foundation on the south wall that is visible from the exterior and interior.

The building has endured many modifications over its lifetime including but not limited to:

- Removed brick on south wall replaced by glass block
- Multiple storefront configurations
- Installation of concrete block in openings to provide closure to previous openings.





Figure 2: Brickwork at 573 Meeting Street. Façade is of dark red brick laid in standard bond, south side of paler brick laid in American bond.

-- Photo by Robert Stockton, February, 2017



Figure 3: Old brick wall on north side of building at 573 Meeting Street, which is the south exterior wall of the building next door at 575 Meeting Street.

-- Photo by Robert Stockton, February, 2017

## The History

The building at 573 Meeting Street was erected by the Grant Realty Corporation in 1946-47, according to tax records. The city ward book (tax record) indicated a sudden increase in the assessment of the property, from \$400 in 1946 to \$1200 in 1947.<sup>2</sup> As of this writing this building is approximately 70 years old.

Grant Realty Corporation had purchased the property from the Charleston Beverage Company by a deed dated February 28, 1942. The purchase price was \$3500, indicating that the site was unimproved. The purchased property was described as consisting of two lots, known by the numbers of 15 and 30 in a plat of the Blake Lands made by John K. Gourdine, surveyor, dated December 1881 (Figure 4).

Lot No. 15, on the west side of Meeting Street, was described as measuring 51 feet, five inches, in front, by 95 feet in depth, and butting and bounding to the east on Meeting Street, north on lands formerly of Blake, south on Lot No. 14 in the said plat, and west on Lot No. 30 in the said plat. Lot No. 30, adjacent to the west of Lot No. 15, was described as fronting to the west on a street marked "A" on the said plat (which plat also labels it as Walnut Street), and as also measuring 51 feet, five inches in width and 95 feet in depth. Lot No. 30 was further described as butting and bounding to the east on Lot No. 15 in the said plat, north on lands formerly of Blake, and south on Lot No. 29 in the said plat.<sup>3</sup>

Grant Realty Corporation conveyed the property to the Bagwell-Elliott Company for \$38,000, by a deed dated October 1, 1949. The large increase in the value of the property (more than tenfold) indicates that it had been considerably improved since Grant Realty Corporation had purchased it in 1942. The property was described in the same terms as in the 1942 deed from Charleston Beverage Company to Grant Realty Corporation. The deed was signed by James G. Sherrer as president of Grant Realty Corporation.<sup>4</sup>

Documentation provided by the conveyance and tax records is confirmed by a sequence of Sanborn insurance maps depicting the property. The Sanborn map of 1929 (Figure 5) shows the site occupied by wooden residences. The Sanborn map of 1942 (Figure 6) shows the site as vacant. The Sanborn map of 1951 (Figure 7) shows a one-story masonry building on the site.<sup>5</sup>

The proprietors of the Bagwell-Elliott Company soon found an oddity: they did not own the north wall of their building. The north wall was actually the south wall of the building next door at 575 Meeting Street, which also was owned by Grant Realty Corporation (Figure 3). The solution was to acquire one half-part of the wall in question. By a deed dated October 10, 1950, the Bagwell-Elliott Company purchased, for \$1.00, the half-part of the said wall. The conveyance described "the Southern half-part of the eighteen (18) inch strip of land with the Southern half-part of the eighteen (18) inch brick wall located thereupon," for a length of 150 feet, and also the "Southern half-part of the Eight (8) inch strip of land with the Southern half-part of the eight (8) inch concrete block wall located thereupon," for a length of 22 feet. The deed referred to a plat of the said wall, and the strip of land on which it sat, but the plat was not found recorded. The deed was signed by James G. Sherrer as president of Grant Realty Corporation.<sup>6</sup>

The Bagwell-Elliott Company had been occupying the building for some time before they bought it. Founded by James B. Bagwell, a Seneca native, and John Walter Elliott, a native of Yonge's Island, the company was established in 1946. The firm was listed at 573 Meeting Street in the city directory of 1948. The business was dissolved in 1977.<sup>7</sup>

The Bagwell-Elliott Company sold the property at 573 Meeting Street, and other nearby parcels that they had acquired over the years, to Stuckey Brothers Parts Company, Inc. of Hemingway, South Carolina, by a deed dated January 7, 1977. The sale price was \$104,000. The property at 573 Meeting was described in the same terms as in the 1949 deed from Grant Realty Corporation to the Bagwell-Elliott Company.<sup>8</sup>

Stuckey Brothers conveyed the property to the Charleston Inter-Faith Crisis Assistance Ministry by a deed dated September 27, 1985. The property was described in the same terms as in the 1949 deed.<sup>9</sup> The property was conveyed to Piggly Wiggly Carolina Company by a deed dated November 15, 1985.<sup>10</sup> The property was conveyed to Charleston Inter-faith Assistance by a deed dated November 13, 1994.<sup>11</sup> Property lines between the parcels owned by the organization were reconfigured by means of a plat (Figure 8) made by Forsberg Engineering and Surveying, Inc., in March 2007 (revised in 2013).<sup>12</sup>

## Summary

This building at 573 Meeting Street was built 1946-47, as a one-story commercial warehouse structure has served many customers over its lifetime. The long-time occupant was the Bagwell-Elliott Company a wholesale auto-parts distributor. More recently, it served as a warehouse to the Piggly Wiggly Company and then Crisis Interfaith ministries as a shelter. It is my opinion that the building is utilitarian in nature served a useful life and not very significant to the historical inventory of Charleston buildings. It was expediently built without a self-supporting north wall and as such compromises its value as a historical artifact, and potentially decreases the integrity of the more handsome building to north at 575 Meeting St. Because of these conditions, it is a building whose demolition I can support.

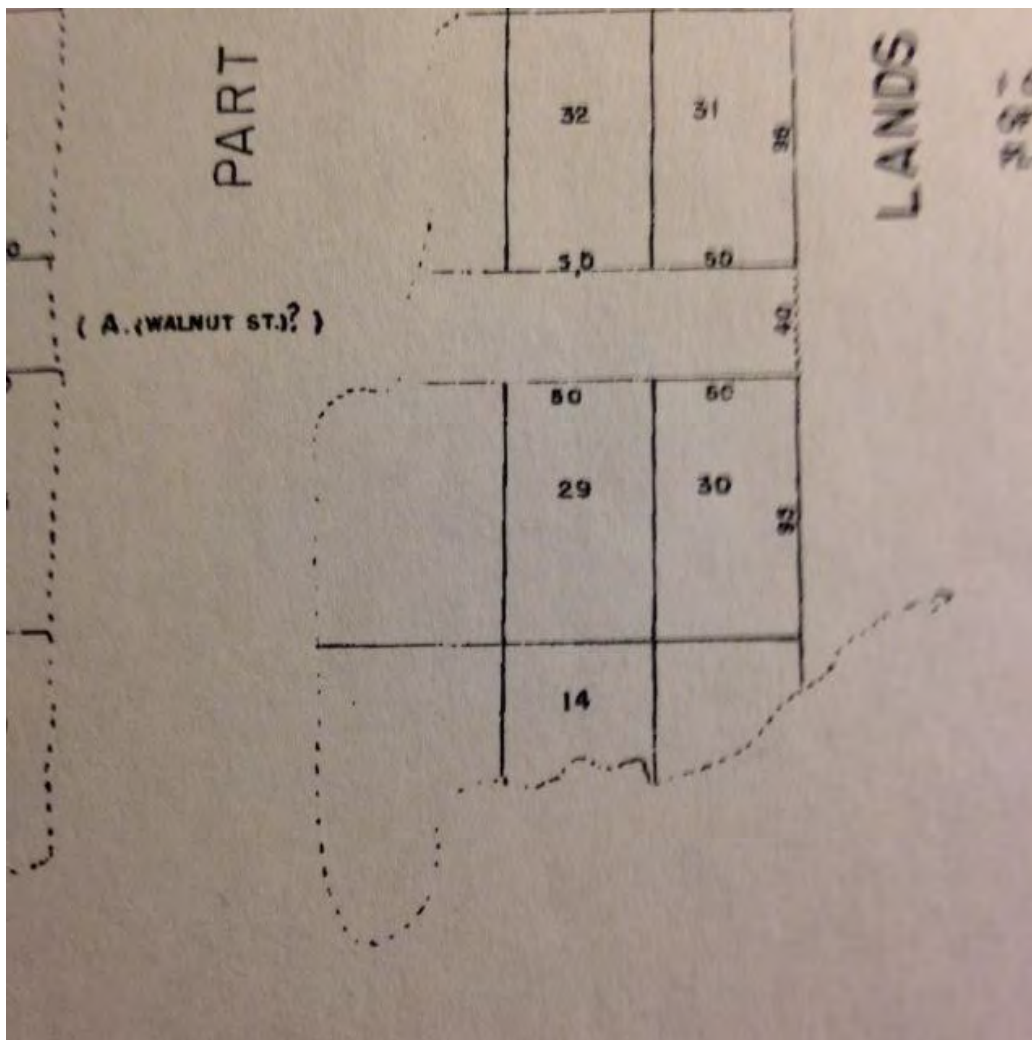


Figure 4: Detail of plat of the Blake Lands by John K. Gourdine, dated December 1881. The original of the plat is very deteriorated. Lot No. 30, fronting on A Street (Walnut) is shown in its entirety but only a fragment is shown of Lot No. 15, fronting on Meeting Street.

-- Plat Book C, p. 37, Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance Office.

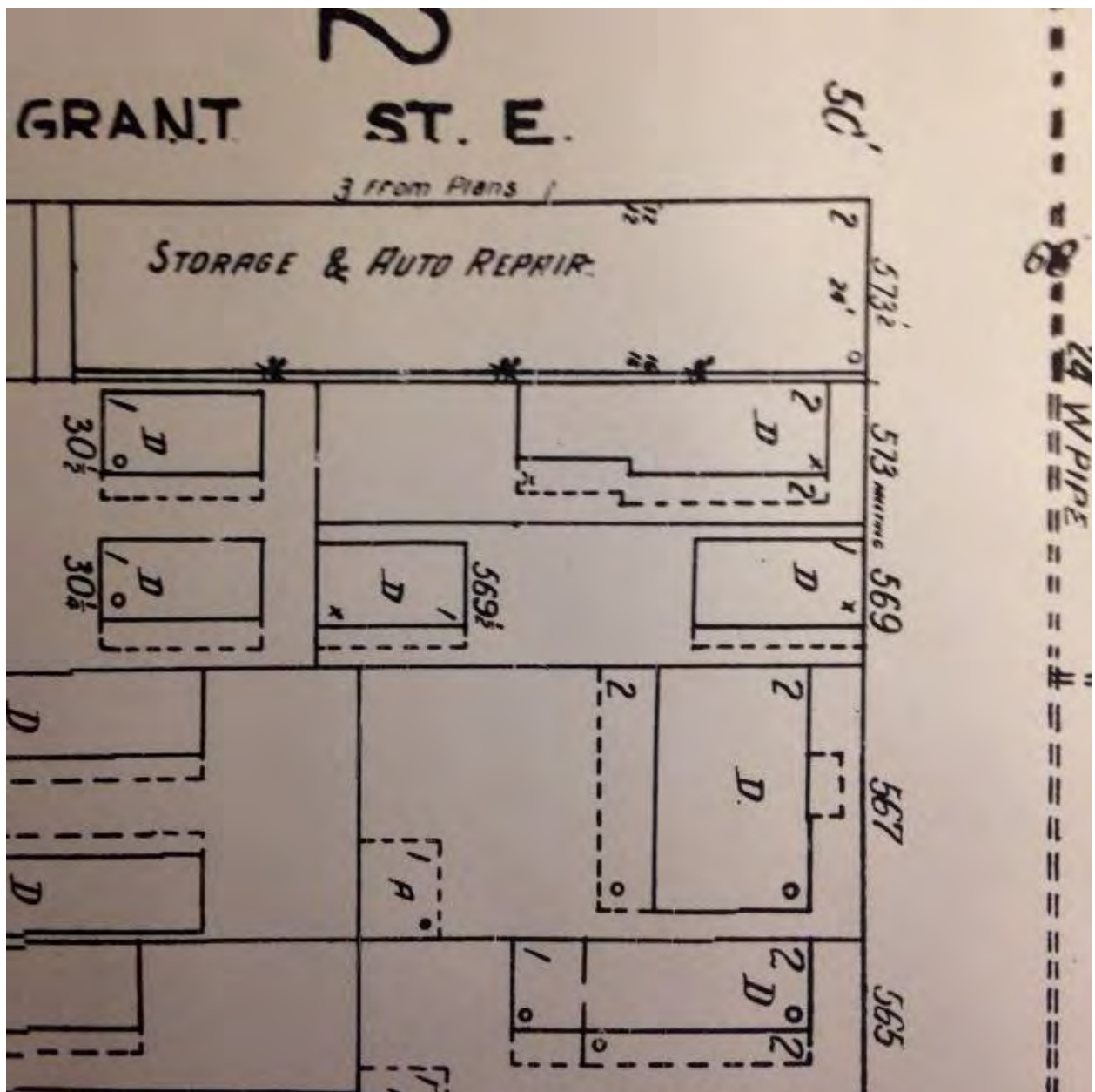


Figure 5: Detail of Sanborn insurance map, 1929, showing wooden residences on site of 573 Meeting Street.

-- South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library



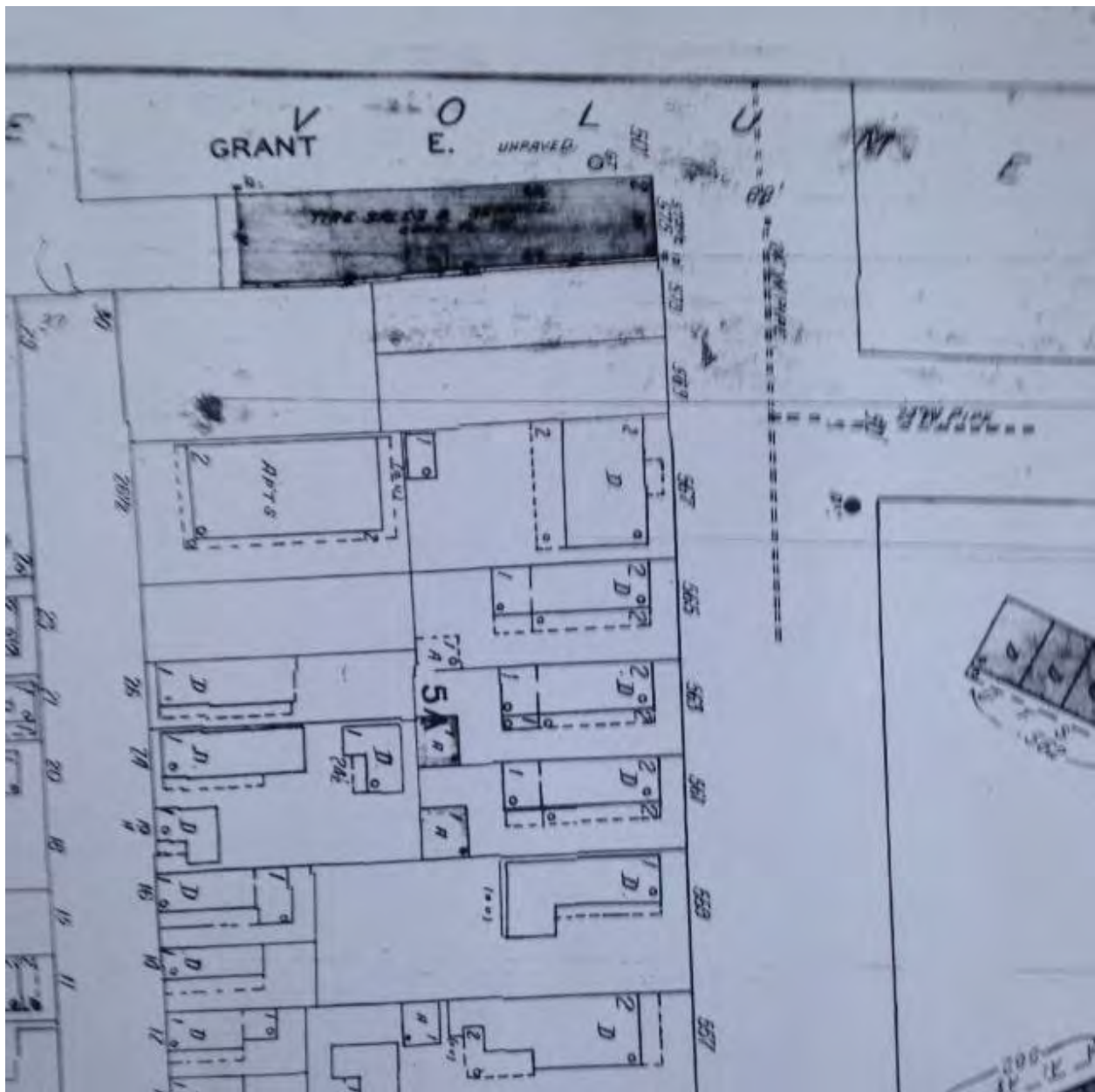


Figure 6: Detail of Sanborn insurance map, 1942, showing vacant lots on site of 573 Meeting.  
 -- South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library



Figure 7: Detail of Sanborn insurance map, 1951, showing double building at 573 Meeting Street  
 -- South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library

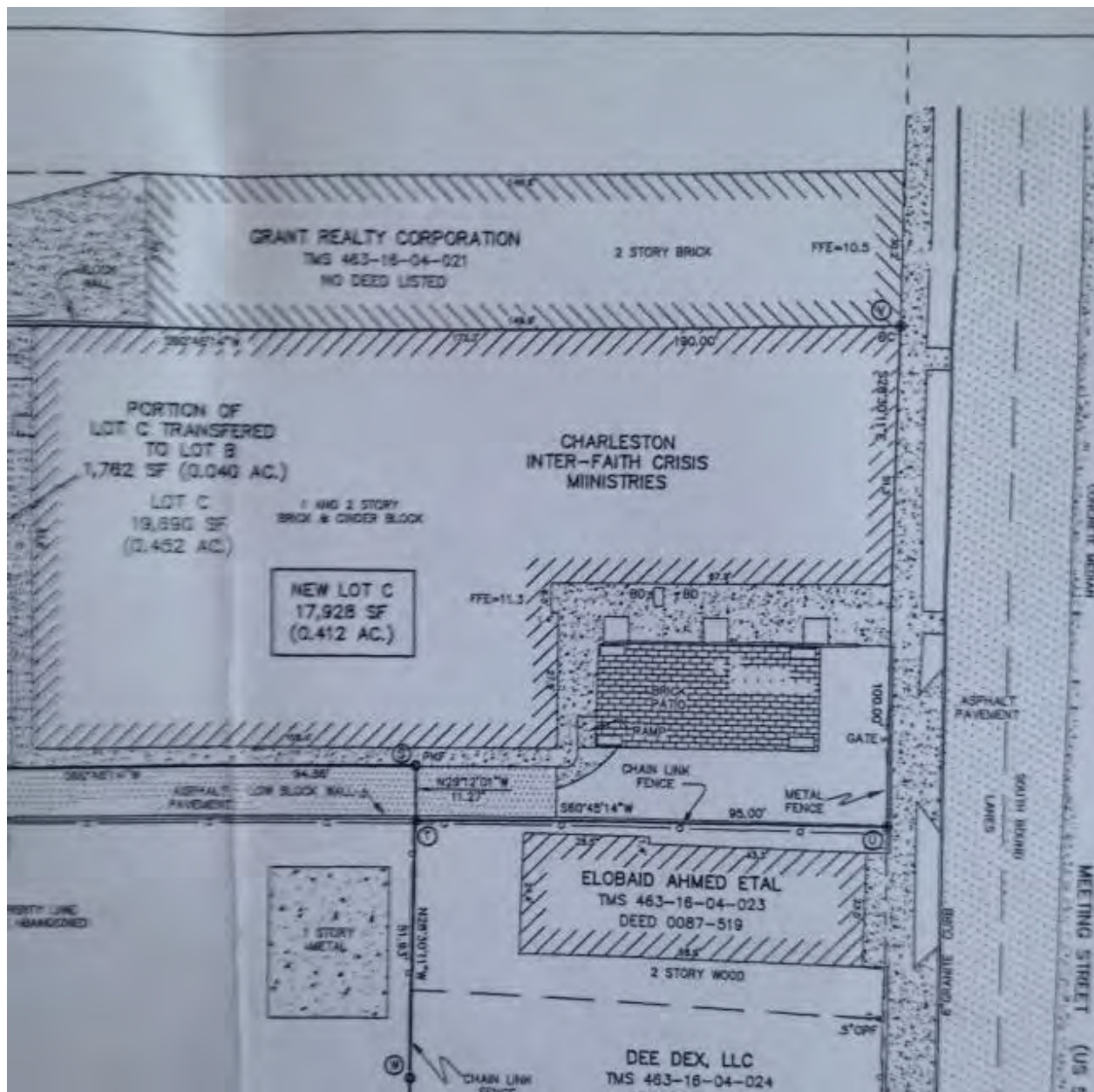


Figure 8: Detail of plat by Forsberg Engineering and Surveying, 2007 (revised 2013) showing 573 Meeting and other properties belonging to Crisis Ministries.

-- Plat Book L13, p. 160, Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup>Lissa D'Aquisto Felzer, *Avoiding the Theme Park: A Study of the Architecture of Augustus Edison Constantine, and the Need for Preservation Policy Reform in Charleston, South Carolina for the Twenty First Century* (Masters Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 2000), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>City of Charleston, Treasurer, Ward Books, Ward 10, 1946-1949, microfilm, Charleston County Auditor's Office.

<sup>3</sup>Charleston County, Register of Mesne Conveyance Office, Deeds, K43:137, Plats C:37.

<sup>4</sup>Deeds, D51:289.

<sup>5</sup>Sanborn Map Company, insurance maps of Charleston, 1929, 1942, 1951, microfilm, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library.

<sup>6</sup>Deeds, Y52:50.

<sup>7</sup>Charleston city directory, 1948, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library; *The News and Courier*, April 2, 1962, March 17, 1977; *Charleston Evening Post*, October 27, 1978; Deeds, N49:133.

<sup>8</sup>Deeds, H111:6.

<sup>9</sup>Deeds, M148:271.

<sup>10</sup>Deeds, S149:897.

<sup>11</sup>Deeds, J220:579.

<sup>12</sup>Plats, L13:160.