



50 ANSON STREET

HISTORY

Today, 50 Anson Street stands as a tangible record of Charleston's post-fire rebuilding, nineteenth-century urban commerce, and twentieth-century preservation efforts.

Known historically as part of what has long been referred to as “Martin Dowd’s Brick Tenements,” 50 Anson Street occupies a prominent position near the southeast corner of Wentworth and Anson Streets and reflects the layered evolution of Charleston’s Ansonborough neighborhood during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The land on which 50 Anson stands was acquired in the late eighteenth or very early nineteenth century by Moses Andrews, a mast, block, and pumpmaker who operated a small industrial works on Gadsden’s Wharf. Andrews assembled a substantial corner tract that encompassed the present-day sites of 42, 44, 46, 48 and 50 Anson Street. It is believed that the house standing at the corner of Wentworth and Anson Streets may have served as Andrew’s residence. Under the terms of his estate, Andrews directed that the property be held for the support of his wife, Louisa, and the education of their children, delaying any sale until the youngest child reached maturity.

Moses Andrews died in 1826, and evidence strongly suggests that at least one dwelling on the property survived the devastating Charleston fire of 1838.

Contemporary accounts note that an unoccupied dwelling owned by Mrs. Andrews stood on the east side of Anson Street following the fire. By 1840, only five structures remained standing within two blocks of Wentworth Street, one of which was the Andrews property, then occupied by William Metzler. Architectural evidence, including an early nineteenth-century tile roof, further supports the conclusion that portions of the property predate the fire.



THE HISTORY OF 50 ANSON STREET

Following the 1838 fire, Martin Dowd spent years assembling narrow lots on Anson Street to develop a series of two-story brick tenements, including numbers 42, 44, and 46. While long attributed to Dowd, subsequent research reveals that 48-50 Anson Street was actually owned by Joshua Lazarus during its mid-nineteenth-century construction. By the later 1850s, the street functioned as a vibrant mixed-use hub, with 50 Anson housing diverse tenants such as cigar shop owned by Raphael Morillo, and Edward Stehle's Bakery.

The property eventually passed through the Lilienthal and Firetag families before the Historic Charleston Foundation acquired it in 1969 as part of the Ansonborough Rehabilitation Project. The property was subsequently sold to Mr. and Mrs. Watts, who rescued the structure from a derelict state. Their sensitive restoration highlighted the building's original masonry and beams, creating a backdrop for an eclectic collection of continental antiques, including eighteenth-century French furniture and a rare 1650 court cupboard.

Constructed or substantially rebuilt circa 1845, 50 Anson Street is a two story masonry building of brick laid in flemish bond with a parapet above the west facade. The division into two equal halves reflects the original uses as two separate commercial storefronts with living space above. The north entry opening was reworked as a window circa 1970 when the building was substantially remodeled as a single residence. The other openings retain their historic size and placement but feature a 1970 Colonial Revival style double door with transom and 12-over-12 and 9-over-9 windows.

Today, 50 Anson Street serves as a premier example of Charleston's preservation movement and intimately conveys its sense of time and place as a mid-nineteenth century structure that is an integral part of Anson's charming streetscape. This blend of adaptive reuse and historical continuity reflects the broader resilience of the Ansonborough neighborhood, bridging the gap between its early commercial roots and modern residential elegance.

