

Summary of the History of the Murphy-Molony Cottage At 852 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina

Prepared by Christina R. Butler/ Butler Preservation LC for Joy Morris

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852 Middle Street is a traditional vernacular Sullivan's Island cottage constructed circa 1880. It has a series of additions dating from the early to mid-twentieth century. It is a wood frame house has a front porch, weatherboard siding, traditional six over six windows, and functional board and batten shutters that are in keeping with the character of island residences of the late nineteenth century. The lot, designated 17 on the Plan of Moultrieville, previously held a personage house for Grace Episcopal Church (which was located next door) but both were damaged and lost in the American Civil War. Mary Murphy bought the lot in 1880 and constructed the current house. She and her husband John were both Irish immigrants, who lived at Moultrieville year-round. Interestingly, all of the house's owner occupants (most of whom resided there seasonally) were Irish or Irish American; John Murphy's estate passed the house to relative Ann Laffan (Irish born) and it then passed to the Molony family, who owned it for over one hundred years, using it as a seasonal beach cottage. The house was omitted from the Moultrieville National Register nomination.

Setting:

852 Middle Street is located on the tip of Moultrieville, a small town on the island that was established around 1791 and chartered or incorporated in 1817. The lot lies where Middle Street and Conquest Avenue begin to converge to create a wedge shape now divided into residential lots. It is near Middle Street's intersection with Station 9 Road, which follows the trajectory of a path that once led to the ferry landings along the Cove. Roughly parallel to Station 9 Road is the vestige of a street that appears on historic maps and formerly called Point Street because of the shape of that end of the island.

The large lot spans from Middle to Conquest Street, which was formerly Back Street and was at one time a waterfront road, before the land along what is now the Intracoastal Waterway was filled to create additional residential lots. The South Carolina stretch of the Intracoastal Waterway was completed between 1936 and 1940. Similarly, the lot originally extended to Station 9 road, although today there is a small parcel with another house located on it to the east of 852 Middle and directly at the corner. A small road called Church Street appears on earlier maps on the western side of Middle across from 852, which is no longer extant. Across from Conquest Street is the "Old Bridge Landing" (formerly Cove Inlet Bridge) and the former connector for Pitt Street Bridge, which once linked Sullivan's Island with Mount Pleasant at Station 9 for automobile traffic. This tip of Sullivan's Island has long been an important transportation hub, with a former ferry landing, the old bridge connections, and the Intracoastal Waterway which runs alongside Conquest Avenue.

History of the Murphy-Molony Cottage:

852 Middle Street lies on a roughly half acre lot that was known lot 17 in the Plan of Moultrieville. The earliest known owner of the lot was James Gibson, who sold it to Grace Protestant Episcopal Church in January 1822. The description in that early deed noted that the lot was “situate next to Grace Church on Sullivan’s Island and bounded west by the house occupied by Mr. Holland, Packet Man.”¹ Both the Grace Church and the neighboring parsonage house were destroyed by shelling during the American Civil War; the badly damaged church was permanently closed in 1879. In 1875 the church sold the parsonage house lot to Thomas Calvert, who purchased it at a high bid of \$750 at auction. It was described in the deed as lot 17 in the plan of Moultrieville, containing roughly half an acre.²

Calvert’s executors then sold the lot to Mary Carrol Murphy (1811-1889) in 1880, at which time the parcel was still vacant. 852 Middle Street was constructed circa 1880, after Mary Murphy purchased the vacant lot from Thomas H. Calvert’s estate. Mary died at age 78 on Moultrieville in August 1889 and was interred at St. Lawrence Cemetery, and left all four of her Moultrieville properties to her husband, John Murphy (died 1897).³

852 Middle Street began as a one bay wide, two-room cottage with a gable roof and front porch running parallel to the street. The house experienced some damage in the August 1893 cyclone, which hit Sullivan’s Island beach and damaged hundreds of buildings. By 1893, 852 Middle Street had a T-plan, with the main dwelling as a rectangular wood frame building with the gable roof running parallel to the street, and a reverse gabled rectangular bay intersecting on the east side. The shed roofed porch running the length of the front façade (still present today) and a similar porch along the rear façade are shown on the 1893 *Sanborn Map*.

John Murphy his estate to his deceased wife’s niece, Ann Laffan; this included “a “Lot and building on Sullivan’s Island no. 13, \$315; Lot and building on Sullivan’s Island no. 17, \$420; Lot and building on Sullivan’s Island no. 56, \$525.”⁴

Anna Laffan sold the house to Maggie M. Molony in 1911 for \$5, indicating a likely but undetermined family connection. The property was described as a half-acre parcel on the north side of Middle Street “designated as number 17 on a plat of the town of Moultrieville. Butting and bounding north on Back Beach, south on Middle Street, east on lot 18 now or late of H. Hurness, and west on lot 14 now or late of Rose Robinson.” The property description is consistent in later deeds. By 1912, the one-story wood dwelling had been modified with a one story shed roof porch and a large projecting addition with a reverse gable roof, which wraps around the side and back elevation of the building. There was a small one story well on the corner of the lot, of wood construction.⁵

¹ See appendix, Chain of Title

² See appendix, Chain of Title

³ See appendix, Chain of Title; Charleston death certificate for Mary Carroll Murphy; *Charleston Evening Post* 2 September 1897, obituary for John Murphy; Estate record for Margaret Molony, Charleston County 334-0006.

⁴ Estate papers of John Murphy, Charleston County 414-0012.

⁵ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*

Margaret “Maggie” Mary Molony (1867-1944) and her husband ship broker James T. Molony used the 853 Middle Street in the summers as their cottage, residing most of the year at 53 Elizabeth Street in downtown Charleston. The couple had four daughters: Helen Molony, Mildred Molony, Bernadine Molony, and Maria Molony.⁶ Maggie and James’ daughter Helen married Arthur B. Moore in 1924; Mildred Lauren Molony married John Satterfield in 1936, Bernadine never married, and Maria passed away in 1935 at age 27.⁷ Maggie M. Molony’s heirs were her three daughters, Helen M. Moore, Mildred M. Satterfield, and Bernadine F. Molony.⁸ According to an article in *SIP Magazine*, Helen’s children, Margaret (Shuman) Ann, Arthur, and James “Jimmy” (Dovre), grew up in the house; “Jimmy remembers when “in the 1940s the town put in water and sewer lines, so Daddy added a bathroom and another bedroom to the house.”⁹

Mildred conveyed her interest in 852 Middle Street to Helen’s daughter Ann Enright Moore in July 1978, while Helen and Bernadine conveyed their interest to Ann in 1985. Bernadine F. Molony died in August of 1993 at age 86. 852 Middle remained in the Moore family, and Helen and Arthur’s children (Margaret, Jimmy, Ann, and Arthur) used it seasonally, as did Jimmy and Margaret’s children. Anne Moore died in September of 2016. Because Ann did not have children, after her death, the property was distributed to her other heirs, James Moore Dovre, Margaret Moore Shuman and Catherine McDougal Moore. James “Jimmy” Dovre (1932-2019) was the youngest daughter of Arthur Moore and Helen Molony. James was named for her grandfather, James Molony. Helen and Arthur’s last surviving daughter Margaret Moore Suman passed away in April 2020. The Dovres who transferred it to Dover Living Trust in 2017. The Trust ultimately conveyed 852 Middle Street to Joy Morris in 2021.¹⁰

Appendix: Chain of Title

Dover Living Trust (James Jimmy Moore to Dovre)

\$10.00

1 November 2017

T145, pg. 439

1985

Helen Moore and Bernadine Molony to Ann E. Moore

- Whereas Maggie M. Molony departed this life 24 February 1944, leaving as her sole heirs her three daughters.
- Mildred Satterfield conveyed her interested to Anne Moore in M116-123

M116-123

Mildred M. Satterfield to Ann Enright Moore

26 July 1978

- Probate case file 834-83 is referenced.

D26, pg. 208

Ann Laffan to Maggie M. Molony

6 June 1911

All that lot piece of parcel of land with the buildings thereon, situate lying and being on the north side of Middle Street in the town of Moultrieville, Sullivan’s Island, measuring and containing one half acre more or less,

⁶ 1880 census; obituary in *News and Courier* 25 February 1944.

⁷ Charleston county marriage records; headstone inscriptions for the Molony family at St. Lawrence Cemetery.

⁸ Estate papers of Margaret Molony, Charleston County 834-0083.

⁹ Polarski, Margaret. “Storied Structures” <http://www.sipmagazinesc.com/storied-structures>

¹⁰ See appendix: Chain of Title

designated as number 17, on plat of said town of Moultrieville, made by William Hume, recorded in Charleston County.

Y22, pg. 176

John Laffan, executor to John Murphy of Sullivan's Island to Ann Laffan

4 January 1898.

- All that lot of land being on the north side of Middle Street in the town of Moultrieville measuring half acre more or less and known as the number 17 on a plan by William Hume. Bounding north on Back Beach, south on Middle Street, east on lot 18 of Hurness, and west on 14 now of Robinson

E23-303

Thomas Calvert per executors to Mary Murphy

1880

- Lot of land on the north side of Middle Street and known on the town plan of Moultrieville as lot 17.

Y16-518

Grace Church to Thomas Calvert

1875

The Protestant Episcopal Church on Sullivan's Island known as Grace Church . . . whereas the place of worship thereon having been destroyed and it having become desolated to change the location thereof the vestry and wardens resolved to sell the said lot.

- Sold at auction to Calvert for \$750, the highest bidder
- All that lot of land on the north side of Middle Street containing one half acre more or less and known by the number 17 on a plat of Moultrieville

H9-185

James Gibson to Grace Church

January 1822

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