

**Physical description:**

The structure at 17 Tradd Street is a two-story, three-bay, stucco-over-brick dwelling with a standing-seam metal roof located on a narrow, deep city lot on the south side of lower Tradd Street. As with many of the structures in this most dense area of the old city of Charleston, the narrow lot has produced a structure with a compact urban form much like a townhouse, although the building is free standing and not attached to any adjacent buildings. For this reason, primary focus is on the street front, or north, elevation, which acquires further visual significance as the building is situated at the southern terminus of Bedon's Alley. Despite this visually prominent location, the street elevation is neither elaborate nor highly decorated, but simply finished with a pronounced corbeled stucco cornice and an inset door with a semi-circular fanlight above and surrounded by a paneled and molded architrave. Fenestration on this elevation, as on the others, consists of six-over-six light double-sash windows. Although some have been lost, paneled shutters held back by wrought iron fixtures are present on the north elevation, and the center bay of the second story features a six-over-six double sash window with jib doors beneath that provide access onto a small, shallow iron balcony. Fenestration on the remaining elevations is irregular, with no windows on the ground level of the west elevation, reflecting the desire for increased privacy in the interior spaces of the ground floor.

Appended to the rear of the original structure are a series of additions of decreasing height and scale, a stepped massing which reflects the organic growth of the building through time as the function and technology of living spaces changed. Originally the building consisted of two rooms on each floor, with a stair hall between. Sanborn maps from the late nineteenth century show that there had been a two-story piazza on the south side, or rear, of the building that predated the existing additions. During the third quarter of the twentieth century, however, a one-story stuccoed brick dining room and kitchen addition with an elaborate colonial revival doorway opening onto the rear yard was constructed onto the rear of the structure. This was followed by a one-room wood frame addition at the second-story level constructed on top of the previous kitchen addition, and a further one-room extension of the kitchen addition at the ground floor level perhaps to accommodate a mud room or laundry room. This latter addition is unique in that the east wall of the small room is curved and without any fenestration, creating the impression of being part of the garden wall.

The interior spaces of the building are quite elaborate, particularly those of the ground floor which historically have functioned as the primary areas for entertaining. In the original portion of the structure, much of the late-eighteenth century interior remains intact, with some later additions. The two original ground floor rooms feature an array of impressive details, including paneled wainscoting, elaborately molded overmantels and carved mantelpieces with neo-classical detail, heavily molded cornices with beading and successive rows of dentils, deep-set window seats and original hardware. The built-in shelves of the south parlour date to the twentieth century when the dining room addition was constructed and the original rear openings were closed up. The twentieth century dining room, as well, features elaborate detailing, reflecting a conscious attempt on the part of the property owner to match the addition with the original rooms, and indeed, much of the original details have been copied in this room. The second floor of the dwelling is less elaborate, with simpler detail reflective of the more private functions of these upper level spaces. Wainscoting is absent, reduced to a simple baseboard, and the cornice is likewise minimized. The mantelpiece of the north chamber is a fluted pilaster and lintel architrave with a single row of dentil molding, and an overmantel is absent entirely. On the second floor, the western end of the stair hall has been enclosed for the creation of a bathroom, whose black and white floor tile and fixtures suggest a date of origin in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

**Statement of significance:**

Charles Warham (1701-1779) purchased Lot 73 on Tradd Street from Joseph Watson, a gunner on the HMS Rose, on 28 September 1748. A joiner who came to Charleston from London, England by way of Boston, Warham possibly built the structure at 17 Tradd on a portion of town lot 73 shortly after the purchase of the lot. A structure matching the present configuration of 17 Tradd Street appears opposite Bedon's Alley on the Ichnography of Charleston, published for the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company in August, 1788. Because Warham was already in possession of Lots 87 and 88 on the north side of Tradd

Street when he purchased Lot 73, it is likely that 17 Tradd Street was erected as an income, or tenement property, as it was described as such in the will of Warham's son Charles Warham, II, which was witnessed on 23 July 1793.

Charles Warham II, a merchant and planter, operated the firm of Ballantine & Warham in the structure, which appears as 7 Tradd in the 1785 Charleston City Directory. Warham II's wife, Mary, inherited her husband's "messuage or tenement with the appurtenances, situate in Tradd Street opposite Bedons Alley" on 21 November 1798. The property remained in the Warham family until at least 1819, when Mary and Charles' son William G. Warham, variously a planter and accountant, is listed as occupant of the property.

The property was owned by numerous parties throughout the second-half of the nineteenth century, and apparently maintained as a tenement. By 1902 the property was occupied by William F. Watson, an African-American steward aboard the ship "Wisteria" Various other individuals including R.F. Conklin, keeper of the St. Lawrence Cemetery, and William Harrington, associate press operator of the Charleston Evening Post, continued to rent the structure until 1929 when it was left vacant for approximately five years. A pattern of vacancy and rental occupancy of the property remained until 1950 when it was acquired by James A. Hood, president and treasurer of the Charleston Freezer Plant, Inc., who conveyed it to Thaddeus Street, Jr., president of Charleston Stevedoring Company and secretary-treasurer of the Carolina Ship Company, in 1955. The acquisitions by Hood and Street reflects the mid-20th century gentrification of the lower Tradd Street neighborhood that had historically housed mixed industrial, commercial and residential uses, as well as the diverse economic and racial demographics that had characterized the area for the previous century.

The building at 17 Tradd is a well-preserved example of the modest 18th-century structures of dual commercial and residential purpose common to pre-Revolutionary Charles Towne. It is further representative of the socio-economic patterns in the neighborhood and of the city as a whole from its colonial origins through the period of the Charleston Renaissance, and on into the late twentieth century. For these reasons the structure at 17 Tradd Street greatly contributes to the character of the historic district both architecturally and historically.

### Historical Significance:

Charles Warham (1701-1779) purchased Lot 73 on Tradd Street from Joseph Watson, a gunner on the HMS *Rose*, on 28 September 1748.<sup>1</sup> A joyner, or woodworker, who came to Charleston from London, England by way of Boston, Warham possibly built the structure at 17 Tradd on a portion of Lot 73 shortly after the purchase of the lot.<sup>2</sup> A structure matching the present configuration of 17 Tradd Street appears opposite Bedon's Alley on the Ichnography of Charleston, published for the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company in August, 1788. Because Warham was already in possession of Lots 87 and 88 on the north side of Tradd Street when he purchased Lot 73, it is likely that 17 Tradd Street was erected as an income, or tenement property, as it was described as such in the will of Warham's son Charles Warham, II, which was witnessed on 23 July 1793.<sup>3</sup>

Charles Warham II, a merchant and planter, operated the firm of Ballantine & Warham at the structure, which appears as 7 Tradd in the 1785 Charleston City Directory.<sup>4</sup> Warham II's wife, Mary, inherited her husband's "messuage or tenement with the appurtenances, situate in Tradd Street opposite Bedons Alley" on 21 November 1798. The property remained in the Warham family until at least 1819, when Mary and Charles' son William G. Warham, variously a planter and/or accountant, is listed as occupant of the property.<sup>5</sup>

The property was owned by numerous parties throughout the second-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and apparently maintained as a tenement. By 1902 the property was occupied by William F. Watson, an African-American steward aboard the ship "Wisteria". Various other individuals including R.F. Conklin, keeper of the St. Lawrence Cemetery and William Harrington, associate press operator of the Charleston *Evening Post*, continued to rent the structure until 1929 when it was left vacant for approximately five years. A pattern of vacancy and rental occupancy of the property remained the norm until 1950 when it was acquired by James A. Hood, president and treasurer of the Charleston Freezer Plant, Inc., who conveyed it to Thaddeus Street, Jr., president of Charleston Stevedoring Company and secretary-treasurer of the Carolina Ship Company, in 1955. The acquisitions by Hood and Street mirrored the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century gentrification of the Tradd Street neighborhood that displaced the mixed industrial, commercial and residential uses to which properties in the vicinity had been put, as well as the diverse economic and racial demographics that had characterized the area for the previous century.

Architecturally, the building at 17 Tradd is a well preserved example of the modest 18<sup>th</sup>-century structures of dual commercial and residential purpose common to pre-Revolutionary Charles Towne. It is also highly representative of the social history of the city from its colonial origins through the period of the "Charleston Renaissance."

---

<sup>1</sup> According to research conducted by L.L. Green, III, 13-27 September 1968. South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>2</sup> E. Milby Burton, *Charleston Furniture 1700-1825*, Charleston, SC: The Charleston Museum, 1955, p. 126-127.

<sup>3</sup> The Will of Charles Warham, recorded from Will Book No. C 1795-1800, page 521. (Copy available at South Carolina Historical Society.)

<sup>4</sup> James W. Hagy, *People and Professions of Charleston, South Carolina, 1782-1802*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. 1992, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Hagy, *Charleston, South Carolina City Directories for the Year 1819*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1996, p. 66