

James Condon House

532 Rutledge Ave.

c. 1919

The house at 532 Rutledge Ave. is built on Lots 9 and 10 of 22 lots laid out along Rutledge Ave. in 1902. In 1913, Unity Realty Co. bought the two adjacent, empty lots, creating a large corner parcel at the northeast corner of the intersection of Rutledge Ave. and Fishburne St.¹ On January 3, 1919, James Francis Condon paid \$5,000 for the lots.² Mr. Condon must have begun construction of his future house soon after. According to an end-of-the-year report about construction in Charleston on November 2, 1919, in the Charleston News & Courier, the average cost of new houses building built in 1919 was about \$3,000. There were a quite a few that cost more than that, but only one cost as much as \$10,000 – the house at the northeast corner of Rutledge Ave. and Fishburne St.

In January 1920, James F. Condon³ was living at his store at 435 King St.



with his wife, Mary A. McLaughlin Condon⁴ and his daughter, Mary. However, for the 1920 city directory, the family was listed as living at their new house (then known as 332 Rutledge Ave.). Therefore, the house must have been completed late in 1919 or very early in 1920. On July 31, 1928, Mr. Condon transferred the house to a real estate company he owned, J.F.C. Realty Co.⁵

James F. Condon was born on August 28, 1857, in Charleston to William Condon and Fanny Scannell.

¹¹ The realty company bought Lot 10 from the Western Realty Co. on April 11, 1913. (Deed book R26, page 296.) On September 24, 1913, the realty company acquired Lot 9 from Lucia McGowan. (Deed book Y26, page 117.)

² Deed book X27, page 286

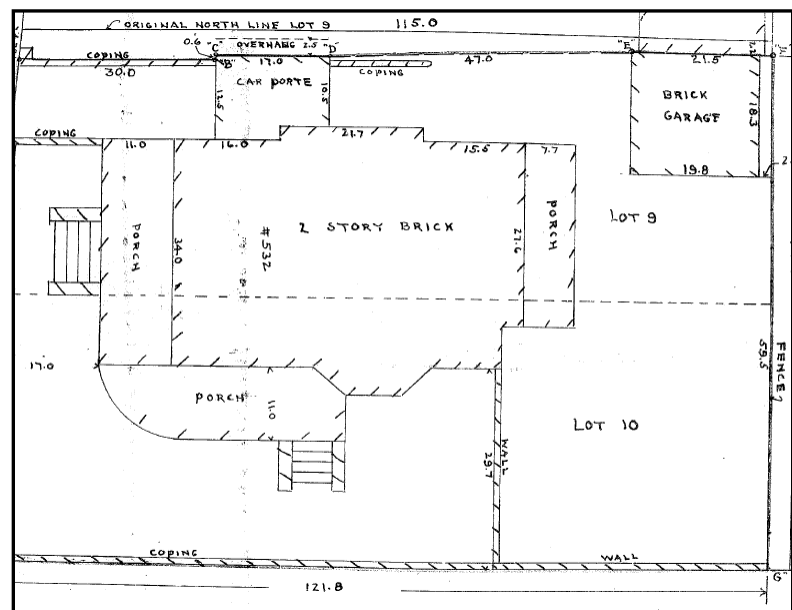
³ In 1910 in the census, the children included James J. Condon, Ella V. Condon, Mary A.F. Condon, Matthew Condon, and William F. Condon. The photo above appeared in the May 19, 1931, edition of the News & Courier in a short story about their 49th anniversary.

⁴ Mary A. McLaughlin Condon was born on September 9, 1859, and she died on August 1, 1948.

⁵ Deed book G35, page 15

His father was a tailor, and after the Civil War, James Condon abandoned his schooling and entered that same trade, working for a string of establishments on King Street. On August 19, 1897, at forty years old, he struck out on his own and established a dry goods store at 434 King St. Despite a rough first year, his business quickly grew; in about five years the store had moved to 435 King St. and had expanded more than once into 431, 433, and 437 King St. He built a new store in 1928 and expanded again in 1930. In 1910, he incorporated his business as James F. Condon & Sons and was joined by his sons Joseph J. Condon; Matthew Condon; and, later, William F. Condon. In 1932, his grandson Francis Eugene Condon joined the family business.⁶ James Condon died at his home on March 18, 1934, and one obituary described him as the “dean of Charleston’s retail merchants.”

His widow, Mary, remained in the house until her own death on August 1, 1948, at which time the Condons’ grandson Francis Eugene Condon⁷ and his wife, Helen Puckhaber Condon,⁸ moved in. In 1949, a plat was filed showing the house’s footprint in anticipation of a transfer to Francis E. Condon,⁹ and the sale was completed on September 21, 1949, for \$12,000.¹⁰ Helen Louise Condon acquired the house in her own name in May 1960,¹¹ and the Condons remained until at least 1961.



⁶ “Death Claims Jas. F. Condon, in 77th Year,” Charleston Evening Post, Mar. 19, 1934, at 1.

⁷ (b. Nov. 19, 1910; d. Sept. 16, 1964)

⁸ (b. Mar. 25, 1913; d. Dec. 9, 1997)

⁹ Plat book D-187

¹⁰ Deed book Z50, page 347

¹¹ Deed book C72, page 178



On June 14, 1962, Robert Leroy Nichols bought the house for \$23,000.¹² By 1968, the house was home to him and Mary Bradford Nichols. Mr. Nichols (shown in 1969)¹³ married Mary Bradford¹⁴ in March 1946 and began work for WPAL, a Charleston radio station in 1949.¹⁵ He began when it was still a white-owned, country music station and eventually became most famous as on-air personality, the first African-American to work as a full-time radio announcer in South Carolina.¹⁶ They had two daughters, including one named Rosemary who married Warner Magajar Jones, Jr. in 1969 and who celebrated her wedding reception at the house.

The Nichols remained in the house until at least 1972 before apparent renters occupied the house. At times, the house was listed in city directories as 532, 532a, and 532b Rutledge Ave., although the three residences were infrequently all occupied in the same years. Over the next ten years there were a string of renters staying for various periods, but the Nichols were not listed in the house themselves.¹⁷ In 1984, the Nichols returned to their house and were listed as living in 532(B) Rutledge Ave. From their return until 1989, there were no other occupants, but whether the house was used in part as rentals during that period is unknown. Then, in 1989, Maurice T. Johnson and Mrs. Eula L. Lloyd appeared in 532 and 532(A) Rutledge Ave. respectively. In 1993, Sharon Brown occupied 532 Rutledge Ave., and in 1995, the information on the house was not verified. On May 25, 1994, Mary Nichols acquired the house in her name after Mr. Nichols' death on August 12, 1993.¹⁸ From 1996 to 2000, the house was home to only Mary Nichols.

¹² Deed book R76, page 40

¹³ (b. Aug. 8, 1927; d. Aug. 12, 1993)

¹⁴ She was born to William Daley Bradford and Corrine Ester Bradford and survived at least until 2011 when her name was included in a list of survivors in an obituary for her sister, Dorothy Bradford Stanley.

¹⁵ Herb Frazier, "Radio's Robert Nichols dead at 76," *Charleston News & Courier*, Aug, 13, 1993, at B1.

¹⁶ *Charleston News & Courier*, July 20, 1969, at 20.

¹⁷ Tenants included Mrs. Anna M. Brown (1972), Mitchell Elementary teacher Ernest Nedd (1973), Burke High School teacher Ernest B. Shaw (1974-75), Winston and Richardean Lodge (1976-1978), Louise Brown (1979-80), Elethea Mills (1979-1980), and Carrol and Mary Gethers (1981-83).

¹⁸ Deed book J243, page 794

On March 23, 2001, chiropractor James J. and Melanie Arney Mathewson bought the house for \$275,000.¹⁹ In 2005 to 2009, Melanie Arney was listed alone using her maiden name, suggesting that the couple divorced during their ownership. In any event, the Mathewsons conveyed the house to GMAC Mortgage LLC on March 31, 2010, for \$630,000.²⁰

The company conveyed the house to Brian Wolter on March 1, 2011, for



\$337,000.²¹ Mr. Wolter, the owner of King St. pizza shop Gilroy's, has occupied the house as a single-family residence.

The house is a large, two-story house in the American foursquare form with a full one-story porch

extending across the entire front of the house; a separate one-story porch on the south side shares a porch floor although the two roofs are separate. A third one-story porch on the rear (eastern façade) of the house has been enclosed as living space. There is a two-story bay window detail on the south façade. On the north side of the house, a windowless room (bathroom?) has been built atop the porte cochere. The entire house and garage at the rear are built of a dark reddish-brown brick with inlaid patterns executed with the same brick. White masonry details mark the corners of the detailing and two chimneys and also set off the tops of the brick columns supporting the porches.

¹⁹ Deed book Z366, page 463

²⁰ Deed book 0114, page 913

²¹ Deed book 0174, page 537