

15 Larnes St.

Thomas Norman Gadsden (b. Nov. 16, 1808; d. Jan. 7, 1866) had a parcel of land divided into lots in June 1856. Lot 37 of the new development was sold to Phillis Grant on May 26, 1857, for \$115.¹ There is no indication in either city directories or tax records to suggest that she had a house added to the property.



After many years, Ms. Grant sold Lot 37 of the Gadsden tract to Caroline P. Curtis (b. Sept. 1850) on July 9, 1881, for \$150.² The few remaining city building permits from the 19th century show that several small houses were erected along Larnes Ct. in the period around 1890, but no permit information exists for 15 Larnes St. Nevertheless, according to the Charleston tax

records, Caroline P. Curtis owned the property and paid taxes on a two-story wood structure on the property in 1883-1886. Moreover, in at least 1890-1907, she lived in the house herself along with her husband, laborer George W. Curtis.

The Curtises, married in about 1872, were typical residents of the working class, black neighborhood. Mr. Curtis (b. Feb. 1860 or 1862), worked as a “night soil contractor.” In the Victorian era, not all city residents enjoyed outhouses; night soil contractors went house-to-house, collecting human waste for disposal on the outskirts of the city. The couple shared the house with a daughter, Mary Middleton, for some period.

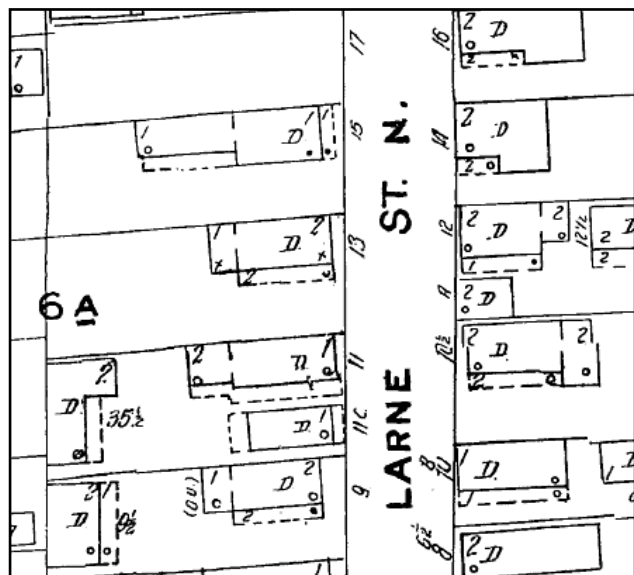
It appears that Caroline Curtis died between 1907 and 1910. From 1910 to his death on August 15, 1915, from malaria, Mr. Curtis lived with a second wife, Ellen J. Curtis (b. abt. 1883 in South Carolina). Also living with the couple were his mother-in-law, Sophie Kinard, and his sister-in-law, Julia Kinard.

Upon Mr. Curtis’s death in 1915, he was buried in the Calvary Baptist Cemetery, and his widow remained in the house for a short time. Since there is no record of a transfer out of Caroline Curtis’s hands, it appears that she died, leaving the house to Mr. Curtis. Then, when he died, the house became the property of Mrs. Ellen Curtis by operation of law (although apparently never subjected to proper probate procedures).

¹ Deed book X13, page 184

² Deed book K18, page 125

Regardless, on February 2, 1917, Mr. Curtis's second wife, Ellen Curtis, sold the house to Harley Patrick Cunningham.³ Immediately before the purchase, the Cunninghams had been living in the rear of 8 Sumter St. Mr. Cunningham was born in 1894 in Berkeley County, South Carolina, and until 1927, he was consistently listed as a bricklayer, but then his job changed to plasterer in 1928. During the 1930s, his position changed back and forth. Even later, the 1940 census recorded his profession as a carpenter.



At least during the 1920s, Mr. Cunningham and his wife, Marion (b. 1894; d. 1963), shared the house with their four children. Harley P. Cunningham died at the house on June 3, 1981. He had been born on May 7, 1890. According to his obituary, he had been an ornamental worker whose work could be found at the Garden Theatre, Francis Marion Hotel ballroom, and in many homes. His son was the first Black priest ordained from South Carolina.⁴

Two of his children, Veronica M. Cunningham and Jean M. Cunningham-St. Julien, sold the house to Glenn Martin Jonson (their son and nephew, respectively) on March 20, 1997.⁵

Glenn Martin Jonson sold the house to Eyecon Properties, LLC for \$32,500 on April 24, 2000.⁶ Eyecon Properties, LLC sold the house to Suzanne T. Grubbs and Steven D. Love for \$160,000 on November 29, 2001.⁷ Amy and Jason Coy purchased the house on May 22, 2006, for \$400,000.⁸

The development of the unusual house is difficult to determine. According to a Sanborn insurance map from 1944, the current house began as a simpler building. The one-story wooden house was a standard width for the neighborhood with a slightly narrower one-story portion extending off the rear. The western portion (the rear) had an open porch facing the side yard. It seems that there have been many additions to the core of the house. Notably, the street front elevation appears to have been widened. The two bays to the north appear to represent the original width of the house, and the portion behind the front door with a large bay window and oval fixtures seems to have been enclosed later. The roof structure shows a T-shaped roof line, suggesting that the portion running perpendicular to the street might have been the addition. Perhaps at that same time, the front was reworked with a single, hipped gable treatment facing forward and tying the additions together.

³ Deed book X27, page 164

⁴ Charleston News & Courier, June 4, 1981, at 11A.

⁵ Deed book M281, page 846

⁶ Deed book E346, page 794

⁷ Deed book D389, page 166

⁸ Deed book J584, page 669