

5 Nunan Street

George Nunan Tenement

c. 1854

The two-story Charleston single house with an inset two-story piazza at 5 Nunan Street seems to have been built for local farmer George Nunan as a rental property in 1854. Since then, the house has largely continued to be used as a rental property with some long period of owner occupancy.

A two-story wooden house was recorded on the property with an \$800 value from at least 1854. In December 1856, **George Nunan** sold it to **John R. Burch** for \$1200,¹ but the deed was not recorded until 1859. (Often deeds were not recorded until the entire purchase price had been paid in a form of owner-financing.) The sale was for two adjacent lots of 25 by 100 fronting on Nunan's Lane each.²

The deed to Mr. Burch in 1856 did not mention any improvements to the lots, but such language was inconsistently used, and the sales price (\$1200 total, \$600 per lot) is not high enough (even considering 19th century prices) to definitely show the presence of a house. Nevertheless, additional evidence strongly supports a construction date of 1854, before the sale to Mr. Burch. Although the county assessed property in 1852 and 1853, the ward books (records of parcels' assessed values) for Nunan Street do not begin until 1854, strongly suggesting that the first houses were erected only then. When the tax records did start in 1854, they referred to a two-story, wooden "tenement" (a term used in the era to describe rental property without its modern connotation of low quality) on the property. Given that the assessment for the property remained steady over the three years recorded in the ward books (1854-56), one might assume that the dwelling was present throughout the entire time.

The street's numbering was different before 1886 when a city-wide renumbering took place. In 1861, a municipal census recorded a few houses on Nunan Street. John R. Burch was listed as the owner of just one property on the short street, a house that was numbered as 3 Nunan Street instead of 5 Nunan Street. Elizabeth Lee's residence in 1861 in the house is consistent with the description of the house as a tenement.

John R. Burch relocated to Chatham County, Georgia, where he was living when he sold the property to **Rebecca F. Fraser** on December 25, 1864, for \$3000.³ (The relative value of the house can be hard to compare because of the instability of Confederate currency.) The property was 50 feet wide on "Newnan Street" and 100 feet deep and was no longer described as two separate lots. Rebecca Fraser immediately sold the house to **C.B. Sigwald** on December 26, 1864, for \$3000.⁴

¹ Deed book X13, page 65

² On March 11, 1857, a request was made by George Nunan to rename Nunan's Lane to Nunan Street when the street was widened. "Proceedings of Council," Charleston Mercury, Mar. 12, 1857, at 1

³ Deed book U14(1), page 287

⁴ Deed book T14(5), page 5

Mr. Sigwald sold the property to **Lewis S. Sigwald** for \$800. The deed was dated July 1867 and recorded in August 14, 1868.⁵ **Lewis Sigwald** sold the house for \$1000 to **George C. Warren**⁶ on July 24, 1871.⁷ The deed had been signed in June 1870, and railroad conductor T.C. and Mary Warren were occupying the house by the time of the 1870 census in July. In 1871, J. Walker occupied the house instead.

On July 25, 1871, Mr. Warren sold the house to carpenter **Edwin Hutchinson** for \$500.⁸ Mr. Hutchinson lived in the house in 1874.



During Mr. Hutchinson's ownership, the 1872 Bird's Eye View of Charleston was drawn, showing the original segment of Nunan Street between Rutledge and Ashley (Payne) Avenue. The map (shown above) seems to show 5 Nunan Street in place, set back slightly from the curb, unlike the other houses on the block.

Phoebe Hutchinson bought it from the estate of Edwin Hutchinson for \$825 following a suit among the heirs.⁹ The sale was recorded on September 16, 1878. Ms. Hutchinson seems to have used the house as a rental property. Occupants included John Bailey (1877); F.L. Jones (1878); A. William Pinckney (1878); John Bailey at 3 ½ Nunan (1878); Benjamin Drayton at 3 ½ Nunan (1878); Charles Cashaw (1879); James Gardner (1879-80), and Samuel Heyward (1881).

BY R. M. MARSHALL & BRO.
TWO STORY FRAME RESIDENCE, 3 NUNAN STREET.
 On THURSDAY, 10th instant, at 11 o'clock, will be sold at the Postoffice,
 The above Residence, having 7 rooms, also an outbuilding of 4 rooms. The lot measures 50 by 100 feet, more or less.
 Terms—One-half cash, balance by bond, payable in one and two years with interest semi-annually, secured by mortgage of the property. Building to be insured and policy assigned. Purchaser to pay State tax of 1870, city tax of 1880, and us for paper.
 \$12,10.00

⁵ Deed book E15, page 673

⁶ T.C. Warren was 23 in the 1870 census and living with Caroline Warren, a 66 year old woman.

⁷ Deed book A16, page 110

⁸ Deed book A16, page 120

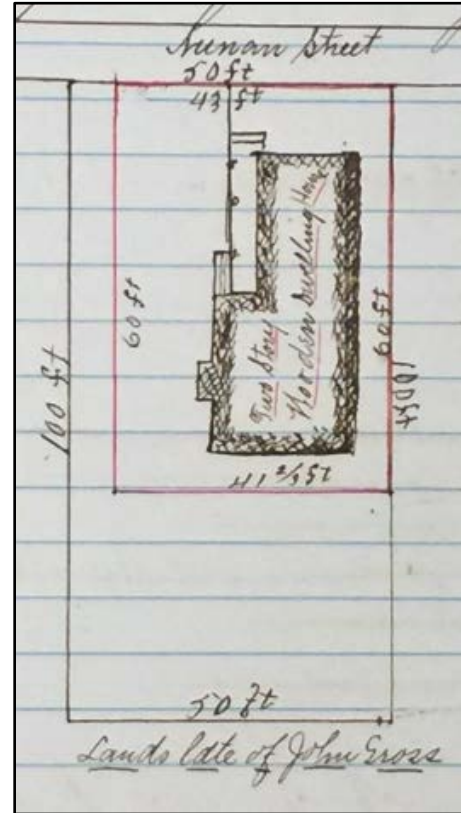
⁹ Deed book N17, Page 60

The house was listed for sale on February 12, 1880 (see ad above), in the News & Courier as a house with seven rooms and a four-room outbuilding. On December 20, 1881, the sale of the house for \$600 to **Benjamin L. Cook**¹⁰ was recorded.¹¹ The decrease in the price of the house is attributable to the fact that the lot was significantly reduced. Until 1881, the lot was 50 feet wide and 100 feet deep. But, in the sale of the house to Mr. Cook, the 43 foot by 60 foot portion of the lot with the house was carved out and sold separately. The 1881 deed included a small drawing of the lot which showed the footprint of the house. (The remaining “flag lot” is currently 7 Nunan Street; it was shown as 5 ½ Nunan Street in the 1902 Sanborn maps.)

Mr. Cook, who worked at a lumber yard on Calhoun Street, lived in the house starting by 1882. (Richard Cherry was an additional occupant in 1884, and blacksmith Tobias Grant was a second occupant in 1894.) Mr. Cook remained until at least 1897. During his time at the house, the numbering was changed from 3 Nunan Street to 5 Nunan Street.

Starting in 1898, Scipio¹² and dressmaker Mary Powell¹³ occupied the house instead as a rental.¹⁴ At times, the house was shared with others; either Mr. Cook was renting the house as more than one unit or the Powells were subletting to co-tenants. Finally, on December 12, 1906, Mr. Cook, who had been renting a house on Judith Street for himself and his wife, sold the Nunan Street house to **Mary Ann Powell**.¹⁵ The Powells remained until at least 1912 before relocating but retaining the Nunan Street house as a rental property.¹⁶ On November 19, 1917, Mrs. Powell sold 5 Nunan Street to **Janie D. Watson** for \$1800.¹⁷

The Watsons lived at 267 Ashley Avenue until 1922 despite having bought the house on Nunan Street. But from at least 1922 to 1945, painter Joseph Walter Watson and Janie D. Watson lived in the house. Mr. Watson¹⁸ died on February 1, 1945, still a resident of 5 Nunan Street, and Mrs. Watson remained in the house until she died on October 8, 1948, at 58 years old. When Mrs. Watson finally died



¹⁰ Mr. Cook was born about April 1830 in South Carolina and was married to Mary A. Cook.

¹¹ Deed book L18, page 211

¹² Mr. Powell was born on October 14, 1863, and died on January 11, 1932.

¹³ Mrs. Powell was born in June 1873.

¹⁴ Additional occupants included Gus Nettles (1900), Elias Collins (1900), George and Louise Gibson (1903-04), Arthur Merkle (1904), and John Small (1905).

¹⁵ Deed book D25, page 12

¹⁶ Occupants include James and Charlotte Prioleau (1913); Irvin Dempsey (1913); Benjamin and Sallie White (1913); William and Eliza Coleman (1914-15); Eugenia Deas (1914); Chossin Deas (1915); George and Catherine Thompson (1916-21); Samuel and Isabella Broderick (1917); Jesse Lee (1918); and Peter and Jane Richardson (1920).

¹⁷ Deed book O29, page 48

¹⁸ Mr. Watson was born about 1877.

in 1948, she left the house to Theodore A. Watson, J. Walter Watson, Rose W. Johnson, Ellen W. Maxwell, and Cassie A. Watson.

Starting at least in the mid-1950s, the house was used by the Watson heirs as a rental property. A seamstress named Dorothy Temple occupied the house from 1955 to 1958, and police detective Charles Temple was there from 1961 to 1976. Overlapping the Temples' use of the house, the Watsons occupied part of the house. Cassie and Theo Watson were present in 1968 and again in 1979. Mrs. Corrine P. Watson was there from 1974 to 1977.

Beverly Owensby bought the house from the heirs on March 3, 1983,¹⁹ but Cassie Watson continued to reside in her family's house until 1987. Other tenants included Yvette Johnson (1987-89) and Johnny L. Sheppard (1989-91), who occupied different units in the house.

Palmetto Mortgage Corporation got it on February 3, 1992, following a public auction,²⁰ and **Alvin Richardson** got it on March 17, 1993.²¹ Mr. Richardson appears to have continued using the house as a rental property with a string of short-term occupants.²²

¹⁹ Deed book V130, page 383

²⁰ Deed book E210, page 405

²¹ Deed book S224, page 133

²² Occupants included Sheila Fraser (1999), Roger Coan (2000-01), Loretta Stanley (2003, 2012), Jenee M. and Mildred Wright (2004-05), Ervin Frazier (2013), Laquesha and Tiffany Nero (2014-15), and Dale Vanderhorst (2015).