

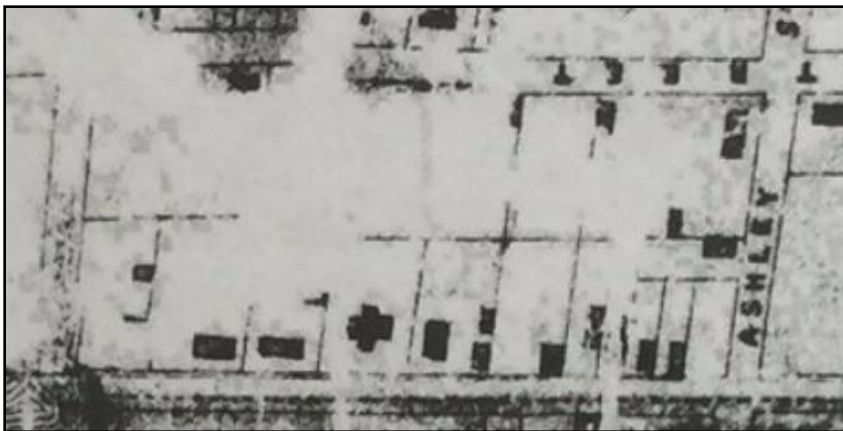
139 Spring Street

c. 1853-1854 and c. 1920s



The property at 139 Spring Street is an unusual property which has, for most of its history, included both a residential and separate commercial structure on the same parcel. The dwelling is a mid-19th century, two-story, wooden building with a two-story front porch. The gable-roofed house is set toward the middle of the property. The commercial structure, on the other hand, is a simple concrete block building on the northwest corner of the Spring Street property line that was added in the 1920s.

The lot itself dates back to a plat prepared in January 1852, on which it was marked as Lot A. The executor of the estate of **Christian B.S. Gulden**, the owner of the newly divided tract, sold Lots A and B to **James E. Walker** for \$1670 on August 20, 1853.¹ At the same time the property was being divided, the block was captured on the 1852 Bridgens & Allen map. That map, which is relatively reliable as to the location (but not necessarily the footprint) of buildings, shows that the block was very sparsely developed at the time. There were no apparent buildings on the Gulden Tract.



James E. Walker sold only Lot A of the property for \$1400 to **F. Postell Thackam**.² In 1855 and 1856, Mr. Thackham occupied the house. At the time of the 1856 city directory, Mr. Thackham's address was listed as 59 Spring

¹ Deed book X12, page 487

² Deed book I13, page 247

Street. Although the house was known as “63 Spring Street” under the 1861 street numbering system until 1885, the earlier reference to “59 Spring Street” is certainly a reference to the same house; the numbering of houses was notoriously inconsistent in the 19th century, and Mr. Thackham owned only the one house on Spring Street.

Mr. Thackam sold it to Edward Freer (trustee for **Caroline E. Starr**) for \$1850 on December 3, 1859.³ A lack of historical sources for the 1850s makes it impossible to know how the house was being used by Mr. Thackam, but in 1860-1861, planter W.W. Starr⁴ was occupying the house with his wife, Caroline Starr, and several children.⁵ The fact that the Starrs were in the house by the time of the 1860 federal census on January 9, 1860 strongly suggests that the house had been built before they acquired the property.

The trust sold the property to **William Walter Riley** on August 9, 1867, for \$1200.⁶ Mr. Riley, a bookkeeper, made his home in the house, but on August 29, 1871, there was a public auction for the property as the result of a lawsuit brought by the Homestead Building & Loan Association. The resulting deed referred to improvements to the property. The winning bid of \$1305 was by contractor **Jonathan H. Lopez**.⁷ How Mr. Lopez used the house during his short ownership is unknown; he consistently lived in a house on Queen Street during his ownership of the Spring Street house.

Mr. Lopez sold the property to **James Monroe Rabb**⁸ on March 31, 1874, for \$1100 with a deed that referred to a building on the property.⁹ Mr. Rabb was the master machinist for the Charleston & Savannah Railroad and lived in the house immediately after buying it. According to tax records during the 1880s, the property had a two-story, wooden building.



The house was listed for sale in March 15, 1888 in the News & Courier but must not have attracted a buyer.

³ Deed book L14, page 146

⁴ (b. abt. 1822)

⁵ (b. abt. 1828)

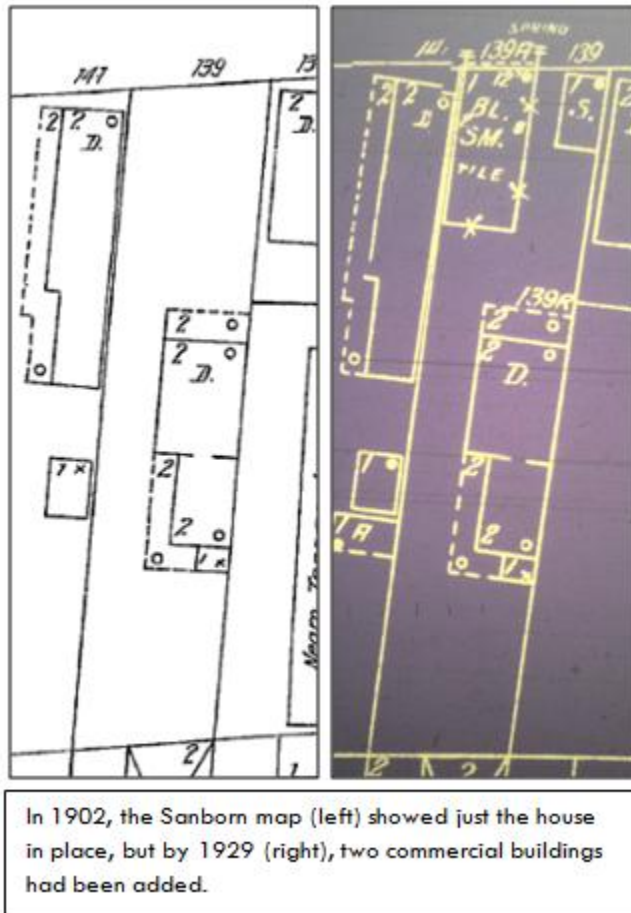
⁶ Deed book D15, page 83

⁷ Deed book V15, page 116

⁸ (b. 1821; d. May 30, 1889)

⁹ Deed book Q16, page 68

Mr. Rabb, a widower, died with a will dated March 11, 1889 that referred to “my dwelling house situate in the City of Charleston S.C. on Spring Street number 139.” According to his estate plan, the house was to “remain as a home for my darling single daughters, viz. Mary Alice, Sallie Amanda, and Janett Stewart” until one of them should marry, at which point the house could be sold. When Mary Alice Rabb married, the house was sold by Mr. Rabb’s executor for \$1500 to **James R.D. Kennedy** in April 1890.¹⁰



When the 1902 Sanborn maps were published, the house was still the sole structure on the property, set about one-half of the way back on the deep lot. No commercial structure had been added to the front of the lot. Nevertheless, at least by early 1921, the house was involved in a neighborhood contretemps over its commercial use.

The house was the location for automobile cleaning and repair business known as the Seaside Motor Service Co.¹¹ Neighbors complained about the business in their residential area making noise day and night, seven days a week. The repairs were done in the street in front of the house and caused other issues: “The negroes appear in the street half clad, dirt and filth are deposited in the street and with a neighboring cook shop, conditions

are declared to be so disgraceful that the residential character of the street is being destroyed.”¹² The matter seems to have been resolved by City Council, and the business appeared in only the 1921 city directory.



¹⁰ Deed book F21, page 63

¹¹ Charleston Evening Post, Feb. 23, 1921, at 8

¹² Charleston News & Courier, Oct. 20, 1921, at 6

Although that episode passed, the parcel continued to have a commercial purpose from the 1920s forward. By the time of the 1929 Sanborn map update, the property was shown with the house and two single-story commercial buildings along the sidewalk.

Maggie Momier bought the property for \$1800 following a lawsuit involving the property on October 24, 1933.¹³ By the time of the 1929 Sanborn map update, the existing building was present and labeled as an auto shop while a smaller building stood next to it without identification. Momier's Garage appeared consistently during the Momier's ownership, while a grocery (e.g., Todd's Grocery, Little's Grocery) occupied the smaller building.

The Momiers seem to have used the dwelling as rental property for most of their ownership, but they also occupied the house at least for a few years in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Joseph S. Momier and his wife, Viri Ann Morrow Momier, were photographed in front of the house in about 1942, for example.



Herbert Smalls bought the house for \$8000 on July 19, 1961.¹⁴ The name of the auto shop changed, but otherwise the house continued as a rental property.

The earliest known photograph showing the commercial buildings on Spring Street was taken in 1985 (below), during Mr. Smalls' ownership. According to that photograph, the smaller commercial building was a very simple wooden building

¹³ Deed book W33, page 263

¹⁴ Deed book G74, page 138

with a door and picture window on Spring Street. The larger commercial building included a large window and a garage door in a block building with a slightly decorative roofline. The businesses in the commercial buildings varied slightly over the years, but the larger building remained an auto shop for most of the time, usually Rhodes Garage. For at least twenty years, the smaller building houses Sheares Grocery.



Mr. Smalls retained the house until his death, at which point it was received by Mercedes Smalls Walker and Florine Smalls on December 23, 1991, from his estate.¹⁵ For the next several years, the buildings were either identified as vacant or no information was available about their use in the city directories. In May 1999, shortly before the property was sold, the smaller of the two commercial buildings on the sidewalk was demolished.

Herman and Vernessa S. Cunningham bought the property for \$105,000 on September 21, 1999.¹⁶ Again, no information was available about the use of the building during the Cunningham's ownership.

¹⁵ Deed book B209, page 442

¹⁶ Deed book N334, page 491



The Cunninghams sold the property to Byron C. Frick, Jr. on August 11, 2003 for \$210,000.¹⁷ Byron C. Frick, Jr. sold the property to FB Dream, LLC on May 1, 2009,¹⁸ but the business transferred it back to him on October 22, 2014.¹⁹ Despite those transfers, at least the commercial property was

returned to use. Starting in at least 2007, Innovate Interiors, an interior design company, was operating out of the storefront.

Byron C. Frisk, Jr. sold the property to 139 Spring Street, LLC for \$625,000 on April 4, 2016.²⁰

¹⁷ Deed book R461, page 342

¹⁸ Deed book 0051, page 163

¹⁹ Deed book 0436, page 271

²⁰ Deed book 0544, page 904