

Houses Saved For Adaptive Use

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Twentieth in a series of articles on the early dwelling along Beaufain and Wentworth streets. The twenty-first will appear on Monday.)

By W.H.J. THOMAS

When the two large 19th century dwelling houses at 63 and 65 Beaufain St. were purchased by the Housing Authority of Charleston and incorporated into the Robert Mills Manor project, their salvation (and the saving of the nearby Marine Hospital and the old County Jail on Magazine Street) was considered an important achievement for local persons concerned with preservation of period buildings and with making the term "adaptive use" a reality here.

According to newspaper reports of the late 1930s —

the period in which plans for this project went on the drawing boards — these two dwellings backed up on an area that contained some of the worst slum buildings in the city.

At a time in the city's history when slums and respectable residential areas frequently found themselves standing side by side, the Cromwell Alley section (known as "Crumble Alley" by many of its residents) just to the south of these dwellings had been known by police for generations to have harbored "the most abject crime and misery, and condemned by health officers as a breeding place for disease."

The solid brick and masonry construction and the ample space within these two homes no doubt were the virtues that kept 63 and 65 Beaufain from

being destroyed 30 years ago.

Despite its general 1850-ish exterior appearance, the three-story dwelling now designated as 65 Beaufain was constructed between 1806 and 1816 by Richard Brennan, a local merchant. He purchased the lot on which it stands on Nov. 26, 1806, from Theodore Gaillard Jr. for \$1,600. The city directories of the period do not list Brennan as a resident here until 1816.

It is instructive to compare the details of 65 Beaufain with the William G. Steele House at 89 Beaufain that was constructed about 1815. In the hipped roof with its gentle bell curve, in general window proportions and in near-identical details on the interior we find a strong similarity that shows a merging of the Adam period with early Regency.

After Brennan's death, the dwelling (fully described in a deed for the first time) was sold by his executors to Thomas Ogier, a broker and auctioneer, for \$5,150 in 1827. It was next purchased on March 26, 1836, by John C. Holcombe, a commission merchant, for \$10,000. Holcombe only retained the property two years, selling it in March of 1838 to Oliver B. Hilliard, a grocer in the firm of Hilliard and Thomas, for \$12,000.

On Dec. 15, 1856, Hilliard sold the property to Liba B. Oakes for \$10,000. It would appear that it was about this date that one of these two owners gave the dwelling its fashionable mid-century appearance by adding the small but ornate cast iron window ornaments, put in the six light window sashes and perhaps

added the stucco facing and the quoins.

The house was owned during the 1860s and 1870s by Charles H. Sanders, listed as a resident of Liverpool, England. It was later owned by the Lawless family and the Hallises.

The two-and-a-half story dwelling now listed as 63 Beaufain, a house that continued as a well kept-up single family residence until being purchased by the Housing Authority in 1940, was apparently built about 1849 by Theresa McHugh.

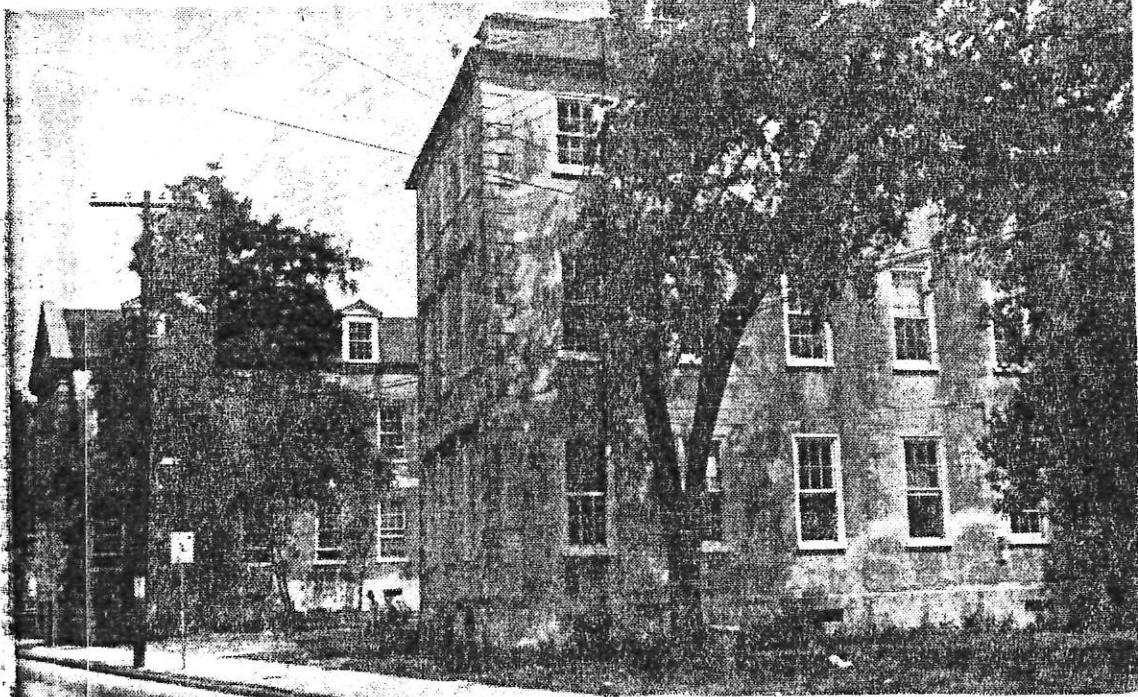
Mrs. McHugh purchased this lot on March 16, 1849, from Thomas Gadsden, paying \$2,400. The city directory for that year lists Francis Q. McHugh, an attorney, as a resident here.

The dwelling looks very strongly as the period, with its gable roof and heavily-molded cornice, the large window proportions and the heavy vermiculated quoins. It seems unusual to have the McHughs living in a dwelling on this location so soon after buying the property. But it appears that the McHughs built it since the deed of conveyance describes the property as a vacant lot.

On May 6, 1881, Mrs. McHugh's executor, the Rev. D. J. Quigley, had all of her considerable real estate sold at public auction, this dwelling being purchased by Elise Plenge. In January of 1911, it was sold to Mary Hallis for \$3,000, then conveyed the next month to Josephine V. Henebery for \$3,500.

It was purchased in 1914 by the Chiquola Realty Corp. and on May 18, 1915, was conveyed to The Society for the Relief of Elderly and Disabled Ministers and the Widows and Orphans of the Clergy of the Independent or Congregational Church in the State of South Carolina.

Nellie M. Murray bought the house in 1920 for \$5,500. It was owned by the Uricchio family from 1931 to 1940.



PERIOD DWELLINGS INCORPORATED INTO PROJECT

63 and 65 Beaufain St. constructed in 19th century. (Staff Photo by Swain)

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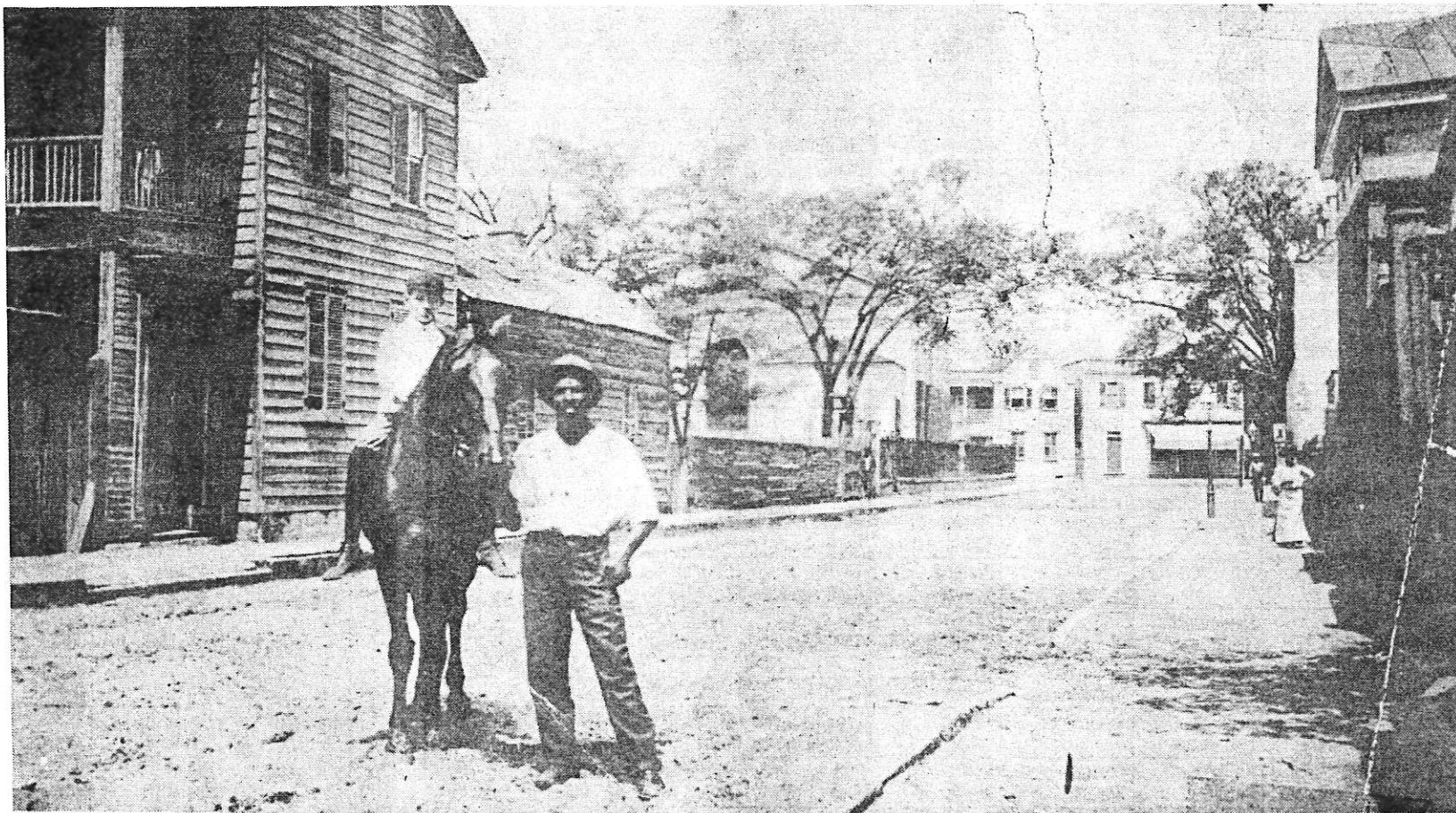
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Lowcountry Past

Wilson Street As It Looked In 1908

Marguerite Behlmer McLaughlin contributes this 1908 photo taken looking north on Wilson Street toward Beaufain. The boy on the horse is her brother, William A. Behlmer. The man holding the reins is Peter Washington, one of the first South Carolinians killed in action in World War I. In the background to the left is Calvary Episcopal Church which was lost when the area was razed to build Robert Mills Manor in the late 1930s.



WILSON STREET