

Historical Notes by Kevin Eberle,  
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The house is interesting by itself because is one of the best examples of Carpenter Gothic architecture in Charleston. What makes its history confounding though is that it is actually part of a trio of similar cottages (77, 79, and 81 Nassau Street).

All three parcels had been owned by the family of William E. and Catherine B. Gordon. You would think that all three houses had been built by the same person, but there is no indication that the houses were in place when the Gordons sold the land on which 79 and 81 Nassau Street were built. (The land for 77 Nassau Street was sold to another buyer about the same time.)

In 1851, the land for 79 and 81 Nassau Street was bought by James H. Taylor. All the indicators point to construction of 79 and 81 Nassau Street by Mr. Taylor. A few months after having bought the parcels, Mr. Taylor used the two lots to secure loans for \$1600 each from the Charleston Building & Loan Association. That figure is consistent with the value of a house at the time. And in early 1852, an advertisement ran for the rental of one of the new cottages on Nassau Street, with Mr. Taylor's company as the contact for interested parties. No specific address was listed, but the timing of the ad, the figures in the transactions, and the involvement of Mr. Taylor's company are strong circumstantial evidence for his having built 79 and 81 Nassau Street in 1852.

The only problem is the amazing similarities between all three of the houses, including 77 Nassau Street. What is crazy is that except for the vertical batten siding, none of the details in seen on all three of the houses. The super cool trim over the windows in seen on both 77 and 79, but not 81. The window arrangement is the same on 77 and 81, but not 79. The piazzas are the same on 79 and 81, but not 77.

It's possible that Mr. Taylor was inspired by an existing house at 77 for the style of his own cottages. Or maybe the other way around? Who knows?!