

Riggs-Baldwin House

68 Cannon Street

c. 1855



The large, wooden house at 68 Cannon Street is certainly not the first dwelling on the site. Because of a paucity of antebellum records, some of the house's history is circumstantial; however, a strong case can be made for the construction of the house in the 1850s by the Sires family, replacing an older house from the turn of the 19th century. Although 68 Cannon Street has periodically been owner-occupied, the house has mainly been used as a rental property.

Daniel Cannon—for whom Cannonborough is named—owned a tract of several acres outside the densely populated downtown near his family's mill. He had the property platted into at least 18 smaller (although still large by modern standards) lots and sold them for development.

Philip Hart sold Lot 7 of the Daniel Cannon tract (100 feet wide and extending all the way through the block to Spring Street) to merchant **Alexander Jones** on for 135 pounds in 1795.¹ Ten years later, butcher **David Cameron** bought the property for \$1200.² Mr. Cameron probably did not live at the site; before he bought Lot 7 in 1805, he had already purchased the neighboring lot (Lot 8) to the east and was living there by 1800.

¹ Deed book O6, page 357 (recorded on September 21, 1795)

² Deed book Q7, page 56 (recorded on June 5, 1805)

Mr. Cameron died in 1809 or 1810, and Lot 7 was acquired by his widow, Elizabeth, and his adopted daughter, Elizabeth Smith.³ The inheritance would ultimately go to whichever outlived the other. His adopted daughter, Elizabeth Smith, must have married William Burn; **Elizabeth Burn**,⁴ acquired the property through David Cameron's estate, and in late 1813, her husband, William Burn, sold about one-quarter of it to **Thomas Critzbourg**⁵ for \$600. The portion that was sold was the first time the property assumed its current dimensions of 45 feet on Cannon Street by 175 feet deep. Additionally, the deed specified that the property had "two small houses" on it. Whether the two small houses had been built for the Burns family or for Mr. Cameron is unknown.

In 1814, Mr. Critzbourg sold the property with two small houses for \$675 to Sarah Remmington (on behalf of her son, school teacher **John K.N. Runciman**).⁶ In the early 19th century, street numbers were irregularly used, especially in the more sparsely populated areas above Calhoun Street. In various years, city directories and censuses showed either Sarah Remmington (1816, 1830, 1831, 1840) or John Runciman (1819, 1835, 1840) living at least on Cannon Street, likely in one of the former dwellings.

Mr. Runciman died in 1848 while residing on Cannon Street and left the property to his widow, Sarah Runciman, and their four children.⁷ The property then saw several quick resales. First, to settle the estate of Mr. Runciman, on July 3, 1848, a public auction for the property was held. Stone cutter **James E. Walker**⁸ paid \$700 for the lot with buildings on it, but in the 1849 directory, he was listed as living on Meeting Street with William, David A., and James E. Walker.⁹ Then, less than a year later, Mr. Walker sold the property to his brother, Rev. **Charles S.**

³ Charleston County will book 31, page 397

⁴ (b. Elizabeth Smith; d. 1825 leaving her husband, William; son George Burn, Ann A. Burn, Charles Burn, Edward Burn) (Given the fact that she left several children by William Burn, one may assume that this was the adopted daughter and not widow of David Cameron. Additionally, David Cameron's widow held only a life estate in the property and would not have been able to convey a title to the property.)

⁵ Deed book 18, page 120 (recorded on November 29, 1813) ("Critzbourg" is often spelled "Chrietzburg" elsewhere.)

⁶ Deed book H8, page 404 (recorded on August 29, 1814)

⁷ John outlived his mother but died, leaving a wife named Sarah Runciman and four children--John W. Runciman, Harriet A. Runciman Lawrence, Mary Ann Runciman, and Vanderhorst Runciman.

⁸ This was probably James Evans Walker, who was born on April 3, 1808 in Charleston to Thomas and Margaret Walker. He was married to Rebecca Schenk Brewer. He died March 13, 1883, in Charleston.

⁹ Deed book A12, page 425 (recorded on Oct. 9, 1848) On the same day that the sale to Mr. Walker was recorded, a quitclaim deed by the Burn clan was recorded to the Runcimans to resolve any issues arising from William Burn's earlier sale on behalf of his wife. Deed book B12, page 221

Walker,¹⁰ for only \$750.¹¹ Next, in 1851, the property was bought by **Thomas Norman Gadsden**¹² for \$995.¹³ (The property was possibly sold when Rev. and Mrs. Walker moved away; they were living in Anson County, North Carolina at the time they sold the property to Mr. Gadsden.) Mr. Gadsden was a very wealthy Charlestonian who lived on lower Church Street and was heavily invested in real estate holdings and development.

On April 17, 1855, Mr. Gadsden sold the property to **Martha M. Sires**,¹⁴ the wife of bookkeeper Peter Sires,¹⁵ for \$1250.¹⁶ Property tax records began being kept in 1852, and the lot was listed as having only a single building on it, suggesting either that one of the earlier “two small houses” had been removed or that both had been replaced with a newer dwelling. In the 1850s, two-story, wooden houses on similarly sized lots along Cannon Street were valued between \$1000 and \$2000, strongly suggesting that whatever house was on the land when Mrs. Sires bought it was an unexceptional dwelling.

While no concrete evidence exists, 68 Cannon Street was likely built by the Sires family as a replacement for whatever simpler house had served earlier owners. First, new construction frequently coincided with changes in ownership, and, indeed, the assessed value of the parcel increased dramatically between 1854 and 1855. Second, the Sires family (especially carpenter Francis Sires, the brother of Peter Sires) added several very similar houses to nearby parcels including 156, 158, and 160 Spring Street, all of which were two-story houses with central halls oriented lengthwise on their lots. Third, the classical style of the house is certainly consistent with 1850s taste and not early 19th century architecture.

Assuming that the house was built for Mrs. Martha Sires, the dwelling was probably intended as an investment and not a personal home for her and Peter Sires. In 1857, **Francis Guerrin Cart** paid \$5500 for the property; the more than quadrupling of the price in less than two years is further evidence that the current house was built during the short ownership by Mrs. Sires.

¹⁰ Rev. Charles Saunders Walker was born on January 22, 1815, and he died on January 18, 1857 in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

¹¹ Deed book C12, page 2 (recorded on May 30, 1849)

¹² Thomas Norman Gadsden (b. Nov. 16, 1808; d. Jan. 7, 1866)

¹³ Deed book N12, page 375 (recorded on January 19, 1852)

¹⁴ Technically, the house was bought by B.S.D. Muckenfuss, a trustee for Mrs. Sires upon her marriage to Peter Sires.

¹⁵ Peter Joseph Sires was born in 1794. He first married Sarah Ann Smith and had two children with her. His second marriage to Martha Ireland generated 12 children. He died on May 13, 1867.

¹⁶ Deed book R13, page 79 (recorded on November 14, 1855)

At least at the very start, the house might have been used for owner occupation. Mr. Cart was the trustee for the marriage settlement of John Cart Glover and Jane Glover,¹⁷ and in the 1859 city directory, J.C. Glover was living on Cannon Street, somewhere west of Coming Street.

In 1859, auctioneer **John S. Riggs** paid \$5000 for the house.¹⁸ Mr. Riggs, who already owned nearby 60 Cannon Street, seems to have lived in that house and rented his new acquisition. In the 1861 municipal census, “42 Cannon” (the house’s first street number) was home to Capt. Shirley C. Turner.

Mr. Riggs quickly sold the house to wood factor **Thomas W. Riggs**¹⁹ for \$5000 in 1862.²⁰ Thomas was only two years younger than John, perhaps a brother, but he seems to have died not long after buying the house. In the 1872 assessor records, Thomas’s widow, **Matilda Friend Riggs**,²¹ was the owner. Renters apparently occupied the house in 1874,²² but a member of the Riggs family lived in the house in 1875.

During the Riggs’ ownerships, the first visual representation of 68 Cannon Street was produced. In the 1872 Bird’s Eye View of Charleston, the large, laterally oriented house can be seen just west of Felix Street amid neighboring houses and dependencies.



The house was next sold at a sheriff’s sale on March 23, 1876, for \$1330 to **J.D. Zerbst**²³ following a suit by the heirs of Thomas W. Riggs to settle the estate. The Zerbst deed referred to a two-and-one-half story wooden house with

¹⁷ Deed book V13, page 472 (recorded on March 19, 1857)

¹⁸ Deed book W13, page 751 (recorded on February 16, 1859)

¹⁹ Mr. Riggs had died before 1877.

²⁰ Deed book R14, page 71 (recorded on September 4, 1862)

²¹ Mrs. Matilda Riggs was born about 1836. She died in January 1901, a resident of 39 America Street. Her children were Thomas, Susan, and Henry Riggs.

²² Renters in 1874 included Carol and Sarah Weaver, Oscar Kanapaux, and Mrs. Mary Mazyck.

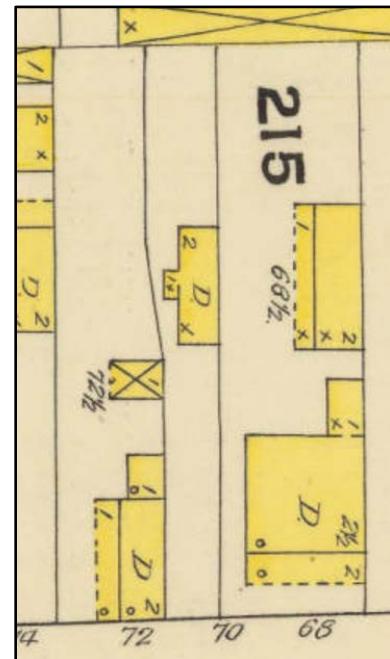
²³ Both Julius and his wife, Julia, had middle names that began with D, so the owner of the property could have been either.

outbuildings on the 45 by 175 foot lot.²⁴ The Zerbst family occupied at least part of the house in 1893-1895, but otherwise they seem to have rented the house out.²⁵

In June 1888, the existing two-and-one-half story house was shown on the Sanborn insurance maps. The house had a square footprint with a two-story pizza overlooking Cannon Street. A rather large, two-story dependency with a single-story porch stood behind the house and was labeled as 68 1/2 Cannon Street. The rear building had not been moved next door by 1908 when a plat for 70 Cannon Street showed only the single house there and nothing in the rear. By the 1929 update to the Sanborn maps, the rear building had been spun 90 degrees and moved to the back of the neighboring lot.²⁶

In 1899, J.H.W. and Dorothea Zerbst (heirs of J.D. Zerbst) sold the house to **Anna R. Rohde**²⁷ for \$3000.²⁸

(Mrs. Rohde lived next door with her nephew²⁹ Edward Bulcken's family at 66 Cannon Street until her death.) When Mrs. Rohde died in March 1912, she left her real estate to Carolina S. Bulcken (nee Petermann), the wife of her nephew, Edward Bulcken. Carolina died in 1914, and Mr. Bulcken (the sole devisee of his wife) sold the house to **Joanna E. Bulcken** in 1919.³⁰ (The relationship between Edward Bulcken and Joanna Bulcken is unknown.)



²⁴ Deed book X16, page 195 (recorded May 22, 1876)

²⁵ Occupants included Charles Y. Richardson and William Richardson (1877-79), David Fickling (1884), George Fisher (1884), Alonzo Coburn (1884), gunsmith Joseph L.N. Beaudrot (1887-92), Edward D. Bulcken (1887-91), William Mehrrens (1896-97), M.S. Stopelbein (1898-99), Mrs. M.J. Sellers (1900-05), Saxby Chaplin (1902), F.W. Rivers (1902-04), David M. Burns (1906-07), J.H. Gruber (1908), J.K. Gunter (1908), T.N. Ladd (1910-15), Mrs. Edith Lockwood (1916), and F.W. McKenzie (1917-1919).

²⁶ All of the properties were owned by the same family at that point, so the movement of the dependency from one parcel to the other is consistent with that.

²⁷ (b. Dec. 6, 1835; m. Heinrich B. Rohde; d. Apr. 29, 1912)

²⁸ Deed book N23, page 274 (recorded on July 19, 1899)

²⁹ Mrs. Anna R. Rohde (1835-1912) was Anna Bulcken before her marriage to Rohde. Her siblings included John G. Bulcken, Gessie Bulcken (1832-1879), Julius Bulcken (1845-74), Wilhelmina Bulcken (Wohltmann) (1842-91), Augusta Bulcken (Janssen), and Meta Bulcken (Nimitz). Anna Bulcken married Heinrich/Henry Rohde (1838-1877), and her sister Wilhelmina married Diedrich Rohde (1839-1919).

³⁰ Deed book Z28, page 209 (recorded on October 7, 1919)

By the 1920 census, Haynes Lennon Baldwin³¹ was there with Johanna E. Baldwin.³² Despite the house's being owned by Ms. Bulcken, it was the home of the Baldwin family from 1920 for almost twenty years. Indeed, when Ms. Bulcken died, Haynes L. Baldwin served as her executor.

As the result of a lawsuit brought by Mr. Baldwin (as the executor of Joanna E. Bulcken) against James F. Baldwin and Oran S. Baldwin (minors), the house was sold to **Carolina Realty Corp.** on August 15, 1939 for \$4021.75.³³ Carolina Realty Corp. sold the house to **John Baldwin** on October 13, 1939, for \$6200.³⁴ John Baldwin sold the house to his brother **Charles Franklin Baldwin**³⁵ on March 8, 1943 for \$1500 and the assumption to two mortgages.³⁶

Although Charles F. Baldwin shortly lived in the adjacent house at 70 Cannon Street, the house at 68 Cannon Street was otherwise converted to a purely rental property starting in about 1940.³⁷ Charles Baldwin sold the house along with both 70 and 72 Cannon Street (which he had acquired in 1943)³⁸ to **J. Palmer Gaillard** on April 30, 1946 for \$10,227.30 and the assumption of a mortgage.³⁹ Mr. Gaillard sold the three houses to **Violet (Voyles) Rubin** (Mrs. Joseph Rubin) for \$21,000 in June 1953.⁴⁰ Rubin sold the three properties to **Hadco Realty Co.** for \$18,500 on April 27, 1962.⁴¹ (Hadco Realty Co. was a real estate firm that was owned, in part, by noted contractor Herbert A. DeCosta.)

³¹ Haynes Lennon Baldwin was born on March 8, 1868, to James and Mary (Lennon) Baldwin in North Carolina. For 40 years, he was a partner in Walker & Baldwin until it was liquidated. He then operated H.L. Baldwin & Sons, poultry dealers, for the final five years of his life. He died June 17, 1954, living in McClellanville.

³² Mrs. Baldwin was born March 23, 1881, to Peter and Joanna Bowles.

³³ Deed book Y36, page 683

³⁴ Deed book V40, page 296

³⁵ Charles Franklin Baldwin was born on October 27, 1915. He died September 28, 1948, when car drove off a bridge and he drowned.

³⁶ Deed book B44, page 47

³⁷ Renters included heating engineer John M. and Melba Wyndham (1940-42); carpenter Robert and Birdie Pogue (1940); Leo J. Barrett (1942-48); Samuel Smith (1948); Ernest Williams (1955); James W. Rast (1955); Miss Violet Rubin (1958); Joseph Washington (1968); William Cherry (1968); Ernest J. Murray (1968); Mrs. Eva Pierce (1968-91); John Bowman (1970-71); Clarence Coaxum (1970); Walter Pinckney (1970); Margaret Johnson (1971-76); Mrs. Dorothy Watson (1971); Mrs. Rosa Gadsden (1972-94); Ben Gadsden (1973-86); Wilhelmina Chisolm (1974-89); Karen Wright (1977); Carmen Wilkey (1981); Wilhelmina Cunningham (1982-2011); Genevia Gantt (1992-96); Eva Smalls (1993-94); Elliott Beckett (1994); Ross Hare (1996); Charles Scaffe (1996); Deirdra Y. Black (1997); Jackie Ficco (1998-2000); Gay Yates (1998); Joshua Dorman (1999-2000); Eddie Smith (2000); Jeffrey S. Ridenoure (2001); Gerald Pressley (2004-07); Randi M. Isaacs (2004-06); and Mukundadura Perera (2010).

³⁸ Deed book R41, page 275

³⁹ Deed book S46, page 201

⁴⁰ Deed book J57, page 345

⁴¹ Deed book M76, page 47

Hadco Realty Co. sold just 68 Cannon Street at its 45 by 175 foot property to track and cross country coach for the College of Charleston **Amy S. Seago** for \$415,000 on January 13, 2011.⁴² At first, plans included an addition to the rear of the house, but the Board of Architectural Review rejected the plans. Instead, in 2013, additional space was created by adding a partial basement (the property is 13 feet above sea level already).⁴³ At the end of the project, the basement became the home of Ladles Restaurant in the summer of 2016; the main floors were expected to house the Seagos' residence and a bed-and-breakfast.⁴⁴

On December 28, 2017, Mrs. Seago conveyed to **In Charleston, LLC** in return for a membership interest in the business.⁴⁵



⁴² Deed book 166, page 436

⁴³ Robert Behre, "Dig it: Cannon St. home gets something novel," Post and Courier, Aug. 10, 2013, at SC Features-1

⁴⁴ Dave Munday, "Charleston tourist district continues to expand with changes on Cannon Street," Post and Courier, at D1

⁴⁵ Deed book 688, page 770