

The History of  
2623 Myrtle Avenue  
Sullivan's Island, South Carolina



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## Introduction

2623 Myrtle Avenue is located within Atlanticville, an area on the eastern half of Sullivan's Island. The property is bounded directly by Station 26 ½ to the north, Jasper Boulevard to the east, 2612 Jasper Boulevard to the south, and Myrtle Avenue to the west. The property is just outside the bounds of the Atlanticville National Register Historic District, which includes the portions of Myrtle Avenue, Jasper Boulevard, and Middle Street between Station 22 ½ and Station 26.<sup>1</sup> 2623 Myrtle Avenue was previously identified as a Traditional Island Resource in an architectural survey and was estimated to have been constructed circa 1900.<sup>2</sup> Lost or destroyed documents make it impossible to definitively substantiate this claim, but contextual historic evidence, and physical evidence in the construction and phasing of the home, make it plausible that the home was built circa 1900 by John F. O'Rourke, Sr.

The home was likely built as a Sullivan's Island U-shape porch typology, but its floor plan was significantly altered throughout the early twentieth century. It was later converted to a front porch typology, and then enclosed the porch and built a new one with a new front entrance to the house on a different facade. These changes likely took place as the house was exchanged to new owners and in reaction to new traffic on the island.



GIS Map showing the property boundaries of 2623 Myrtle Avenue.

<sup>1</sup> David B. Schneider, "Atlanticville Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places*, United States Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, 2007. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/charleston/S10817710177/S10817710177.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Summer Ciomek, Katie Quinn, and Sean Stucker, "Sullivan's Island Historic Resources Survey," (Charleston, SC: New South Associates, 2024), 3. <https://sullivansisland.sc.gov/sites/sullivansisland/files/Documents/Historic%20Preservation/Survey%20Report%20Draft%207-23-2024.pdf>.

## Area Context

Sullivan's Island has served a great many purposes throughout its history. By the end of the seventeenth century, most of present-day Charleston County had been granted to private owners by the Lords Proprietors; however, they reserved what is now known as Sullivan's Island for public use. Its location at the mouth of the Charleston Harbor made it a strategic location for both defense and surveillance. In 1674, Florence O'Sullivan was among several of a militia entrusted with firing a gun or cannon from the island, and his name has been remembered since. A watchhouse was constructed in 1685 to guard against Spanish invasion. In 1707, a "pest house" was built to quarantine incoming passengers who showed signs of contagious disease. This pest house was destroyed and rebuilt three times between 1707 and 1784. In 1776, Fort Moultrie was built to defend South Carolina from the British in the American Revolution; it was later ceded to the United States government in 1805.<sup>3</sup>

When ownership transferred from the British Crown to the State of South Carolina, there was some debate about issuing private land grants on the island, but it was ultimately decided that it should remain public. In 1791, however, a legislative decree allowed wealthy individuals to build summer homes on half-acre lots, essentially invoking "squatters' rights" on the government-owned island. They successfully petitioned to remove the pest house in 1796 as they built on the western end of the island. The area on the western portion of the island became known as Moultrieville and was led by a board of commissioners from 1798 to 1817, when it was chartered as a village. Amid much controversy, the state continued to hold eminent domain on all the island's properties, severely regulating real estate and commercial development. This imbalance in legal ownership caused discord among residents and repeated battles in the Statehouse. The question of land ownership was finally solved, when the US government sold Fort Moultrie, and there was no real reason for Sullivan's Island to be deemed a public asset any longer. In 1953, residents finally could apply to convert their property to a freehold from a leasehold.<sup>4</sup>

The eastern half of the island remained largely undeveloped through most of the nineteenth century, until in 1898, when Dr. Joseph Lawrence embarked on a venture of developing the Isle of Palms as a resort destination. To facilitate travel, he organized the construction of eight miles of a trolley line which ran from Mount Pleasant, through Sullivan's Island, to the Isle of Palms. The line's route on the eastern end of Sullivan's became a road called Railroad Avenue, which was later renamed Jasper Boulevard. A generating station was built to power the trolley, which simultaneously brought electricity to Sullivan's for the first time. These improved technologies and

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<sup>3</sup> Nic Butler. "Sullivan's Island: Property of the Crown and State," *Charleston Time Machine*, <https://www.ccpl.org/charleston-time-machine/sullivans-island-property-crown-and-state>.

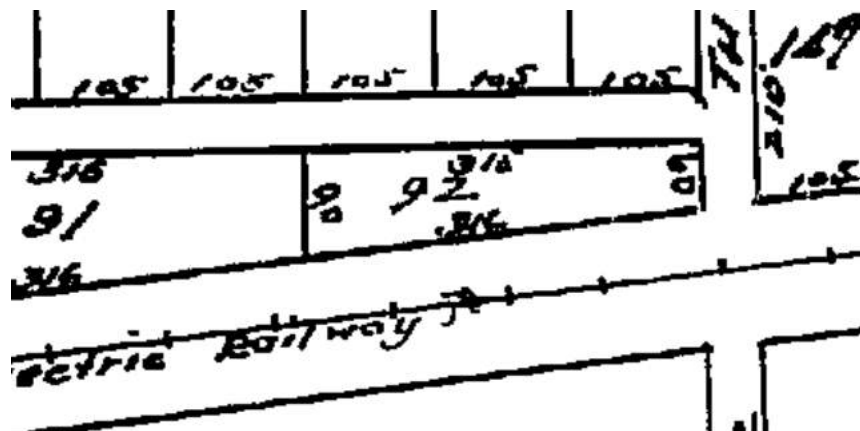
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

transportation created a sudden boom of development in this area, called Atlanticville, and at the turn of the century, many Charlestonians built seasonal cottages with distinctive typologies regional to Sullivan's for their families.<sup>5</sup>

2623 Myrtle Avenue is located on Lot 92, as recorded in an 1899 plat of the east end of Moultrieville (Plat Book D, p. 184). It is a small, tapered piece of land that fronts the trolley line to the Isle of Palms. There is no record of any buildings occupying the land prior. The triangular sliver of land to its east, labeled Lot 123, is later amalgamated into the property lines above it.



*"Sullivan's Island, Moultrieville, S.C. East End." Plat. 1899. Register Mesne Conveyance Office, Charleston County, SC. Plat Book D, p. 184.*



*2623 Myrtle Avenue appears again as Lot 92 in 1927 with unchanged property boundaries. "Plan of a Part of Atlanticville, Sullivan's Island." Plat. 1927. Register Mesne Conveyance Office, Charleston County, SC. Plat Book E, 43.*

<sup>5</sup> Schneider, "Atlanticville Historic District."

## History of Ownership

**John Farrell O'Rourke, Sr.** (1867-1925) is the first known owner of 2623 Myrtle Avenue. His original license to the house was "lost or destroyed," but it is known for certain that he owned the property, on which there was a house built, by the time of his death in 1925.<sup>6</sup> More than likely, like many of his Atlanticville neighbors, he received a license for the house in 1899, with a stipulation to build within one year of the license's issue.

Born into an Irish immigrant community in 1866, O'Rourke's early origins are mysterious. His father was Bryan (or Bryant) O'Rourke, an Irishman who emigrated to Charleston with several of his brothers in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Bryan O'Rourke was settled in Charleston by early 1852; in March of that year, *The Charleston Daily Courier* recorded that he recommended his brother, Farrell O'Rourke, be granted a license from City Council to open a tavern across from "the Shoe Factory on King Street."<sup>8</sup> Both Bryan and Farrell would go on to marry women named Mary, later leaving two widowed Mary O'Rourkes in city records.

Bryan and Farrell's brother, James, died in 1864, and the family hosted a funeral at his house at the corner of Line Street and St. Philip Street.<sup>9</sup> In 1866, Bryan appeared in the *Charleston City Directory* living at 18 Woolfe Street.<sup>10</sup> While some documents vary on his date of birth, John F. O'Rourke was likely born in 1867 at the Woolfe Street residence as the youngest of five brothers.<sup>11</sup> Bryan died in 1868, and his funeral was held at their house.<sup>12</sup> In the summer of 1870, John was orphaned when his mother, Mary, died at the Woolfe Street home at age thirty-six. Her funeral was held at St. Patrick's Church and she was buried at St. Lawrence Cemetery. Her death records indicate that she was born in Albany, New York, which is contested by John's own death record which states her birthplace as Ireland, and the 1910 Census which records John's mother's birthplace as South Carolina.<sup>13</sup>

There is a good deal of confusion in the records over the remaining years of John's childhood. Census records indicate that John was immediately moved to the Catholic Male Orphan House operated by the Sisters of Mercy on Calhoun Street. It is there that the 1870 census records the five-year-old John living with his brother James; it marks that both of his parents were born in

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<sup>6</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book J34, p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> South Carolina, U.S. Death Records, 1821-1972: 326. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>8</sup> "Council Chamber, March 1, 1852," *The Charleston Daily Courier*, March 19, 1852: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>9</sup> *The Charleston Mercury*, October 14, 1864: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>10</sup> *Charleston City Directory*, 1866: 36. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>11</sup> "John F. O'Rourke: Former Alderman and Business Man Dies in Charleston," *The State* (Columbia, SC), March 6, 1925: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>12</sup> "Funeral Notices." *The Charleston Daily News*, December 29, 1868: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>13</sup> South Carolina, U.S. Death Records, 1821-1972: 565. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com); "Funeral Notices." *The Charleston Daily News*, June 6, 1870: 3. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com); U.S. Federal Census, 1910. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

Ireland, that his father died when he was one, and that his mother died when he was two.<sup>14</sup> In the 1880 census, he is recorded as fourteen years old and the oldest boy at the Catholic Male Orphan House.<sup>15</sup> It records contradictory information: the schedule of “Homeless Children” said that while John’s father was deceased, his mother was still alive but had surrendered him to the institution. He was not illegitimate and of “respectable origins,” and had been admitted to the institution in 1876.<sup>16</sup> This clearly contradicts Mary’s published 1870 obituary and death record.

Even more confusingly, in 1898, *The Evening Post* published that John was “a Charlestonian by birth, but was reared in New York.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps Mary was born in New York, as her death record suggested, and her remaining family raised John in the north; maybe even they had to surrender him to the orphanage again in 1876. John’s driven personality and desire to succeed may have also led to him mythologizing his own origins to obscure his early beginnings of poverty in an immigrant community.

John O’Rourke first reappears in written record again in the 1889 *City Directory*, aged approximately twenty-two years and working as a clerk and living at 473 King Street.<sup>18</sup> Two years later, his profession had evolved to that of watchmaker.<sup>19</sup> By 1893, he was living at 55 Radcliffe Street and worked as a watchmaker and jeweler at his 443 King Street storefront.<sup>20</sup> In approximately 1895, he married Agnes Ida Matthews, a Charleston-native who has been elusive in the records.<sup>21</sup>

In 1896, O’Rourke expanded his jewelry store, which seems to have become a staple for Upper King Street residents. Located on King between Radcliffe and Warren Streets, it was touted as “one of the best equipped Jewelry establishments of the city.”<sup>22</sup> O’Rourke needed “no introduction to the public, he having been in the jewelry business in the city for several years, enjoying the confidence and patronage of most of the up-town residents.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to watch and jewelry repair, he and his “force of first class workmen” took up clock mending, as well.<sup>24</sup>

Evidently, O’Rourke’s business continued to boom. In 1898, he moved the store down the block to a “modern, model establishment” at 423 King Street (see Figure 1), between Warren and

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1870. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1880. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1880 Schedules of Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent Classes: 28. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>17</sup> “Handsome New Quarters, 423 King Street.” *The Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), June 11, 1898: 75. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1910. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>19</sup> 1891 *City Directory*, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>20</sup> 1893 *City Directory*, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1910.

<sup>22</sup> “O’Rourke Jewelry Palace,” *The Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), June 8, 1896: 4. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “Recognizing the Necessity of the Day!” *The Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), July 8, 1896: 4. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

Vanderhorst Streets.<sup>25</sup> A newspaper advertisement for the new location notes that in addition to “twenty three years in the watch making business,” he is also “a graduated optician, and has every facility for testing and accurately fitting the eyes.”<sup>26</sup> His wares now included custom eyeglasses, silver chafing dishes, diamonds, jewelry, clocks, and watches.<sup>27</sup>

Business continued to be incredibly prosperous for O’Rourke throughout the rest of his life.<sup>28</sup> As proprietor of a popular store, he became a fixture in the community and was known as “one of [Charleston’s] progressive and highly respected citizens.”<sup>29</sup> This status allowed for his election to Charleston City Council, where he represented Ward 8 from 1912 to 1915.<sup>30</sup> His time in politics was short-lived but seemingly lively. In



John F. O'Rourke and an unidentified woman inside the O'Rourke Jewelry Store. Date of photograph unknown. Uploaded by Patricia Therrien on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

1912, he successfully petitioned South Carolina Governor Cole L. Blease for a pardon for a Charleston resident, Clarence Davis, who was convicted at age seventeen of forgery; perhaps O’Rourke was sympathetic because of his own experiences with a childhood marred by poverty and instability.<sup>31</sup> The next year, he ran for Mayor Pro Tempore of Charleston, but was beaten by John F. Rafferty.<sup>32</sup> Several months later, a newspaper reported on a break-in at O’Rourke’s King Street home. An African-American man named Willie Hipps was discovered in the home with a pocketful of matches. According to *The Charleston Evening Post*, Hipps “brought about his own detection, when unluckily for him, he failed to suppress a cough, for when Mrs. O’Rourke noted the sound issuing from nowhere seemingly, a search was instituted. . . . The sight of a pair of feet protruding from

<sup>25</sup> “We Have Moved to Our Own New Quarters,” *The Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), July 20, 1898: 8. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>26</sup> “Handsome New Quarters, 423 King Street.”

<sup>27</sup> “Bargains in Eyeglasses,” *The Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), June 10, 1902: 4. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>28</sup> “OUR 25c EYE GLASSES,” *The Charleston Evening Post*, March 20, 1916: 10. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>29</sup> “Handsome New Quarters, 423 King Street.”

<sup>30</sup> City of Charleston. “City Councilmembers, 1783-1951.”

<https://www.charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/19117/City-Councilmembers-1783-1951>. Accessed March 28, 2026.

<sup>31</sup> “Have Gotten A Pardon For Davis,” *Fort Mill Times* (Fort Mill, SC), February 1, 1912: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>32</sup> *The Gaffney Ledger* (Gaffney, SC), January 24, 1913: 1. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

under the stairway was the first clue to the ultimate discovery of the whole negro.”<sup>33</sup> While Hipps claimed he “was taking a nap,” O’Rourke pressed charges against the man. The circumstances of the event are unclear, but perhaps Hipps was politically motivated against the city councillor.

The rest of O’Rourke’s life seems to have been spent in comfort. In 1920, he lived at 425 King Street with his wife and his four surviving children. His twenty-four-year-old son, John Bryan, was working as an optometrist at the family store.<sup>34</sup> Over Christmas of 1924, O’Rourke became ill and died of pernicious anemia at his 425 King Street home on March 5, 1925 at age 58.<sup>35</sup> His funeral was held at St. Patrick’s Church, and he was buried at St. Lawrence Cemetery. His obituary noted that he had served “energetically and effectively” as chairman of the almshouse board, and that he “had taken an active interest in real estate.”<sup>36</sup> One of O’Rourke’s real estate projects was 2623 Myrtle Avenue on Sullivan’s Island. Perhaps he built the cottage then as a secondary beach home for his family to escape from the hustle and bustle of their 425 King Street residence.

**John F. O’Rourke, Jr.** (1902-1957), was conveyed 2623 Myrtle Avenue from his father’s estate in 1930.<sup>37</sup> He continued to own the house until 1935. O’Rourke was his parent’s fourth child. He married another Charleston native, Myrtle Marie Hook, with whom he had three daughters and lived at 5 Warren Street. He became a “nationally known crystal chandelier designer,” and “was active in preserving Charleston heirlooms. He also designed, rebuilt and restored chandeliers for homes in many parts of the country. His creations are evident in many Charleston homes.” He was also a member of St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly, when he died in 1957, one of



**RESTORED CHANDELIER**—A five-tiered chandelier hanging in a Charleston home is one of the most outstanding examples of the work of John O’Rourke. (Staff Photo by Burbage.)

<sup>33</sup> “Housebreaker Held: Negro Caught in Alderman O’Rourke’s House Committed To Jail.” *The Charleston Evening Post*, May 14, 1913: 8. *Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current*.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1920. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>35</sup> South Carolina, U.S. Death Records, 1821-1972: 326. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>36</sup> “John F. O’Rourke: Former Alderman and Business Man Dies in Charleston.”

<sup>37</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book G35, 121.

his pallbearers was Harry Von Glahn Butt, who was at that time, the owner of 2623 Myrtle Avenue.<sup>38</sup>



**Harry Von Glahn Butt** (1902-1988) had purchased 2623 Myrtle Avenue from O'Rourke Jr. in 1935.<sup>39</sup> Born the same year in Charleston, the two must have been life-long friends. As much as the O'Rourkes were dedicated Irish Roman Catholics, the Butts were dedicated German Lutherans. Butt was an active and leading member of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church; he and his wife, Myrtle, routinely hosted church group meetings at 2623 Myrtle.<sup>40</sup> The couple maintained a home at 8 Vanderhorst Street, and Butt operated a grocery store at the corner of Warren and St. Philip Streets, called The Basketeria.<sup>41</sup> He was an involved citizen of Charleston, belonging to the German Friendly Society, the Preservation Society of Charleston, and the South Carolina Historical Society. Like O'Rourke, Sr., Butt served on Charleston City Council for seven years and was mayor pro tempore in 1974.

He and his wife owned 2623 Myrtle Avenue for fifty-two years; during their period of ownership, the house was known as the "Butt Inn." He died in 1988 and was buried in Bethany Cemetery.<sup>42</sup>

In 1987, a year before his death, Butt sold the property to **Christopher Heller Fales** and **Janie Dodd Fales**.<sup>43</sup> Four years later, in 1991, the Fales conveyed their property to **Nancy C. Smythe**, who received 7/12ths undivided interest, and to **Caroline C. Smythe** and **D. Archibald McCallum**, who received 5/12ths undivided interest.<sup>44</sup> That group sold the property to Hollister G. McDonnell in 1993, who retained it until selling to **Fred K. Norris** in 2002. Mr. Norris is the President of Disaster Plus, a local water damage restoration company, and remains the current owner of the home as of 2026.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "John F. O'Rourke Funeral Set Today," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 19, 1957, 9. *NewsBank*; "Charleston Man One of Few Chandelier Makers in U.S.," *Charleston News and Courier*, March 13, 1953, 3. *NewsBank*.

<sup>39</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book I38, p. 287.

<sup>40</sup> *Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), June 28, 1958, 3. *NewsBank*.

<sup>41</sup> *Charleston News and Courier*, June 9, 1933, 14. *NewsBank*.

<sup>42</sup> "Ex-Council Member For City of Chas. Harry Butt Dies," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 17, 1988, 19. *NewsBank*.

<sup>43</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book E167, p. 485.

<sup>44</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book H207, p. 071.

<sup>45</sup> Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book E228, p. 640; Charleston County, Records of the Register Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Charleston, SC. Deed book G424, p. 296. See Appendix A for the complete Chain of Title.

## Architectural Description

2623 Myrtle Avenue is a one-and-a-half-story, wood-framed house. It is five bays wide and five bays deep. It sits on a raised foundation covered by horizontal slatting. Its V-crimp metal roof is side-gabled with a moderate pitch on the north and south ends, with a cross gable added on the middle of the west side. There is a dormer window on each side of the cross gable addition, and two smaller dormers facing east. The house is clad in yellow clapboard, except for its dormers and gable ends, which are clad in small shingles in a matching color.

The primary facade faces south. The cross gable and its dormer are on the left of the facade, with a double-hung, four-over-four window. The end of the side gable is on the right side, with a double-hung, two-over-two window. Both windows on the half story have Bahamas shutters painted turquoise. At the base of the side gable, a sloped roof extends out, allowing for a porch which runs the length of the facade. Rafter tails are visible under the porch roof. Seven vertical wooden supports run below the roof, which are connected by a balustrade of vertical posts. Eight wooden steps lead up to the front door of the house, which opens into the cross gable addition. The door is wood-paneled, with a large nine-by-nine window. Left of the door is a set of paired double-hung four-over-four windows, which do not have shutters. To the right of the door, there are two evenly spaced double-hung, four-over-four windows framed with louvered shutters. At the far right, there is a set of French doors.

The east facade runs the length of the side gable and has two dormers. Both dormers have paired double-hung, two-over-two windows. A roof extends from below the original roofline and forms a porch, which has been enclosed. On the ground floor, five sets of paired double-hung, two-over-two windows run the length of the facade. All windows on this facade have Bahamas shutters.

The north facade is primarily occupied by the end of the side-gabled facade, with portions of the enclosed porch and length of the cross gable visible. Two paired double-hung, two-over-two windows are placed under the porch roof with a Bahamas shutter. Under the side gable, there are two double-hung, four-over-four windows with louvered shutters. On the cross gable addition,, there is another double-hung, two-over-two window with louvered shutters. There is one double-hung, four-over-four window on both the side gable half story and on the dormer on the cross gable addition. Both of these half-story windows have Bahamas shutters.

On the west facade, there is one double-hung, four-over-four window with louvered shutters. On the ground floor of the side gable, there are two small evenly-spaced double-hung, four-over-four windows. Placed symmetrically above them on the half story is another window of the same type, forming a triangular shape. All windows on this side-gable end of the facade have Bahamas shutters.



*The front south-facing facade.*



*The west facade.*



*The north facade.*



*The east facade, viewed from Jasper Boulevard.*

## Building Phasing

Physical evidence in construction methods lends support to the theory that the house was constructed circa 1900. First, very large timbers were used to support the house's weight. These timbers are much longer and wider than the wood that would be available for construction later in the twentieth century.



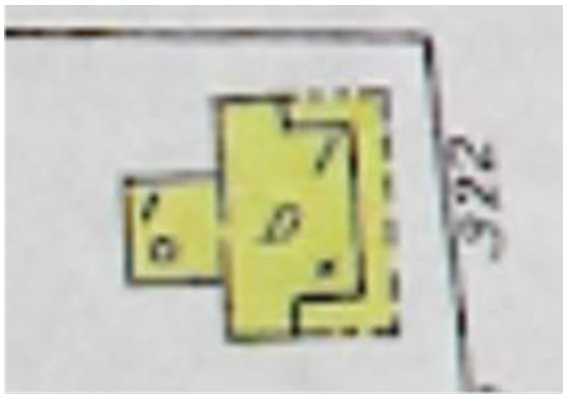
*Large timbers used in construction. Viewed from the crawlspace.*

Most of the original lumber used in the house's construction was circular sawn. Circular saws became common throughout America by the mid nineteenth-century, but by the turn of the century, they began to fall out of favor when more efficient technologies for sawing became accessible. Circular-sawn lumber shows distinctive arced etches on the wood surface. There is a possibility that some of the wood may have been repurposed from another building, but the abundance of circular saw marks support a construction date at the turn of the century.



*Circular saw marks on first floor joists.*

2623 Myrtle Avenue first appears on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in 1924, a year before John F. O'Rourke Sr. would die and pass the home to his son. The house is depicted as a one-story, rectangular, wood-frame dwelling with a shingled roof, with an addition on the rear of the house, and a U-shaped porch on the front, facing Jasper Boulevard. This rear addition supports the theory that the home was constructed at the turn of the century; the O'Rourke family had grown, and perhaps decided that their seasonal retreat needed more space. This matches the U-shaped Wrap Porch Typology, which suited additions on the back of the house well.<sup>46</sup>



2623 Myrtle Avenue on the 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.



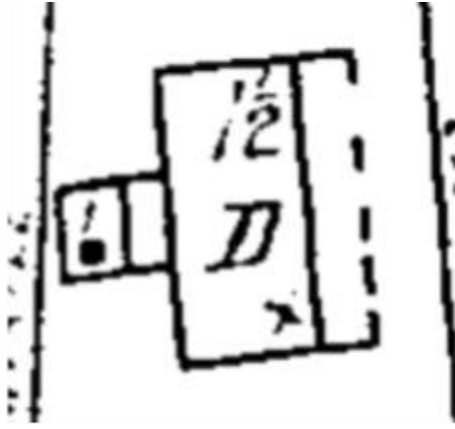
Sullivan's Island U-Shape Wrapped Porch Typology. Sketches by Amelia Millar.

The house is documented again in 1938, three years after the home was purchased by Harry and Myrtle Butt. Many changes have taken place, installed either by John F. O'Rourke Jr. in the ten years during which he owned the house, or by the Butts in their first few years of ownership. The main body of the house has grown to one-and-a-half stories, indicating that the two dormer windows facing Jasper Boulevard were added between 1924 and 1938. The rear cross-gabled addition remains one-story tall, so its dormers were likely added after 1938. Additionally, the portions of the porch that wrapped around onto the north and south facades were enclosed, so that the house resembled a new typology: the Sullivan's Island Front Porch. This typology was the most

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<sup>46</sup> Amelia Morgan Millar, "A Study of the Vernacular Beach Cottage Typologies of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina and Documentary Drawings of the Nathaniel Barnwell House for the Historic American Building Survey," (*Clemson University Master of Science in Historic Preservation Terminal Projects*, 2010), 55-57.  
[https://open.clemson.edu/historic\\_pres/3](https://open.clemson.edu/historic_pres/3).

common on the island.<sup>47</sup> The side portions of the porch were likely enclosed to easily gain livable square footage within the main plan of the home.



*2623 Myrtle Avenue on the 1938 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.*

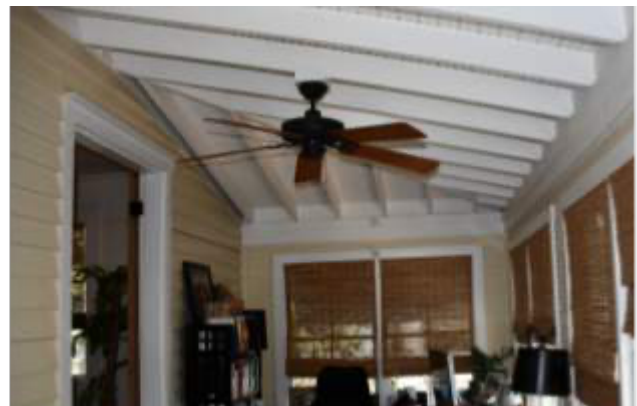


*The Sullivan's Island Front Porch Typology. Sketch by Amelia Millar.*

One of the most dramatic changes to the home was likely carried out during the Butts' fifty-two year period of ownership. The front porch along Jasper Avenue was enclosed and converted to a sunroom, while a new porch was constructed along the southern length of the house, creating an asymmetrical front facade. The front of the house may have been reoriented away from Jasper Boulevard as it grew busier with traffic going to and from the Isle of Palms. With this new orientation, the house then faced into the 2623 Myrtle Avenue's large yard, granting more privacy while still being able to catch the ocean breeze on the porch.

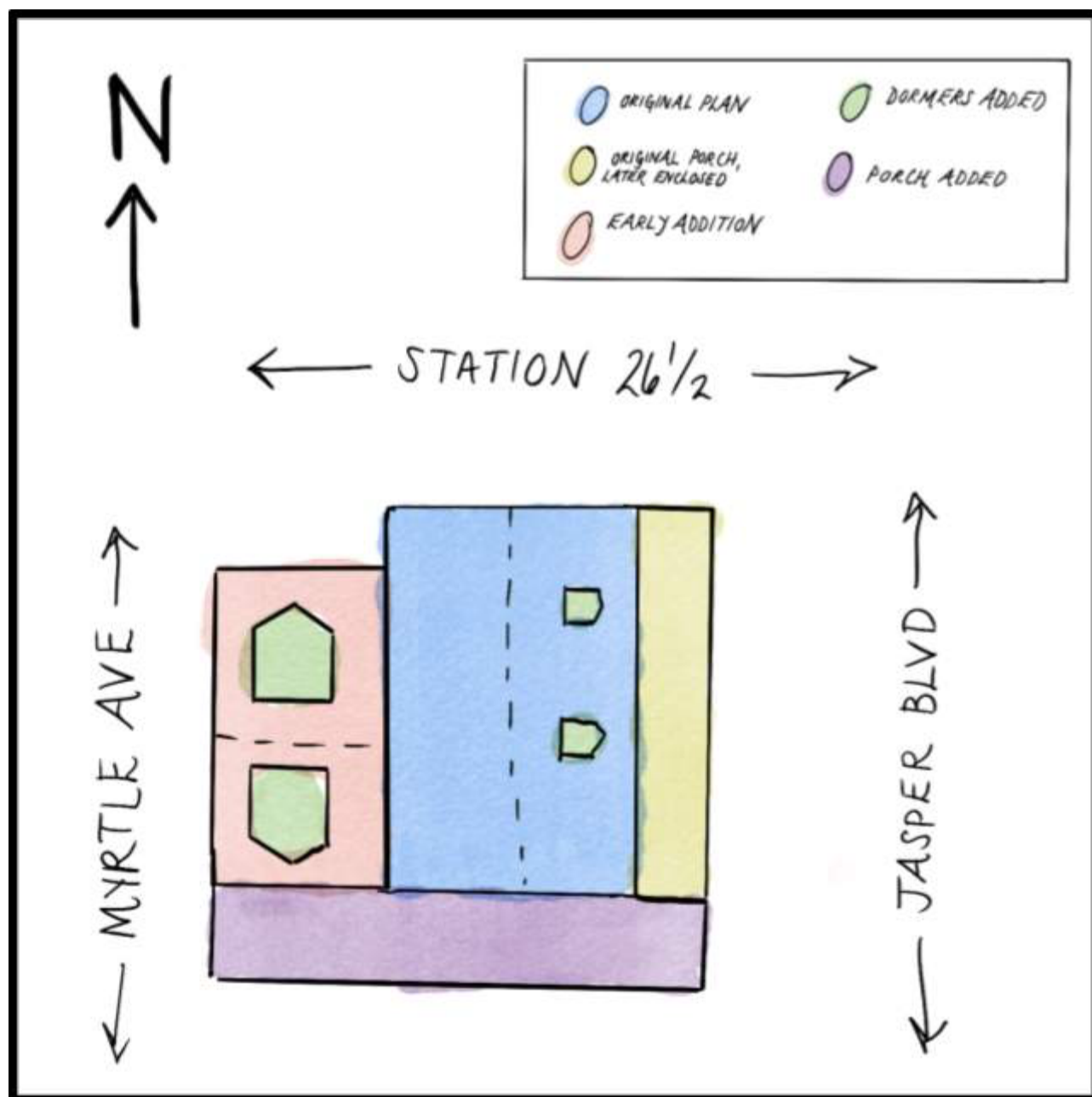


*The enclosed porch facing Jasper Blvd. March 4, 2026.*



*Interior of the enclosed porch. March 4, 2026.*

<sup>47</sup> Millar, 33-40.



*A diagram of the conjectured phasing of 2623 Myrtle Avenue.*

## Statement of Significance

Based on archival and material evidence, 2623 Myrtle Avenue was likely constructed circa 1900 by John F. O'Rourke, Sr. The house is an excellent example of the adaptability of Sullivan's Island traditional typologies, as it originated as a U-Shape Wrap Porch and evolved to be a Front Porch typology, according to the owner's evolving needs. It also demonstrates sensitive additions and ways to maximize livable space within a home without having to cause much damage to the existing historic material. For example, the interior of the enclosed porch retains its original exterior siding and fenestration. The original footprint of the home is still visible and definable. The house has been owned by a series of preservation-minded owners who have kept it in good repair and left historic materials visible and intact.

The house is also significant for the stories of its owners. It was owned by two City of Charleston councillors who both operated their own businesses in the Upper King Street district and remained closely connected to their family's immigrant roots. The approximately 125-year-old house stands as a testament to the self-made Charlestonians of the early twentieth-century who sought respite from the city's colorful life on the breezy shores of Sullivan's Island.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Chain of Title, 2623 Myrtle Avenue*

#### **G424, p. 296**

Hollister G. McDonnell to Fred K. Norris  
October 31, 2002

#### **G377, p. 081**

Hollister G. McDonnell to Hollister G. McDonnell  
July 16, 2001

#### **E228, p. 640**

Nancy C. Smythe, Caroline C. Smythe, and D. Archibald McCallum to Hollister G. McDonnell  
June 9, 1993

#### **H207, p. 071**

Christopher Heller Fales and Janie Dodd Fales to Nancy C. Smythe, Caroline C. Smythe, and D. Archibald McCallum  
October 18, 1991

- “Release unto the said Nancy C. Smythe a 7/12ths undivided interest, and unto Caroline C. Smythe and D. Archibald McCallum a 5/12ths undivided interest, their heirs and assigns, in and to the following described property as follows. . . 2623 Myrtle Avenue, Sullivans Island, SC 29483”

#### **E167, p. 485**

Harry von Glahn Butt to Christopher Heller Fales and Janie Dodd Fales  
March 17, 1987

- “All that piece, parcel or lot of land, together with the buildings and improvements thereon, situate, lying and being on Sullivan’s Island, in the County of Charleston, State of South Carolina, and known and designated on a plat of the East End of said island made by H.S. Lamble, L.S. April, 1899, recorded in the RMC Office for Charleston County in Plat Book D at page 184 as No. ninety-two (92).”
- “Said lot butts and bounds and measures and contains according to a recent plat of survey thereof made by Charles F. Dawley, Jr., R.L.S. dated July 15, 1987 as following: Butting on

the North on Myrtle Avenue three hundred fifteen and 50/100 feet (315.50'); to the East on Station 26 ½ Street sixty and 80/100 feet (60.80'); on the South on Jasper Boulevard three hundred thirteen feet and 00/100 (313.00'); and to the West on Lot 91 ½ eighty-six and 40/100 feet (86.40')."

- "This being the same property a leasehold interest in which was conveyed to the Grantor herein by Deed of John F. O'Rourke dated April 22, 1935 and recorded in the RC Office for Charleston County in Book I-38 at Page 287. The fee simple interest of the State of South Carolina having been conveyed to the Grantor herein by the State of South Carolina and the Town Council of the Town of Sullivan's Island by Deed dated March 17, 1987 and recorded contemporaneously herewithin."

**E167, p. 593**

State of South Carolina to Harry von Glahn Butt

March 17, 1987

- Released to Harry von Glahn Butt "All of the reversionary interest of the Town of Sullivan's Island and the State of South Carolina in fee simple in and to" 2623 Myrtle Avenue for a \$25.00 fee.

**I38, p. 287**

John F. O'Rourke to Harry von Glahn Butt

April 22, 1935

- "All of the right, title, interest and estate (the same being such as is granted to the holders of lots on Sullivan's Island under the statutes of the State of South Carolina) of which I am seized and possessed, of in and to: All that lot, piece, or parcel of land, together with the buildings thereon, situate, lying and being on Sullivan's Island in the County of Charleston, and known and designated on a plat of the East End of said Island made by H.S. Lamble, 1st. April, 1899, recorded in the R.M.C. Office for Charleston County in Plat Book 'D' at page 181, as ninety-two (92). Butting and Bounding to the North on Myrtle Street, to the East on Third Street; to the South on Railroad Avenue, and to the West on lot numbered ninety-one (91) all as shown on said plat. Measuring and Containing on the North line 315 feet, on the East line 60 feet, on the South line 316 feet, and on the West 90 feet."

**G35, 121**

John F. O'Rourke [Sr.] to John F. O'Rourke [Jr.]

June 5, 1930

- Lot 92 “Has been recently conveyed by the heirs of the Estate of John F. O’Rourke, Senior, to John F. O’Rourke, but that the original license to said lot has never been recovered and has been lost or destroyed.”

**J34, p. 254**

John F. O’Rourke [Sr.] Estate to John F. O’Rourke [Jr.]

May 14, 1930

- John F. O’Rourke, Sr., died on March 5, 1925.
- Conveys deed for Lot 92 from John R. O’Rourke Sr. Estate to John F. O’Rourke

*Because the record is missing or destroyed, it is unclear when or from whom John F. O’Rourke Sr. purchased Lot 92, if he built the current house, or when the current house was built. O’Rourke certainly owned Lot 92 before 1925. There were no results for John F. O’Rourke or Lot 92 in any of the cross indexes from 1880-1930, or in any of the direct indexes from 1880-1930 under the State of South Carolina, Town of Sullivan’s Island, or Moultrieville as grantor.*

*Appendix B: Historic Photographs of Residents*



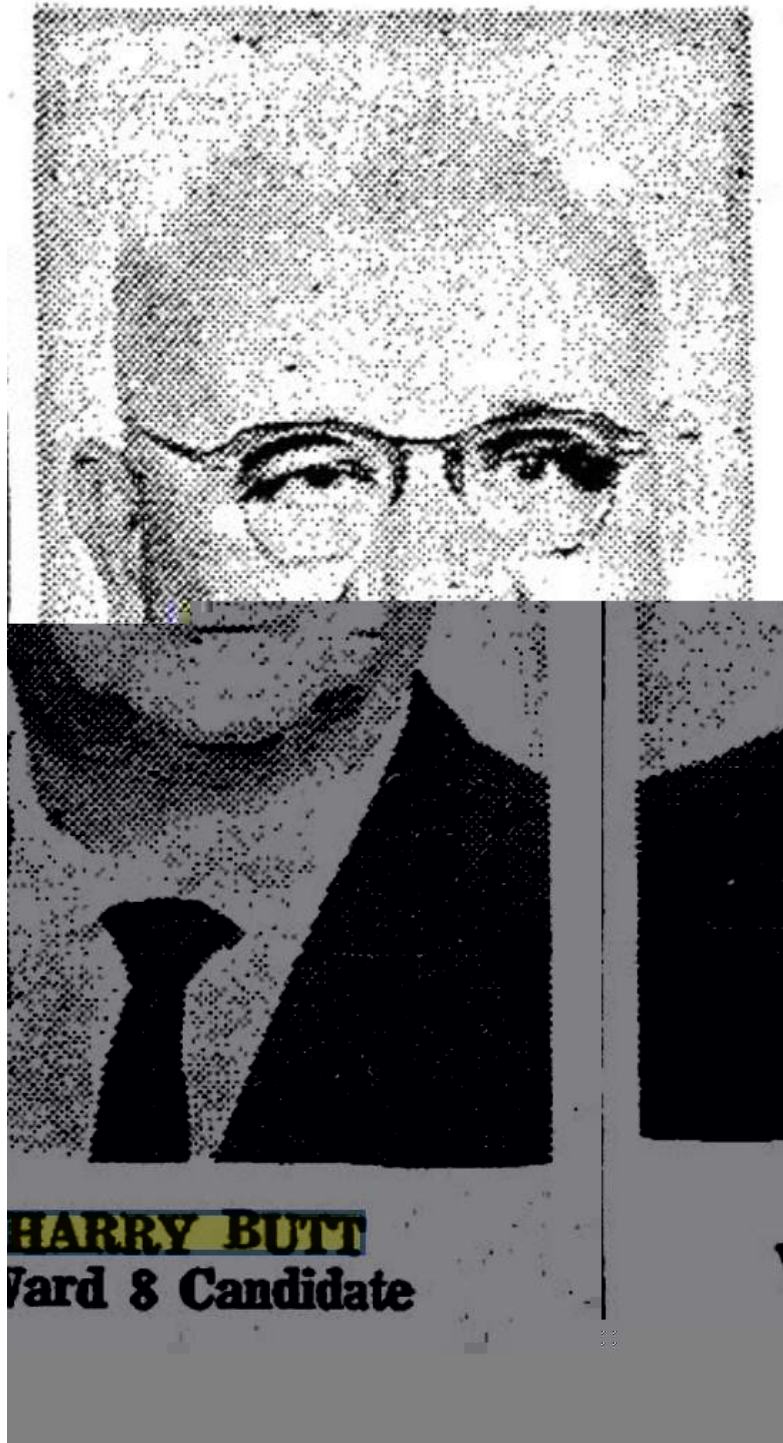
"O'Rourke Family Portrait." Photograph. n.d. Courtesy of Fred Norris.



O'Rourke Jewelry Store Exterior, 423 King Street, Charleston. Date of photograph unknown. Uploaded by Patricia Therrien on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).



John F. O'Rourke and an unidentified woman inside the O'Rourke Jewelry Store. Date of photograph unknown. Uploaded by Patricia Therrien on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).



Harry Butt, 1967. *Evening Post* (Charleston, SC), March 3, 1967, 13. *NewsBank*.

*Appendix C: Site Visit Photographs, March 4, 2026*



Shingle detail on dormer, south facade.



Gable detail, south facade.



Window detail, south facade.



Downspout detail, east facade.



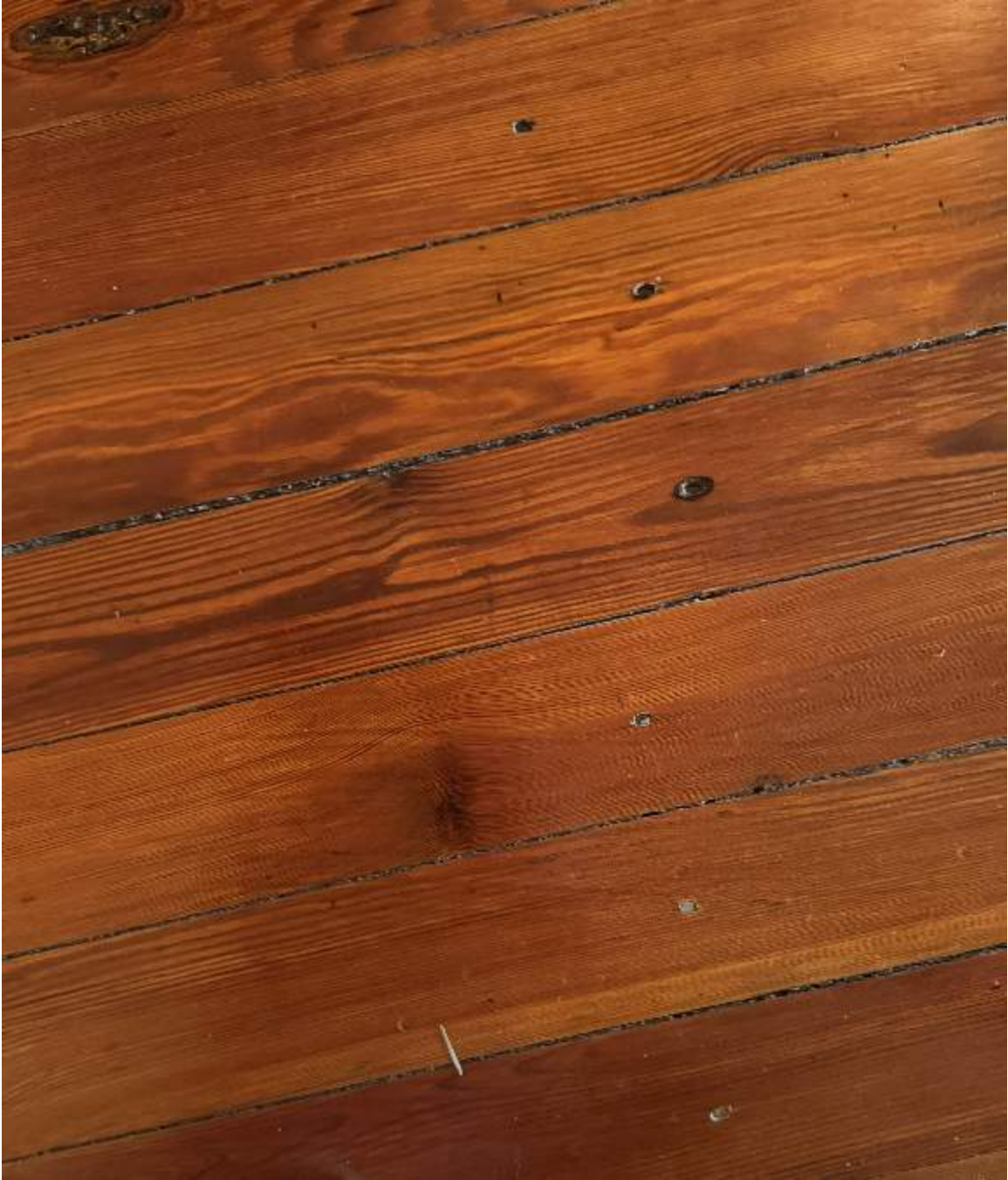
Nails in first floor joists.



Axe marks visible in reclaimed floor joist.



Difference in flooring between addition (bottom) and original main house (top).



Top-nailed floors in the original house plan.



Siding and light fixture left inside the enclosed porch.



Historic french doors opening onto the enclosed porch.



Doorway from original main house into cross-gable addition.



Inside the attic, looking down the side gable.