



Club has been at 53 E. Bay St. for 26 years.

Staff Photo by Stephanie Harvin

Bonds Of Camaraderie Mark Charleston Club's Survival

By EDWARD O. MARSHALL
Post-Courier Reporter

A certain nostalgia is associated with the established clubs of Charleston. The Charleston Club, one of the oldest, lends itself particularly to this appeal.

Simply remember the famous "Doctor Johnson," who said of Boswell, in recommendation for club-life, Boswell was indeed "clubable." However, another friend, not so well thought of by Johnson, was "unclubable."

Thomas della Torre, the Charleston Club's last surviving honorary member wrote of this when he compiled "A Sketch of the Charleston Club" in 1928. With great care, della Torre recorded the events and the changing nature of the Charleston Club, suggesting modern clubs are "an evolution of the London Coffee house."

The Charleston Club was chartered in 1852 under authority of the South Carolina General Assembly. The clubhouse was located at 45 Meeting St. on land now part of the post office parking lot. But in the wake of the Civil War — 1866 — the club was dissolved and the clubhouse sold. As recorded in "The South Carolina Institute," a pamphlet printed in 1870, the structure was "a handsome three-story brownstone building, erected before the war by one of the wealthiest clubs in America for their own entertainment. It is probably the handsomest and best arranged clubhouse in this country, but has since the war been sold to the United States government and is now used as the United States Courthouse." The former clubhouse was destroyed in the earthquake of 1886, and the grounds were added to the government property.

Do You Know Your Charleston?

In April 1881, the club reopened its doors to membership. Gentlemen of the city, whose names are not recorded, raised \$13,600 to purchase 3 Meeting St. — now known as No. 7.

The club prospered in its new location and its membership increased. And with revived interest, gaiety and good times were had. For example, in the minutes of the annual meeting in December 1883 the secretary records J. Clarence Cochran's recipe for The Charleston Club Punch: "One Volume Green Tea; one Volume California Brandy; one-fourth Volume Santa Cruz Rum; Lemon juice and sugar to taste; Ice; Lemon peel. When about to serve, add one Volume mineral water. Note: California Brandy blends better than French Brandy; Santa Cruz White Rum has the better taste. If Santa Cruz cannot be had, use Jamaica Rum. Bacardi Rum will not do."

During the early 1890s, "The club rooms were crowded of an evening and the bottle was passed freely," della Torre reports. "There was a life, a camaraderie, which make those days unforgettable in retrospect. There was much gaiety and occasionally with a little disorder. ... The

See Charleston Club, Page 2-B

Continued From Page 1-B

Managing Committee was kept busy
guarding against intrusions of the
rules.

But more moves were in store. On
New Years Day of 1938 the club re-
located to the middle apartment of
Vanderhorst Row, 78 East Bay St.,
commanding view of Charleston har-
bor, again under terms of a
charterty 1920s members had withdrawn
ulately was on the decline and by the
By 1896, however, the clubs pop-
ularity was at a point which caused talk of
dissbanding the club and dividing its
assets.

On April 14, 1927, the clubhouse on
Meeting Street was sold and mem-
bers moved to 22 South Battery, un-
der terms of rent. But, the new
location was not the answer to the
clubs problems. The club had by this
time lost all but some 23 regular and
three honorary members. As della
Torre reports, "The fortunes of the
club were now to their lowest point."

In the early '30s, just when things
looked the worst for the club, the loca-
tion was changed again, under the
leadership of the new president —
Henry Busto — this time to 45 East
Bay St., under terms of rent. Member-
ship began to increase and the clubs
"monthly reunions were occasions to

Charleston Club

Charleston Club