

Building History of 1 Broad Street by Mark Beck*

Hello All: Can you help with this? I'm attempting to document the history of 1 Broad Street building (Brownstone building at the corner of Broad and East Bay) from 1853 through today and the history has a lot of holes. Plus, what I've found here and there is difficult to verify—I'm not sure parts or any of this is even correct. I bet you know some people out there that can help fill in the story and help with correct information, additional information, documentation and pictures.

Here's what I've compiled...throw some darts....thanks!:

Broad Street was just that, the broadest street in Charles Town, which was founded in 1670. The street is 61 feet wide at the intersection of East Bay and 100 feet wide between St. Michael's Church and the Beef Market (which stood on the site of City Hall). Records during the period, 1698 to 1714, interchangeably refer to Broad Street and Cooper Street, presumably for Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper. The location has been continuously occupied for nearly 350 years.

Edward Sebring, President of The State Bank of South Carolina, New York native and Charleston resident built #1 Broad Street and its neighbor #3 Broad in 1853. Sebring was a leading businessman and financial booster to Charleston's development; he built and lived a Greek Revival mansion located at 268 Calhoun Street and was also the first President of Magnolia Cemetery.

1 Broad Street was designed as a replacement for an earlier wood building by the Charleston's most notable antebellum architectural firm, Jones & Lee (Edward C. Jones and Francis D. Lee). This firm designed many local buildings, Magnolia Cemetery and worked elsewhere in South Carolina (including designing the campus layout and Main Hall at Wofford College). Jones located his office into 1 Broad in 1857.

The building was constructed for the State Bank of South Carolina at a cost exceeding \$100,000 in 1853 US dollars. Due to the Federal bombardment of the city 1863-65, the State Bank moved up the peninsula to Cannon Street. The prominence of 1 Broad as a center of finance along with the Confederate financial printing operation next door made this area a key target. 1 Broad was one of the most heavily shelled structures in Charleston. The building was wrecked and the State Bank collapsed along with the Confederacy and its currency.

Evidence of the bombardment damage still remain; cannonball holes are found in the pine ceiling beams and scared and burned framing timber are located throughout the building.

The building was rehabilitated and enlarged in 1868 for the company of George A Trenholm, cotton broker, blockade runner and one-time Treasurer of the Confederate States of America. Trenholm was a colorful character considered by some to be the real Rhett Butler and was noted as the financier for the Confederate war effort. At the end of the war Trenholm lost his fortune when the US government sued for import duties, he was jailed, then pardoned by President Andrew Johnston and somehow quickly regained his fortune and the building at 1 Broad Street. In 1875, the building was purchased by another local merchant and blockade runner, George Walton Williams, who founded the Carolina Savings Bank in Charleston in 1875 and also built the imposing house at 16 Meeting Street.

The building survived the earthquake and ensuing fire of 1886 intact and throughout the late 19th century, the bank was located on the first floor, the office and telephone exchange of Southern Bell was located on the second floor, and the local office of the U.S. Weather Bureau was on the third floor.

The Carolina Savings Bank merged with First National Bank in 1957 and moved from 1 Broad. The building again became a bank in 1963 when it was bought by the Carolina Bank and Trust Company for its main office. Bankers Trust of South Carolina took over Carolina Bank in 1969 and 1 Broad became the main Charleston office of Bankers Trust.

In 1978-80, Bankers Trust completed renovation of the building, restoring the exterior as well as the interior with its elaborate 19th century Rococo Revival plaster cornice and frieze and ceiling painting in its President's office. For the renovation, Banker's Trust commissioned "Charleston Blacksmith" Philip Simmons to design and produce iron work for the interior teller grills and stair railings.

One Broad Street is noted to be one of the finest examples of Italian Renaissance Revival style architecture in the United States and is based on the "palazzos" of 15th and 16th century Italy. Architectural features of the exterior include the lion head keystones on the first floor and each head is unique and said to have been patterned from the faces of bank managers.

*Posted to a Facebook page, "Charleston Before 1945," ca. 10/6/2015, by Mark Beck, the current owner of the building.