

end of the hall is a raised semi-circular platform, over which is an elevated balcony, supported by four posts of Colonial design.

CHARLESTON LIBRARY BUILDING, N. W. corner Broad and Church Streets—The Charleston Library Society was organized in 1748, being the third library established in America. It was chartered in 1754. The books were at first kept at the residence of the Librarian, then in the third story of the State House (now the Court House). In 1778 the collection of books, already very valuable, was destroyed by fire. The Library now numbers only some 20,000 volumes, but among these are an unusual number of rare and valuable works.

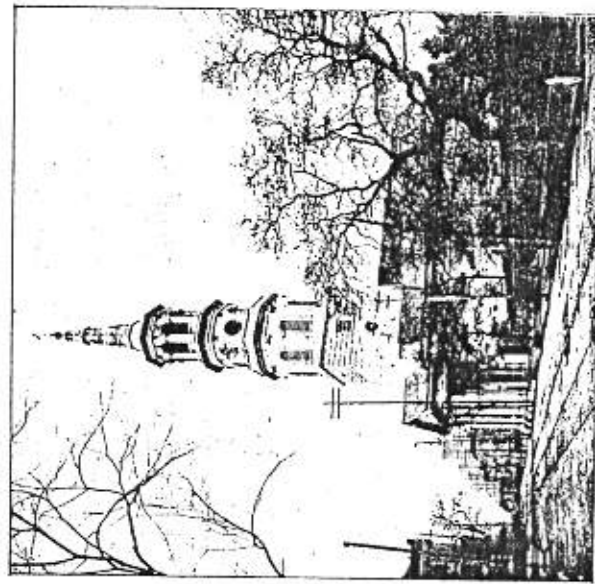
In 1835 the present building, erected for and occupied by the South Carolina Bank, was purchased by the Society.

On the corners formed by the junction of Broad and Meeting Streets stand four important buildings. St. Michael's Church with its interesting history; the City Hall, backed and flanked by Washington Square; the Court House; and the new Postoffice, erected upon the site of the police headquarters destroyed by the earthquake of 1886.

Without doubt the most interesting building in Charleston to the tourist is St. Michael's Church: and its history, though of some length, is replete with interesting features. On its site was built the first Episcopal church in the province, and called St. Philip's, whose congregation in 1723 removed to a more spacious edifice, built upon the site of the present St. Philip's.

In 1751 the city was divided into two parishes, that portion of the city lying north of Broad Street was called St. Philip's, and that lying south of the same street, St. Michael's.

The same Act of Assembly directed the building of a church where the original St. Philip's stood, and as a result the corner-stone of the present St. Michael's was laid on February 17, 1752, upon the plot that was originally set aside as a graveyard, in 1672, at the time of laying out Oyster Point Town. This latter fact is supported by the finding at the time of repairing the damage by the earthquake, in the excavation under the stairway leading to the south gallery, a well-preserved coffin of



ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH.

red cedar, whose lid was studded with brass tacks forming the initials J. O. B., and the date 1678. The tacks had entirely disappeared, but the corroding heads had left their mark distinctly imprinted upon the wood.

There have been many conjectures as to who was the architect of the building. Some claim that it was Sir Christopher Wren, but there is little to substantiate the claim. Others that it was James Gibbs, the architect of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, and that St. Michael's is a copy of that edifice. The spires are somewhat similar, but the likeness seems to end there. The name of the architect given in the early records of the church is "Gibson." There is some doubt as to the exact date of the completion of the edifice, but records show that divine service was first held in the church on February 1, 1761.

The building is sixty feet wide and one hundred and sixty feet long, including the portico which extends to the curb. The graceful steeple reaches to a height of a little over one hundred and eighty-five feet. The gilt ball surmounting the spire was blown down by the cyclone of 1885, and subsequently replaced.

In 1762 a subscription was started to buy a "ring of bells," whose varied history furnishes material for a charming story. Eight bells were ordered from London, but, many thinking their weight would be too much for the steeple, the number was changed to six; yet, through some mistake, the original order was filled, and the eight bells arrived, with the clock, in the ship *Little Carpenter*, on July 15, 1764, and soon were hung. Their peaceful mission ceased for a time, when, at the evacuation of Charles Town by the British, in 1782, Major Traille, of the Royal Artillery, took possession of the bells as a military perquisite, and shipped them to England. A Mr. Ryhiner purchased them in London, and sent them back to the city, where they arrived November 20, 1783, after an absence of about a year. Johnson's "Traditions" says that "when they landed on the wharf the overjoyed citizens took possession, and hurried them up to the church and into the steeple, without thinking that they might be violating a private right." In 1822 two of them were found to be cracked, which were shipped to England, in 1838, to be re-cast. The following year, 1839, they were returned to their places, where they hung undisturbed until 1862. After the battle of Secessionville they were sent to Columbia, S. C., the capital of the State, for safe keeping. Unfortunately this was a bad move, for they were there burned by Sherman's Army, in the month of February, 1865. Two were stolen, and the rest so injured as to be useless. After the war the fragments were shipped again to England to the successors of the original founders, and this metal was re-cast in moulds made from the original patterns. They were again transferred to Charleston, and reached the city for the third time in February, 1867, when they were held by the customs authorities until a fund was raised to pay the duty of twenty-two hundred dollars imposed. However, on the 21st of March, 1867, upon the ears of the people fell the sweet music of their voices, ringing out "Home Again! Home Again! From a Foreign Shore!" and bringing glad tears to many eyes, and a feeling of peace and thankfulness to the hearts riven by the strife of the years just past. Their joyous tones seemed to foretell a time to come filled with happiness and prosperity. The return of these beloved bells was an occasion for great rejoicing, and since that day they have hung unmolested in their belfry, save when the white-haired negro, who has rung their chimes for more than sixty years, strikes with his aged hands the well worn handles which, by the ropes overhead, call forth resounding peals that, to the city far beneath, are, and always will be, the sweetest music of the world.