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165 King Destined For Restoration

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Third in a series on notable King Street buildings. The fourth will appear two weeks from today.)

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One of the first King Street property owners to demonstrate a renewed faith in Charleston's downtown shopping thoroughfare is Elizabeth Austin, Inc.

The firm has bought 165 King St. and is restoring it as the new location of Elizabeth Austin Antiques, which is now at 159 King St.

The two upper floors are being restored as an apartment for Miss Suellen Austin, the store manager.

One of the first buildings involved in the current King Street revitalization, 165 King served a similar role a century ago, following the Civil War and the disastrous fire of 1861.

The 1861 fire began the night of Dec. 11 in a sash and blind factory at the Cooper River end of Hasell Street.

Driven by a north-northeast wind which "almost rose to a hurricane," the fire slashed like a flaming sword across the peninsula to the Ashley River end of Tradd Street.

It left damage estimated at \$5 million to \$7 million in its wake.

Among the losses was a three-story brick commercial building at what is now 165 King, which had been built sometime before 1821.

In that year, Dr. Tucker Harris, prominent physician and Revolutionary War patriot, died and left it to his seven daughters, with the stipulation that they sell it.

Bartholomew Clark bought it for \$11,000 in 1821. After his death, it was sold at auction to Abraham Tobias for \$18,000, the highest bid in 1839.

Title was conveyed in 1859 to Eleanor Tobias, who sold the ruins in 1862 to the Unitarian Church for \$8,000. The church sold the lot in

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1861 to George E. Gibbon, merchant, for \$2,500.

Gibbon sold the lot for \$1874 in December, 1874 to William Byrne who according to county tax records built the present structure in 1875.

Apparently a wealthy man, Byrne, partner in Byrne and Fogarty, grocers and liquor dealers at 318 King St., built 165 King as his private residence.

He built a substantial town house in the Renaissance Revival (Italianate) style, with two-story piazzas overlooking a garden where 163 King is now.

Some of the piazza columns and spindles have been found and will be used to restore the rear piazzas.

Byrne sold the property in 1885 to Frederick Steinke and James Donald for \$10,250. They opened a bakery (F. Steinke Co.) on the ground floor, while the Steinke family lived upstairs.

The bakery continued in operation until 1913. Meyer Collis reopened it as the New York Bakery in 1918, later called it Collis' Bakery and operated it until World War II.

Donald's heirs sold the property in 1916 to the Unitarians who paid \$5,000 and assumed payment of a \$9,000 mortgage. The church subdivided the property and sold 165 King in 1965 to R. M. McGillivray Jr.

McGillivray operated an office machine store there before selling it in June to the Austins.

The Austins say they plan to restore the building to its original state whenever possible.

The first story facade, remodeled several years ago with a plate glass window and imitation Georgian doorway which is incongruous with the 19th Century archi-

ture, will possibly be changed later.

Two antique mantels will be installed on the second floor.

One will be a white Classic Revival mantel with double Corinthian columns on each side, from the estate of Gov. Tazwell in Virginia.

The second will be a Georgian pickled pine mantel to be placed in the library.

According to Dr. George Curtis Austin, husband of Elizabeth and father of Suellen, a large lantern done in gold leaf and wrought iron will be used on the front of the building for illumination around the door.

The lamp came from the old Biltmore Hotel which once stood in Asheville, N.C.

The remains of the original staircase from the second to third floor were found in back of a closet. Plans are to restore the spiral staircase, re-establishing the original location.

Heart pine spindles and posts were salvaged from an old Savannah home.

The baseboards and flooring were originally of heart pine, an extremely dense pine. Much of the flooring was saved, according to Miss Austin.

The thick walls were formed from 4 by 4's in the sidewalls and supports. The batten strips to attach the lath are just as intact now as when the building was put, according to Dr. Austin.

The entrance to the upstairs area is from Gateway Walk, a path with 10 gateways leading from St. John's Lutheran Church on Archdale Street across King and Meeting to St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Church Street.

The walk was opened to the public in 1930 and underwent extensive renovation in 1953.

The Elizabeth Austin store opened in May 1969.

"I thought Charleston needed an authentic dealer that handled only antiques; no gift items, just antiques," said Miss Austin.

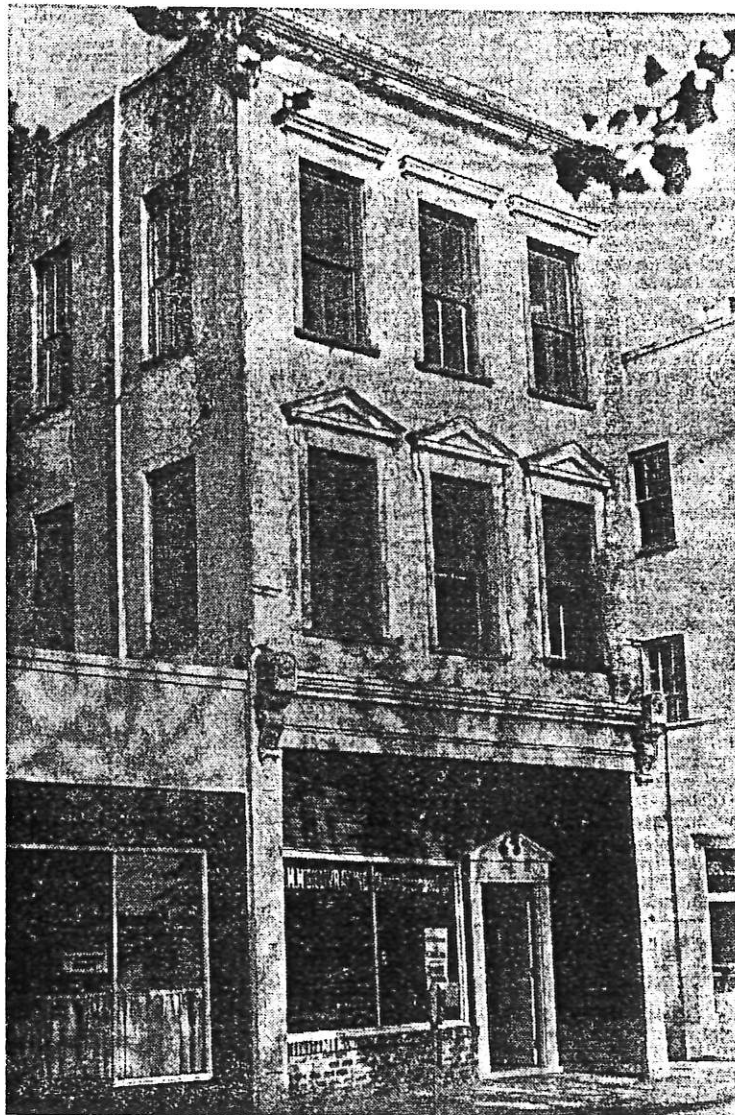
The new shop will give Miss Austin about three times as much space, so that she will be able to bring in more period furniture and sterling

silver, the shop's specialty.

The Austins didn't consider moving from the King Street area.

"I think there is more

potential as a specialty street," said Miss Austin. "I'm very 'pro' fixing up King Street. I'm convinced this is 'the' area."



(Staff Photo By Stockton)

165 King St. Built As Residence In 1875

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165 King St

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