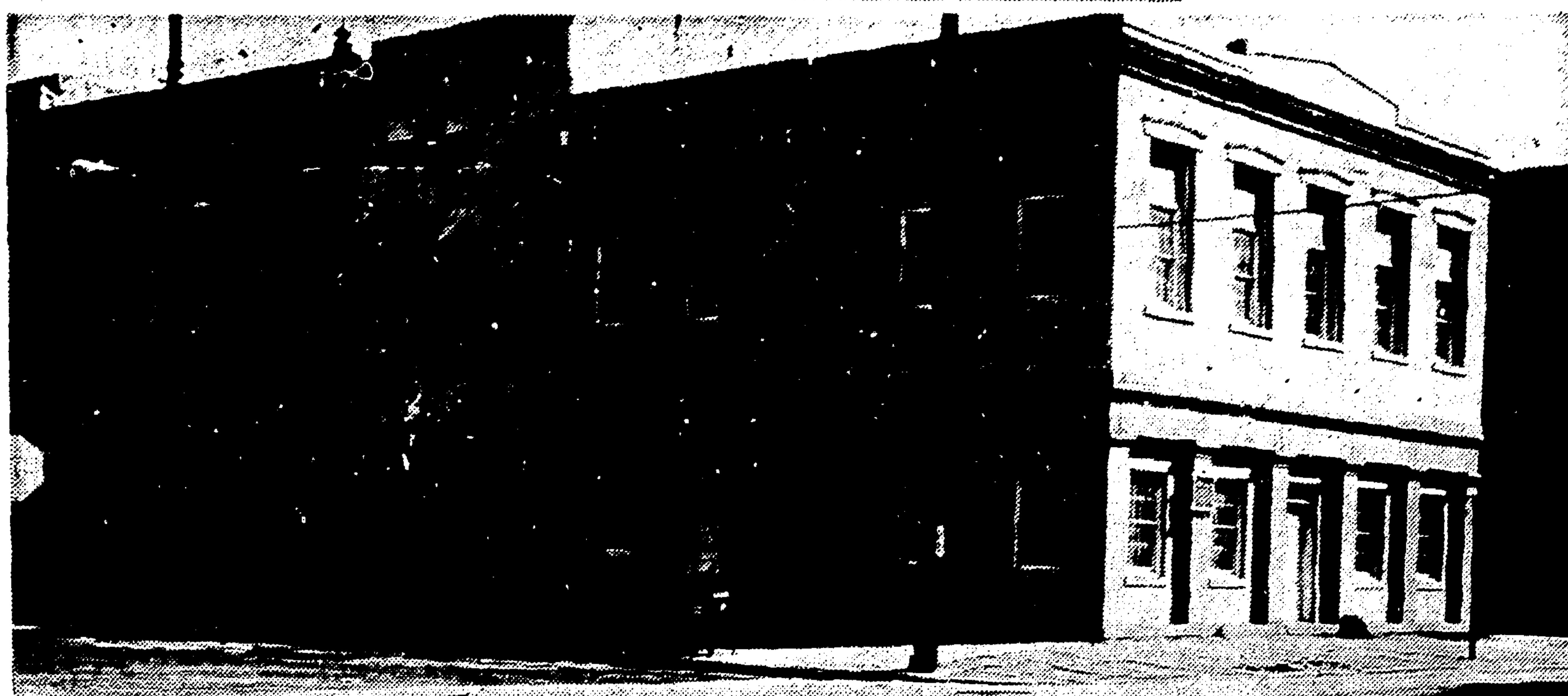


Charleston, S. C., Mon., March 17, 1969

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sume on his return.



COMPLETE UNITS STAND AT EAST BAY AND VENDUE RANGE
Corner building was general offices for Clyde Line. (Staff Photo by Swain.)

Commercial Unit Unaltered

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Second in a series of articles on Charleston's historic commercial buildings. The third article will appear next Monday.)

By W. H. J. THOMAS

It is that mysterious quality termed "character" that is believed to be the great attraction which draws the tourist to Charleston.

Despite the city's wide reputation for the heavy concentrations of 18th and 19th century dwellings and a few fine churches, it is really the general backdrop of early buildings constructed for every purpose that creates this thing called character, a quality so many knowledgeable visitors say we are slowly losing.

Among Charleston's more interesting architectural prizes making up this backdrop are a number of commercial buildings, especially those units lining East Bay Street for several blocks north of Broad.

Here we find what remains from the days of early shipping, before the slip berths were filled by silting and the activity of the city's waterfront moved elsewhere. Today the commercial buildings of the area serve nicely as offices but their onetime dependencies in the form of impressively handsome brick warehouses are generally abandoned and

look unhappily close to the swinging ball of the wrecking crews.

One block of early 19th century buildings that remain together, even if the buildings stand perilously close to demolition activity, shows the old waterfront property in its current use. This is the block of several buildings bounded by East Bay, Vendue Range, Prioleau and Gendron streets.

Several of the units have been nicely restored as offices for contractors, lawyers and an insurance company, while another section of the block

Do You Know Your Charleston?

appears to be abandoned. The two-story building fronting on East Bay, now offices for the Aiken Loan and Security Co., has been well restored and is one of the last to have a direct waterfront connection. Now numbered as 166 East Bay, it served in earlier decades as a center of great activity for coastline shipping.

The flat-roofed antebellum building was the ship reservation office in the heyday of the Clyde Steamship Co., when the sidewheel iron-hulled vessels of that line made the voyages to New York and Philadelphia in less time than railroads could do.

Highway travel by automobile was unknown and the trip by railroad between

New York and Charleston meant frequent changes of train, as the route consisted of a series of independent lines which operated in zigzags to connect cities along the way.

The ships of the Clyde Line (or Clyde-Mallory Line as it was known in this century) passed when speed replaced leisure in coast travel. But before World War II, a Charlestonian had four opportunities a week to board one of the "Indians"—The Cherokee, Seminole or Mohawk—running between New York and Jacksonville with a stop at this city.

According to an old guidebook, the first arrival of a steamship at Charleston for coastwise trade was in January of 1870. It was a vessel of the Clyde Line and carried 2,500 bales of cotton.

The guide stated: "The line is popular with the traveling public as well as with shippers, the saloons and staterooms being all on deck, securing very thorough ventilation, and the tables are luxuriously supplied."

The property on which the building stands was acquired in 1817 by Samuel Prioleau, who left it to his son, Philip G. Prioleau. On Feb. 9, 1820, it was conveyed by Catherine Prioleau in part to Thomas Fleming.

The property was reunited by James Ross, who purchased one part from Thomas Fleming in 1826 and the other from Philip G. Prioleau and

Martha Prioleau on Nov. 16, 1835.

The property passed into the hands of Margaret A. Timmons, Anna A. Dillingham and Bessie H. Howison, who sold it on Feb. 28, 1854, to George H. Moffett. It later came into the hands of the city of Charleston and was sold to Helen G. Chitopoulos.

Each of the buildings on the block show interesting contrasts in construction, as do all the nearby units, including the large brick structures immediately near this block now being converted to quarters for The Colony House restaurant.

Although the front of 23 Vendue Range shows off a Victorian front with sheet metal parapet and window ornaments, its rear on Gendron Street shows spots of Flemish bond and segmental brick lintels showing through the masonry, suggesting an earlier period.

Next door to the east stands an insurance office which was once the quarters of the Dan Talmage company, wholesale rice dealers. The building was constructed using commercial bond and its cast iron pilasters at first story level suggest they once carried Corinthian capitals like those on the three story building at 17 Vendue Range.

This small block remains one of the few consistent groupings unscarred by some form of demolition.

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