

John L. Dart Library

1067 King Street

c. 1968

Before the library was built in 1968, 1067 King Street was the location for a popular restaurant.

Idle Hour

The Idle Hour opened November 1, 1939. In 1941, one of the operators, Leon Dunlap, got into an argument with two men at the business, and one of the men attacked Mr. Dunlap with a tear gas gun.¹ It quickly became one of Charleston's better-known restaurants with plans being made to enlarge the dining room. In an odd story, the newspaper reported gushingly that the provision of good food meant "an important means of promoting speed and efficiency in work. Give a workman a good place to eat and his work will be faster, more accurate and efficient and his outlook on life will be more cheerful." It continued that the restaurant made a contribution to the national defense in that way.²



There was a seedier side. Mr. Dunlap was arrested in a series of liquor raids for possessing and selling whiskey in violation of state law in December 1941; liquor could only be sold at licensed liquor stores and only by the bottle at that time.³ A grand jury decided not to pursue the cases.⁴

On November 6, 1946, Ms. Platt (a co-owner) died, and William J. Logothetis bought the business.⁵ He made alterations to the business and reopened it in December 1946 with a white tablecloth look.⁶ During the next several years, each business lasted only a short time. It became a private club known as El Casanova (October 1949);⁷ the Beach-Comber's Barbecue (November 1953);⁸ the Beachcombers Drive-In Club (December 1953);⁹ Charley's Supper Club (December 1954);¹⁰ the

¹ "Tear Gas Gun Attack Alleged," Evening Post, Nov. 29, 1941, at 5

² "Idle Hour Serves Growing Population," News and Courier, Dec. 2, 1941, at 11A

³ "Defendants Waive Hearing," Evening Post, Dec. 9, 1941, at 7

⁴ "Grand Jury Finds No Bills For 20 Arrested at Bars," News and Courier, Dec. 12, 1941, at 1

⁵ News and Courier, Nov. 8, 1946, at 9B

⁶ News and Courier, Dec. 6, 1946, at 7B

⁷ News and Courier, Oct. 14, 1949, at 3

⁸ News and Courier, Nov. 6, 1953, at 2

⁹ News and Courier, Dec. 24, 1953, at 3

¹⁰ News and Courier, Dec. 16, 1954, at 2

Merchandise Mart, Inc. selling furniture (April 1956);¹¹ Fan-Tan Club, a Chinese restaurant with dancing and music (November 1956);¹² RVA Club (by March 1960);¹³ and the Moose Lodge (May 1964).¹⁴

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The location was bought for use as the Dart Library in 1967.¹⁵ The forerunner of the current library, Dart Hall, had been a library long before becoming an original branch of the county library system in 1931. It traces its origins to the Charleston Industrial Normal Institute which was opened in 1899 by the Rev. John L. Dart, a distinguished educator and a leading minister, at the corner of Kracke and Bogard Streets (right).



Rev. Dart's daughter, Susan Dart Butler, founded Dart Hall. She had long felt the need for library services for the African American population of Charleston. In 1927, she opened a reading room at Dart Hall for the African American public and operated it at her personal expense until July 1931, when the county opened the Dart Hall Branch of the Charleston Free Library there. From 1931 until 1952, three large rooms were made available at a nominal rent of \$1 per year. In December 1952, Charleston County purchased Dart Hall.

The present John L. Dart Library was built by County Council in 1968 and was named in honor of the late Rev. John L. Dart. Dedication ceremonies for the new building, designed by Demetrious Liollio, were held on December 12, 1968, with members of the Dart family present.



¹¹ News and Courier, Apr. 1, 1956, at 8

¹² News and Courier, Nov. 1, 1956, at 8

¹³ "Thieves Net \$1,000 At RVA Club," News and Courier, Mar. 10, 1960, at 7

¹⁴ "Plan Tea For Franke Home," News and Courier, May 4, 1964, at 5

¹⁵ News and Courier, July 19, 1967, at 1B