

**Historic Buildings
in the
The Midtown Project Area**

**Architectural/Historical Notes
by
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Introduction and Historical Overview

This study, including historical research and architectural and structural analysis, of historic buildings in the proposed Midtown redevelopment project, was undertaken in behalf of Regent Charleston, LLC, the developer. The project area contains a number of buildings along the east side of King Street, of varying age and historic and architectural importance. Regent Charleston, LLC desire to retain and preserve buildings and portions of buildings which are of historic and architectural value, and to clear from the project site buildings and portions of buildings that are of no such value.

The project area has had layers of historical development. The neighborhood has been occupied since the late eighteenth century, when former plantation lands along the Broad Path (King Street) were subdivided, and current property lines still in large part reflect those early divisions (Figures 1 and 2). The first development followed a typical pattern in which merchants built combined stores and residences with extensive outbuildings, for use as wagon yards. Wagoners from the interior, coming down the King Street Road, stopped at such establishments to exchange country produce for trade goods. Development was aided by the proximity of Spring Street, which led to a bridge across the Ashley River. The wagon trade was eclipsed during the 1820s and '30s by the South Carolina Rail Road, which acquired a right of way through the blocks bounded by King and Meeting streets (Figure 3). The presence of the rail line facilitated industrial development, and in the 1850s George S. Hacker and his partners established a complex including a sawmill, lumber yard and sash and blind factory on King Street, opposite Cannon Street (Figures 7, 8, 9). Along Hacker's Alley (also known as Riker's Lane), small wooden residences were built, perhaps for workers in the Hacker concern (Figure 4). Further redevelopment occurred after the Hacker heirs sold part of their holdings in the 1880s. By the early twentieth century, several banks and a movie theater augmented commercial activities along King Street (Figures 10, 11). Unfortunately, most of the historic buildings in the project area were demolished in the mid-to-late twentieth century.¹

The oldest surviving structure of historic and architectural significance, in the project area, is 562 King Street, which was built ca. 1811. The other buildings selected for historical and structural analysis are 544 King Street, built in 1927; 556 King Street, built in 1887 and remodeled in the 1920s; and 560 King Street, built in 1951. This report has focused on the crucial historic preservation issues involved at each of the selected buildings, and on recommendations for resolution of these issues. The selected buildings are discussed below, in the order of their street addresses.

544 King Street Street – The Peoples First National Bank Building

T.M.S. 460-08-04-48

A handsome Neoclassical structure of brick and stone, the building was constructed in 1927 for The Peoples First National Bank of Charleston, and designed by the important architectural firm of Simons & Lapham of Charleston.² Over several decades, the building has undergone modernizing changes such as suspended ceilings, new floor systems, partitions and additions, and a drive-through teller system. In spite of these changes the building's original architectural features are mostly intact and can be restored. Regent Charleston, LLC desire to retain and restore the original historic elements of the building and remove those, such as the drive-through teller system, which are non-historic.

Crucial issue: Over time, additions were made to the rear of the bank building (Figures 10, 11, 12). Most of that construction was subsequently removed (Figure 13). There remains, however, an unattractive warren of partitions, additions and cosmetic overlay on the rear of the building. An examination of that area indicates that within this accretion and nearly masked by it, is the original rear extension of the building, which was depicted on the Sanborn insurance map of 1929 (Figure 10). Project engineer Russell Rosen has concluded that the extension originally contained a boiler room, which theory is supported by the presence of a handsome chimney at the juncture of the extension and the main part of the building. Although the 1927 extension has lost its original roof, the exterior walls appear to be intact.

Recommendation: The accreted non-historic partitions, additions and overlay should be removed from the 1927 extension, and the historic walls and chimney retained for further use.

556 King Street – The John H. Ducker Building

T.M.S. 460-08-04-50

This is a puzzle of a building, as it has undergone significant changes since it was constructed in 1887 by John H. Ducker, as a two story wooden building (Figure 8) in the Italianate style.³ Ducker's wooden building replaced a two story brick building which was depicted on a plat dated 1855 (Figure 4) but which was demolished by 1881-82 (Figure 6).⁴ In the 1920s, when the building was remodeled for use as a bank, the first floor was rebuilt in brick, while the wooden second floor was stuccoed, and the building was extended to the rear with a masonry addition (Figure 10). The remodeling probably was undertaken about 1921, when the City Bank and Trust Company occupied the building.⁵ Subsequently, the building was further extended to the rear, with the construction of another masonry addition (Figure 11). At some point in time, a second brick wall was constructed adjacent to the north wall of the original building. A recent occupant further confused matters by introducing historic structural members and woodwork salvaged for other locations.

Crucial issue: The configuration of the 1887 building, despite the 1920s remodeling, is clearly defined by line breaks in the brickwork between the original building and the first extension. Another clue to the footprint of the original building is a floor covering of small octagonal tiles, which was installed in the bank's public lobby. The tile floor is bounded the walls of the building at its outer edges, and a line marking the ghost of the teller counters along its inner edge. The tile floor also terminates at the same point as the line breaks in the brickwork. The developer desires to retain the original 1887 extent of the building, and demolish the additions to the rear of the line breaks. This is problematic as the brick walls of the earliest extension, although not original to 1887, appear to date from the 1920s and therefore can be considered as historic and worthy of retention. The later additions, to the rear of the 1920s extension, are of no historic or architectural value, and can be removed without regret.

Recommendation: Architectural elements of the 1920s remodeling, and the portion of the building dating from the 1920s, should be retained along with the original 1887 building. Any historic materials in the later rear additions (including historic materials of recent introduction) should be salvaged for possible re-use.

560 King Street – The Palace Realty Building T.M.S. 460-08-04-52

This one story concrete block building, with a brick and plate-glass storefront, was built in 1951 by the Palace Realty Company (Figures 12, 13).⁶ The building was initially occupied by a furniture store.

Crucial issue: The piazzas of the ca. 1811 house at 562 King Street were demolished to clear space for the construction of 560 King Street. The building at 560 King Street is considered by this consultant to be of marginal historic and architectural interest, in contrast with the great historical and architectural value of the building at 562 King.

Recommendation: This building of least value can be demolished, as it is not historic, in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of 562 King, the building of ultimate value in the project area.

562 King Street – The Thomas Fleming Building T.M.S. 460-08-04-52

Thomas Fleming, a prosperous merchant, built this handsome three story brick, hip-roofed single house after purchasing the site in 1811. It was built as a store and residence, with a separate two-story brick, gable-roofed kitchen to the rear, and a long, two-story brick outbuilding extending deeply into the large lot. A large wooden stable stood at the east end of the lot, and other wooden outbuildings were built during subsequent decades. Nineteenth century maps (Figures 3, 5) indicate the Fleming establishment was one of several such complexes in the block. The property evidently was occupied by his kinsman Robert Fleming, who operated a wagon yard. Thomas

Fleming sold the property to Robert Fleming in 1821 for \$12,000, which was a fortune in those days ⁷

In the course of its history, the façade of the main building was Victorianized and the storefront modernized. On the south side, the piazzas were demolished in 1951 for the construction of the neighboring building at 560 King Street. About the same time, the kitchen building was demolished except for a portion of the west wall and gable end. The long brick storehouse and wooden outbuildings were completely demolished. The historic outbuildings were replaced by modern warehouse space of masonry construction, attached to the rear of the main house.

On the rear of the main building, various changes were made in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This area does not illustrate the typical pattern found in Charleston single houses, in which the rear of the piazza wraps around the corner of the building, in an “L” shape, and terminates in a small extension, usually one bay square. The brick, gable-roofed rear extension at 562 King Street is rectangular, rather than square. A masonry line break at the point where the extension joins the main building indicates that the extension was not part of the original construction, but was constructed or rebuilt some time after the construction of the main house. At its eastern end, there is another line break where the extension intersects with the surviving west wall of the kitchen building. The extension also impacted on a window (infilled) in the west wall of the kitchen. The rectangular extension, between the main house and kitchen, was in place by 1852 (Figure 3). At some point in time, a third level was erected on top of the extension, using the kitchen gable end for support. Physical examination reveals hand-split lath, an old wooden partition and a batten door in the extension, all evidence of age and historic value. There also appear to have been repairs, of an expedient and slipshod nature, to this area, probably following the 1886 earthquake.

A city ward map and Sanborn maps (Figures 6, 7, 8, 9) also indicate an atypical pattern and changes to the piazzas at the rear of the main building. This documentation is imperfect but appears to indicate that by the late nineteenth century, the piazzas did not wrap around the rear corner of the building in the typical “L” shape. Rather, there were separate two-tiered piazzas along the south side of the rear extension and a one-story piazza along the south side of the kitchen. By 1902 (Figure 9), the two-story piazza, on the south side of the rear extension, had been enclosed; the physical evidence of this change remains on the second story. At some point in time, a door was cut through the kitchen wall, connecting the piazza with the second level of the kitchen; the door subsequently was infilled.

Crucial issue: The rear extension is pulling away from the main building to the extent that daylight can be observed through the resulting crack. The rear addition, the enclosed piazza, and the surviving west wall of the kitchen building are in deteriorated condition.

Recommendation: The rear extension and the kitchen wall are the most architecturally and historically significant components of the rear area and should be retained and preserved. The enclosed piazza is the least significant element. However, structural elements of the nineteenth century piazzas may survive. If they do, these elements could be reused.

Endnotes

¹Charleston County, Register of Mesne Conveyance Office (R.M.C.O.), Deeds, Z5:91, B8:534, C8:146, C8:418, D8:48, D8:77, G8:220, P9:490, W10:337, D12:455, S12:3, S12:59, X12:375, T13:182, K20:699, N34:311; R.M.C.O., Plat Book A, p. 133, Plat Book E, pp. 110, 124; City of Charleston, Assessor, Ward Books, 1852-1953, originals in Charleston County Auditor's Office, mfm., R.M.C.O. and Charleston County Public Library; City of Charleston, Block Plats, 1881-82, by Richard Lamblé, City Surveyor, mfm., Charleston County Public Library; John McCrady Company, McCrady Plats, Nos. 4093, 4097, 4144, 4156, 7961, originals in R.M.C.O, mfm., Charleston County Public Library; Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Charleston, 1884, 1888, 1902, 1929, 1944, 1951, 1955, mfm., Charleston County Public Library; R.P. Bridgens and Robert Allen, *An Original Map of Charleston*, 1852, original in South Carolina Historical Society, copy in Charleston County Public Library; C. Drie, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1872*, original copy in South Carolina Historical Society, on-line copy at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/map_item.pl; Frederick A. Ford, *Census of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, For the Year 1861* (Charleston: Evans & Cogswell for the Charleston City Council, 1861), p. 124; Charleston City Directories, 1813-1955, mfm., Charleston County Public Library; Abstract of titles by Alston & Bird, LLP, Atlanta, GA.

²R.M.C.O., Deeds, N34:311; Ward Books, 1885-87, Sanborn insurance map, 1929.

³R.M.C.O., Deeds, K20:699; Ward Books, 1885-1887; Sanborn insurance maps, 1888, 1902.

⁴R.M.C.O., Plat Book A, p. 133; McCrady Plats, Nos. 4093, 7961; City Block Plats, 1881-82.

⁵Sanborn insurance map, 1929; Charleston City Directories, 1920, 1921, mfm., Charleston County Public Library.

⁶Ward Book, 1950-1953.

⁷R.M.C.O., Deeds, B8:534, P9:490.



Figure 3

Bridgens & Allen, *An Original Map of Charleston*, 1852 (Detail).
-- Charleston County Public Library

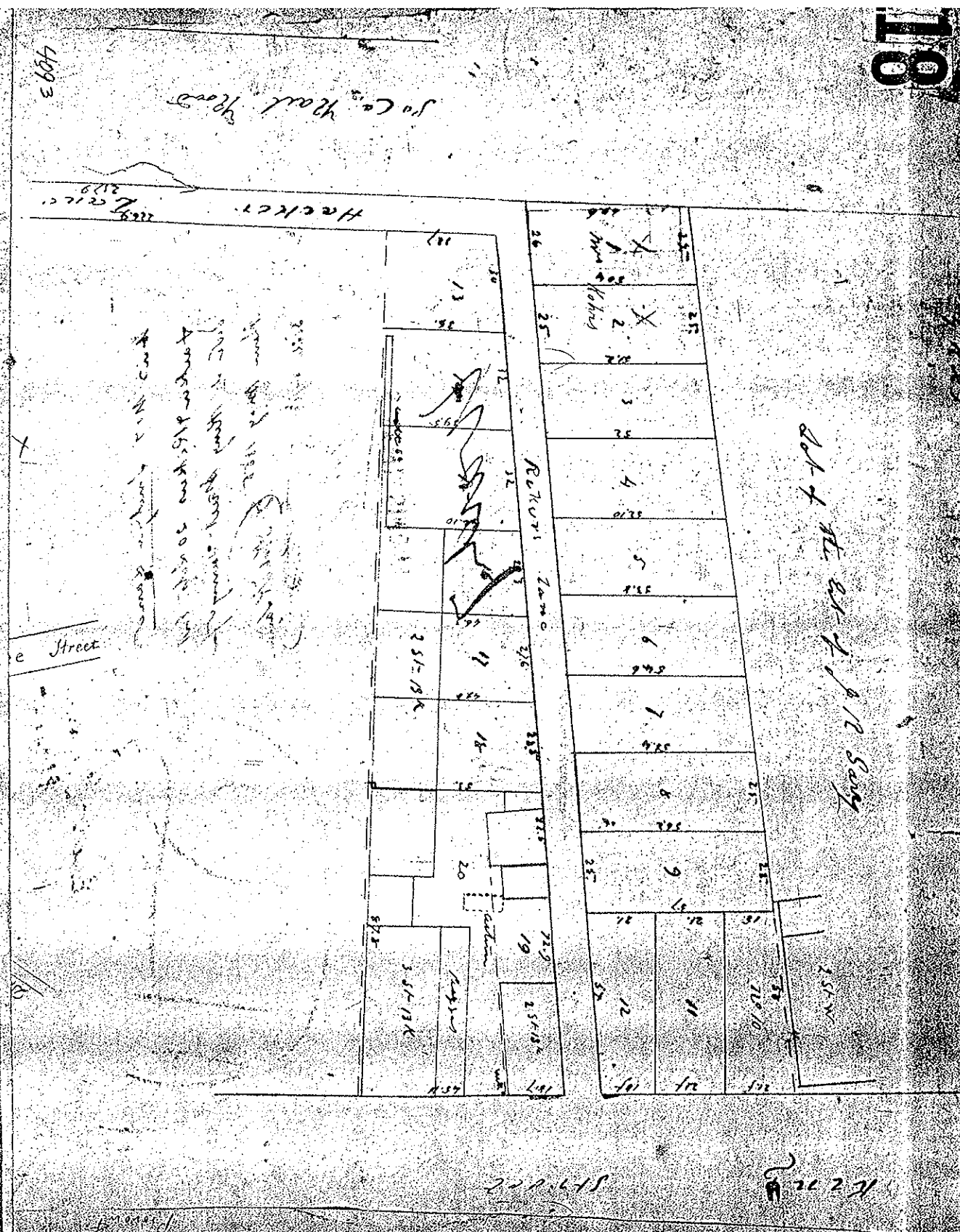


Figure 4

Plat by Robert K. Payne, showing division of lands, east side of King Street and Rikers Lane (Hacker's Alley), for Hacker and Riker partnership, 1855



Figure 5

C. Drie, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1872* (Detail)
-- Library of Congress

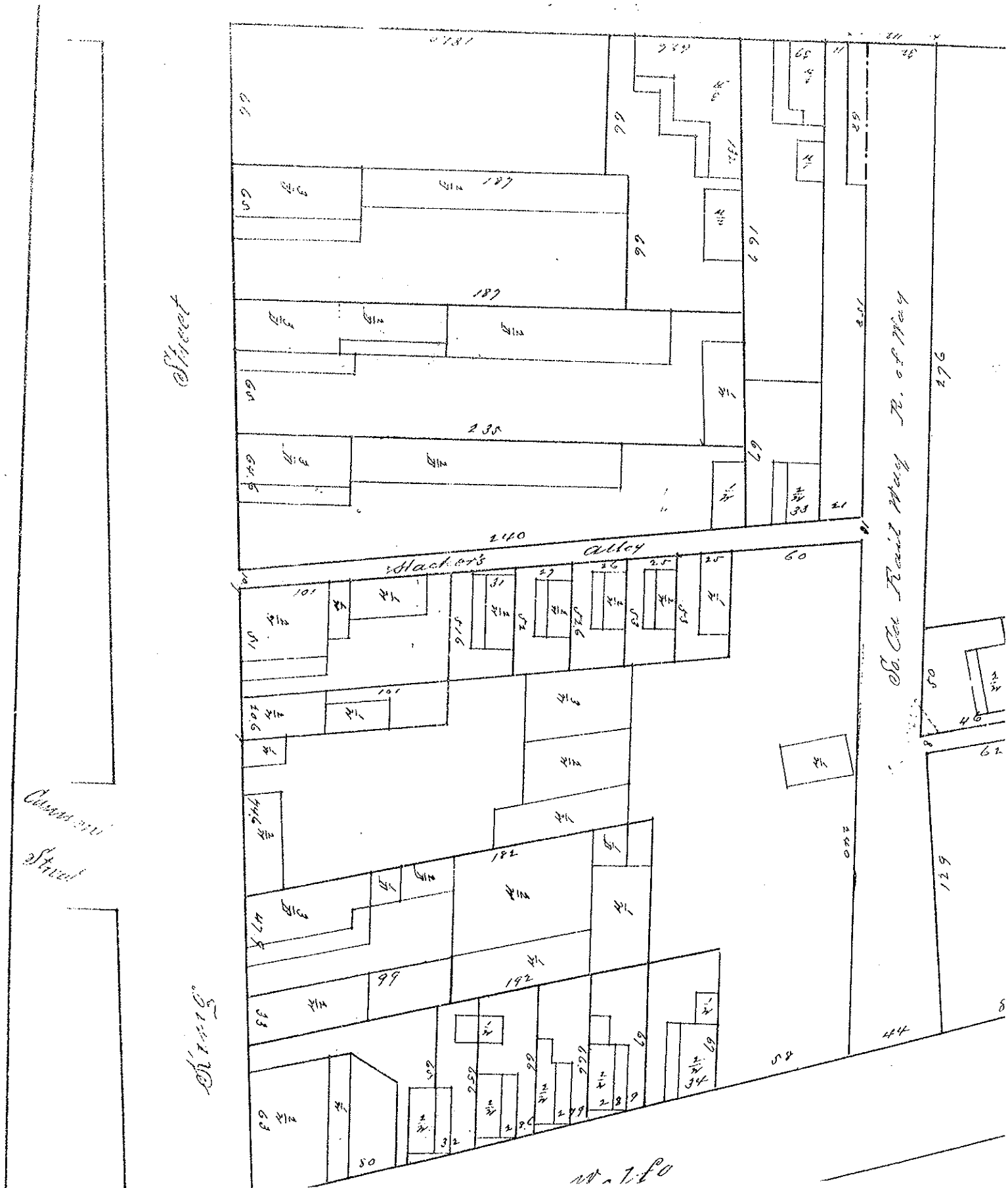


Figure 6

Block plat by Richard Lamblé, City of Charleston Surveyor, 1881-82 (Detail)
 — Charleston County Public Library

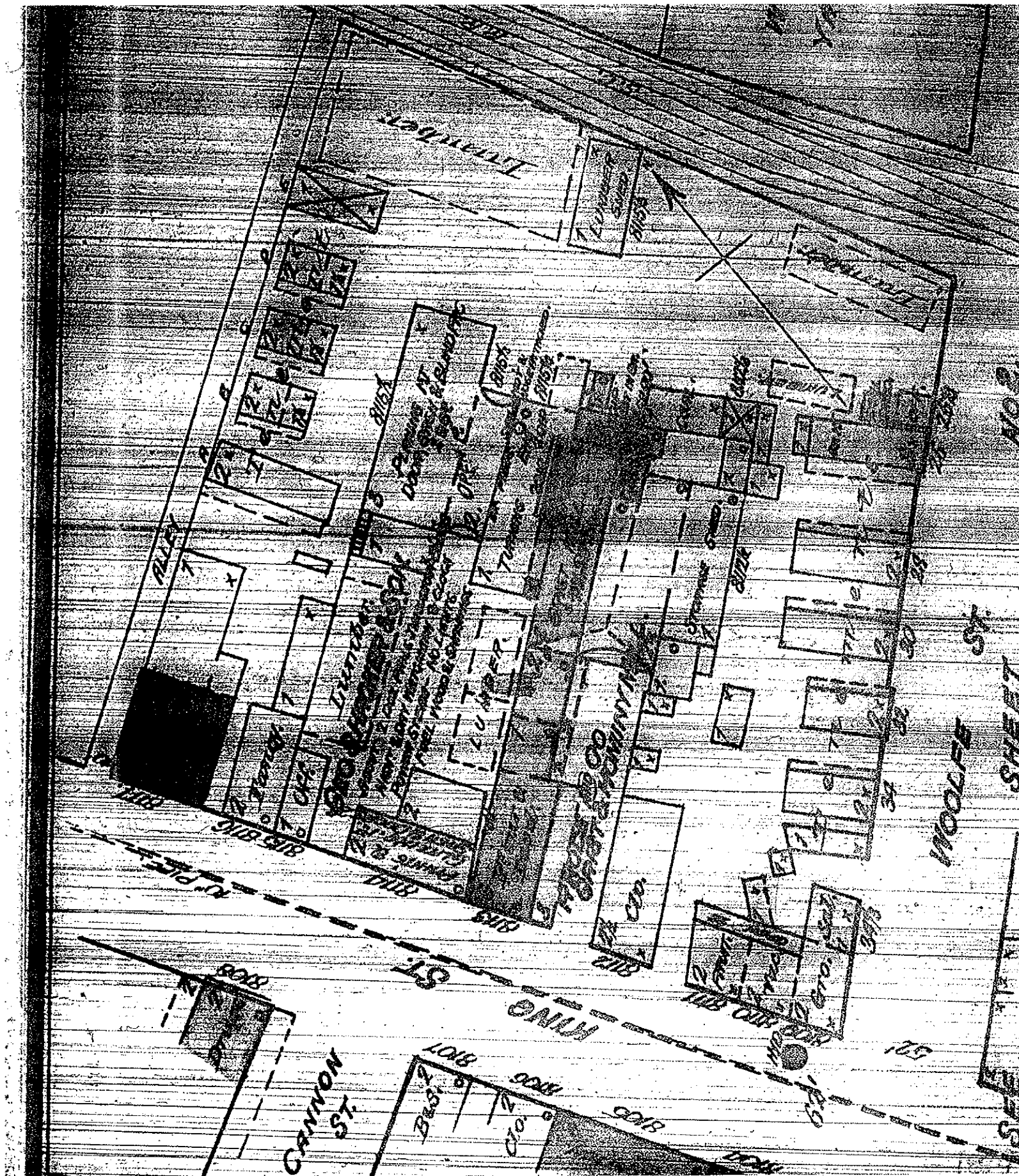


Figure 7

Sanborn insurance map, 1884, showing buildings south of Hacker's Alley
 — Charleston County Public Library

ESTON



Figure 8

Sanborn insurance map, 1888, showing buildings in Midtown area (Detail)
 — Charleston County Public Library

1402

SPRING

ST.

149

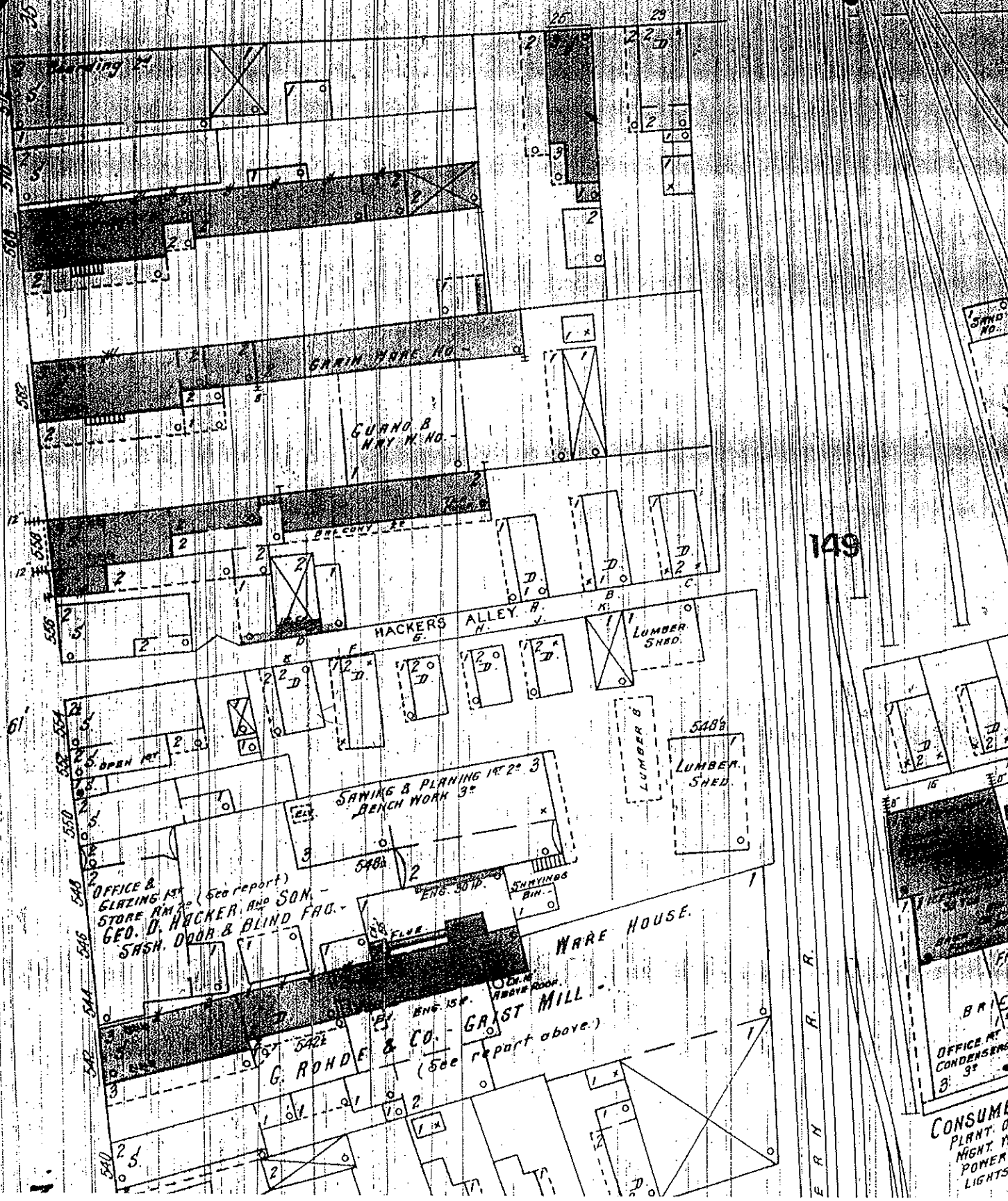
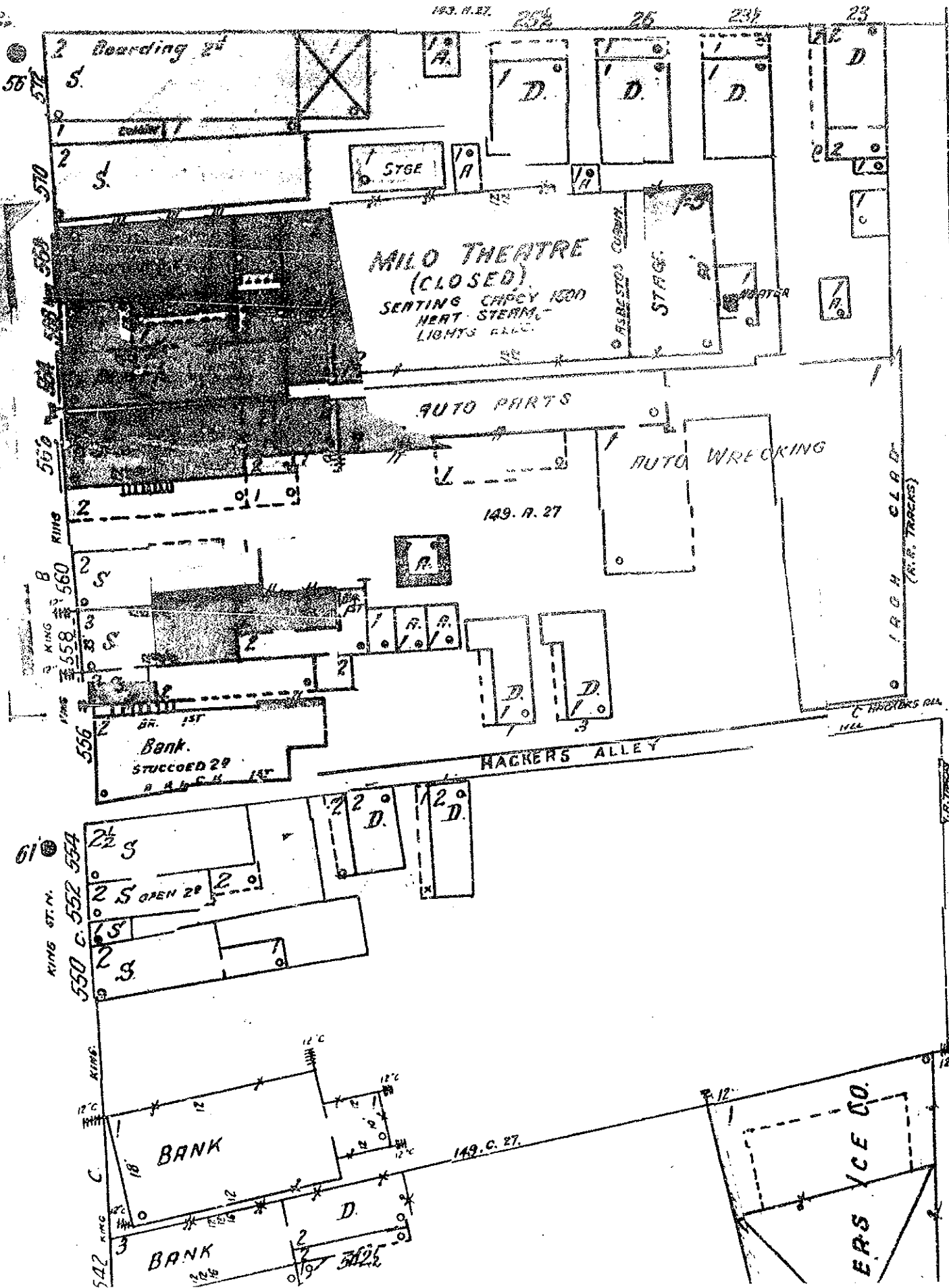


Figure 9

Sanborn insurance map, 1902, showing buildings in Midtown area (Detail)

- Charleston County Public Library



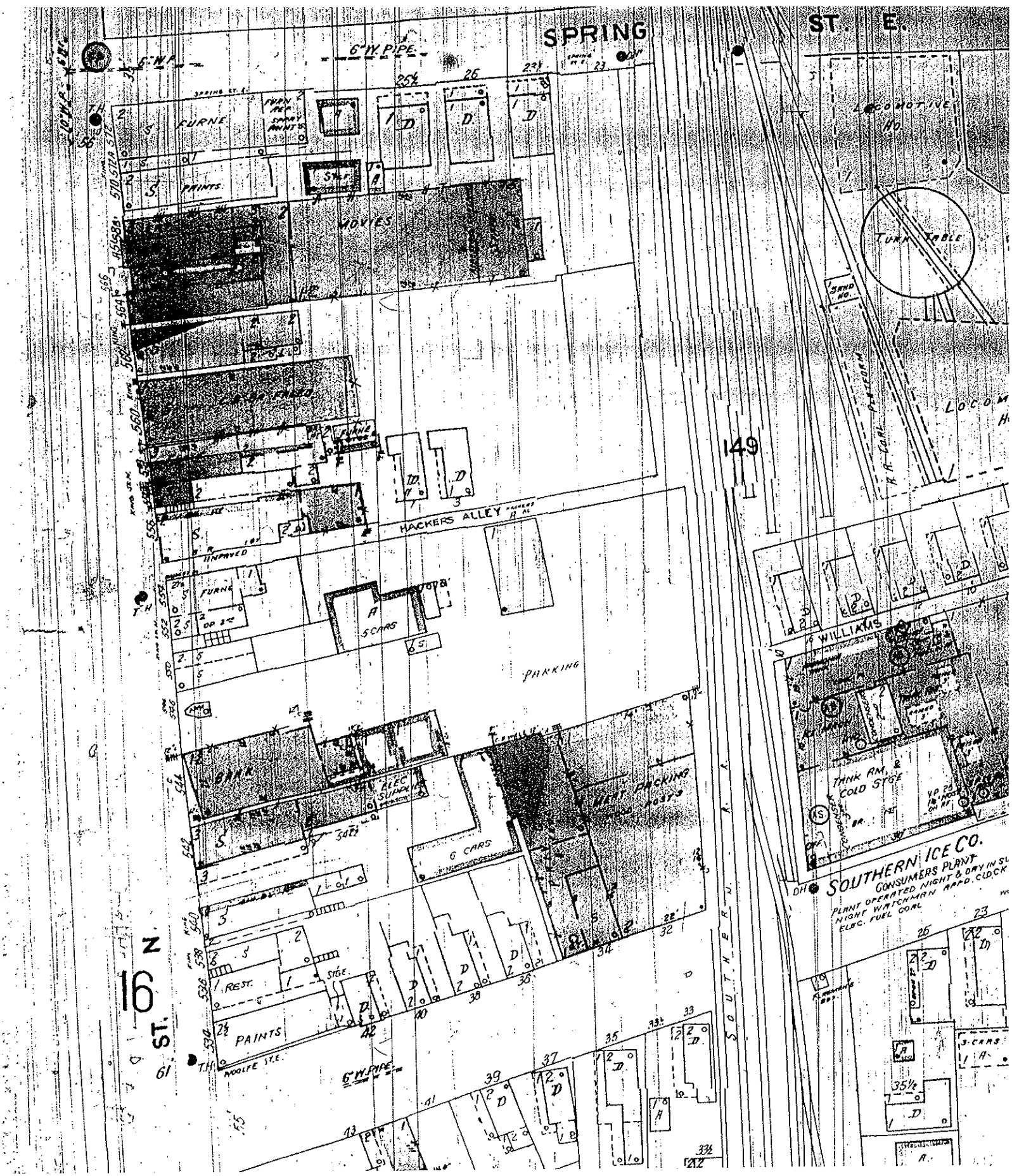


Figure 12

Sanborn insurance map, 1951, showing buildings in Midtown area (Detail)
 -- Charleston County Public Library

1755

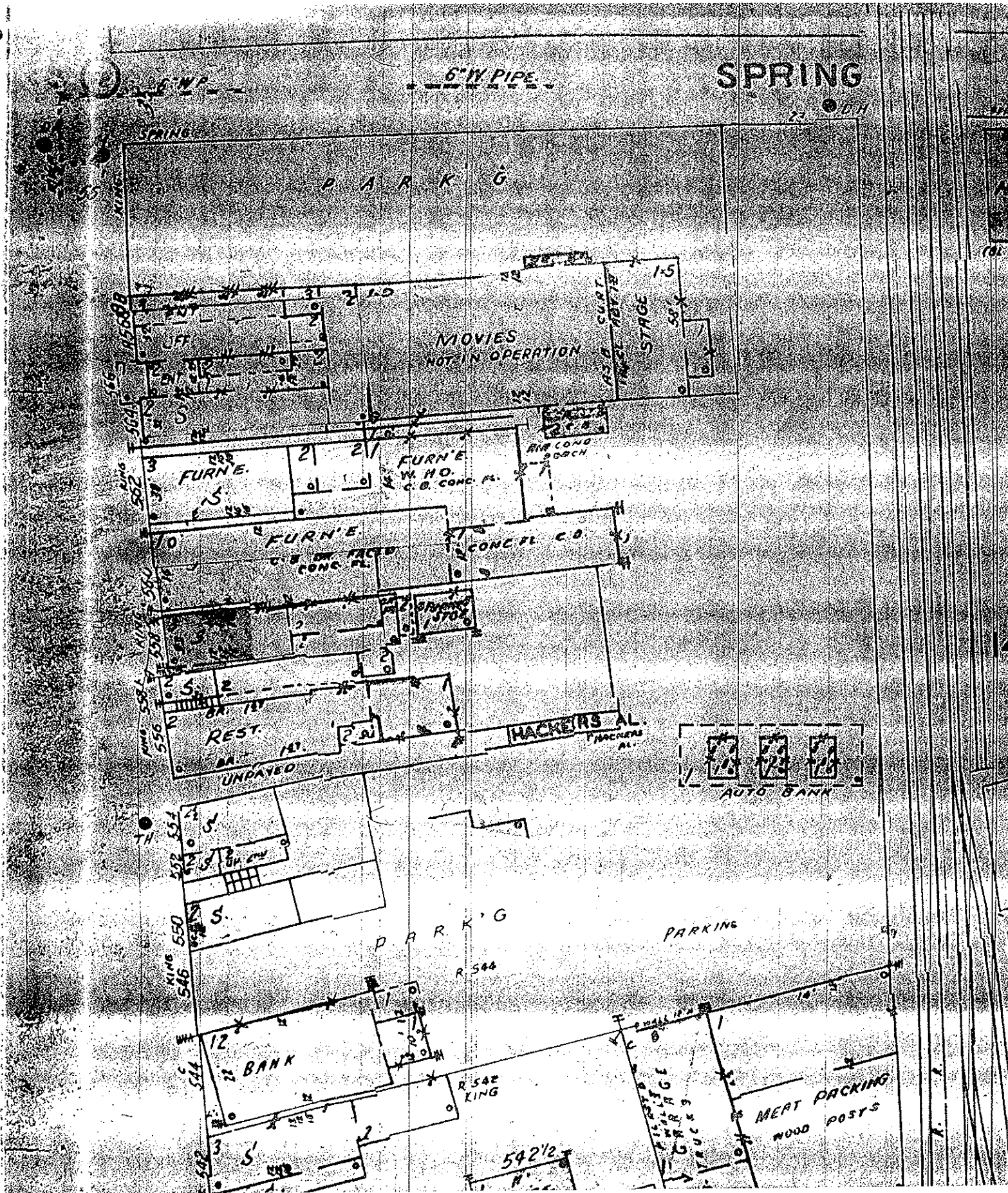


Figure 13

Sanborn insurance map, 1955, showing buildings in Midtown area (Detail)

-- Charleston County Public Library