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143 East Bay Street
Charleston, South Carolina

Sometime after the Great Fire of 1778, Jonathan Cook(e), a shoemaker/vintner/grocer, built #143 East Bay Street to replace an earlier dwelling on the property. He kept a store here for awhile, then the building began a long history as an investment/rental property. By 1821 it was known as the Bank Coffee House, and was described in a deed of 1835 as a three-story brick house. The upper levels were most likely occupied as a residence and/or inn. Inn use is hinted at in the name applied to the building in the early 1840s: "now known as the Alhambra and formerly called the South Carolina Coffee House."

The lot on which 143 East Bay Street stands is about one-quarter of the original Town Lot 16 on the Grand Model of Charleston. Directly to the rear, 12 State Street was also part of Lot 16, and the two properties often shared a common ownership.

In 1853-54, the Farmers & Exchange Bank (Saracen Restaurant) was built along the south wall of 143 East Bay. At about the same time, owner John Jones more than doubled the length of 143 East Bay with a rear addition, and remodeled the interior for use by a ships' chandlery business. After several mortgage sales during the difficult post-war years, Charles O. Witte, president of Peoples National Bank, bought the building as an investment property.

From 1875 until about 1890, Witte's tenant was Bartholomew Foley, a successful merchant of clothing, boots and shoes. He lived above the store until the earthquake of 1886, which significantly damaged 143 East Bay Street. It was repaired enough for the store to remain in business for several more years, although the Foley family moved their residence to Market Street.

#143 East Bay was finally given a complete overhaul in 1893, with a new facade and large new windows along the north wall. The interior was remodeled to provide an open interior two stories in height at the front section. When renovated, the building became home to the Western Union Telegraph Office, which remained until about 1905. Afterward, the Atlantic Coast Line Railway's Traffic Office occupied 143 East Bay Street from about 1908 until 1922.

In 1923 the property was purchased by the Planters Fertilizer and Phosphate Company. The company moved its own offices to 143 East Bay, the first time in generations that the building had been occupied by its owner. With the changes in the chemical fertilizer industry after World War II, Planters closed its Charleston operation ca. 1948. #143 East Bay was returned to rental occupancy, then sold in 1960. From about 1957 until after 1990 it was the home of Charleston Office Supply Company. Since that time, it been used as an antiques mall and an art gallery.

143 East Bay Street
Charleston, South Carolina

The building at 143 East Bay Street stands on part of Lot 16 of the Grand Model of Charleston. Lot 16 was approximately 100' X 200', and included today's #143 and 141 East Bay, #12 and 10 State Street, and part of the SCN property to the south. The lot is referenced in the 1698 Will of Mary Crosse, Widow, in which she mentions "ye house wherein I now live" on the northernmost half of her Town Lot, which fronted on "ye wharfe." Mrs. Crosse devised this half-lot, 50' X 218', to her daughter Susanna (Mrs. Edward) Rawlins, subsequently Susanna Wigington. In 1724 Susanna Wigington, widowed for the second time, divided the half-lot into two parcels, each 25' X 218'. She conveyed the north parcel (143 East Bay and 12 State) to Mary Blamyre, citing the "Messuage or Tenement wherein John White now lives." Mrs. Blamyre sold the lot with house "wherein Joshua Lancaster now lives" in 1733 to Stephen Miller, a shopkeeper.

It is not known whether Miller too used the property as rental or whether he occupied it. Upon his death in 1749, his quarter-lot was divided into two 109' deep parcels. The State Street lot was devised to Stephen Miller, and the East Bay section to John Miller. John Miller (d. 1751), a planter in St. Thomas and St. Denis Parish (Berkeley County), may have used the house as a city residence, or as income property. Miller's entire estate passed to his wife Hannah, and then to their daughter, also Hannah. In 1770 she and her husband John Stirk, a planter of Hampton, Georgia (near Savannah), conveyed to Jonathan Cooke, shoemaker of Charleston, "all that Messuage or Tenement at present occupied by Joshua Hart, on the Bay in Charles Towne, with the land on which the same is built, a parcel 25' X 109', part of Lot 16 on the Grand Model."

Although there was a dwelling house on the present site at least by 1698, the existing building is not a 17th century structure. It was most likely constructed sometime after the Great Fire of 1778. Over 250 dwellings in the city were lost, and only 15 houses on the Bay, from Queen Street south past Tradd Street, survived the blaze.

A few months after the 1778 fire Cooke, then described as a vintner, bought today's 12 Street, the 25' X 109' lot behind 143 East Bay. The building on this lot had been lost to the fire, and Cooke did not rebuild there.

He probably built the present structure at 143 East Bay ca. 1780, sometime after the fire but before the first Charleston city directory was printed in 1782. This guide lists Jonathan Cook as a grocer at 24 Bay Street; the 1790 directory gives the address of Jonathan Cook's grocery as 57 Bay Street. Either or both of these addresses could indicate today's 143 East Bay. (The change of address could also indicate relocation by Cooke. Charleston was under British occupation from 1780-82. It may be that Cooke did not build 143 East Bay until ca. 1785.) By 1794 Jonathan Cook was a shopkeeper on King Street. After his death in 1796, the lots on East Bay and State streets remained in the Cook(e) family. The present building at 12 State Street was built ca. 1815 for his widow, and was used in conjunction with a coffee house that had been established at 143 East Bay.

Upon the death of Eleanor Cook of New York City in 1821, the property from East Bay to State Street was sold (\$8,750) on behalf of her brothers Jacob and Peter Quackenbush and several other heirs. The deed states that the two lots together "now form that establishment on East Bay known by the designation of the Bank Coffee

House." The operator of the Coffee House has not been identified. It is listed in the 1822 City Directory as the Bank Coffee House, 129 East Bay Street.

The 1821 purchase had been made by William Heyward, a planter of St. Lukes Parish (and father of Thomas Heyward, signer of the Declaration of Independence) and others, acting on behalf of Elizabeth Heyward Hamilton, wife of James Hamilton Jr. The buildings were used as rental property for her benefit until January 1835 when Mrs. Hamilton's trustees sold the two lots (\$15,000) to Louis N. Vidal of Wadmalaw Island. The deed cites two 3-story brick houses, today's 12 State Street and 143 East Bay Street. This is the first descriptive reference we have to the present building.

Charleston addresses changed frequently during the 1800s. In 1835 James Vidal, probably related to Louis, was operating the Marine & Commercial Hotel at 129 East Bay Street. Coffee houses and taverns often doubled as inns, and it may be that Vidal's hotel was above the Bank Coffee House.

However, the property is referred to only as the Bank Coffee House in the deed conveying both lots from Louis Vidal to Isaac S. Daviga (\$21,000) in January 1836. The same day, Daviga leased it to Aries Antonio and J. Rousseau for five years, at an annual rent of \$2,000. City directories do not prove whether Antonio and Rousseau occupied the building: in 1836 Rousseau is listed as keeping a coffee house at 3 Vendue Range, and Antonio was the proprietor of "Tivoli Gardens" on Charleston Neck. The partners may have also briefly operated the Bank Coffee House, but by 1837 Antonio was in business at the Globe Tavern on King Street, and Rousseau had disappeared from the records.

The situation in the 1830s is difficult to trace. The lease term with Antonio & Rousseau was not completed. The 1837-38 city directory does not include the Marine & Commercial Hotel, but does list James Vidal as proprietor of a clothing store at 131 East Bay, in association with F. D. Picault, clothier and tailor. (Again, because of changing addresses, it is not certain whether this store was at today's 143 East Bay.) Isaac Daviga, owner of the double lot, may have died; in February 1838 the Bank of the State of South Carolina began foreclosure action against Grace Daviga, Moses Daviga, and several minors to satisfy a mortgage. The property was finally sold at auction in December 1838, and was referred to as the "United States Coffee House" in the advertisement, and "South Carolina Coffee House" in the deed. The purchaser was the Charleston Insurance and Trust Company.

Four years later the company sold both lots (\$15,000) to John S. Jones, a hardware merchant. The 1843 deed describes the buildings as "that 3-story brick House on East Bay now known as the Alhambra and formerly called the South Carolina Coffee House, and also that 3-story Brick Dwelling House on State Street, the lower story thereof being now or late occupied by Gantt & Mortimer, brokers." Jones gave the seller a mortgage on the property (which he satisfied before his death), and then sold 12 State Street separately. Later sales refer to the State Street parcel as only 80' deep, reflecting that 29' had been taken from that lot and added to 143 East Bay, which is today 141' deep.

Jones owned 143 East Bay when the Farmers & Exchange Bank (Saracen Restaurant) was built next door ca. 1854. At about the same time, he more than doubled the length of his own building with a rear addition, and remodeled the interior for commercial/retail use. In December 1859 #143 East Bay was referred to as "the large BRICK STORE AND OUT-BUILDINGS, lately used by Bee & Tylee as a Ship Chandlery Establishment."

at auction to Gustavus V. Ancker, a cotton broker. Ancker, too, had financial problems, and in 1873 the property was again ordered sold. The auction was held in March 1874, and 143 East Bay Street was purchased by Charles O. Witte, president of Peoples National Bank.

Like most previous owners, Witte held 143 East Bay Street as rental property. In 1875 he attracted a new tenant, Bartholomew Foley, a successful merchant of clothing, boots and shoes. Foley expanded his operation to East Bay Street, moving his residence there as well, and also kept his Market Street store.

#143 East Bay Street was rocked by the earthquake of August 1886. The north, south, and west walls were not heavily damaged, but engineers determined that the east facade needed to come down at least to the first story. The chimney tops were off and the roof needed extensive repair. The roof, chimneys and exterior were repaired enough for Foley's business to continue operating: the city directory for 1887 shows Benjamin Foley still in business on East Bay Street, although he had moved his residence to the Market Street store. In partnership with his son James, Foley continued to run both shops for another year or so, but by 1890 #143 East Bay was vacant. Bartholomew Foley may have retired or died; in 1892 his son was sole proprietor of the Market Street clothing business.

After being vacant a year or more, 143 East Bay was occupied briefly as a grocery store, then finally given a complete overhaul in 1893. When renovated, it became home to the Western Union Telegraph Office, which moved in from next door at the old Farmers & Exchange Bank. Western Union remained at 143 East Bay until about 1905.

After C. O. Witte's death in 1908, #143 East Bay Street and 12 State Street passed to his daughter Beatrice Witte Ravenel, who sold both in 1911 to Atlantic Realty Corporation. Atlantic Realty held them until 1920, then the properties were sold three times in succession, to Commercial Refining Company, Unity Realty Company, and finally Planters Fertilizer and Phosphate Company. Despite the ownership changes, the use of 143 East Bay remained consistent, with Atlantic Coast Line Railway's Traffic Office occupying the building from about 1908 until 1922. In 1919 the Franklin Sugar Refining Company also established offices at 143 East Bay.

In 1923 the Planters Fertilizer and Phosphate Company moved its offices to 143 East Bay, the first time in generations that it had been occupied by its owner. Planters was a Charleston-based firm, and occasionally the building was also occupied by other Charleston businesses, such as Shellmore Oyster Products and H. G. Leiding & Co., merchandise brokers. With the changes in the chemical fertilizer industry after World War II, Planters essentially shut down its Charleston operation ca. 1948. #143 East Bay was returned to rental occupancy, although the former board room at the ground floor of the rear wing was reserved as the office of W. O. Hanahan, president of Planters Fertilizer Company. In 1957, G. Hammond Bamberg's Charleston Office Supply Company moved into the main section of the building. Bamberg purchased the property in 1960, and held it until 1995. Since that time, it has been used as an antiques mall and an art gallery.

Changes to 143 East Bay Street

1854 Addition

Ca. 1853-54 the Farmers & Exchange Building (Saracen Restaurant) was constructed along the south wall of 143 East Bay Street, extending beyond the original building to the rear. At about the same time, a narrow wing or group of outbuildings at the rear of #143, shown on the 1852 Bridgens & Allen Map, was replaced by the present rear addition (which is the width of the original structure). The City Assessor's appraisal of the building increased from \$10,000 in 1853 to \$15,000 in 1854. At the second level rear section of the addition there is evidence of earlier window openings. Part of the addition may incorporate an earlier service building on the site.

1886 Earthquake Repairs

#143 East Bay Street was rocked by the Earthquake of August 1886. The north, south, and west walls were not heavily damaged, but engineers determined that the east facade needed to come down at least to the first story. The chimney tops were off and the roof needed extensive repair. The roof, chimneys and exterior were repaired enough for Foley's business to continue operating: the city directory for 1887 shows Benjamin Foley still in business on East Bay Street, but he had moved his residence to the Market Street store. With his son James, Foley continued to run both shops for another year or so, but by 1890 #143 East Bay was vacant. Bartholomew Foley had either retired or died; in 1892 his son was sole proprietor of the Market Street clothing business.

1893 Renovation

The metal storefront is stamped "Hughes & Chisolm, Charleston S.C." This firm was a partnership of Samuel Hughes and William G. Chisolm, who were both executives of the Charleston Iron Works. They briefly operated the ironworks as Hughes & Chisolm, from 1893 until about 1895. By 1896 the company was again Charleston Iron Works, with Hughes its manager, and William Chisolm had gone on to the presidency of Charleston Knitting Mills. #143 East Bay has one of the few Charleston storefronts stamped by Hughes & Chisolm.

The interior was thoroughly reworked. The 1888 Sanborn Map shows a 3-story building with a long 2-story rear wing. The 1902 map reveals extensive alterations: the interior had been converted to two stories, and an addition had been made to the rooftop, the small monitor indicated by the roofing structure in the third floor front room. In the original section of the building, walls and ceilings at the double-height first floor and the upper floor were finished with beaded-board siding.

Besides the new storefront, which rises into the original second floor level, new windows were installed along the north wall. These oversized openings, like the storefront, rise past the level of the original second floor, and are carried along the first bay of the ca. 1854 wing. Whatever remained of the original rear wall was removed at this time. A new division between the front section and wing was created further back (just behind the existing mezzanine). This division wall was finished in the same beaded-board paneling used in the main interiors.

Twentieth Century Remodelings

The existing stair along the south wall is finished in beaded-board paneling narrower than that at the rest of the interior. This stair was apparently added ca. 1920, about the time there were several changes in both ownership and tenancy of the building. In about 1925 two skylights (one of them is shown on the 1944 Sanborn Map) were opened in the roof of the rear wing, the section of the building used by Planters Fertilizer and Phosphate Company.

A ca. 1945 photo in *Architects of Charleston* (p. 216) shows a portion of 143 East Bay, with a projecting upper cornice, slightly higher than that of the bank, detailed with brackets, and a projecting cornice above the first level storefront. A 1961 photo (poor quality, at Historic Charleston, not copied) shows the lower cornice, but the present plain flat parapet had replaced the earlier cornice. These two cornices account for the apparent repairs visible above the storefront and upper windows.

Ca. 1965, a mezzanine was built forward from the ca. 1893 dividing wall between the rear wing and front building, to a point within the original building. According to G. H. Bamberg, Jr., owner of the building 1960-1995, the mezzanine and partitions within the rear wing were added gradually to provide additional office space for Charleston Office Supply Company, ca. 1965-1990. The skylights were constant sources of leaks, and were blocked over ca. 1965.

The 1972 Feiss-Wright survey photograph shows the facade much as it is at present, with both cornices removed. The photo shows metal-and-glass entry doors that have been replaced by the present wood-and-glass doors, but with the transoms (divided lights at the right, single panes at center and left) as they are today.

The ca. 1893 monitor and the rear dormer at the principal hipped roof were badly damaged by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Remnants of both were removed during repairs.

During 1996-97 a limited modernization program was carried out. Ceiling and walls at the commercial space, including the stair enclosure, were covered with sheetrock. An HVAC system was installed, with the addition of flues and small partitions in the rear wing.