

43-47 Broad St. -- Charles Love and Conrad M. Wienges, saddlers and harness makers, purchased this site in 1855, removed some earlier structures and constructed the present building. In 1870, they sold it to Charles Plenge, who added the pressed tin cornice with his name. The "Hat Man" painting on the Church Street side of the building dates from the late 19th century.

(Green, unpub. notes; HCF.)

46 Broad St. -- Site of Shepherd's Tavern, also known at various times as Swallow's Tavern, The City Tavern and The Corner Tavern. Charleston's taverns were more than just eating and drinking establishments, and at this location occurred many historically important events. One was the organization of one of the first Masonic lodges in the United States. Solomon's Lodge No. 1, Free and Accepted Masons, was organized on Oct. 29, 1736, at "Mr. Charles Shepherd's in Broad Street." The first Scottish Rite lodge, the Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Free Masonry, was organized at the same location in 1801. The first record of a theatrical season in Charleston, and one of the first in the country, is an announcement in the South-Carolina Gazette, Jan. 11, 1735, that on the following 24th, a tragedy called The Orphan, or The Unhappy Marriage, by Thomas Otway, would be "attempted" in "the Courtroom." The "Courtroom" was the long room of Shepherd's Tavern, which was rented for several years prior to 1738 to the provincial government for meetings of the court, since the Province had no suitable building and the Governor and Council could not agree on where one should be built. The use of the same room for court sessions and entertainments was not unusual. A dancing master, Henry Holt, gave a ball in the Courtroom a month before The Orphan was presented there. (The Orphan was not the first theatrical production in Charleston. Tony

43-45-47 BROAD STREET

Charles Love and Conrad M. Wienges
Saddlers- & Harness Makers

c. 1855

(Minor Changes c. 1870) "

Z-12, p. 456 On 23 April 1855, Alexander Towan, Master in Equity, of Philadelphia, Trustee of the legatees of John Hoff, deceased, sold to Charles Love and Conrad M. Wienges this property. It was described as two lots of land, measuring 61 feet on Broad Street by 38 feet on Church Street, more particularly described by a plat filed in F-8, p. 168.

F-8, p.168 The cited reference proved to be a conveyance of 1811, by the Master in Equity to John Hoff, of the property "formerly of George Cobham, deceased", whose Will had been proved in 1785. The buildings shown thereon must therefore have stood since 1811, and very likely, since before 1785. They cannot have been older than 1778, however, for the fire of that year consumed "the South side (of Broad Street) from Mrs. Sawegen's to Mr. Guerard's". "Mrs. Sawegen" has been identified as the widow of Jonathan Sarrazin, whose house and office stood just here; therefore, the buildings here were positively burned in 1778.

S. C. Gazette,
quoted in
Charleston
Year Book
for 1880

The plat of 1811 shows a two-story building on the corner, and one next door to the east, separated by a yard of 12'-2" width. Since nothing of the sort survives today, but the buildings of the 1811 plat were standing in 1855, and since the style of the present building is that of the eighteen-fifties, I have deduced that Charles Love and Conrad M. Wienges built it, soon after their purchase in 1855. In 1870, they sold it to Charles Plenge, who, after the earthquake, apparently, replaced the former cornice with one of pressed tin, and added his name thereto.

L. Louis Green, III
29 October 1969

38.1471



Corner Broad and Church Streets,
CHARLESTON, S. C.

43-47 Broad

~~crop right to~~
~~illustration~~
crop to rule

FALL

FINE SILK
MEN'S

NOBBY

UN

SILK UMB
ALPACCA
GINGHAM

MOURENIN

HA
A GR

C.

Corner

Dunla

38.1471

FALL STYLES

Now Ready!

FINE SILK HATS, \$1.00, 5.00.

MEN'S SOFT HATS, 50 cts. to \$5.00.

MEN'S STIFF HATS, \$1.00 to \$3.50.

NOBBY HATS FOR YOUNG MEN,

A SPECIALTY.

UMBRELLAS.

SILK UMBRELLAS, FROM \$3.50 UPWARDS.

ALPACCA " FROM \$2.50 TO \$4.50.

GINGHAM " 75c, \$1.00, \$1.25, \$1.50.

MOURENING BAND ON HATS, 25 Cents.

HATS RESTOCKED AND TRIMMED.

A call is respectfully solicited.

C. C. PLENCE,

WE ARE
THE LARGEST IMPORTERS AND DISTRIBUTORS
IN THE WORLD OF FINE

Teas, ..
Coffees,
Spices,

AND

Courtenay's Worcestershire Sauce.

TRY A BOTTLE. 12 Cents.

The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co.

325 KING STREET.

Telephone 554.

JAS. F. LOCHREY, Mgr.

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RETAIL GROCERS

TABLE LUXURIES AND ALL GOOD
THINGS TO EAT.

FINE TEAS AND COFFEES A SPECIALTY

558 KING STREET,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

Henry J. O'Neill,

COMMISSION MERCHANT

AND

MERCHANDISE BROKER.

CAROLINA RICE A SPECIALTY

146 EAST BAY,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

W. T. THOMPSON,

Auctioneer,

REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE AGENT

RENTS COLLECTED.

LOANS NEGOTIATED.

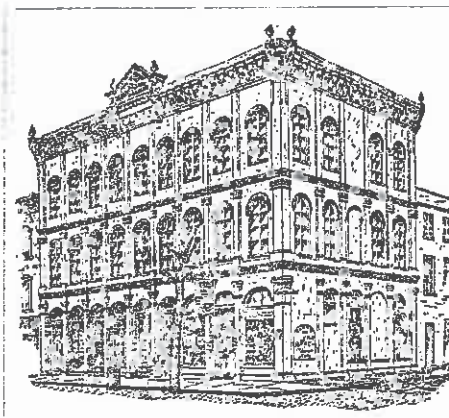
NO. 28 BROAD STREET,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

1871

Plenge's
Hat & Cap
Store.

NECKWEAR,
MACKINTOSHES,
SERGE COATS
AND VESTS.



1898

Plenge's
Cigar Store

Baracoa Cheroots,
Manila Stogies,
Mexican Resagos,
Smoking and
Chewing Tobacco,
Smokers' Articles.

45 & 47 BROAD ST., CHARLESTON, S. C.

Source: Resources & Attractions

Uncovering the legend of the 'Hat Man'

By Peg Eastman

Historic Broad Street

Before we uncover the iconic figure on Church at Broad, let us set the stage for the grand man of local commercial art. Charleston's early commercial activity was centered in and around the Old Exchange Building. The handsome Georgian building dominated Broad Street where numerous docks flanked it and lined the river on East Bay. Nearby, merchants and banking houses facilitated the commerce that once made Charleston the richest city on the Atlantic Seaboard.

Beyond the noise and bustle of the docks were private residences where some of the city's most prestigious citizens lived. Among them were Supreme Court Justice and South Carolina Governor John Rutledge, a signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, Governor John Geddes who entertained President James Monroe in 1819, William Ward Burroughs, first commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, and Dr. David Ramsay, a respected historian and delegate to the Continental Congress, who was murdered on Broad Street by a deranged man.

In the antebellum period a number of handsome commercial buildings were built near the Exchange Building including the State Bank of South Carolina, Walker, Evans & Cogswell, engravers that printed the Confederate currency, and the old *News and Courier* building.

In spite of Yankee bombardment and a destructive earthquake in 1886, many Broad Street buildings have survived. The greatest loss of real property on Broad Street occurred when the Great Fire of 1861 destroyed the iconic St. Andrews Hall, where the Ordinance of Secession was drafted, St. John's and St. Finbar's Catholic Cathedral, and numerous private residences on the west end.

Today, in addition to public buildings, the business end of Broad Street houses banks, law firms, insurance companies, real estate brokerages, restaurants and art galleries.

Introducing "The Hat Man"

The Plenge Building is located at the southeast corner of Broad and Church Streets. On the Church Street wall is a faded painting of a clown-like man sporting a top hat; he catches the eye because his face and body are comprised solely of a wide variety of old-fashioned hats. Locals call him "The Hat Man."

With nine bays, the Plenge Building is considerably larger than its immediate neighbors, which are typically three to four bays wide. The super-size structure was built in 1855 when saddler and harness makers, Charles Love and Conrad Weingas, purchased 43, 45 and 47 Broad Street and constructed the present building on the enlarged site. In 1870 they sold it to Charles C. Plenge.

Little is known about Plenge's personal life other than he was born in Germany in 1847,

prospered after "the war," lived in Charleston's Ward 1, and was a widower when he was buried in Magnolia Cemetery in 1910.

Plenge was the consummate promoter of his mercantile establishment. He lost no time in modifying his new acquisition by adding a fancy Italianate façade topped with a pressed tin cornice that proudly proclaimed Plenge ownership. To advertise his haberdashery he had "The Hat Man" painted on the building's side wall.

Plenge advertised with trade cards including "Plenge the Hatman." The back of the card promoted the latest Fall styles from Fifth Avenue including "Fine Silk hats, \$4.00, \$5.00 - Men's Soft Hats, 50 cents to \$5.00 - Men's Stiff Hats \$1.00 to \$3.50 NOBBY HATS FOR YOUNG MEN, a specialty" and listed "Silk Alpaca and Gingham UMBRELLA prices, Mourning Bands Put on Hats, 25 Cents."

Plenge also advertised cigars and smoking paraphernalia in Charleston City Directories, where Baracoa Cheroots, Manila Stogies and chewing varieties were promoted. In another directory C. Plenge advertised as a Merchant Tailor at 37 Broad St.

At some unknown date the image of the hat man was painted over and forgotten. Fortunately, while the building's Church Street wall was being sand blasted, it was rediscovered in the 1930s and restored. Facing the western sun, the painting continues to fade to the extent that it has been refurbished several times since then.



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE CHARLESTON MUSEUM, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

A trade card for yesterday's haberdashery business at Broad and Church streets.

Victorian Nostalgia

In the 20th century, many of Broad Street's commercial buildings were used as offices for law firms strategically located near the city's center of government and the court systems. The attorneys were collectively known as "Broad Street lawyers."

In the 1950s Morris N. Rosen purchased the Plenge Building and had it renovated for the law offices of Rosen, Rosen and Hagood. In the process they discovered a lot of beat-up old hats stashed in the rafters.

As a joke, the hats were placed in the front windows, everyone was quite surprised when people came into the office

and hat man painting to "an advertisement for a store like the golden arches is for McDonalds. It is kind of silly, but what is interesting is how commercial art begins to take on an artistic quality it didn't have in its [own] time."

Currently, 43-47 Broad St. features an upscale boutique, an art gallery and the Southern Environmental Law Center. The second floor has a "for rent" sign in the window. It doesn't matter who is there or what they do. Memories of bygone days will continue as long as "The Hat Man" excites the imagination of passersby.

This is the first in a series featuring noteworthy buildings on Broad Street. *The Mercury* would like to thank Lash Thompson from the Charleston County Library for the contributing to this article.

Peg Eastman has published five books about yesterday's Charleston, the most recent being Hidden History of Civil War Charleston. She may be reached at pegastman@comcast.net

wanted to purchase the vintage merchandise.

In a *News and Courier* interview in 1980, Rosen's son Robert compared the