

Building Predates Civil War

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Special Writer

George N. Miller, a merchant, built the three-story double building at 286-288 King St. in 1839-40. The building was remodeled in 1883 by the Steinmeyer family.

Now owned by Harry Blas, the building has housed Patrick's Sandwich Shop since 1974.

Miller, a merchant, acquired the site from merchant William S. Miller of New York, on Feb. 9, 1839. He paid

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\$20,000 for the lot, which measured 60 feet, 8 inches, in front on King Street and contained on the north end the 3½-story building now known as 290 King St.

Two-ninety King had been rebuilt after the great fire of April 27-28, 1838, and the south part of the property was apparently still vacant from the fire.

On Dec. 18, 1839, George N. Miller mortgaged the southern part of the lot to the Bank of the State of South Carolina, under the "Act for Rebuilding the City of Charleston," passed by the General Assembly after the 1838 fire.

Designed to aid property owners in the burnt district, the law required that the mortgage money be spent, within a year of its receipt, on the erection of brick or stone buildings.

Miller borrowed \$3,100, using as security the south part of his property, described as two lots, each measuring 19 feet, 9 inches, in front on King and 98 feet deep.

The mortgages on the two lots were satisfied, indicating that Miller fulfilled the law's requirement.

Miller retained the property until 1853, when he sold it to Thomas N. Gadsden for \$15,000. The deed described the lot as having "a Three Story Double Tenement Brick Store thereon." The double building was then numbered 282-284 King.

Gadsden failed to satisfy a mortgage executed at the same time and,



286-288 King St. Dates From About 1840

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Staff Photo by Stephanie Harvin

...Building

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as a result of a foreclosure suit, the property was sold at auction in 1856.

John Henry Steinmeyer submitted a high bid of \$9,300 to buy the property, which remained in his family until 1896.

The building has housed a variety of tenants including Hunley's Drug Store, which was there from the 1930s to 1974.

George Norton Miller, builder of the structure, was a member of Miller Ripley & Co., a dry goods firm with branches in Charleston and New York. He was living in Charleston when the building was constructed, but by the 1850s had moved to New York. He died there in 1891, leaving a considerable estate.

John Henry Steinmeyer, whose family remodeled the building in 1883, was the owner of Steinmeyer's Mill, a lumber establishment on Gadsden Street.

He conveyed the King Street property in 1879 to James W. Steinmeyer in trust for his wife, Eliza R. Steinmeyer, and died in 1883.

The structure at 286-288 King, originally in the Greek Revival style, was remodeled by the Steinmeyer family in the Italianate style of the 1880s.

When built, it consisted of two buildings, each three bays wide, with a store on the ground floor of each.

The original Greek Revival style is seen in the regular fenestration of the upper floors, the false attic windows with cast iron-grills having Greek palmette motifs, the parapet roofline and the scored stucco.

The two stores were, according to the News and Courier, Sept. 5, 1883, converted into one and "fitted up with the latest improvements with plate glass fronts."

Probably the pressed metal cornices of the second and third floor windows date from the same remodeling. The cornices are in the bracketed Italianate style then popular.

The present storefront, possibly the one described in 1883, is of plate glass in a wooden frame, with a marble sill and wainscot. A recessed entrance with a paneled wood ceiling is centered in the storefront.

The transoms have glazed copper grills manufactured by the Solar Presto Co. of Cleveland.

The door on the far right, giving access to a stairway to the upper floors, has a marble sill and wooden door with plate glass in the upper panel.

The store interior has mahogany paneling and display shelves with Classic Revival pilasters, in the taste of the late 19th century. A long counter is faced with marble.

Millwork and tongue-in-groove paneling on the upper levels indicate the interior there was remodeled in the late 19th or early 20th century.

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