

# Do You Know Your Charleston?

*King Street Near Wentworth*



—Photo by Jacobs.

## Clock Tower and Dime Bank Dome. Shown in Once Familiar Scene, Disappear as Buildings are Remodeled

The old Stephen Thomas building at 257 King street, now being demolished to make room for the enlargement of the F. W. Woolworth company's store, was the scene about forty years ago of one of the largest robberies ever committed in Charleston.

Who broke open the old safe of the jewelry store and took out \$40,000 in diamonds and other valuables still remains a mystery.

Stephen Thomas, grandfather of Stephen Thomas, local architect, had laid in a good stock for Christmas trade. It was just a few days before Christmas. The watchman, whose salary had been paid by the various merchants of the section, had gone home sick about 2 a. m.

It is said that two men apparently broke the safe open. One man stood in the doorway and held one end of a string, which ran through a keyhole to the safe, where it was attached to a monkey wrench. Evidently, he pulled the string to warn his companion if anyone approached while he was bursting the safe with a crowbar.

After the robbery, two little negro boys said they saw two men come out of the store about 7 a. m. with satchels in their hands. The crowbar, the string and the wrench were found in the store. One tray of diamonds and watches, which sat closely in the top of the safe, was all that remained of the safe's stock.

The building itself was of no great value. Practically nothing more than a roof laid on two party walls, it was distinguished for its clock tower, which jutted out from the second story. For many years the clock has not worked.

The property was bought in the 1870s from the Cohen family by Stephen Thomas, Jr., for about \$3,500. He put a one-story brick addition to the rear to be used as an

office and watchmaking department. He took his brother, Joseph M. Thomas, into partnership with him and the firm was known as Stephen Thomas, Jr., & Bro.

In 1911, he gave his son, also named Stephen Thomas, an interest in the business. Later father and son bought out J. M. Thomas and the business became Stephen Thomas & Co. When the elder Stephen Thomas retired, the younger Stephen Thomas took his brother, Claude Thomas, into partnership, the elder Stephen Thomas dying shortly afterward.

When the younger Stephen Thomas died, the business was operated by his estate as Stephen Thomas & Co., Inc., until it was sold out at auction. For several years the store was rented to the Metz Jewelry company, and to the New York Model Hat shop, the latter firm subletting its lease. In 1929, it was sold to the F. W. Woolworth company for \$45,000.

The site of the building is to be used by the Woolworth company to enlarge its present store. The third floor is being removed from the present store and the two properties are to be combined at a cost of \$50,000 into a modern two-story store and warehouse. The first floor, which will be the store, is to be air conditioned.

The remodeling of the old Dime Bank building, at the northwest corner of King and Wentworth streets, and the demolition of the Stephen Thomas building, with its clock tower, will make probably the greatest change in the mid-section of King street in the last twenty years.

The dome and the third floor of the Dime Bank building have been removed and the structure itself is being almost entirely changed, leaving little of the old building.

J. V. N., Jr.

## SOLONS TO SPEAK AT CANAL OPENING

**Governor, General Markham  
on Program—E. H. Jahnz  
Will Lead 'Fleet'**

The federal government's completed intracoastal waterway system extending from the Delaware river to Miami will be dedicated formally at Myrtle Beach April 11 in a ceremony marking the official opening of the final link of the canal through South Carolina.

District army engineers under Colonel William G. Caples have completed the remaining section of the inland system between Winyah bay and Little River, eliminating the last outside passage on the coast south of the Delaware. The new section of the canal, approximately forty-two miles in length, has a depth of eight feet.

Vast improvements have been made by army engineers along the intracoastal system during the last three years until the 1,200-mile continuous protected channel has been completed. The outstanding projects included the construction of new canals in North Carolina and South Carolina, the improvement of the Florida east coast canal and the deepening and widening of other existing channels along the route.

Starting with the Chesapeake and Delaware canal at Reedy Point, Del., on Delaware bay, the inside waterway to Miami now provides a minimum depth of seven feet with certain sections providing depths up to twelve feet. The deeper draft prevails for 366 miles from the Chesapeake and Delaware canal to Beaufort, N. C.

The channel between Winyah bay and Charleston, approximately fifty-