

Location of the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1868

My great-great-grandfather, Rev. James M. Runion, was an important participant of the Constitutional Convention of 1868, and here's a brief mention from the Edgefield Adviser, 01/22/68, of one of his entries, after a pre-meeting effort to procure support:



Edgefield Advertiser January 22, 1868

Mr. J. M. Runion offered the following:

1. Resolved, That whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the late plan of reconstruction enacted by the Congress of the United States, however ultra men in the South or in the North may oppose or denounce them, there is but one course of action for the true patriots to pursue, and that is unhesitatingly and in good faith to carry out their enactments.

2. Resolved, That the reconstruction measures, as passed by Congress, should be recognized as being the supreme laws of the land, passed by the constitutional authority of the United States, and are therefore entitled to the unhesitating support of every citizen of this great Republic.

3. Resolved, That those measures combined form a harmonious whole and constitute the chart by which twelve millions of people are to be guided into the haven of perpetual union on the basis of equal justice, without regard to race or color.

The best reference for this is in the minutes of the meeting below. In addition to many other entries, he opened the meetings with prayer on 10 occasions.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE

The PRESIDENT announced the following Committee: E. W. M. Mackey, D. H. Chamberlain, and W. E. Rose.

Mr. L. S. Langley offered the following:

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention, the war of the Republic and of the Commonwealth of South Carolina requires that the further confiscation of lands and disfranchisement for political offences should be forever abandoned.

On motion, the resolution was laid upon the table for the present.

Mr. WHITTEMORE, Chairman of the Committee to report what Standing Committees are necessary for the Convention, reported the following: Committee on Bill of Rights, Legislative Committee, Executive Committee, Committee on the Judiciary, Committee on Franchise and Elections, Committee on Education, Committee on Finance, Committee on Rules and Regulations, Committee on Petitions, Committee on Miscellaneous Matter, Committee on Review and Consolidation.

The Report was adopted and the Committee discharged.

Mr. WHITTEMORE, from the Committee appointed to wait upon Generals Canby Scott, Clitz, His Excellency Governor Orr, and the Mayor of the City, reported that having waited upon those gentlemen, they all expressed their thanks for the compliment, and requested the Committee to assure the Convention that they would take the earliest opportunity to visit the body.

The report was adopted, and on motion of Mr. R. C. DeLARGE, the Committee was discharged.

Mr. DUNCAN offered the following resolution which was adopted:

Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed to consider what measures are necessary for the relief of the people of the State, and to report as early as possible.

On motion of Mr. R. C. DeLARGE it was

Resolved, That all resolutions and motions, save those of temporary character, be referred to the appropriate Standing Committees.

Mr. J. M. RUNION offered the following:

Resolved, That whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the late plan of reconstruction enacted by the Congress of the United States, however ultra men in the South or in the North may oppose or denounce them, there is but one course of action for the true patriots to pursue, and that is unhesitatingly and in good faith to carry out their enactments.

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CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

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the constitutional authority of the United States, and are therefore entitled to the unhesitating support of every citizen of this great Republic.

Resolved, That those measures combined form a harmonious whole and constitute the chart by which twelve millions of people are to be guided into the haven of perpetual union on the basis of equal justice, without regard to race or color.

On motion of Mr. B. C. DeLARGE, the resolutions were referred to the Committee on Bill of Rights.

The PRESIDENT announced Messrs. NEWELL, JILLSON and KERSHAW as the Committee to wait upon Judge Bryan and District Attorney Corbin, and invite them to seats in the Convention.

Mr. B. F. RANDOLPH moved that a Committee on Militia, a Committee on Charitable Institutions, and a Committee on Incorporations be added to those named by the Committee on Standing Committees. Referred to the Committee on Miscellaneous Matters.

Mr. N. G. PARKER offered the following, which was referred to the Committee on the Legislative part of the Constitution:

WHEREAS, in every State of the United States, and in every unreconstructed State under the Government of the United States, the several divisions of the same are denominated counties, except the State of South Carolina and Louisiana; therefore

Resolved, That the several Districts of this State shall hereafter be known and denominated Counties.

Mr. B. O. DUNCAN offered the following:

Resolved, That Major-General Ed. R. S. Canby be requested to suspend all executions of judgments or other forcible collections of debts contracted prior to the 30th June 1865, for the space of three months, or until further measures of relief can be matured by this Convention.

Mr. F. J. MOSES, Jr., said the resolution was entirely superfluous, as General Canby had already issued such an order.

Mr. WHITTEMORE asked if this resolution was designed for the protection of any of the gentlemen of the Convention.

Mr. DUNCAN said he was not aware that such was the case. It was not the case of the mover at any rate.

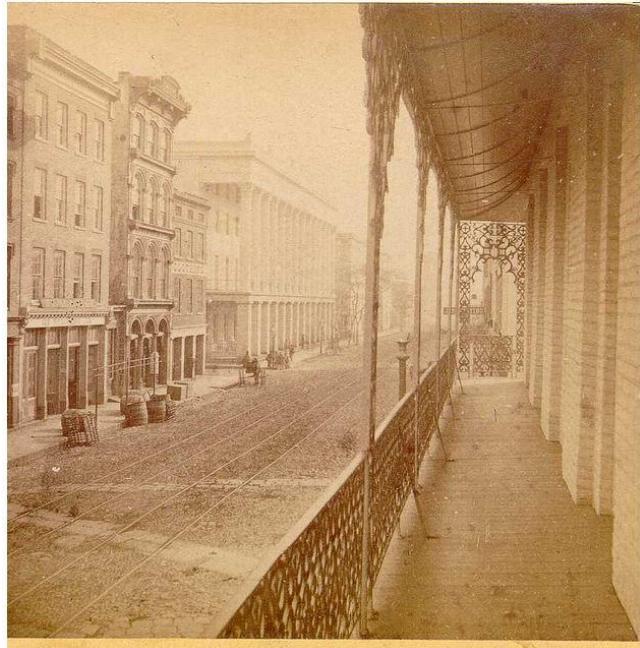
Mr. J. J. WRIGHT said he was utterly opposed to the proposition. General Canby had already issued an order securing to every person a home, which was evidently all the resolution aimed to accomplish; but whether he had done so or not, it would be well for the Convention to pause before dictating measures which could not be carried out when enacted. It might be necessary to pass some laws of a legislative character, but it remained to be seen when or how they were to be enforced.

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I also know from historic newspapers he stayed in the Pavilion Hotel (Argyle at some point)(since demolished – now King Charles motor inn)(View from the veranda of the Pavilion Hotel) :

**The Charleston Daily News,
Monday Morning, January 13, 1868**

HOTEL ARRIVALS.—Pavilion Hotel—T. F. McCarthy, U. S. A.; J. H. Tinsel, Maine; John R. Davis, New York; R. Hamilton, Columbia; J. Barnard, Nashville; R. H. Cormie, Washington; James Phelan, M. Flannelly, E. Northgreave, New York; T. R. Kelly, Philadelphia; F. W. P. Rbert, Little Rock; R. Flemming, South Carolina; **J. M. Bunion, Greenville;** Ernest R. Hirsh, city; Geo. C. J. Stetterand, Beaufort; Lieut. A. M. Grolinger, U. S. A.; A. Cunningham and lady, New York; C. M. Berselieu, city; H. B. Van Ness, Chisolm's Island; Samuel Monroe, Darlington; E. Buck, John Hatheway, North Carolina; W. B. Worsham, St. John's Berkeley; Jas. Tremble, South Carolina; C. C. Lewis, N. C. Tucker, W. S. Calson, North Carolina.



South Carolina Radical Negro Convention.
CHARLESTON, Jan. 14.
The Convention elected under the provisions of the Reconstruction Acts of Congress assembled at the Club House, Meeting-street, in this city, at 12 M. to-day.
The space set apart for spectators was densely crowded by colored visitors, not more than five or six whites being in attendance.

Newspaper accounts list the Charleston Club House as the site for the convention, as does the intro to the minutes – note the heading in the Edgefield Adviser of 01-22-68:

The historic newspaper etching below shows the Charleston Club House, although not specifically delineated. Some descriptions make it sound like it might be the Bank of the South building, with the columns, but it was ostensibly on the West side of the street:

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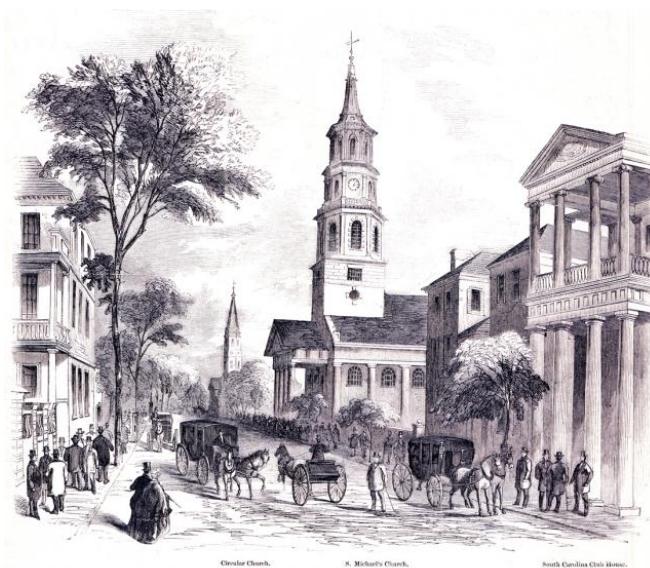
Original caption

Meeting Street, Charleston, S.C., with a view of St. Michael's Church, Circular Church, and the South Carolina Club House

Source citation:

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, November 23, 1861, p. 7.

Since it was near his hotel, my best guess for the location is a building no longer standing, now represented by a park and fountain behind the Post Office (the clip below is from a certificate currently for sale online):



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Beautifully engraved certificate from the **Charleston Club House** issued in 1854. This historic document is hand signed by the Company's Trustees and is over 150 years old.

Post Office Park – The Charleston Club, built in 1853-54, a two story brick building with Corinthian columns and pediment, designed by Barbot & Seyle. The building was sold to the U.S. Government in 1869 for use as a Federal Court House, which it was until 1884. After the 1886 earthquake, in which it suffered heavy damage, the building was demolished. During the building of the present Post Office and Federal Court House, this area was used for storing building stones. The park was created in 1904. A wooden annex to the Post Office was built on part of it in the 1940s. The park was restored in 1964.

Charleston Club House was located on the west side of Meeting Street, in the city of Charleston, measuring and continuing in front, on Meeting Street, fifty-eight feet, more or less, by about two hundred and thirty-six feet in depth, more or less; bounding, north, on lands formerly of Wm. P. Greeland; to the east, on Meeting Street; to the south, on lands formerly of M. C. Mordecai; and to the west, on lands of the French Protestant Church. But all process, civil or criminal, issued under the authority of this State or any officer thereof may be served and executed on any part of said premises and on any person there being and implicated in any matter of law. Said lot of land and all the buildings and structures of every kind erected thereon shall be absolutely and forever exempt from all taxes of the county of Charleston, the corporation of the city of Charleston, South Carolina.

In Addition from the History of the John Rutledge House “. . . . The drawing room on the second floor is large and has a coved ceiling. In this room the United States Courts sat for a time after the Civil War, until the Federal Government bought the Charleston Club House, which stood in the present Post Office Park on Meeting Street.”

So, please help me be sure of the proper location. James M. Runion's life changed greatly after the convention, enduring baseless lawsuits and attacks for many years until his death, while still held in high esteem by peoples of all colors. That's another story.