

THE FARMERS' AND EXCHANGE BANK
141 East Bay
c. 1853-53
Offices of Hollings and Hawkins, Attorneys

With its unusual Moorish design this building has long been recognized as of utmost importance to Charleston and to American architecture.

In 1969 request was filed for a permit to demolish it. As crisis stage was approaching Senator Ernest F. Hollings stepped forward and purchased the building for his law firm.

The Farmers' and Exchange Bank was designed by Francis D. Lee, one of the city's renowned eclectic architects. He uses the unpointed horseshoe arch, reminiscent of the Mosque at Cordova.

The interior detail was even more lavish and exotic than the exterior. Some of this is now lost to sight. In order to utilize the building practically it was necessary to make two stories of the lofty bank lobby with its exaggeration of decoration. As much as possible the interior embellishments have been retained--the remainder is carefully "stored" in situ within new interior walls.

A major problem of the preservation movement in communities is the question of what to do with period buildings once they have been restored - many can be used as museums, but a community can support only a limited number of museums. Restoring structures, such as this one to serve efficiently as modern office buildings contributes not only to the historical and architectural history of a city, but also serves to stabilize and revitalize the city center.

As you continue your tour of the Broad Street area, you will see much evidence of the work that has been done since 1966. In that year the Broad Street Beautification Committee was formed by Historic Charleston Foundation to improve and further protect the street. The success of this program has been brought about by the effective cooperation of the principal owners of Broad Street offices in repainting the buildings and removing unsightly signs. The South Carolina Electric and Gas Company removed all overhead wiring and replaced it with gaslights and the City has planted an avenue of trees down the sides of the street. Markers were placed on all buildings giving the date of construction and the name and occupation of the builder. This area, long the center of the city, has been revitalized by effective adaptive use of period buildings.