

PRESERVATION

PROGRESS

PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON • SUMMER 2011



SEVEN TO SAVE

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Vol. 55 No. 1

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Charleston, South Carolina*

PRESERVATION SOCIETY
of CHARLESTON

PRESERVATION PROGRESS

Summer 2011 • Vol. 55 No. 1

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from the president

J. Rutledge Young III

Change is accurately described as the only constant in life. Charleston has changed dramatically over the years. Some argue that we are better for it, while others worry that Charleston has lost its charm. Whether you embrace change or resent its intrusion, you cannot ignore it. Consider the impact of Hurricane Hugo, the development of Charleston Place, or countless other examples big and small that highlight the transformation of Charleston during the twentieth century. Much has been lost and thankfully, much has been saved despite the constant change.

At the Preservation Society we remember what the City was like in part because we fought hard to protect it. If you need a quick reminder of what can happen to Charleston if no one cares enough to protect it, please come visit our archives and have a look at the original proposed design for Charleston Place. Whether it is the arrival of the cruise industry or the demise of the corner store, it is not hard to recognize today what is threatened and what is almost gone. We remember how the City struggled with various preservation issues over time, and we have seen the positive benefits of passion and tenacity. At the Preservation Society we worry about the City's future because we care.

Our goal is to preserve and protect Charleston. Other than protecting and nurturing our beloved city, we have no purpose. Our resources are limited, but our commitment is boundless. Our motivation is not selfish and our reward is not profit. We do not seek public accolades or political power. Often times our decisions are exceedingly difficult, our efforts are unpopular, and our task is thankless. Nonetheless, we serve a critical need in the community and Charleston's future is among our biggest concerns.

As trite as it may sound, our mission is now more important than ever and the continuing discharge of the Society's responsibility is no small task. I hope you will enjoy this revised edition of Preservation Progress and that it will cause you to reflect upon what you like about Charleston. As you will see, a lot is going on at the Preservation Society. If you care about what Charleston will be like next week, next year, or for the next generation please join us and support us in our mission to preserve and protect the character and integrity of Charleston. I guarantee that you can help.

the executive director's desk

Evan R. Thompson

Preservation Progress has been a staple of the Society's communication to its members and to a wider public since the first issue was published in December, 1956. Through the addition of some new features and a wide array of stories about the Society, the tradition of Preservation Progress continues. We are looking at ways to make Preservation Progress available on-line as well. Many of our current (and future) members are moving to new forms of media, so we hope that both print and on-line versions will be available in the future. This will allow us to incorporate video - something unthinkable in 1956 - and other forms of media to better articulate what is happening at the Society and in Charleston.

There is much going on and plenty to catch up on in this issue. We hope to offer Preservation Progress on a more regular basis than in the past, which means that we'll be bringing you more news, research and inspiration for preservation in Charleston in a timely fashion. Many thanks for your continued support of the Society and for preservation.

lost and found



Intersection of Legare and Queen
Photograph by Truman Moore, July, 1952.



preservation party



Party Pose! Claire Slover, Elizabeth Gumb Odom, Juan Tamarit, Lori Wyatt and Amy Jo Gengler. (Preservation Party photography by Paul Cheney).



Randy Pelzer & Elizabeth Bradham, Bill & Judy Werrell, and Stephan Zacharkiw lend support!

membership meeting

Our May Membership Meeting was held May 12th at the Charleston Museum. The highlight of the meeting was the launch of our newest preservation initiative, "Seven to Save." Other events at the meeting included the introduction of greenpreservationcharleston.org, the graduation ceremony for the Master Preservationist Program, and student preservation awards.

the society

Who says preservationists can't party? The Preservation Society's first Preservation Party on April 30th at the Memminger Auditorium brought guests together for an evening of celebration to kick off the fundraising for our new Seven to Save Initiative. Nearly \$30,000 was raised. More on page 18.



Andrew Countryman, Tyler Whitaker, Samia Nettles and Jason Daigle share a laugh at the Preservation Party. Nettles served as the Party's chairperson.

volunteer party

Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers! Our annual Volunteer Appreciation Party was held on May 19th at the Maritime Center. The weather was perfect, the drinks cold and the food delicious, creating a sensational party atmosphere.



Verner Comes Home
Generous Donation of
Prints Made to Shop

Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, (1883-1979), widely recognized as the matriarch of the Charleston Renaissance, was an integral part of the arts and preservation scene in Charleston for half a century. Her work has been viewed as the quintessential aesthetic definition of picturesque Charleston and the South Carolina Lowcountry. A charter member of the Preservation Society of Charleston, Mrs. Verner's etchings, pencil sketches and pastels showcase Charleston's dramatic 20th century cultural renewal and the city's natural beauty and charm. The subjects of her etchings and pastels feature live oaks draped in moss, colorful flower women, cypress trees in an abandoned rice preserve and many times, one of her favorite motifs is featured – the streets and alleyways of the city of Charleston. Mrs. Verner was always on guard to protect her "subjects" and devoted many tireless hours to lectures, letters to the editor and other writings in defense of her Charleston.

In December 2010, the Verner Gallery, Ltd., led by Mrs. Verner's grandson, David Verner Hamilton, graciously donated the prints remaining in the Verner collection to the Preservation Society of Charleston. This donation was made in honor of Elizabeth O'Neill Verner's role as a founding member and loyal supporter of the Society and its goals. The Society's Book & Gift Shop at King & Queen is now the home of this impressive collection of prints and postcards along with several original pastels and etchings. The Preservation Society of Charleston looks forward to fostering the Verner legacy and bringing awareness to our mission of preservation through education programs tied to the Verner collection.

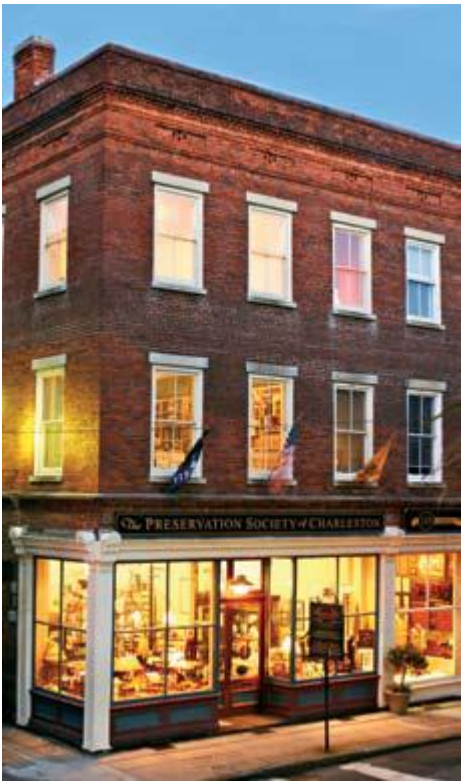
We invite you to come to our shop at King & Queen (147 King Street). Purchasing a Verner print supports our mission and brings a treasured piece of Charleston's heritage home to you.



East from King by Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. Pastel drawing reproduced as a color lithograph featuring the steeple of St. Michael's Episcopal Church. The original on silk is also available for sale in our shop.

Estes joins Society
Staff as Director of
Retail Services

Lisa Estes joined the Preservation Society of Charleston as Director of Retail Services in January, 2011. A native Charlestonian, Lisa returned home after retiring from the practice of law and owning one of the oldest independent bookstores in the southeast. She is excited to bring her support of preservation to the Society's retail activities.



John McCall House, 66 Church Street

This house sits on part of Lot 64 which was part of the original city plan of Charleston. The lot was granted to Thomas Rose in 1681 and was located within the original fortification walls of the city. It is said that Thomas Rose constructed a brick house on this property; if so it would have been destroyed by the fire of January 13, 1778. There is mention, however, of a house and outbuildings on the property in a deed dating from 1779.

In 1784, John McCall, Jr., an insurance broker and City Treasurer, purchased the lot, which, by the end of the McCall family ownership, took in not only 66 Church, but a garden lot to the south (present site of 64 Church). It is believed that McCall and his family built and lived in the current house until his death in 1800, and subsequently his wife, Ann's, death in 1824. Their daughter Harriet McCall inherited the property, and though it is not certain where she lived, it would seem that 66 Church became largely a rental property until the late 20th Century. The McCall heirs sold the property in 1881. Directly behind and to the North of 66 Church is Longitude Lane, which became a major storage yard for the

Commercial Cotton Press and Wharf Company, and for a time the area was used primarily for industry due to its proximity to the Cooper River.

The house was built as a typical Charleston single home with a brick first story and a three-tiered piazza. Originally, the kitchen house was constructed several feet behind the main house, but it is uncertain whether they were built at the same time. The kitchen house is now attached to the main building by way of a hyphen (a narrow room or hallway by which a historic kitchen or carriage house is attached to the main house). During restoration the kitchen house was elevated to its current level by crane.

According to City Directories, 66 Church was home to the Live Oak Tea Room from 1924 thru 1926, with the proprietor probably living on the upper floor. It is thought that the cellar of the house was originally open, and when the house was renovated, probably in 1927, the ground level was enclosed. In the years after renovation, city directories begin to list 66-A and 66-B Church, suggesting that the house had been separated into apartments and the

ground floor had become commercial property. This was the location of the Carolina Handcrafts gift shop from 1940 until the early-mid 1960's.

The house was purchased in 1960 by Mrs. Norma Stender. Under the Stenders' ownership the lot was subdivided, allowing for the house at 64 Church, and in 1964 they applied for the demolition of number 66. The request was delayed by the city in hopes that a preservation advocate would purchase the house and in June of that year the Stenders sold the house to Dr. W. Henry Miller. In 1966 Dr. Miller was given recognition by the Preservation Society of Charleston for his "Valuable Preservation" of 66 Church. The most recent commercial business to be housed here was the Charleston Rare Book Company.

The renovations that took place between 2005 and 2007 were extensive. During the building's life as a rental property, the front 20 feet of the piazza on all three tiers had been enclosed. They were reopened during the renovation. The house sits directly across the street from the c. 1819 First Baptist Church.



Fall intern, Kimberly Taylor, a graduate of the Clemson & College of Charleston Masters program, completed the house history for 66 Church Street.



Learning their ABCs

Preservation Society
Kicks-Off
Amazing Buildings of Charleston
Program with Help from
Charleston Day School's
Preservation Superhero

by Katherine M. Schultheis

The Preservation Society of Charleston was thrilled to kickoff a segment of the Amazing Buildings of Charleston (ABC) program with Charleston Day School this spring. Rhondy Huff, who recently served on the Society's Board of Directors and Society staff, worked closely with the faculty of Charleston Day to develop a curriculum based on the historic buildings in Charleston, specific to each grade level, first through eighth.

Through the creativity of Katie Richardson, Charleston Day's Primary School Director, and the hard work of other faculty members Evelyn Wells and Andy Willits, among others, Charleston Day's seventh-grade students spent the spring semester utilizing the Society's resources to write research papers on historic sites throughout the city, including fire stations, White Point Gardens, and the Four Corners of Law. The culmination of the semester was an assembly, in which the seventh-graders spelled out "PRESERVATION" on poster boards, explaining various

applications of the word. The assembly would not have been complete without the Preservation Superhero who sprang from the bleachers, earthquake bolt in hand, enticing the crowd to chant, "Preserve, Conserve, Protect!" Afterwards, students departed for field trips to each of the researched sites, at which the seventh-graders served as tour guides to the others.

As the Preservation Society's ABC program develops, the Society is delighted to further its mission of education and community outreach with the students, parents, and faculty of Charleston Day. Cultivating interest in and providing resources that allow students to analyze the built environment around them, both architecturally and historically, will instill the critical importance of historic preservation in the local community and beyond. Society board member Anne Pope will be leading the further development of this program, which can serve as a model for programs with other local schools in Charleston and throughout the region.

preservation in progress



New Cannon Street Baptist Church
46 Cannon Street



Brodie House (c. 1893)
114 Rutledge Avenue



Charles Drake House (c. 1890)
50 South Battery



Dr. Anthony Vanderhorst Toomer House (c. 1840)
34 Chapel Street



James MacBeth House (c. 1846)
48 South Battery



249 Coming Street (c. 1880)

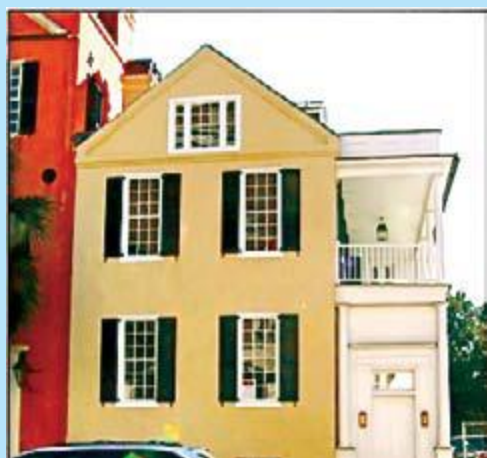
The Carolopolis Award program was created in 1953 to recognize outstanding achievement in exterior preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and new construction in the city of Charleston.

The Carolopolis Award is a plaque placed on buildings that have been

preserved, restored, rehabilitated or are outstanding examples of new construction. The word Carolopolis comes from the original name of the city, which was derived from a combination of the word Carolus (Latin for Charles) and Polis (Greek for City), thus Charles City and later Charleston.

The Pro Merito or "For Merit" Award

was established in 1999 to honor those properties that were given a Carolopolis Award not less than 20 years ago and have either undergone a second major renovation or have displayed an admirable level of continuous preservation. For more information on the Preservation Society of Charleston's Carolopolis Award program, visit www.preservationsociety.org.



97 Broad

Mordecai Cohen Tenement
Commercial/Residential
Owner: James Meadors
Architect: Meadors Inc.
Contractor: Meadors Inc.



80 Broad

City Hall
Municipal Government
Owner: The City of Charleston
Architect: Joseph D. Schmidt of
Evans & Schmidt Architects
Project Team: NBM
Construction Company Inc.

CAROLOPOLIS



120 Broad

Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist
Owner: Catholic Diocese of Charleston
Architect: Glenn Keyes Architects
Project Team: Hightower Construction
Company, 4SE Inc.,
& Copper Exclusive LLC

AWARDS 2010



70 1/2 Tradd

Robert Pringle House
Service Building
Owner: Kathleen Young
Architect: Simons Young of
Thompson Young Design LLC
Project Team: Tupper Builders,
Inc. & Rosen and Associates Inc.



199 St. Philip

Hope & Union Coffee Company
Owner: 199 St. Philip Street LLC
Architect: AJ Architects LLC
Project Team: Palmetto Craftsman Inc. & John
Vergel de Dios & Harper Poe, Owners of Hope
and Union Coffee Company



OLD IS THE NEW GREEN

Thanks to a generous grant from the Post & Courier Foundation, the Preservation Society of Charleston recently launched www.greenpreservationcharleston.org in an effort to establish preservation's place in today's major movement. By Kate Alexandra Dellas

Green is a term we hear rather frequently these days. This hue has created a buzz, and its many shades seem splashed across all discourses. Unfortunately, the green movement has resulted as a response to some not so pleasant things – resource depletion; environmental degradation; pollution; energy consumption. Architecture remains particularly relevant to all of these subjects. In Charleston, buildings and related energy use account for over half (58%) of our energy consumption and the resultant greenhouse gas emissions annually. The green movement in architecture wisely tends to focus on energy reduction, and new green buildings are capable of dramatic cutbacks in annual operating energies- the energy required to maintain and operate a building over its life cycle. Unfortunately, new construction accounts for over 40% of raw material consumption in the global economy each year. No matter how green, new construction requires tremendous outlays of energy and materials. It takes energy to: Extract raw materials; Manufacture construction-ready building materials; Transport building materials to a construction site;

Assemble the actual structure. If replacing an existing building, it takes still more energy to demolish the existing structure and haul away the waste. This is the theory of 'embodied energy,' and it reveals how existing buildings represent storage repositories of energy. At the most fundamental level, these buildings are green because they already exist. Re-use of existing buildings proves to be among the 'greenest' options for the architecture sector; preserving materials, embodied energy, and human capital already expended in their original construction, while also avoiding the environmental impact of new construction, reducing the use of new materials, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The recycling of historic buildings remains inherently "green", despite the years worn on their facades. The survival of historic buildings is a testament to their quality- the quality of materials and the level of craftsmanship in their construction. Resilience is possibly the 'greenest' quality of traditional buildings, and it becomes difficult to match with modern materials and methods of construction. For example, think of an existing historic building— Now imagine the amount of present-day energy it would take to build a replacement building of the same size and of the same materials.

Today's green building standards promote synthetic building products as green alternatives to traditional materials. Mass-produced lesser-quality wood products replace traditional timber. Modern cement and bricks have taken the place of man-made bricks and lime mortar. The noticeable reduction in cost also suggests a reduction in quality, which in turn results in buildings with much shorter life spans. Sustainable? Green building standards fail to award points for historic buildings already equipped with high quality and resilient materials and construction. Perhaps we are overlooking the most green strategy of all: Simply Recycling.

Not to mention that many historic buildings were built long before modern heating and cooling. Historic buildings often became a product of their sites, and orientation became the principle factor of design- how could the building be laid out in order to make the most efficient use of passive energy sources such as the sun, the wind and the earth. These buildings were designed as a response to the environment, maximizing natural daylighting and ventilation and also assisting with heating and cooling. Today the green movement in architecture celebrates precisely these strategies. Cast in the new 'green' light, traditional building practices are

An unusual and vibrant row of concrete single cottages at 101-117 Nassau Street was built by Ishum Lanier by 1910. The small scale of these houses serves as a lesson in minimizing resource use.

experiencing a revival. Built when technology was limited, historic structures demanded practical design solutions to improve the comfort of occupants. Many architectural features we love about old buildings - porches, cupolas, vestibules, operable windows, shutters - served to respond to the weather. Also, historically builders chose materials to accommodate the local climate, and usually these materials were sourced locally due to the difficulty and expense of transportation. The green movement in architecture returns us to these old lessons.

While green concepts may be modern in articulation, these principles have been practiced for centuries and dictated the design of many historic structures. So before getting lost in the many shades of green, a reminder of the foundations of today's major movement is in order. Our dreams for green are grounded in sustainability. In all of its definitions, sustainability is to last through the ages. This is the most obvious reason why preservation plays a part in the discussion of green. We celebrate historic architecture precisely because it has stood the test of time; These buildings are inherently sustainable.

Kate Dellas, BA Architecture, Middlebury College; MS Historic Preservation, University of Vermont.

at ease
For Lois Lane, preservation is a way of life. Known for representing some of the finest historic properties through her eponymous real estate company, the former Society board president is truly at ease in old buildings. Having donated historic preservation easements on both her Lamboll Street residence ad Broad Street office, Lane walks the preservation walk.



“After years of being in the real estate business downtown I came to understand the value of architectural purity both aesthetically and financially,” says Lois Lane.

Her office at 9 Broad Street has an important place in local preservation lore, as the former leased office of the Society’s first president, Susan Pringle Frost. Designed circa 1850 by Edward Brickell White (1806-1882) for wealthy cotton factor William Pinckney Shingler, it operated as a cotton exchange for a number of years until purchased by the Smythe Law Firm in the late 1850s. The property remained in the family until purchased by Lane in 1997.

Restoration began in 1998, when dropped ceilings on the first floor were removed to expose covered ceilings. Carpets were rolled up to reveal original heart pine floors, and late 1960s “wood” paneling was removed revealing bead board paneling, historic door frames and an old transom were brought back in view. “My parents helped me with the restoration of the first floor. Demolition of modern additions is great fun but finding original fabric is thrilling” says Lane.

about the society’s easement program
The Preservation Society of Charleston has been accepting preservation easements since 1978 and currently holds over 80 exterior as well as numerous interior easements. The Society accepts and monitors exterior and interior easements on properties in Charleston and the Lowcountry. An easement is a legal agreement made between a property owner and a qualified easement holding organization, such as the Preservation Society. The easement protects the architectural integrity of a property by restricting future alterations and uses of the property. An easement on a certified historic structure allows the owner to protect their property in perpetuity while qualifying for Federal tax deductions. Contact Robert Gurley at (843) 722-4630 for more information.

Lane stands at the front of Lois Lane Properties at 9 Broad (top). An interior view (center). In the rear, a lush courtyard provides a quiet respite from busy Broad Street (bottom).

“One of the challenges was restoring the front door,” she adds. “By studying a set of doors in the untouched second floor, we were able to determine its original design.” The restoration received a Carolopolis Award from the Society upon completion in 2002.

Lane’s commitment to the building is perpetual through her donation of interior and exterior preservation easements on the building. “The historic fabric of Charleston’s interiors are as important as the facades, but there is no legal protection for them. By donating the easement, future owners are legally bound to maintain the historic interiors that we uncovered and restored,” she explains. “We had been working on the building for a couple of months when I overheard a tour guide telling her group this had been the site of Miss Sue’s first real estate office. What a confirmation I was in the right place.”

From the first female real estate agent in Charleston, Susan Pringle Frost, to its current owner and occupant who carries on the same trade, preservation and 9 Broad Street are truly at ease together.

9 broad street





MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

the society spotlights seven sites worth saving

Quarters "A" was built in 1905 as the Commandant's House. It has stood vacant since the closure of the Navy Base in 1996 and is in need of major stabilization work. Several other structures in the Charleston Navy Base Officers' Quarters Historic District are suffering from demolition by neglect.

seven to save

Preservation is about solving problems. And with so many historic resources throughout the region, there are many historic problems to be solved. As an initial step, the Preservation Society of Charleston announced its first *Seven to Save* list at its membership meeting on May 15, 2011. The *Seven to Save* program is designed to solve ongoing preservation problems related to specific sites and issues of importance to a diverse range of regional constituencies. *Seven to Save* complements the strong public advocacy program of the Society by drawing attention to problems that might otherwise not be addressed and that have application to a range of sites beyond those specifically listed.

By working with site owners, interested organizations, neighbors and friends, the Society will be able to demonstrate leadership in the community as a constructive partner for preservation. Each year, seven sites will be selected, and fundraising efforts will be launched in support of programs that will help save those sites. “In some cases, just starting the conversation about a site in a public way will stimulate new ideas that otherwise remain dormant,” said executive director Evan R. Thompson. “Preservation should be constructive and supportive, and if the Preservation Society isn’t prepared to be of assistance, who is?”

New members and donors have already signed up to support *Seven to Save*. A concerted effort to raise \$100,000 toward the program is off to a fast start with nearly \$30,000 raised at the April 30th Preservation Party. Private contributions have started to come in, and local foundations will be approached for additional support. “*Seven to Save* is about reaching out and making a positive impact in the community. It is ambitious, but it is focused, and with the support of our membership and the community-at-large, preservation will continue to progress,” said Rutledge Young III, president of the board of directors.

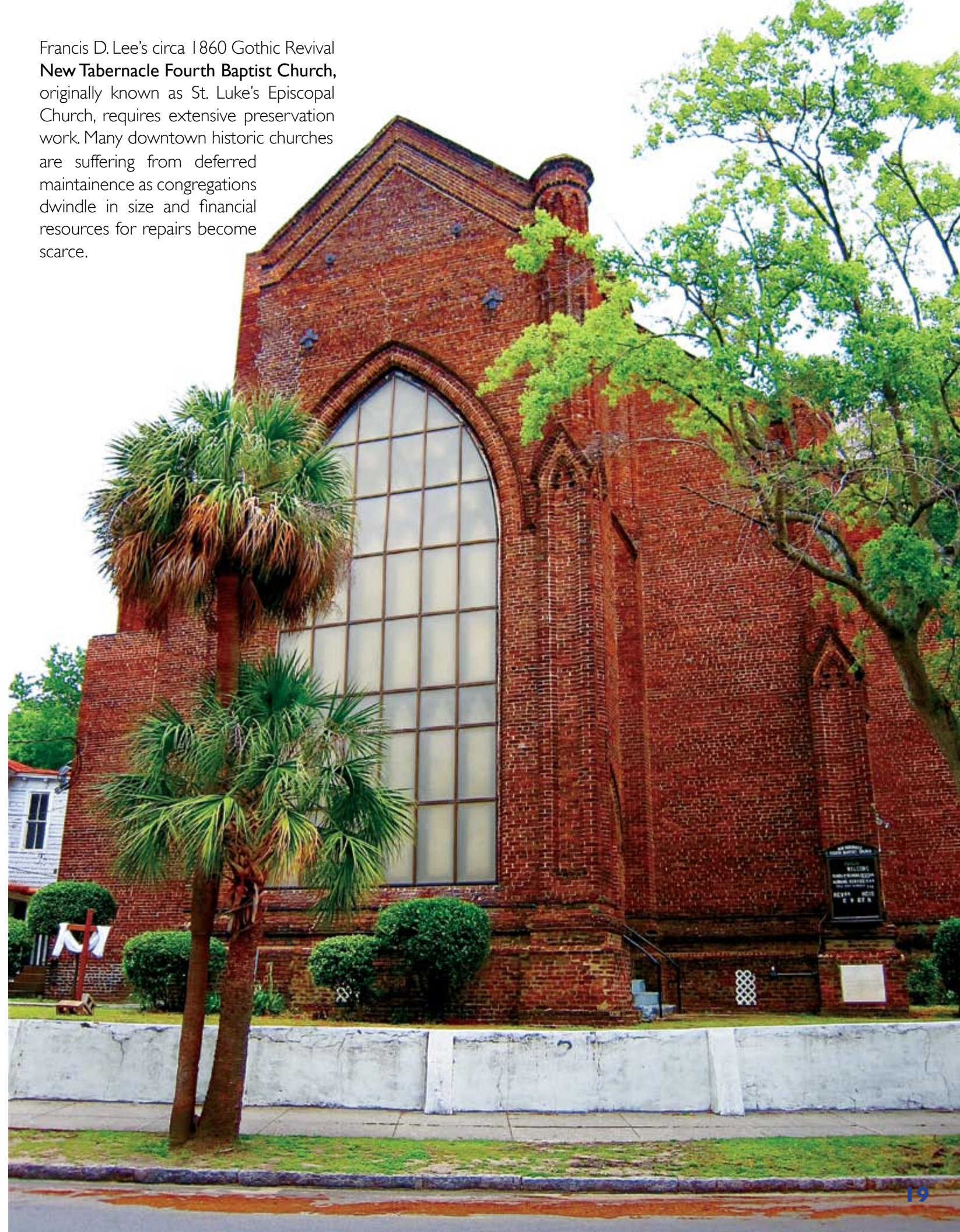


The cottages at **193-199 Jackson Street** were built circa 1900 as four identical structures that are now vacant and in need of rehabilitation. An important vernacular building type in Charleston, the “single cottage” form is being lost throughout the city by demolition and inappropriate alteration.



Built circa 1850 and attributed to Edward C. Jones, the **Magnolia Cemetery Receiving Tomb** is in need of critical structural repairs and restoration. Historic mausoleums are an important part of Charleston’s architectural heritage and many are suffering from demolition by neglect.

Francis D. Lee’s circa 1860 Gothic Revival **New Tabernacle Fourth Baptist Church**, originally known as St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, requires extensive preservation work. Many downtown historic churches are suffering from deferred maintenance as congregations dwindle in size and financial resources for repairs become scarce.





Historic paving materials from the 19th and early 20th centuries represent a major civic investment that are not protected by local ordinances. Rose Lane in Elliottborough was paved with Belgian blocks circa 1915, but later covered with asphalt in the 1970's. Its restoration can serve as a model for other streets throughout Charleston.



Historic structures along the 1960's-era Septima Clark Parkway (above) are suffering from demolition by neglect due to their proximity to a busy six-lane highway. For example, the vacant houses at 68 & 74 Fishburne Street and 306 & 308 St. Philip Street were built circa 1920 in the Wilson's Farm subdivision, an eligible historic district and are in need of restoration.



help save seven.
preservationsociety.org
become a member
of the society.

843-
722-4630

The Society has developed programmatic activities in support of these sites, and contributions can be made directly in support of the Seven to Save program through our website, in our shop, or by calling the Society at (843) 722-4630. Volunteers from the Charleston Master Preservationist

Program will also be working on projects associated with these seven sites, and community volunteers will be needed as well. "Preservation is about saving places that matter, be they great or small," said executive director Evan R. Thompson. "The challenge of solving preservation problems is what this program is all about."



Civil Rights Era Sites in the region are endangered because of a lack of documentation and awareness of their significance. One example is the home of civil rights leader Septima Clark at 17 Henrietta Street (left) that was demolished for a parking lot. All that remains is a bronze plaque (right).

STEWARDED THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT INNOVATIVE SOCIETY PROGRAM TO BE NATIONAL MODEL

spring 2011
participants

- Elizabeth Alston
- Lane Becken
- John Burkel
- Sandi Clerici
- Verner Daniel
- Jeanie Duvall
- Peg Eastman
- Trevor Johrendt
- Micki Patterson
- Caroline Ragsdale
- Sherry Ray
- Sallie Robinson
- Rob Salvo
- Jane Thornhill Schachte
- Sally Smith
- Steve Stewart
- Pat Sullivan
- Juan Tamarit
- Edward Thornton
- Kristin Walker

A field trip to Drayton Hall was one of three weekend excursions.

The Charleston Master Preservationist Program is underway! A pilot version of the program concluded at the Society's May membership meeting. Twenty local residents, including board members, volunteers, real estate and development professionals, community leaders and interested members spent twelve weeks in weekly classroom and field study sessions studying everything from architectural history and building technology to archaeology and preservation law. Instructors were experts in their fields and drawn from the local community.

Walking tours of downtown neighborhoods and historic properties were supplemented by field trips to Charles Towne Landing, Drayton Hall and Magnolia Cemetery. The group then took on a Keystone Project, developing an adaptive use plan for four historic structures located adjacent to the King Street Off Ramp where I-26 becomes Highway 17 downtown. The project results were presented at the annual meeting. Now that the formal training period has concluded, participants will take on thirty hours of community service work in support of historic preservation before becoming the first official class of Master Preservationists.

The program was developed by Society executive director Evan R. Thompson and was modeled on successful Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs. The purpose of the program is to train community volunteers who will work toward the ongoing stewardship of the built environment. A grant from the Richard and Julia Moe Fund for Statewide and Local Partners of the National Trust for Historic Preservation enabled the Society to hire an intern, Ryan Jackson, to help organize the class, collect materials and arrange for site visits. The project was selected for funding in part because it is a program that can serve as a model for other communities nationwide.

The Society is planning to continue the program with a new class of participants in the Fall, and is considering how to reach those who might be interested in the program but do not have the time to devote during a weekday. Contact the Society to learn more about the program; It is a great way to meet neighbors and become more engaged in preserving our community.



A visit to the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church on Race Street was a special highlight.

topics studied

Historic Preservation in US and Charleston	Land Use & Planning
Archaeology	Historic Landscapes & Cemeteries
Historic Building Technology and Conservation Assessment	Diversity and Cultural Landscapes
How to Read a Building (Exterior)	Sustainability & Green Preservation
How to Read a Building (Interior)	
Preservation Law and Regulation	Preservation Economics



Participants explored Porter's Court during a walk through Elliotborough.

BENNETT RICE MILL FACADE, SAVED (AGAIN?)

In a meeting held in August 2010, officials from the State Ports Authority committed to the stabilization and preservation of the historic Bennett Rice Mill façade which stands on the port's property. This important commitment to preservation advanced further when engineer Craig Bennett committed to a pro bono assessment of the structure, with recommendations for immediate steps that can be taken to protect what remains of one of the greatest antebellum industrial buildings.

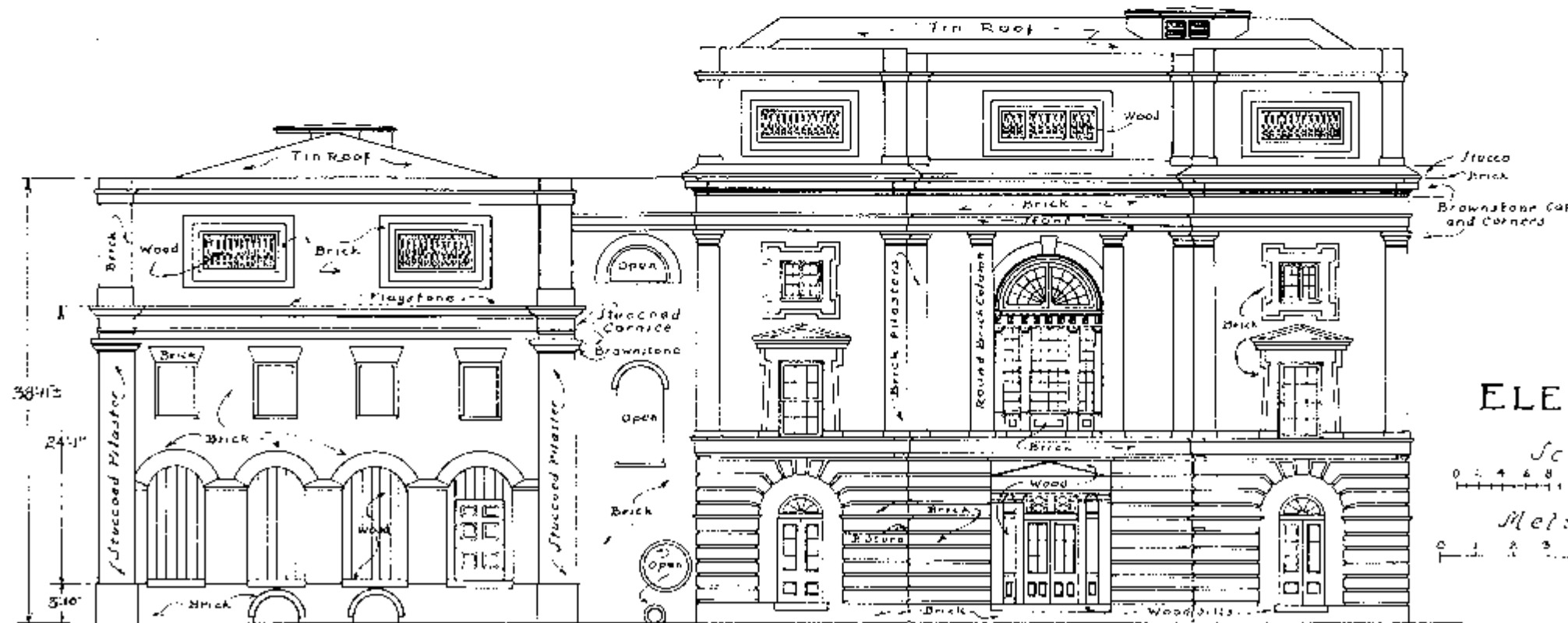
Now is a good time to recount the importance of the structure and the Society's involvement over the last fifty years. The preservation of the Bennett Rice Mill is not a new topic in the pages of *Preservation Progress*. It is a long story during which a confluence of forces, from economic neglect, selective demolition, the fury of nature and common-sense realities have reduced the structure to a single façade. This fragile façade remains as an important reminder of the durability and quality of our old buildings and the need to retain it on its site overlooking the Cooper River.

The Bennett Rice Mill was constructed in 1844 by Governor Thomas Bennett, Jr., and remained in the Bennett family's ownership until 1911. The significance of the mill was expressed as early as 1924 in Samuel Lapham, Jr.'s "The Architectural Significance of the Rice Mills of Charleston, S.C.", which appeared in the August issue of *Architectural Record*. In describing the aesthetic objectives of the building's unknown architect, Lapham wrote:

Somehow, he breathed a glamour of romance over a structure built for storage, mechanical power, and production. It is not a mechanical plant that we see in the tropical twilight. His Renaissance details, his masses, his voids and solids with their play of light and shade, blend against the sky and fade into the night mist and we have a castle of transformation, worthy of Poe, a castle where unseen obedient dragons, grind the white silver of the rice and transmute it into gold behind the still waters of the tern. It is as perfect in its way as is Mt. Vernon... The Chateau of Chambord was said to be a Fata Morgana in a wild woody thicket; Bennett's Mill could equally be a Piranesi in a marshy plain.

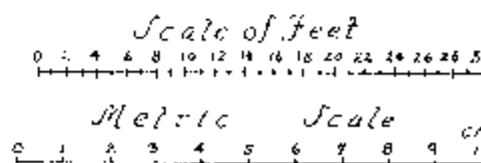


South Elevation



West Elevation or Front

ELEVATIONS



A.B. Myers, Del.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS, BUILDINGS, AND RESERVATIONS
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
BENNETT'S RICE MILL
Charleston, Charleston County South Carolina.



SURVEY NO.
13-7
March 24
1934

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 6 OF 8 SHEETS

INDEX NO.
S.C.
10-C-1116
63

In detail the Palladian window, although badly weathered, is beautifully done and is a wonderful example of scale, as well as the focal point of interest. It is almost a copy book example of Mutualy Doricorder. The use of the full column instead of a pilaster under the arch is an odd touch, but the sense of strength gained more than compensates for the loss of line. The richness of the window is added to by the simplicity of the plain flanking panels of brick and the large brick columns. These with their stone caps and lintel are beautiful examples of a high degree of craftsmanship in a common material, for the bricks are roughly ground, and except at close range, the line of entasis is satisfactory to the eye...

It is of interest to note that in Bennett's Mill appears the American or running bond at a time when all other brickwork in the city was being done in Flemish bond. Even West Point Mill, fifteen years later, as well as all residences at that time were still being laid up in Flemish bond. If the building was more removed into antiquity it would be a temptation also, to point out that in the spindled ventilators is the symbolic representation of the waving fronds of the rice fields at harvest time, but not being located in Egypt, we can only say that the architect might have had that thought in mind.

The preservation challenge presented by the mill began as early as 1938, when the News & Courier reported that it might be demolished by the Seaboard Air Line Railway because of maintenance costs. The Society voted to send a letter requesting that the roof, blown off in the September 29, 1938 tornado, be restored. At the same time, the Richmond Times-Dispatch editorialized:

It is not often that such architectural characteristics are found in factories and

such evidences of aesthetic efforts on the part of the builders attest an unusually high stage of culture. Bennett's Mill is of brick, and the exterior is widely known among connoisseurs, not only for its fortress-like dignity of mass, but for the masculine exuberance and elegance of the detail enriching the solid facades. It is to be doubted if in any other state there is to be found a single industrial structure from the antebellum era which can remotely compare with it.

The building languished for fourteen years until the City of Charleston declared it unsafe and required it to be



torn down by September 1, 1952. An outpouring of support for preservation found its way into print. "The mill must be preserved," wrote Charleston newcomer Helen Rainsford of 65 Anson Street in the June 13, 1952 edition of the News and Courier, "You all will regret losing it if you let it go." Several months later an article by Jack Leland remarked that "in Bennett's Rice Mill one finds not simply the outpouring of a plantation aristocrat's desire for a fine mansion. Here one discovers what is perhaps the highest tribute to a mercantile system based

on rice for, in its classic dignity the usual mediocrity of industrial construction is completely missing."

Professional respect for the significance of the mill was expressed by the American Institute of Architects in New York. At their June 26, 1952 meeting, they concluded that the mill was "worthy of preservation" and that all efforts should be made to save it. The Maryland Society of Antiquities provided additional support:

Bennett's Rice Mill is known throughout the nation as a rare and splendid

example of industrial architecture of a century ago. Its loss would greatly impoverish the city in which it exists and would be regretted by those interested in fine architecture... We would like to help those in that city who are making a valiant effort to preserve it.

In August 1952, the Preservation Society passed a resolution to (1) petition the city and county to reduce taxes on the mill; (2) petition for more time to study the possibility of finding some suitable use for the mill and (3) petition the Seaboard Air Line Railway

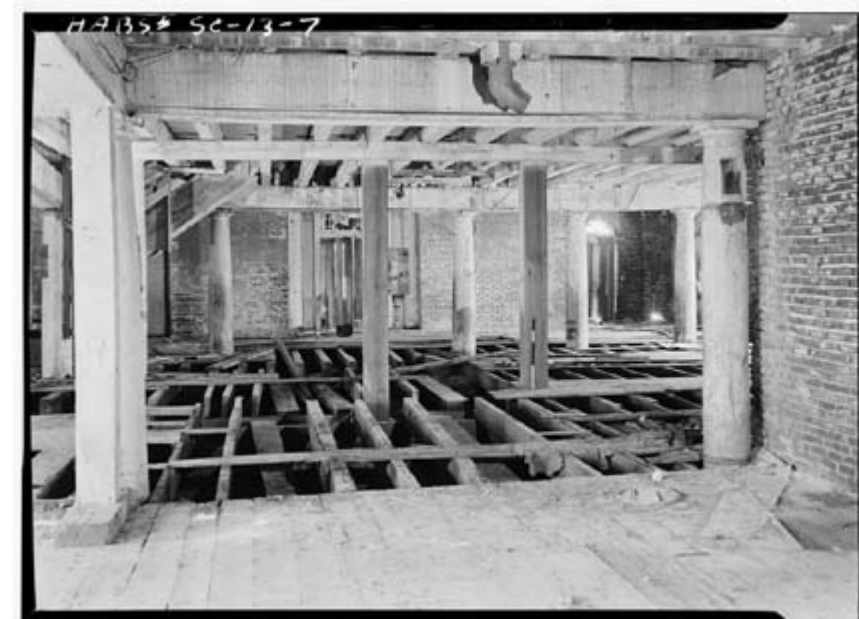
Co. to give consideration to the feasibility of restoring the building for use as a company office. The solution that emerged was for the Railway to lease the Bennett Rice Mill to the Society for a nominal fee. In the spring of 1953, a smaller adjacent annex was demolished, leaving the 1844 structure standing on its own. Efforts to raise \$100,000 to fund restoration and find suitable new uses came to a dead end in May 1958, when the Society wrote a letter to the railway:

"It is with great regret that the Society now abandons all efforts to restore and preserve this interesting building, and we hereby relinquish it to its inevitable fate and will no longer stand in the way of the owners who wish to tear it down in order to use the land on which it stands."

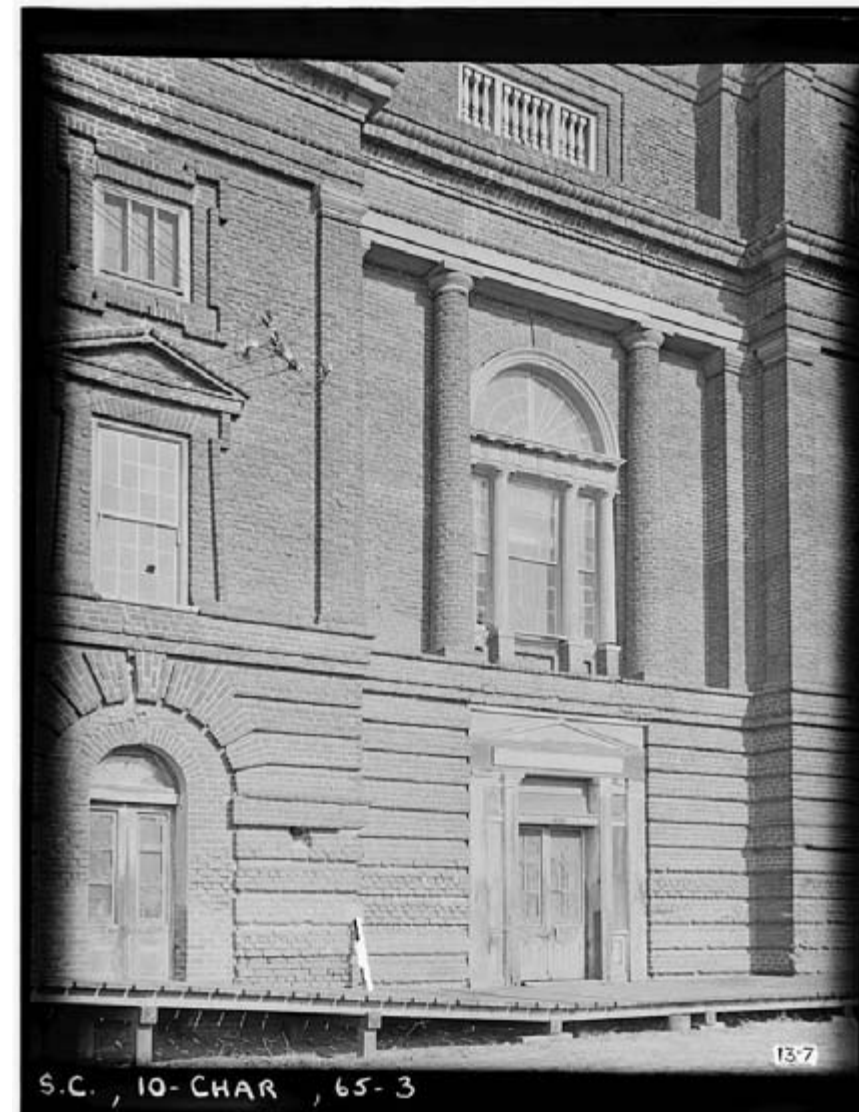
Within days, an announcement reported that the railroad was to transfer ownership of the mill to the State Ports Authority and that the authority could afford to restore the structure for use as its offices. "Now, we believe, there is definite hope that the building will be saved. The authority could obtain a beautiful administration building on the waterfront and at the same time save a valuable architectural relic," said Society president Louis R. Lawson.

The Ports Authority chided the Society for disclosure of the possible transfer of ownership, however a May 1958 News and Courier article reported that Authority chairman Cotesworth P. Means said "that the Authority's interest in preservation of historic landmarks was reflected by its recent purchase of Castle Pinckney in Charleston Harbor." He added it would cost \$100,000 more to restore the mill than it would cost to build a new office building, he added.

After giving up in May 1958, the Society continued to fight to preserve the structure. It sent letters to all members of the South Carolina legislature that month lobbying for more funding for the State Ports Authority to preserve the Bennett Rice Mill. As so often happens when owners of historic structures do not want to preserve the building, cost estimates rise with every new engineering report. In June 1958, the state ports authority learned from engineers that the "price tag on reclaiming the old mill was set between \$418,000



Historic American Buildings Survey, M.B. Paine, Photographer April, 1934
ENTRANCE DETAIL, WEST ELEVATION. HABS SC, 10-CHAR, 65-
[1992(HABS):SC-1]3



12. Historic American Buildings Survey, Louis Schwartz, Photographer May, 1958
INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR. HABS SC, 10-CHAR, 65-[1992(HABS):SC-1]12

and \$500,000” and that a restored mill “would not not provide practical office space.”

In July, fifty two years ago from today, the city issued another false deadline to “repair or demolish” within thirty days because of the fire hazard posed by this isolated brick building on the waterfront. By the end of the month, the News and Courier printed a brilliant letter by Robert N. S. Whitelaw of 42 State Street:

At long last, the Bennett Rice Mill is in the hands of a public, local and state institution and we are informed that the mill is to be destroyed. For the first time a body that has, and should have, state support has the fate of a nationally important building in its hands and has chosen to tear it down. Two other rice mills of lesser architectural importance have been saved usefully but the third, according to the State Ports Authority, must go...

This building was well constructed by a man who had pride in the architectural achievements of his community and neighborhood where he was building. He created a mill that even as a ruin is a monument to him and his city. It is a building that is regarded by architectural historians and preservation societies over the nation as outstandingly unique...

Sheldon church [in Beaufort County] stands as a ruin and once was restored after being a ruin for many years. We should plead that the mill be saved as a ruin, possibly permanently, but more probably until the authority or its successor sees init a building well worth the cost of restoration.

On August 2, another engineer announced that the “Bennett Rice Mill can be saved.” The engineer recommended removal of old timbers from the structure to reduce the risk of fire, citing steps taken to

removetimber from Brick House on Edisto Island after it burned in 1931. This report provided an opening for the Society to renew its calls for adaptive reuse of the mill. The idea of preservation as ruin seemed to have taken hold, when president Lawson said on August 4, 1958 that “The Preservation Society wants to remove the idea from the public’s mind that we are insisting on complete restoration.” Two weeks later, bids were again solicited for demolition. Ports Authority chairman Means said that:

As a state agency, the authority cannot spend substantial amounts of money solely for the purpose of restoring architectural landmarks, no matter how great their admitted value... The fate of the Bennett Rice Mill points up something very significant. Talk is very cheap, but the translation of talk into action can be difficult and expensive. In looking toward the future preservation of those historic buildings which we all revere, Charleston needs more deeds and fewer words.

On August 21, 1958, the National Trust for Historic Preservation entered the debate, submitting a letter to the News and Courier appealing “on behalf of the national membership of the trust and its several hundred member organizations we hope some solution can be found to retain this notable example of early industrial architecture.”

The next day, Historic Charleston Foundation proposed offering \$3,000 toward the \$5,000 cost of removing the fire-menacing timbers from the structure and enclosing openings in the facade in concrete block for security and stability. The Preservation Society pledged an additional \$3,000, but that it was “contingent on written and legal assurance from the Ports Authority that the building would not

be demolished” and suggested joint ownership of the ruin by the Society and the Foundation. Preservation arguments were bolstered by a letter from the chairman of the committee on preservation of historic buildings of the American Institute of Architects:

Our committee, which represents the American Institute of Architects in preservation matters, is distressed to learn of renewed menace to the Bennett Rice Mill in your city. In 1952 we protested its proposed demolition and now reaffirm our support of the Charleston Preservation Society in its effort to save the historic structure.

The rice mill is architecturally unique and significant. It represents perfectly the resplendent, romantic and antebellum period in which it was built and could have happened in no other time or place. Our plea is that because of its national and local importance, decision to demolish be delayed...

We are astonished that an agency of government such as the South Carolina State Ports Authority, now the owner, should condemn such an historic building to destruction. Many such bodies elsewhere, with less to save than in Charleston, have taken the broad view, not the immediate one, and have set enviable preservation examples. We hope the authority will take second thought and help preserve a noble architectural example.

Susan P. Bellinger penned a letter from Hendersonville, North Carolina on August 30th which reminded readers of the News and Courier that “the saving of the mill is not so much a matter of cost, large as that is. It is a matter of faith that beauty is of lasting significance, and that the history, the creation of this Lowcountry, is a splendid heritage worth understanding and handing on.”

The persistence of preservationists paid off on September 11, 1958, when it was reported that the State Ports Authority “unanimously adopted a resolution assuring historical groups the old mill would not be razed for five years provided that a ‘responsible agency’ assume the cost of fencing and [repairing] the structure.” A deadline of October 15th was set for the Society and Foundation to accept or reject its offer. However, the fire department stepped in as the new enemy of the building and disapproved of plans to save the mill. “I, too, am interested in preserving old historic buildings, but as chief of the Fire Department, I am vitally interested where life and limb are concerned,” said chief Fred C. Shokes. Yet another thirty day deadline to remove fire hazards was imposed.

On October 1, 1958, the Ports Authority accepted an alternative plan presented by the Society and the Foundation that would require approval by the fire department. The plan was accepted and by January 1959 the building was declared “sufficiently fireproofed.” The interior was removed, and heavy steel pipes and beams were installed to brace the structure. The mill was leased to the two organizations for five years. The front of the mill was restored as near as possible to the original. Window mullions were replaced and instead of glass, sheet metal was installed for panes. Arches over doors were restored and the woodwork painted.

Regrettably, the efforts of preservationists were no match for Mother Nature. A rare tornado badly damaged the structure, and all that could be saved was the western façade which is still standing. Perhaps the preliminary effort to restore the mill in 1958 ensured its partial survival.

Miraculously, the façade survived Hurricane Hugo in 1989, but we dare not risk another season of storms lest we lose a remarkable relic of our nation’s industrial and architectural heritage.



Today, the Bennett Rice Mill facade stands as a fragmentary reminder of one of the greatest examples of early 19th century industrial architecture in America. It is deserving of great care to preserve the remaining historic fabric.



The facade is supported by steel braces that are in need of repair and reinforcement, in addition to the meticulous work of repairing and repointing the brick facade. Photos by Robert Behre courtesy of the Post and Courier.

PRESERVATION PROGRESS

PUBLICATION OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON, INCORPORATED
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Vol. III, No. 34

November 1958



Charleston's Cooper River skyline is to have its magnificent ruin.

Handsome old Bennett's Rice Mill has been granted at least a five year lease on life. This gratifying move for preservation has been realized through public sentiment and cooperation of all interested parties.

A nationally recognized building which is well worth the saving, Bennett's Mill is now undergoing repairs which will strengthen its fine old brickwork and eliminate all fire and safety hazards. Plans to make the walls structurally sound are being carried out by C. Stuart Dawson of Dawson Engineering Company.

The South Carolina State Ports Authority which owns the building has cooperated with preservation groups in an effort to do the best possible for the landmark. It has guaranteed a five year period of grace for the building. At the end of this time plans for the future of the Mill may have to be reconsidered.

A joint committee from the Preservation Society and the Historic Charleston Foundation combined to make the final effort which saved the Mill. Each organization subscribed \$3,000, which will cover the expenses of present repairs. The Preservation Society is glad to accept personal contributions toward this fund. The treasurer, Miss Virginia Gourdin, 14 Tradd St., is receiving these contributions. If the total subscription from the Preservation Society is not contributed, the balance will be taken from the Society treasury.

Bennett's Rice Mill has weathered 114 years on the Charleston waterfront. It is still a striking symbol of the taste and affluence of the port's prosperous rice-supported era. The building is on a splendid scale, and the details of the brickwork around windows and doors and the rounded columns on the second story are among the outstanding aspects of the architectural pattern.

It has been watched over for years by the Preservation Society, which has forestalled several moves to raze the building in the past decade. The Seaboard Air Line Railroad which owned the building until last year considered tearing it down in 1952. Efforts by the Preservation Society -- and particularly by its President Captain A. S. Johnson -- prevented destruction at that time.

Last spring the fate of the Mill appeared sealed, and bids for demolition of the property had even been asked before this reprieve was granted.

During the years of struggling to preserve the Mill the Society has sought help from several national foundations -- without success. But in the critical hour it was from the local people and organizations that a way of saving the Mill had to come.

Public sentiment, expressed in editorials, letters to the newspapers and cash, has played its part in shielding the staunch walls of Bennett's Rice Mill from an imminent threat of destruction.



PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON



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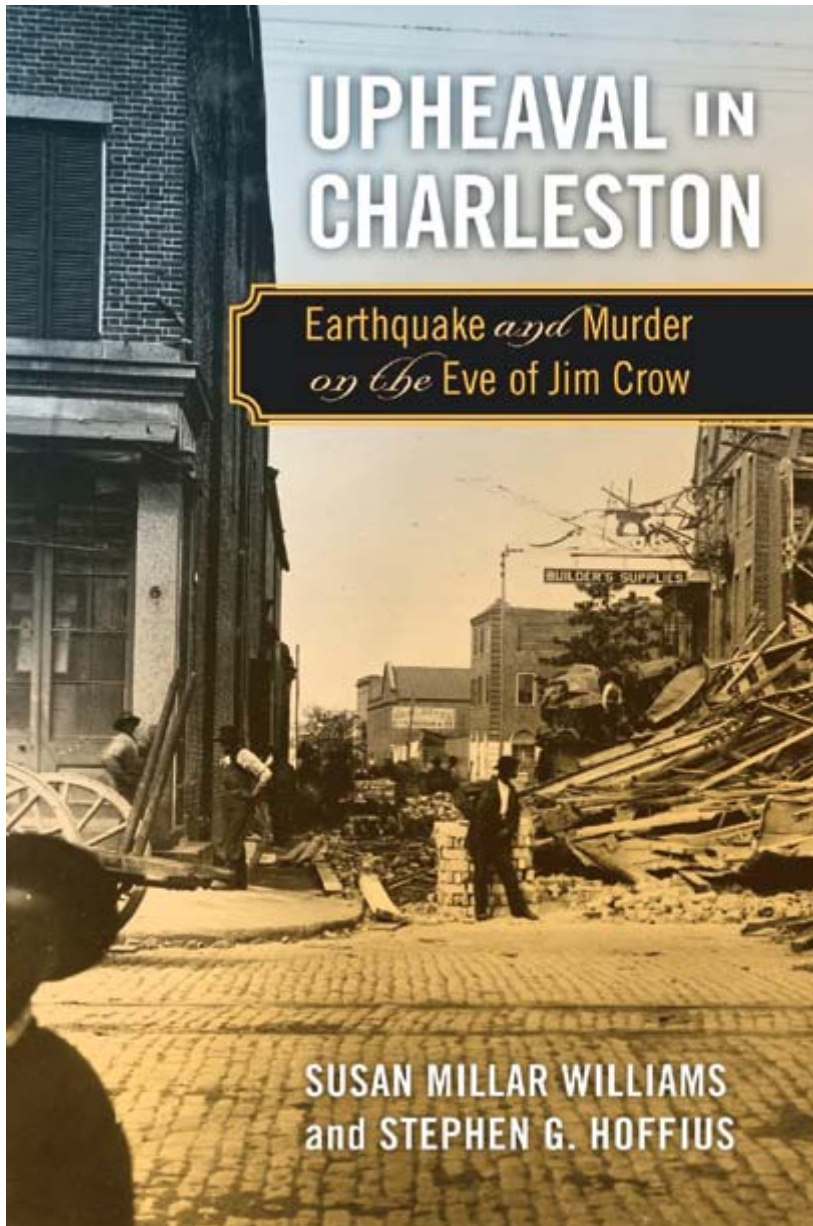


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Books for sale at the event.

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