



KINGS COURTYARD INN

History of the Kings Courtyard Inn

192 – 198 King Street, the present address of Kings Courtyard Inn and several retail shops, is known to many Charleston historians as the Blum Building. It was built in 1853 by Colonel J. Charles Blum and designed in the Greek revival style with Egyptian detail by Francis D. Lee. Other noteworthy buildings designed by Mr. Lee include 141 East Bay Street and the Unitarian Church on Archdale Street. Horlbeck Alley, located a few paces south of the inn is named for the family of Mrs. Blum, Esther Horlbeck.

Ward records indicate the value of this location increased from \$1,000 to \$9,000 in 1853 with the erection of the building designed by Mr. Lee. In Lee's day King Street was to visiting ladies a "narrow dirty street" but even so it was fashionable and contained the best shops. The construction of Colonel Blum's building in 1853 brought to this part of lower King Street a change from modest, separate residences to a more diversified usage which included retail trade, second and third story rental units, and hotels. Establishments in the Blum building mentioned in the City directories of 1855 and 1859 were Mrs. Evan's boarding house, F. Petit confectionary and fancy goods, Mrs. Sarah Watts, Millinery and Bailey and Douglas, and retail groceries. In the 1870's, after war had dissipated wealth of the region and made conspicuous consumption vulgar, the shops changed in character. A portrait and picture frame manufacturer lasted only a year at 192 King Street, Singer Sewing Machine and "Installment" Furniture stayed for longer periods.

The Twentieth Century has seen such occupants as a bicycle dealer, electrical supplies, dry cleaners, and Salvation Army lodging for women. These types of occupancy were continuing in the 1930's – small offices, service businesses, and apartments. Since then, one or another of the properties at this address such as the Shade Shop #198, has enjoyed a few prosperous years. On the whole, however, thoroughly inappropriate uses for such an architectural asset had persisted. In this same year at #194, the first floor was utilized for the Jet White Laundry and second floor for the Sports Arena Skating Rink. This building sold for as little as \$5,000 as recently as 1962 after falling into a sad state of disrepair.

Kings Courtyard Inn was opened in November 1983 following an 8 month restoration by Managing General Partner Richard T. Widman. At the time the interior courtyards were created from original light wells and 34 guest rooms were appointed with 18th century reproduction furniture beautifully preserving the antebellum heritage. Meticulous efforts by the partnership are evident in the preservation of the stunning oversized windows favored by the original designer and Victorian accents of stylized columns and delicate ironwork added around the turn of the century. An elegant hostelry offering the conveniences expected by discerning inn travelers while preserving historic integrity, Kings Courtyard Inn is pleased to welcome guests once again to this remarkable address in Historic Charleston, South Carolina.