

Central National Bank (now  
Sylvan Building)  
Northeast corner of Hampton and  
Main Streets (originally named  
Plain and Richardson Streets)  
Columbia  
Richland County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-255

HABS  
SC  
40-COLUM  
8-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CENTRAL NATIONAL BANK  
(NOW SYLVAN BUILDING)HABS  
S.C.  
40. Colum.  
8-

Location: Northeast corner of Hampton and Main Streets (originally named Plain and Richardson Streets), Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Sylvan Bros. Jewelry Store, Northeast corner of Hampton and Main Streets, Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina.

Present Occupant: Sylvan Bros. Jewelry Store and offices.

Present Use: Stores and offices.

Brief Statement of Significance: The Central National Bank is an important late nineteenth-century Columbia commercial building, which was probably designed by the nationally prominent architect, Samuel Sloan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Central National Bank, 1871 (bank merged with Loan and Exchange Bank c. 1900). Sylvan Bros. c. 1906.
2. Date of erection: c. 1871.
3. Architect: Probably Samuel Sloan (see report by Walter F. Petty under "Historical Events" below).
4. Notes on original plan and construction of building: This structure originally was built as a bank with stores on remainder of the ground floor and offices on the upper floors.

## B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. The following was extracted from a report by Walter F. Petty, AIA Preservation Officer, Columbia, South Carolina, prepared in 1961:

The building was constructed as a bank building (Central National Bank, corner of Richardson and Plain Streets; John S. Preston, President; Organized 1871), according to the Columbia City Directory of 1875-76. The bank merged with the Loan and Exchange Bank around the turn of

the century. The building was purchased by the Sylvan Brothers (both now dead) around 1906. The sons still operate a fine jewelry store here. A nephew, now a prominent Columbia jeweler, came over from Sweden to work for Sylvan in 1912. He informs me that his Uncle Gus told him that the banking room floor was at the basement level and entrance was by a monumental stair down. The floor at street level was added by Sylvan. Mr. John J. Seibels, who died last month at the age of 91, recalled that the building was built in 1870. Mr. Seibels also (and without suggestion) recalled that the architect was named "Sloan." He could not recall if the first name was Samuel. Since Samuel Sloan was known to be doing work at the State Hospital as early as 1858 (by Hospital records) and as late as 1883, this building could very well be his work. The building is recognizable on a bird's-eye view of the city made in 1872 (drawing in South Caroliniana Library).

2. The following is extracted from a letter dated February 8, 1962, from Harold N. Coolidge, Jr., Associate Professor, School of Architecture, Clemson College, Clemson, South Carolina:

On the basis of dates (Sloan was working on the "Centre" Building of the Insane Hospital from 1870 until 1883) and casual references to "other works" in Columbia, S.C. made in reports of the Hospital Building Committee (State Papers) the possibility that the building is Sloan's design is pretty good. The probability that it is his is increased when one refers to the late commercial designs of Sloan as published in The Architectural Review (particularly Vol. I, pp. 9, 90, and 236).

I am going to stick my neck out and claim it for Sloan, not only because of the published commercial designs of the 1868-84 period but the residential ones as well (see The Architectural Review, Vol. I, pp. 240 and 300).

- C. Sources of Information: See the extracted reports of Walter F. Petty and Harold N. Coolidge, Jr., above.

Prepared by Walter F. Petty, AIA Preservation  
Officer, South Carolina Chapter  
July 1961 AND  
James C. Massey, Architect  
National Park Service  
April 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Central National Bank is a fine example of a "Victorian" commercial building.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories on an elevated basement. There are five bays on the Hampton Street side of the building and two bays on the Main Street side. The building has a rectangular layout, approximately 20' x 80' in size.
2. Foundations: White ashlar stone.
3. Wall construction: Red brick with rusticated stone quoins at corners and at intervals, acting as vertical accents; there is also a string course between the first and second stories.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls and timber framing.
5. Steps: Simple iron steps to raised first-floor entrance (Hampton Street side).
6. Chimneys: Six, simple, low, brick chimneys.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Main building entrance on Hampton Street has double doors set in arched opening with two-light circular-head transom and molded architrave with keystone.
  - b. Windows: First floor--one-over-one-light, double-hung wooden sash with stone labels and keystones. Second floor--two-over-two-light, double-hung wooden sash with circular and low arch heads, stone labels, and keystones.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof, slated in a decorative pattern.

- b. Cornice: Molded and bracketed cornice, probably in sheet metal.
- c. Dormers: Circular window heads. Two-over-two-light, double-hung wooden sash. Pediments over windows are both arched and triangular.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

- 1. Floor plans: Ground floor--on the west end is a large, open, two-story store area with balcony; on the east end there are four shops. Second and third floors--stair hall in center, three offices on both east and west ends; corridor at north side.
- 2. Stairways: Wood.
- 3. Flooring: Wood.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Wood.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: Wood.
- 7. Hardware: Conventional.
- 8. Lighting: Electric.
- 9. Heating: Steam heat; offices originally heated by stoves.

D. Site:

- 1. Orientation and general setting: On northeast corner of intersection in the downtown Columbia shopping center.
- 2. Outbuildings: None. There is a notable clock (c. 1908) on sidewalk adjoining building.
- 3. Walks: Cement sidewalks.

Prepared by James C. Massey  
Architect, National Park Service  
April 1960           AND  
Walter F. Petty, AIA Preservation  
Officer, South Carolina Chapter  
July 1961