

Museum Around the Corner

The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

The Hub Shops ©

In 2016, information was received at the Georgetown County Museum about an establishment known as “The Hub”. The current owners of The HUB Shops at 123 King Street provided in 2017 a brochure that related the history of this still viable commercial building. For many Georgetown citizens, The HUB SHOPS site continues to hold memories of the establishment’s formative decades.

The owners write: “Since the mid-1940s, The Hub Shops on King Street in the Historic District of Georgetown, SC has been a significant commercial site serving the citizens of this third oldest city in the state. The original edifice, then referred to as “The HUB”, was a two-story wooden structure that served as a mainstay for public gatherings, commerce, social events, indoor sports and recreation, especially for African American citizens in Georgetown and surrounding areas.

City and county residents were especially fortunate to have the various businesses that occupied this establishment during the decades of unequal opportunities in the town. Perhaps this building was named The HUB because it was a key commercial entity in center city Georgetown and soon became a “hub” for exchanges of a variety of enterprises. From its earliest years, The HUB provided sources for several facets of consumer needs to the underserved and neglected segment of the town’s population. However, as civic and social advancements gradually occurred in the town, The HUB became a new resource for many enlightened entrepreneurs.

Walter Wilbert Manigault (November 19, 1910 – August 6, 1968), a local African American mortician and businessman who established his funeral home in Georgetown in 1937, and William S. Thompson, D.D.S. (August 23, 1898 – July 7, 1961) – the only African American dentist in Georgetown during this period – saw the need for such a commercial entity. With a few years of planning, they combined their resources in partnership (c. 1945) to purchase the large, two-level wooden structure at 123 King Street known as The HUB.

For a number of years, The HUB was the focal point for hundreds of Georgetown County citizens who shopped on both King Street and Front Street, especially during their weekly Saturday visits to town. Among the first units of occupancy at The HUB were the dental office of Dr. Thompson, the Apex Barber Shop and the insurance office of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance agent, Mr. Lawrence “Bubs” Dunmore. The latter two businesses were previously located on Front Street. The second floor of The HUB was used in the early years (1940s) for Howard High School basketball games, school proms and other dances. Several clubs and organizations of the town also often held their large meetings and special gatherings at The HUB.

As The HUB business ventures thrived and became successful, there came a need to expand and improve the aging 1940s structure. Dr. Thompson relocated his office to another building a few yards away, and Mr. Manigault, a skilled business planner and self-taught architect, drew the blueprints for a new seven-unit masonry HUB building. He employed local masons and carpenters for construction of the new building for The HUB (c. 1952).

Along with the rental units for smaller enterprises, The HUB's new floor plan incorporated some expanded dimensions to include a large billiards room. This was likely the first modern public pool room for minorities in Georgetown. A sit-down restaurant for people of color, operated by Mr. "Fats" Cooper and his wife, was another first for the business section of the town. The Apex Barber Shop, a shoe repair shop, and the famous Holmes Shoe Shine Parlor, along with a wine and spirits liquor store, also became favored businesses at The HUB's newly expanded building. The parking lot of The HUB's new 1950s structure was first leased by the then popular A&P Grocery Store, which was adjacent to The HUB, but facing Front Street.

Countless first-time business visionaries, as early as the 1940s, began their careers as entrepreneurs and tenants at The HUB. This legacy of providing open commercial opportunities to all new and aspiring entrepreneurs in Georgetown continues as an uncompromising commitment. The HUB, now known as The HUB Shops, presently seeks and supports diverse ventures and small businesses that provide goods and services to the entire Georgetown citizenry and to the many visitors touring the Historic District of Georgetown.

Historically, The HUB Shops is among the oldest commercial establishments in the city of Georgetown having single family ownership at the same location for well over half a century. When owner Walter Wilbert Manigault died in 1968, his wife, Maggie McLeod Manigault and their son, Walter William Manigault, continued with the management of the businesses. Now into the third generation of ownership, The HUB Shops, as it is now known, is presently owned and operated by Walter Wilbert Manigault's two daughters, Naomi Manigault Holmes and Dr. Gladys Manigault Watkins, along with his grandson, Troy Manigault. Several aesthetic and structural upgrades make this commercial site an attractive and convenient complex for newer generations to be creative in historic Georgetown."

Today, Georgetown's notable Gullah Museum occupies a space in The HUB Shops. Please make it a point to visit there. Thanks so much to Dr. Gladys Manigault Watkins, Naomi Manigault Holmes and Troy Manigault for the story of this enduring establishment that helped many residents to begin their careers, and for many others to enjoy the services offered there.