

# S.H. Kress & Co. 5-10-25 Cent Store 1502 Main Street



▲ The Kress Store was still a thriving business in 1979.  
Photograph by Russell Maxey.

► The Kress sign still adorns the Hampton Street entrance of the building.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.

▼ The Hampton Street entrance to Kress now serves as office space.  
Photograph courtesy of Hunter Clarkson/Quackenbush Architects



▲ A view of Main Street from a postcard circa 1940. Image courtesy of Capitol Places.



**A** Nationally Registered historic building, the S.H. Kress & Co. 5-10-25 Cent Store is a Columbia landmark and stands as the best example of Art Deco architecture in the city.

The building that occupies 1502 Main Street was built in 1934 by architect Edward F. Sibbert, who designed many of the Kress stores across the nation as he served as architect for the S.H. Kress Company in New York City from 1929 to 1954. Many of his buildings survive and stand as examples of Art Deco design.

The two story Kress building features a white terra cotta façade. Egyptian inspired floral motifs are found throughout the façade, most notably above the Kress logo in the building's cornice and on the storefront level. The most recognizable feature of the building is the painted copper marquee. Above the marquee is copper lettering bearing the name "S.H. Kress and Co 5-10-25 Cent Store."

The interior of the Kress store is equally impressive. Large columns occupy much of the retail space, as well as the lobby of the apartment building. These columns have ornate capitals that are octagonal in shape and reflect the floral motif of the main façade of the structure. The columns were originally practical as well, providing air vents for heating and cooling the building. The numerous hanging lights that illuminate the store are also original to the building.

In 1952 an L-shaped wing was added, with a second entrance now accessible from Hampton Street. This addition was constructed in the International Style, a sharp turn from the Art Deco design of the original structure. The addition most notably served as an entrance to the diner of the 5-10-25 Cent Store.

The S.H. Kress & Co. 5-10-25 Cent Store of Columbia is noted for more than just its contribution to the architectural styles of the city. The Kress store played an important role in the commercial and social history of the city.

On the morning of August 21, 1962 the Kress store gained historic importance as black and white college students rallied against segregation by holding sit-ins at the store's whites-only lunch counter. Other Main Street businesses were also protested, including Woolworth's, Silver's, and Eckerd's. The event received no news coverage in town and was not reported in any Columbia newspaper until four days later. *The State* portrayed the event as the voluntary limited integration of the lunch counters of several downtown businesses. The sit-ins were praised as a non-violent act occurring during the tumultuous Civil Rights era. Their efforts proved successful as Columbia's downtown stores integrated peacefully and opened their lunch counters to black customers that same year. A portion of the original lunch counter was donated to the South Carolina State Museum.

In 1979 the Kress building was added to the National Register of Historic Places for its contribution to the architectural history of the city of Columbia. At that time the fifty year old requirement for historic structures to be nominated to the National Register was lifted due to its architectural contribution to the city.

In 1981, the McCrory Corporation purchased Kress and subsequently ran the property under its original name until 1995 at which time the chain filed for bankruptcy and closed the store. The closure of Kress paralleled the experiences of many former Main Street retail shops that had fallen victim to waning customers more inclined to shopping at suburban malls.

In 1998 Capitol Places purchased its first property in Columbia, the S.H. Kress & Co. 5-10-25 Cent Store. The building had remained vacant after the closing of the Kress store years earlier. Capitol Places preserved many of the building's architectural features. The façade of the structure was left virtually unchanged since its original construction. The elaborate columns, hanging lights, decorative ceilings and terrazzo floors were incorporated into the new design by Columbia architect J. Lesesne Monteith, when he worked with Capitol Places in the adaptive reuse of the building. In 2000 Capitol Places I opened with thirty-one apartments, which greatly added to the revitalization of downtown Columbia by bringing residential space back into the city center for the first time in twenty-five years.



◀ By the late 1990s, the Kress Store stood as yet another vacant building on Main Street.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.

► Construction of one of the apartments in Kress.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



▲ Terra cotta tiles in Egyptian influenced floral motifs decorate the main entrance of the building.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



◀ The original columns still stand throughout the building.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



► A sign announces the arrival of retail and residential space in the former Kress 5-10-25 Cent Store.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



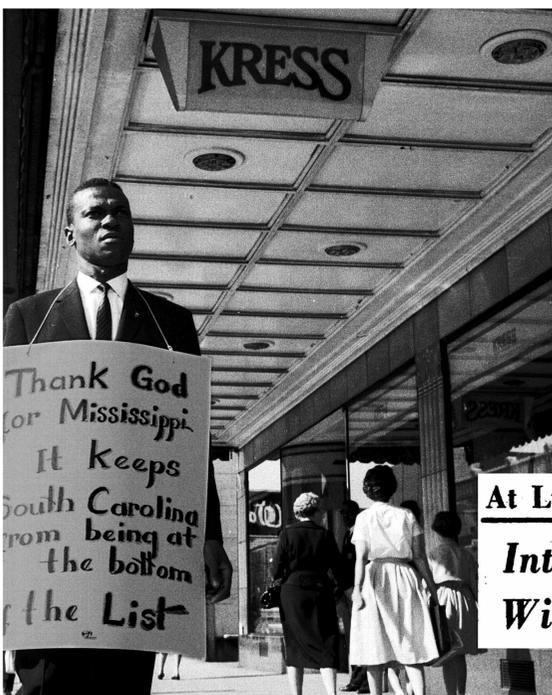
◀ The Kress Store reopened in 2000 with thirty-one apartments and a restaurant on the first floor.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



► Capitol Places purchased the building in 1998 and began interior demolition to convert it into residential space.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



◀ The first level of the building before it was renovated into retail space.  
Photograph courtesy of Capitol Places.



▲ Leonard Glover, a Benedict College student, protests the segregation of the Kress lunch counter in 1962.  
Image courtesy of the photographer, Cecil Williams.

## At Lunch Counters Integration Continues Without Incident Here

▲ August 25, 1962 headline from *The State* reporting the sit-in protest of Main Street lunch counters as the voluntary integration of downtown businesses.  
Image courtesy of the South Caroliniana Library.