

Property/House History Resources at the South Carolina Historical Society

Please be aware that house numbers in Charleston have changed several times over the years with the most comprehensive taking place following the 1886 earthquake. Maps, city directories, and deeds can help trace properties through these changes.

Manuscripts

- Property files arranged by street address include newspaper clippings, photographs, research notes, and other miscellaneous information. If the property is (or was at one time) a plantation, check the subject vertical file guide in the catalog room under the section *Plantations*. **Please ask for assistance.**
- Manuscript collections. Some of our manuscript collections include house history information such as building sketches and descriptions, renovation plans, inventories of furnishings, photographs, information concerning property disputes, deeds and titles, and other miscellaneous material. Some of these materials can be found through an address search in the online catalog. **For a list of addresses, do a Subject search for “Streets.”** Searching by the property owner’s name is likely the best way to locate any relevant manuscript collections.
- Buist, Moore, Smythe & McGee Title abstract and plat books, 1854-ca. 1960. Ninety-seven bound volumes containing abstracts of title for properties in downtown Charleston and Charleston County, and to a lesser extent, properties in Beaufort, Colleton, Dorchester, Jasper, Williamsburg, Georgetown, Florence, and Berkeley counties. **Please ask to see the Buist Card Index.**
- Map & Plats. Copies of some of our maps are located in the map case in the library. For more maps and plats, check the online catalog under property name or locality.

Architectural Records

- Simons and Lapham Architects Records, ca. 1915-1975. Construction/renovation plans for many downtown Charleston properties, including residences, business, and churches. **Please ask to see finding aid to locate relevant properties.**
- A.E. Constantine Papers, 1913-1975. Architectural drawings for several Charleston churches, homes, schools, civic buildings, and businesses. **Please ask to see finding aid to locate relevant properties.**
- Dargan Landscape Architects Records, 1986-2002. Landscape plans for homes in various South Carolina cities, primarily Charleston, Camden, Columbia, and Florence. **Please ask to see finding aid to locate relevant properties.**
- Loutrell Briggs Landscape Plans, ca. 1922-1972. Landscape plans for homes all along the East coast, but primarily for downtown Charleston homes. Copying restricted. **Please ask to see James Cothran’s book: *Charleston Gardens and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrel Briggs* to locate relevant properties. A finding aid is also available.**

Specific Titles:

- *The Buildings of Charleston : a Guide to the City's Architecture* by Jonathan Poston. A comprehensive guide to the architectural history of Charleston (720.975 .P67 B85 1997).
- *Information for Guides of Historic Charleston*. A training manual for tour guides that includes historical information about Charleston properties. Properties are listed by street address. **Ready reference section, please ask for assistance.**

Published Resources

- *Charleston City Directories* are helpful in tracing the ownership and use of a certain property. The library has a collection of city directories beginning in 1782 through the 20th century. Open stacks and microfilm. **Please ask for assistance to locate the appropriate years.**
- *South Carolina Deed Abstracts* 1719-1800 by various authors. Provide information on home/land ownership for properties throughout the state until ca. 1785, and then solely Charleston District (929.34 section of the library).
- *Record of earthquake damages*. Compiled following the 1886 earthquake in Charleston. Arranged numerically by street, information includes Sanborn Map coordinates, property owner name, building material description, dimensions, extent of damage, and remarks on repairs. **Patrons are requested to use microfiche copy (50-221).**
- Books on architecture and design are located in section (720-729) of the library.
- Archaeological Surveys for specific properties and localities offer maps, information on land use, construction materials, family history information, current disposition, and more. Many surveys are located in section (913.03) of the library. Also try a subject search online catalog by property or locale name.
- Local history of Charleston. There are several titles in this section of the library on the architectural history of Charleston. Some titles include indexes by street address or building name (975.71 section of library).

Online Resources

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1884- 1950s. Done periodically for cities all over the state, these maps show building footprints, building materials, and other miscellaneous information. **Largely available online through USC:** <http://www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/sanborn.html>. Microfilm available at SCHS (45/295).
- State Historic Preservation Office. Information on South Carolina's historic properties, including those on the National Register of Historic Places: <http://shpo.sc.gov/properties/>.

Other Repositories

- Register of Mesne Conveyance (RMC Office), Charleston SC. The RMC Office holds land titles, liens, and other documents relating to property transactions. <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>
- South Carolina Historical Repository Directory: information about repositories in South Carolina holding significant primary source material. <http://shrab.palmettohistory.org/repository/repositories.htm>