



SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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 reading 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. Searching by the property owner's name is likely the best way to locate any relevant manuscript collections.
- Collections of title abstracts and other property records:
 - **Buist, Moore, Smythe & McGee Title abstract and plat books, 1854-ca. 1960, SCHS call # 400.00.** 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.**
 - **Mitchell and Horlbeck property records, SCHS Call # 576.00.** Property records removed from the Mitchell & Horlbeck Legal Collection (0505). Most are title abstracts pertaining to properties mainly in Charleston, S.C., but also neighboring areas and elsewhere, including plantations in the counties of Berkeley, Georgetown, Dorchester, and Colleton. Some of the title abstracts include plats. The bulk of the records Dates from the 1870s to the 1920s.
 - **Simons, Siegling, & Cappelmann property records, SCHS Call # 0577.00.** Property records removed from the Charleston (S.C.) law firm of Simons, Siegling & Cappelmann records collection (SCHS# 0478.00). Most are title abstracts pertaining to properties mainly in Charleston, S.C., but also neighboring areas and elsewhere, including plantations in the counties of Berkeley, Georgetown, Dorchester, and Colleton. Some of the title abstracts include plats.
- Map & Plats. Check the online catalog under property name or locality. Many plats for property in Charleston have the title [Plat of Charleston City lots]. Perform a keyword search for "Charleston city lots" and the street name or area you are researching.
- Manuscript collections of surveyors, civil engineers, and plat collectors. The SCHS holds several collections consisting of plats and maps created by surveyors and civil engineers, as well as papers of individuals who collected maps and plats.
 - **John McCrady plat collection, SCHS call # 510.00.** This collection consists of over 600 primarily eighteenth and nineteenth century plats (some are copies of earlier plats) pertaining to properties in the Lowcountry.
 - **Gaillard plat collection, SCHS call # 575.00.** This collection chiefly consists of plats created or collected by the surveying and civil engineering firm of Gaillard & Gaillard.

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- **Joseph D. Taylor papers, SCHS call # 525.00.** The papers of Joseph D. Taylor, a surveyor and public official who lived in the Adams Run area, contain hundreds of plats he surveyed for land transactions and phosphate prospecting from 1866 to 1910, primarily in Colleton County.
- **Henry A.M. Smith papers, SCHS call # 1102.00.** The papers of Henry A.M. Smith, a Charleston judge, historian, and plantation owner, contain abstracts of property records and other material, research notes, indexes, transcriptions of documents, hundreds of maps and plats, and other items
- **Langdon Cheves papers, SCHS call # 1167.00.** The papers of Langdon Cheves, a Charleston attorney and landowner, contain land papers (including plats) of properties in the Lowcountry, including land Beaufort, Charleston, Berkeley, and Georgetown counties.

Architectural Records

- Simons and Lapham Architects Records, ca. 1915-1975. Construction/renovation plans for many downtown Charleston properties, including residences, business, and churches. Copying/Photographing restricted. **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 Designs, ca. 1922-1972. Landscape plans for homes all along the East coast, but primarily for downtown Charleston homes. Copying/Photographing restricted. **Please ask to see James Cothran's book: *Charleston Gardens and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrell Briggs* to locate relevant properties. A finding aid is also available.**
- Glenn Keyes Architects Records, 1986-2020. Collection consists of architectural drawings and plans mainly relating to renovations and other work on historic homes and buildings mainly in Charleston, S.C. **Please see finding aid for list of relevant properties.**
- Wertimer and Associates Records, 1982-2008. Collection consists of records pertaining to numerous landscaping projects designed and implemented by landscape architect Sheila Wertimer, ASLA, and later, Wertimer and Associates, Landscape Architects, mostly in Charleston (S.C.) and environs, but also locations in South Carolina and elsewhere. **Finding aid available.**
- In the online catalog, use the subject heading “**Architectural firms – South Carolina**” to view more collections.

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 (**NA735.C35 P67 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 (**F279.C43 I5 1985**).



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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 **(F268 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 **(NA730-NA735)** 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 by county **(F277)**. Many are also found in the SCHS pamphlet collection **(913.03 section)**. 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 **(F279 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 Deeds Office, Charleston SC. The ROD holds land titles, liens, and other documents relating to property transactions. <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>