

Property Research at Other Local Repositories

In addition to the many property research resources at the Margareta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation, below is a listing of some of the materials available at other institutions in Charleston:

(1) South Carolina Room, Charleston Public Library (68 Calhoun Street)

Sanborn Maps (Charleston, SC, Microfilm & Digital)

Description: The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company was created in the late 19th century and continued into the mid-twentieth century. Throughout this period the company created remarkably accurate and exceedingly informative maps of major American cities for insurance purposes. These maps consisted of streets, lot boundaries, building footprints, and annotation as to the materials of construction, height, and use of the buildings. Copies of Sanborn maps were kept in municipal offices for reference and many have now been given to historical repositories due to the wealth of architectural information contained therein.

Uses & Limitations: Sanborn Maps provide useful architectural information and can help to construct an architectural evolution of a property. Unfortunately, there are no known Sanborn maps between the 1902 and 1944 editions,¹ leaving a very large gap in the architectural record. Furthermore, the microfilm translates color and shading very poorly, with the result that much of the information contained in the original Sanborn maps is not detectable.

Notes: The earlier editions (1884, 1888) cover a much smaller portion of the city than the later editions, which are much more extensive geographically. Newer or less dense areas of the city (i.e. Hampstead), are not likely to be covered in the 19th century editions. It should also be noted that the 1944 and 1951 editions are revisions to the 1902 map, whereas the 1884, 1888, 1902, and 1955 editions are entirely new maps.

Other Repositories: Copies of the Sanborn maps for the city of Charleston can be found at the Margareta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation (1902 rev'd 1951 edition only) and the South Carolina Historical Society (miscellaneous incomplete editions). The 6 editions at the South Carolina Room at the Charleston Public Library, however, are complete for the years listed above and therefore the most useful. Sanborn Maps for South Carolina are also accessible online at the Charleston County Public Library or remotely via the Charleston County Public Library website (you must have a library card to access them). Additionally, portions of some Charleston Sanborn Maps (in color) are available at University of South Carolina Libraries Digital Collections, www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/sanborn.html.

¹ The modern Sanborn Company is called "EDR Sanborn." This company has kept copies of all of their Sanborn maps on microfilm, in black and white, and copies can be ordered of specific sheets for a fairly hefty fee. It should be noted, however, that the EDR Sanborn Company does not have any maps of the City of Charleston that are not already available at the Charleston Public Library. Apparently no Sanborn maps were made between the period 1902 and 1944.

City Directories, Charleston, SC (Bound volumes, microfilm, microfiche)

Description: The City Directories for the City of Charleston were first put out in the mid-eighteenth century and served much like a modern day phone book. They initially included residents' names, profession, residence and place of business. It also included a guide to specific classifications of the business and to government offices, as well as a multitude of advertisements. In the 1890s, the City Directories began to include a street index, listing every street address in the city alphabetically and the primary resident at that address.

Uses & Limitations: The City Directories are most useful for obtaining information on people and for finding the use of and residents of a property at a specific time.

Notes: For most of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, black entries are denoted with a "C" following the name. And in the first decade of the twentieth century the name index began to be separated out into white and "colored," the latter often denoted by colored pages, a format which continued into the third quarter of the twentieth century.

Other Repositories: A more complete set of Charleston City Directories, bound copies and microfiche, is kept at the South Carolina Historical Society. The bound volumes, beginning in the late nineteenth century, are in relatively poor condition due to the high frequency of users, and the microfiche is relatively troublesome to use. It should also be noted that the City Directories from 1782 to 1861 have been published in six volumes in abridged reference form.² The Margaretta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation has the abridged volumes and also the Baldwin and Southern's city directories for 1948, 1950-51, 1955, 1958, and 1961.

Vertical Files -- Charleston Buildings

Description: These files are clippings and miscellaneous files collected by the staff of the South Carolina Room. They are primarily composed of local newspaper clippings and brochures from the second quarter of the twentieth century to the present day.

Uses & Limitations: These files can be useful for learning general historical information about a property, and for obtaining older images of the building. Unfortunately, because these files are informal, the materials are often not dated, and the information somewhat dubious since their origins are not known. They are useful for general reference and getting started with research, and often the information contained therein does prove to be accurate, but these files for the most part should not be heavily relied upon for serious scholarly research.

Other Repositories: Most of the newspaper clippings will be easily located in the newspaper index in the Charleston Public Library, and much of the material will be duplicated in the South Carolina Historical Society 30-1 Architecture files and the property files at the Margaretta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation. Note also the Charleston Building files at the City of Charleston Dept. of Records Management.

² See the four volume *People and Professions of Charleston, South Carolina* series by James W. Hagy, Clearfield Company, Baltimore, Maryland, 1992-2000.

Charleston County Probate Records (Microfilm and Bound Volumes)

Description: Probate records are composed primarily of recorded wills. The South Carolina Room includes microfilm of the original will books up to 1868, as well as a number of bound volumes of typed transcribed wills from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Editions: Index (Bound Volume), 1670-1868; Transcriptions (Bound Volumes), 17th & 18th century; Originals (Microfilm), 1670-1868

Uses & Limitations: The probate records at the South Carolina Room are very useful for research prior to 1868. This is especially convenient as the alternative is to go to Probate Court in North Charleston, which is not easy to get to or particularly research-friendly. The transcribed wills are also convenient to use as a quick reference, as they are easier to use than the microfilmed originals. For detailed research, however, the originals should be consulted as the transcribed wills contain frequent errors.

Notes: Charleston County Deed Books should also be consulted in searching for wills and associated records.

Other Repositories: Complete and original probate records are kept at the Charleston County Probate Court.

(2) South Carolina Historical Society (Addlestone Library, 205 Calhoun Street)

Architecture (30-1) Files (Vertical Files)

Charleston City Directories (Microfiche and Bound Volumes)

Historic Photographs

Sanborn Maps (miscellaneous incomplete editions)

City Directories (bound and on microfilm)

Record of Earthquake Damages (original and microfilm)

(3) Register of Deeds Office (101 Meeting Street)

Ward Books, Charleston, SC (Microfilm)

Description: The Charleston City Ward Books are a record of every head of household in the city during the given year. The city is divided into various wards, often indicated by a map at the beginning of the first Ward Book for a given year, with streets within the wards listed alphabetically, and each individual parcel of property listed beginning with the lowest street number. Each side of the

street is listed separately. For each parcel of property listed is recorded the street address, if one is attributed to the parcel, the lot dimensions, the structures thereon with the material of construction and number of stories, and the property owner.

Editions: 1852-6, 1871-1960s. There are no Ward Books for the 1860s. Not all years in the period of coverage are represented, and not all editions are complete. In some cases individual pages, groups of pages, or entire wards are missing.

Microfilm Reel 1: Ward Books, 1852-1880

1852 – Wards 1-8

City Real Estate Taxes, 1871-1875

1871-1875 – Wards 1-8

1876-1880 – Wards 1-8

1880 – Wards 1-5

Microfilm Reel 2: Ward Books, 1880-1890

1880 – Wards 5-8

1881-1882 – Wards 1-8

1883-1886 – Wards 1-12³

1886-1890 – Wards 1-10

Microfilm Reel 3: Ward Books, 1890-1898

1886-1890 – Wards 11, 12

1890-1894 – Wards 1-12

1894-1898 – Wards 1-3

Uses & Limitations: The Ward Books provide fairly detailed historical and architectural information, and in conjunction with Sanborn Maps and the City Directories can help to create a fairly complete history of a building after 1852. Going through the Ward Books is tedious due to the method of arrangement of the pages on the microfilm reels, and properties can be difficult to identify since the entries refer to lot numbers and there is no corresponding map. For this reason it is best to obtain Sanborn maps first, and to use them as a reference while conducting Ward Book research.

Notes: Like the Sanborn maps, some of the northern areas of the current City of Charleston may not be included in the earlier Ward Books. It should also be noted that like street addresses, ward numbers change periodically in response to population increase. Over time wards become more compressed on the peninsula but will almost always be even or odd (i.e. the south side of Wentworth Street may start in Ward 3, and then change to Ward 5 in the late nineteenth century, and then change again to Ward 7 in the early twentieth century, but will usually not change to an even-numbered ward.) Also note that there are no regular street numbers/addresses until the 1886/90 Ward Books, where in most cases the street addresses are the same as those used today.

McCrary Plats, Charleston, SC and environs (Microfilm)

Charleston County Deed Books (Microfilm and Bound Volumes)

³ During this period the boundaries of the wards are redrawn, and wards 9 through 12 added to cover more of the northern area of the city.

(4) City of Charleston Records Management Division (2 George Street)

City Engineer's Plat Book, 1671-1950

City Engineer's Ward Book, 1882

Sanborn Maps

Certificates of Occupancy

Building Permits (after 1933, most are on microfilm)

City Council Minutes and Journals

Ordinances

Easements and Encroachments

Vertical Files – Buildings and Streets

City Year Books (complete run)