



State Historic Preservation Office

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
8301 Parklane Road | Columbia, SC | 29223
scdah.sc.gov

Useful Sources for Researching Historic Properties

Research Guides

- [National Register Bulletin 39: Researching a Historic Property](#): Guidance on researching a historic property from the National Park Service.
- [Preservation Hotline #8: Tracing the History of Your Historic Building](#): Guidance on researching a historic property from the South Carolina SHPO.
- [Preservation Hotline #13: Researching a Mid-Century/Modern Property](#): Guidance on researching a Mid-Century/Modern property from the South Carolina SHPO.
- [SCDAH Guide to Online Research](#): List with links to online resources available from the South Carolina Department of Archives & History.
- [SHPO Historic Properties Research](#): List with links to online resources available from the South Carolina SHPO.

Libraries and Archives

- [SCDAH Research Room](#): Collection includes non-current public records from the legislature, judicial system, office of the governor, state agencies, county and municipal governments, school districts, and special purpose districts. Consult the [South Carolina Archives Summary Guide to Holdings](#) for additional details on the collection.
- [South Carolina Historical Society](#): Organization with significant holdings related to South Carolina history.
- [South Caroliniana Library](#): Library at the University of South Carolina with an extensive collection of archival material related to South Carolina topics.
- [Southern Historical Collection](#): Part of the Louis Round Wilson Library Special Collections at UNC-Chapel Hill. One of the largest archival collections in the U.S. related to southern history.
- [SCIWAY South Carolina County Libraries](#): List with links to public county libraries across the state. Some local libraries offer extensive access to digital collections and/or a research room dedicated to local history. Check what sources your local library offers.
- [SCIWAY South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Organizations](#): List with links to various historical and genealogical organizations across the state, organized by county.

Digital Collections

- [Archive.org](#): Digitized documents, including an array of printed materials that are useful for historical research.
- [Detroit Publishing Company Collection](#): Includes over 25,000 photographs from 1880-1920. Approximately 194 photographs of South Carolina are included in the collection.
- [Digital Public Library of America](#): Similar to the South Carolina Digital Library below, but drawing on material from a wider geographic range.
- [DocSouth](#): Digitized materials on Southern history from the collections of UNC-Chapel Hill.
- [HathiTrust Digital Library](#): Offers digitized versions of publications in the public domain.
- [Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey](#): Measured drawings, photographs, and histories for over 43,000 historic properties.
- [History of South Carolina Slide Collection](#): Digitized images from 1989 slide collection. Includes historic photos and illustrations of buildings, structures, and landscapes from across the state. The images are indexed by topic, county, and subject.
- [Jackson Davis Collection of African American Photographs](#): Digital collection held by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. Includes over 500 photographs from South Carolina.
- [Library of Congress Digital Collections](#): Collections relevant to South Carolina include: Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, Slave Narratives from the

Federal Writers' Project, Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints, Genthe Collection, National Child Labor Committee Collection, Lomax Collection, and Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection.

- [Negro Motorist Greenbook Collection](#): Digitized collection of guides for African American travelers from 1936 to 1966, held by New York Public Library.
- [Richland County Library Digital Collections](#): Digitized photos and maps from Columbia and Richland County, free to access. See *The State* newspaper photo archive, and the Russell Maxey, Bicentennial, and Mabel Payne Photograph Collections.
- [SCDAH Online Records Index](#): Database of records from South Carolina Department of Archives & History's holdings indexed by topics, including: Will Transcripts (1782-1855); Records of Confederate Veterans (1909-1973); Plats for State Land Grants (1784-1868); Legislative Papers (1782-1866); Criminal Court Records (1769-1891); School Insurance Photographs (1935-1952); and National Register Properties.
- [South Carolina Digital Library](#): Free access to extensive collections of historic photographs, maps, directories, manuscripts, journals, oral histories, etc. from over 75 cultural institutions in the state, including University libraries, County libraries, and museums. Search by institution, topic, or geographic location.
- [South Carolina Electronic Records Archive \(SCERA\)](#): A portal for searching and accessing electronic records created by state agencies and digitized materials from the SCDAH archives, including birth certificates (1915-1921), map collections, and SHPO records from the Statewide Survey of Historic Properties and National Register listed properties.
- [South Carolina Historic Properties Records \(SCHPR\)](#): Searchable database of SHPO records from the Statewide Survey of Historic Properties and National Register listed properties.
- [University Libraries – Digital Collections, University of South Carolina](#): Digital collections of the libraries of the University of South Carolina, including numerous photo collections and a collection of South Carolina postcards, among many other useful sources. Collections can be searched or browsed by topic, department, or material type. Items of note: Berkeley County Photograph Collection; Beulah Glover Photograph Collection (Lowcountry images, 1941-1952); Columbia City Directories (1859-1927); George LaGrange Cook Photograph Collection (Historic images of Charleston and Summerville, 1880s-1890s); Inventory of S.C. Church Archives: Survey of Church Archives conducted by W.P.A. workers between 1937 and 1939; John Hensel Photograph Collection (Historic images of Columbia, 1949-1951); Joseph Winter Photograph Collection (Historic images of Columbia, 1965-1980); Kenneth Frederick Marsh Photograph Collection (Historic images of homes, public buildings, textile mills, and churches); and South Carolina Railroads Photograph Collection.

Genealogy Services

- [Ancestry.com](#): Searchable access to census records, city directories, and other sources. Free access to Ancestry.com is available at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
- [FamilySearch](#): Free genealogical research from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
- [The Freedmen's Bureau Project](#): Searchable database of Freedmen's Bureau Records with free account through FamilySearch.
- [Fold3.com](#): Searchable database of military records.

Newspapers/Journals

- [Chronicling America, Historic American Newspapers](#): Text searchable newspaper collections from across the U.S., including a number from South Carolina (pre-1923). Project of the Library of Congress.
- [Historical Newspapers of South Carolina](#): Digitized local and regional South Carolina newspapers from 1815 onward, available for free.
- [NewsBank](#): Online database that provides access to searchable issues of many current and historic South Carolina newspapers. Available through various libraries. Check with your [local library](#) about access.
- [Newspapers.com](#): Available with a subscription, or check if your [local library](#) provides access.
- [Readex – America's Historical Newspapers](#): Database of historical newspapers, 1690-1922. Check with your [local library](#) to see what newspaper sources may be available to you.
- [Google News Archive](#): Online archive providing free access to digital scans of newspapers.
- [Accessible Archives](#): Online archive providing access to a number of sources, primarily from the 19th and early 20th centuries, including a number of African American newspapers. The *Christian Recorder* is a particularly useful

source for researching A.M.E. Churches. Check with your [local library](#) to see if they provide access. Personal subscriptions are available for a fee.

- [JSTOR](#): A subscription service that provides digital access to a large variety of scholarly journals. It is possible to read a limited number of articles for free if you create a free account. Wider access is available via paid individual subscriptions. Most university libraries will provide free access.

Maps

- [David Rumsey Map Collection](#): Large collection of digitized maps from around the world. Includes downloadable Google Earth layers, georeference viewer, and other unique features. Nearly 300 maps related to South Carolina.
- [Hargrett Rare Map Collection, University of Georgia](#): Digitized historic maps, primarily covering Georgia but also including maps related to the Carolinas.
- [HistoricAerials.com](#): Historic aerial photographs and topographic maps, searchable by current address. Free to use with watermark, images can be purchased without watermark. Sometimes useful for identifying date ranges for building construction/alterations.
- [Library of Congress Map Collections](#): Digitized maps from the Library of Congress. Offers online access to [over 400 maps of South Carolina](#), primarily from the 19th century.
- [Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, South Carolina Maps](#): State maps, historic city maps, historic topo maps, and maps of National Parks. Part of the collections of the University of Texas at Austin.
- [Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, South Caroliniana Library](#): Produced for many cities and towns across the nation. Provides footprint outline of building, number of stories, porches, and (on color maps) building materials. Color maps available for free from the South Caroliniana Library for years 1884-1923. Local libraries or archives may have additional maps in their collections that are not available online. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are also available from the [Library of Congress](#).
 - Sanborn Maps from [Spartanburg Co. Library](#): Available under Learning Tools Databases.
 - Residents of Charleston County can access a [more complete collection](#) with a Charleston County Library Card.
- [SCDOT County Road Maps](#): Historic maps of all South Carolina counties, part of USC digital collections.
- [SCERA Map Collection](#): Digitized maps from the SCDAH Archives.
- [SCIWAY South Carolina County GIS Maps](#): List with links to interactive GIS maps across South Carolina (not available for every county). Some county GIS maps include historic aerial layers.
- [South Caroliniana Library Map Collection](#): Digitized map collection searchable by date, creator, or keyword.
- [Topographic Maps of South Carolina, 1888-1975](#): Digitized topo maps from the University of South Carolina Map Library.
- [USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer](#): Searchable topographic maps since 1884.

Plan and Pattern Books

- [The Aladdin Company of Bay City Collection](#): History and sales catalogs of Aladdin kit homes from 1908 to mid-1950s. Collection held by the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University.
- [The Association for Preservation Technology's Building Technology Library](#): Contains digitized out-of-copyright architectural publications, construction trade catalogs, house plan books, and related publications dating from the early nineteenth century through 1963.
- [Sears Modern Homes](#): History, chronology, and images of Sears hit homes, 1908-1940
- [The Wilburn Patterns Books](#): Pattern books of Atlanta architect Leila Ross Wilburn (b.1885-d.1967).
- [Roots and Recall](#): Links to various historic pattern books (as well as a growing database of historic property images). Free upon signup for email list.

Deeds and Plats

- [SCIWAY South Carolina County Register of Deeds](#): List with links to the Register of Deeds website for each South Carolina County.
- [SCIWAY South Carolina County GIS Maps](#): Some counties include digitized plats as part of their GIS mapping.

- SCDAH: The South Carolina Archives houses an extensive collection of deeds and plats, as well as state and local government records. Consult the [reference staff](#) for assistance. The [summary guide to the collections](#) is very useful for browsing available collections.

Surveys and Inventories

- [South Carolina Statewide Survey of Historic Properties Finding Aid](#): The records include survey forms, photographs, map locations, reports and/or brief descriptive and historical information documenting historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and landscapes in every county in the state. Relatively few properties have been recorded in some counties, but in others thousands have been documented. The records date from the mid-1970s to the present. An increasing number of survey records are accessible electronically.
- [South Carolina Historic Contexts and Survey Reports](#): Digitized SHPO historic contexts and survey reports on locations and subjects specific to South Carolina.
- [SC ArchSite](#): Online cultural resource geographic information system for the state of South Carolina. The Public View offers a searchable map showing the locations of National Register listed and eligible properties across the state, as well as above-ground historic and architectural properties recorded by surveys. The Subscriber View offers access to the locations and digitized site files of archaeological sites, restricted National Register listed properties, and survey areas. Primarily useful as a reference tool to determine the status of a property and to find identifying information for related records held by SCDAH/SHPO, such as National Register nominations or survey forms and reports, or for archaeological site file records and available archaeological reports held by [SCIAA](#) (the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology).
- [South Carolina Equalization Schools 1951-1960](#): Online inventory of known equalization schools in the state, plus additional research resources.
- [South Carolina Rosenwald Schools Database](#): SHPO compiled county by county record of Rosenwald Schools.
- [Rosenwald Fund Card File Database](#): Searchable database of Rosenwald schools, provided by Fisk University.
- [Cinema Treasures](#): Inventory of movie theaters in South Carolina with images available for some buildings. Organized alphabetically by theater.
- [South Carolina Railroad Stations](#): PDF list of surviving railroad stations in South Carolina from [American-Rails.com](#).
- [Inventories of American Painting and Sculpture, Smithsonian American Art Museum](#): Searchable inventories of American art, including an [inventory of outdoor sculpture in South Carolina](#).

August 2022