

Preservation PROGRESS

FOR THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON



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Stepping Toward a New Preservation Plan



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Steven Craig, President

Time marches on and 2006 is now in the record books. Although 2006 seemed to expire at a rapid pace, I am pleased to report it did not pass the Society by without fundamental progress being made on many fronts. With the hard work of our dedicated staff, our supportive Board, and loyal members, 2006 was a breakthrough year for the Society. Among the most significant results, our membership grew by an impressive 30% from just one year ago and our gift shop sales increased by 23%. Perhaps most significantly, with the help of our many volunteers and generous homeowners, the 2006 Fall Tours proved to be our most financially successful effort yet. Indeed, the Society enters 2007 with a great deal of positive momentum.

Along with last year's successes came additional challenges, and I believe events of 2007 will be no different. Plans are in place that will continue to exert intense pressure on the quality of life that we all currently enjoy. We have heard and read of incoming urban development around Marion Square and all points north, without any substantial updated assessment of the impact those projects, in total, will impose on the current infrastructure and traffic volume. The primary entrances to the city, along Calhoun Street at Meeting and King, are rapidly becoming gridlock, and we remain concerned about the potential for choking reasonable access to all points south of those intersections.

At the present time, it's clear the future holds a continuum of challenges that promise to impact the historic fabric and lifestyles of the peninsula. Demand for access to the educational resources of the College of Charleston continues to intensify the need for more college facilities. Local hospitals seek additional land for expansion as they look into the future. Rising land prices will continue to fuel multi-family development, and the conversion of Charleston's large, single-family houses into condominiums and apartments. Neighborhood parking issues will continue to plague tax-paying homeowners, as many existing parking facilities are either displaced by development. New parking facilities are often poorly located, and others are bypassed or not well served by public transportation. While we are ever mindful of the need to balance our efforts to preserve Charleston's integrity with the positives of economics of growth our focus must be steadfast.

As we enter the New Year, we pause for reflection on our goals and missions. Despite the rapid passage of time, we are charged with preserving the past for all to study and enjoy. Hopefully, children like my own soon will be teaching future generations of Charlestonians many of the same lessons we're teaching today. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that what we value of Charleston's yesterdays and what is great about our city today survives into the Charleston of tomorrow. As the Society continues to advance and pursue those goals, we sincerely appreciate all that you do to support our efforts.

We kicked off 2007 in our usual fashion, by holding our Annual Meeting (this year on February 1st), at which we awarded the 2006 Carolopolis and Pro Merito Awards. Once more, this gala night was a fabulous celebration thanks to all the efforts of the Society and those who supported it. I look forward to seeing you at the next membership meeting.

Steven Craig, President



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The Preservation Society of Charleston was founded in 1920 with its purpose being to cultivate and encourage interest in the preservation of buildings, sites and structures of historical or aesthetic significance and to take whatever steps may be necessary and feasible to prevent the destruction or defacement of any such building, site or structure, such purposes being solely eleemosynary and not for profit.

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PRESENTING: JOURNEY TO IRELAND A MEMORABLE STUDY TOUR TO THE EMERALD ISLE

— JUNE 11TH - 20TH —

The same excellence and attention to detail associated with the Preservation Society's study tours in the past are currently focused on creating an exciting new adventure. This time, the trip is a summertime journey to Ireland.

Set to depart from Charleston on June 11th and return on the 20th, the trip includes nine days of rare and intimate visits to some of the Emerald Isles' finest castles, museums, distinguished country homes and celebrated gardens. As usual, first-class accommodations are planned for the group limited to number no more

than twenty. Travelers will be guided throughout the tour by well-known former Charleston resident Tom Savage, Director of Museum Affairs at the famous Winterthur Museum and Country Estate in Delaware. Joining the group in Ireland is Marianne Gorman, noted Irish tour guide, who will connect Charleston to the magnificent 18th century Irish Georgian architecture and craftsmanship. Guests will enjoy private lunches and dinners with the owners of many of Ireland's fascinating properties. This fabulous opportunity is not to be missed!



Romantic castles, picturesque cottages, early Irish architecture and grand estates of the 18th and early 19th centuries are reflected in this connoisseur's tour of Ireland. (Photos: *Great Houses of Ireland*. By Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and Christopher Simon Sykes)

It's that time of year (again):

Tax-Smart Ways to S-T-R-E-T-C-H Your Support of the Society

As tax time approaches and we all consider our financial status, this is a good time to reconsider your level of support for the Preservation Society of Charleston. Choosing to be a member is only one of many ways you can help the Society preserve and protect Charleston's architectural and cultural heritage. Consider these additional options – now that financial planning is top-of-mind. And remember–these ideas are good ALLTHROUGH 2007, not just until the April 15th tax deadline.

Give Securities instead of Cash. You may donate stocks or other assets that have (a) gone up in value and (b) been owned by you for more than 12 months, and deduct your cost, plus your untaxed "paper profit" (capital

gain), up to 30% of your adjusted gross income. Excess deductions can be carried over for up to five years. Cash gifts are deductible up to 50% of AGI.

Make a Large Gift, Receive a Partial Deduction, but keep Lifetime Income. You can make a gift and reserve income for life for yourself or others. You can choose between a fixed income amount and variable payments. You'll receive a charitable deduction for part of what you give and if you fund your gift with securities, you may reduce or avoid capital gains tax.

Make Gifts from Your Business. Owners of closely held corporations should consider making charitable gifts.

Make "Temporary" Gifts of Cash or Income-

Producing Property. Letting charity "borrow" income-producing assets for several years (through a charitable lead trust), with the assets later passing to children or grandchildren, can provide specific tax advantages.

Consider Qualified Distributions from IRAs. Through 2007, those age 70 and over may direct the custodians of their IRAs to make distributions of up to \$100,000 directly to non-profit public charities. Although no charitable deduction is allowed, the transfers will count toward the owners' required minimum distributions and will not be subject to tax.

Please call Alix Tew, the Society's Director of Development at (843) 722-4630 for more information.

Our Medallion Circle Meets Again For "A VIEW TO CHARLESTON'S FUTURE"

On a brisk November day that might be described as "Indian Summer's last call," the group of young preservationists known as The Medallion Circle gathered at the Pavilion Bar atop Market Pavilion Hotel for a party called "A View to Charleston's Future." Guests enjoyed a spectacular sunset and a rooftop view over the Holy City complimented by an elegant selection of delicious tapas and drinks. Co-hosts for the event were Debbie Borbeau, Will Cook, Derrick DeMay, Elaina Palassis England and Eleanor Smythe. Special thanks go to Elaina Palassis England and her brother, Nick, for their gracious hospitality at the Pavilion Bar.

These Society members and invited guests enjoyed this second opportunity to mix in a social setting effectively bonding them as the next generation of Charleston preservationists. The evening resulted in several new members coming onboard and the turnout of previous members was an encouraging sign that the city's "preservation ethic" is indeed alive, well, and ensured for the foreseeable future.



Eleanor and Gus Smythe visit with Brad and Jill Braddock



Party hostess, Elaina England with Jason and Stacy Smallwood



Leslie Turner, Martin Lynch and Lois Lane



Marie Mumper, Katie Bennett, Chris Cuniffe and Katie Coleman



104 Rutledge Avenue c. 1816, Thomas Bannister Seabrook House

FOR HOMES THAT MADE HISTORY...Thank you.

From the Battery to the Beaches, to the Old Village of Mount Pleasant, the perseverance and passion of the Preservation Society of Charleston are what keep our city alive and vibrant while insuring the history of our city and its buildings are kept intact. We, at Daniel Ravenel Real Estate, support the Preservation Society and highly commend them on their hard work and success in honoring the Lowcountry's material and cultural heritage. We thank you for helping Charleston, our great city, continue to be one of the most historical and preserved cities in the United States.



From The Battery to The Beaches.

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2006

House & Garden Tours Break All Records for Financial Success



Claudia Pollack guides a group through a foyer on South Battery.

The Preservation Society's Fall Candlelight Tours of Homes & Gardens for 2006 were the most financially successful in the 30 year history of the Society's tours. In 2006, the door of hospitality to 198 different properties was graciously opened to visitors from virtually all over the world. Many of these properties (private homes, gardens and historic public buildings) had never previously been offered on our tours.

According to the Society's Tour Director, Ginger Scully, more than 700 volunteers were recruited, trained, organized and utilized to make the 2006 tour schedule possible. "In addition to having a great team of property owners and volunteers, we were also fortunate in terms of the weather," she pointed out, "During the six weeks of the tours, we only had two days of rain."

"A large percentage of our ticket buyers were repeat customers," she added, "These were people who choose to make our tours a regular feature in their annual vacation travel plans." An independent survey conducted by the College of Charleston's Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management showed that the tours were especially popular with out-of-state visitors (72%) and that the vast majority of ticket buyers (80%) considered their experience to be "educational." Also, the way our tickets are sold is keeping pace with the rapid advancements in business technology.

Internet vacation planning is becoming increasingly more popular and people are also more comfortable with on-line ticket buying for events they plan to enjoy while visiting here, according to the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

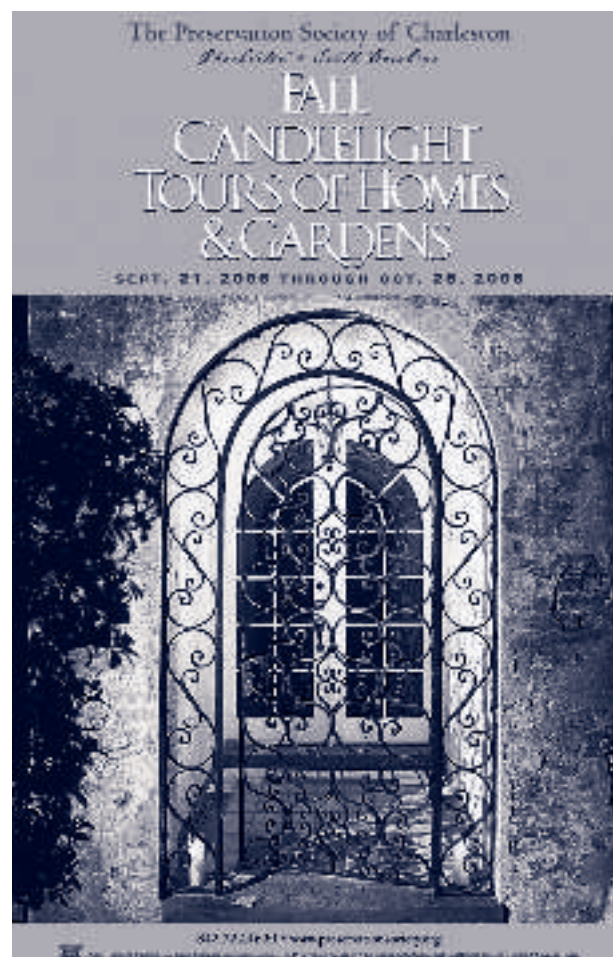
"We've responded to these changes," adds Ginger Scully, "in the way we plan and market the tours. Because we've done more internet marketing, we've been able to save on printing costs and other advertising and promotional overhead which further serves to benefit our fundraising goals."

"Managing change is always a challenge," she adds. "We strive to provide our loyal tour patrons with as many options as possible at the most practical and convenient times. To that end, we experimented with offering Sunday afternoon tours – which turned out to be a popular choice. We also added an Upper South Battery Tour featuring early 20th century Charleston homes which was well-received by the public."

The tour committee for 2007 has already begun preliminary planning for next year. Chairman of this group is Mr. Kevin Eberle with Mrs. Lizz Ackerman, Mr. Gene Brown, Dr. John DuBose, Mrs. Jane Locke, Mrs. Tiffany Silverman and Mr. John Stewart assisting as committee members. Next year's tours will be held for five weeks (September 27th to October 28th) and feature offerings on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Because of the added afternoon tours, the word "candlelight" has officially been dropped from the tour's name. Mark the dates on your new 2007 calendars and plan on being a Preservation Society tour volunteer!



Guests get a tour of a garden on East Battery.



A (NEW) LIGHT IN THE WINDOW AT OUR BOOK AND GIFT SHOP



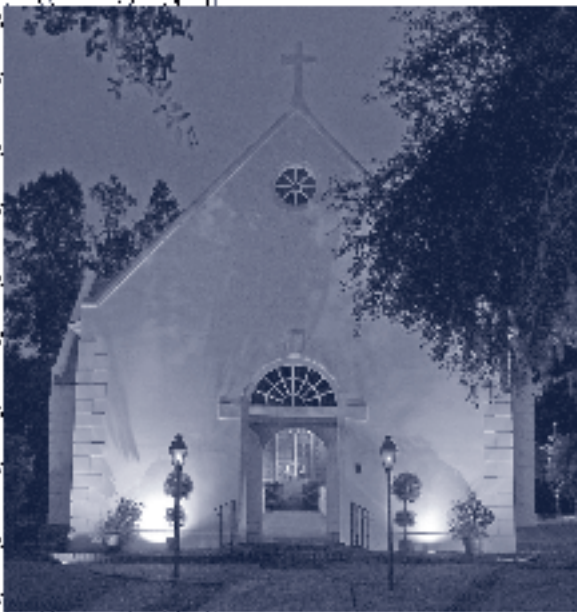
There seems to be no end to the references of “a light in the window” as a metaphor for hospitality and welcome to weary travelers. It appears in poems, novels, movies, and even one old Welsh ballad sung by weary coal miners returning home from their labors deep underground. The lit lantern symbolizes all that is good, safe and warm awaiting inside by hearth and home.

Recently, the Society’s Book and Gift Shop at 147 King Street received a new lantern to hang above the front door. It offers a bright new welcome to shoppers and staff entering the building via our King Street entrance. The brass and copper lantern, designed by Society past-president Glenn Keyes is in keeping with the building’s vintage and style. It was fabricated and donated to the Preservation Society of Charleston by The Urban Electric Company, 438 King Street, whose catalogue of similar styles is on their website at www.urban-electricco.com.

Come visit us and look over our attractive display of books, gift items and other fine merchandise on display in our downtown King Street location. We’ll leave a light on in the window for you.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JIM RAMSEY



The man you see competently ringing up all those sales at the Holiday Book Signing in December has all the earmarks of a full-time Preservation Society staffer, but the fact is – he’s a volunteer. According to Shop Manager Cynthia Setnicka, Jim Ramsay is more than a volunteer; he’s a “special blessing.”

“You’ll find Jim working at the shop at least once (and sometimes twice) a week,” she adds, “and I can’t think of anything he isn’t prepared or willing to do. Jim is a joy to work with and he’s extremely capable.”

Jim Ramsay is a native of Pennsylvania. He grew up in Pittsburgh and did his undergraduate studies at nearby Grove City College. He went on to earn his MBA Degree from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. Then he began a 35-year career with U.S. Steel Corporation where he worked in production planning, scheduling and inventory control dealing with vast quantities of industrial materiel.

During his tenure with U.S. Steel, the company transferred him twice; once to Birmingham, Alabama, and later to Lorain, Ohio. With this kind of professional background, the rigors of a Holiday Book Signing – even the busiest one – must seem like a piece of cake.

Jim’s fascination with the all things Charleston began with a visit to the Holy City in 1998. The next step was purchasing a condo on the Isle of Palms the following year. While in Charleston taking a fall house tour in 2003, a chance meeting with Executive Director Cynthia Jenkins sparked his interest in joining the Preservation Society. His attraction to our city was growing. Seasonal and holiday visits only whetted his appetite for spending more time here and eventually he decided to make the move permanent in 2005.

A life-long devotee to travel, he went on the Society’s spring tour to Mt. Vernon in 2005 and then to Winterthur the following year. “I really enjoy the Society’s approach to these study tours,” Jim says, “The attention to detail is impressive and the ‘behind the scenes’ access to historic sites always makes each trip a unique adventure.”

His local volunteer involvement started with being a docent at the Edmundston-Alston House early in 2006 and he became involved with the shop shortly thereafter.

Thank you, Jim, your help is greatly appreciated.

10th Annual Holiday Book Signing; Fun for Authors and Readers Alike

Photos courtesy of Natasha Lawrence

On December 7th, the Preservation Society of Charleston held its annual Holiday Book signing in the Society's Book and Gift Shop with 43 local and regional authors on hand and a full house of eager shoppers. Not only was this festive evening a great opportunity for members to meet a wide variety of literary figures and purchase their signed works as Christmas gifts, it was an enjoyable social evening for the authors as well, all of whom are members of the Society. A record number of authors participated in the event and shoppers were delighted to find many hard-to-find titles and the most-recently-released books popular with holiday shoppers.

Complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres were served throughout the evening while members and shoppers passing by browsed through stacks of publications containing Charleston and/or Lowcountry themes. Many shoppers found interesting gift merchandise in the shop, as well, to help Santa fulfill those Christmas "wishes" he receives as the year winds down.

Special thanks go to the fine Charleston restaurants who generously donated the delicious hors d'oeuvres served throughout the evening. They include **Al di La, Anson, Bocci's, Chai's Lounge and Tapas, Charleston Place, FIG, FISH, Garibaldi's, Hamby's, Hominy Grill, Magnolias, Market Pavilion Grill 225, Maverick Southern Kitchens, and Pane e Vino.**



Jonathan Poston and Barbara Bellows share a smile with the photographer



Matt and Ted Lee were kept busy signing their recently released *Lee Bros. Southern Cook Book*



Author, Mary Whyte chats with one of her many adoring fans



There's always a crowd in the children's literature corner!

A Conversation with Josh Martin: Input on the City's New Preservation Plan

Editor's Note: The featured speaker at the March 2007 membership meeting was Josh Martin, the City of Charleston's (relatively new) Director of Planning, Preservation, Neighborhoods, and Economic Innovation. He has an impressive grasp of the latest urban planning trends currently being explored in local, regional, national and even international forums. Part of his job is to keep a navigational eye on tomorrow. Indeed, his enthusiasm for the subject – so apparent at the Society's membership meeting – was equally evident when he recently stopped by our King Street offices to discuss a number of planning issues – including the City's new Preservation Plan. The following is comprised from those conversations as well subsequent e-mails:

Question: When you were Director of Community Development for Bluffton, what lessons did you learn that you can apply to the planning process for Charleston?

Answer: First of all, we had to admit (to ourselves and to everyone in the path of the wave of development approaching Bluffton) a fundamental truth: that growth was inevitable. It was totally unrealistic to think it would not happen. Once that was decided, we knew every tract of land annexed to the city would be annexed for development and therefore we planned accordingly – managing that change as wisely as we could. We tried to stay abreast of current market trends and guide developers toward what consumers wanted. For instance, there was a shift away from country club/golf course developments to properties with a more environmental/stewardship feeling. The “new” people (moving to Bluffton) were more interested in nature and the land, enjoying its history and its peoples. Knowing this helped us encourage developers to provide better product and thus use the land more wisely.

Unlike a developer-created community or manufactured “place,” the village of Bluffton had its own identity, a pre-existing sense of place, and in 1999 they designated their Historic District to preserve those values when it was still a village of about 600 people.

Clearly, Charleston is an entity that has a keen sense of place. Its original Historic District dates back to the early 1930s. It's not an easy thing to do – to socially program a given sense of place where diverse values are a strong part of that reality. One wants to avoid creating what I call “an architectural petting zoo” of artificial quaintness. It involves more than just land planning; it includes concepts like form-based and smart-based codes, context-sensitive zoning, and careful monitoring the public attitudes about that given place. It's important to remember the public decides what these values are. That's why the new Preservation Plan is so important; it is a “check-up” to make sure we're in tune with these public values and attitudes.

Question: What do you feel will be the greatest change in Charleston a decade from now? How can urban planning help or hinder that transformation?

Answer: I believe we will be looking at it (future growth) from a renewable resource perspective; i.e. the “green building” point of view. We'll be looking at historic architecture and new construction with a conscience for energy conservation. We'll be finding new and more effective ways to use and protect our traditional building materials.

The classic Charleston Single House is a perfect example. Instead of seeing it purely as a design or a footprint on a particular homesite, we'll study it more as a creative solution to the challenges of the City's climate and weather – learning new things from the working solutions of the past.

Question: For areas of the City that are off the peninsula, what are some effective ways to maintain the character of these neighborhoods?

Answer: The City of Charleston has changed its sense of place by virtue of expansion of the central city. It is energized by its extensions – including West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island, Daniel Island, and the Cainhoy Peninsula. We as City officials (government) must respond to this changing landscape by rethinking our one-size-fits-all zoning ordinance. A forested area on the Cainhoy

Peninsula, the Charleston Single House on Tradd Street, and the suburban home within Carolina Bay all deserve context sensitive codes that foster the same principles that constructed this great place (the peninsula). While we apply these principles we need to respect the context of each place and remind ourselves that great places take time.

When indulging the current lessons of place, we must look to the future and understand challenges to come. I believe the context-sensitive approach to zoning/development standards yields the preservation of place. Sensitivity to context is crucial in the understanding of this. Neighborhoods differ and our regulations/codes should be flexible to adapt to the varying landscapes and combinations of physical form.

*It's not an easy thing to do—
to socially program a given sense of place
where diverse values are a strong part of that reality.
One wants to avoid creating what I call
“an architectural petting zoo”
of artificial quaintness.*

Question: Now that you've been in Charleston for awhile, what do you see are the primary successes and failures in preserving Charleston's historic and architectural character?

Answer: There are many more successes than failures in terms of city planning. Perhaps it is human nature to forget or overlook the success we've enjoyed and to focus on things people don't like. But everyone needs to realize there are many, many inappropriate proposals and planning ideas that are presented to the City and deflected long before they ever reach the forum of the B.A.R. (Board of Architectural Review).

The success of codes and ordinances are a mixed blessing for urban plan-

The intention is that the Preservation Plan will be a useful and working reflection of public values.

ners. The great irony for preservationists is the fact that those same laws meant to protect and preserve the historic districts in America's most distinctive cities would make the building of those unique cities unlawful in the first place.

When the consultants have finished their draft of the City's new Preservation Plan (due to be completed in September, 2007), what will be the process by which the document is made public before it can become law?

There will be numerous opportunities for input on the Preservation Plan via public hearings before scheduled commission and board reviews. And don't forget – the entire document will be available to anyone via the City's website www.ci.charleston.sc.us. Anyone will be able to review the draft at any time of day or night and leave a comment via the website or they may choose to personally e-mail a member of the staff. In other words, there's an avenue of communication open to everyone who wants to participate in the process. The intention is that the Preservation Plan will be a useful and working reflection of public values.

In profile: Josh Martin, A.I.C.P., C.N.U.

Josh Martin was born and raised in Burlington, Kentucky, on a family beef cattle farm. He attended Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, graduating summa cum laude in 2001 with a degree in Government. Martin then attended Clemson University pursuing a Masters of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) degree. During that time, he also completed a study abroad program in Indonesia.

Martin began his professional career in Bluffton, South Carolina, as Senior Planner in the Town's Community Development Department. He helped create their first Community Development Department writing grants and administering zoning and development standard ordinances. By 2003, Martin was named Director of Development for the whole department – serving as project manager for several master plan/development plan reviews, representing the town in annexation matters, as well as designing and developing the department's first website.

In 2004, Martin was named Bluffton Town Manager, administering operations of the fastest growing community in South Carolina. There, he directed, managed, and supervised all activities of the Community Development, Administration, Judicial, and Police Departments (58 staff members and a \$7 million operating budget). Martin was also responsible for developing Bluffton's Old Town Master Planning Effort which was conducted by the firm of Dover, Kohl, and Partners. He has served as a Board Member for the Beaufort County Open Land Trust and Technical College of the Lowcountry and he has been active in the American Institute of Certified Urban Planners as well as the Congress for New Urbanism and the Seaside Institute.

For the past six months, Josh Martin has been Director of Planning, Preservation, Neighborhoods and Economic Innovation for the City of Charleston.



Book Signing

Saturday, April 21

Tara Guerard, Wedding and Event Designer and author of the newly released *Southern Weddings: New Looks from the Old South*

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Please see our website or call us for more details.
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NEW IDEAS ILLUMINATE AN OLD TREASURE TROVE: THE CHARLESTON LIBRARY SOCIETY TODAY

Compared to the relatively young Preservation Society of Charleston (founded in 1920), the Charleston Library Society, located at 164 King Street, is a cultural dinosaur with traceable footprints leading back almost to the dawn of Charles Towne. They began collecting materials in 1748! And yet, we two organizations are more than just neighbors along the city's legendary commercial path known as King Street. We are close friends. Their mission of preserving the cultural history of Charleston is one of our goals, too. And their membership rolls and ours share many names in common. Many, if not most, of the *Preservation Progress* editors during the past 50 years have been members of the Library Society, as well. Or, they have done research in the fascinating archives housed behind the doors of their handsome, white, Beaux Arts building designed in 1914 by the architectural firm McGoodwin and Hawley of Philadelphia, PA.

The Library Society is considered to be the third-oldest private library organization in the United States, according to Charleston chronicler Jonathan H. Poston. Its organizers were a mini cross-section of 18th century Charles Towne – colonial citizens who wanted to keep abreast of the latest news and books from England. Among the founders were two lawyers, two planters, a school master, a physician, and one peruke-maker (a manufacturer of fine wigs for ladies and gentlemen of high fashion). Their educational intentions were crystallized in the words of one founder who put it this way, “(so that) the children would not grow up to be savages.”

They began to collect books and newspapers, the daily correspondence of business leaders and political figures of the day; they even collected scientific instruments and the observations of early Charlestonians stimulated by the Age of Enlightenment. They featured an exhibition entitled “Electricity” as early as 1767. Their educational efforts were instrumental in the founding of the College of Charleston (in 1770, and officially chartered in 1785), the Charleston Museum (in 1773), and the South Carolina Historical Society (in 1855).

Sadly, their earliest collection was lost in the city fire of 1778. Undaunted by this tragedy, however, they resumed collecting materials and housed them on the

third floor of the Charleston County Courthouse until 1835. At that time, they moved to 50 Broad Street, a vacated bank building formerly home to the Bank of South Carolina. This was their home until 1914. During the war years of 1861-1865, part of the collection was sent to the state capital for safe-keeping. How it escaped destruction in when Columbia was burned in February of 1865 is unclear. But when the collection returned to Charleston, it was augmented by a merger with the Apprentice's Library, another educational entity rendered homeless by the Civil War.



The Library Society's Beaux Arts facade on King Street.

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The early social life of Charleston was very much influenced by the famous (some would say infamous) South Carolina Jockey Club which operated its popular race track where Hampton Park now stands. In 1900, that organization was finally disbanded and the funds from the sale of the old Washington Race Course were donated to the Library Society. A charming vestige of that time is the name assigned to the Society's book fund which supports additions to the collection even today – still known as "The Jockey Club Fund."

For years, the Library Society was mainly the haunt of serious scholars and experienced genealogists, the depth and breadth of its collection known only to the members who numbered less than 1,000. Not many researchers were totally comfortable dealing with hand-written card catalogues and working with archival materials in less-than-high-tech ways. But a new era is dawning with the appointment of Dr. W. Eric Emerson as the Society's first full-time executive director.

Preservation Society members will know Dr. Emerson as former executive director of the South Carolina Historical Society. They will also recall his stirring discussion at the membership meeting last spring where he profiled his fascinating book, *Sons of Privilege: The Charleston Light Dragoons in the Civil War*. He brings a refreshing new attitude toward opening the Society's collection to new audiences. "In the weeks ahead, we will begin the process of formulating a strategic plan for the Society's future," he says.

"I believe our history and the richness of our collections dictates that we do more than serve as a private, local lending library," Dr. Emerson adds. "The Library Society should play an active role in educating members of our community through programming, publications, and other forms of outreach. With our new website, we hope to launch an online catalog of our holdings as soon as later this year." This will literally open the collection to new worlds – shining new light on Charleston and South Carolina's complex and fascinating heritage.

Today, the Library Society is full-service offering a wide range of membership categories for individuals, families, and businesses. Short-term researchers may pay a small daily fee. Researchers from all over the world access the collection in person and by correspondence – accessing the Society's rare books, maps, periodicals, manuscripts, clippings, directories, and almanacs dealing with Charleston, South Carolina, and the South. For membership information, call (843) 723-9912 or visit www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org.



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CHARLESTON'S PRESERVATION ETHIC

BY ROBERT P. STOCKTON



The 1803 Joseph Manigault House as it appeared about 1920.

Editor's Note: *If imitation is the highest form of flattery, then repetition must be very close behind. During our three-issue retrospective, reviewing the 50-year history of Preservation Progress, we "rediscovered" many articles that were particularly insightful and genuinely inspiring. Some of them were sage bellwethers of future preservation issues facing the City of Charleston. Among the latter is the following essay by Robert Stockton first published in the Spring, 1993 issue. As Charleston undertakes the task of updating the city's Preservation Plan (last updated in 1974), it is appropriate to revisit the roots of the movement. The following is the story of how we began to preserve and protect Charleston's unique architectural heritage – as it was passed on to our generation and as we, in turn, pass it on to the next.*

Charleston's preservation movement did not spring forth from the mind of Susan Pringle Frost in 1920, like Athena springing (fully armed) from the head of Zeus. The preservation impulse had existed in the city long before Susan Pringle Frost was born. The earliest documented articulation of that reverence for the city's historic architecture occurred in 1835, when the congregation of St. Philip's was opting to reconstruct its firedestroyed colonial church, in lieu of adopting a more modern style. Referring to that decision,

a member expressed the view, in a letter to the *Charleston Gospel Messenger*:

"Let the old large private dwellings in Charleston be compared with those more recently built, and I am very much mistaken, if the general, as well as the scientific, and the tasteful eye will not give the former the reference. The comparison holds good in favour of the old public buildings also and more particularly of the Churches.... York-minster was so re-built as to be scarcely distinguishable from its predecessor, and why not St. Philip's?"

Charleston could claim a connection to the first

historic preservation organization in the United States: the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Ann Pamela Cunningham, founder of the movement to rescue the home of President George Washington from development, made her first appeal for help in a letter to the *Charleston Mercury* in 1853. Miss Cunningham, a South Carolinian, must have realized that she would find a receptive audience in Charleston.

Her contemporary, the novelist and architectural critic William Gilmore Simms, writing for *Harper's* in 1857, described two Charlestons: "the

old and the new – representing rival communities,” The old Charleston, he said, “is formidable in sheer stubbornness, and his very vis inertia makes him immovable.”

That strong streak of conservatism in Charleston manifested itself at a relatively early time (in chronological relation to the historic preservation movement in Europe and America) in the form of a reverence for historic buildings. It is probably that factor, more than good fortune or any other reason, which explains the survival of so much historic architecture in Charleston.

The reverence of Charlestonians for their city led them to “spend a great deal of money,” according to Simms, “Furnishing up the old.” This characteristic behavior also caught the attention of a New York visitor in 1860 who expressed admiration for Charlestonians who lived in “quaint old residences – (showing their occupants had grandparents),” Many other such bits of evidence could be cited as documentation of the city’s early preservation ethic.

Arthur Mazyck captured the essence of his native city’s magic in the introduction to his Guidebook to Charleston in 1875:

“Beautiful as a dream, tinged with romance, consecrated by tradition, glorified by history, rising from the very bosom of the waves, like a fairy city created by the enchanter’s wand...That was, and is, Charleston thanks to her people’s preservation ethic.”

The most compelling evidence, however, is the sheer number of historic buildings that have survived. That they could have been preserved by accident is not a logical concept. Nor can the frequently-cited role of post-Civil War poverty rationally explain the preservation of the city.

In the period following World War I, Charleston became a way stop for affluent travelers on the automobile route from New York to Florida. The automobiles seemed to have an unquenchable thirst for gasoline, and some of their occupants expressed an alarming avidity for collecting colonial woodwork, ironwork and other movable historic resources. The threat of this new Northern invasion led to the formation of the first city-based historic preservation organization in the South. The immediate impetus was to protect Gabriel Manigault’s masterpiece, the house designed circa 1803 by the “gentleman architect” for his brother Joseph, which was to be replaced by a temple of the new order – a gasoline station. Charlestonians for the first time found it necessary to formally organize to promote their preservation ethic.

It was in 1920 that thirty-two zealots for the architectural beauty of Charleston met to form the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, and Miss Susan Pringle Frost was elected as the first president. A decade later, they were moved to gird their principles with legal reinforcements. It is now known as the Preservation Society of Charleston.

The crisis of the Manigault House was soon followed by another: the Heyward-Washington House was in great danger of having its valuable circa 1770 woodwork removed by a collector. The stories of the long and arduous but ultimately successful efforts to rescue the Manigault House and the Heyward-Washington House are now classic epics of the preservation movement.

But losses continued, including an entire building, the circa 1772 William Brisbane House (also known as the Mansion House), which was dismantled by a collector. It was obvious that neither the Society, nor the Charleston preservation ethic, were strong enough to prevent the piece-meal destruction of the city without the backing of some legal authority.

Fortunately for the future of the historic city and its preservation community, the mayor at the time was Thomas Porcher Stoney, scion of an old planter family and a vigorous champion of his city’s heritage. In 1929 he

began laying the foundation for Charleston’s most important contribution to the preservation movement; the Historic Zoning Ordinance of 1931. This landmark in preservation law, the first such ordinance in the nation, was the culmination of much careful consideration by local civic leaders. It also was legitimized by the advice of the proverbial “expert from out of town,” the firm of Morris Knowles of Pittsburgh, PA, nationally prominent in the fields of city planning and engineering.

The ordinance provided for the designation of a defined historic district. Initially the district included a small area of the oldest part of the city, but the ordinance allowed for that to be expanded in the future. The Board of Architectural Review was mandated jurisdiction over demolition and alteration of historic buildings and over construction of new buildings in the district.

The precedent-setting importance of the ordinance was that it represented a decisive step in the evolution of the historic preservation movement. It went beyond concern for individual buildings with important historical associations, to a more comprehensive concern for the historic environment. Thus, the ordinance gave legal weight to the Charleston preservation ethic, which for generations had been articulated by Charlestonians as a love of the city – not merely as collection of historic buildings, but as a historic environment possessing a special magic.

The rather romantic notion of “preservation through poverty” is negated by the actions of some local property owners who, during the Great Depression, demolished their old buildings in order to reduce their tax liability. Elizabeth O’Neill Verner, a notable preservation advocate as well as a notable artist, made

a list of 30 historic buildings demolished for that reason during the summer of 1933.

Mrs. Verner, through her art, conveyed an aesthetic appreciation for Charleston’s architectural heritage, but her work also was imbued with a quality beyond aesthetics. It conveyed a sense of the intense love of Charlestonians – native and adopted – for the city itself. It is undeniable that the emotional element has always been a strong component of Charleston’s preservation ethic.

To Albert Simons, who was Charleston’s premier preservation architect for most of the twentieth century, Charleston’s preservation ethic was no mystery; he believed that it was part of the Charleston persona. He said that Charlestonians have “a certain amount of personal vanity invested in this city, and when they see something that they love and cherish destroyed, it hurts their vanity. They feel that their treasures have been diminished and they take it very personally.”

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Looking Forward/Looking Back

A Question of Urban Density For 150 Wentworth Street



Photo courtesy of the *Post & Courier*.

One of the most dramatic examples of the failure of Charleston's current zoning ordinance to protect a property within the Historic District from overdevelopment is the proposed new project at 150 Wentworth Street. The address is in the Harleston Village neighborhood and presently the site of McAlister-Smith funeral home.

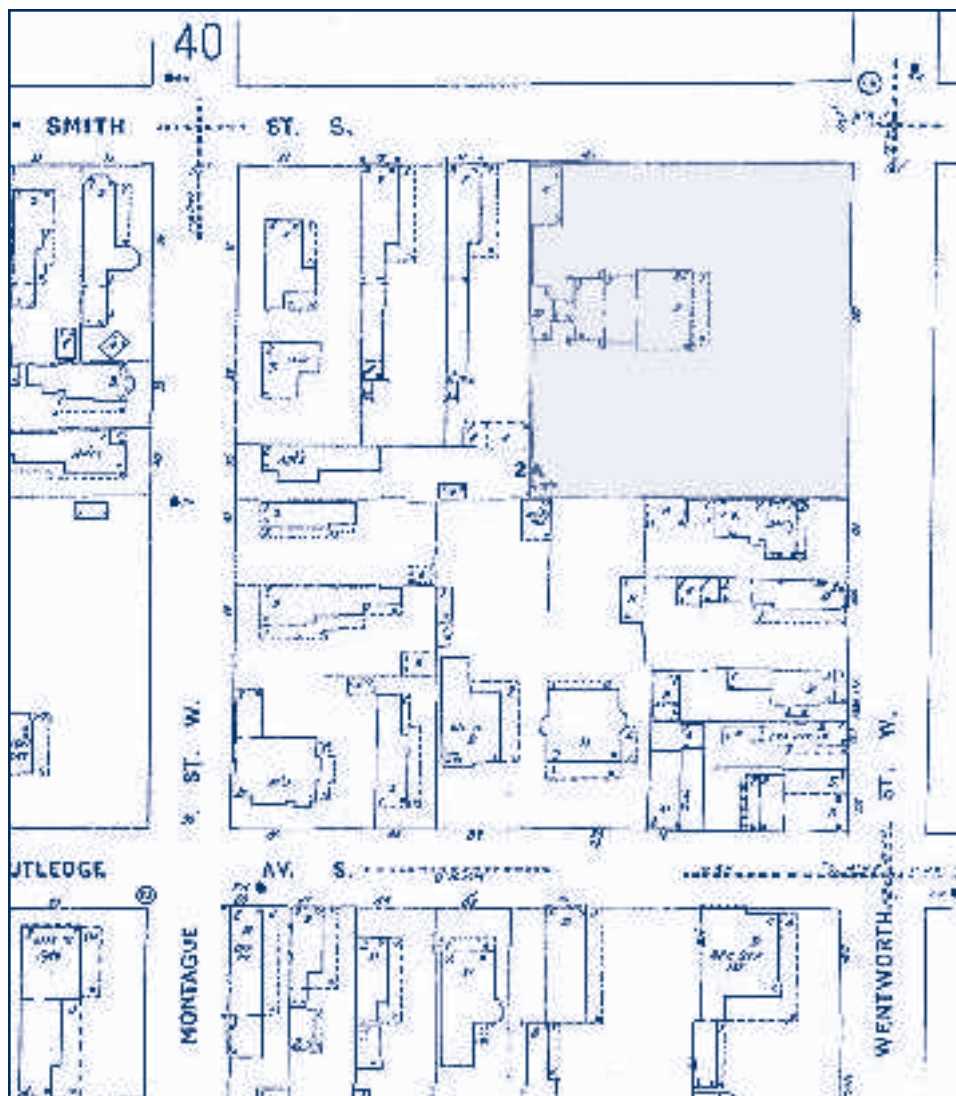
Shown at left in this archival photograph is the property as it appeared before 1956. The classic Charleston Double House built on that site in the 1850s was the home of 19th century Charleston businessman and civic leader Christopher Memminger. His house, like those built in the neighborhood adjacent to it, was a single family residence with a series of support buildings surrounded by a large garden and many trees.

The Sanborn (fire) insurance maps (drawn as recently as 1955) show the population density of that block had remained predominantly single-family half-way into the 20th century. In 1956, the old Memminger house was demolished and replaced by the present building which has stood on the site for over half a century.

Today, there are plans to replace the McAlister Funeral Home with a condominium project. The density of this proposed project is 17 units. This would substantially change the character of that block in Harleston Village – imposing all the ramifications associated with increased urban density. This includes an additional volume of

traffic seeking access to and egress from Wentworth and Smith streets (already overcrowded), more strain on the infrastructure of services and utilities, plus the further "canyonization" of the streetscape. In fact, the population density of the condominium project – as proposed – would actually exceed the density of the entire block as it was in the 1955 Sanborn map (left).

"This is a classic example of how our present zoning ordinance is insensitive to the historic and architectural character of a streetscape or neighborhood. The proposed condominium project for 150 Wentworth Street illustrates an ever-increasing trend to redevelop lots in the historic district with out-of-scale, high-density new construction. In both residential and commercial zones, the loss of these historic settings (the feeling and associations that accompany them) is diminishing the quality and character of the entire city.



Sanborne Map 1955.



The funeral home facility built in 1956.



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