

PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

DISCOVERING YOUR HOUSE'S HISTORY

Interested in knowing about the history of your old house or building? There are many avenues of research that can reveal a wealth of information on building history (like past owners, the exact date of construction, and when and what changes have been made); and many of these avenues can be explored without leaving home! Check out the information below and get ready to take a step back in time...

FIRST STEPS: ONLINE RESEARCH

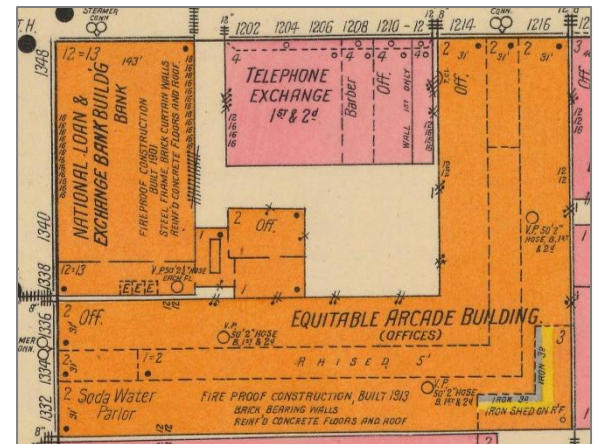
GIS and Assessor Info: Richland County [Online GIS and Assessor Data View](#) provide a good starting point to get basic information about your property such as square footage, legal description, and sales history without digging through your filing cabinets. The sales history lists the book and page of the recorded deeds which gives a place to start if you want to do further deed research. Assessor info also lists date of construction, but be careful: the listed date of construction for buildings built after 1950 tend to be accurate, but since documentation of older properties can be hard to find you may want to double check the date of construction for older buildings (try some of the sources below to double check!)

Sanborn Maps: Sanborn Maps were produced starting in the 19th century for the use of fire insurance companies. These detailed maps show the size, shape, and materials of residential and commercial buildings in cities throughout the US. Full sets of late 19th and early 20th century [Columbia Sanborn Maps](#) are available online through South Caroliniana Library Digital Collections. Looking at the maps over time will illustrate changes made to individual buildings and to the City as a whole (they are also just really fun to look at!).

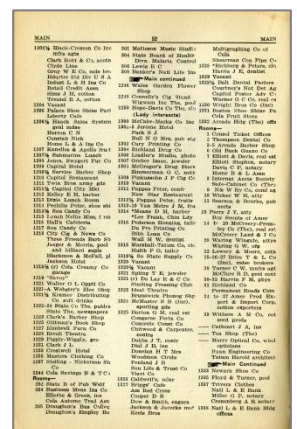
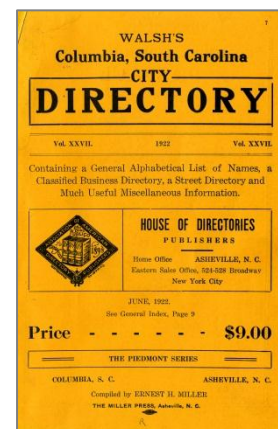
Newspapers: [Newsbank](#) (available through Richland Library online) offers over 200 years worth of digitized South Carolina newspapers from 34 publications. A quick search for your address can turn up the names of past owners, For Sale advertisements, and other interesting bits of information that can help you start to piece together the history of your home. Looking for older Columbia history? Digitized copies of the [Daily Phoenix](#), Columbia's post-Civil War newspaper, are available through the [Library of Congress](#).

Photos: Photo collections that focus on Columbia's built environment from as early as the 1800s are available online through Richland Library and USC. Collections like the [Russell Maxey](#) and [Mable Payne](#) photographs (available through [Richland Library](#)), and the [Joseph Winter](#) and [John Hensel](#) photos (available through [USC Digital Collections](#)) are a good place to start looking for images of older Columbia buildings.

City of Columbia Records: With over 200 years worth of history, the City of Columbia [Permit and Plumbing Books](#) from the 1930s - 1950s can provide information on date of construction and building alterations. [City Directories](#) (available online by the [South Carolina Digital Library](#) project up to 1927) provides lists of City residents and businesses as well as a street-by-street listing of building occupants.



Clip of 1919 Sanborn Map showing the Arcade Building (1332 Main Street) and the National Loan & Exchange Bank Building known today as the Barringer Building (corner Main and Washington, famous as being the state's first skyscraper); Orange symbolizes fireproof construction, pink is for brick construction, and yellow is for wood frame.



Cover and excerpt from 1922 Columbia City Directory

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Online research can only get you so far. Some records are not available online and will require in person search at local libraries and archives. For instance, Columbia Sanborn Maps are available online up to the 1920s but if your house was built after that then you may need to take a look at the physical 1950s Sanborns which are available by request at the South Caroliniana Library.

Visiting the Register of Deeds: Other historical resources, like deeds, are only available via an in-person search through records. The Register of Deeds has years and years worth of real estate information for Richland County, including deeds, titles, and probate records. Tracking your property backwards through time will give you information about when your house was built and who owned your property throughout its history. While staff at the Register of Deeds can help you get started they cannot do the search for you; so if you go down this route, be sure you have a few hours (or a few days) to dive into the records.

DON'T FORGET TO ASK AROUND

You never know where a great source of information might come from. Old neighborhood residents might have juicy information about past owners and any changes they made that wouldn't be found in the local newspaper. Information might also be found through Historic Columbia Foundation or even the City preservation office. It can never hurt just to reach out and ask. The amount of information found through each source may not be much, but every little bit can help paint the bigger picture of your building's history. Just remember to have fun with it!

FURTHER READING

For more ideas on how to unlock the hidden mysteries of your historic building, check out the following online articles:

From the National Trust for Historic Preservation: 10 Ways to Research Your Home's History-

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-tips-toolshomep-10-ways-research-homes-history>

How to Research Your House's History: Part Two-

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/how-to-research-your-houses-history-part-two>

From This Old House Magazine: How to Research the History of Your House-

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/ideas/how-to-research-history-your-house>

From Curbed Handbook: Historic House Research: 7 Steps To Learning the Story of Your Home-

<https://www.curbed.com/2017/1/19/14310362/historic-house-research-how-to>

LOCATIONS AND CONTACTS:

Richland Library Main, Walker Local History Room:

1431 Assembly Street, Columbia, SC
Hours: Sunday: 2:00-6:00pm,
Monday - Thursday: 9:00am – 9:00pm,
Friday - Saturday: 9:00am – 6:00pm
Phone: 803-929-3402
<http://localhistory.richlandlibrary.com/>

Richland County Register of Deeds,
Located in the Richland County Judicial Center:

1701 Main Street, Rm 101, Columbia, SC
Hours: M-F 8:30am-5:00pm
Phone: 803-576-1910 or 803-576-1917
Email: RodCustomerService@rcgov.us
<http://www.richlandonline.com/Government/Departments/Business-Operations/Register-of-Deeds>

South Caroliniana Library:

(located in the Graniteville Room, on the Mezzanine level of Thomas Cooper Library (1322 Greene Street), while the Caroliniana's historic building undergoes renovations)

Hours: M-F: 8:30am – 5:00pm
Phone: 803-777-3132
Email: sclref@mailbox.sc.edu
<http://library.sc.edu/p/Collections/SCL>

South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Research Room:

8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC
Hours: Tuesday – Friday: 8:30am – 5:00pm, Saturday: 8:30am – 12:00pm and 1:00pm – 5:00pm
Phone: 803-896-6104
<http://archives.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Historic Columbia Foundation:

1601 Richland Street Columbia, SC
Phone: 803-252-7742
<https://www.historiccolumbia.org/>



We Are Columbia

This newsletter was created by the Preservation Staff of the City of Columbia's Planning and Development Services Department. If you have any questions about your specific historic property please contact your district's preservation planner. Contact information can be found on our [website](#). If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list please send an email to preservation@columbiasc.net.