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BUILDING HISTORY RESOURCE GUIDE

These are the resources that we suggest researchers consult when researching a building's history at the Georgia Historical Society. This is a non-exhaustive list, but includes the most commonly used resources. There are many useful published sources in the collection; researchers should search the online catalog to identify other potential sources. To make searching easier, researchers should know the building's street address, lot number and ward.

Clippings/Vertical Files: Subject, Biography, and Genealogy. The biography and genealogy files can provide information about an owner, builder, or architect. The subject files can include newspaper clipping, other articles, pamphlets, etc., about your building. Helpful subjects to search include Buildings, Businesses, and Neighborhoods.

Historic Savannah: Provides the construction date, original owner and sometimes the builder/architect for selected properties in the Historic District. Now in its 3rd edition.

Ward Notebooks: Used in conjunction with *Historic Savannah*, these are the research notes compiled by Mary Morrison that include former owners and improvements of a property. They are organized by ward and lot, and can include neighborhoods, such as Ardsley Park, outside the downtown Landmark Historic District.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: From 1884, 1888, 1898, 1898 with paste-ins to 1914, 1916, 1916 with paste-ins to 1949, 1922, 1954, and 1954 with paste-ins to 1973. These show the footprint of a building, and what materials were used in its construction. They can be useful for tracking a property's development, pinpointing location and determining the nature of surrounding structures. In a variety of formats: hardcopy, online (through the Digital Library of Georgia), and microfilm.

Architect/Builder/Craftsman Database: Contains an indexed listing of architects, builders, and craftsmen, etc., referring to newspaper articles in which the person, or his work, is featured. The database is accessible from the public access terminals in the reading room, and a hardcopy version is in a black binder near the ward notebooks.

Savannah Newspapers: We have the indices for 1763-1891 and 1929-1985 bound and 1891-1895 on microfilm. *Please note: there is no index for the period September 1895- May 1929.* All newspapers are available on microfilm for 1763-present.

City Directories: May provide the name, spouse, occupation and place of employment for the resident of a building. The directories cover the years 1858-2002, with a few gaps. Beginning in 1889 a street index is included allowing researchers to look up a property by street address.

Miscellaneous Surveys: Various plans, surveys, reports and regulations on Savannah and the surrounding areas. These can be useful for areas not in the Landmark Historic District.

Municipal Reports (1856-1923): These can tell when a property received electricity, sewer, paving, or other city services. Mayor's reports are available online through the Digital Library of Georgia.

Archival Collections

The following collections are especially useful for building research. This is a brief description of some of the materials available. Researchers will need to consult the finding aid to determine exactly which box(es) to request from any given collection. To request material researchers will need the collection name, number and the box number(s) to be pulled. The finding aids/inventories for all archival collections are located opposite the reference desk in the series of blue binders.

Collections MS 1360 and MS 1361PH: These are two of the largest photo collections at GHS. The Cordray-Foltz Collection, 1360, is comprised of images from the Cordray and Foltz Photography Studios in Savannah, c. 1890-1960. The GHS Photo Collection, 1361PH, is a collection of images from various sources. Both are arranged by subject and contain street scenes, images of specific buildings and events, as well as other subjects. 1361PH contains images of dwellings listed by street address.

Robert L. Heriot Photo Collection (MS 1371): 40 boxes of copy prints, proof prints and negatives, including images of streets, buildings, business, events and aerial views of Savannah (1908-1986; bulk 1950-1986).

Edward Girard Photo Collection (MS 1374): 320 Savannah-area photos (1905-1952).

Midtown Savannah Photo Collection (MS 1686): 450 photos of midtown (1950-1960s).

Savannah Jewish Archives Visual Materials: Photos, albums, blueprints and drawings

Other Photographs: Please consult the visual materials collections binder to find additional collections containing photographs.

City of Savannah Tax Assessment Records (MS 5600-90): These records are on microfilm and cover the years 1854-1912, with some gaps.

The Walter Hartridge Collection, (MS 1349): A vast collection of research notes compiled by local historian Walter C. Hartridge. Includes notes on various Savannah homes and buildings, some of which have since been demolished.

Lawyers Title Insurance, (MS 1599): This collection covers dates 1922-1979 and consists of title insurance policies. The policy may include property reports, blueprints, notes on the condition of the property and various other building attributes.

Architectural Drawings: There are several places to search: The "Architectural Drawings" index, Cletus Bergen Drawings binder (VM 1363), the manuscripts index and the online catalog.

Maps: The City of Savannah Map, 1953, includes ward names and lot numbers. It is located behind the William Hodgson portrait at the far wall. Also useful is the Vincent Map, 1853. Several helpful maps are located in the map case, specifically the Waring Map Collection, which is a series of maps charting Savannah's progress from 1770 through 1903. See also the Map Collection index.