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South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina

University of South Carolina--South Caroliniana Library

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SOUTH CAROLINIANA LIBRARY

at the University of South Carolina
OUR LANDMARK BUILDING

Welcome to one of the nation's oldest and most architecturally distinctive libraries! This graceful Greek revival-style structure anchors the western end of the University of South Carolina's Horseshoe, which historian Charles A. Beard has called "the most beautiful college campus in America."

The building that houses the South Caroliniana Library was established in 1840 as the central library for the South Carolina College. It was the first freestanding college library building in the country, pre-dating those of Harvard (1841), Yale (1846), and Princeton (1873). South Caroliniana Library is the oldest continuously occupied academic library building in the United States.

The design of this landmark resulted from the collaboration of several architects, the best known being Robert Mills, South Carolina native son and federal architect. Constructed of handmade brick dominated by a front portico with four massive white Doric columns, the exterior is often admired and much photographed as a beautiful structure that remains functional and vital well into its second century.

The simple interior is equally appealing. The wide, carriage-style entry hall is accented by a marble marker on the east wall commemorating Preston S. Brooks, South Carolina College student—Class of 1839. The curved stairway, with its heavy mahogany handrail, is housed in a semicircular bay that protrudes from the center of the rear facade, an unusual architectural feature typical of Robert Mills.
The stairway leads to the second floor Reading Room. This long, elegant room with 12 alcoves, three skylights, and a mantelpiece at each end was closely modeled after Charles Bulfinch's design for the original Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Busts of individuals who influenced the state's history adorn the walls, most of them created by 19th-century sculptor Hiram Powers.

Originally painted "dead white," the Reading Room has changed very little over the years, with one notable exception. When the building was renovated in the 1980s, a more colorful design was used to enhance the original wood molding and artistic detailing.

SPECIALIZED RESEARCH AREAS

MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION
collects and preserves a wide variety of unpublished materials, including letters, diaries, and other personal papers; records of businesses and organizations; and broadsides and other ephemera reflecting political, commercial, and leisure activities that document the people, buildings, and landscapes of the region, including those that document the history of women, African Americans, and other minority populations in South Carolina.

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES serves as the University of South Carolina's official "memory." It acquires, preserves, and makes accessible those University records that have permanent historical value. These include the records of major administrative offices, such as the Board of Trustees,
the University president, and the provost. Other archives
collections include 19th-century student records, Univer-
sity publications, maps, and photographs relating to all
aspects of life at the University of South Carolina. The bulk
of the material is from the 20th century.

**PUBLISHED MATERIALS
DIVISION** collects and preserves
an extensive and diverse collection
of publications written by or about
the people, places, and culture
of the Palmetto State. Materials
include books, maps, periodicals,
newspapers, and genealogical resources, as well as
University of South Carolina theses and dissertations.

**VISUAL MATERIALS DIVISION** documents the people,
places, and culture of South Carolina through a collection
of 17th-century to the present of photographs, postcards,
illustrated newspapers, engravings, and lithographs. Other
holdings include original artwork, sculpture, posters, blue-
prints, and architectural drawings.

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM** conducts and collects inter-
views with narrators representing all facets of South Carolina
history and culture, from civil-rights activists to writers to
bankers. In addition to the department's own oral history
projects, it conserves and processes interviews donated as
part of collections, in formats ranging from reels to microcasset-
tes. The earliest recordings are from the 1930s, but most
are more recent and range from the 1950s to the present.

South Caroliniana currently lists approximately 3 million
items in Millennium, the online catalog for University of
South Carolina libraries.
The central library (1840–1940) for the South Carolina College is now known as South Caroliniana Library (1940–present) at the University of South Carolina.
THE SURROUNDINGS

Although located near a major city street, the largely walled grounds of the South Caroliniana Library provide a peaceful oasis on the edge of a busy campus. Its gardens are highlighted with brick walkways, iron gates, towering camellia bushes, and other native shrubs.

To the left of the main entrance, on the small strip of lawn, is the campus' only grave, that of J. Rion McKissick, major library supporter and president of the University when he died in 1944. A plaque honoring his wife is nearby. To the right of the entrance is a plaque memorializing the 531 University sons who were killed in World War I.

The area behind the library is a favorite outdoor gathering place whose focal point is a tall tiered fountain installed in 1986 to honor the Carolina Patriots who fought in the American Revolution. Other charming bits of history and natural beauty make the garden an especially enjoyable retreat.