Brief History of South Carolina

South Carolina stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Blue Ridge Mountains, containing 31,113 square miles. Fortieth in geographic area among the fifty states, it ranks twenty-fourth in population. The Palmetto State's 5.1 million citizens value its rich history, a legacy that is a prime factor in making tourism the state's second largest industry.

Spaniards explored the South Carolina coast as early as 1514, and Hernando DeSoto met the Queen of Cofitachiqui in 1540 when he crossed the central part of the State. Spanish fears of French rivalry were heightened when Huguenots led by Jean Ribaut attempted to settle on what is now Parris Island near Beaufort in 1562. After Ribaut returned to France for reinforcements, the soldiers who were left behind revolted, built themselves a ship, and sailed for France the next year. The horrors of that voyage went beyond eating shoes to cannibalism before an English ship rescued the pitiful remainder of the French attempt to colonize here.

The Spanish built Fort San Felipe on Parris Island in 1566 and made the new settlement there, known as Santa Elena, the capital of La Florida Province. In 1576, under attack from Native Americans, Santa Elena was abandoned, but the fort was rebuilt the next year. The English also posed a threat. A decade later, after Sir Francis Drake had destroyed St. Augustine, the Spanish decided to concentrate their forces there. With the withdrawal from Santa Elena to St. Augustine in 1587, South Carolina was again left to the Native Americans until the English established the first permanent European settlement at Albemarle Point on the Ashley River in 1670.

King Charles II had given Carolina to eight English noblemen, the Lords Proprietors. The proprietors' first settlers included many Barbadians, and South Carolina came to resemble more closely the plantation economy of the West Indies than did the other mainland colonies. By 1708, a majority of the non-native inhabitants were African American slaves. Native Americans, ravaged by diseases against which they had no resistance, last significantly threatened the colony's existence in the Yemassee War of 1715. After the colonists revolted against proprietary rule in 1719, the proprietors' interests were bought out and South Carolina became a royal province.

By the 1750's, rice and indigo had made the planters and merchants of the South Carolina lowcountry the wealthiest men in what would become the United States. Government encouragement of white Protestant settlement in townships in the interior and migration from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina were to give the upcountry a different character: smaller farms and a larger percentage of German, Scotch-Irish, and Welsh settlers. By 1790, this part of the State temporarily gave the total population a white majority, but the spread of cotton plantations soon again made African American slaves the majority.

Charlestonians were strong supporters of their rights as Englishmen in the Stamp Act crisis in 1765, and South Carolina would play a significant role when differences escalated into the American Revolution. The Charleston merchant Henry Laurens served as President of the Continental Congress in 1777 and 1778. The first decisive victory of the war was the repulse of a British fleet by patriot defenders in a palmetto log fort on Sullivan's Island on June 28, 1776. Over two hundred battles and skirmishes occurred in the State, many of them vicious encounters between South Carolinians who opted for independence and those who chose to remain loyal to King George. Battles at Kings Mountain (1780) and Cowpens (1781) were turning points in the war.

South Carolina became the eighth state to ratify the United States Constitution in 1788, and in 1790 moved its seat of government to the new city of Columbia in the state's midlands. South Carolinians played a prominent role in antebellum regional and national politics. Andrew Jackson was born near the North Carolina border but claimed South Carolina as his native state. John C. Calhoun served as Secretary of War before becoming Vice President of the United States in 1824. Calhoun emerged as the preeminent political theorist of states' rights when South Carolina nullified federal tariffs in 1832. The State thereafter was in the lead in resisting the threat to Southern institutions from abolitionists and a stronger federal government and was the first to secede from the Union when it ratified the Ordinance of Secession on December 20, 1860.

The first shots of the Civil War were fired in Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861. Two days later the federal garrison in Fort Sumter surrendered to Confederate forces. Union troops occupied the sea islands in the Beaufort area in November, beginning the move toward

freedom for a few of the state's slaves, but few military engagements occurred within the state's borders until 1865. Thirty-five percent of South Carolina's white males of fighting age were sacrificed to the Confederate cause, and General William Tecumseh Sherman's march through the State at the war's end left a trail of destruction. Poverty would mark the State for generations to come.

African Americans played a prominent role in South Carolina government while the State was occupied by federal troops from 1865 to 1877. The Constitution of 1868 brought democratic reforms, but adjustments from a slave to a free society were not easily made and corruption in government under "radical" reconstruction left a bitter taste. Confederate General Wade Hampton III's tenure as governor after a disputed and violent election in 1876 marked the return to power of native-born whites. "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman's agrarian populists gave him the governorship in 1890 and leadership in a constitutional convention five years later that disenfranchised the state's African Americans. The Tillman era ended with the election of Progressive Governor Richard I. Manning in 1914. Rapid expansion of the textile industry in the 1890's began the state's recovery from a share-cropper economy, but the boll weevil gave the Great Depression a head start here in the 1920's. The expansion of military bases during World War II as well as domestic and foreign investment in manufacturing in more recent decades have revitalized the State. In 1970, when South Carolina celebrated its Tricentennial, more than 80% of its residents had been born in the State. Inclusion in the "Sun-belt" has brought more newcomers since then, but the state's history still both shadows and illumines our daily lives.

In the 1960's, dramatic changes emerged for the State politically, economically, and socially. The Civil Rights movement brought an end to racial segregation, and with the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, African Americans registered to vote in record numbers, resulting in South Carolina electing three black members to the House of Representatives in 1970, one black State Senator in 1983, and one black Congressman in 1992. Furthermore, in 1994 the General Assembly elected the first black Chief Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court.

During this same period, political party composition transformed the state's political landscape. With the Democratic Party leading the State since the end of Reconstruction, the Republican Party began its ascent in the late 1960's. By the mid 1970's, South Carolina elected its first Republican governor since Reconstruction. The Republican Party

gained control of the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1994 and the Senate in 2001.

For the better part of the 20th Century, South Carolina's economy was largely agricultural and entrenched in the textile industry. During the 1980's and 90's, South Carolina began a progression to a more urban society as the population shifted in many counties, especially along the state's coast. The textile manufacturing industry began a decline and tourism emerged as an economic force employing more than 300,000 workers. Tourism venues, cultural arts, and entertainment industries developed rapidly.

Now that the State is well into the second decade of the 21st Century, economic investment and the pursuit of innovation paint an encouraging picture. South Carolina has already experienced major advancements in economic diversity, improved natural beauty, evolving urban areas, and a growing list of choices for residents and visitors to enjoy a better quality of life. As a top state for doing business, South Carolina has built upon its rich history and technically savvy and hardworking labor force to continue attracting major corporate investment into the State. Through these efforts the State has brightened the collective future of its citizens.

As the 21st Century continues to unfold, South Carolina, and its citizenry, will continue to write a promising and fulfilling history.

The State House

Charles C. Wilson of Columbia, who was the last architect of the State House, proclaimed South Carolina's State House "one of the most notable buildings of the world." Its Corinthian capitals, which had been designed by Major John R. Niernsee, were, said Wilson, "wonderful, nothing finer in France or Italy." The building was Niernsee's "life work." But his death prevented him from completing it, and subsequent architects departed from vital particulars of his plans.

The move toward construction began on December 15, 1851, when the State laid the cornerstone for a "Fire Proof Building" to house its records safely. In 1852, the General Assembly appropriated $50,000 to complete that building and to begin the next section for use as the "New State Capitol." P. H. Hammerskold was the project architect, but in June 1854, the State dismissed him for "concealments and misrepresentations and general dereliction of duty."

In June 1854 the State appointed Niernsee as consulting architect and hired him as resident architect in January 1856. Niernsee examined Hammerskold's work and found it and the materials Hammerskold had used both defective and wholly unsuitable. The work was dismantled; the loss totalled $72,267.



On November 27, 1854, Governor John L. Manning recommended erecting a new State Capitol with north and south exposures at the intersection of Senate and Main (then Richardson) Streets. He thought that, "if change of location be made, in the end, perhaps it may not be a subject much to be regretted that delay and disaster attended the first efforts to construct a new Capitol for the commonwealth." The General Assembly acted on Governor Manning's recommendation, changed the site, and ordered a design with wings extending east and west.

Niernsee planned to complete the building in five years. By 1857, it rose to the top of the basement window-heads. On October 1, 1860, Niernsee reported that the structure had risen nearly sixty-six feet above the foot of the foundation and that the "absolute value of the work put into the building" was $1,240,063. "The Corinthian granite capitals, some 64," he said, were "being executed in a style and finish heretofore unequalled in that line."

Work on the new State House was suspended when Sherman's army destroyed Columbia on February 17, 1865. Shells from Sherman's cannons, which were of light calibre, damaged the building only slightly,

and brass markers were subsequently placed on the west and southwest walls of the building to show where the shots had landed. Ten were fired in all. Six "struck the western front," with little damage "except one which shattered the moulded windowsill and balusters of the second window from the west side of the House of Representatives." Four struck the interior of the building.

More devastating was the fire that destroyed the old State House. Niernsee reported it cracked five "bells of St. Michael's Church, Charleston," which had been "sent up here some time ago" and "deposited under one of the sheds." It consumed the valuable State House library, offices, and workshops, a vast quantity of finished marble and rough material, estimated by Niernsee to be worth $700,000, and Niernsee's library of architectural and scientific books, engravings, and several thousand drawings, the result of his practice of twenty-five years. "These," said Niernsee, along with "one of the latest and best busts of Calhoun" and all the valuable detail State House drawings, contracts, and so forth, which had accumulated during Niernsee's ten years on the job, "were utterly swept away during that terrible night—an irreparable loss."



First State House Begun 1753/Burned 1788 State House Begun 1786/Burned 1865

All that remained of Niernsee's drawings were several prints of a perspective view and one full-size detail of a Corinthian capital. This perspective and evidence in the building itself, however, indicate Niernsee's concept of the completed structure. His plan did not contemplate a dome that looked anything like the dome on today's building. His was a lofty and finely-proportioned tower, which rose one hundred eighty feet from the ground through the center of the building supported by piers and arches; it was "a rectangular lantern," somewhat pyramidal in outline, and thirty feet square at the base; its projected cost was $200,000.

Niernsee returned to Columbia to resume his work as architect of the State House in 1885, but he died on June 7. He was succeeded by a former associate, J. Crawford Neilson, of Baltimore. On October 1, 1888, his son, Frank Niernsee, took over and worked largely on the interior until construction was again suspended, this time about 1891.

In 1900, Frank P. Milburn became architect. He hired the contracting firm of McIlvain and Unkefer, replaced the roof, and built the present dome and north and south porticos for about one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars. Senator J. Q. Marshal of the State House Commission protested Milburn's appointment, however, and launched an investigation of the work. The investigation ended when the State brought suit against Milburn and his contractor, but the case ended in a mistrial and was not retried.

A joint legislative committee, after calling in Captain S. S. Hunt, the superintendent of construction for the United States Capitol, characterized the dome as infamous. "No uglier creation could be devised," it lamented, "and it is nothing short of a miserable fraud."

On April 8, 1904, the State elected Charles C. Wilson of Columbia as architect. Wilson worked on the terrace and steps of the north front and made sundry improvements to the interior. His work continued for several years and cost about one hundred thousand dollars.

Wilson, who admired Niernsee's design, described the style as "Roman Corinthian, with considerable freedom and distinguished originality in much of the detail. The workmanship of Maj. Niernsee's time," he said, "is exceptionally fine, indicating not only his great genius but the enthusiastic cooperation of mechanics of the highest skill and integrity.... All credit for this noble and dignified building is due to the original designer and architect, Maj. John Niernsee. It is due him and to future generations of South Carolinians that it be protected from further departure from his design, and in good time, in the state's future prosperity, it is not too much to hope that it may yet be restored to his ideal."

Although all legislative records for the building are not available, those that are show the General Assembly appropriated at least $3,540,000 for its construction over the years. The granite for the structure, according to Alexander S. Salley, who wrote a history of the State House in the early-twentieth century, came mostly from the Granby quarry, which was located about two miles south of the State House.

The State House Renovation

Inside and out, from foundation to dome, the State House, as a result of the 1995–98 renovation, is in better shape than ever before. The work balanced the need to meet modern code requirements and improved efficiency against a respect for historic form and appearance. Most visitors will never see the structural improvements, the sophisticated electrical wiring, alarm systems, or the state-of-the-art earthquake isolators that were installed. However, everyone will notice the renewal of the House and Senate chambers, the 19th Century treatment of the lobby, the vaulted brickwork in the hallways of the lower floor, the restored marble floors and refurbished interior of the dome.

The Stevens and Wilkinson architectural firm of Columbia developed the renovation plan; Caddell Construction Co. Inc., of Montgomery, Alabama was the prime contractor for the project. The cost of the renovation was $51,530,000.

The State Seal



On March 26, 1776, the Provincial Congress of South Carolina set up an independent government, electing John Rutledge, President. On April 2, 1776, the President and Privy Council were authorized by Resolution of the General Assembly "to design and cause to be made a Great Seal of South Carolina."

After the Declaration of Independence, a design for the arms of an official great seal, prepared by William Henry Drayton, a member of the Privy Council, was accepted, together with a design for the reverse, said to have been designed by Arthur Middleton. Both designs were turned over to an engraver in Charles Town and engraved as a great seal, which was used by President Rutledge for the first time on May 22, 1777.

The Seal was made in the form of a circle, four inches in diameter, and four-tenths of an inch thick.

Both the arms and reverse symbolize the battle fought on June 28, 1776, between the unnamed, and unfinished fort at Sullivan's Island (now Fort Moultrie), and the British Fleet.

Description of the Seal

A Palmetto tree growing on the seashore erect (symbolical of the fort on Sullivan's Island, built on Palmetto logs); at its base, a torn up oak tree, its branches lopped off, prostrate, typifying the British Fleet, constructed of oak timbers and defeated by the fort; both proper. Just below the branches of the Palmetto, two shields, pendant; one of them on the dexter side is inscribed MARCH 26, (the date of ratification of the Constitution of S.C.)—the other on the sinister side JULY 4, (the date of Declaration of Independence): Twelve spears proper, are bound crosswise to the stem of the Palmetto, their points raised, (representing the 12 states first acceding to the Union); the band uniting them together bearing the inscription QUIS SEPARABIT (Who shall separate?) under the prostrate oak, is inscribed MELIOREM LAPSA LOCAVIT (having fallen it has set up a better); below which appears in large figures, 1776 (the year the Constitution of S.C. was passed, the year of the Battle at Sullivan's Island and of the Declaration of Independence, and the year in which the Seal was ordered made). At the summit of the Exergue, are the words SOUTH CAROLINA; and at the bottom of the same ANIMIS OPIBUSQUE PARATI (prepared in mind and resources).



Arms



Reverse

A woman walking on the seashore, over swords and daggers (typifying Hope overcoming dangers, which the sun, just rising, was about to disclose); she holds in her dexter hand, a laurel branch (symbolical of the honors gained at Sullivan's Island) and in her sinister hand, the folds of her robe; she looks toward the sun, just rising above the sea, (indicating that the battle was fought on a fine day, and also bespeaking good fortune); all proper. On the upper part is the sky azure. At the summit of the Exergue, are the words DUM SPIRO SPERO

(While I breathe I hope) and within the field below the figure, is inscribed the word SPES (Hope).

The Sword of State

This sword rests in the customary rack on the Senate rostrum in front of the President's chair during the daily sessions and is carried by the Sergeant at Arms on all state occasions. The present Sword of State was presented to the Senate February 20, 1951, as a personal gift to South Carolina by Lord Halifax, former British ambassador to the United States. The sword was fashioned by master craftsmen of London, England, having a pointed straight blade, the upper portion of which is etched with a design containing the State Flower, the yellow jessamine. One side of the design is centered with the State Seal. It has a golden curved guard and a handle wrapped with gold braid. This sword replaces the cavalry sword that was used after the Sword of State



disappeared from the Senate rostrum in 1941. The cavalry sword was presented on March 5, 1941, and is carried in the Senate Journal of that date, as follows: "Mr. Means, on behalf of the Charleston Museum, which is the oldest like institution in the U.S., presented to the Senate a cavalry sword made in 1800 and used in the War of 1812 and in the War of the Confederacy, to replace the Sword of State recently stolen from the Chamber."

This sword has been returned to the Charleston Museum.

Facts as to the history of the Sword of State and of the one that mysteriously disappeared in 1941 were secured from A. S. Salley, Historian *Emeritus*, and are as follows:

Earliest mention found is in Journal of the "Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina" for Friday, May 5, 1704, wherein it is stated that £26 11s. 3d. (about $129) be paid for a Sword of State, "for

the Rt. Hon. the Governor and all succeeding Governors for the Hon. of this Government."

The Governor and the eight deputies of the eight Lords Proprietors of Carolina constituted the Upper House of the General Assembly. The Sword of State was secured and used by the Grand Council until that body passed out of existence with the overthrow of the government of the Lords Proprietors in South Carolina in December 1719.



The Senate Chamber

Thereafter it was used by His Majesty's Council for South Carolina, at least until June 23, 1722, when Arthur Middleton, President of the Council, and acting Governor, informed the Commons House that it was "no way proper to be used by any of His Majesty's Governor" and suggested that the House give it to the "Corporation of Charles City (Charleston) and Port, to be carried before the Mayor." Says Mr. Salley:

"Whether this suggestion was carried out and a new sword procured, the writer has so far been unable to ascertain, but throughout the records of His Majesty's Council for South Carolina down to the Revolution evidence is found of the use of a Sword of State. On March 26, 1776, South Carolina adopted a Constitution independent of the government of Great Britain and elected John Rutledge, President of the State. He was inaugurated on the following day, and the Journal of the Lower House records that His Excellency was 'preceded by the sheriff bearing the Sword of State and the Officers of the Legislative Council'."

"The same Sword of State," says Mr. Salley, "has been in constant use ever since, being borne by the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate instead of the Sheriff of Charleston District (now County) as then."

"That this Sword of State was made in Charles Town (now Charleston) by a local silversmith is evidenced by the fact that it contains no hallmarks, which would not be the case had it been made in England."

The Mace

This is the emblem of authority of the House of Representatives. It has been the custom every day, upon the opening of the session, for the Sergeant at Arms to bear the mace ahead of the Speaker and lay it upon its specially prepared rack on the Rostrum in front of the Speaker, there to remain until recess or adjournment. Whenever the House officially attends in the Senate Chamber, and upon state occasions, the Mace is always borne at the head of the procession.



The Mace was made in London, in 1756, as shown by the hallmarks thereon, by Magdelen Feline, and purchased by the "Commons House of Assembly of the Province of South Carolina" for 90 guineas. The panels contain the royal arms of Great Britain, the arms of the House of Hanover, the arms of the Province of South Carolina, and other insignia.

Made of solid silver, with gold burnishing, it very much resembles the Mace of the Common Council of Norwich, England. So far as Mr. A. S. Salley, Historian Emeritus, was able to learn it is the only Mace in use in the United States that antedates the Revolution. In the diary of Joseph Quincy, Jr. of Massachusetts it is recorded that on March 19, 1773, he visited the House in Charleston and saw the Mace, "a very superb and elegant one," on the table before the Speaker.

During the Revolution this Mace was appropriated by British sympathizers who offered it for sale to the House of Assembly of the Bahama

Islands. The records of that body show that authority was given to purchase it, but show no further action. Mr. Salley declared that "as a matter of fact" it was not purchased and that the Mace now in Nassau was made in London 43 years after the South Carolina Mace was made.



The House Chamber

From the time the Mace disappeared from its place in the old State House in Charles Town, during the latter part of the Revolution to 1819, its whereabouts was known to only a very few. "In 1819 when the Hon. Langdon Cheves of South Carolina went to Philadelphia as President of the Bank of the United States, he found it in a vault of the bank and restored it to its rightful owner."

In a letter to Mr. Salley, the Hon. James Simons of Charleston, deceased, states that the "Mace was not used after war until I became Speaker, when I had it brought up into the House and used for the purposes for which it was intended."

During the night of Feb. 3, 1971, the Mace was taken from the locked glass enclosed wall niche back of the Speaker's Rostrum; and on Feb. 24, 1971, it was recovered in Gainesville, Fla., by Chief J. P. Strom of SLED and later returned to the House of Representatives, where it is displayed in a vault.