

ROBERT MILLS MANOR (PUBLIC HOUSING), 7 WILSON STREET
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS SC-872-D
SC-872-D

HABS
SC-872-D

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROBERT MILLS MANOR (Public Housing), 7 Wilson Street

HABS No. SC-872-D

Location: Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina
U.S.G.S. Charleston Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17/599520/3627140

Present Owner: The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston
20 Franklin Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Present Use: Vacant; structure to be demolished

Significance: The Robert Mills Manor remains as Charleston's earliest and most intact example of a locally initiated public low-income housing project. During the 1930s, the federal government began subsidy programs for the development of low-income housing and for slum clearance. The City of Charleston quickly took advantage of these programs, developing several large low income projects, the first of which was the Robert Mills Manor. Its associations with prominent local architects Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham, through their Housing Authorities Architects, and noted local landscape architect Loutrel W. Briggs, the site is an example of excellent early twentieth century institutional architecture and planning. While current plans call for the demolition of 3 Cromwell Alley, and 4, 6, and 7 Wilson Street, the essential form of the complex's plan will not be substantially altered and the loss of these structures is mitigated by the rehabilitation of the remaining twenty-six similar structures. The remaining buildings include at least one structure essentially identical to each of the buildings being removed.

PART I. PHYSICAL HISTORY AND SETTING OF THE ROBERT MILLS MANOR

Setting

7 Wilson Street is a multi-family residential structure that is part of Robert Mills Manor, a thirty-four building low-income housing project. The project is located on an 11.7 acre site in downtown Charleston, South Carolina within Harleston Village, a predominantly residential neighborhood of large and medium scale eighteenth, nineteenth, and early-twentieth century structures. The neighborhood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Charleston Old and Historic District (listed 1970, extended 1978, and amended 1988).

The area now known as Harleston Village was part of a seventeenth century land grant to John Coming and Henry Hughes. Coming's wife's nephew, John Harleston, eventually inherited the land and it was for him that the area is named. Harleston Village was first developed in 1770 when streets were opened and lots sold. Located to the north and west of the city's eighteenth century center, the area initially consisted of large suburban estates. By the nineteenth century, many of the larger properties had been divided and much of the land covered with houses.

Physical History

The Robert Mills Manor was constructed as a low-income housing project in two phases which were completed in 1939 and 1941, respectively, as U.S. Housing Authority projects SC-1-1 and SC-1-6. The first phase included the construction of twenty two-story multi-family residential structures along Cromwell Alley, Queen Street, Franklin Street, and Magazine Street. Also included in the first phase was the renovation of the old Marine Hospital, located at 20 Franklin Street, for use as offices by the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston. The second phase included the construction of eleven additional structures along Wilson, Beaufain, and Logan Streets, including 7 Wilson Street, and the rehabilitation of three eighteenth century residences on Beaufain Street. The old County Jail, although located on the project site, has never been renovated.

Bids were opened on 28 December 1938 for the first phase construction. Artley and Company of Savannah, Georgia, was chosen as general contractor, having submitted the low bid of \$472,000.¹ Demolition of existing structures on the site began immediately thereafter and construction was underway by early 1939. The completed structures were ready for occupancy on 10 October 1939.² The second phase of the project was begun in 1940 with Artley Company again serving as general contractor, having submitted the low bid for the project of \$356,300.³ Developed by the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston, and funded by the U.S. Housing Authority, the Robert Mills Manor property has been owned by the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston since 1938-1939.

Both phases of the project were designed by the architectural firm of Simons and Lapham under their subsidiary Housing Authority Architects. The parent firm was established in 1920 as a partnership between Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham. Simons (1890-1980), a Charleston native, received his architectural training at the University of Pennsylvania, studied extensively in Europe, and began his career with an architectural firm in Boston. Prior to his association with Lapham, Simons taught architecture at Clemson College and was a partner in the firm of Todd, Simons, and Todd in 1916 and 1917. After serving in World War I, Simons returned to Charleston, where he formed a partnership with Lapham. He served on the National Committee for the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930s and, both with and without Lapham, was responsible for the documentation of hundreds of structures in the Charleston area, both through drawings and

writings. Simons was a fellow in the American Institute of Architects, the National Academy of Design, and the Royal Society of Arts.⁴ Lapham (1892-1972) received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was also a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, having served as president of the South Carolina Chapter. Among the firm's notable works are the Medical College of Charleston and the Dock Street Theatre, as well as numerous Charleston residences, several nearby plantations, and additional low-income housing projects.⁵

The original landscape plan for the Robert Mills Manor was designed by prominent Charleston landscape architect Loutrel W. Briggs (1893-1977). Briggs was trained at Cornell University and later served as head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. He relocated to Charleston in 1927 and established his practice, gaining great recognition for his residential landscape designs for many of the city's finest historic residences. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Briggs designed the landscaping for several low-income housing projects in Charleston and Columbia.⁶

Site Development

Significant development on the Robert Mills Manor site did not occur until 1802, when the structure now known as the Old County Jail, was constructed. The jail was expanded in 1822 to the design of Robert Mills but this addition was removed for the construction of the present octagonal wing in 1855-56.⁷ Richard Brennan, a local merchant, constructed a three and one-half story residence at 63 Beaufain Street about 1815.⁸ The Medical College of Charleston was constructed at the northeast corner of Queen and Franklin Streets, immediately west of the Roper Hospital, in 1827. The Marine Hospital, also designed by Robert Mills, was constructed just to the south of the jail between 1831-1834. The city's earliest Gothic Revival style building, it was built for the care of merchant seamen by the federal government. Between 1866-1870 it was used as a school for black children and later, in 1895, it became Jenkins Orphanage for blacks.⁹ Several additional large residences were constructed at the eastern end of the site through the mid-nineteenth century, including a two and one-half brick dwelling for F.Q. McHugh, an attorney, located at 59 Beaufain Street, which was completed about 1849.¹⁰ The western end of the site was much slower to develop, as it was bounded by marshland to the west, where Smith Street currently exists. This marsh was filled in the late 1840s and lots were sold along Smith Street in the early 1850s. The 1872 Bird's Eye Map of Charleston by C. Drie shows little construction on this end of the site by that date; however, Cromwell Alley was created by that year linking Smith and Franklin Streets. By 1888, much of the remainder of the site had been infilled. Rows of small one-story frame cottages lined both sides of Cromwell Alley and other small residences filled the remaining lands between Smith and Franklin Streets.¹¹

PART II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT-PUBLIC HOUSING IN CHARLESTON

The federal government began to involve itself in the issue of slums as early as the 1890s when it conducted a series of hearings on the subject. While the hearings produced no specific programs, they did result in increased public awareness of the nation's housing problems. During World War I, Congress directed its efforts toward providing housing for war workers as the demand for living quarters near defense plants swelled. It was not until the 1930s that the federal government would turn its full attention toward the problems of slum clearance and low-income housing. In 1933 the Public Works Administration (PWA) offered a series of loans to nonprofit housing corporations with little success.¹² The PWA began to construct its own low-income housing projects in 1934. Charleston's first low-income housing project, the 212-unit Meeting Street Manor-Cooper River Court, was built by the PWA in 1937.¹³

A 1934 federal inventory of property in sixty-two cities conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce indicated the need for an overall improvement in Charleston's residential building stock: twenty-two percent of the city's houses were considered in need of major repair, twenty-one percent were without running water, almost fifty percent were without indoor toilets, more than fifty percent were without a bath tub or shower, the city's death rate was almost twice the national average, and the city's infant mortality rate was more than fifty percent above the national average.¹⁴ A similar study conducted by the Works Progress Administration, released in 1940, examined 18,477 dwelling units in 10,586 structures within the city. More than forty percent of the units were found to be substandard due to physical condition, defined as being in need of major repair or unfit for use, and/or overcrowding, defined as greater than one and one-half persons per room. Eighty-six percent of the structures had been built prior to 1919 and 1,101 units were considered to be unfit for occupancy.¹⁵

Charleston mayor Burnet R. Maybank responded to the problems indicated in the 1934 federal study by initiating efforts to convince City Council of the need for slum clearance and providing adequate low-income housing. A Housing Commission was established in October 1933 and was charged with identifying areas of the city requiring attention.¹⁶ In 1934, the South Carolina legislature passed the Housing Authorities Law authorizing local governments in the state to establish local agencies for addressing public housing issues. Charleston City Council responded to this legislation by adopting a resolution on 18 December 1934 authorizing the creation of the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston. The authority's first members were named on 5 May 1935: Dr. Joseph E. Smith, a physical and City Alderman for Ward 6; W.D. Schwartz, Jr., an insurance agent; Clelia P. McGowan, a widow; Henry A. Molony, president of the Charleston Board of Trade and the Citizens Taxation and Collection Service; and, Howard M. Harley, manager of a wholesale produce company.¹⁷

Congress passed the Housing Act of 1937 to provide subsidies for the construction of low-income housing and slum clearance through loans to local authorities for the amortization of capital costs.¹⁸ The law had two impacts on public housing in Charleston: it allowed the Housing Authority to finance, construct, and manage its own projects and it made federal assistance available for construction. The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston was restructured in 1938 to allow the city to take advantage of the new federal program. The authority's board remained the same, although Dr. Smith resigned his seat on City Council to avoid any potential legal conflicts due to his membership on the authority. A permanent staff, including Edward D. Clement as Executive Director and Alan B. Smith as accountant, was hired to administer the authority's activities later that year.¹⁹

Mrs. Clelia McGowan, speaking at a 1940 meeting of Charleston's Welfare Council, described the operational relationship between the local authority and the U.S. Housing Authority.²⁰

The construction of these projects is accomplished almost entirely by the local authority, which chooses sites, employs architects and engineers, takes bids, and through its engineers supervises the construction. The local authority employs its own manager for the project, selects the tenants, and operates the project. The United States Housing Authority gives assistance and exercises such control as seems necessary to maintain the low cost and low rent character of the project and to assure that only families within certain income brackets and who are [were] living in substandard homes [are] occupying the projects. The United States Housing Authority loans 90 percent of the costs of the project and the local

authority has to furnish the remaining 10 percent. The city contributes through the remission of taxes. The local authority pays a service charge to the city which practically amounts to the taxes received on the slum dwellings, previously occupying the site.

In November 1938, the federal government turned over operation of the Meeting Street Manor and Cooper River Courts to the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston. The next year saw construction begin on the 163-unit Anson Borough Homes and the 128-unit Wraggborough Homes. Construction on these projects was completed in 1940 and was started on the 72-unit Gadsden Green Homes. In 1941, the Housing Authority began construction on the 400-unit Ben Tillman Homes and the 600 unit George Legare Homes.²¹

During World War II, most of the public housing that had been constructed throughout the country was converted for military housing use. The Housing Authority of Charleston supervised the local War Housing Center. Between 1941 and 1944, the Authority completed 5,210 additional housing units, including: the George Legare Homes, the 350-unit John C. Calhoun Homes, the 60-unit Kiawah Homes, the 3,286 unit Liberty Homes and extensions, the 410-unit St. Andrews Homes, the 64-unit Victory Homes, the 128-unit Boulevard Dormitories, the 150-unit Ashley Homes, the 200-unit Read Hill Homes, and the 550-unit Daniel Jenkins Home. The authority also operated the Pine Forest Inn in Summerville as housing for workers at the Charleston Naval Yard.²²

After the war, the Authority terminated its involvement with the war housing projects. The Housing Act of 1949 made a "decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" a goal of the federal government and authorized the construction of 810,000 units over a six year period.²³ 800 additional low-income housing units were authorized for Charleston under this legislation and resulted in the Housing Authority's re-acquisition of the Ben Tillman Homes, George Legare Homes and Kiawah Homes projects and their conversion into permanent low-income housing units.²⁴ In addition, the Edmond Jenkins Homes were constructed in Mt. Pleasant, bringing the Authority's total number of housing units to two thousand.²⁵

PART III. SPECIFIC HISTORY-ROBERT MILLS MANOR

By the early twentieth century, the area that would become the Robert Mills Manor site consisted of a large assemblage of dilapidated late-19th and early-20th century residences and tenements surrounding the county's jail on the corner of Franklin and Magazine Streets. Conditions at the site had deteriorated to the point where contemporary accounts called it: "the worst disease breeding spot in the lower section of the city. Its existence was a constant police problem and fire hazard. Its crowded poorly lighted, evil smelling tenements depreciated the entire section of the city."²⁶ In its 1937 report published in the City Year Book, the Housing Authority announced its intention to take full advantage of the Housing Act. In that year the authority applied for and was granted one of the U.S. Housing Authority's first awards, for \$900,000 to be used for the construction of the Robert Mills Manor, named in honor of the architect of the Marine Hospital, one of the notable buildings in the development area.²⁷ City Directories for 1938 indicate that virtually all of the residents in the area were black.

Land acquisition for the construction of the Robert Mills Manor began in 1938. On 24 August, the Housing Authority purchased 25 and 25-1/2 Franklin Street from Paul G. Davis. During the next two months twenty-one additional properties were acquired on Magazine, Smith, Franklin, Beaufain, and Logan Streets and on Cromwell Alley.²⁸ In December, thirteen parcels were sold to the Housing Authority by the City of Charleston for \$20,250.00 pursuant to an action by City

Council. The city had acquired five of these parcels, including the northeast corner of Queen and Franklin Streets, 3 through 9 and 11 through 18 Cromwell Alley, a parcel to the south of 18 Cromwell Alley, and a lot on Smith Street from the Orphan Aid Society on 30 November. The city had also obtained two lots on Franklin Street, a lot on Monroe Alley, 19 Magazine Street. In addition to these nine parcels, the December transfer included title to Cromwell Alley, Monroe Alley, Franklin Alley, and the extension of Magazine Street.²⁹ Also in December, the Housing Authority obtained two additional parcels on Logan Street and Cromwell Alley. The old County Jail was transferred to the Housing Authority in January 1939.³⁰

The first phase of the Robert Mills Manor, consisting of 140 units in twenty-two buildings, was completed in 1939 and the 129 unit second phase followed in 1941. Three historic brick residential structures, 63 and 65 Beaufain Street and 3 Wilson Street were retained and rehabilitated as housing units as part of the project. Contemporary accounts indicate that these buildings, along with the old Marine Hospital which was extensively renovated for use as the Housing Authority's offices, were the subject of some public concern when the project was announced. On 21 January 1938, a photograph of the old Marine Hospital appeared in the Charleston News and Courier with the title: "Landmarks to be Razed in Slum Eradication Here." Housing Authority Executive Director Edward Clement, "in a letter to persons who have evidenced interest in [the] preservation of some of the buildings" in the project area, stated that "every possible effort [would be made to] preserve buildings of architectural value...."³¹ Clement went on to justify removal of old buildings where needed by arguing that the financial considerations under which the authority operated made it impossible for it "to purchase old buildings that cannot be fitted into the development program and allow them to remain as ruins."³²

As completed, the project included playgrounds, a wading pond, and sand pits for the use of children living in the project. A social hall and play school were also operated according to a ca. 1940 WPA housing survey of FHA housing units.³³ City Directories for the period from 1939 to 1945 indicate a diverse mixture of tenants, including carpenters, seamstresses, drivers, waitresses, machinists, widows, etc.

The Robert Mills Manor was originally constructed for white residents only. The slum clearance project that was carried out prior to its construction resulted in the displacement of some eighty black families.³⁴ In 1949, an act was passed that gave veterans of both world wars preference for housing in federally assisted or managed housing projects.³⁵ A ca. 1946 newspaper article on public housing in the city indicated that "the need for low-cost housing is far greater among negroes than among white persons, that the proportion of applications is about nine to one." Authority Executive Director Clement is quoted as saying: "Unfortunately, negro family compositions do not meet with the authority's requirements in many cases." These requirements are described as preferences earlier in the article.³⁶

Unlike most landlords, preference is given by the authority to families consisting of husband, wife and children. Broken families are placed on the deferred list. Many applications, particularly among negroes, for a grandmother and grandchildren, or a woman with several adopted children are received. Such applications are placed on a deferred list under existing regulations."

Occupancy of the project was restricted to white families until the early 1960s when the Housing Authority quietly integrated in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.³⁷

Mechanical systems have been upgraded and much of Loutrel Briggs' landscaping has been lost over the years; otherwise the Robert Mills Manor has seen very little alteration. In the years since its construction. It remains as Charleston's earliest and most intact example of a locally initiated public low-income housing project. Its associations with architects Simons and Lapham, through their Housing Authorities Architects, and Briggs, also make it an example of excellent early twentieth century institutional architecture. While current plans call for the demolition of 3 Cromwell Alley, and 4, 6, and 7 Wilson Street, the essential form of the complex's plan will not be substantially altered and the loss of these structures is mitigated by the rehabilitation of the remaining twenty-six similar structures. The remaining buildings include at least one structure essentially identical to each of the buildings being removed.

Notes:

- ¹"Housing Authority of the City of Charleston." Year Book (1938), City of Charleston (Charleston, S.C.: Walker Evans, & Cogswell, 1939), p. 178.
- ²Year Book (1939), City of Charleston, p. 168.
- ³Year Book (1940), City of Charleston, p. 184.
- ⁴"Noted Architect Albert Simons Dies," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier/Evening Post, 25 May 1980.
- ⁵"Samuel Lapham, Architect, Dies," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier, 3 October 1972.
- ⁶"Loutrel Briggs, Architect, Dies," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier, 20 May 1977.
- ⁷Robert P. Stockton, "Do You Know Your Charleston," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier, 23 January 1978.
- ⁸Stockton, "Do You Know Your Charleston," 9 May 1970.
- ⁹W.H.J. Thomas, "Do You Know Your Charleston," 22 July 1968.
- ¹⁰Stockton, "Do You Know Your Charleston," 9 May 1970.
- ¹¹Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Charleston, 1888.
- ¹²The President's Committee on Urban Housing, A Decent Home (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 54-56.
- ¹³Donald J. Cameron, The Housing Authority of Charleston: A Report on Fifty Years of Service (Charleston, S.C.: The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston, 1985), p. 2.
- ¹⁴Untitled manuscript, Housing Authority Files, City of Charleston Archives, Charleston, S.C.
- ¹⁵"Many Local Dwelling Units Considered As Substandard," (Charleston, S.C.) Evening Post, 17 April 1940.
- ¹⁶Cameron, p. 4.
- ¹⁷Untitled manuscript, Housing Authority Files; City Directory, 1938.
- ¹⁸Robert Taggart, III, Low-Income Housing: A Critique of Federal Aid. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 12.
- ¹⁹Untitled manuscript, Housing Authority File.
- ²⁰"Many Local Dwelling Units Considered As Substandard," (Charleston, S.C.) Evening Post, 17 April 1940.
- ²¹Year Book (1940), City of Charleston, p. 190.
- ²²Cameron, p. 7; Year Book (1940), City of Charleston, p. 190.
- ²³Taggart, p. 13.
- ²⁴Charleston Grows (Charleston, S.C.: The Carolina Art Association, 1949), p. 180.
- ²⁵Cameron, p. 7.
- ²⁶Year Book (1938), City of Charleston, p. 177.

²⁷Year Book (1937), City of Charleston; Cameron, p. 4.

²⁸Deed Book H40, pages 568, 684; Deed Book S40, pages 241, 243, 247, 49, 251, 253, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 335, 337, 339, 341, 532; Deed Book O40, page 157; Deed Book E40, pages 348, 446, 483; Deed Book Y40, page 11; Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, S.C.

²⁹"Resolution [by the City Council of Charleston]," December 1938, Housing Authority Files, City of Charleston Archives, Charleston, S.C.

³⁰Deed Book E40, page 483.

³¹"Orphanage Building, Franklin Street Home Definitely Will Be Saved, E.D. Clement Says-City Not Being 'Given' Money," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier, 23 May 1938.

³²Ibid.

³³Excerpt from a WPA housing survey (ca. 1940), "Housing" files, Vertical File, Charleston County Library, Charleston, S.C.

³⁴"Foundations of Mills Manor Rise at Housing Project," (Charleston, S.C.) News and Courier, 7 April 1939.

³⁵"Public Housing Here Reputed a Success," undated newspaper clipping, "Housing" files, Vertical File, Charleston County Library, Charleston, S.C.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Cameron, p. 8.

PART IV. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

7 Wilson Street is one of thirty-one similar multi-family residential structures that make up the thirty-five buildings of the Robert Mills Manor low-income housing project. Constructed between 1939 and 1941, the two and three story brick structures are typified by tile gable roofs, wooden sash windows, and copper porch and stoop roofs.

7 Wilson Street is a three-story rectangular building measuring twenty-seven feet two inches in width (east and west elevations) by one hundred thirty-three feet ten inches in length (north and south elevations). The brick outer walls of the structure rest on a slightly raised first floor concrete slab supported by continuous concrete grade beams on pilings. The second level floor system consists of a concrete slab supported by concrete posts. The wooden third floor framing is supported by the outer masonry walls and a load-bearing frame partition at the center of the building that extends from north to south. The gable roof is supported by wooden trusses.

The exterior walls are rough cast brick of a reddish brown color set in common bond with simple struck joints. A concrete belt course extends around the entire building above the first floor level and corresponds to the second floor slab. The lateral gable tile roof has a series of five low brick chimneys, each with a corbelled cap and clay flue liners. The outer chimneys and central chimney contain triple flues; the remaining chimneys each contain two flues.

Window and door openings are spaced along the first floor level of the principal south elevation as follows (from west to east): paired entrance doors, two 6/6 windows, paired entrance doors, a single 6/6 window, paired entrance doors, a single 6/6 window, a single entrance, a single 6/6 window, paired entrance doors, a single 6/6 window, paired entrance doors, two single 6/6 windows, and paired entrance doors. Second and third level windows correspond with each other but not with the first level openings. A simple concrete stoop is located at each paired entrance and has a cast concrete canopy. Windows are wooden double hung sash set within rectangular openings with

simple flat soldier-course arches and brick sills. Doors are set within rectangular openings with wooden doors, originally with nine-lights over two recessed panels, and wooden screens. The east and west elevations have single centrally placed 6/6 windows at their second and third levels only with a small rectangular louvered attic vent above. Window and door openings at the first level of the north elevation generally correspond to the openings on the south elevation with the exception that entrances are not paired and several narrow 4/4 light windows are interspersed in the elevation. Windows on the second level are 6/6 sash and alternate between 6/6 and 2/2 sash on third level.

The interior is divided into five first floor flat apartments with eight townhouse apartments above. Each flat has a living room, kitchen/dining room, a bath, and either one or two bedrooms. The townhouse units are accessed by narrow stairhalls located between the first floor units. Each townhouse includes a living room and kitchen/dining area on the first level and two or three bedrooms and one bathroom on the upper level. Simple staircases rise in closed wells at the sidewalls of the living rooms to a small hallway at the upper level. Several of the units are reversed in plan from their adjacent units to allow common "wet" walls. Walls and ceilings are typically finished with smooth plaster with no ornamentation. Interior trim consists of simple flat baseboards and plain window and door surrounds. Doors are typically wooden with two flat panels. Floors are typically finished with vinyl tile, except at bathrooms which have ceramic tile.

The existing heating system includes floor mounted gas units vented to one of a series of five interior brick flues. There is no cooling system. Lighting consists of simple ceramic bare bulb fixtures centrally located in the ceiling of each room. Kitchens typically have iron sinks with simple porcelain wash basins, tubs, and toilets in the bathrooms.

There have been very few alterations to the buildings at the Robert Mills Manor since the time of construction. The original oil heating systems were replaced in the mid-1950s and the electrical system has been upgraded. This latter alteration resulted in exposed conduit that extends along the exteriors of the buildings. In order to remove glass from the exterior doors of the buildings, for safety and building code reasons, most of the original doors have been extensively reworked or replaced.

The thirty-five buildings of the Robert Mills Manor include thirty-one multiple-unit residential structures built between 1939 and 1941, three historic residential structures that were converted for multiple units in 1941, and the former Marine Hospital Building. At the southeast corner of Franklin and Magazine Streets, near the center of the project, is the old County Jail building which has remained unutilized since 1939. Immediately to its south is the former Marine Hospital Building which was converted for use as administrative offices for the project in 1939. Three two-story structures are located to the south and east of the offices, with two of the units placed perpendicular (to Queen Street to the south). To the west of the old jail, a series of six two story structures, each oriented from north to south, perpendicular to the street, extends up each side of Cromwell Alley. The two westernmost buildings face Smith Street (to the west) and the two easternmost buildings face Franklin Street (to the east). The eight buildings on the interior of the block are paired and face each other. To the north of the jail on the block bounded by Wilson, Magazine, Beaufain, and Logan Streets, are twelve additional structures arranged around two perpendicular axes. Four of the structures, each two stories tall and oriented from north to south, extend along Magazine Street. On the interior of the block are four three story buildings oriented perpendicular to the Magazine Street buildings. One additional two story building is located facing Beaufain and Logan Streets, respectively, and are angled from the adjacent buildings due to the shape of the lot. Two historic residences, which were converted into multiple units in 1941, are

located between these angled units, perpendicular to Beaufain Street. Six additional structures are located on the block to the west and include two two-story buildings facing Beaufain Street to the north, one two-story building facing Wilson Street to the east, a historic residence that was converted into multiple units in 1941 located at the corner of Wilson and Magazine Streets, and two three-story buildings on the interior of the block.

Landscaping for the Robert Mills Manor was designed in 1938 by landscape architect Lourel W. Briggs. Briggs' plan included the planting of magnolias, pittosporum, ligustrum, magnolia grandiflora, azaleas, hibiscus, nandinas, photinias, and spiraea and specified the location of utility poles, underground drainage, a garbage collection station, and laundry areas with clothesline poles. Much of Brigg's original plan has been lost over the years and only selected trees, notably several magnolias on the Queen Street side of the project, remain.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation has been prepared for compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SHPO), the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston, and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development relevant to a request by the Housing Authority for a Comprehensive Assistance Program grant. It was determined that the proposed renovation of the Robert Mills Manor would have an effect upon three sites included or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places: The Charleston Old and Historic District, the Old Marine Hospital, and the Robert Mills Manor Low Rent Public Housing Project. Documentation meeting the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey has been prepared by Preservation Consultants, Inc., for four structures, 4, 6, and 7 Wilson Street and 3 Cromwell Alley, that will be demolished as part of the renovation, pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement.

Prepared by: David B. Schneider
Title: Project Manager
Affiliation: Preservation Consultants Inc., Charleston, South Carolina
Date: 11 November 1988

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Historic Plans and Views:

Both the South Carolina Historical Society and the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston have original plans for the Robert Mills Manor. The Housing Authority sets include blueprints from phase 1 of the project (referenced by the projects FHA project number SC-1-1) and blueprints from its expansion (designated SC1-6). The South Carolina Historical Society has one set of blueprints from the first phase of the project in its Simons and Lapham Collection as well as miscellaneous landscaping plans, details, and plumbing plans in its Loutrel W. Briggs Collection. In addition to the referenced plans, early construction photographs and photographs of previously existing buildings on the site removed prior to construction can be found in the newspaper articles referenced in the bibliographic information for this report. The Housing Authority also has a limited number of historic photographs of the project in its files.

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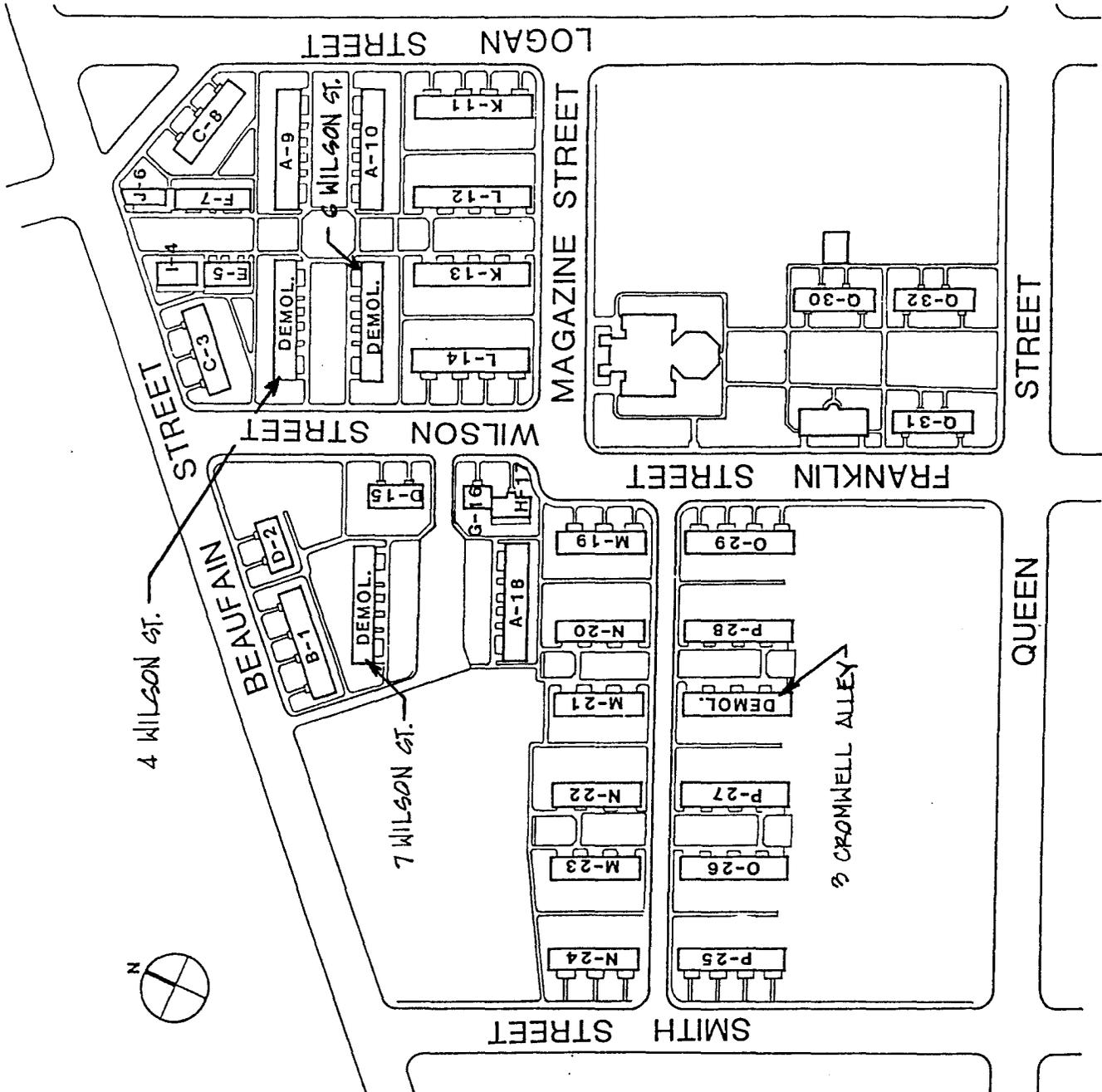
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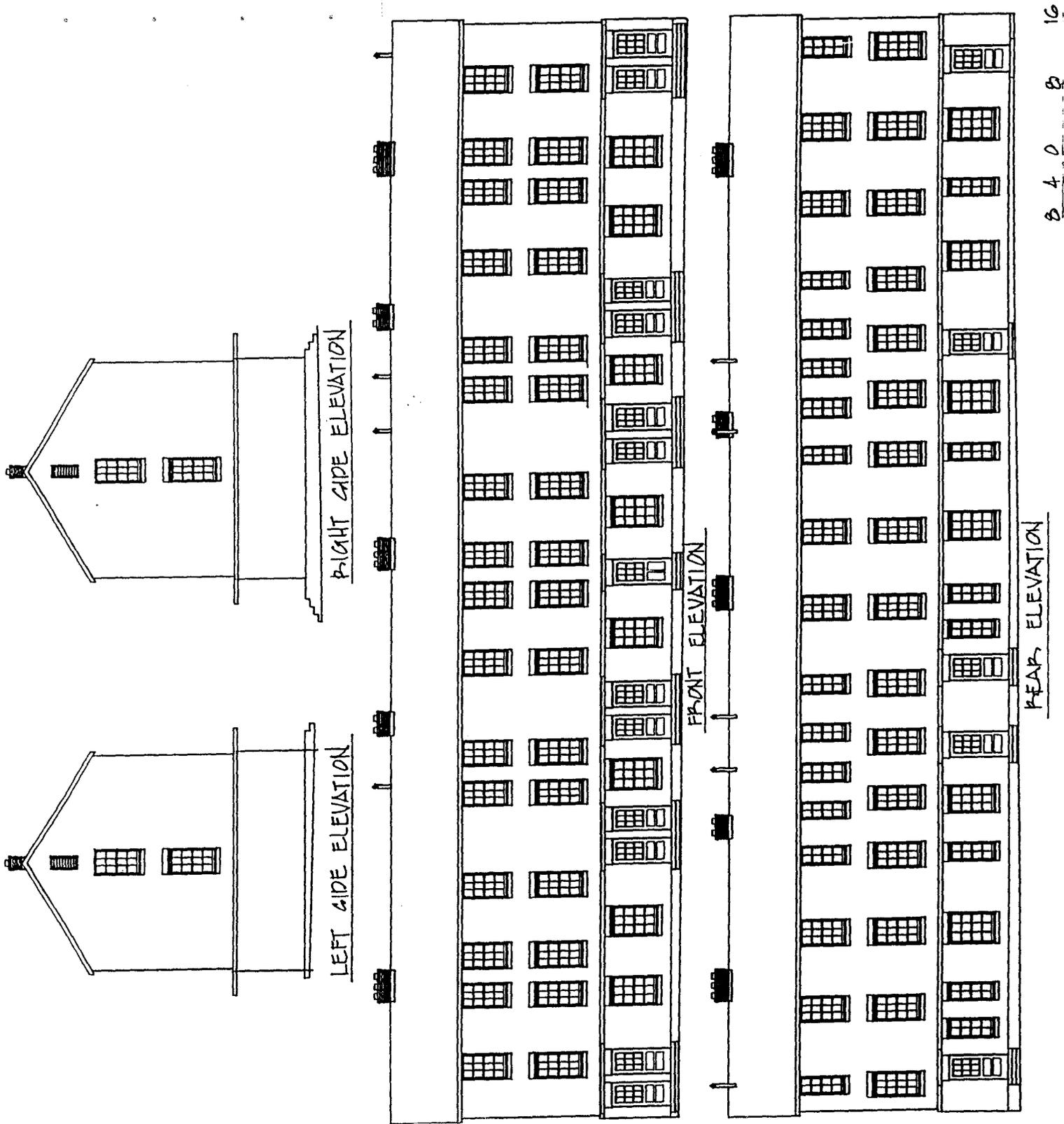
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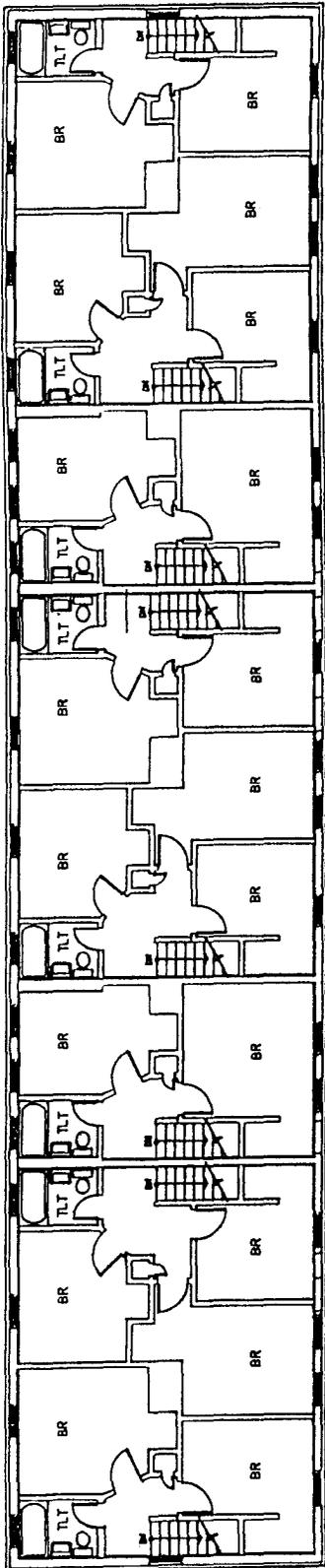


ROBERT MILLS MANOR SITEPLAN

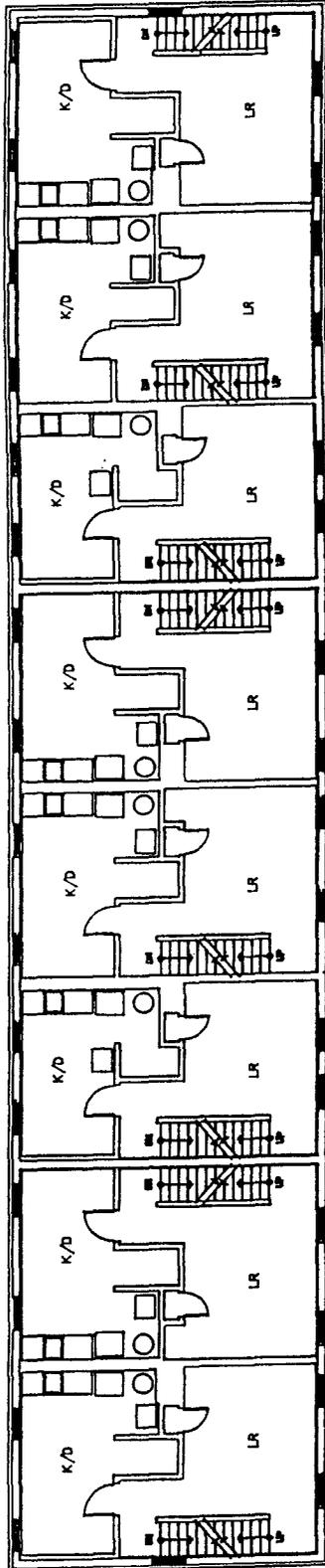
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Charleston County SG, Turner Associates
Charleston, SC Architects & Planners



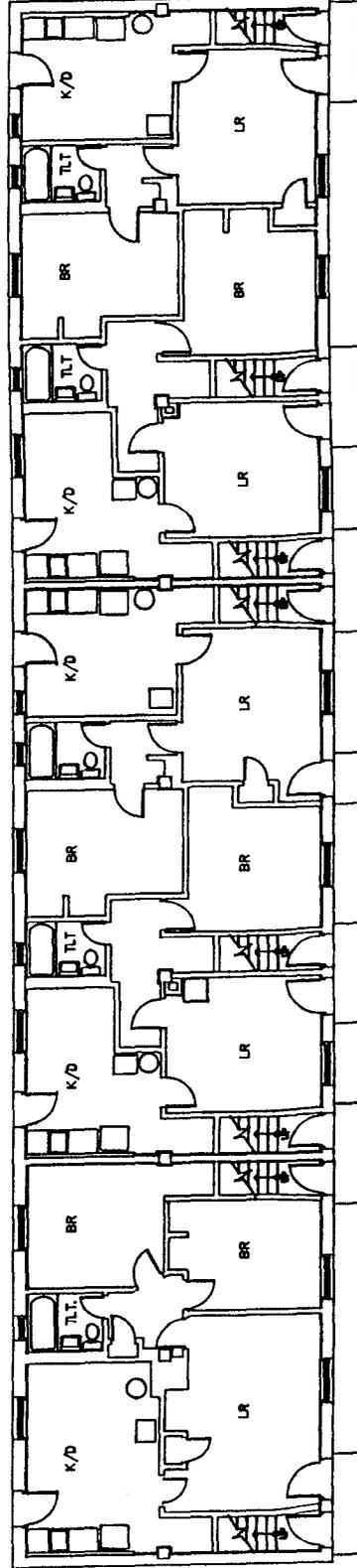
7 WILSON STREET **ELEVATIONS**
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THIRD FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

133'-10"



NORTH



7 WILSON STREET

FLOORPLANS

ROBERT MILLS MANOR
Charleston County
Charleston, SC

November 1988
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