

Charleston County Courthouse

ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTIONARY TIMELINE

1753 - Cornerstone laid for two-story Provincial Statehouse, erected at approximate location of a drawbridge in ramparts around Charles Town.

1783 - Provincial Statehouse destroyed by fire. Decision is made to erect Charleston County Courthouse on this site. Historic records and evidence found in walls show that exterior walls and partial first floor walls of Statehouse were incorporated in the new Courthouse.

1792-96 - The original exterior design of the Charleston County Courthouse is not verifiable. Based on a photograph taken some time after 1840 the building's appearance included the following:

- New Courthouse is three stories plus an attic. East-west elevations are nine bays wide, north-south five bays wide.
- Exterior walls are stucco (over brick) scored to imitate stone with quoins at corners, belt courses at upper floors.
- South elevation includes projection of central three bays; upper two stories include four 2/3 engaged, composite columns supporting a pediment. Design of central entry door is unknown.
- Windows are 6/6 rectangular on first and second floors and square on third. South elevation includes niches at second and eighth bays; rectangular with arched heads on first and second floors and round on third.
- Cornices is projecting wood with dentils and consoles.
- East elevation includes central bay entryway with pedimented surround.
- Hipped roof is covered with slate and two major chimneys are located on south elevation.

1886 - A major earthquake causes extensive damage to the Courthouse. Major alterations to the building are as follows:

- Roofing replaced with standing seamed metal. Chimneys are removed.
- Wood cornice replaced with metal of new design and height.
- Roof pediments are altered in slope.
- Belt courses removed from exterior walls.
- Entire first floor stucco walls are rusticated.
- Niches on south elevation are replaced with 2 over 2 sash.
- Square windows on third floor are replaced with rectangular.

- Main entry is relocated from Broad (south) to Meeting Streets (east) and entry surround is replaced with broken pediment and more ornate paneled doors of Victorian style.
- 1941 Growth of County and its judicial system requires major addition to Courthouse.
 - Three-story addition is placed on north side of Courthouse, effectively doubling it in size.
 - Treatment of all features including walls, doors, windows, cornice and roofing are detailed to mirror the 1886 appearance of the original building.
- 1968 Interior rehabilitation program includes minor changes to the exterior:
 - A window existing in the central first floor bay of the south elevation (original entry door location) was replaced with a fixed, inoperable door.
 - Niches were reinstalled on the south elevation at the second and eighth bays. An attempt was made to duplicate the pre-1886 niches, however, the third floor niches are now oval rather than square.
- 1991
 - Major interior rehabilitation is planned for all interior spaces.
 - Repairs to roofing damaged by Hurricane Hugo are required.
 - Conservation, rehabilitation, or restoration of building exterior.