

OLD MARINE HOSPITAL  
20 Franklin Street  
Charleston, Charleston County  
South Carolina

Owner: Jenkins Colored Orphanage.

Date of Erection: Between 1820 and 1830.

Architect: Robert Mills (?).

Builder:

Present Condition: Fair.

Number of Stories: Three.

Materials of Construction: Brick and wood.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages,

OLD MARINE HOSPITAL  
FRANKLIN STREET  
CHARLESTON, S.C.

SURVEY NO. 13-10

1.  
S.C.  
10-CHAR  
- 66 -

This building is attributed to Robert Mills. Its precise date of erection is unknown and it is uncertain that Mills was the architect.

In the Bulletin of the University of South Carolina, #77, on Mills, Mr. C. C. Wilson states as follows:

"Mr. Schuyler 'on internal evidence would ascribe to him the Branch Mint at New Orleans,' built in 1835, and states that he certainly built Marine Hospitals in Charleston and New Orleans". The Mr. Schuyler referred to was Mr. Montgomery Schuyler, who in 1910 in "The American Architect" devoted one part of his article on the Greek Revival to Robert Mills.

Mills himself, in his "Statistics", makes only the following reference: "The Marine Hospital is located in the rear of the Medical College, where the sick stranger or poor mariner is taken care of. The expenses of this institution exceed annually 5,700 dollars. The number admitted 296." This would fix the date as prior to 1826 (the time of publication of the "Statistics") but the meager data given would indicate that Mills had not designed this building as in his "Statistics" he greatly expands his remarks when describing the buildings designed by himself.

However, comparison of certain mouldings indicates a similarity to and relationship with those used on the County Records Building, known to be by Mills, and it

may have been by his hand.

This building was in use as a Marine Hospital as late as 1849, as it is so indicated on a map of the city issued in that year.

At some time subsequent to that date it passed into other hands and finally became the property of the Rev. D. J. Jenkins, who converted it into a negro orphanage and reformatory. Under such conditions and use it has suffered great deterioration, much temporary remodeling and sub-division and also passed through a severe fire in the winter of 1932-33. It is still owned by the Rev. Jenkins and used as a negro reformatory school, but has been condemned as unsound since the fire, and may shortly be destroyed.

Sources of information: "Statistics of South Carolina", by Robert Mills, Hurlbut and Lloyd, Charleston, 1826. Bulletin of the University of South Carolina #77 - Robert Mills, Architect - by C. C. Wilson, Columbia, February, 1919.

*Data by Post. Officer  
Approved*

*James J. Johnson*

District Officer #13

MARINE HOSPITAL

Constructed 1831-34

20 Franklin Street

Robert Mills, architect; D. Homans, contractor

Robert Mills's Marine Hospital is Charleston's first public Gothic Revival structure. Built by the federal government as a hospital for sick and disabled merchant seamen, the hospital has served as a teaching hospital for the Medical University of South Carolina, a military hospital for the Confederacy, a free school for black children, and an orphanage. Constructed while Mills was no longer resident in South Carolina, his selection as architect was soon embroiled in the middle of a political controversy. In 1820 Robert Mills, a native Charlestonian was asked to serve on the Board of Public Works as a salaried acting commissioner for public buildings in the state of South Carolina. The state had recently begun a series of ambitious building projects which included the construction of canals, roads, dams, locks and bridges in order to facilitate trade between Charleston and the upper part of the state. Mills had earlier designed the Circular Church in Charleston (1804, now destroyed), and the First Baptist Church, Charleston (1818-1822), and he was eager to participate in the states progressive programs. In his various capacities as acting commissioner, superintendent of public buildings and later consultant to the state, Mills was responsible for the design and construction of fourteen courthouses, thirteen jails, the asylum for the insane in Columbia, and the County Records Office and powder magazine complex in Charleston. With declining tax revenues in the late 1820s, Mills found it increasingly difficult to procure work and thus he returned to Baltimore in 1829. Shortly thereafter he began work for the federal government.

Mills's association with South Carolina, however, did not cease at this time. In 1831 Congress appropriated funds to be used for the construction and operation of a marine hospital in Charleston. Several architects submitted plans, and the City Council chose those submitted by Frederick Wesner, a local architect. For unstated reasons the secretary of the treasury overturned the decision of the Charleston City Council and instead chose the design submitted by Mills. The federal government had specified that not more than \$12,500 was to be expended in the erection of the building, but all the estimates from Charleston contractors averaged nearly \$20,000 for the construction of Wesner's building. Mills then contacted a local Washington D.C. contractor whose bid for the work on Mills's building in Charleston was only \$12,100 which in itself might explain the secretary's decision.

Such an action taken by the federal government soon added fuel to the the fire of the Nullifiers in South Carolina. Angered by the Tariffs Acts of 1824, 1828 and 1832 which protected northern industries at the expense of southern agricultural production, many South Carolinians argued for a nullification of the tariff laws within the state of South Carolina, or secession if necessary. One of their concerns was the increasing outflow of capital to northern bankers, factors, mechanics, and merchants. Despite Mills being born in Charleston and having only having left South Carolina two years earlier, he was portrayed by the Nullifiers as an outsider perhaps because of his connection with leading Unionist organizer, Joel R. Poinsett. The snubbing of local contractors even more angered local nullifiers. The states rights' Mercury editorialized,

The plan drawn by Mr. Mills is objectionable in itself, not being suitable to the climate, and much more expensive than that drawn by Wesner, which united both these advantages of suitableness to the climate and cheapness...An allusion is made to one of the letters of the Secretary [of the Treasury] to Mr. Mills as an architect....What are the qualifications of this gentleman I am not disposed to enquire, but it is known that he drew the plan and superintended the erection of the Lunatic Asylum in Columbia, for which \$30,000 was appropriated, but which cost \$100,000, and is not finished. The Fireproof Building in this city, and the [powder] magazines on the Neck are further examples of difference between his calculations and actual cost...It should be remarked, that the only difficulty in the way of our mechanics getting this job, was the plan of Mr. Mills.

The Washington contractor came to Charleston only to discover that he too was unable to build the hospital for the specified \$12,100. The difference, however, was that he was able to convince the federal government to spend another \$5000, further angering the nullifiers. The focus on the political aspects of this commission deflected attention from its contributions to urban planning. Situated between the District jail and the Medical College of South Carolina (now destroyed), near the Work House and the Poor House, the Marine Hospital consolidated use of this area of Charleston for penal, medical and charitable functions.

While the Nullifiers complained of the building's design, Dr. William G. Ramsey described the hospital in 1836 as "a commodious and airy building, fronting the west...with double piazzas to the north, south, and west, which are appropriated to the use of the patients." U-form in plan, the marine hospital is wrapped in gothic ornament such as lancet arches and cluster columns supporting the piazzas. It remained in use as a hospital until the end of the Civil War, and then as a freedman's school, a library, orphanage and governmental offices.

Sources:

Bryan, John M., ed. Robert Mills, Architect.

Lane, Mills. Architecture of the Old South, South Carolina.

Severens, Kenneth. Charleston Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny.

MARINE HOSPITAL  
c. 1833  
20 Franklin Street

An early and successful example of adaptive use for Charleston is Robert Mills' Marine Hospital, the drawings for which he had completed by 1831. It was constructed for its so-named use, served mainly victims of yellow fever, but has also been the home of the Jenkins Negro Orphanage, and was restored more than 30 years ago as offices for the Housing Authority of Charleston.

The building was originally double its present size, with two long wings projecting from the rear; these were removed because of extensive fire damage when the building was restored. Mills built a series of these structures across the United States and utilized some version of the Gothic for all of those whose plans remain. His Charleston hospital expresses the Gothic only gently, with pointed arches in the end pavilions, in the lights over doors and windows, and in the clustered columns of the double-tiered gallery above the arcaded basement. The stair projection to the rear of the structure dates from the restoration.

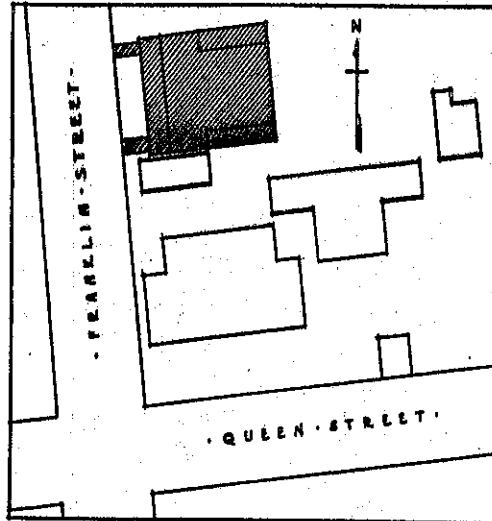
Mills also worked on the nearby County Jail building. First constructed about 1803, it was then added to by Mills in the mid 1820s, but remodelled by Barbot and Seyle about 1855. Although Mills is believed responsible for the rear or south wing, it cannot be determined who is the real author of this crenellated, brick and stucco structure.

W.H.J.T.

# • OLD • MARINE • HOSPITAL •

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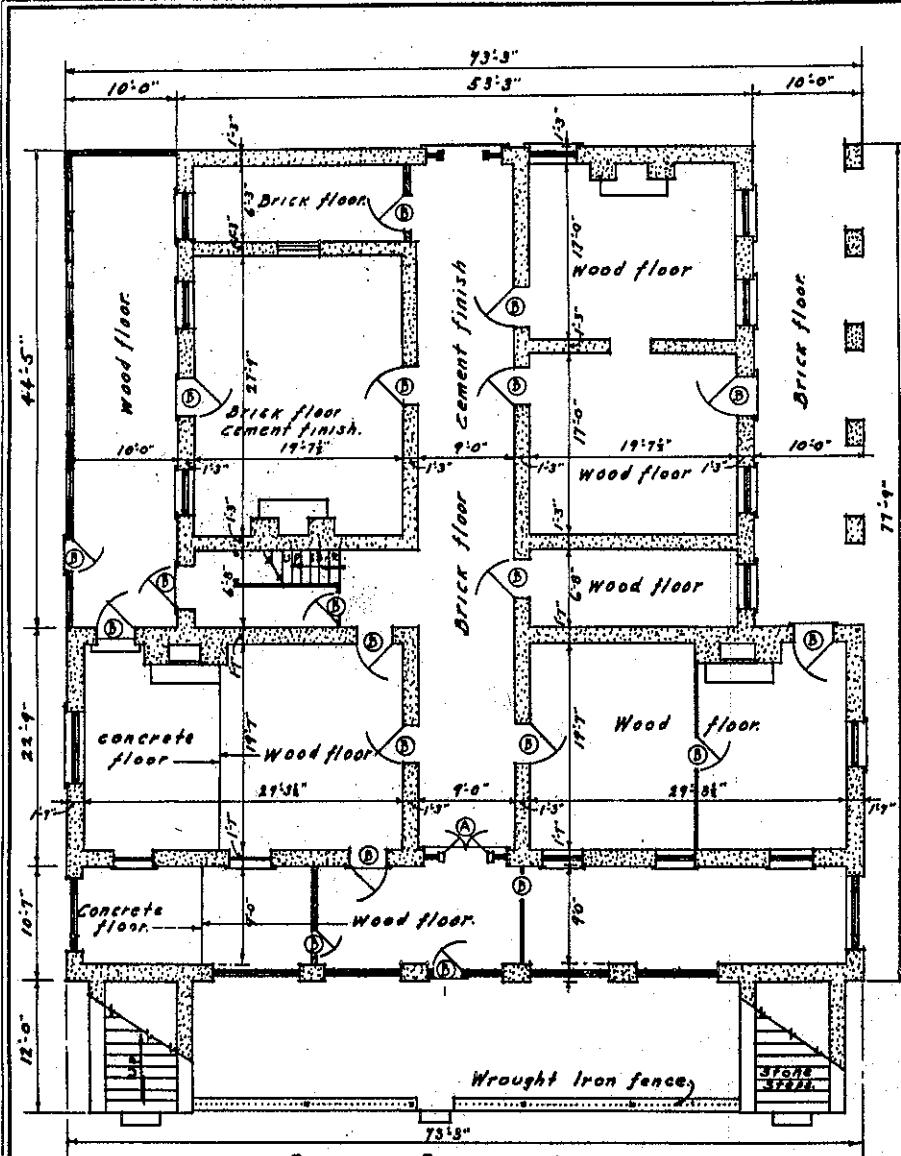
• CHARLESTON, • SOUTH-CAROLINA •



• SKETCH • MAP • SHOWING • LOCATION •

• BUILT - CIRCA - 1820 - 1826 -  
• ARCHITECT - ROBERT - MILLS -

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BUREAU OF PLANS AND DESIGN		MEASURED: Feb. 18 - Feb. 29 - 1934 DRAWN: Feb. 28 - Mar. 14 - 1934 MEASUREMENTS CHECKED: S.T. Feb. 18-29 - 1934	DRAWINGS APPROVED: <i>Samuel Lapham</i> DRAWINGS APPROVED: <i>S. L. Lapham</i>	DISTRICT OFFICER Supt. ARCHAEOLOGY	DIST. NO. 15 - SOUTH CAROLINA SAMUEL LAPHAM - DIST. OFFICER, 42 BROAD ST., CHARLESTON, S.C. • FIELD - PARTY STEPHEN THOMAS - SQUAD LEADER 63 ASHLEY AVE., CHARLESTON, S.C. F. R. MALLEY, A. P. MEYER - LIAISON OFFICER	SURVEY NO. 13-10 S. C. 10- 66	INDEX NO. SHEETS: 1-8
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

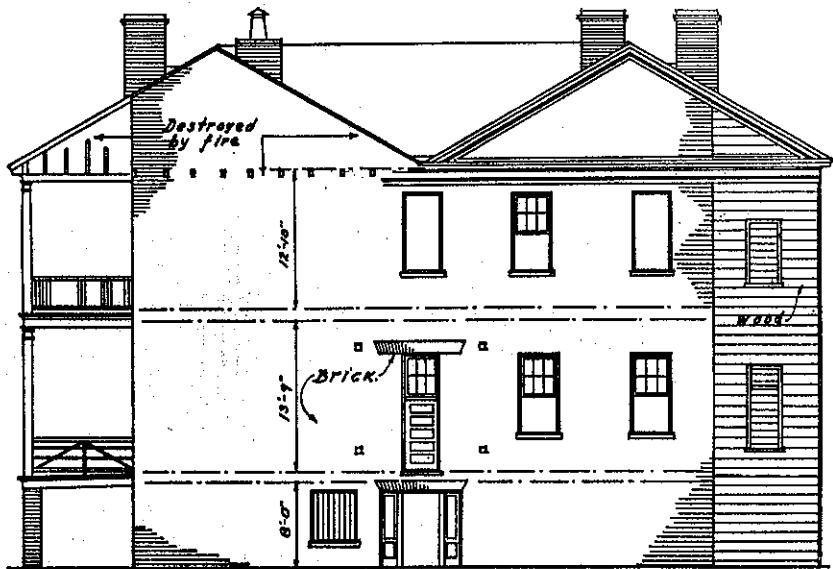
Key  
Brick   
Wood 

*Stephen Thomas ~ Del.*

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BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE  
• OLD • MARINE • HOSPITAL.  
Charleston, Charleston County South Carolina.

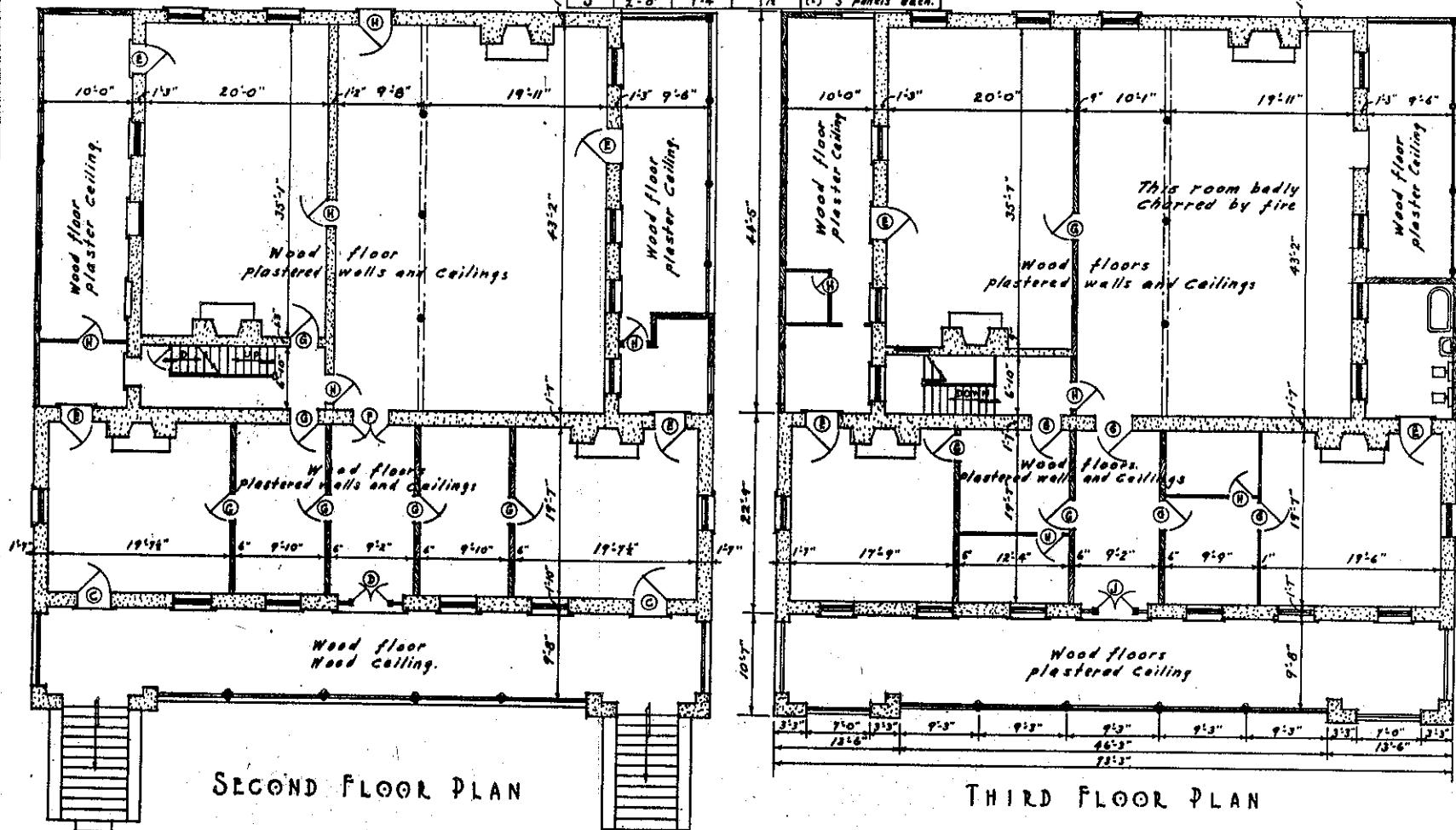
DOOR SCHEDULE				
MARK	Width	Height	Thickness	Description
A	8' 0"	6' 8"	1 3/8"	2-3 panels each
B	All very crude modern T & G. batten doors			



REAR ELEVATION  
EAST.

OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS, BUILDINGS, AND RESERVATIONS  
- BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN  
Charleston, S.C. MARINE HOSPITAL  
Charleston County South Carolina.

DOOR SCHEDULE				
Mark	Width	Height	Thickness	Description
C	3'-7"	8'-6"	1/2	6 panels.
D	2'-6"	8'-8"	1 1/2	(4) 4" " each.
E	3'-6"	7'-0"	1 1/2	(4) 6" " each.
F	3'-0"	7'-0"	1 1/2	(4) 3" " each.
G	3'-0"	7'-0"	1 1/2	6" "
H	Very Grade - modern T and G bottom doors		(3) 3 panels each.	
J	2'-0"	7'-6"	1/2	



Key  
 BRICK   
 Wood

Metric Scale  
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 C.M.  
 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 feet  
 Scale

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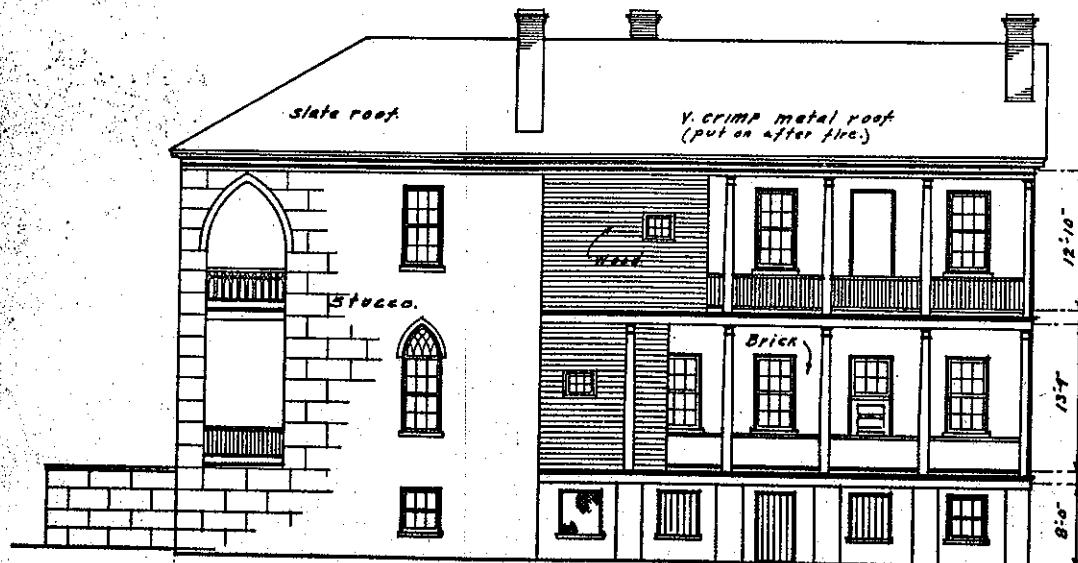
NAME OF STRUCTURE  
 OLD MARINE HOSPITAL  
 Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina.



SURVEY NO.  
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 BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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SIDE ELEVATION  
SOUTH

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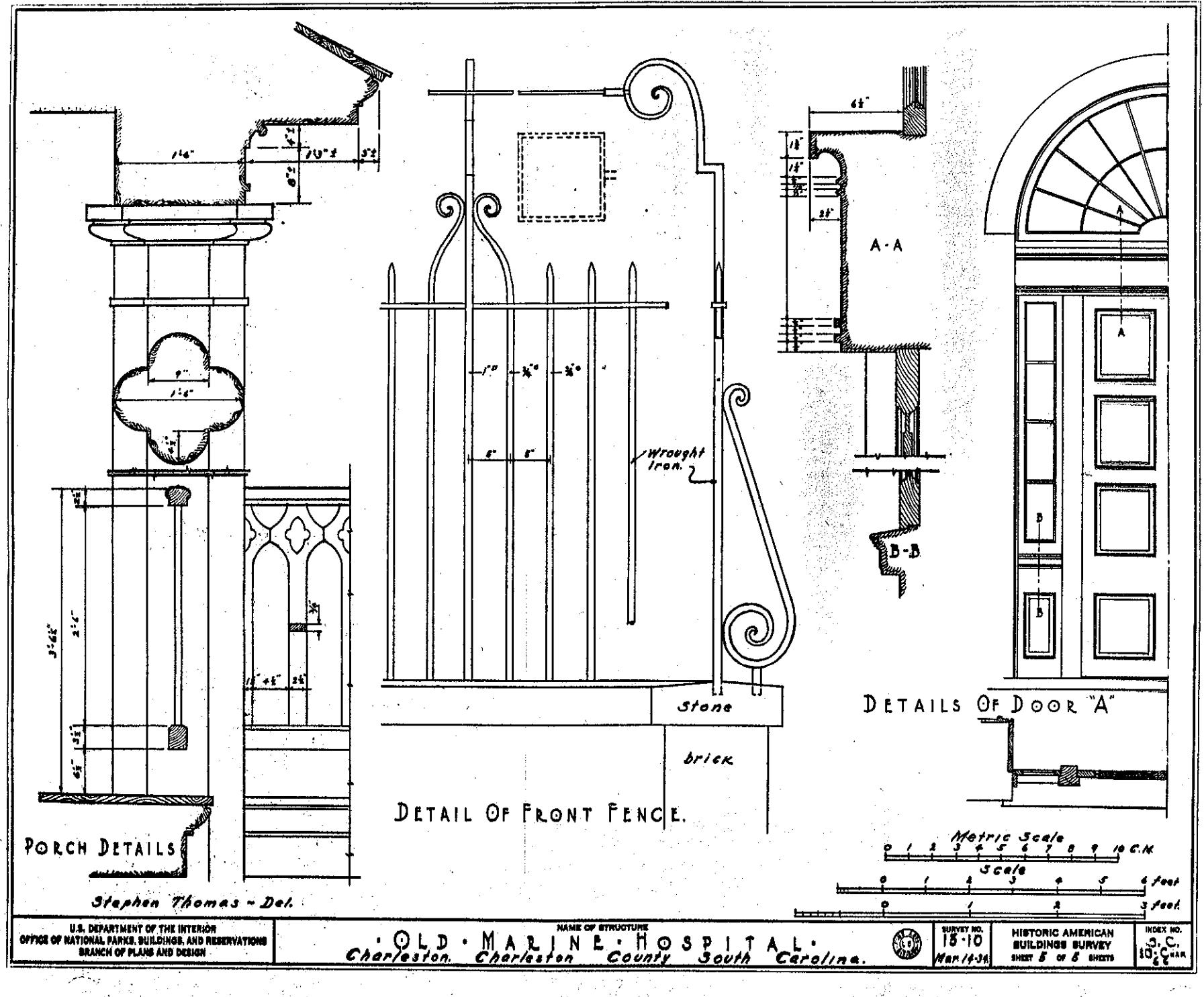
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NAME OF STRUCTURE  
OLD MARINE HOSPITAL  
Charleston, Charleston County South Carolina

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HISTORIC AMERICAN  
BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

1. **What is the primary purpose of the study?** (check all that apply)

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Mar 14-3

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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