



# PRESERVATION PROGRESS FOR THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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SUMMER 2000

## *Three MUSC Properties Listed on SC's 11 Most Endangered Properties List*

*by Leigh Allen Murphy*

The Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation nominated three historic buildings owned by the Medical University of South Carolina to South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties 2000 list. The three properties were selected in May for inclusion on the list. The buildings are: 141 Ashley Avenue, 141½ Ashley Avenue (Alston House), and 147-157 Rutledge Avenue (High School of Charleston).



**141 Ashley Avenue**

The building at 141 Ashley Avenue is a c.1850 Charleston single house. The house was built of Charleston brick and covered in a lime stucco. The house has exemplary terra cotta window pediments on the Ashley Avenue façade and maintains its original fenestration. The building has been seriously neglected since Hurricane Hugo.

The Alston House, 141½ Ashley Avenue, was built c.1817-1819. The house has been moved three times in the past century. The Alston House

is an excellent and rare example of suburban villas built by wealthy planters in the Canonborough and Radcliffeborough neighborhoods, just outside the city limits of Charleston, in the early 19th century. The house has surviving ornate Adamesque ceiling plasterwork complete with medallions and cornices, and one second-floor room has a barrel-vaulted ceiling.

The High School of Charleston, 147-157 Rutledge Avenue, was built in 1921 and is a three-story, Neoclassical, brick school. Additions were made to the school in 1931 and 1947. The High School of Charleston, founded in 1839, is one of the oldest high schools in the country. The school was located in this building from

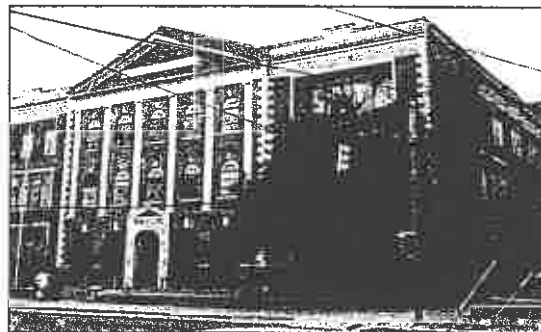


**141 ½ Ashley Avenue**

1922 to 1981, when the school became Rhett Middle School. A 1985 architectural survey of Charleston listed the building as a Category III historic building, meaning that the

building has "significant architectural quality." The building has been abandoned since 1985. The rear portion of the building no longer has a roof and brick walls are crumbling. A new parking lot borders one side of the school.

Repeated attempts by local preservation organizations, as well as individuals, to encourage the preservation of these buildings have failed. In fact, the Alston House was listed on South Carolina's Most Endangered Properties list in 1997, yet nothing



**High School of Charleston**

has been done to ensure the protection of this site. While all three buildings are threatened by demolition by neglect, the High

School of Charleston appears to be in the most imminent danger.

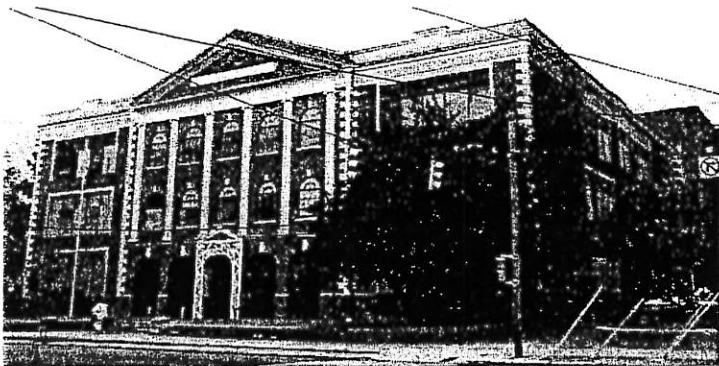
A broadcast e-mail sent to all MUSC employees on June 6 states that "the MUSC master plan calls for an additional 3,000 parking spaces over the next 10 years and identifies Charleston High School and Castle Pinckney (a site on MUSC's property referred to as Castle Pinckney) as the next likely sites for expanded parking." The e-mail goes on to say that "A parking garage at Charleston High School is proposed to be built and open by December 2002 with 1,200 spaces."

John Sutusky, Director of Planning for MUSC, confirmed that a major parking structure is planned for the land currently occupied by the rear portion of the High School of Charleston. MUSC plans to leave the courtyard and the façade of the High School of Charleston, which might serve as a pedestrian passage. Preliminary design for the parking garage could begin as early as November.

As for 141 and 141½ Ashley Avenue, the site where these two houses now sit is being considered for a new Heart and Vascular Center. If this new structure is built on this site, both 141 and 141½ Ashley Avenue will most likely be moved closer to Calhoun Street. Sutusky stated that these two buildings would not be demolished if this site is chosen. There is a possibility that MUSC could contribute money to moving the Alston House if an interested party wanted to purchase the building.

# Preservation Alert

**WHAT:** The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) is seriously neglecting three historic



**The High School of Charleston**

buildings. MUSC owns The High School of Charleston (147-157 Rutledge Avenue), 141 Ashley Avenue, and 141½ Ashley Avenue (The Alston House), and all three have been neglected since Hurricane Hugo. They are all threatened with demolition by neglect.

Repeated attempts by local preservation organizations, as well as individuals, to encourage the preservation of these buildings have failed. The Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation nominated all three buildings to South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties 2000 list, and the buildings were included on the list. In fact, the Alston

House was listed on the South Carolina's Most Endangered Properties list in 1997, yet nothing has been done to ensure the protection of this site.

The High School of Charleston appears to be in the most imminent danger. A major parking structure with 1,200 parking spaces is being planned for the land currently occupied by the rear portion of the High School of

Charleston. Preliminary design for the parking garage could begin as early as November. As for 141 and 141½ Ashley Avenue, the site where these two houses now sit is being considered for a new Heart and Vascular Center.



**141 Ashley Avenue**

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT:

We need your help in encouraging MUSC to be good stewards of the historic buildings they own. Please voice your concern

and contact Dr. Raymond F. Greenberg, President of MUSC. A sample letter is attached. Sign the letter and mail it today, or write your own letter. Send a letter to the editor of the *Post & Courier*. We need to let MUSC know that demolition by neglect is not acceptable in Charleston! Please call The Preservation Society at (843) 722-4630 to let us know if you send a letter so that we may track our members' response (or email to [preserve@preservationsociety.org](mailto:preserve@preservationsociety.org)). Thank you!

**Dr. Raymond F. Greenberg, President**  
MUSC  
171 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, SC 29425  
[greenber@musc.edu](mailto:greenber@musc.edu)

**Post & Courier**  
**Attn: Barbara Williams, Editor**  
134 Columbus Street  
Charleston, SC 29403



**The Alston House**



147 KING STREET • POST OFFICE BOX 521 • CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA 29402

March 17, 2000

Mr. Chad Lennox  
The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation  
1314 Lincoln Street, Suite 213  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201-3154

Dear Chad:

The Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation would like to submit three nominations for South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties 2000. The properties—141 Ashley Avenue, 141 ½ Ashley Avenue (Alston House), and 147-157 Rutledge Avenue (The High School of Charleston)—are all owned by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and have been seriously neglected for at least a decade. The buildings are within a one block vicinity of each other. The Alston House was listed on the 1997 South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties list, and unfortunately, it is still threatened. It is our belief that MUSC is ignoring these buildings so that they will ultimately be demolished. All three buildings are threatened by demolition by neglect and encroaching development.

We hope that these properties will be listed either as one or three sites on the 2000 list. A listing, and in the case of the Alston House a *second* listing, would encourage MUSC to meet their stewardship responsibilities. Thank you for your consideration. If I can provide any additional information, please let me know.

With kindest personal regards, I remain

Most sincerely yours,

Cynthia Cole Jenkins  
Executive Director

**11 Most Endangered Properties Nominations**

**Name of Site:** 141 Ashley Avenue

**Address:** 141 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, South Carolina 29403

**County:** Charleston County

**Date of Property:** c. 1850

**Ownership:** Private

**Owner Address:** Medical University of South Carolina  
171 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, South Carolina 29425  
(843) 792-2300

**Designation:** Old City District, Charleston, South Carolina

**1. Provide the name of the group nominating the site:**

The Preservation Society of Charleston  
and  
Historic Charleston Foundation

**2. Provide the address and phone number of the group nominating the site:**

The Preservation Society of Charleston  
Post Office Box 521  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 722-4630

Historic Charleston Foundation  
Post Office Box 1120  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 723-1623

**3. What is the physical description of the site?**

The property is located at 141 Ashley Avenue.

The house was originally built as a two-story single family house. The house adheres to the Charleston Single House form, with the piazza on the south side. The house was built of "Charleston brick" and covered in a lime stucco, scored in a stone block pattern and sits on what appears to be its original masonry foundation. The house contains its original fenestration, with solid shutters on the first floor and louvered shutters on the second floor. The north side of the house was the property line and was devoid of windows for privacy. A later window has been installed on the first floor. Part of the heart pine piazzas at the southwest corner was infilled at a later date for bathrooms.

The roof has three southern dormers. The slate roof was replaced after Hurricane Hugo with fiberglass shingles. A chimney was lost in Hurricane Hugo and the masonry gabled end on

Ashley Avenue was destroyed. The original staircase that was located between the front two rooms on the first floor has been removed. The house was converted to two apartments circa 1945, and an exterior open riser steel staircase was added to the exterior of the piazza.

The interior walls are a combination of plaster on wood lath and gyp board. The house retains its original heart pine tongue and groove flooring. The house has its original wood mantles.

**4. What is the historic or architectural significance of the site?**

There are extraordinary terra cotta window pediments on the Ashley Avenue façade.

**5. Is the site open to the public?**

No

**6. What is the threat to the site?**

Demolition by Neglect

**7. How immediate is the threat?**

The house has been seriously neglected since Hurricane Hugo in 1989. All of the wall and ceiling finishes are severely damaged due to heat, humidity, and rain water through the roof. The interior face of the exterior masonry walls exhibit severely deteriorating mortar joints.

**8. How can the threat be eliminated?**

Protection mechanism, change of ownership, or encourage the current owner (the Medical University of South Carolina) to meet their stewardship responsibilities.

**9. How would listing this site as one of SOUTH CAROLINA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED PROPERTIES help this property?**

The property is owned by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Repeated attempts by local preservation organizations as well as individuals, to encourage the preservation of this property have failed. Listing on South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties list would make MUSC aware of their responsibility to be good stewards of their buildings.

**10. Additional Comments/Recommendations:**

**11. Contacts:**

Cynthia Cole Jenkins, Executive Director  
The Preservation Society of Charleston  
Post Office Box 521  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 722-4630

Dr. Carter Hudgins, Executive Director  
Historic Charleston Foundation  
Post Office Box 1120  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 723-1623

**12. Photographs and location map**

See Attached

**Name of Site:** Alston House

**Address:** 141 1/2 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, South Carolina 29403

**County:** Charleston County

**Date of Property:** c. 1817-1819

**Ownership:** Private

**Owner Address:** Medical University of South Carolina  
171 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, South Carolina 29425  
(843) 792-2300

**Designation:** Old City District, Charleston, South Carolina

**1. Provide the name of the group nominating the site:**

The Preservation Society of Charleston  
and  
Historic Charleston Foundation

**2. Provide the address and phone number of the group nominating the site:**

The Preservation Society of Charleston  
Post Office Box 521  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 722-4630

Historic Charleston Foundation  
Post Office Box 1120  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 723-1623

**3. What is the physical description of the site?**

The property is located at 141 1/2 Ashley Avenue. The Alston House has been moved three times in the past century. It originally sat back from Calhoun Street, and the piazza garden side overlooked Bennett's Rice Mill pond. The entry to the house faced Mill Street.

The two-story house is wood-frame with fine architectural detailing in wood and plaster. However, almost all of the plaster has separated from the wood lath. The house has original six over six double hung windows. The front two-story piazza is original to the house. The octagonal columns on the second floor are original and the first floor fluted columns are a later addition. The original configuration of the piazza appears to have been a "C" shaped plan, but two sides of the porch were later infilled. The original standing seam metal roof was badly damaged in Hurricane Hugo and now the roof is a mixture of asphalt shingles and roll roofing.

The floors are tongue and groove oak and pine. The house sits on a new foundation, since it was moved.

**4. What is the historic or architectural significance of the site?**

The Alston House is an excellent and rare example of a suburban villa that wealthy rice planters built in the Cannonborough and Radcliffeborough neighborhoods, just outside of the city limits of Charleston in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house was built by William A. Alston, a rice planter.

The house has surviving ornate Adamesque ceiling plasterwork complete with medallions and cornices. One second-floor room has a barrel vaulted ceiling.

The house has exceptional carved wood trim.

**5. Is the site open to the public?**

No

**6. What is the threat to the site?**

Demolition by Neglect

**7. How immediate is the threat?**

The house has been seriously neglected since Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Encroaching development threatens the site further.

**8. How can the threat be eliminated?**

Protection mechanism, change of ownership, or encourage the current owner (the Medical University of South Carolina) to meet their stewardship responsibilities.

**9. How would listing this site as one of SOUTH CAROLINA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED PROPERTIES help this property?**

The property is owned by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Repeated attempts by local preservation organizations, as well as individuals, to encourage the preservation of this property have failed. The property was listed on the South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties list in 1997, but nothing has been done to ensure the protection of the site. A second listing on South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties list would make MUSC aware of their responsibility to be good stewards of their buildings.

**10. Additional Comments/Recommendations:**

**11. Contacts:**

Canthia Cole Jenkins, Executive Director  
The Preservation Society of Charleston  
Post Office Box 521  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 722-4630

Dr. Carter Hudgins, Executive Director  
Historic Charleston Foundation  
Post Office Box 1120  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402  
(843) 723-1623

**12. Photographs and location map**

See Attached



147 KING STREET • POST OFFICE BOX 521 • CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA 29402

August 9, 2000

The Honorable Joseph P. Riley Jr., Mayor  
80 Broad Street  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Mayor Riley:

Out of concern for the fate of three historic buildings in Charleston, The Preservation Society of Charleston has mailed to our members the attached Preservation Alert. The High School of Charleston, the Alston House, and 141 Ashley Avenue are threatened with demolition by neglect. They all are owned by the Medical University of South Carolina. The Preservation Society is seriously concerned about the future of these buildings.

I am sending you and members of City Council the Preservation Alert and sample letter to Dr. Greenberg that were mailed to our members today. The Preservation Society would appreciate any assistance that you and members of City Council can give us with this matter.

With kindest personal regards, I remain

Most sincerely yours,

Cynthia Cole Jenkins  
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Anne Frances Bleecker  
The Honorable Kwadjo Campbell  
The Honorable Yvonne D. Evans  
The Honorable Henry B. Fishburne, Jr.  
The Honorable Jimmy S. Gallant, III  
The Honorable G. Robert George  
The Honorable Wendell G. Gilliard  
The Honorable James Lewis, Jr.  
The Honorable Robert M. Mitchell  
The Honorable Larry D. Shirley  
The Honorable Paul Tinkler  
The Honorable Louis L. Waring

(843) 722-4630

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FAX (843) 723-4381





147 KING STREET • POST OFFICE BOX 521 • CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA 29402

Dr. Raymond F. Greenberg, President  
MUSC  
171 Ashley Avenue  
Charleston, SC 29425

Dear Dr. Greenberg:

I am writing you to express my concern over three historic buildings owned by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). MUSC is seriously neglecting The High School of Charleston (147-157 Rutledge Avenue), 141 Ashley Avenue, and 141½ Ashley Avenue (The Alston House). These important buildings in Charleston's architectural history have been neglected by MUSC since Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Today, eleven years later, these buildings are still threatened, and one stands on the verge of partial demolition.

The Charleston single house at 141 Ashley Avenue was built c.1850. The house has exemplary terra cotta window pediments on the Ashley Avenue façade and maintains its original fenestration. The Alston House, 141½ Ashley Avenue, was built c.1817-1819, and it is an excellent and rare example of suburban villas built by wealthy planters in the Canonborough and Radcliffeborough neighborhoods. The house has surviving ornate Adamesque ceiling plasterwork complete with medallions and cornices. The High School of Charleston, built in 1921, is a three-story, Neoclassical, brick school. Founded in 1839, the High School of Charleston is one of the oldest high schools in the country. The school was located in this building from 1922 to 1981. A 1985 architectural survey of Charleston listed the building as a Category III historic building, meaning that the building has "significant architectural quality." The building has been abandoned since 1985.

The three properties were selected to be on South Carolina's 11 Most Endangered Properties 2000 list in May after being nominated by The Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation. Repeated attempts by local preservation organizations, as well as individuals, to encourage the preservation of these buildings have failed. In fact, the Alston House was listed on South Carolina's Most Endangered Properties list in 1997, yet nothing has been done to ensure the protection of this site. While all three buildings are threatened by demolition by neglect, the High School of Charleston appears to be in the most imminent danger.

John Sutusky, Director of Planning for MUSC, has told The Preservation Society that a major parking structure is planned for the land currently occupied by the rear portion of the High School of Charleston. As for 141 and 141½ Ashley Avenue, the site where these two houses now sit is being considered for a new Heart and Vascular Center.

These three buildings offer MUSC the opportunity to be a role model for the community by being a good steward of her historic buildings. Since MUSC is among the oldest medical schools in the country, the university should protect the sense of place and security that comes from the adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

Sincerely,

Member, The Preservation Society of Charleston

(843) 722-4630

FOUNDED 1920

FAX (843) 723-4381

# MUSC

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
171 ASHLEY AVE • STE 200-A  
PO BOX 250001  
CHARLESTON • SC 29425

(843) 792-2211  
FAX (843) 792-1097

August 23, 2000

Ms. Katherine E. Hammersley  
99 Chadwick Drive  
Charleston, SC 29407

Dear Ms. Hammersley:

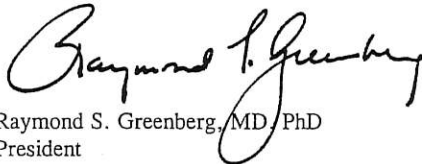
I have received your letter regarding the former Charleston high school building and the two historic properties located at 141 and 141 ½ Ashley Avenue. I appreciate your concerns and thank you for taking the time to write me.

Concerning the former high school building, we are initiating a formal planning process for the development of that general area of the campus late this year. We have structured this extended planning and design process in order to allow for input from all interested parties. I want to assure you that there will be ample opportunity for you to have input during that process.

The historic houses on Ashley pose different challenges. The University has been working for several years to find interested and responsible parties to relocate and restore the Alston House. When we last advertised that offer, there was limited response. The recent publicity about the properties has stimulated new interest. We plan to solicit proposals again in the near future.

Again, I am grateful for your expression of concern for these properties. You have my promise that we will attempt to address these concerns in a timely and responsive manner.

Sincerely,



Raymond S. Greenberg, MD, PhD  
President

RSG/jwc/vh