

SOUTH CAROLINA MEMORIAL GARDEN  
1919 Lincoln Street  
Columbia  
Richland County  
South Carolina

HALS SC-9  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### SOUTH CAROLINA MEMORIAL GARDEN

HALS NO. SC-9

Location: 1919 Lincoln Street, Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina  
(Southwest corner of Lincoln and Calhoun Streets)

Lat: 34.010201, Long: -81.043263 (Center of Front Garden Gate, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: The South Carolina Memorial Garden is historically significant for its having been designed by one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's premiere American landscape architects, Loutrel Briggs. Briggs' designs are nearly synonymous with the quintessential "lowcountry" garden aesthetic, as Briggs is credited with establishing the iconic and world-renowned "Charleston Garden Style." Briggs refined the style during his time in Charleston, which lasted from the late 1920s until his death in 1977.<sup>1</sup> The South Carolina Memorial Garden is located approximately 100 miles northwest of Charleston in the South Carolina state capital of Columbia. Although the plan for the garden features several characteristics similar to many of Briggs' private Charleston gardens, the garden's prime distinction rests in its being designed by Briggs as a public space rather than a private one.<sup>2</sup> The garden is demonstrative of Briggs' signature designs, in its utilization of various ornamental plants and implementation of assorted flattering design elements such as: a gate and tool house, walks, terraces, walls, a fountain, sculpture, and garden furniture all contained within a limited space.<sup>3</sup> Briggs was fond of creating a series of garden "rooms" which were divided into a hierarchy and related to the architecture of the surrounding buildings.<sup>4</sup> The creating of garden "rooms" is a hallmark feature of Briggs' work, and is clearly demonstrated here.

Description: Entering through the wrought iron gate set into a brick wall, the long and narrow site opens up to a centered "terminal motif" at the rear. To the left is a brick gable-roof tool shed with two doors and an iron trellis. On the right is an octagonal building that houses a small sitting area and a bathroom at the rear. The windows into the space have wrought iron grills installed and the highly-steeped roof flares at the base. The two buildings are made of brick that has been painted white. Brick and flagstone pavers provide a firm footing in this area, with traditional boxwoods installed in symmetrical planting areas in front of the

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<sup>1</sup> SCDAH, "National Register Properties in South Carolina. South Carolina Memorial Garden,," Richland County, Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740153/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> The Preservation Society of Charleston, "The Gardens of Loutrel Briggs: Edens Lost and Found," *Preservation Progress* 50, no. 2 (2006): <http://www.preservationsociety.org/progress/lowresfinalissue.pdf>

tool shed. Low brick walls at the end of this courtyard area frame the view of the terminal motif. Each wall terminates in a low brick post topped by lead figures representing the seasons. These figures, routinely gnawed on by the squirrels, have had to be replaced. The current figures are replacements, and squirrel interference is already clearly evident, especially on the base, toes, and hair.

Beyond the courtyard space, the garden opens up into an expanse of lawn. On the left is a brick wall laid in running bond topped by a section laid in a honeycomb bond which separates this garden from the grounds of the Governor's Mansion and gardens. This wall has a window opening and a full opening into the space beyond. The window opening is a little less than half-way down from the front of the garden and contains a wrought iron grate. The full opening is about three-quarters of the way down from the front of the garden and contains a wrought iron gate. The rear wall of the garden continues the same bond as the left side. It is not entirely clear if this is the original wall. The plan makes no specific mention of the wall and early photographs show a garden so densely planted that any wall would be completely obscured. The garden wall on the right is laid in a blue-toned stone and contains no openings as it separates this garden from the street. The front wall of the garden, with the main gate, is set in a running bond pattern and is two withes wide with relieving arches on the garden side. The front garden wall was partially destroyed by a truck removing items from the property after a wedding in the garden and has been fixed. The color of the repair is similar to the original but has not experienced the same weathering and, as such, is obviously a repair.

The lawn has recently been re-sodded and, at the time of the site visit in February 2015, the individual segments were still clearly distinguishable. Flanking the lawn section are plantings framed with a hedge of upright brick. One of the major design changes called for by Loutrel Briggs, the designer of this garden was to create a serpentine border to these plantings. In the past, as a private yard, the lawn was flanked by rectilinear plantings. Briggs retained some of the original plants from this iteration, but softened the look of the whole space with meandering edges. This detail has subsequently been lost and the rectilinear borders have been restored. These side areas are home to a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, including some large crepe myrtle trees which have been allowed to grow naturally. These planting beds also contain holly, dogwood, and loquat as well as the boxwood that existed in the garden at the time of Brigg's design. At the time of the visit, the only color was from camellias at the end of their season and the promise of daffodils as the stems were above ground, but no blooms were visible.

The terminal motif, so called by Briggs, is elevated from the flat plain of the main lawn by two steps made of brick. The first brick step has sunk into the ground and thus has created an imbalance between the rise of the first and second steps. This is likely a function of the brick sinking over time as the

original plan calls for steps with the same rise (2 bricks, stacked). Either side of the terminus has a brick post and curved walls, similar to the “open arms” handrails of some staircases. The front-facing edge of these walls and the posts have been painted white. The posts and walls, are topped with flagstone, as they are in the rest of the garden. There are similar lead figures on top of each post, with the same signs of squirrel activity. The steps rise to a flagstone-paved area with an oversized basin fountain at its center. Behind the basin of the fountain is a sizeable stone figure representing St. Francis of Assisi. This is not the original location of the figure. Originally, it was intended to go next to the octagonal building but was moved to this space at a later date after spending some time in front of the tool shed between the doors. The original Briggs plan calls for a single bench on this paved area parallel to the stone wall and facing the fountain. The space, in fact, features two benches, set at each rear corner and angled into the space. The original design also called for the installation of one bench down on the lawn. It, too, was to be set parallel to the stone wall, and was set on axis directly across from the gate into the Governor’s Mansion garden. A second bench has been added to the lawn area, approximately across from the window into the garden opposite. Each of these benches is set atop a pad of flagstone pavers, just as was called for in the Briggs plan.

History: Situated in the historic Arsenal Hill neighborhood of Columbia South Carolina, the South Carolina Memorial Garden was fashioned from a portion of the grounds that were originally part of the Caldwell-Hampton-Boylston House, a ca. 1830 Greek Revival house, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>5</sup> The garden, established in 1944-45, was designed by Loutrel Briggs at the behest of the Garden Club of South Carolina.<sup>6</sup> As a successful landscape designer with a large following in New York, Briggs came to Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1920s, when he was asked by some of his wealthy New York clients to design many of the gardens for their newly acquired Charleston properties.<sup>7</sup> Briggs, who is credited with establishing the “Charleston Garden Style,” was therefore firmly established in South Carolina landscape design when asked to design the Memorial Garden.

The garden was “envisioned by the club as the first memorial garden sponsored by a state garden club in the United States that recognized veterans of World War II for their military service.”<sup>8</sup> Substantial restoration efforts were initiated by the Garden Club of South Carolina after the garden suffered heavy damage caused by an ice storm in 2000. Extensive restoration of the garden’s plantings, structures, and hardscapes were carried out in 2003, and 2007-2008, under the guidance of Atlanta landscape architect, and Briggs expert, James R. Cothran.

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<sup>5</sup>National Park Service, “National Register of Historic Places Program,” Accessed March 5, 2015.[http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/presmonth/2012/South\\_Carolina\\_Memorial\\_Garden.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/presmonth/2012/South_Carolina_Memorial_Garden.htm)

<sup>6</sup> SCDAAH, “National Register Properties in South Carolina.”

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> SCDAAH, “National Register Properties in South Carolina.”

Under Corthan's expertise, the restoration of the garden closely followed Briggs' original plans, upholding the property's historic integrity.<sup>9</sup> Still owned and maintained by the Garden Club of South Carolina, the garden hosts events on Memorial Day and other occasions.<sup>10</sup> The South Carolina Memorial Garden was Listed in the National Register April 2, 2012.<sup>11</sup>

- Sources:
- "SCDAH." National Register Properties in South Carolina. South Carolina Memorial Garden, Richland County. Accessed March 8, 2015.  
<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740153/>.
- United States. National Park Service. "South Carolina Memorial Garden -- National Register of Historic Places Official Website--Part of the National Park Service." National Parks Service. Accessed March 8, 2015.  
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- "South Carolina Memorial Garden." Title Marker. Accessed March 8, 2015.  
[http://www.lat34north.com/HistoricMarkersSC/MarkerDetail.cfm?KeyID=40-165&MarkerTitle=South Carolina Memorial Garden](http://www.lat34north.com/HistoricMarkersSC/MarkerDetail.cfm?KeyID=40-165&MarkerTitle=South%20Carolina%20Memorial%20Garden).
- The Preservation Society of Charleston. "The Gardens of Loutrel Briggs: Edens Lost and Found." *Preservation Progress*, Summer, 2006, 50, no. 2  
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- Cothran, James R. *Charleston Gardens and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrel Briggs*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2010.

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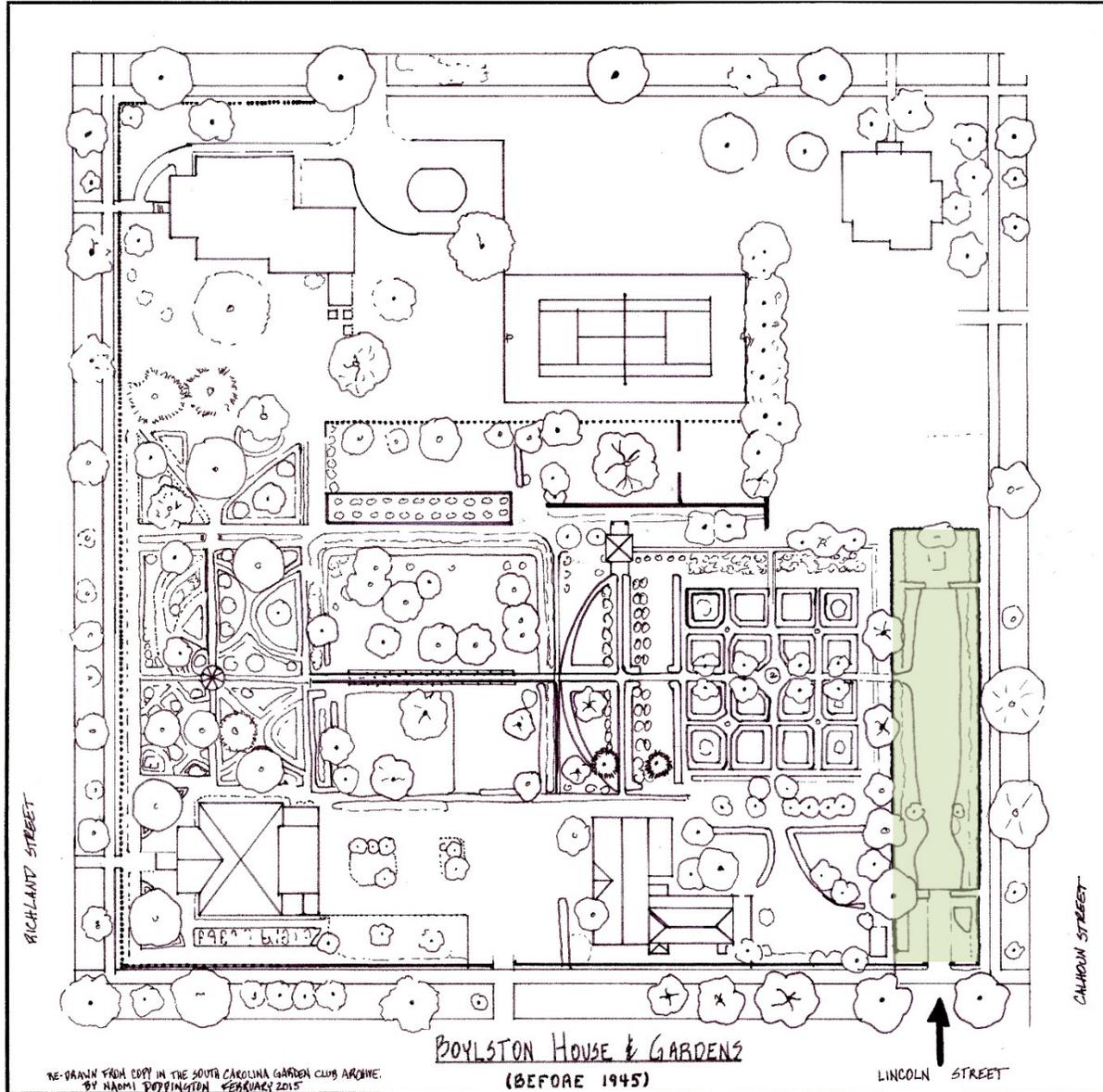
Entry 2015 HALS Challenge: Documenting Modernist Landscapes

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<sup>9</sup> National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Program."

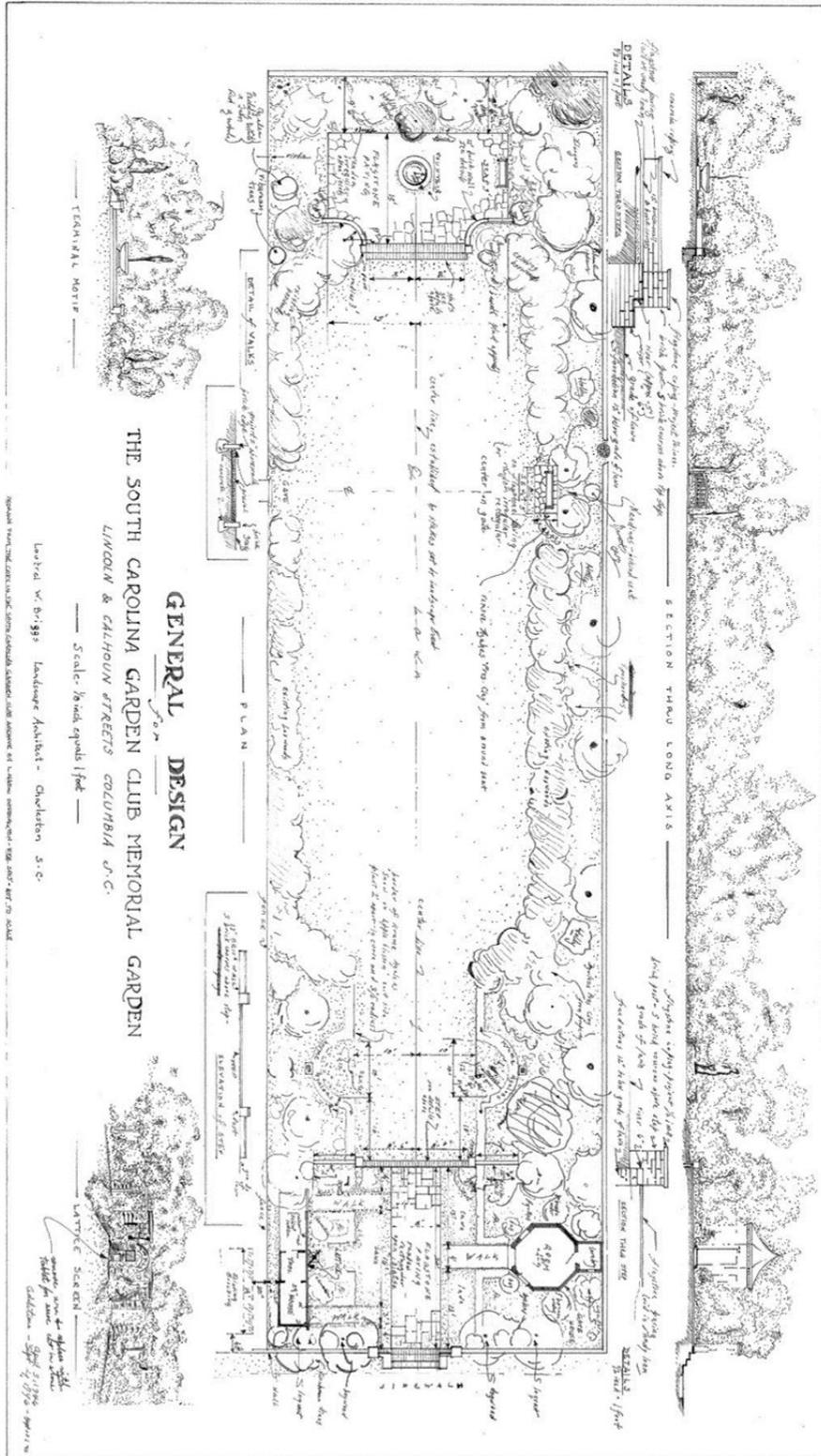
<sup>10</sup> South Carolina Memorial Garden, "Title Marker." Accessed March 8, 2015.  
[http://www.lat34north.com/HistoricMarkersSC/MarkerDetail.cfm?KeyID=40-165&MarkerTitle=South Carolina Memorial Garden](http://www.lat34north.com/HistoricMarkersSC/MarkerDetail.cfm?KeyID=40-165&MarkerTitle=South%20Carolina%20Memorial%20Garden).

<sup>11</sup> SCDAH, "National Register Properties in South Carolina."

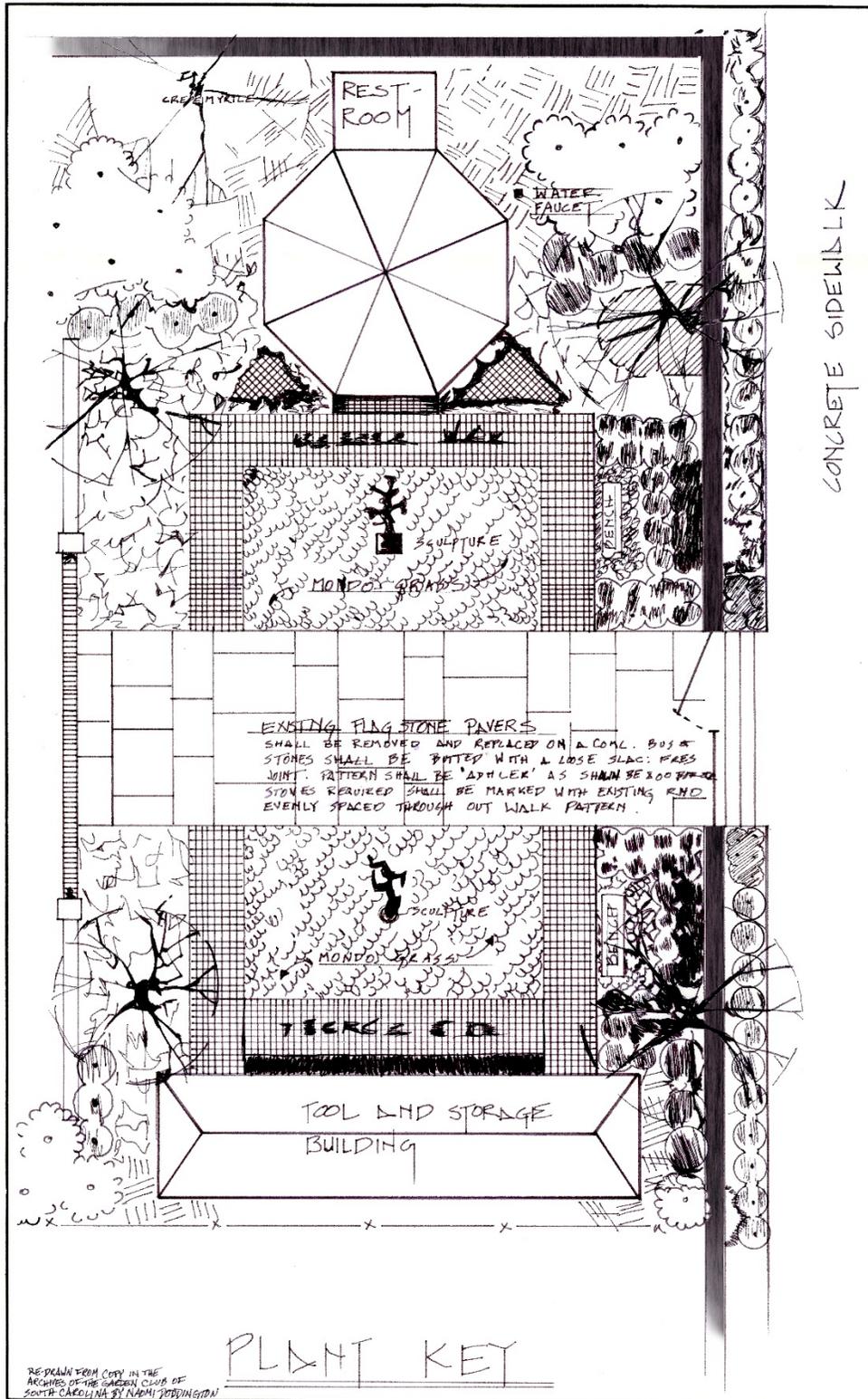


Plan showing Boylston House and Gardens, Draughtsman unknown, Pre-1945 (Redrawn by Naomi Doddington from original in The South Carolina Garden Club archives, 2015)

\*Mrs. Boylston donated the walled garden area at the corner of Lincoln and Calhoun Streets (highlighted above in green) to be turned into the South Carolina Memorial Garden in honor of her husband and son in 1945. The South Carolina Garden Club hired Charleston Landscape Architect Loutrel Briggs to re-design the gardens. His plan was executed between 1946 and 1957. The remainder of the Boylston property seen above was incorporated into the grounds of the South Carolina Governor's Mansion.



Original Plan of the Memorial Garden by Lourel Briggs – 1945 (Redrawn by Naomi Doddington from original in The South Carolina Garden Club archives, 2015)



Plan for Renovation of Courtyard, Architect Unknown, 1985-1987 (Redrawn by Naomi Doddington from original in The South Carolina Garden Club archives, 2015)



Star Magnolias in Bloom, 1940s (Photograph from The South Carolina Garden Club archives.)  
\*View from Rear of Garden to Front Gate.



Tool Shed, 1950s (Photograph from The South Carolina Garden Club archives.)  
\*Briggs' plans called for a tool shed and gazebo-like structure built in brick. The South Carolina Garden Club completed these buildings in 1957 and re-dedicated the garden at that time.



Memorial Day, 1979 (Photograph from The South Carolina Garden Club archives.)

\*Briggs' plan called for a large basin fountain on the terrace to create the "terminal motif". This was installed in 1950. In this 1979 image, the vegetation is very lush, the Francis of Assisi statue had not yet been installed behind the fountain, and the current-day Crepe Myrtle flanking the terrace were not yet planted.



Renovated Courtyard, 1987 (Photograph from The South Carolina Garden Club archives.)  
\*Between 1985 and 1987, The South Carolina Garden Club renovated the Courtyard at the front of the garden and re-laid the flagstone on the terrace. The Club was not in possession of a copy of the Briggs plan at this time, therefore, the renovation departed strongly from the original design. Of note is the original brick wall at the gate. This wall was damaged and replaced temporarily by a chain-link fence. The restoration of this original detail was an important element of the work performed in the early 2000s.



Pre-Restoration, 2002 (Photograph from The South Carolina Garden Club archives.)

\*The garden had fallen into quite a state of disrepair by the early 2000s. The front wall was damaged in an accident and chain-link fencing was installed to protect the garden from intruders. The 1980s renovations were not holding up very well and, having re-discovered the Briggs plan, the Club decided a restoration would be appropriate. This work was undertaken between 2003 and 2009.



Terrace (Photograph by Naomi Doddington, 2015.)



Francis of Assisi Statue (Photograph by Naomi Doddington, 2015.)



Window into Governor's Mansion Garden (Photograph by Naomi Doddington, 2015.)

\*The brick wall at the front of the garden and along the Governor's Mansion Garden was rebuilt in 2005. The Briggs plan did not specify what this garden wall was to look like. Photographs of the front wall before the damaging accident existed, and the Club followed the original design.



Panorama from the Front (Photograph by Naomi Doddington, 2015.)



Panorama from the Rear (Photograph by Naomi Doddington, 2015.)