

G

The Magazine of Greenville

Treasures in our Past

Celebrating
the history
& traditions
that have
shaped our city

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Greenville from sleepy town to
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inside Furman University's
President's Home

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A collection of our long-since-
vanished, turn-of-the-century
landscapes, by William B. Coxe

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Walk On, Holy City

Touring historic Charleston the old-fashioned way—on foot

{ Written by **Sandy Lang** ~ Photography by **Peter Frank Edwards** }

There are some things you can discover only if you live in a place, particularly if you're the walking type—the shortcuts with lots of shade trees in the heat of summer; when the gates close at the historic churchyard across the street; and where to sit awhile when a rare deep freeze causes the water pipes in your apartment to burst, and the heat's not yet back on.

All of this may not sound like much help for a traveler, but a few years ago, when a now-defunct airline magazine asked me to write a walking tour of my neighborhood, it was of some aid that I did actually walk or ride my bike many places. At the time, I was living on the third floor of a circa-1810 single house on Archdale Street in Charleston, south of Market Street and one block back from the antique stores on King. For that as-



Olde Town: (Above) Peaceful Cistern Yard sits at the heart of College of Charleston's campus, bounded by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings and walls. (Below) The circa-1808 Nathaniel Russell House at 51 Meeting Street is a grand, Federal-style home filled with period antiques.



signment, I created a short route in my mind and wrote up what I knew. To double-check historical information, I used an old copy of Alan Huntley's booklet "The Charleston Walking Tour." I also stopped in to talk with a friend and professional tour guide, Denny Stiles. He's a co-owner of Charleston Walks, and he happens to be an excellent poet and two-time president of the Poetry Society of

South Carolina.

Along with pointing out the lovelier attributes of three-hundred-year-old Charleston, Stiles can talk about Charleston's ferocious war battles, dozens of hurricanes, devastating fires, disease, epidemics, and the largest earthquake east of the Mississippi—all of the stuff that makes for good stories. There's also the tragic history of Charleston's

On the Road **Charleston**

role in the slave trade from Africa, and the profound influence that Afro-Caribbean people and their descendants have had on the city's culture, food, and architecture. There's much to learn and explore.

A guide from Stiles' group could lead you on a highly interesting tour, and of course there are the popular, horse-drawn carriage tours that you can pick up in the Market area, and then do more exploring by foot later. For now, here's my offering—a well-

updated, looping route that can serve as a starting point for getting acquainted with the peninsular city. Happy walking.

Start on King

Because it's easy to find—and it has a wonderful art deco façade—begin under the marquee of the circa-1939 Riviera Theater at the corner of King and Market streets, and walk south a few blocks. Antique stores with gilt-framed mirrors and velvet-upholstered chairs

in the windows line this part of King Street, along with some favorite restaurants, Fulton Five and Il Cortile del Re.

At Clifford Street, take a right and follow it up to Archdale Street, where two massive brick single houses are straight ahead. (One of them was where I lived.) The “single house” is the most common floorplan of historic houses of antebellum Charleston. With the narrow side facing the street, the best feature is always the wide piazza—to catch the breeze, and, if you're like me, for cocktail parties.

At the southeast corner of Clifford and Archdale is the circa-1818 St. John's Lutheran Church, with its recently restored steeple and original iron gates. This is the sanctuary of the oldest Lutheran congregation in the South, and just next door is the first Unitarian church in the South, founded in 1839. If the gate is open (it generally is during daylight hours), you can walk into the rambling Unitarian churchyard, where the crepe myrtles, lantana, and day lilies grow practically untamed over the cemetery. It's said that this free-flowing garden is purposefully wild so the departed can be closer to nature. Follow the brick path through the tangle and headstones to a tree-shaded path that connects with King Street.

Once back on King, it's just a few dozen steps to Queen Street. You'll pass the Plum Elements gallery and the new Billy Reid store, both worth stopping inside. Go east (left) on Queen past the slow-twirling ceiling fans in the bar of the Barbadoes Room at the Mills House Hotel. You'll also pass Poo-gan's Porch and 82 Queen restaurant, which is one of those Charleston places that feels like a secret when you walk in along a narrow hallway that leads to something larger than you expected. In this case, the centuries-old buildings open to a walled garden.

Four Corners of Law

At Meeting Street, turn south again, passing the cobblestones of Chalmers Street and the entrance to tucked-away Washington Park, a public space since the early 1800s where there's a monument to a Charleston militia unit that fought in the Civil War

Rest in Peace: Flowers, tangling vines, and crepe myrtles fill a cemetery at the Unitarian Church, located just off the beaten path at 8 Archdale Street.





Scenic City: (Above) The details that make up Charleston's stunning streetscapes come in sizes large and small with textures and colors that draw you in. (Bottom left) High Battery Wall is a popular tourist spot. (Bottom right) St. Michael's Episcopal Church at 71 Broad Street is Charleston's oldest church edifice.

and a statue of George Washington. (I love this quiet park where birds once triumphed over people. In the early 1990s, yellow-crowned night herons started nesting in the oak trees after returning from fishing in nearby salt marshes. The Piccolo Spoleto art show that was held there each year had to be relocated.)

Just beyond, the intersection of Meeting and Broad streets is known as the "Four Cor-

ners of Law" because each corner represents a different branch of law—city law (city hall, built in 1801), state law (Charleston County Courthouse, originally built as the South Carolina State House in 1752), federal law (U.S. Court House and Post Office, built in 1898), and God's law (St. Michael's Episcopal Church, constructed 1752-1761). Each of the corner buildings has undergone renovations in recent years. If they're open, it's

worth mailing a letter in the old post office just to see the woodwork, and, at St. Michael's, to see pew No. 43, where both George Washington and Robert E. Lee have worshipped. And if you take a short detour to the west (right) on Broad, you can stop in at Gaulart et Malicet Cafe (also known as G&M or Fast and French) for reasonably priced lunch and dinner specials that include wine or French-press coffee.

{ EAT, SHOP, SLEEP }

Eat:

FIG, a mod local scene, with a regional menu of locally harvested seafood and farm ingredients. 232 Meeting St., (843) 805-5900, www.eatatfig.com

Hominy Grill, Brunswick stew, buttermilk fried chicken, homemade chocolate pudding and chef Robert Stehling just won a James Beard Award. 207 Rutledge Ave., (843) 937-0930, www.hominygrill.com

Pane e Vino, Italian recipes for pasta, fish, duck, prosciutto, along with wine and a tucked-away patio/garden. 17 Warren St., (843) 853-5955

Shop:

Billy Reid, opened this summer by the Alabama clothing designer. 150 King St., (843) 577-3004, www.billyreid.com

Plum Elements, a mix of Japanese and locally-made art and furnishings. 161 1/2 King St., (843) 727-3747, www.plumelements.com

Ann Long Fine Art, classical realist paintings and sculpture. 54 Broad St., (843) 577-0447, www.annlongfineart.com

Blue Bicycle Books, owned by writer Jonathan Sanchez, with frequent readings and thousands of used, rare, and new books. 420 King St., (843) 722-2666, www.bluebicyclebooks.com

Sleep:

Wentworth Mansion, stunning 19th century manse with Circa 1886 restaurant. 149 Wentworth St., (843) 853-1886, www.wentworthmansion.com

Mills House Hotel, Southern and elegant with parlors, crystal chandeliers, and bow-tied porters. 115 Meeting St., (843) 577-2400, www.millshouse.com



Food Finds: The sea-to-farm-to-table movement makes dining in Charleston a fresh experience. (Clockwise from top left) Chef Robert Stehling's shrimp and grits at Hominy Grill; FIG's unassuming exterior; FIG Chef Mike Lata serves diners the freshest seasonal ingredients, from pork belly to stone crab claws.

From the Four Corners, walk east along Broad Street for a couple of blocks to State Street. Here there are art and jewelry shops, cafés and restaurants, and many longstanding professional offices and banks. At State Street, turn north (left) and follow it to Unity Alley on the right, a narrow brick-and-stone connection to East Bay Street and to the fountains and walkways of Waterfront Park. About halfway down that pedestrian alley is the entrance to McCrady's Restaurant, with a beautiful, tall-walled bar just inside. At this point, you may walk on for a look at the harbor and views of Fort Sumter, where the opening shots of the Civil War were fired.

The French Quarter

Or you can make your way one block west on Chalmers Street to Church Street and the heart of the French Quarter—notice the "Pink House" at 17 Chalmers, built as a tavern (and likely brothel) sometime between 1694 and 1712. At 135 Church Street is Dock Street Theatre, which is now going through a major renovation. When it's open again in May 2010, this is a terrific old theater to visit, and it's a place where I've seen it all—Clyde Edgerton reading to a packed house, chamber music, and a troupe of little people performing a play during Spoleto Festival USA. Just across Church Street, look up to see the iron finials of the Gothic Revival-style French



Pedal Power: Visitors who don't bring their own bikes can rent gear from various downtown shops.

Huguenot Church, circa 1845.

Facing north on Church, don't miss St. Philip's Episcopal Church extending into the roadway. The church was built in 1838, but the churchyard a century older, and the gates on the western side of the street are among the oldest and most detailed wrought iron in the city. The open-air City Market—now craft, retail, and food vendors—is a block north.

There are so many ways to look at this historic city while walking. You can follow the newly deemed "Museum Mile" on Meeting Street. You can take the family through the beautiful South Carolina Aquarium and walk along the waterfront, watching ships come and go from the port (often filled with Upstate-made BMWs). You can wander the city's oldest neighborhoods South of Broad, where streets and alleys are most narrow. And if you bring sneakers, you can walk or run on the wide bicycle/pedestrian lanes of the new Arthur Ravenel Bridge over the Cooper River. That'll stretch your legs, put a sea breeze in your hair, and give you views to remember—fitting for a city founded well before cars were invented. G

Sandy Lang is a frequent contributor to *G* and author of www.sandylang.net, a food and travel blog.

Have you ever, stood and watched a favorite place for hours, listening as the world prepares for the light of day to fade and then watch moonlight shine?



I have, West Fraser

September Sky, 24 x 36, Oil on linen



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