

## Charleston Industrial Institute Materials, 1895–1898

*The Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library*

*Compiled by Kathleen Gray, 2010*

Collation: 1 folder

Description: This collection consists of two items pertaining to the Charleston Industrial Institute.

The first item is a typescript copy of a letter sent to Reverend John L. Dart from Charles H. Simonton on June 17, 1895. The contents of the letter consist of Simonton's commendations and congratulations to Dart for the work he was undertaking with the Charleston Industrial Institute for Girls.

The second item is a handwritten statement by Rev. Dart on stationery from the Charleston Industrial Institute and Home for Girls, dated May 10, 1898. The statement records the laying of the cornerstone of the Charleston Normal and Industrial Institute, specifies the management and mission of the institute, and lists the incorporators. This item includes the original envelope, labeled "Statement."

Both items in this collection have suffered significant water and mold damage and have undergone repairs in-house.

Transcripts of both items are available.

Historical Note: In 1895, Rev. John L. Dart and other prominent members of the Charleston African American community founded the Charleston Industrial Institute. The aim of the institute was to provide African American children with a school, "where they could be taught not only reading and writing, but the lessons of morals, temperance, sewing, cooking, nursing, housework, carpentering, etc." The school was a two-story structure situated on a lot of land on Kracke Street. In its first year of operation, the institute had seventy children enrolled in the school and twelve in the Kindergarten. In theory, each child was required to pay a weekly fee of five cents, although those unable to pay were given instruction, nonetheless.<sup>1</sup>

The Charleston Industrial Institute grew in the ensuing years, serving more students, both male and female, and adding additional facilities. The building that would eventually become known as Dart Hall is believed to have been built in 1898, the same year the Institute became incorporated.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear when the Charleston Industrial Institute ceased functioning as an active school, although sources suggest that Julia Pierre Dart, the wife of Rev. Dart, continued to run the institution for some years after his death in 1915.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Prospectus of the Charleston Industrial Institute and Home for Girls*. 1895.

<sup>2</sup> see *Statement of Rev. John L. Dart, May 10, 1898* in this collection.

<sup>3</sup> Caldwell, A. B. *History of the American Negro, South Carolina Edition*. (Atlanta, GA: A. B. Caldwell Publishing Co., 1919): 210–212.

In the early 1920s, Rev. Dart's daughter, Susan Dart Butler, began to see a need in the African American community for a library. To that end, she transformed one of the rooms in Dart Hall into a reading room, stocking it initially with books from her late father's personal library. The room she chose had once served as the printing room of the newspaper *Southern Reporter*, during Rev. Dart's tenure as editor from 1905–1913. The Dart Hall reading room and library opened in 1927.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that the presence of the Dart Library in the Charleston community helped persuade the representatives of the Rosenwald Fund and the Carnegie Foundation to endow Charleston County's Free Library in 1931.<sup>5</sup> Dart Hall, which was purchased by the County in 1952, remained a branch of the Free Library until 1967, when the new John L. Dart Branch Library was built at 1067 King Street. Dart Library continues to be part of the Charleston County Public Library system to this day. The original Dart Hall fell to the wrecking crews in 1968.

Note: There are several variations on the name of the institution, including: Charleston Industrial Institute and Home for Girls; Charleston Industrial Institute; Charleston Normal and Industrial Institute.

Related Collections: The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 7th Annual Prospectuses of the Charleston Industrial Institute are housed in the Charleston Archive at the Charleston County Public Library under the following call number: SC\_Pam 373.75791 Charlest.

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<sup>4</sup> Butler, Susan Dart. "Do You Know Your Charleston: Dart Library Branch." *News & Courier*, December 26, 1952.

<sup>5</sup> "Charleston County Buys Dart Hall, Plans to Continue Negro Library Branch There." *News & Courier*, December 17, 1952.

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## Collection Outline

I. Typescript copy of letter, Charles H. Simonton to Rev. John L. Dart, 17 June 1895, 1 page (transcript available)

II. Handwritten statement of Rev. John L. Dart, President, Charleston Industrial Institute, 10 May 1898, 2 pages and envelope (transcript available)