

William Means Real Estate & Christie's Great Estates

by *Mariam Qureshi*

Charleston's warm climate and inviting charm has its population rapidly growing. Among the construction of new housing and renovations of the historic landscape, the topic of real estate seems to have entered everyone's conversations. This is not at all surprising, as stepping into real estate waters is a milestone that can test one's patience, character and bank account. Luckily, for those buying or selling a property, excellent and professional guidance can be in found in the expert hands of William Means Real Estate. The agents at William Means Real Estate will ensure that every detail is tended to and that each transaction runs as smoothly as possible. Honesty, professionalism and intelligence mark the backbone of their agent team. One would be hard pressed to find any Realtor in the Charleston area who knows the Lowcountry as well as this select group of specialists. The greatest testament to the strength of their agents is in the overwhelming number of clients who keep coming back to work with them.

In 1933, the real estate company was founded by William Means. Initially, the firm offered real estate and insurance services, as well as specializing in the sale of plantations. In 1957, the firm's real estate division was acquired by Means' son-in-law, W. Elliott Hutson. It was later purchased by current owner and broker-in-charge, Helen Lyles Geer, who has an impressive career in real estate. A broker since 1973, she has been the William Means broker-in-charge since 1993.

William Means Real Estate is one of the oldest and most established real estate firms in Charleston and has maintained its main office on Broad Street for 75 years—first at the Confederate Home at 60 Board Street, and today at 41 Broad Street, near the corner of Church Street. "To know we have made the experience as enjoyable and convenient as possible and built a long-standing business relationship is very important to us. Our high level of referral business attests to this approach, and it's a principle we will carry on for the next 75 years!" comments Geer.

The firm specializes in the buying and selling of the finest residential real estate on the historic peninsula, east of the Cooper and surrounding communities. These include high-end homes, such as a deep-water estate on Kiawah Island, a beachfront lot on Sullivan's Island and a completely restored historic home on Church Street. William Means has also been involved with significant sales over the past several years, including the Governor's House Inn, a historic Charleston bed and breakfast and the stunning Calhoun Mansion. Another notable property on the list is the Lowndes Grove Plantation, built circa 1786, which is the only remaining plantation on the peninsula. According to the William Means Web site, "the home's alterations chronicle more than 200 years of evolving architectural design, from its original Georgian style, to Adamesque and Gothic Revival renovations."

Embracing the city's historic integrity is of utmost importance to the firm. As a trustee for the Historic Charleston Foundation, Geer explains that, "We work very closely with all preservation organizations, not only for properties on the peninsula, but also for country properties and period houses on Sullivan's Island and the Old



Village of Mount Pleasant." As for the current challenges in real estate, Geer explains, "Today's market is correcting itself. Charleston had soaring prices for such a long time, and those prices have come down. We are finding more buyers and sellers being realistic about this correction, while the properties are still selling for what are today's fair market values."

William Means is Charleston's only exclusive affiliate of Christie's Great Estates, which is the largest international network of real estate companies committed to the marketing and sales of premier properties. Christie's selects brokers who have a leading market share and who meet Christie's benchmark of premium service and consistent achievement. Each broker has exclusive use of the Christie's Great Estate name in a specific geographic area. Most importantly, this winning relationship exposes properties to an outstanding clientele of potential buyers. "Our affiliation with Christie's Great Estates gives us international exposure and has certainly made a difference in our clientele," beams Geer.

As proud residents of Charleston, William Means' agents give back to the city through community involvement and philanthropic efforts. They provide a generous monetary donation to the MUSC Charles P. Darby Children's Research Institute for each transaction, whether representing the buyer or seller. They regularly sponsor events for the Gibbes Museum of Art, as well as are involved in Spoleto Festival USA, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation and the Special Olympics.

If you are searching for a real estate agency displaying a high level of personal service and integrity, call on William Means Real Estate. Their knowledge and guidance will help you achieve your real estate goals.

William Means Real Estate & Christie's Great Estates is located in downtown Charleston at 41 Broad Street. Call (877) 353-0332 for information. The East Cooper office is located at 652 Coleman Boulevard, Suite 102, Mount Pleasant South Carolina, 29464. Call (877) 353-0332 or visit the Web site at www.williammeans.com.