In a colony known for its wealth and transatlantic connections, private South Carolinian libraries offer a unique lens through which to explore the culture of reading and book ownership that was an essential part of day-to-day provincial and early national life. Largely overlooked by historians, personal libraries in South Carolina were statements of well-rounded, often cosmopolitan identities before, during, and after the Revolutionary War. A careful reading of newspaper advertisements, probate inventories, loyalist claims and correspondence, in conjunction with extant books and bookcases, portraiture, and architectural spaces allows us to reconstruct the culture of reading and book-ownership that dominated Southern society before 1800. Moreover, doing so reveals the weight placed on reading and South Carolinian society’s recognition of text’s formulative influence upon making and refining the individual self. Book collections of various sizes functioned as carefully curated statements of one’s professional and academic life, hobbies, interests, and leisure, as well as taste, wealth, and participation in contemporary philosophical and cultural movements. As such, they were often displayed in the most public spaces of private homes: front offices, reception and drawing rooms. Before the war, books were not merely material bolsters of Anglo-American status and, after, collections not necessarily distinctly “American.” Studying extant books also takes to task long-accepted, outdated notions that certain sections of the population read only what was conveniently in reach of their easy chair. By situating books acquired in various ways for various reasons within the private home of the colonial and early Republic eras, we thus get a fuller picture of how eighteenth-century readers interacted with books in their day-to-day lives.