Fort Hill Plantation
Home to Clemson University
History

The Clemson University we know today got its start at Fort Hill, a beautiful antebellum plantation home and National Historic Landmark.

Fort Hill was first a four-room structure called Clergy Hall, built in 1803 as a residence for the Reverend John McElhenny. Clergy Hall sat on more than 1,000 acres of land and became one of several plantations owned by Vice President John C. Calhoun and his wife, Floride.

When the Calhouns moved into Clergy Hall in 1825, they renamed it Fort Hill and turned the humble house into a fourteen-room mansion.

The final owners of Fort Hill were Anna and Thomas Green Clemson, Calhoun’s daughter and son-in-law. It was the dream of these two to open a high seminary of learning on the grounds they called home.

Clemson willed the plantation to the state of South Carolina for the establishment of a college of agriculture and science. Upon his death in 1888, Clemson Agricultural College was founded.

Fort Hill remains a rich part of Clemson University’s history and is preserved and restored as a museum to display the lifestyles of the Calhoun and Clemson families.

Fort Hill Timeline

1803

Thomas Clemson born
1 July 1807

1825

Anna Calhoun born 13 Feb. 1817
Calhouns move to Clergy Hall, rename Fort Hill 1825

1838

Anna and Thomas Clemson married 13 Nov. 1838

1850

Thomas Clemson diplomat to Belgium 1844-1851
John C. Calhoun died 31 March 1850
Andrew Pickens Calhoun and later his widow, Margaret, reside at Fort Hill 1851

1861-1865

Civil War
Thomas Clemson resigns post of Superintendent of Agricultural Affairs
Floride Calhoun died 25 July 1866

1875

Anna Clemson died 22 Sept. 1875
Anna and Thomas Clemson retire to Fort Hill 1872

1888

Thomas Clemson died 6 Nov. 1888
Clemson College opens 1893
What Style Is It?

Fort Hill is a combination of two architectural styles: Federal and Greek Revival. The Federal style characteristics include the transom windows over the front and side doors, the louvered shutters (3) and the gentle-sloping gable roof line. Characteristics of Greek Revival Style are the front-projecting portico porch (10), rear colonnade piazza or porch, the elaborate entablature made up of the cornice (9), frieze (8) and architrave (7) above the porch, and the monumental columns (6) with Doric order capital (1) supporting the gable roof. Decorative features include false columns called pilasters (5). The house was constructed of local materials such as cedar shake shingles, wood clapboard siding (4) and stone chimneys (2). As was popular in the 1820s, the front doors are painted to look like mahogany veneer.

Name That Room

John C. Calhoun

John C. Calhoun is the most well-known owner of the house and land that became Fort Hill Plantation.

Calhoun graduated from Yale in 1804 and from Tapping Reeve Law School in 1806. After serving as a member of the S.C. Legislature, Calhoun held several federal government positions over the next 40 years, including U.S. Representative, Secretary of War, twice as Vice President, twice as U.S. Senator and Secretary of State.

Calhoun and his wife Floride married in 1811 and had ten children with seven surviving to adulthood.

Thomas Green Clemson

Thomas Green Clemson was a scientist, mining engineer, diplomat to Belgium under four U.S. presidents and the first secretary of agriculture. He married Anna Maria Calhoun at Fort Hill on November 13, 1838. They had four children, but only two survived to adulthood.

Clemson left his estate and fortune for the betterment of education in South Carolina and willed that Fort Hill “shall always be open for the inspection of visitors.”

African-Americans at Fort Hill

African-Americans were a vital force in the operation and economy of Fort Hill. Like many Southern planters of the time, Calhoun raised cotton as a cash crop using enslaved African-American labor to run his household and plantation. The Calhoun family owned approximately 60-80 skilled workers such as gardeners, seamstresses and carpenters in addition to agricultural workers and field hands.

The Calhoun slaves lived one-eighth of a mile from the mansion, in houses built of stone and joined together like barracks, with gardens attached and a large open space in front.

Susan Clemson

Susan Clemson took care of Thomas and Anna Clemson’s children when the family lived at Fort Hill. After the Civil War, she married Billy Richardson and moved near Saluda, S.C.

William Greenlee

One of the Clemson family’s employees was Bill Greenlee. He worked as a stable boy and carriage driver at Fort Hill. After Clemson’s death he continued working for the college for 51 years.

This is perhaps the earliest photograph of Fort Hill, circa 1871, and it shows an African-American woman holding a child. That child is believed to be Floride Isabella Lee, and she is being held by Marie Calhoun. Floride was the daughter of Floride Elizabeth Clemson and Gideon Lee.
Connect the Dots

What’s This?
Circle the correct name of the object or person shown.

Banjo clock
Lamp
Bed warmer

Plow
Boot scrape
Hitching post

Spoon
Clock
Bed warmer

Fireplace tool
Tweezers
Key

Abraham Lincoln
George Washington
John C. Calhoun

Cowboy hat
Flower pot
Hat tub
Calhoun and Clemson Family Game

1. What was John C. Calhoun’s profession?
2. Whom did Anna Maria Calhoun marry in 1838 at Fort Hill?
3. Whom do the two statuettes in the living room represent?
4. What type of bird is carved on the black couch in the parlor?
5. How many children did the Calhouns have?
6. What was the name of the African-American man who worked for Thomas G. Clemson as a boy?
7. How long is Thomas G. Clemson’s bed?
8. Who was the young slave girl who took care of the Clemson’s children?
9. What is the little white building behind the main house?
10. What is the name of the underground room outside the house that was used to refrigerate food?

SCORE

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<th>Player 1</th>
<th>Player 2</th>
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Anna Maria Calhoun Clemson

Floride Calhoun

In the springhouse
9. John C. Calhoun’s study
8. Susan Clemson Richardson
7. Seven feet long
6. Hill (resemble
5. Ten (seven survived to adulthood)
4. An eagle
3. John C. Calhoun and George Washington
2. Thomas Clemson
1. A lawyer and a politician

ANSWERS
Fort Hill Word Search

Find and circle the bold words and dates hidden in the puzzle to the right. The words are written forward, backward and diagonally.

John C. Calhoun – Vice President
March 18, 1782 – John C. Calhoun’s birthday
Lawyer – John C. Calhoun’s profession
Floride Calhoun – John C. Calhoun’s wife
Fort Hill – John C. Calhoun’s home
Fort Rutledge – Historic fort
Thomas G. Clemson – John C. Calhoun’s son-in-law
Heirloom – A valued possession passed down in a family
U.S.S. Constitution – The ship from which the sideboard was made
Duncan Phyfe – Furniture designer
Banjo Clock – Clock in foyer
Piazza – Outdoor plaza
East Porch – Porch on the east side of Fort Hill
Beehive Oven – Main fireplace
South – Area of the country where Calhoun lived
TAKE THE TOUR

Fort Hill
Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – noon and 1-4:30 p.m.
Sunday, 2-4:30 p.m.

Hanover House
Saturday, 10 a.m. – noon and 1-4:30 p.m.
Sunday, 2-4:30 p.m.

To schedule group tours contact the:
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Clemson University
Box 345615
Clemson, S.C. 29634-5615

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clemson.edu/about/history/properties
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National Historic Landmark
National Register of Historic Places
Save America’s Treasures Project