



# *Chapter Seven*



## EPILOGUE



A library bookplate from the era of Clemson Agricultural College.

“My purpose is to establish an agricultural college which will afford useful information to the farmers and mechanics[;] therefore[,] it should afford thorough instruction in agriculture and the natural sciences connected therewith—it should combine, if practicable, physical and intellectual education, and should be a high seminary of learning in which the graduate of the common schools can commence, pursue and finish the course of studies terminating in thorough theoretic and practical instruction in those sciences and arts. . . . I trust that I do not exaggerate the importance of such an institution for developing the material resources of the State by affording to its youth the advantages of scientific culture, and that I do not overrate the intelligence of the legislature of South Carolina, ever distinguished for liberality, in assuming that such appropriation will be made as will be necessary to supplement the fund resulting from the bequest herein made.”

—from the Will of Thomas Green Clemson, August 14, 1883



For a time after Anna's death, Thomas Clemson lived in seclusion at Fort Hill and, for many years, worried about what would happen with the plan he and his wife had conceived to found a scientific school. Dissatisfied with the will that James Rion drafted in 1883, Clemson called upon attorney R. W. Simpson, son of his former associate in the Pendleton Farmers' Society, R. F. Simpson, to help rewrite the document. The new instrument, which was signed on November 6, 1886, with Rion named as executor, provided for "the establishment of an agricultural college upon the Fort Hill place," with the provision that "the dwelling house" should remain standing and "kept in repair" and that all the furnishings should be kept intact and always open for visitors. Rion's death in December necessitated a codicil, which was drawn up on March 26, 1887, by R. W. Simpson, who by that time served as executor of both the aforementioned last will and testament and its codicil. Thus, the final document was in place toward the founding of the school desired by both Anna and Thomas Clemson.<sup>1</sup>

In 1883, according to communicant Ben Skardon's informal history of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Clemson's will "set in motion certain circumstances" that would ultimately affect the future of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where the Calhouns and Clemsons had worshipped. With the opening of Clemson Agricultural College in 1893, a need arose for organized churches nearby, and, in 1899, Holy Trinity Chapel was consecrated as an Episcopal Church on property across from the school's campus; however, its official designation as an "organized mission" of the Diocese of South Carolina was not proclaimed until 1901. In a "Founding Statement," The Rev. B. M. Anderson referred to the "Mission" as a former "Chapel of Ease" to St. Paul's Parish, Pendleton, a most appropriate designation for a church built for the convenience of parishioners at the college. Although initially Holy Trinity Episcopal Church was subordinated to St. Paul's, today the roles are reversed. The "old gray church," in Floride Clemson's poem "Our Festival," is cared for by the clergy and congregation of what was once a "fledgling" flock.<sup>2</sup>

On April 6, 1888, Clemson's death, at the age of eighty, left a legacy to the state of South Carolina that was made possible by his wife's bequest of property to him. Despite the controversy of a court contest initiated by his son-in-law, Gideon Lee, on behalf of his daughter Floride and despite opposition from South Carolina College, in Columbia, which was the recipient of federal funds for their own agricultural and mechanical program, the Clemson will was upheld by a ruling of the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in May 1889, and its acceptance was signed into law by Governor John Richardson in November. The college, established on the site of Clemson's 814 acres, later bought, for \$10,000, an additional 288 acres that belonged to his granddaughter, Floride.<sup>3</sup>

The Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina, envisioned by its founder, Thomas Green Clemson, to become "a high seminary of learning," celebrated its centennial academic year as Clemson University in 1988-1989. In light of this celebration, and the coincidence of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Clemsons' marriage—with the renewed appreciation for the prominence of Fort Hill as the home of statesman John C. Calhoun—Lemon Professor Emeritus Carol Bleser conceived of a "landmark conference" that was hosted by the university. Writers and scholars from around the nation presented original essays on the topic of "Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South." These essays were subsequently compiled in a book entitled *In Joy and in Sorrow*, with the 1848 Jacob Joseph Eeckhout portrait of Anna Maria Calhoun Clemson appearing on the dust jacket.

Also in conjunction with the university's centennial commemoration was the paving of a brick walkway, from inside the entrance at St. Paul's Churchyard, in Pendleton, back to the grave sites in the Clemson Plot, and the erection of a marker that credited the work "RESTORED IN 1989 BY CLASS OF 1932 AND 1934." Clemson alumnus Sam Lowry (Class of 1932), who worked with the restoration project, has confirmed that the tombstone of Anna Calhoun Clemson, beside that of her son and her husband, is the same one that was in place at the time of the centennial commemoration. Possibly her original tombstone—the location of which was made known by St. Paul's Churchyard caretaker extraordinaire Jim Reed—lies in the crawl-space, damaged, under the church sanctuary. At the base of the slab, the inscription reads: "ERECTED BY HER DISCONSOLATE HUSBAND THOMAS G. CLEMSON." The rest is set in agreement with the one in the family plot:

ANNA CALHOUN CLEMSON  
*LAST SURVIVING CHILD OF*  
 HON. JOHN C. CALHOUN  
*AND*  
 FLORIDE CALHOUN  
 BORN  
*FEBRUARY 13, 1817*  
 DIED  
*SEPTEMBER 22, 1875*

*Believing this life to be one of probation  
 ho[?w] for an immortal existance [sic] hereafter  
 and governed in every act by a consci-  
 entious sense of duty she lived a model  
 Daughter, Wife, Mother, and Friend.  
 Her intelligence and accomplishments  
 made her an ornament of every sphere in  
 which she moved.<sup>4</sup>*

Today, "dear old Fort Hill," as Anna regarded the beloved house after 1830, is the site of an ongoing \$1.8-million-dollar restoration that began in April 2001, under the direction of Will Hiott, the university's current Director of Historic Houses, and Debbie DuBose, former Executive Director of Clemson's Alumni Association. On the occasion of the "Fort Hill Bicentennial and Restoration Reopening," on March 31, 2003, James Frazier Barker, the fourteenth President of Clemson University, commissioned the "Fort Hill Fanfare," a musical composition for brass to commemorate the occasion.

As a symbol of the past, the Fort Hill historic house museum stands in the present, on the campus of a school that has grown from 446 male cadets to a full-service university with a co-educational enrollment of over 17,000 students, nearly half of which are women. In light of the current gender distribution and in recognition of Anna Calhoun Clemson's part in the university's origin, the point made by Clemson alumna Carol Stout is a good one: that her school's alma mater should acknowledge its "daughters" as well as its "sons." Were it not for Thomas Clemson's "beloved dear Anna," the school she wanted in order to commemorate the illustrious career of her father, John C. Calhoun, might never have come into being.<sup>5</sup>