

FOREWORD

Allen P. Wood, ALA

Trustee Emeritus

This biography is written in celebration of Thomas Green Clemson's birth on July 1, 1807. It tells the unique and fascinating history of his life and times. He, for instance, received the best available European education of the times in chemistry, mineralogy, geology, and mining. With his involvement in art, music, and languages, in addition to his activities as a student activist, and, later, as a diplomat, proponent of higher education, education reform, and scientific agriculture, Thomas Clemson possessed very broad and integrated knowledge and varied social and cultural interests. Thus, because of his education and interests and his lifespan (1807–1888), he became the quintessential nineteenth-century Renaissance man.

Nevertheless, throughout his adult life Mr. Clemson constantly worried about money, suffered from chronic depression, and had strained relationships with family, in-laws, friends, and business associates. His symptoms of “subjective feelings of irritability or excessive anger,” “poor appetite,” and “feelings of hopelessness” are attributed to his depression and unrealized ambitions. Fortunately, his marriage to Anna Maria Calhoun, the daughter of Senator John C. Calhoun, gave him the stability and support he needed. It also gave him the means to fulfill his dream to establish a “people's college.” Describing conditions in the South Carolina post-bellum era as “wretched in the extreme,” Clemson desired to establish a “high seminary of learning” to deliver a practical, science-based education in the mechanical arts and agriculture.

Before the death of Anna Maria Clemson, Mr. and Mrs. Clemson were true co-partners in their determination to create a college. She actively supported his efforts, and it was her land on which the Clemson Agriculture College of South Carolina eventually would be established. After her death and his many failed attempts to find support for a scientific and agricultural college, Clemson ultimately came to the conclusion that only by his death and a will could their shared dream become a reality.

When his Last Will and Testament became public, immediately following Thomas Clemson's death, there was significant and powerful opposition to the establishment of another publicly supported college in South Carolina. It took legislative and legal action and political and public support for the will to be accepted by the state of South Carolina. And the story of that opposition and sup-

port is as interesting as it is complex. Finally, Clemson's will became a reality when the South Carolina House and Senate and the governor accepted and enacted it almost verbatim into law. Having been upheld by the United State Supreme Court, when challenged in a civil suit, Clemson's Last Will and Testament was also validated by the chief justice of the South Carolina State Supreme Court. That validation was the final step in establishing the Clemson Agriculture College of South Carolina, which is now Clemson University.

The Clemson will is unique in the governance of a public university in both the nature and the manner in which those bequests are to be managed. The will is also interesting and unique in other aspects by what it does and does not contain. For example, it gives the Board of Trustees full authority over the institution and the power to regulate all matters pertaining to the institution—duties which can never be taken away or conferred upon any other person or group. This independence has given the Board of Trustees the legal authority to make tough decisions and the flexibility to adapt to changing times and conditions. Unusual for a document written shortly after Reconstruction, Clemson's Last Will and Testament does not disenfranchise anyone or any group. This is further evidence of the forward thinking of Thomas Green Clemson.

The biography is written in a collaged manner so that each chapter focuses on a particular facet of Clemson's life and times. Presented in this manner it offers the opportunity to explore and understand the many facets of this true Renaissance man. While the last chapter takes a more holistic approach, the diversity represented by the biography's twelve authors skillfully reflects the diversity of the collage that was his life and world. You are invited to celebrate with all the many beneficiaries of the Last Will and Testament and the legacy of Thomas Green Clemson.