

HONORING

ANNA

Anna Calhoun

A CELEBRATION OF CLEMSON UNIVERSITY'S CO-FOUNDER



ANNA'S CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE

On February 13, 1817, Anna Maria Calhoun was born to American statesman John C. Calhoun and his wife Floride Bonneau Colhoun Calhoun at the couple's Bath Plantation in Abbeville, S.C. She was the fourth of ten children and would outlive all nine of her siblings.

Anna shared a close relationship with her father and his affection for her is evident in their personal correspondence: "My dear Anna, were it not for your letters, there are a thousand incidents that are daily occurring, where every incident even the smallest, is interesting to me, of which I should remain ignorant. Your mother and brother write me on grave subjects of business, or what relates to the welfare of the family; but you fill up the interval with those little, but to me interesting details, which are so agreeable to an absent father to know. Were it not for you, I would not have heard a word about the humming bird, their familiarity, the vines, their blooms, the freshness of the spring, the green yard, the children's garden, and finally Patrick's mechanical genius and his bateaux, every item of which excited agreeable associations, but accompanied with the painful recollection of my long absence, from those so dear to me."

The intellectually gifted Anna began serving as her father's copyist in 1834. Calhoun encouraged his daughter to study national events and discussed politics with her, although he did not want her to participate in the political process. During a visit with him to Washington, D.C., she met Thomas Green Clemson. They were married at Fort Hill on November 13, 1838. This union would eventually lead to Thomas gifting Anna's land to build a "high seminary of learning" — present day Clemson University.

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ANNA AS PLANTATION MISTRESS AT CANE BRAKE

Thomas and Anna Clemson's first three children were born at Fort Hill, but in January of 1844, the family moved to Cane Brake plantation near Saluda, S.C. In addition to Cane Brake, Thomas purchased thirty slaves which made Anna, as plantation mistress, responsible for their well-being.

Many of the African-Americans at Cane Brake were purchased from John Ewing Colhoun, Jr., of Keowee Heights. These slaves included Susan Clemson, her mother Daphne and her father Bill Lawrence. The Clemsons' workforce at their sale six years later had increased to some fifty enslaved persons through additional purchases and births.

There were many challenges to overcome at Cane Brake, including bad roads to Edgefield, poor mail service and scarcity of plantation supplies. On February 11, 1844, Anna described these hardships in a letter to her father, declaring, "I am sure I have done more hard and dirty work in that time than all the rest of my life put together."

William Clemson, an enslaved African-American carpenter, was purchased by Thomas Clemson specifically to oversee the construction of the family's new home. Due to difficulty in obtaining necessary lumber, the process of building Cane Brake took longer than expected. On January 28, 1844, Anna wrote Maria Calhoun, "But patience, patience, and all will I hope be finished one of these days."



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ANNA AT THE COURT OF LEOPOLD I OF BELGIUM

The formal education Anna received before meeting Thomas prepared her well for her role as a diplomat's wife in Europe. Prior to serving as her father's copyist from 1834-1838, Anna studied at a female academy in Edgefield, and her academic studies culminated in attending the South Carolina Female Collegiate Institute, located in Barhamville near Columbia, S.C. The curriculum included instruction in painting and music but overall was rigorous and demanding. A typical day consisted of waking early to go to prayers before breakfast, then studying all day with dedicated teachers. Later in life, Anna would look back fondly on her school days.

While in Belgium, Anna saw the plight of the industrial age, and as a member of the Southern aristocracy, shared her feelings that the enslaved persons in the South were taken better care of than the wage workers in Europe. One of the Clemson slaves named Basil traveled with the family.

Before returning to America, Anna catalogued her husband's extensive art collection. It was also here that the Fort Hill portraits of Anna and her two children were painted.



SOUTH CAROLINA FEMALE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE.
BARHAMVILLE S. C.

HONORING

ANNA

Anna C. Calhoun

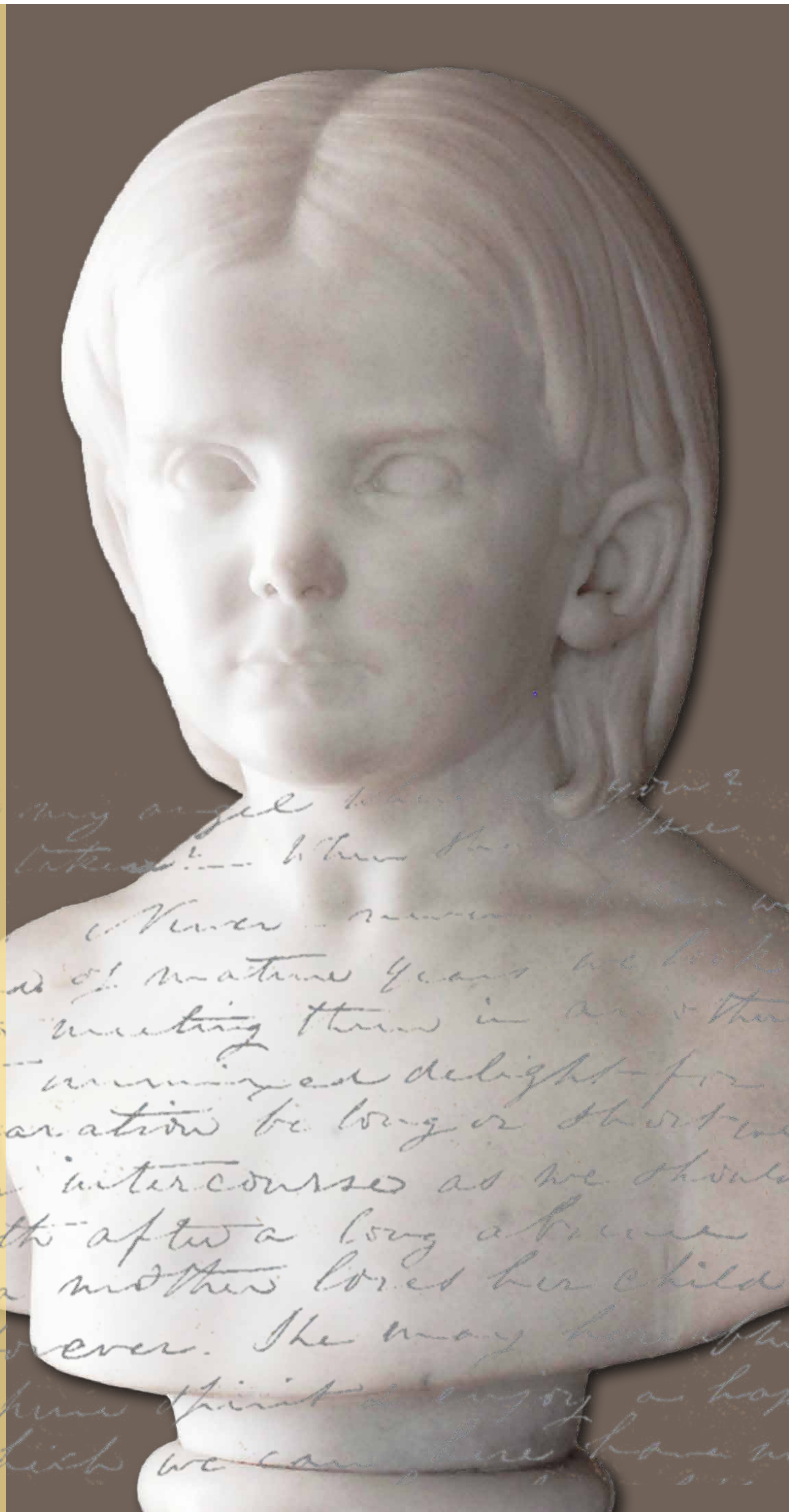
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ANNA DURING THE MARYLAND YEARS AND HER YOUNGEST CHILD NINA

On October 3, 1855, Anna gave birth to her fourth child, a daughter. She was named Cornelia after Anna's sister, Martha Cornelia, and called Nina. Personal correspondence and writings reveal that Thomas Clemson especially doted on Nina. When Nina tragically died of scarlet fever in late 1858, Anna lamented: "Oh Nina oh my angel where are you? Why are you taken? When shall I see you again? Never – never. When we lose a friend of mature years we look forward to meeting them in another world of unmixed delight, for let our separation be long or short — we resume our intercourse as we should on the earth after a long absence but when a mother loses her child it is lost forever. She may here after meet its pure spirit but her child she never meets again."

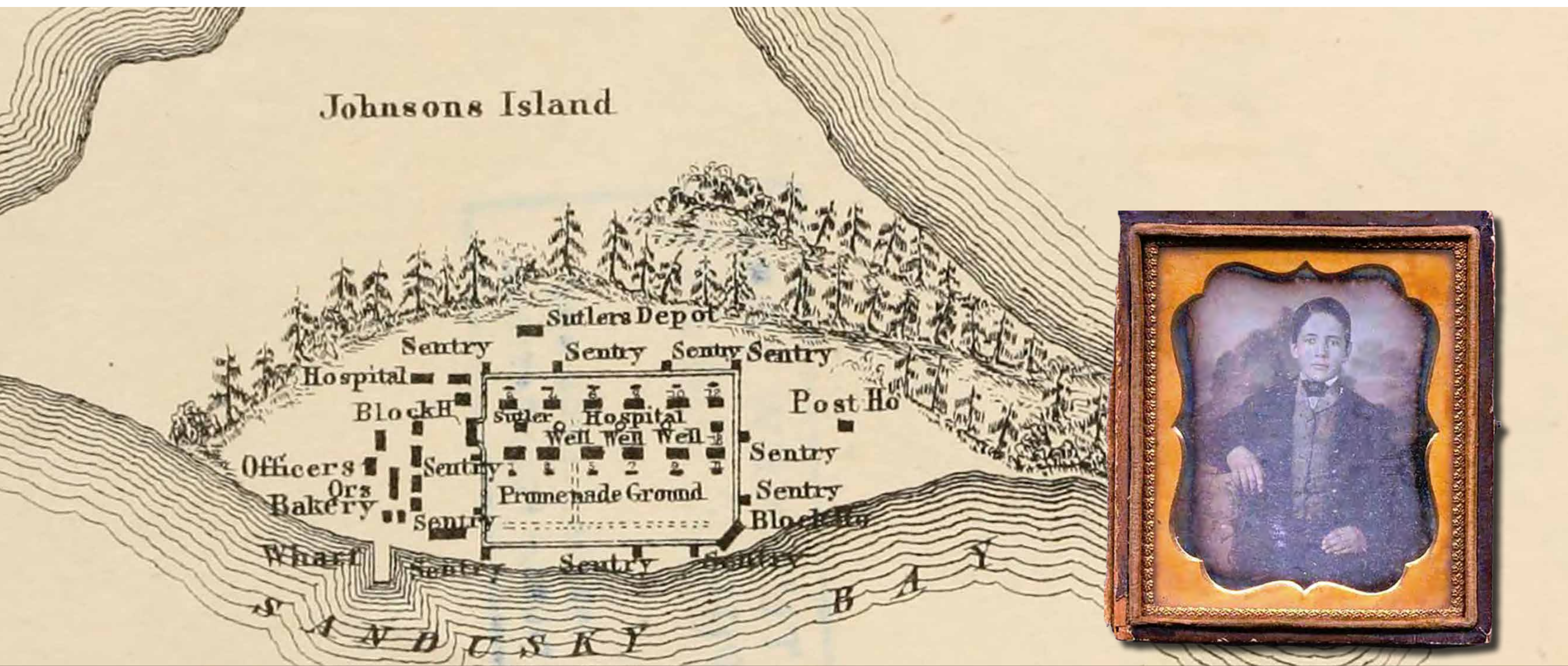
Thomas and Anna had a death mask made of their daughter, and American sculptor Hiram Powers used it to create a marble bust of Nina. The child was buried at their Maryland residence, the Home, but several years later her body was relocated to Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

While managing their farm in Maryland, Anna took care of another child, Andy, the mulatto son of Mrs. Calhoun's cook Nelly Calhoun. His relationship to Anna is unknown; however, her protection of the boy was akin to an aunt.



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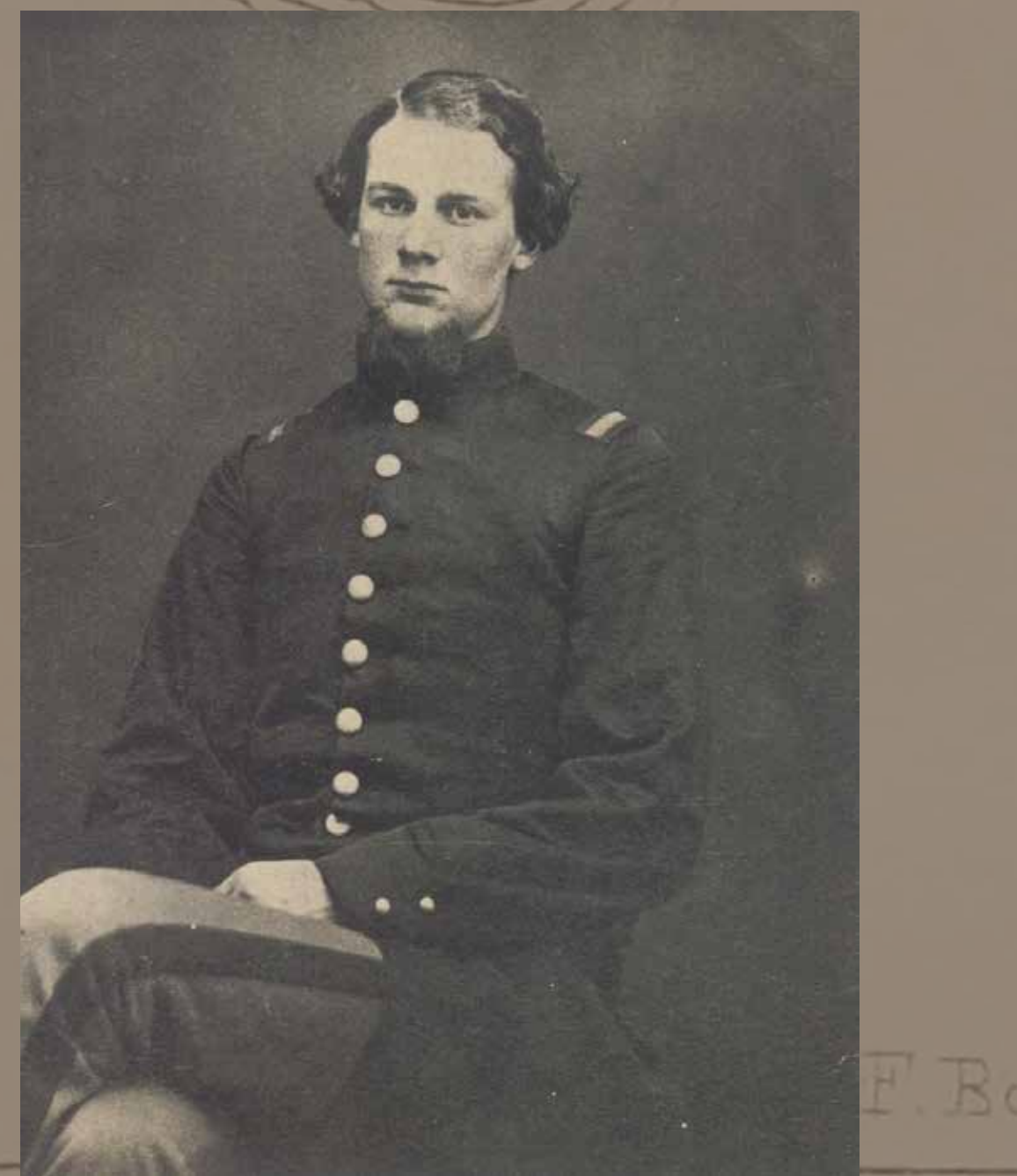
ANNA AND HER SON JOHN CALHOUN CLEMSON

To distinguish their son from the other Johns in the family, Thomas and Anna called him by his middle name Calhoun. Anna's primary focus was her children's education. In the fall of 1859, Calhoun entered the freshman class of Virginia Military Institute (VMI); however, illness prevented completion of his education. Calhoun may have had the opportunity to take a class from a young VMI Professor Thomas Jackson, who would later be nicknamed Stonewall.

At the onset of the Civil War in 1861, Anna saw both Thomas and Calhoun Clemson leave Maryland for Pendleton. While Calhoun enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861, Thomas spent two years advocating for the Confederacy to create an agricultural college before he enlisted in 1863. Calhoun was captured on September 9, 1863, in Bolivar, Mississippi.

Anna's courage and motherly devotion was tested with Calhoun's imprisonment. Immediately, she began a tireless campaign for permission to visit her son. Once achieved, she embarked alone on a journey through enemy territory to visit him. For eighteen months, Calhoun Clemson was imprisoned at the federal prison on Johnsons Island in Lake Erie, Ohio; the prison was three miles from present day Sandusky, Ohio, located on the Sandusky Bay. In a letter to her daughter dated April 21, 1864, Anna describes both Calhoun and the conditions in the prison: "C. is very well, save a sore leg, which however is not all bad He is very handsome, and much improved every way — seemed delighted, and astonished. I have a great deal to tell you, but I am so weary, and over excited I can't write Your devoted and very happy mother."

On August 10, 1871, heartbreak again touched the Clemson family with the death of their last child when Calhoun's passenger train collided with a lumber freight train in Oconee County. Calhoun, whose heart was punctured by a broken rib, was the only fatality, and Thomas was inconsolable; for years, he blamed the train conductor and engineer.



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Anna C. Clemson

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ANNA AND HER DAUGHTER FLORIDE ELIZABETH CLEMSON

On December 29, 1842, Anna gave birth to her third child and second daughter named Floride Elizabeth after both grandmothers. Thomas and Anna's first child was a girl who died at three weeks of age in 1839; her name and grave are unknown. Floride would grow up to be her mother's confidant as Anna battled loneliness, financial woes and depression. Anna sent Floride to Philadelphia to study at the Barton's finishing school operated by her Aunt Elizabeth Clemson Barton and Uncle George Washington Barton. During Floride's two years at school, she studied a variety of subjects, taking great interest in art and even borrowing her father's brushes during her education.

Throughout Floride's time in Philadelphia, she and her mother exchanged frequent correspondence. These letters reveal the closeness of their bond as mother and daughter, including while coping with the loss of family members. On August 1, 1869, Anna was separated from Floride as Floride married Gideon Lee at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Pendleton and moved to Carmel, New York. In a letter to her brother James Edward Calhoun on June 8, 1869, Anna expressed anxiety about her daughter's approaching marriage, writing, "I feel very sad at parting ... for I shall have very little inclination to go north to visit her, and shall have to depend on her coming here. We live together like sisters, and companions, and I shall miss her greatly."

Floride Clemson Lee gave birth to Floride Isabella on May 15, 1870. Marie Calhoun, a former slave and childhood companion of Floride Clemson, accompanied her to Carmel, employed as a maid and seamstress. After Isabella's birth, Marie assisted in caring for Isabella through her early childhood. Tragedy struck on July 23, 1871, when Floride Clemson Lee died from a lingering illness at the family's home in Carmel.

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ANNA'S FINAL RETURN TO FORT HILL

Sadly, Anna's last two children were buried seventeen days apart during the summer of 1871. By late September 1871, Anna wrote her will leaving everything inherited from the estates of her mother, her brother Patrick and her sister Cornelia to her husband. It was Anna's wish that Thomas preserve her father's house and use the land for a state agricultural college.

In January 1872, Thomas and Anna retired from her mother's former home in Pendleton to Fort Hill, but Anna would live there for only three more years. Her health rapidly deteriorated after the deaths of Calhoun and Floride, and in September of 1875, four years after writing her will, Anna died from a sudden heart attack. She was buried alongside her family in the St. Paul's Episcopal churchyard in Pendleton. Anna's granddaughter Floride Isabella Lee would live to adulthood, sell her fourth of the Fort Hill property to the University trustees, and later marry her cousin, Andrew Pickens Calhoun II.

Today, Clemson University occupies the former Fort Hill plantation, with the plantation house at the center of the campus.

