

The Caboose, the Gardens, and the Clemson College Class of '39



By
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Class of '41 Memorial Professor and
Professor Emeritus of History
Honorary '39er
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(A special thank you to David Senn for his work on this project
and to Patrick Wright for the photographs)

This Book is Dedicated to Marguerite “Reet” Senn,

The “Hostess” of SOU-X-3164



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Introduction

“IF I WERE A caboose, I could think of no better way to spend my retirement years than resting quietly in a peaceful garden,” the Southern Railway official wrote in December 1972. Caboose SOU-X-3164, the official added, “will continue to serve your University, as it so adequately served Southern Railway, for many years.”¹

A few weeks before, the railway had delivered the bright red caboose, retired recently from service to the line, to Clemson University. The university’s Physical Plant and Department of Horticulture, with great effort, transported the caboose to its final resting place at the entrance to the school’s burgeoning Horticultural Gardens, located on the east side of the campus, just off the all-dirt Perimeter Road near U.S. Highway 76.

The caboose symbolized a major piece of history. Southern Railway had served the South and Clemson Agricultural College—all male and military until 1955 and a university after 1964—for nearly a century. During that time, the railway, which operated some 4,400 miles of track throughout the Southeast United States, helped more than any other single institution to drive the economic and social development of the region.

The arrival of SOU-X-3164 at its new home resulted primarily from the efforts of several leading members of the university’s Class of 1939, of Marguerite Busby “Reet” Senn, the wife of a class member and longtime head of the university’s Department of Horticulture, and of others in the department and at the school. In the years that followed, the Class of 1939 identified itself intimately with the caboose and the beautiful gardens that surrounded it. Also, as

¹ Robert B. Dunn (Purchasing Assistant, Southern Railway System, Washington, DC) to Dr. T.L. Senn (Head, Department of Horticulture, Clemson University), December 13, 1972, in T.L. Senn Papers. The papers are presently in Senn’s possession, and are hereafter cited in these pages as TLSP; at a future date, the papers are scheduled for placement in the special collections department of Clemson University’s R.M. Cooper Library.

some class leaders intended, the caboose would stand as a memorial to the class. Today the caboose is part of the South Carolina Botanical Gardens that attract and delight annually some 100,000 visitors—many of them children—to the gardens and university.

The pages that follow chronicle this fascinating and unusual story that entwines a caboose, horticulture gardens, a Clemson class, a class member's wife, and numerous other persons supremely dedicated to the caboose project and Clemson University.

Chapter 1 Beginning of the Horticulture Gardens

THE PEACEFUL GARDENS EAST of the university campus to which caboose SOU-X-3164 retired in 1972 had not been there long. The gardens reflected a growing interest of the university's Department of Horticulture in ornamentals research and production, primarily in floriculture and landscape horticulture. This added a significant new dimension to the department's traditional work with fruits—especially peaches—and vegetables.

Like nearly everything at the university, the gardens had a history.

By the late 1950s, the Horticulture Department had completed the move of its offices from Long Hall to the newly constructed Plant and Animal Science (P&A) Building on the east side of campus. Behind the P&A Building, the department, with the help of other interested parties in South Carolina associated with horticulture, established a "Variety Trial Garden" of flowers and other ornamental plants.

The driving force in this effort was Dr. Tazewell L. "Tee" Senn, the department's new head after 1959 and a member of Clemson's Class of 1939. Senn had graduated with a job on the horticulture faculty. Except for his service in the U.S. Navy in World War II, graduate study at the University of Maryland, and a brief stint with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, his award-winning career and international prominence as a Clemson teacher and researcher would span forty-two years.

When he returned to Clemson in 1959 with a newly minted doctoral degree, Senn had an almost single-minded mission and dream. He would recall later, "My aim, goal, hunt, probe,

search, pursuit, seeking and desire is for a Horticultural Garden at Clemson College (University).”¹

The roughly two-acre trial garden behind the P&A Building provided him with a beginning.

Several factors had coalesced to produce the garden. A Clemson graduate from nearby Walhalla, Fred Thode, a trained floraculturist in the Horticulture Department, liked flowers. Through the university’s agricultural extension service, Thode and other department faculty dealt with many people around the state who were interested in flowers and landscape design. The South Carolina Seedsmen Association, and especially one of its leaders, “Bob” Garrison, provided seeds for the new trial or demonstration garden. Another department member and Clemson graduate, J. “Pat” Fulmer, procured tulip bulbs from growers in the Netherlands. Garrison also had contacts with fertilizer dealers in the state and persuaded them to provide essential nutrients for the plants. “We’ll get you all you need,” the dealers told Garrison.

Meanwhile, Senn, who loved flowers and whose personality made him a natural promoter of Clemson throughout the state and beyond, recruited the support of the state’s Garden Clubs. The clubs grew beautiful azaleas and camellias, held some of their meetings at Clemson, and encouraged the department to plant more such ornamentals in the trial garden. These included Japanese cherry trees.

Also Senn used his connections in the academic and business worlds to acquire organic material for the garden. A humate company in Texas, owned by Dr. J.C. Karcher, a Pennsylvania State University graduate, whom Senn had met and befriended, provided the material.

¹ Taze Leonard Senn, *The Autobiography of Taze Leonard Senn* (self-published, 2009), 95.

Karcher, who visited Clemson, took a liking to both the trial garden and Senn.

Once, while walking through the garden with Karcher, Senn remarked casually, “Wouldn’t this be an ideal place for a stainless steel fountain with lights of different colors?”² Karcher agreed, and after spending an evening socializing at Senn’s home in Clemson, paid a substantial sum for the construction of the fountain that became immediately a beautiful landmark in the garden.

During 1959, two things happened that resulted in the relocation of the trial garden.

First, Clemson decided to enlarge its football field, Memorial Stadium. To help make room for the expansion, a large camellia collection on adjacent Cemetery Hill, established by James Carey, the school’s grounds superintendent, had to be moved. The Horticulture Department sought to acquire the impressive collection for inclusion in its trial garden. Senn asked the school’s administration for a five-acre patch of land to relocate the collection and trial garden in an area that would permit growth.³

Second, in response to the request, the administration made the department an offer. It would provide the department a substantial sum of money to move the trial garden and camellia collection to a ten-acre site east of the campus, close to Lake Hartwell and just off the all-dirt Perimeter Road near U.S. Highway 76.

The department accepted quickly. “I kept after the university,” Senn told a reporter much later, “and they gave us 12 acres over there.”⁴

But despite the money provided for the move of the garden and camellias to a larger home on Perimeter Road, the project involved hard work. James Carey and the university

² Ibid., 99.

³ Elizabeth Fortner, “The Botanical Garden: Clemson’s Most Beautiful Classroom,” *Clemson World*, vol. 42 No. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1989), 34.

⁴ Ron Barnett, “The Search for Seaweed: ‘Tee’ Senn’s quest for the perfect seaweed,” *Turf: The Magazine for Turf Care Professionals* (May 2003), B-11.

grounds crew helped the horticulturists transplant the garden to its new site. Also reclaiming and preparing the land there posed problems. The location, an abandoned campus landfill at the edge of John C. Calhoun's original plantation, on which Clemson College had been founded in 1889, was not prime real estate. Much of the land had been stripped of its topsoil for use in campus development, and deep erosion ravines had cut through the red clay.

Nevertheless, the area proved a good nurturing place for the young garden. Pine trees produced appropriate shade and the old terraces, reminiscent of Calhoun's former plantation, provided ideal drainage.⁵

During the next decade, the Department of Horticulture steadily expanded the new garden site, adding research plots and special collections of flowers and other plants. In Senn's words, "From this humble beginning grew what was informally known as the Ornamental Grounds which served as an outdoor laboratory for the Horticulture Garden's teaching and research programs."⁶

By November 1965, the department had already enlarged the "ornamental grounds" into adjacent university dairy land so that the grounds encompassed nearly twenty-seven acres. A department newsletter described the area: "It consists of moderately rolling ground with several wooded sections of natural pine and hardwoods and a one-acre run-off lake which serves to irrigate the entire grounds." In addition to serving "as a valuable part of the teaching program, this area will be convenient to the campus and will serve in the interest of the public of South Carolina and surrounding states."

The department, with the aid of its students in an advanced landscape class, had prepared a "general plan for the development of the area." Planning had started with the area, "along with

⁵ Senn, *Autobiography*, 95.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the present greenhouse, cold frames, tea house, lathe house, Camellia collection, a shrub collection of sorts and a briefing on the general needs of the area." The plans called for

an organized shrub collection, Camellia collection, rhododendron and azalea collections, ground cover specimens, and herb garden, areas designated for research and plant introduction, tree specimens, and a building for storage of equipment. Also, if this area was to be a showplace for the public, sufficient parking and paths had to be provided.

A consensus of the final plans showed that throughout the entire area a strong effort was made to display various species of material in their natural surroundings and as a result, tree and shrub specimens enhance the parking facilities as well as the peripheral boundaries. Ground cover plots are placed in their natural settings of both sun and shade. The existing shrub collection is to be arranged and expanded to include over three hundred plants with room for further expansion.⁷

The blueprint for the grounds and garden called also for a "welcome center located at the main entrance" on Perimeter Road, a lecture area "near the existing greenhouse and other plant growing structures," a Japanese-style house across the lake "to add a touch of the Orient to the atmosphere," and "several kinds of ducks on the lake."⁸

Numerous individuals and groups helped make such plans a reality. The expanding garden attracted the attention of the nurserymen of South Carolina, who provided it with plants. But the greatest contributor of flowers and other plants was a Clemson graduate of 1912, Claude Jacques "Pappy" Hayden. A former horticulture instructor at Mississippi State University, North Carolina State College (now university), and Clemson College, since 1944 Hayden had owned and operated in Athens, Alabama one of the largest nurseries in the U.S. [Photograph No. 1]

The elderly Hayden had kept close ties to Clemson and the Horticulture Department.

He returned often to the campus for class reunions and football games and had provided most of the funds to establish a Horticulture Garden library. A small, wiry man, who typically wore glasses low on his nose and a brimmed hat tipped to the left on his head, "Pappy" furnished

⁷ Thomas Woodham, "The Ornamental Grounds at Clemson," in *Collegiate Horticulture Newsletter (Clemson University)*, November 1965, prepared by the Horticulture Club, 9-10, copy in TLSP.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

nearly all of the plants needed for the expanding Clemson garden. He and Tee Senn were close friends; another department member, Pat Fulmer, took some of his students to Alabama to visit “Pappy” and his nursery. In 1965, Clemson’s student Horticulture Club elected Hayden an honorary member.⁹

Numerous others contributed as well to both developing and expanding the ornamental grounds and garden. Paul Alexander, a Clemson horticulture professor and expert in plant diseases, established grass plots, helped create a horticulture degree in turf management, started the state’s Turf Association, and built relations with golf courses. Hessie Thomson Morrah of Greenville, a leader in the Garden Clubs of South Carolina and mother of a prominent state legislator, provided money for student scholarships in horticulture and pressed, together with the clubs, for enlargement of the garden.

To advertise the grounds and garden to the public and publicize horticulture statewide, Tee Senn, calling himself the “Plant Professor,” appeared on a weekly radio program and on television. He emphasized repeatedly to his audiences how, “from the cradle to the grave, horticulture covers you,” and how plants and flowers influence people’s lives every day. Working with Fulmer and Thode, he managed to acquire more acres for the garden from the bordering dairy land.

Always, however, money remained scarce for managing and maintaining the garden and grounds, which included irrigation and cutting the grass.

To help solve the financial problems, Senn received advice from another close friend, Augustus “Gus” Schilleter, son of the former head of Clemson College’s mess hall and local

⁹ “‘Pappy’ Hayden,” *Collegiate Horticultural Newsletter (Clemson University)*, November 1965, prepared by the Horticulture Club, 30-31, with a photograph of Hayden holding a cigar and sipping a drink (most likely an elixir of some kind); a copy is in TLSP. Also, Interview, May 25, 2010, the author with T.L. Senn (hereafter Senn interview).

Clemson town property owner. Schilleter urged the head of the Horticulture Garden to pursue federal monies and contact South Carolina senator and 1923 Clemson graduate in horticulture, Strom Thurmond.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Senn had received a phone call from a parent in the state who had two sons who were blind. “What,” she asked, “are you doing for the blind at the garden?”

Senn confessed later that, until her call, he had never thought about the issue. In any case, it pressed him into action. He contacted the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind in Spartanburg, whose superintendent invited Senn to visit the school to discuss the problem of blindness with two of its blind students. One whom he met was Ricky Godfrey, sightless since birth.

“Dr. Senn,” said Ricky, “before you leave I wish you’d go out and look at a couple of trees.”

When they did so, Ricky demonstrated how he identified trees by feeling them, and how he did the same with plants like azaleas and camellias. Senn fell immediately in love with the talented Ricky, whom Senn learned also played the harmonica and guitar.¹¹

The visit to Spartanburg impressed on Senn the importance of hortitherapy, of making Clemson’s emerging horticultural garden accessible and enjoyable to handicapped—including blind—people. In this regard, the horticulture head pioneered the concept that public gardens could provide something more than merely beautiful flowers. In the future, the Clemson garden would include specialty areas that benefited, and appealed to, diverse groups of visitors.

Not long thereafter, Senn joined a fellow Clemson graduate and later head of the university’s agricultural economics department, Joel Lanham, who worked at the time in

¹⁰ Senn interview.

¹¹ Ibid.

Washington, D.C., in approaching Thurmond about acquiring the senator's support for a federal grant for construction of a garden for the blind at Clemson.

On a Friday afternoon, Lanham and Senn met with Thurmond in the senator's office in Washington. Thurmond always called Senn "ol' Professor."

Senn showed the senator a map the Horticulture Garden head had sketched of a line between Clemson and Washington, emphasizing to Thurmond the large population that lived along the corridor between the two places. "Many of these people," Senn observed, "are potential visitors to Clemson's garden, especially its garden for the blind and other handicapped." Thurmond, the horticulture graduate and a former farmer, obviously wished to help Clemson as well as South Carolinians and others who would visit the university's garden. He placed an immediate phone call to a federal agency that funded large grants designed to help the physically and mentally handicapped.

Thurmond's call set in motion a hectic next two days. The deadline for submission to the agency of completed forms applying for the grant expired the following Monday.

Hurriedly Senn filled out the forms in Washington and sent them via airmail to Clemson. There his secretary, Beth Farmer, and Linda Cartee completed the process and secured the approval and signature—since the university president, Robert C. Edwards, was out of town—of the university's comptroller. As part of the application, Senn designed plans for a rehabilitation garden for the blind and other handicapped persons that would cover not only the Horticulture Garden, but also much more of the remaining adjacent dairy land (some 100 acres). The forms were delivered to Greenville, and returned from there by air to Washington in time to meet the agency's Monday deadline.

Clemson received the grant, totaling \$40,000, for the garden for the blind. The impressive funding, which would be renewed later, helped persuade the university's forestry and dairy departments as well as Board of Trustees to approve the takeover by horticulture of more land on the Perimeter Road site.

The further dramatic expansion of land for the horticultural garden produced even more support for it. Garden Clubs in the state donated larger sums of money for the garden, including purchasing benches for its visitors. Many of the women in the clubs, encouraged to do so especially by Frances Wright, the wife of a Clemson professor of forestry, traveled to the nearby mountains and nurseries to acquire more plants.

Construction of the garden for the blind and other handicapped persons moved swiftly.

With help from the School for the Deaf and Blind, the Horticulture Garden developed a trail-type program for the blind, with braille tapes and cards that visitors to the garden could use. Senn hired Ricky Godfrey to assist in building garden trails that had plaques along the way printed in braille, describing the trees and plants. The blind who could read braille, therefore, could understand fully and enjoy the species as well as the characteristics of plant life through read and touch methods.

The hortitherapy extended to numerous others recruited for constructing the garden.

James "Sonny" Crawford, Sr., one of the horticulture faculty, hired handicapped youth—both women and men—from Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties to work in clearing land for the trails and walkways and planting trees. To help mark the sides of trails, Senn asked a fellow member of the Clemson Class of '39, George Williams, treasurer of Southern Railway, if the rail line could donate to the garden old used railroad crossties. The railway sent what would be the first of many future shipments of ties to Clemson.

The young handicapped workers found their labor therapeutic and enjoyable. Some of the youth came from a detention home in Greenville; they learned about different flowers and plants, and many were influenced greatly by the work. Years later Crawford would observe: "This work with the handicapped changed their lives, a lot of people's lives." Crawford, a Clemson graduate who would teach at the school for forty-one years, was an avid gardener, hunter, and fisherman, and a devoted fan of Clemson athletics. In addition, he used his connections to help persuade the South Carolina Department of Highways to assist the university in designing and constructing a parking area for the garden, accessible to Perimeter Road.

Crawford, Senn claimed, "could talk things out of anyone."¹²

Also the ever-enlarging garden needed lots of water. The university built a pump station at Schilleter Woods, the present location of the Clemson Downs Retirement Community. Augustus Schilleter's wife donated the money for irrigation lines that ran to the garden.

By 1970, the Horticulture Garden and university received considerable notoriety for their garden and program for the handicapped. In March the department's exhibit, "A Garden for the Blind," displayed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual "National Lawn and Garden Week" in Washington, D.C., received first place among exhibits of six land-grant universities invited to participate in the competition. To celebrate the proud success, the South Carolina congressional delegation held a reception in Washington, D.C. for Senn, his wife Marguerite, Rickey Godfrey and his teacher, Virginia Robinette, and Clemson University president Robert Edwards.

¹² Silas N. Pearman (Chief Highway Commissioner, S.C. State Highway Department, Columbia) to R.C. Edwards (Clemson University President), June 23 and August 31, 1972, TLSP; Interview, April 20, 2010, the author with James H. Crawford, Sr. (hereafter Crawford interview); "Clemson mourns the death of retiree James Henry (Sonny) Crawford, Sr.," *Inside Clemson* (INSIDE@CLEMSON.EDU), July 16, 2010; and Senn interview.

On April 9, the Third District congressman, William Jennings Bryan Dorn, spoke to the U.S. House of Representatives, praising Senn and the Horticulture Garden:

Mr. Speaker, I have always been an advocate of gardening and I felt that the Clemson Horticulture Garden's idea of a garden for the blind could well work with people who are physically handicapped. A garden is great therapy and we should be forever grateful to Clemson for its initiative in this area of horticulture for the handicapped.¹³

Still other substantial funding for the garden followed.

Grants from federal, regional, and state agencies helped finance the expansion and beautification programs that reclaimed more of the surrounding land for the garden. For example, in June 1972, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the university a \$40,000 grant for developing, according to HUD, what had become by then a 44.2 acre "parcel of land known generally as the Ornamental Grounds, Department of Horticulture" into "a botanical and horticultural garden. It will feature a comfort station, trails, identification labels, an earthen dam and shelters." Clemson, said the grant, "agrees to retain said land, as developed . . . for park and recreational purposes, conservation of land and other natural resources, or historic or scenic purposes."¹⁴

By the early 1970s, Clemson had a nationally recognized forty-four acre Horticulture Gardens comprised of several areas: a garden for the blind, a garden for meditation, and a garden for the physically handicapped. The horticulture department planned to add other special gardens in the future, emphasizing history and developing the principal theme of "Living Historical Gardens." For Tee Senn, whose ideas and drive initiated the gardens and who planted

¹³ U.S. of America, "Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 91st Congress, Second Session, 'A Garden for the Blind,'" April 9, 1970, copy in TLSP.

¹⁴ For Project No. SC-1004-OS and Contract No. SC-1004-OS (G), see *Ibid.*, Charles A. Rendleman, Area Counsel (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Columbia Area Office, Columbia, S.C.) to T.L. Senn, June 30, 1972.

some of their first seeds, the gardens were intended to serve a much larger purpose than being a pretty spot on campus.

“Hopefully,” he told a reporter much later, “this Garden can give society something to think about.” Not only about the handicapped and disadvantaged, but also about history.¹⁵ And, he might have added, what better project than the Clemson Horticulture Gardens to encourage his classmates in the Class of 1939 to identify with and support?

¹⁵ Fortner, “Botanical Garden,” 35.

Chapter 2

“Why don’t you give me a little red caboose?” The Class of ’39 and “Reet” Senn

“FOR SOME TIME,” THE Clemson president wrote in September 1972, “we have dreamed of getting a Southern Railroad caboose to place in our Living Historical Gardens at Clemson University.”¹ The “we” Robert C. Edwards meant were several leading members of the Clemson Agricultural College Class of 1939—including, most of all, the wife of one of the members, Marguerite B. “Reet” Senn. For her and members of the class, a railroad caboose symbolized the history of a major portion of their lifetime and of their nation. No other single technology—except, perhaps, several weapons of World War II—had a greater impact on building the United States in the first half of the 20th century into a major world power.

Nor had any other single form of transportation so influenced the first half-century of Clemson Agricultural College. Travel to and from the town of Calhoun (eventually renamed Clemson), adjacent to the campus, was primarily by rail, with frequent local trains to and from the Southern Railway station one mile away in the town, or at Cherry’s Crossing, two miles east of the campus. For many years, a livery stable in the town supplied horse drawn carriages for persons and goods to move between campus and railheads. Only during the late 1930s had the age of the automobile begun to arrive in significant measure to transport on Saturday mornings the long lines of cadet hitchhikers wishing to leave the geographically isolated campus.²

¹ R.C. Edwards to W. Graham Claytor, Jr. (President, Southern Railroad, Washington, D.C.), September 18, 1972, TLSP.

² Wright Bryan, *Clemson: An Informal History of the University, 1889-1979* (Columbia, S.C.: R.L. Bryan, 1979), 79, 116.

By 1972, mainly through the efforts of Tee Senn, one of its members, the Class of 1939 had adopted the Horticultural Gardens on Perimeter Road as a special project for the class to encourage and promote. Both the gardens and Senn had garnered national acclaim; in 1968, he received the nation's "Outstanding Horticultural Teaching Award," the first among many such honors he would receive in his career.³ Not only did he and his classmates like the idea of the future Clemson "Living Historical Gardens," but also their loyalty to, and willingness to support, the university exceeded—or, at the least, equaled—that of any other single Clemson class. Since their first class reunion in 1949, the class regularly led the way in the percentage of members who returned to campus for such gatherings and in contributing to the school's annual fund.⁴

Of 385 men identified with the Class of 1939, 305 had graduated in 1939 or later, and 80 had never earned a degree. During World War II, nearly every class member served in the military; according to the class history, twenty-six members "gave their lives in the war for the country they loved and for a cause they believed in."⁵ After the war, and having once embarked on their careers, the "'39ers" realized what the college had meant to them. One, Elton W. Shepherd, Sr., who spent his career in the transportation industry, recalled many years later: "We were a Great Depression class. . . . Many of us worked hard to get through Clemson; therefore we are a 'Closely Knit' class who reunion every year and who never forget what Clemson did for us in the way of a very good education."

³ They subsequently included the 1974 Distinguished Service Award from the Clemson Alumni Association; the Silver Seal and Gold Seal Awards from the National Council of Garden Clubs for developing horticultural concepts as therapy for the handicapped; the Clemson Alumni Association Volunteer Award, 1988-89; and the Clemson Medallion, 1994, the highest honor given by the university.

⁴ David Shi, "Class Act," *Clemson World Magazine* (Spring 1998), 12 (reprinted from *The News* [Greenville], February 15, 1998). Shi was a historian and writer and president of Furman University. His father-in-law, B.F. Thomson, Jr., was a member of the Clemson Class of 1939.

⁵ The statistics given here are from the program handout, "The Clemson A&M College Class of 1939 Reunion 1996, June 7th and 8th on their 57th Anniversary of Graduation," TLSP. Tee Senn and Betty C. Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer than to be a Thirty-Niner: A Short History of the Clemson College Great Class of 1939* (self-published, 1999), 18, 20, notes that 646 class members had enrolled as freshmen in 1935, and 293 graduated in 1939.

At Clemson, the military discipline, cadet life, and "spirit" they found there had created among them a special bond, molded them into men of honor and integrity, and made each ready to make his contribution to the world—and to their alma mater.

What was the "Clemson Spirit" to the '39ers?

A half century after he graduated, W. Bryan Northrup, an industrial engineer retired from Dupont, defined it as follows: "An undying love for the school and my class mates." George C. Salvo, a former Clemson horticulture major and retired army lieutenant colonel, said: "It seems to me to be an outstanding group of students who was interested in everything. The spirit of Clemson is hard to explain, but everyone seems to want to make Clemson outstanding and a place to always be remembered."

Perhaps the diminutive James O. Sweeny, a retired electrical engineer and one of the class's foremost leaders (he had served as its president from 1938-49) and supporters of its numerous campus projects, especially the Horticulture Gardens (for which, in part, he received in August 2010 an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Clemson University), said it best:

'Spirit of Clemson': It's like love—something one can't see or feel, but it's a force nevertheless that exhibits itself in a variety of ways. Those who had the Clemson Spirit share a sense of attachment [to] the school—they take pride in its accomplishments, whether academic or athletic. They hurt when Clemson stumbles—but their loyalty never wavers. They want Clemson to be the best in all things and are willing to help make that happen. They feel a bond with Clemsonians everywhere, those they know as well as those they don't know—but who are not strangers.⁶

At biennial campus reunions held during the first weekend in June, relationships among the '39ers, and among them with Clemson, grew ever more deeply. At their first reunion in 1949, more than one hundred class members attended the festivities. "Those who arrived for the Friday evening social get-together found real joy in reliving past experiences," said a post-

⁶ The quotes are from *Ibid.*, 164, 184, 193, 204.

reunion report to members from class secretary-treasurer, Robert A. Banister, a member of Clemson's engineering faculty. "Some 'bull sessions' lasted far into the night."

The '39ers showed immediately their support for Clemson.

Banister's minutes of the class business meeting on Saturday morning reported how "all unused funds" for a "reunion booklet" contributed by the fifty-five members present were "to be applied towards a class project [at the college] in the future." At the all class banquet Saturday evening, Harry H. Cosgrove, Jr., Class of '39 president,

used his allotted time of three minutes to tell the Clemson Alumni and their dates of the sentiments of the reunion class of 1939. Approximately 100 '39ers stood and cheered when President Cosgrove stated that we were the best graduating class of Clemson Agricultural College.⁷

Following the '39ers' reunion in 1959, Walter T. Cox, then class secretary-treasurer and longtime Dean of Student Affairs at Clemson (who, from 1985-86, would serve as Clemson University's tenth president), wrote the class's newly elected president, William E. Summerbell, the owner of a Washington, D.C. engineering firm. Cox, with affection typical of his classmates for one another, told Summerbell: "It was a real pleasure seeing you at Clemson for our twentieth class reunion. I enjoyed this occasion very much. It was warming to share the fellowship of our classmates, and I am especially pleased that you have been selected as our president." In keeping with the class's tradition of generosity to Clemson, Cox promised that he would work with other class members "to coordinate our interest and efforts so that the Class of 1939 will live up to its pledge to become 100% active in the Loyalty Fund."⁸

⁷ The quotes from Banister's report are in *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

Each reunion usually included a Friday evening party and dance at the Clemson House, and on Saturday a morning business meeting, late afternoon "social hour," and evening dinner banquet and party.

Late Friday afternoons or evenings, Tee and Marguerite "Reet" Senn invited the '39ers and their wives and friends to a picnic and party at "TeeReet's Retreat," the Senns' lake home in Clemson. The Senns enjoyed thoroughly their classmates and friends. And the feeling was mutual. Following the June 1961 reunion, a classmate, George M. Williams, Vice President and Treasurer of Southern Railway headquartered in Washington, D.C., thanked Tee:

Just a line to go on record as to how much I enjoyed the delightful party at your home last Friday night. . . .

You and your lovely wife are always such a nice host and hostess that I always look forward to your parties. I am sure that our other classmates would echo these sentiments.

If I am able to get down to Clemson this fall for a [football] game, I hope to be able to see you then.⁹

In addition to seeing one another at reunions, Williams visited the Senns when the railway official traveled nearly every weekend in the fall to Clemson to see the football Tigers play. The two classmates became close friends; when Williams served as class president from 1964 to 1966, they worked together, for example, helping plan reunion door prizes and recruiting money from the '39ers for Clemson's Alumni Loyalty Fund.¹⁰ Williams had majored in chemistry at Clemson and in 1951 earned an advanced degree from Harvard University's business school. He, too, had caught the Clemson "spirit" and described it in terms of his Clemson class, which, he believed, had a special relationship with America's history. "The Class of '39," he said once,

⁹ Williams to Senn, June 13, 1961, TLSP.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Williams to Senn, May 15 and August 5, 1964.

in many ways represents the coming of age of the United States. Struggling through the Depression, looking for a job, then being given a job by the US government to fight a world war. Readjusting and reeducating after the war, becoming successful in our chosen fields, then banding together to serve our class, our school, and our country.

The Class of '39 is important to me because it represents what a group of ordinary men can accomplish if they work together and accomplish some extraordinary things. The Class of '39 is an embodiment of the Clemson spirit which is famous to everyone who has been subject to its power and enthusiasm.¹¹

By the early 1970s, it is little wonder that Williams and many others in the class supported not only the Loyalty Fund, but also one of the class's special projects—the Horticulture Gardens.

Some class members, like Senn and Williams, thought about what might represent the class's growing involvement at the gardens. Few would have guessed what they would choose and why and how they would choose it.

A Southern Railway caboose?

In early September 1972, during a Saturday evening following a Clemson home football game, Williams visited the "TeeReet Retreat," which he had done so many times and years before. He and the Senns socialized, again as they had done so often before, and talked about one of their favorite topics—their Class of '39. Amid the discussion, Reet Senn, according to the later class history, "commented about the Horticultural Gardens and the Senns' ambition to make this a place that Clemson would be proud of." Thinking about how one might help make the gardens a unique and special place, she thought about putting there a piece—really an icon—of American and Southern history.

She asked Williams, "Why don't you give us a little red caboose?"¹²

¹¹ Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could be Finer*, 218.

¹² *Ibid.*, 59.

Trains fascinated Marguerite Senn; often during World War II, she had traveled by train to visit her navy husband. Born Marguerite Busby in Anderson, South Carolina, one of ten children and the daughter of a dairyman, she had married Tee in December 1939. He would recall many years later, "She had always wanted to ride in a caboose." And, he added, "She had known and loved the children's song, 'Little Red Caboose.'"¹³ Since the 19th century, nearly every freight train in the United States had a caboose, usually painted red for visibility and coupled at the train's rear to provide the train crew with a shelter, a place to do its work, and in some instances, living quarters.

The next morning, again at the Senns' "retreat," Williams prepared to return home to Washington on the Southern Railway train that ran through Clemson. But somehow he had mislaid his official company pass to board the day coach. When he phoned the local stationmaster about the problem, and requested the number on the pass, the man refused to believe Williams' claim of who he was and hung up on the railway vice-president and treasurer.

Reet couldn't believe what had happened to her beloved guest.

At her urging, Williams gave Reet the phone number of the local stationmaster, whom she intended to call. But after a quick discussion about what to do, Williams gave her the phone number of the railway's Atlanta regional office. Reet phoned the office, put Williams on the line, and within a few moments he had obtained the pass number he needed.

Relieved, Williams contacted the Clemson stationmaster and gave him the number. Now he could board the train and return on it to Washington.

To make sure all went smoothly, the Senns accompanied Williams to the train station. In good spirits and now relaxed, the Southern Railway executive began to board the train. He'd

¹³ Senn interview.

enjoyed a fun weekend, not only with his many friends, like the Senns, but also with his Clemson football Tigers, who had won their game. As he mounted the steps to enter the railway coach, he turned back to his friends who stood on the station platform, smiling and waving to him.

“Thanks, Reet, for your help,” he shouted. “What can I do for you?”

“Why don’t you give me a little red caboose?” she asked, reminding him of their discussion the previous night.

Williams nodded and waved as the train left the station for the nation’s capital.

Many years later, Tee Senn reflected on Reet’s rejoinder that weekend in the fall of 1972 to Williams’s question: “Reet was a good ol’ country girl. She didn’t mind telling you that she wanted a caboose.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid. Marguerite Senn died in April 1996. A year later, Tee Senn married a longtime friend, Betty Connor Yarborough; Senn, *Autobiography*, 151.

Chapter 3 The Arrival of SOU-X-3164 at Clemson

THE SUNDAY MORNING EXCHANGE on the railway platform at Clemson set in motion an immediate series of actions at both the university and Southern Railway.

How could a caboose cause so much bustle and interest?

At Clemson, the idea of placing such a visible icon of American history in the Horticulture Gardens appealed to nearly everyone, and especially to the Class of ’39. Class leaders like Tee Senn—and his wife, Reet—and George Williams viewed placing a caboose in the gardens as something that could make the gardens even more appealing to the public and friends of the university. And the caboose would be tied, by virtue of those helping acquire it, to the ‘39ers, ensuring a stronger association of the class with the gardens.

Also, most university officials knew that the American public rarely saw a caboose, except at the end of freight trains. And, although few observers realized it, including at the university, within a decade the caboose would disappear almost entirely from the railway scene. During the 1980s, new technology made obsolete the need for a caboose to assist train crews in performing their work; consequently, only an occasional museum in the country put a caboose on public exhibit.

But now, in the fall of 1972, Clemson University had the prospect of obtaining for itself such a unique piece of history for public viewing.

Southern Railway officials seemed even more eager to accommodate the university’s sudden interest in acquiring a caboose. Barely two days had passed since George Williams

returned to the railway's headquarters in Washington, D.C. when Tee Senn received a phone call at his home from the company's train repair and mechanical plant in Atlanta.

The caller asked, "Is this Tee Senn?"

"Yes," Senn replied.

"Is your wife named Reet Senn?" the man inquired further.

"Yes."

"I've got a caboose," the railway official said, "but it's red, dirty, and old." He repeated this to Reet when she took the phone. She discussed with him cleaning up the caboose, and then asked, "Don't you know the vice president of Southern Railway, Mr. George Williams, in Washington, D.C.?" The man replied, "If Mr. Williams tells me to clean up the caboose, I'll do it."

Not long after the phone call from Atlanta, Reet phoned Williams at his office, telling him about the Atlanta call. Apparently Williams contacted the Atlanta railway repairman, because within minutes the latter called the Senns again and inquired: "What are you doing with the caboose?" The official suggested, "If you know the vice president, George Williams, I'd suggest that you send the caboose to Spartanburg, South Carolina, where the railway office there can repair it and really make it look good." Reet then phoned Williams again, who told her: "Don't worry about a thing."¹

Meanwhile, Williams suggested to Tee Senn that he ask the university president, Robert C. Edwards, to write a letter to W. Graham Claytor, Jr., the President of Southern Railway, making a formal request that the company give Clemson a caboose.

¹ Senn interview.

Senn wasted no time. On September 8 he began forwarding a sample letter to Edwards through the university's administrative channels, first to O.B. Garrison, the director of the South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station.² Ten days later, the university's Dean of Agricultural Sciences, Luther Anderson, asked Edwards to send the letter to Claytor. Anderson explained to Edwards: "We feel that a letter from you to Mr. Claytor will help greatly in acquiring this caboose, and we would appreciate your signing the attached letter for this purpose." The same day, Edwards sent the letter, just as Senn had prepared it originally, to the railway's president:

For some time we have dreamed of getting a Southern Railroad caboose to place in our Living Historical Gardens at Clemson University. Recently, Dr. T.L. Senn, Head, Department of Horticulture here at Clemson, classmate of George M. Williams, Class of '39, Clemson, were discussing such a caboose. Mr. Williams suggested to Dr. Senn that perhaps Southern Railroad would be in a position to donate a caboose for the gardens.

These gardens are made up of several areas; namely a garden for the blind, a garden for meditation, a garden for the physically handicapped, and plans are under way for a religious garden in conjunction with the overall theme of Living Historical Gardens.

Duke Power Company has been helpful with the garden. We have received national attention, and at certain times in the spring and fall, we may have as many as a thousand visitors per week

Any assistance you can give us in obtaining this caboose for the gardens will be greatly appreciated.³

Within three days, Claytor responded to Edwards' query. The railway chief observed that the railway did "not at the present time have any surplus cabooses available." But then he added something much more promising: "It is probable, however, that some time in the course of the next year we will retire one or more additional cabooses and, if and when this happens, I will be glad to make one available for this purpose." Claytor even mentioned that the railroad "would be willing to deliver it [the caboose] to any rail siding in the Clemson area," but the

² Memo, Senn to Dr. O.B. Garrison, September 8, 1972, with the sample letter, in TLSP.

³ Ibid., R.C. Edwards to W. Graham Claytor, Jr., September 18, 1972; and Luther P. Anderson to R.C. Edwards, September 18, 1972.

university “would have to arrange to have it thereafter moved by a low boy highway trailer or otherwise to the site selected in the Gardens.”

Obviously Williams had discussed with Claytor Clemson’s wish for a caboose. Moreover, Claytor received word soon, and informed Edwards on October 6, that Southern Railway’s Atlanta repair yard had “a steel bay-window caboose, SOU-X-3164, available for the Living Historical Gardens at the University.” He offered “to send it along to you when you are prepared to accept it.” He enclosed for Edwards a diagram of the dimensions and layout of the floor plan “of a caboose similar to that which has been selected for you.” He advised that the caboose, which weighed nearly thirty tons, be placed at the university on “a panel of track, approximately fifty feet in length, set in concrete or on ballast,” and offered “to furnish enough second-hand rail and other track material if you decide to do this.”⁴

Delighted at this news, Edwards expressed his—and the university’s—appreciation to Claytor and told him to deliver SOU-X-3164 to Clemson’s Cherry Crossing siding, two miles east of the campus and the closest railhead to the gardens. He then requested that Tee Senn work directly with Southern Railway “regarding all of the details of the move” of the caboose to Clemson.⁵

Senn, ever the promoter of horticulture and the university, began planning favorable publicity for the railway’s donation of the caboose. This included, he informed Southern Railway, “newspaper releases” and arranging for television programs showing “the preparation

⁴ Ibid., Claytor to Edwards, September 21 and October 6, 1972; and Edwards to Claytor, September 27, 1972. SOU-X-3164 had been in rail service since it was built in August 1947; see the inscription on the side of the caboose, “BLT 8-47.”

⁵ Ibid., Edwards to Claytor, October 12, 1972.

of the track” in the garden where the caboose would rest, “getting the caboose from the railroad siding to the garden, and then the final completed job.”⁶

Two weeks later, in early November 1972, Reet Senn received another phone call from Southern Railway, this one from its depot in Spartanburg, South Carolina. “What are you going to do with the caboose?” asked the official on the phone. “It’s going into Tee’s garden,” she replied proudly. “Fine,” said the man. “We’ll bring it to Clemson.”

Reet then handed the phone to her husband. The latter was told that the railway would “bring the caboose to Calhoun.” The station in downtown Clemson, however, was located far away from the Horticulture Gardens, and moving SOU-X-3164 from the station to its new home would prove most difficult. “No, No,” Senn told the railway official, “we can’t do anything with the caboose at Calhoun.”

“Then we’ll take it to Seneca,” came the reply. Seneca was a town seven miles north of Clemson.

Again Senn objected: “No, we don’t want it in Seneca.”

Finally, the official, realizing there was only one other rail siding close to Clemson, said, “Then we’ll deadhead it to Cherry’s Crossing, and then it’s up to you.” “That’s fine,” Senn told him. The man ended the call by telling Senn that the railway could “wait a while before we send the caboose” until Clemson “got the track down” at the garden on which the huge train car would rest.⁷ [Photograph No. 2]

Preparations to receive the caboose started immediately.

A horticulture professor, James “Sonny” Crawford, with the help of local businessman, Norman Canoy, laid down the necessary rails and crossties near the entrance to the garden along

⁶ Ibid., Senn to William Geeslin (Assistant Vice President, Public Relations, Southern Railway System), October 17, 1972.

⁷ The phone exchange is in Senn interview.

Perimeter Road. Canoy, whose father owned a construction company that did work for Southern Railway laying and replacing track between Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina, had the heavy equipment that moved the materials. Also the generous Canoy obtained the track and crossies, the latter not only for the caboose site at the garden, but also for other parts of the campus. In the garden, his rail crew and large truck and tractor laid down a bed of gravel and crushed rock, some fifty feet in length and exactly like the foundation under a regular railroad track. Then the rails and crossies were placed on top, readying the site for the caboose.⁸

On November 16, Southern Railway shipped a repainted SOU-X-3164 "in tow" from Spartanburg.⁹ The railroad kept the Senns well informed about the shipment and alerted them that the caboose had arrived in Seneca, on its way to the Cherry's Crossing siding. The couple's excitement got the best of them; they wanted to see the caboose as soon as possible.

Shortly after midnight, they traveled by automobile to the Seneca railway station. There they found the bright red caboose setting on a side track.

"The caboose," they agreed, "was beautiful."

While they admired Clemson garden's soon-to-be new possession, an engineer about to board a train standing in the station told them, "I'm taking the caboose to Cherry's Crossing, and you can ride it there if you wish." The Senns were thrilled. They phoned their son, Dickie, and asked him to meet them and the train at Cherry's Crossing. The ride there in SOU-X-3164 was a dream come true.¹⁰

⁸ Crawford interview.

⁹ Southern Railway System, "Company Material Waybill Only, No. 100816," November 16, 1972, TLSP.

¹⁰ Senn interview.

But while the nearly thirty-ton caboose had arrived safely at Cherry's Crossing, transporting it two miles from there to the Horticulture Garden turned out to be a monumental task. Now the hard work began.

To do the job required the use of very heavy equipment. Crawford, at Canoy's suggestion, contacted the university's Physical Plant and grounds crew, headed by James Carey and George Jones. Already the morning following the Senns' ride on the caboose from Seneca, Carey sent to Cherry's Crossing a long, flatbed trailer (called a lowboy) pulled by a truck. Canoy, whose work for Southern Railway made him an expert in the matter, advised the Physical Plant to move the caboose to the garden in two parts or stages: first the detached wheels and axles; and then the carriage itself. To help remove the wheels and axles, a crane was used to lift the caboose off the ground; the lowboy then transported the wheels and axles to the garden, where they were placed on the tracks that Canoy's construction crew had laid there.

Moving the caboose from Cherry's Crossing to the garden proved much more challenging. The crane lifted it onto the flatbed, but because of the enormous weight of SOU-X-3164, when Carey and his crew started the truck pulling the load, the truck engine burned out. Carey exchanged the truck for a huge tractor that, along with a bulldozer pushing from the back, moved the lowboy loaded with the caboose to the garden. The convoy crept slowly, barely inching along. Finally, it reached its destination. [Photograph No. 3]

All during the journey, Reet Senn watched everything. "Isn't that beautiful!" she exclaimed repeatedly.

Once at the garden, the crane and workmen carefully unloaded the caboose onto the axles and wheels that had already been set on the bed of track near the garden's entrance from

Perimeter Road. Many years later, Tee Senn gave credit to Crawford, Canoy, and Carey for doing the difficult job successfully: "The three 'C's' did it."¹¹ [\[Photograph No. 4\]](#)

Clemson and its Class of '39 now had the caboose!

A few days later, both Tee Senn and President Edwards thanked Southern Railway for its donation to the university. For starters, Senn sent Claytor a gift for which the railway president quickly expressed his gratitude: "I was quite surprised today to receive such a large box of peaches which George Williams brought up to me. It was very thoughtful of you to think of me in this way, and I can assure you that they couldn't have arrived at a better time with the approaching holiday season."¹² Senn and the Horticulture Department would gladly trade boxes of local, department grown, peaches for the benevolence, present and future, of Southern Railway. Also, on December 7, Senn wrote Claytor and several other Southern Railway officials, praising what they had done:

There must be some way that I personally, as well as for the Department [of Horticulture] and Clemson University, could adequately express our appreciation to Southern Railway for the beautiful caboose (X3164). Unfortunately, at the moment, I have found no way to convey our appreciation other than by saying thanks and extending a most cordial invitation to have you visit us at Clemson and see the caboose in our Historical Ornamental Gardens.

Attached are two (2) black and white photographs showing you the site chosen for the caboose. The caboose will be enjoyed by thousands of people this coming spring. The Class of 1939 (George Williams and Tee Senn) will have a christening and dedication party during Reunion Weekend of June 8, 9, and 10.

To each of you who have contributed to this most worthwhile endeavor, we offer you our heartiest thanks and certainly hope that you will be able to visit us in the very near future.

The decal, 'Southern Railway Serves the South—Look Ahead, Look South', would certainly make a wonderful addition to the interior of the caboose.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.; and Crawford interview.

¹² Claytor to Senn, December 1, 1972, TLSP.

¹³ Ibid., Senn to Claytor, George Williams, William F. Geeslin, Robert Dunn, and Walt Simpson, December 7, 1972.

One of the railway executives, Robert Dunn, provided the decal and commented to Senn about the new caboose at Clemson: "If I were a caboose, I could think of no better way to spend my retirement years than resting quietly in a peaceful garden." Also, he thanked Senn for sending him a most welcome gift: "Mr. Williams forwarded to me some of the canned Freestone and Cling Peaches which you sent to him. They were excellent, the very best we have tasted."¹⁴

Edwards thanked the railway even more profusely. He wrote Claytor on January 4, 1973: "As we reflect on the events of the past year insofar as Clemson University is concerned, one of the most outstanding has to be the donation by Southern Railway System of the caboose to be used in our ornamental gardens. We not only appreciate your making this available to use but also the splendid cooperation in getting it to Clemson to set up in the gardens."¹⁵

The freshly painted red caboose, with the word "Southern" painted in large white block letters on each of its sides, now sat proudly "in its place of honor"¹⁶ at the front of the Horticulture Gardens, just off Perimeter Road. [\[Photograph No. 5\]](#)

¹⁴ Ibid., Dunn to Senn, December 13, 1972.

¹⁵ Ibid., Edwards to Claytor, January 4, 1973.

¹⁶ In the words of the class history, Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 59.

Chapter 4 Christening a Class Shrine

DURING THE EARLY MONTHS of 1973, the Horticulture Department began refurbishing the inside of the caboose, landscaping the area immediately adjacent to it, and constructing a parking lot between it and the road. For some time, the leaders of the Class of '39 had planned to make the caboose and garden areas surrounding it a special class project and, at the class reunion in June, "christen" the caboose and present it to the university. Added to Reet Senn and class members Tee Senn (since 1959 the class's secretary-treasurer) and George Williams, all of whom had played *the* central roles in acquiring the caboose, other influential members like Herbert Thomas, the class president, Harvey Snell, the future class president, and James Sweeny, liked the caboose.

Numerous people helped remodel the inside of SOU-X-3164, which was badly worn and dilapidated. James Crawford and Jack Crumpton, a wood worker at the university's Physical Plant, installed in the caboose a restroom, air conditioner, new electrical wiring and lights, and wood paneling and insulation. Also they built desks and seats and painted inside the caboose. Initially, at one of the desks, a young girl from Orangeburg, South Carolina, who had suffered severe burns in an accident, worked as a receptionist to help visitors to the caboose and gardens. Immediately on its arrival, the caboose attracted the public's attention, especially that of children.

At first, Crawford, Crumpton, and others worked out of an old greenhouse nearby, but eventually a workshop was built that housed not only hand tools, but also garden tractors and other equipment. Friends of the Horticulture Gardens at nearby La France Industries furnished

the fabric, in the gilt and red velvet identical to that of old railroad smoking cars, for the seat covers and draperies. The secretaries in the Horticulture Department, Beth Farmer and Linda Cartee, made the draperies. Eventually Crawford obtained various Southern Railway memorabilia and placed it in the caboose. Much of the rest of the remodeling was financed by a grant, by the always-charitable Pappy Hayden and Gus Schilleter, and by members of the Class of '39.¹

Moreover, Hayden's nursery and other nurseries donated money and plants that helped establish a garden that surrounded the caboose. Hayden's gift of \$100,000 established a conference center at the Horticulture Gardens, which the university named for the horticulturist. Also, the Class of '39, in recognition of Hayden's longtime generosity to the horticulture program and gardens, made him the first honorary member of the class.²

To continue developing the Horticulture Garden, the Horticulture Department used the labor not only of handicapped youth, but also of numerous university students; they assisted in the planting, often working even on Saturdays. Crawford directed much of the landscaping. On some occasions, he took students to the mountains of Georgia and North and South Carolina to dig up wild plants. Local Garden Clubs also contributed plants and money. As a consequence of this hard work, Clemson's scenic horticultural gardens had grown by the first months of 1973 into a 76-acre public site, bordered by U.S. 76/S.C. 28 and Perimeter Road. Winding pathways connected the gardens that included azalea, wildflower, bog, and research areas, and the special garden for the blind.

Crawford supervised as well the planting of trees at the gardens, and especially around a new gravel parking lot—that would be paved later—that he persuaded the state Highway

¹ Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 59; Crawford interview; and Senn interview.

² Senn interview. Also, see the reference in chapter 5 below to the plaque in the caboose, acknowledging Hayden.

Department, headed by Clemson graduate Silas Pearman, to help build. The parking area served as the entrance to the gardens off Perimeter Road; it was located between the road and the portion of the gardens taking shape around the caboose. With the Highway Department's approval, Crawford had a path or trail cut across the road from the campus. A forestry professor, Dr. Rosencrans, planted the trees, many of them donated for the area by Johnny Brailsford, a member of the Class of '39 and owner of a large nursery in Orangeburg, and by the university's Departments of Forestry and Agronomy.³

But Crawford's service to the Horticulture Gardens and Class of '39 did not end yet. One day in the spring of 1973, he phoned Tee Senn, telling the latter that he had seen something ever so shocking and that he believed he should share it with his friend and head of the Horticulture Department. "The Guardroom bell," he explained to Senn, "has been thrown on a nearby trash pile. I've seen it, and know where it is. The bell's going to be destroyed and used for scrap metal." Senn, too, was stunned at what he heard.

Perhaps no other single object on the campus represented more than the bell, of which Crawford spoke, the special period in Clemson's history, from its founding in 1893 until 1955, when the school was an all-male and all-military college. During that time, the students wore uniforms, attended military classes, practiced military drills, lived in barracks, marched to meals in a common mess hall, and most attended military summer camp at a U.S. Army post—all the while working towards a college degree in their chosen field. As Senn, Crawford, and the twelve thousand other Clemson cadets who graduated in those sixty-two years realized, the Guardroom bell had been at the very center of their four years as students. Located atop old No. 1 Barracks, high above the Guardroom three floors below, the bell had rung for all military formations and

³ Crawford interview; and Senn interview.

for the first class of the day. All campus life marched to the Guardroom bell, until it was deactivated in 1954 when the college razed No. 1 Barracks to make room for modern new dormitories.⁴

But now the historic bell lay forgotten on a university scrap heap. Destined apparently for eventual destruction.

Both Senn and Crawford could not reach the endangered bell quickly enough.

As unobtrusively and carefully as possible, Crawford, with Senn as a passenger, drove his truck to the scrap pile; there they loaded the bell quickly and took it to the caboose. Believing the university might disapprove of their taking the bell, they hid it for a time inside SOU-X-3164. A few weeks later, they moved the bell to immediately behind the caboose. Soon, Crawford and Crumpton, the wood worker, built a replica of the old Guardroom tower that had housed the bell for so long, and placed the bell inside it. Senn feared the Physical Plant might seek to retrieve the bell for sale as scrap, but that did not happen. Instead, as he would tell many of his former classmates later, Crawford and he had rescued a piece of history that had “played a very prominent role in the cadet life of all of the Class of ’39.” Also Harvey Snell, whom the class would elect its president at the 1973 reunion, wanted the bell at the caboose.⁵

By the late spring of 1973, the caboose, surrounding garden, and parking area appeared ready for the upcoming Class of ’39 reunion in June. The class had committed itself fully to helping finance, and otherwise assist, the further development of the Horticulture Gardens. The official invitation to class members for the reunion had a drawing of the caboose on it with an engineer, a “Clemson Tiger,” looking out the window as he leaned casually on his arm. The

⁴ Most of this paragraph is taken, some of it verbatim, from the “Cadet Life Garden” and “Guardroom and Guardroom Bell” markers in the South Carolina Botanical Gardens. Also, see Trent Allen and Kevin Bray, *Clemson: There’s Something in These Hills* (Clemson: Fort Hill Press, 2006), 70-89.

⁵ Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 59; Senn interview; and especially Crawford interview.

invitation included the “Class of ’39 Agenda” for the reunion, a schedule of events for Friday, June 8, and Saturday, June 9.

The reunion began on Friday afternoon at the beautiful gardens, with a dedication of SOU-X-3164, symbolizing the class’s donation of it to the gardens and university. Herbert Thomas, the class president, opened the ceremony with brief welcoming remarks to the twenty-one class members present, along with their spouses and other friends, gathered in front of the caboose. George Williams then spoke representing Southern Railway and presented the caboose to the university. La France Industries officials—Harold Hafner, Bob Morgan, and George Morgan—did the same for the fabrics they had donated for the seats and drapes inside the caboose. Then Tee Senn spoke, on behalf of the Department of Horticulture, acknowledging the many people involved in bringing the caboose to Clemson and in assisting in restoring it.

Finally, the moment had arrived that many of those present and numerous others in the Clemson community had waited for—the “christening,” or ceremonial dedication, of SOU-X-3164.

The ’39ers had given the honor of doing the christening to Reet Senn, who had originated the idea, and then helped to make it happen, of placing a caboose in the Horticulture Gardens. In fact, as the previous pages in this book show, Southern Railway had given the caboose to her. She, in turn, had donated it to the Class of ’39, which gave the rail car to the university for display in the gardens. Both the class and university confirmed this when they affixed a small plaque to one side of the caboose, at its rear. The plaque read: “Class of ’39 Caboose donated by and dedicated to Marguerite B. Senn by Southern Railway, 1973.”⁶

⁶ The plaque is still on the caboose, at the very place where Reet Senn stood on June 8, 1973 to christen the car; also, Senn interview.

A happy and radiant Reet, standing on the outside platform at the back of the brightly painted caboose, with her smiling husband Tee, Herbert Thomas, and George Williams (each having donned rail engineers' caps—specially designed for the occasion for all the '39ers by one of their own, Francis Rawl—that had a small caboose and '39 emblem on the front) immediately to her right on steps leading to the platform, smashed a Southern Comfort whiskey bottle against the side of the caboose. Everyone present cheered heartily and proudly. The class now had a special symbol of its commitment to the gardens and university. [Photograph No. 6]

Almost anti-climactic to the ceremony, Physical Plant officials, James Carey and George Jones, spoke about the Guardroom Bell, located behind the caboose. When they finished, the festivities closed with music by D. Land and the "Turnpike Ramblers." [Photograph Nos. 7 and 8]

From the gardens and caboose, the happy group of '39ers made their traditional reunion visit to TeeReet's Retreat, on Lake Hartwell, for what the host and hostess advertised as a "Southern Living Party." The "Turnpike Ramblers" arrived at the Retreat in a long black hearse, with lettering on the side saying, "In this hearse, bluegrass music comes alive!" About the fun the guests would experience there, the reunion invitation had said it all:

Swimming, boating, and kegs of suds. Special sampling of exotic hors d'ouvres. Special aromatic elixirs. Southern home style cooking—fried chicken, hash, barbecue, ham, rice, black-eyed peas and corn bread. Premiere showing of '39 Caboose and Guard Room bell. Films of previous reunions. Spend the rest of the evening with the '39ers at Tee Reet's Retreat enjoying southern living. Dress: Comfortable.⁷

The next morning, class members gathered on campus for their reunion business meeting. Herbert Thomas, the class president, according to the minutes of the meeting, "commented on

⁷ See the invitation, "Class of 1939, Southern Living;" and Senn, "'39 Caboose Dedication, Ornamental Gardens," June 8, 1973, TLSP.

the '39 Caboose Christening and expressed the desire that '39ers return to the Horticultural Gardens often." He added "that no other class has a guard room bell being preserved by them." After Thomas presented Tee Senn with a framed, printed copy of a previous class resolution "concerned with the Secretary's devotion to the class," Walter Cox, a class member and the university's vice president for student affairs, asked Senn to discuss the hortitherapy program at the Horticulture Gardens. Senn explained the recently created and award-winning program, noting how it "embraces the use of horticultural arts and skills in improving the physical and mental well being of the visually handicapped, mentally ill, mentally retarded, youthful offenders, drug addicts, and alcohol addicted."⁸

The '39ers reunion in June 1973 ended after two days of meetings and parties, but the consequences of what the class had done there would be felt long into the future.

In November, the university and its ruling Board of Trustees showed their approval for what the Class of '39 and the Horticulture Department had done. The board agreed to protect in perpetuity the original forty-four acres of the Horticulture Gardens that now included the caboose.⁹ In doing so, the board recognized the gardens area's value as a major public resource.

But the Class of '39 and officials at Clemson University weren't the only persons proud of the caboose that now adorned the entrance to the Horticulture Gardens. Southern Railway, too, touted the christening of SOU-X-3164 and the railway's gift to the university. In December 1973, the railway's magazine published a photograph of Reet Senn and those who had stood next to her while she smashed the bottle of Southern Comfort against the caboose. The caption read, in part:

⁸ Ibid., Senn, "Minutes of Class of '39—34th Anniversary," June 9, 1973, business meeting.

⁹ Ibid., Joseph B. McDevitt (University Counsel and Secretary of the Board of Trustees) to Senn, November 29, 1973, attaching a copy of the board's resolution.

Another old Southern Railway caboose has found a home, this time in the horticulture gardens of Clemson University. Few surplus cabooses are still around, but X3164 was resurrected through the efforts of Southern treasurer and Clemson alumnus George Williams. The steel, bay-window caboose serves as a plush reception center for garden visitors.¹⁰

Senn, moreover, continued to trade the railway peaches for crossties as well as for paint for the caboose. George Williams wrote him in April 1976: "Thank you so much for sending the Clemson peaches. They arrived yesterday in good shape. One of my men responsible for getting the crossties has received a case of the peaches. I have told him that Clemson has done its part; now it's up to him to make sure that Southern lives up to its side of the bargain." A few months later, Williams thanked Senn again for another shipment of peaches: "They arrived in good shape and have been spread around the building where they will do a lot of good for Clemson."¹¹

But not surprising, it didn't take long for leaders of the Class of '39 to transform the caboose into a real monument to the class.

By the mid-1970s, nearly one-fourth of the 305 class members who had graduated in 1939 and later, and the additional eighty who had not graduated, had died. For a class that had lost twenty-six of its members in World War II, and now continued to lose annually five or more members, a steadily growing sense of mortality began appearing among its remaining members.

Obviously reflecting this sentiment, Harvey Snell, the class president from 1973-75, fashioned a Scroll of Honor for the class. It was a beautiful wooden plaque made of walnut and

¹⁰ "Clemson Caboose Christened," *Ties: Southern Railway System*, November/December 1973, 29.

¹¹ Williams to Senn, April 8 and December 13, 1976; Senn to Williams, May 10, 1977; and Williams to Senn, July 26, 1978, TLSP.

large enough to hold an engraved nameplate for every deceased classmate. Tee Senn donated the lumber for the plaque.¹² [Photograph No. 9]

In the spring of 1975, in preparation for the class's 36th anniversary reunion in June, Senn distributed a briefly written flyer to the class, mentioning the Scroll of Honor and tying it to the caboose and Guardroom Bell. He urged as many members as possible to attend the reunion. "The Class of '39 Caboose," he wrote,

is located in a beautiful spot of the Horticultural Gardens. It is hoped that the Class of '39 can be identified with the caboose and the Guard Room bell. A plaque containing the names of the deceased members of the class of '39 will be permanently installed in the caboose. It is hoped that each of you will attend the Reunion and help us to establish this identity.¹³

To open the reunion, the class held a Friday afternoon memorial service for its deceased members. The Reverend Steve Skardon, a '39er, conducted the ceremony outside the caboose. The Scroll of Honor was placed where everyone present could see it, and the names of the deceased were read and a minute of silent prayer was observed. At the class business meeting the next morning, resolutions declaring the class's identity with, and control of, the "Class of 1939 Caboose" and the "Guardroom Bell" were read and approved. Those present also agreed to frame and place the original resolutions on each side of the Scroll of Honor, which would hang on an inside caboose wall. In addition, the class decided to display its mementos, including photographs of class members at each reunion, inside the caboose.¹⁴

The two resolutions¹⁵ read as follows [Photograph No. 10]:

¹² Ibid., Senn, "Minutes of Class of '39—36th Anniversary, Tenth Reunion," June 14, 1975, handwritten; Senn, *Autobiography*, 111.

¹³ A copy of the flyer, advertising a "Thirties Party" for June 13, is in TLSP.

¹⁴ Ibid., "Minutes of Class of '39—36th Anniversary, Tenth Reunion." See, also, "39ers Enshrine Guardroom Bell," *The Clemson World*, September 1975, 4.

¹⁵ Both, indeed, hang inside the caboose.

**“Resolution
The Class of 1939 Caboose”**

WHEREAS, the distinguished Class of 1939 in proper assemblage and with deep appreciation, accepted from Southern Railway Company a genuine Southern Railway Caboose, and

WHEREAS, said Caboose had, in its years of service on the main lines of Southern Railway through Clemson, been a symbol of the transportation available to thousands of Clemson College men to and from their homes to this College in the red hills of South Carolina, and

WHEREAS, the Class of 1939 has declared this Caboose a proper and fitting monument to the perpetual memory of those members of the Class who have passed from this life since their days at Clemson,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the officers and members of the Class of 1939 do herewith officially dedicate this memorial on the Clemson College campus; and that a timeless plaque be placed inside to honor those members of the Class who pass from this life, recognizing their service to college, country and class.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the grateful appreciation of the Class be officially recorded hereon to Southern Railway Company and to the Physical Plant Division of Clemson College for the gift and placement thereof.

DEDICATED this 13 day of June, nineteen-hundred-seventy-five.

[SIGNED] FOR THE CLASS OF 1939

A.H. Snell, President

H.E. Avent, Vice President

T.L. Senn, Secretary-Treasurer

**“Resolution
The Guard Room Bell”**

WHEREAS, the infamous Guard Room Bell of Clemson College rang loud and clear beckoning grey-clad cadets to campus, classes, formations, to and from our fate or glory with the earthquaking peel of a wrecking ball and starch like authority of the College Commandant, destroying rudely and completely the pleasant dreams of so many men barracked on this military campus, and

WHEREAS, this infamous bell is recalled with deep emotions by the men of the Class of 1939--with both love and hate; with contempt at the time, but with warm memories and genuine appreciation now for the control that it exercised over, and the direction it gave to, our lives as cadets of Clemson College, and

WHEREAS this bell, the one and only such guard room bell in the illustrious history of Clemson College, has been lastingly preserved, appropriately identified and properly placed on the Clemson campus by the Class of 1939,

NOW BE IT RESOLVED that by the latter action the members of the Class of 1939 have expunged all hate and contempt the once had for this instrument of discipline, and does now officially dedicate this bell and its lodging place as a memorial to the Class of 1939 and to the honor, pride and principled regimen it brought to our lives.

DEDICATED this 13 day of June, nineteen-hundred-seventy-five.

[SIGNED] FOR THE CLASS OF 1939

A.H. Snell, President

H.E. Avent, Vice President

T.L. Senn, Secretary-Treasurer

For the Class of '39, SOU-X-3164, had become a shrine. The caboose now held the class's Scroll of Honor, and with it so many memories of the classmates whose names appeared there.

Eventually, class leaders hung inside the caboose a poem, placed in a glass frame shaped like a railroad car, dedicated to the role in American history of SOU-X-3164 and other cabooses. The writing by a Southerner, Arthur Nolen Caudle, described what members of the Class of '39 had realized for a long time—how the popular rail car known as the caboose reflected the rise of the United States as an industrial and commercial power:

“The Caboose”

You have heard of me before
The tail end, the butt of jokes,
And lately, the needless one.
Like a Prairie Schooner
Where I once was vital,
I am now on the side track,
Discarded, victim of progress.

You are here to look into your past.

You shall find part of yourself in me.
 You see the cot where the tired rested.
 You see the stove that made warmth
 And provided meals for the hungry crew.
 You see the communication system;
 The desk where crucial information was figured.
 In short, you see the brain of the train,
 The mind that brought to you household needs,
 That carried your produce to market,
 That bound together the greatest nation on earth.

In my day I had y glory.
 Now as a relic
 I serve in my crudeness
 To show you your roots.

Following the 1975 gathering and festivities, every '39er reunion would begin on Friday afternoon at the caboose with a solemn service commemorating the lives of class members who had died since the previous reunion. The names of the deceased were added to the Scroll of Honor. Eventually the service included ringing the Guardroom Bell for each such member. At the 42nd anniversary class reunion in June 1981, class members approved the following resolution, drafted and signed by Bryan Northrup, James O. Sweeny, and Thomas B. Young, Jr.:

WHEREAS the Clemson Class of 1939 began in 1973 opening each class reunion with a memorial service at our Class of 1939 Caboose at the Horticultural Gardens honoring the memory of all of our departed classmates and particularly those who passed on since our last reunion.

And WHEREAS as from 303 who graduated in the Class of 1939 214 are left among the living and recognizing that with 42 years passed since our graduation we are now in our 60's and can only expect a more rapid depletion of our ranks in the coming years.

BE IT RESOLVED that this Memorial Service is a highly significant part of our reunions to honor our departed classmates and should continue to be a part of each reunion as long as there remains a member of our class who returns to Clemson for a reunion.¹⁶

¹⁶ "Resolution, Class of 1939, June 13, 1981," appended to "Minutes of Class of '39—42nd Anniversary, Thirteenth Reunion," June 13, 1981, TLSP.

At the same meeting, the class approved yet another resolution, also drafted and signed by Northrup, Sweeny, and Young, celebrating the career, service to the university, and impending retirement of Tee Senn as head of the Department of Horticulture. The document read, in part:

BE IT RESOLVED that we, his classmates gathered at Clemson for the 42nd anniversary reunion of our graduation in 1939 do express to Tee our admiration for and appreciation of the honorable services he has rendered to Clemson and wish him and his good wife, Margarite, a long and pleasant retirement.¹⁷

Also to honor Senn, still another resolution provided that all "residual monies" in the class treasury, after payment of reunion expenses, be donated to the university and designated for the "Senn Scholarship Fund." The fund, established in 1981 by Senn's colleagues, former students, friends, and corporate donors to honor him, provided undergraduate scholarships in the Department of Horticulture.¹⁸ Finally, the '39ers voted in a new—and permanent—slate of officers; they elected Senn class president and Jim Sweeny secretary.¹⁹

Indefatigable in his care for the caboose, only days before the reunion Senn had asked Southern Railway for a second major donation of paint for SOU-X-3164.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., "Resolution, Class of 1939, June 13, 1981," appended to "Minutes of Class of '39—42nd Anniversary, Thirteenth Reunion," June 13, 1981.

¹⁸ Ibid., "Resolution, Class of 1939, June 13, 1981," appended to "Minutes of Class of '39—42nd Anniversary, Thirteenth Reunion," June 13, 1981. Also, see Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 36.

¹⁹ "Minutes of Class of '39—42nd Anniversary, Thirteenth Reunion," June 13, 1981, TLSP.

²⁰ Ibid., John Gerson (Manager, Hayne Shop in the Mechanical Department of Southern Railway System, Spartanburg, S.C.) to Senn, May 29, 1981.

Chapter 5

“What Better Place . . . to get them to think about Clemson?”

THE LONG AND CORDIAL relationship between the university and Southern Railway continued for several more years. In October 1981, the railway provided paint for sprucing up the outside of the caboose. Tee Senn, in a written thank you to the railway for its donation, mentioned the caboose's location in the university's Horticultural Gardens. “The Gardens become more and more popular each year,” he wrote, “and we estimate that we have 40,000 to 50,000 visitors annually. The caboose serves as our reception center for the Gardens, and a new coat of paint will certainly brighten up the caboose and make a good first impression on our visitors.”¹

Also the railway continued to donate crossties to the university. In July 1982, Senn told George Williams: “These crossties have been used in many ways. For example, outlining the walks through the Horticultural Gardens, shoring up eroding banks, outlining turf areas in the flower trial gardens and many other uses. Without your help the Gardens would not be as beautiful as they are today.” In 1984, Senn told another railroad official that still other donated crossties “have been used to outline intramural sports areas and have been used generally around the campus for landscaping purposes as well.” Only after Williams's retirement from the railway in 1983 did the abundant flow of crossties from it to the university end. Still, as late as 1995, Senn inquired of Williams whether the latter had any ideas about how the university might acquire more crossties. Williams, however, replied: “Sorry I couldn't give you much advice

¹ Senn to Gerson, October 12, 1981, TLSP.

regarding the crosstie situation—that is somewhat out of my area of railroad expertise and all my old friends in the area are now retired.”²

Meanwhile, the death in January 1982 of A. Harvey Snell, a former Class of '39 president and leader in the class's adopting the Horticultural Gardens as one of its major projects and acquiring the caboose, prompted another class member, the businessman and gifted writer and publicist Thomas Benton Young, Jr., to pen a poem to the class in Snell's memory. The touching lines read:

“Class of 1939”³

Last class of Clemson's Old Era,
We marked the close of her first half-century . . .
As we left our Alma Mater in 1939,
Between the Great Depression,
Hardly overt,
And the Great War,
Not then begun . . .
But soon to claim us all . . .
Some for a few years,
And some forever.
Most of us carried on,
And built careers in chosen fields . . .
Built families with our chosen partners,
As ever a common bond remained
Between us . . . and will—
Something we shared together
For four years,
And still share . . . always:
The Clemson Spirit.
There is something unique in this . . .
For as the years pass on by—
Ten . . . fifteen . . . then twenty and thirty,
That Spirit—our bond of fellowship—
Grows stronger . . .
As we know it will continue to
When we come back . . .
After forty years . . . and then fifty

² Ibid., Williams to Senn, July 14, 1995; Senn to J.L. Jones (Executive Vice President, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Norfolk, V.A.), January 27, 1984; and Senn to Williams, July 13, 1982.

³ A copy of the poem is in a glass frame in the caboose.

For Clemson's Centennial,
And the Golden Reunion for the Class of '39
Then our spirit will be stronger still . . .
Though fewer remain,
They will return
Again . . . and again
To be together . . . at Clemson . . .
Until, one year in the twenty-first century,
When our children's grandchildren
Walk in the shadows of Tillman Hall
The last 39er
Will return . . . alone
But he will not be alone . . . in spirit,
For so long as one '39er remains . . .
The spirit of our class lives on.

During 1987 the university consolidated the Horticultural Gardens, Forestry Arboretum, and adjoining university land into the 250+ acre “Clemson University Botanical Garden.” The garden had more than 2,200 varieties of plants and trees.

Two years later, the '39ers marked the 50th anniversary of their graduation by establishing a \$500,000 endowment, of which \$135,000 would be used to support improvements to the garden. Nearly 120 class members, spouses, and guests attended. By then, the original seeds planted at the garden back in 1959 had blossomed into one of Clemson's most popular attractions, drawing an estimated 80,000 visitors annually.⁴ Shortly thereafter, the university renamed the huge garden the “South Carolina Botanical Garden.”

On June 8, 1991, Tee Senn received yet another distinguished honor. Clemson University named the garden's original forty-four acre tract, which formed the main entrance to

⁴ Fortner, “Botanical Garden,” 35. The endowment funded also 1) student scholarships; 2) a brick and concrete structure (tower) on the main campus in which the old bell from the Tillman Hall clock tower would be housed and displayed; and 3) an annual \$5,000 award for faculty excellence. The bell, originally hung in Tillman Hall in 1905, tolled the hours faithfully until replaced by the carillon in 1985. The structure that enshrines the bell includes materials and design elements patterned after distinctive architectural details found in Tillman Hall. The Tillman Hall Bell Tower on campus is a memorial to Class of '39 members who gave their lives in the cause of freedom in World War II and also serves as a prominent means to honor recipients of the faculty award for excellence. See the markers on the bell tower; and the typed copy of an article by C.B. Barnett, from *Turf South Magazine* (n.d.). Also, note Walter T. Cox to Clemson Alumni Association, n.d., about the reunion, TLSP.

the 250+ acre garden and included the caboose, for the garden's founder. A ceremony unveiled a deep-etched, gold-lettered plaque at the site, establishing the "The T.L. Senn Horticultural Gardens." The plaque praised Senn's "talents and tenacity as an administrator, educator and innovator," whose gardens "integrated nature, recreation and therapeutics with preservation, conservation, teaching and research."⁵ Today, the plaque, with Japanese Star Jasmine growing up around it, sets along the winding red brick sidewalk leading from the Botanical Garden's parking lot to the rear of the caboose.⁶

Furthermore, the '39ers began a major new project in the South Carolina Botanical Garden. With it the class sought, in its own words, "to present a visual display of some of the important aspects of Clemson's history and traditions." The Clemson Heritage Gardens contained several discrete parts. The first, completed in 1996 with funds and gifts from class members, was the Caboose Garden.⁷ Immediately surrounding the caboose were shrubs, plants, small plots of grass, benches, and sidewalks, the latter with plaques inserted, each honoring a '39er and given by family and friends. The garden was marked on two sides, in front and at the rear of the caboose, by the words engraved in the sidewalk, "The Class of '39 Caboose Garden."

At the rear edge of the Caboose Garden the class placed a class roll of '39 freshmen who entered in 1935. This was a bronze name plaque, installed on the sidewalk, which contained the names of the freshmen. Class member Elton W. Shepherd, Sr. designed the beautiful four-tiered structure. [Photograph No. 11] Jim Sweeny, the principal driving force in the creation of the

⁵ "Dedication of the T.L. Senn Horticultural Gardens," *The Botanical Garden Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 1991), 3.

⁶ A decade later, directly across from the plaque, on the other side of the sidewalk, a bench was placed with its own plaque, engraved with the words "In Honor of Betty C. Senn, By the Tee Senn Family." Today, there exists behind the bench a beautiful Dwarf Cherrylaurel, the heartiest of the Cherrylaurels and a plant native to Southeastern Europe and Asia Minor.

⁷ Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 37.

Heritage Gardens, enlisted the aid of another '39er, Barham Thomson, to install a new air conditioner in the caboose; and Tee Senn had the seats in the caboose re-upholstered.⁸

The caboose, since its arrival at the gardens in 1973, had become a favorite center of attention for thousands of children who visited the gardens each year. "What better place," Tee Senn has asked often, "to take kids and teach them about the flora and fauna and also get them to think about Clemson?"⁹

The class, moreover, funded the impressive stone and concrete entrance to the Heritage Gardens, completed in 1997. Plaques embedded in the entrance honored class members Walter T. Cox, Sr. and James O. Sweeny. His classmates memorialized Cox for a "lifetime of dedication to Clemson" that "included serving as President from July 1985 to March 1986." They paid tribute to Sweeny for his heading the Heritage Garden Committee and for his "leadership, generosity, and countless hours of volunteer service [to] help make these Gardens a reality."¹⁰

Other parts of the Heritage Gardens include the Cadet Life Garden, depicting major features of cadet life during Clemson's first sixty years; and will include eventually the Founder's Garden, celebrating Clemson's founder, Thomas Green Clemson, and the events surrounding Clemson's establishment in 1889, and the Presidents Gardens, acknowledging Clemson's presidents and presenting the important events of each one's tenure.

BY THE BEGINNING OF the 21st century, no other single class had done more for Clemson University than "the Great Class of 1939." Today, its impressive gifts to the university are listed

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37, 212; Sweeny to Thomson, May 10, 1996; and e-mail, Beth Farmer to Regina Carroll, September 18, 1996, TLSP.

⁹ Fortner, "Botanical Garden," 35.

¹⁰ Senn and Senn, *Nothing Could Be Finer*, 37; and see the plaques.

on one side of the bright red caboose, SOU-X-3164, which sets at the entrance to the South Carolina Botanical Garden [Photograph No. 12]:

LEGACY
of the Class of '39
 Student Scholarships
 Faculty Award for Excellence
 The Bell Tower
 The Class of '39 Caboose Garden
 The Clemson University
 Heritage Gardens

On the same side of the caboose, toward the front, one of the two windows is boarded up with a piece of metal, on which is printed the names of class members who directed the funding of the projects launched at the class's golden anniversary in 1989 [Photograph No. 13]:

Class of '39
Golden Anniversary Endowment
Fund Committee &
Caboose Garden Committee
 Henry E. (Bobby) Avent
 William A. (Bill) Carlisle
 Walter T. (Walter) Cox
 Frank W. (Nelly) O'Neal
 Taze L. (Tee) Senn
 Elton W. (Shep) Shepherd
 Barham F. (Tommy) Thomson
 Russel S. (Russ) Wolfe II
 William B. (Bill) Ziegler
 James O. (Kid) Sweeny,
 Chairman

On the other side of the caboose, facing the garden's parking lot, one finds the names of the principals who made the caboose possible [Photograph No. 14]:

Conductor—G.M. Williams
 Brakeman—Tee Senn
 Hostess—Reet Senn, Class of '39

The name "Reet" also appears above the front platform of the caboose. Additionally, at the rear of the caboose, affixed on the side where she christened it in 1973, a small plaque notes her role in acquiring the caboose for the gardens.¹¹ [Photograph No. 15]

Inside the caboose the Class of '39 has collected many of its dearest mementos: the precious Scroll of Honor containing an engraved plaque for each deceased class member; numerous class photos from the reunions; and photos of the recipients of the university's Class of '39 Award for Faculty Excellence, established and funded by the class and selected by the university's Faculty Senate.¹² [Photograph No. 16] The award recipients, along with other persons selected by the class, become "honorary members of the Class of '39," charged by the original members with continuing the generous '39er spirit of giving to the university long after the last original '39er has gone to the Great Caboose in the sky.

Also on the inside caboose walls hang numerous plaques and glass frames that contain resolutions and poems honoring the class, several of its officers and other members and friends, and the caboose. Included is a glass frame containing a small key and the following inscription: "Southern Railway switch lock key. Used by D. P. Henley, locomotive engineer on the Charlotte and Winston-Salem Divisions between 1892 & 1930. This type of key is no longer in use. Donated to Class of 1939 by John Henley in memory of Reet Senn."

Another small plaque, affixed above the desk, honors the extraordinary work and financial contributions of "Pappy" Hayden and his Alabama nursery in the construction of the botanical gardens and Horticulture Department. The inscription reads:

¹¹ For the words on the plaque, see chapter 4.

¹² See the list of award recipients at the end of this chapter.

C.J. Hayden, Class 1912
 A.H. Sherff
 Friends and Benefactors
 Athens Nursery Co.
 Athens, Alabama

Two resolutions celebrate the Class of '39, one from Clemson University's Faculty Senate of 1997 and the other from the city of Clemson of 2004:

"Resolution to Honor the Clemson University Class of '39"
JS97-11-1 P

WHEREAS the Class of '39 established the Class of 1939 Award for Excellence "to inspire the greatest possible level of achievement by members of the faculty of Clemson University;" and

WHEREAS the Award for Excellence is presented annually to one distinguished member of the faculty whose outstanding contributions have been judged by peers to represent the highest achievement of service to the University, the Student Body, and the larger community; and

WHEREAS Faculty who have received this distinction become members of the Class of '39; and

WHEREAS the members of the Class of '39 have bestowed the privilege of the Award facilitat-ion to the Faculty Senate; and

WHEREAS the Class of '39 respects and believes in the importance of the faculty and its impact on students and the future of Clemson University;

RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate does hereby honor and celebrate the members of the Great Class of '39 for its trust and confidence in and recognition of the faculty of Clemson University.

Passed unanimously by the Faculty Senate
 November 11, 1997

**"City of Clemson Proclamation
 Clemson University Class of 1939"**

WHEREAS, the Clemson University Class of 1939 is celebrating its Golden Anniversary, and

WHEREAS, the Class of '39 exemplifies, and with great dignity, claims its role as part of this great nation's "Greatest Generation", and

WHEREAS, the Class of 1939 represents all of the Clemson family honorably, and

WHEREAS, the Class of 1939 has given freely and generously [to] Clemson University and its great heritage.

Be it therefore resolved that the City of Clemson, SC, does herewith honor, with affection, the history, the contributions, and the gifts of the Clemson University Class of 1939.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Clemson to be affixed the 1st day of April, 2004.

Larry W. Abernathy, Mayor
 Attest: Diannne J. Bitzer, MMC, City Clerk

Of all that has been written and said about the "Great Class of '39," an essay from 1998 by David Shi, the former Furman University president and historian, perhaps best captures the class's unrivaled loyalty to its university and what motivated such a feeling. Shi's father-in-law was class member Barham F. Thomson, Jr.:

In talking with the 80-year-old members of this distinguished class, I was struck by how many of them viewed their time at Clemson as the turning point in their lives. Although subjected to a lifetime's weathering, their recollections of shared friendships, classes, professors, military drills, parties and football games are remarkably fresh and precise. Clemson remains a continuing presence in their lives.

To be sure, class members wax nostalgic about bygone days, and, like all of us, they remember some things as they wish they had been. But their mooring to alma mater extends beyond mere sentiment and myth. They return to the campus so often because they find there something very important about themselves. Like so many alumni, they find their strength renewed and their faith revitalized when they attend reunions. Their student days gave them a common identity and a lifetime bond. Clemson endowed them with a sense of place and shared history that is embedded in their consciousness as a memory but protrudes into the present outlook like an exposed piece of granite. At Clemson they were given a chance to surmount the economic distress of their time and broaden their provincial outlook.

The root meaning of the word 'educate' is to lead out, and in this sense Clemson led these students out into a wider, more complicated and even tragic world, all the while providing a comforting tether of support. In this regard, the Class of '39 provides living

testimony to what the poet Robert Frost once said: 'If you have to fall in love with something, you can do a lot worse than a college.'
Go Tigers!¹³

The class, thanks in great part to Marguerite "Reet" Senn, also fell in love with a caboose.

"What better place . . .?"

¹³ The essay appeared originally in *The News* (Greenville, S.C.), February 15, 1998, and was reprinted in "Class Act," *Clemson World Magazine* (Spring 1998), 13.

APPENDIX I

"The Class of '39 Award for Excellence Roll of Honor" *

1989	Dixie Gooch Goswami	English
1990	Joel Brawley	Mathematical Sciences
1991	John Lane Idol, Jr.	English
1992	Raymond C. Turner	Physics
1993	A.B. Bodine	Animal & Veterinary Science
1994	Cecil O. Huey, Jr.	Mechanical Engineering
1995	Francis A. McGuire	Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Management
1996	R. Lawrence LaForge	Management
1997	Chalmers Butler	Electrical and Computer Engineering
1998	Larry L. Bauer	Agriculture and Applied Economics
1999	Judy Melton	German and Women's Studies
2000	Clifton "Chip" Egan	Theatre
2001	Jerry A. Waldvogel	Biology Instruction and Agricultural Education
2002	Alfred P. (Hap) Wheeler	Biological Sciences
2003	Douglas K. Sturkie	Sociology
2004	Art Young	English and Engineering
2005	Benjamin Lee Sill	Director, General Engineering Program
2006	Donald M. McKale	History
2007	Alma Bennett	Humanities and English
2008	William T. Pennington, Jr.	Chemistry
2009	Webb Morrow Smathers, Jr.	Applied Economics and Statistics
2010	Melanie M. Cooper	Chemistry

Each name above, with its year, is etched in granite on the Bell Tower at the front of the Clemson University campus. An inscription on the tower reads: "This Structure is Dedicated to Those Distinguished Members of the Faculty of Clemson University Whose Outstanding Contributions to the Student Body, the School, and the Community Have Been Recognized by Their Peers as Meriting this, Their Highest Honor."

*Award recipients are also honorary members of the Class of 1939.

APPENDIX II

"Honorary Members of the Class of 1939"

Frank J. Cox
 Sandy Edge
 Mark Eisengrein
 James Ensley
 Beth Farmer
 Anne Grant
 *Claude Jacques "Pappy" Hayden
 *Dr. U.S. Jones
 Jeannie Kelly
 Adrienne J. LaBranche
 *Johnny Mann
 W.N. Whirl Miller
 Dr. Jerome V. Reel, Jr.
 Carolyn Robinson
 David Senn
 Virginia Senn
 Elton W. Shepherd, Jr.
 Todd Steadman
 Cathy Sturkie
 Bob Sweeny
 Jim Sweeny Jr.
 Lolly Tai
 Carol Talbert
 Sherry Waldvogel
 Dr. Byron K. Webb

* Deceased

Tee & Pappy Discussing 'Garden Plans'

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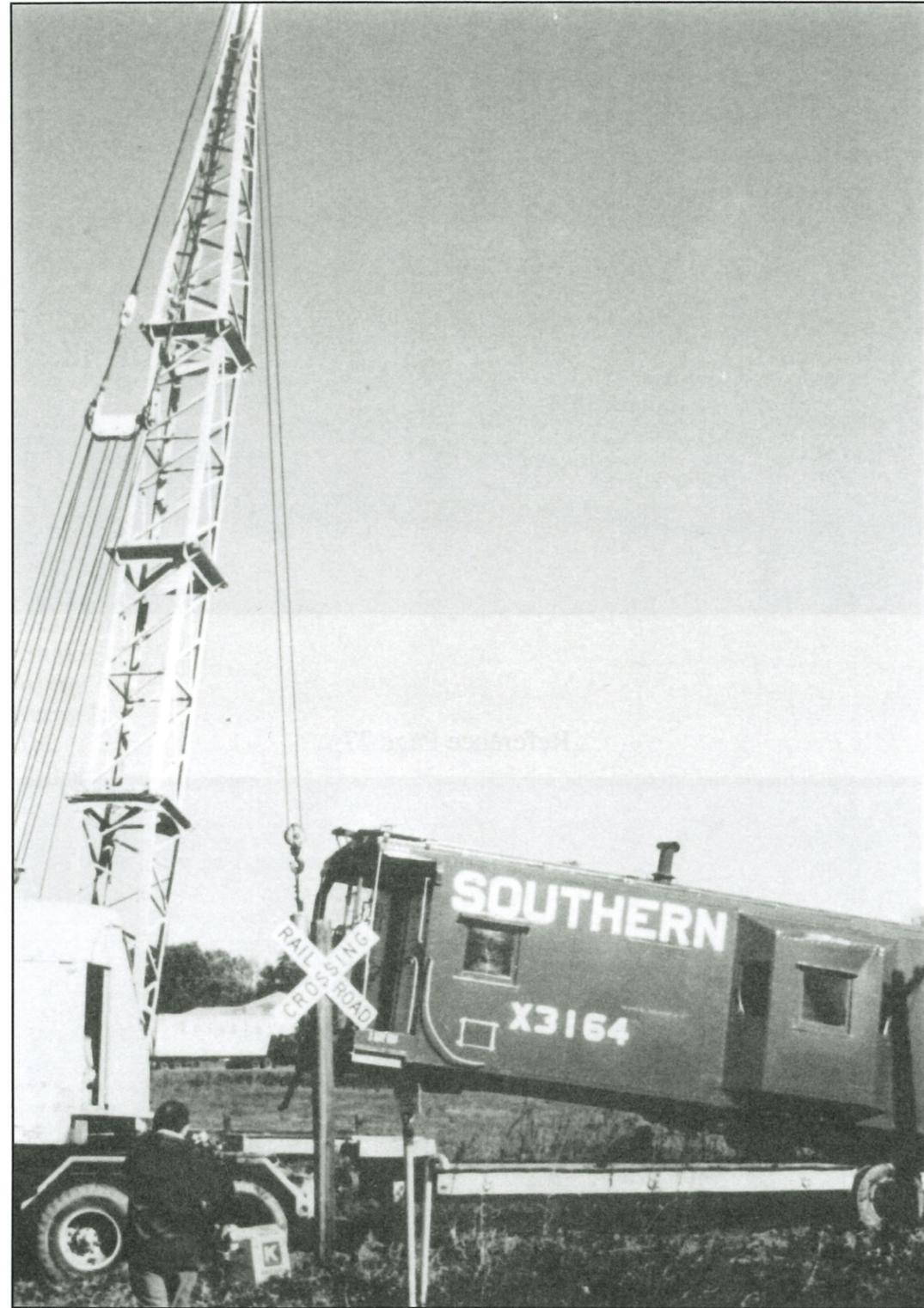


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P. Plant Loading Caboose at Cherry's Crossing

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Tee Senn & Sonny Crawford

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Final Resting Place!

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*L.R. Herb Thomas (President)
George Williams, Tee Senn & Reet Senn*

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D. Land & The Turnpike Ramblers

Reference Page 37



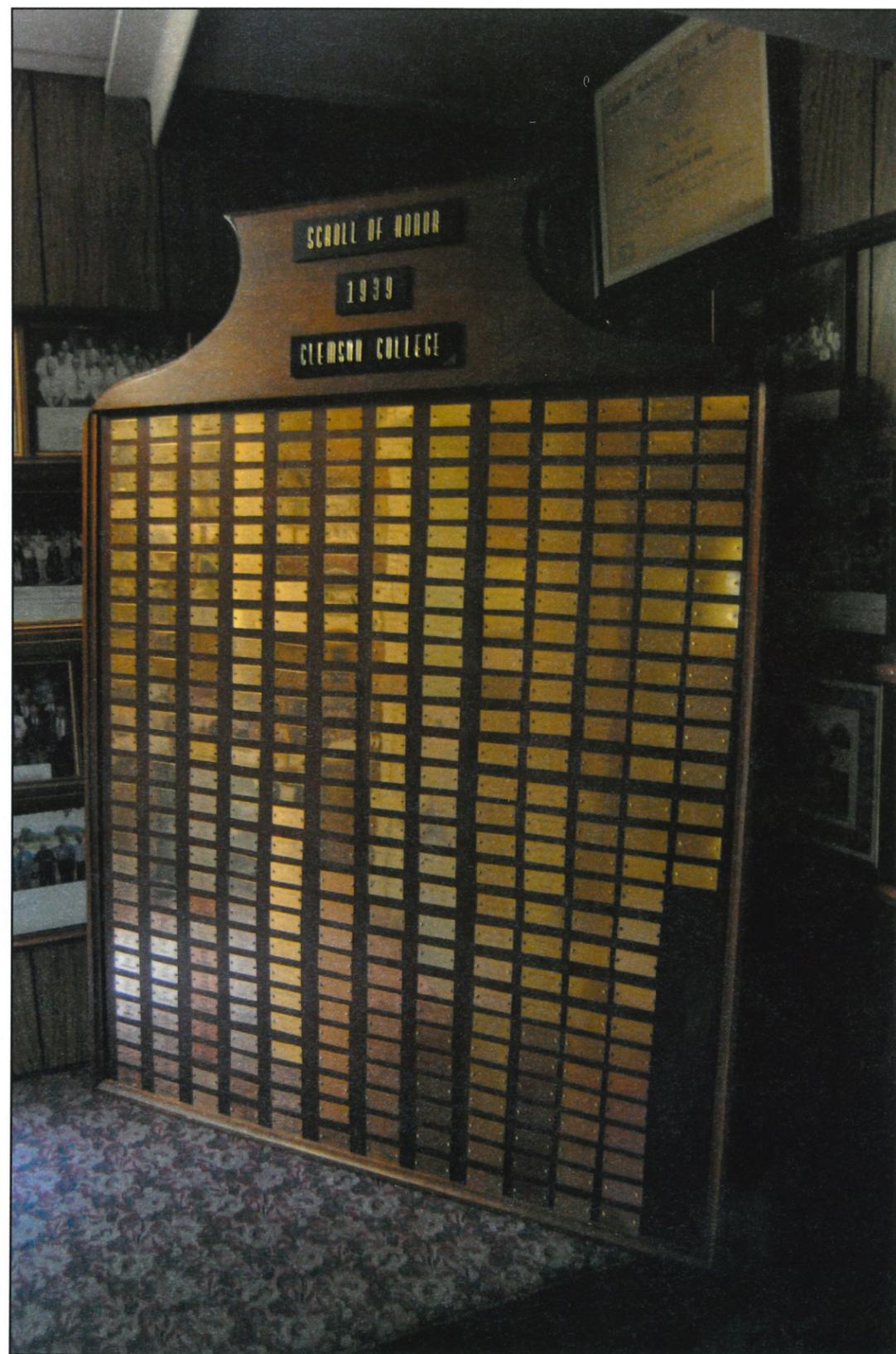
*(L-R) Bunny Gantt, Harvey & Mary Snell,
Reet Senn & Alma Thomas Applaud "D" Land & The
Turnpike Ramblers!*

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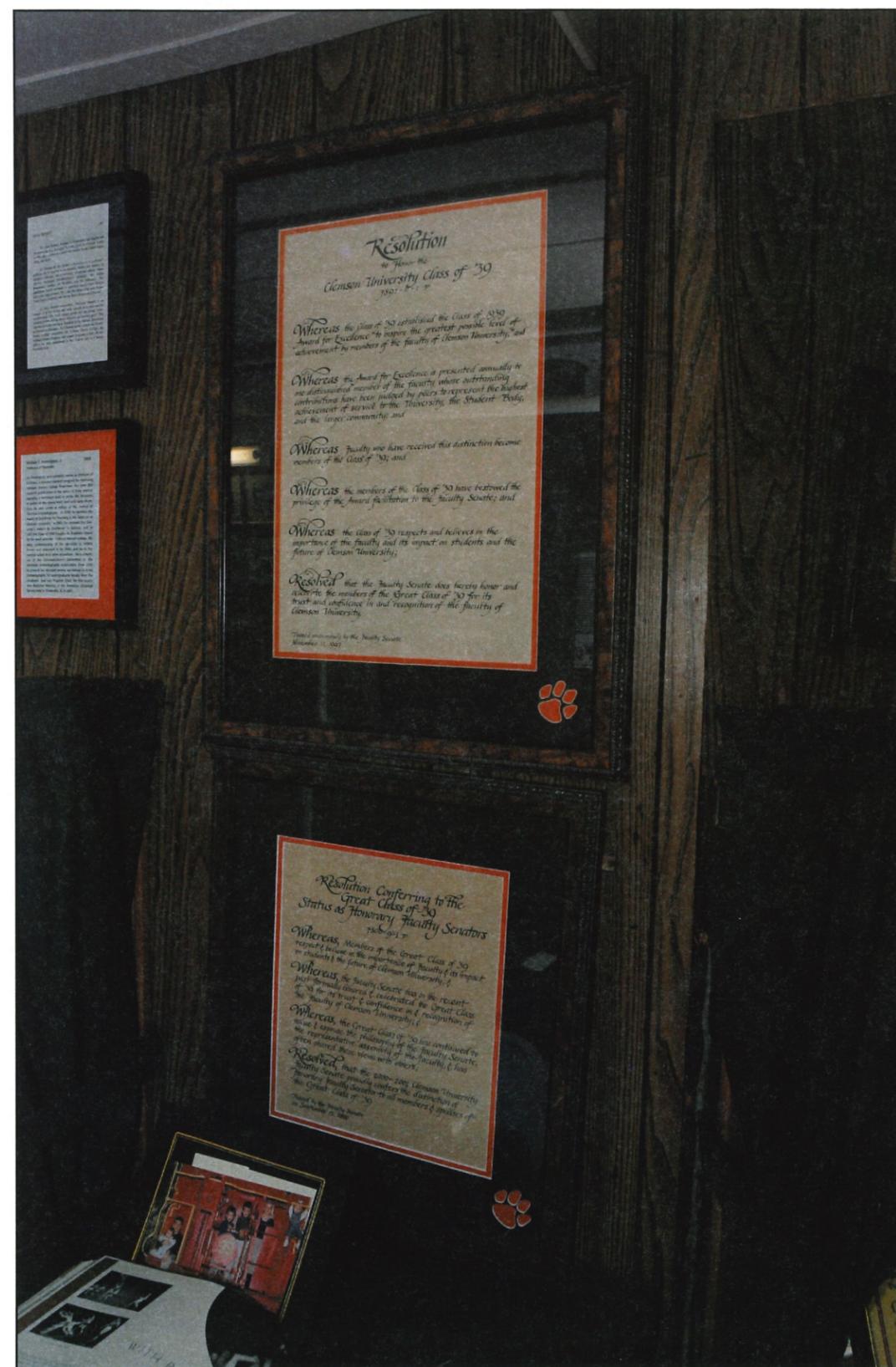
1939 Scroll of Honor

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'Resolutions'

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Freshman Class Roll In 1935

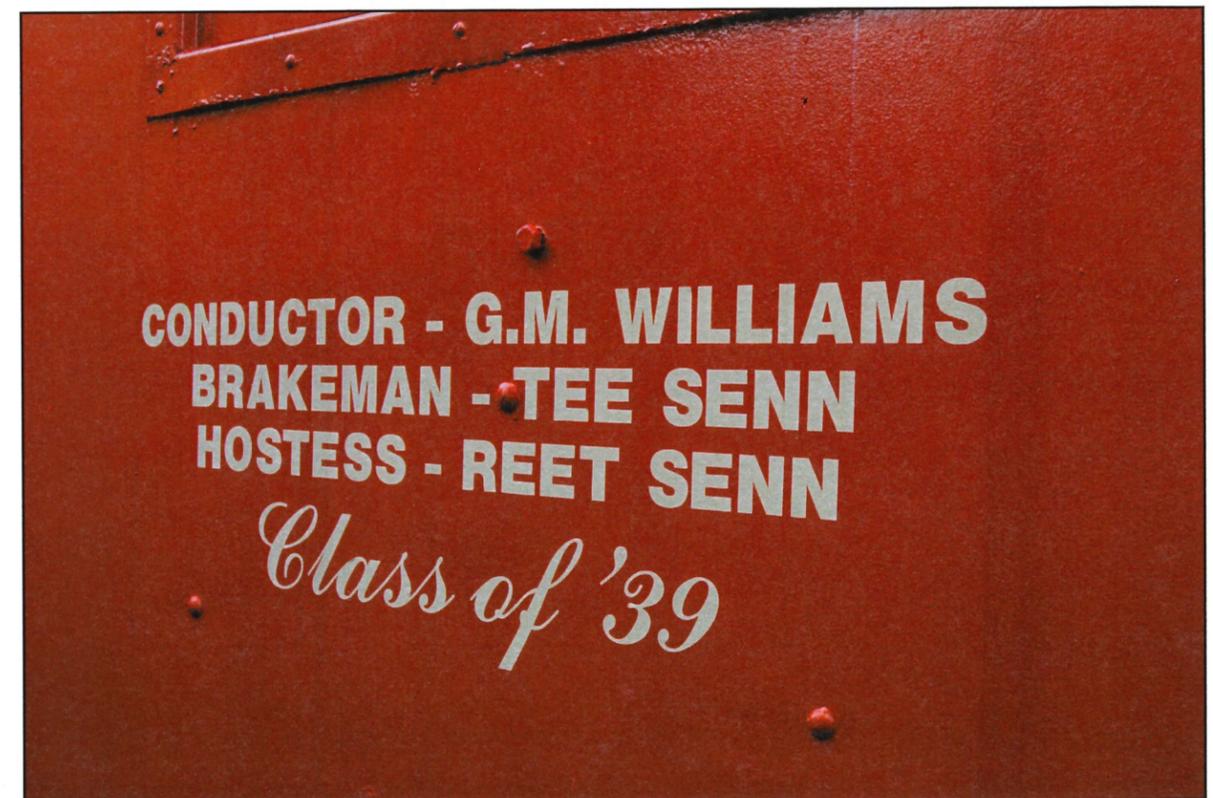
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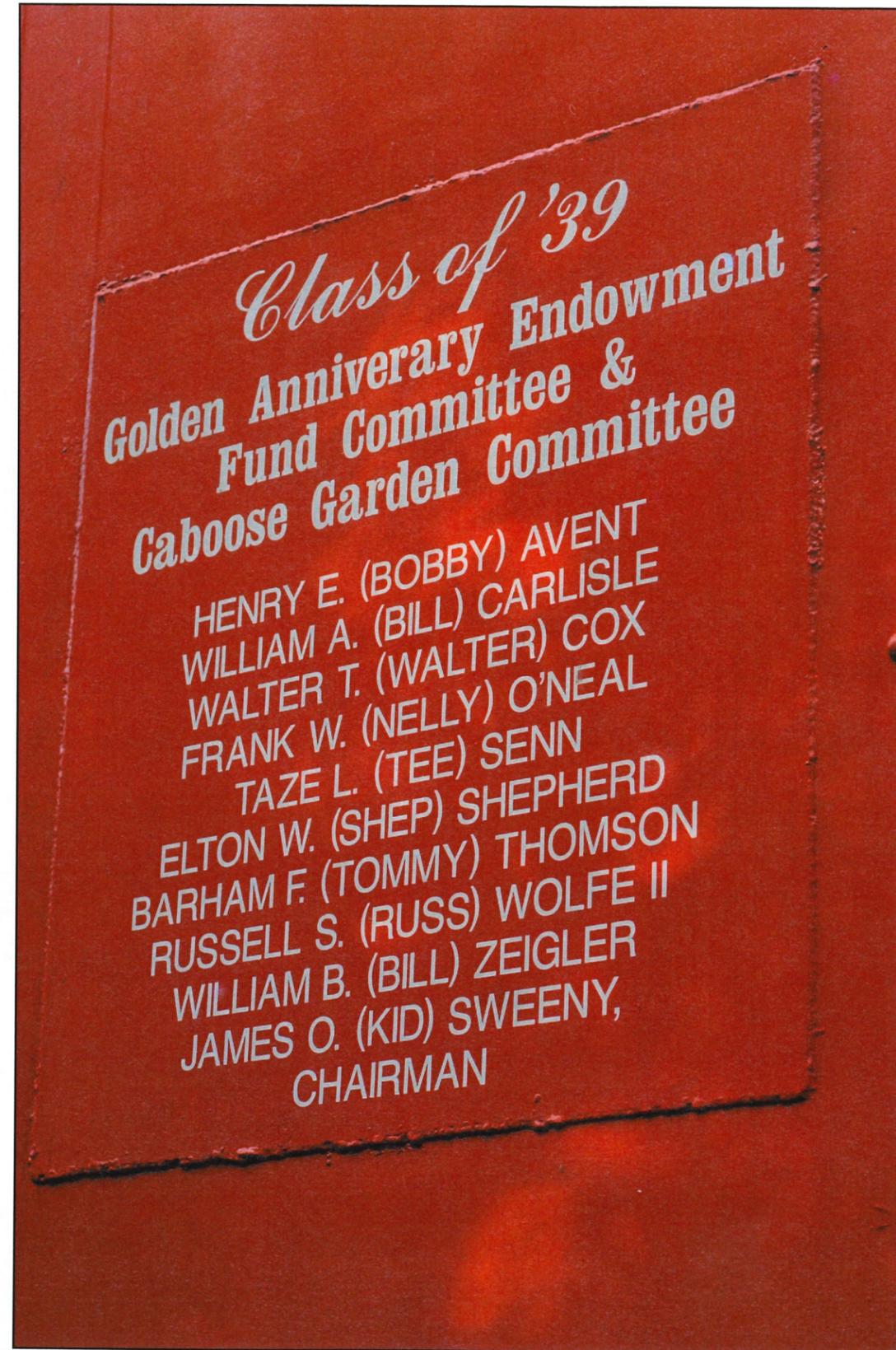


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*All Proceeds Go To The
South Carolina
Botanical Gardens Heritage Garden Fund*