

THE HALLWAY



Of the ten children born to John and Floride Calhoun, Anna Maria was the only one to outlive her mother. She married Thomas G. Clemson, and the couple had four children.

Fort Hill, home of American Statesman John Caldwell Calhoun and his son-in-law Thomas Green Clemson, founder of Clemson University, is a monument to the people who lived here. These rooms tell the story of the Calhoun and Clemson families, as well as the enslaved African-Americans whose physical labor is largely responsible for the maintenance of the plantation buildings and land.

Clemson left Fort Hill's 814 acres to South Carolina for the creation of an agricultural and mechanical college. He also willed that his home be preserved and "always be open for the inspection of visitors." Because of this vision of Fort Hill as a museum, nearly all the furnishings and items on display are original to the house or to the families that resided here.

The two matching pier tables and mirror in the upper hallway belonged to the Calhouns, as did the marble-top pier table and banjo clock in the lower hallway. Wallpaper throughout the home is a reproduction of the 19th century American wallpaper with French borders that hung here during the Calhoun residence from 1825-1854.



In 1803, Fort Hill began as a small, four-room manse called Clergy Hall, summer home of Reverend McElhenny, a Presbyterian minister. The Calhouns moved here in 1825, expanding Clergy Hall into a fourteen-room mansion and naming it after Fort Rutledge, a nearby Revolutionary War site. Until 1836, Floride Bonneau Colhoun owned the property, renting to her namesake daughter and son-in-law, John C. Calhoun.

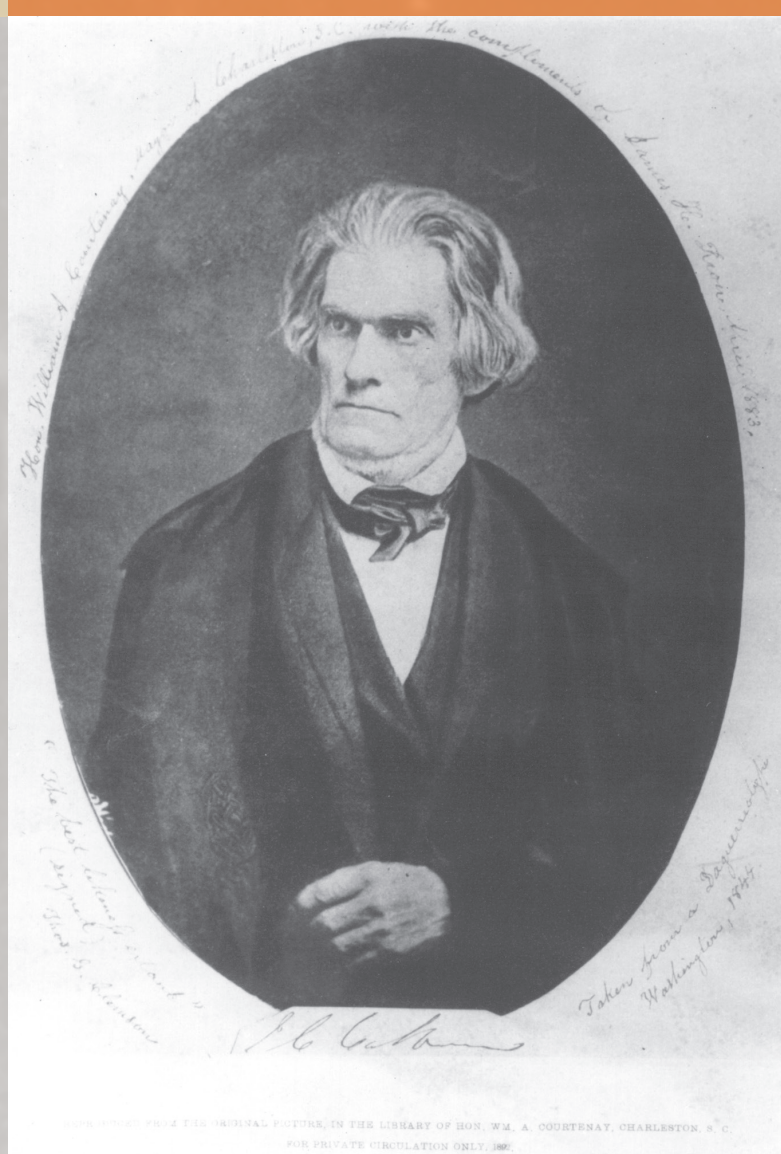
THE STATE DINING ROOM



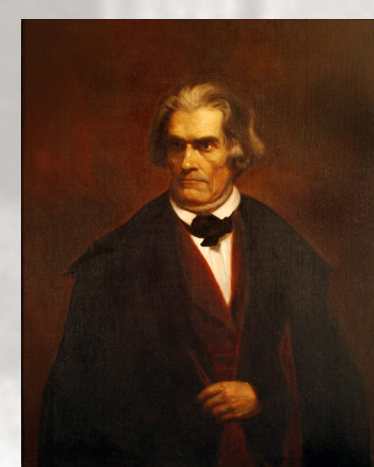
The sideboard located to the left was given to John C. Calhoun by Henry Clay; it was made from the mahogany paneling of the officers' quarters of the U.S.S. Constitution, or "Old Ironsides." The original cattle horns were a gift to Calhoun from his brother-in-law, James Edward Colhoun, a career navy officer who traveled widely and collected unique gifts. The federal sideboard and knife boxes are also Calhoun family artifacts.

This formal dining area is where guests were entertained. The Duncan Phyfe table and chairs came from the Calhouns' home outside Washington, D.C. Many important statesmen, such as Frenchman Marquis de Lafayette, would have dined at this table. The china is a reproduction of Andrew Jackson's presidential china. John C. Calhoun served as vice president under John Quincy Adams and then Jackson before resigning in December 1832.

The tables serving as banquet ends were the Clemsons' dining table. Enslaved cooks prepared all the food in an adjacent kitchen and then household slaves and white employed servants would serve the family and guests.



On either side of the fireplace are portraits of Thomas and Anna Maria Clemson during their time in Belgium. They commissioned Belgian artist Eugène François de Block to paint both the large portrait of John C. Calhoun (from a daguerreotype when he was a senator in the 1840s) and the companion portrait of Floride Calhoun (from a miniature).



Calhoun was born in Abbeville, S.C., into a slave holding family. He graduated from Yale College, attended law school in Litchfield, Conn., and practiced law in both Abbeville and Charleston. After serving in the state legislature, Calhoun was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1810, and gave his first speech as the response in favor of going to war against England. In January 1811, Calhoun married his cousin, Floride Colhoun. Her wedding portrait hangs above the mantel. In 1850, Calhoun died as a sitting U.S. Senator. Floride would bury five of her children, Patrick, John, James, William and Cornelia. In 1854, the widow sold Fort Hill to her son Andrew, and moved to Pendleton. When she died in 1866, she left Fort Hill to her only surviving child, Anna Maria Calhoun Clemson.

PARLOR



Built in 1827, the parlor was the most expensive addition to the house. This room hosted the marriage of Thomas Green Clemson and Anna Maria Calhoun on November 13, 1838, the result of a six-month courtship after meeting in Washington, D.C. This union of “her land, his plan” would lead to the founding of a college.



Sadly, the Clemsons outlived all four of their children. A bust of the Clemson's youngest daughter, Cornelia or “Nina,” is in the back-left corner and was made from her death mask. The portraits on the left wall show the only two Clemson children to survive into adulthood. Daughter Floride Elizabeth Clemson married Gideon Lee of Carmel, New York, but died from a lingering illness at the age of 28, leaving behind a one-year-old daughter, Floride Isabella Lee. Son John Calhoun Clemson, a Confederate veteran, was the only fatality in the August 10, 1871 train wreck in Oconee County, South Carolina, just seventeen days after the death of his sister. Mrs. Clemson wrote her will a little more than a month after her son's death, leaving her inheritance to her husband.

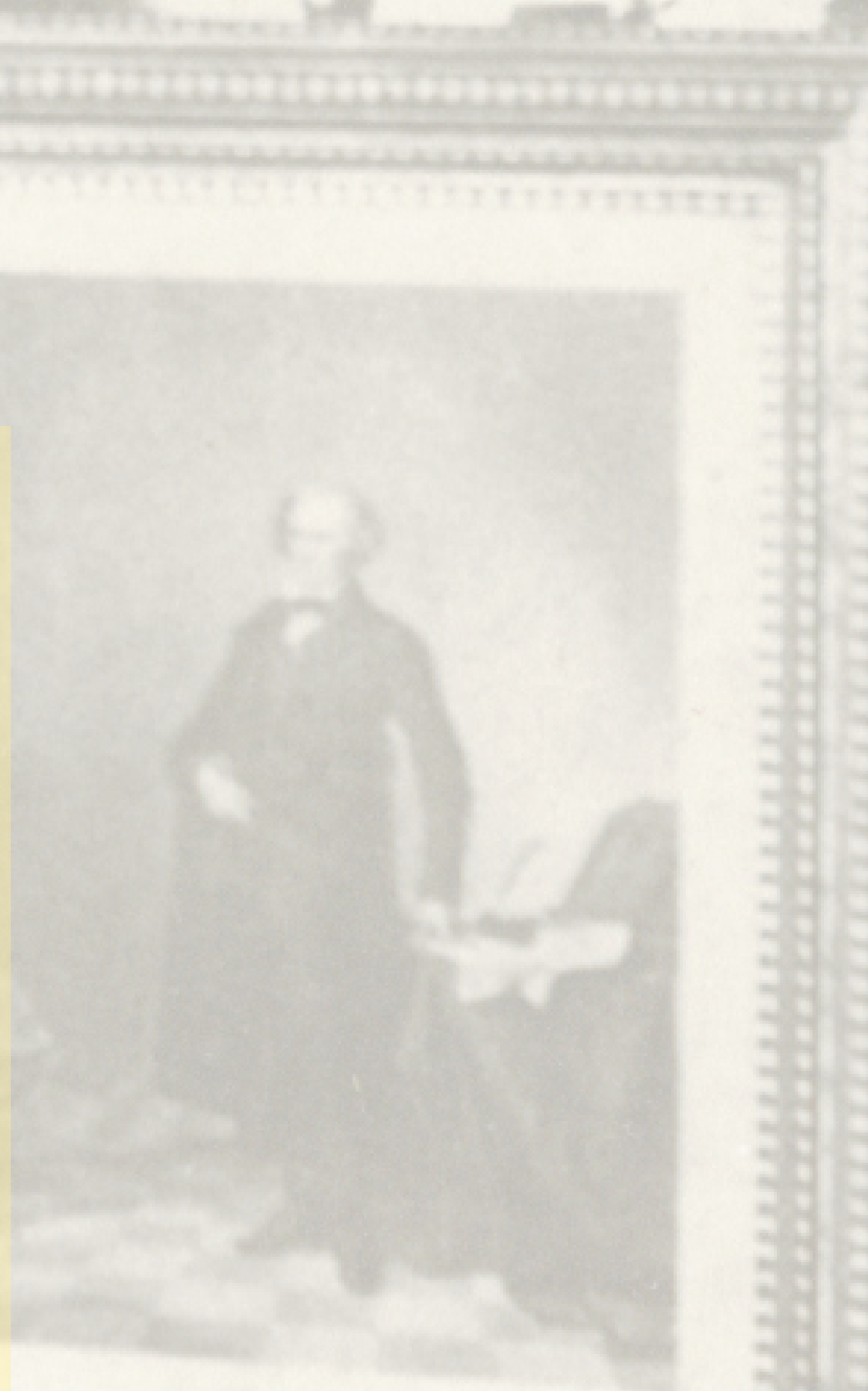


Floride Calhoun's Gunther and Norwood pianoforte is along the left wall, and the piano to the right, which also belonged to the Clemson family, was her last piano. Thomas G. Clemson played the piano and violin, composing eight songs during the Civil War. In addition to his musical abilities, he was also a talented painter. One of his paintings, *The Old Man Smoking*, is on display in this room to the left of the fireplace. Three other of his paintings are upstairs, including a self-portrait.

The large portrait of Anna Maria was painted in Belgium by Jacob Joseph Eeckhout. The portrait to the right of the fireplace portrays her husband as a young student in France. Notice how the room's wallpaper choice reflects two important 19th century cash crops: the cotton blossom and tobacco leaves. Other interesting items include the small Windsor chair in front of the fireplace and the sofa along the right wall, both associated with George Washington.



Clemson received the red upholstered chair from King Leopold I of Belgium. The Clemsons, including two of their children, lived in Belgium from 1844-1851. They were accompanied by Basil, an African-American slave.



THE CALHOUN MASTER BEDROOM



The portrait of Calhoun next to the wardrobe is a copy of a Rembrandt Peale from 1834. Supposedly, at Floride's request, the wardrobe was modeled after one owned by former First Lady Dolly Madison. Both the wardrobe and lap desk, which now sits on the sofa, were made by William Knauff.



Hanging above the bed is a portrait of Floride Calhoun by James Bogle. Floride's father was a U.S. Senator, and her mother was from a wealthy, slave-holding, French Huguenot family. While John C. Calhoun was an ardent supporter of slavery, he described himself as a paternalistic slave master. He owned approximately 70-80 enslaved persons at Fort Hill at the time of his death.

In 1831, Floride was "offended" by an African-American house slave, Aleck, who ran away to avoid punishment. Once captured, Calhoun ordered that Aleck be imprisoned for ten days and given thirty lashes to "prevent a repetition." Oftentimes, Aleck would have been the only male house slave at Fort Hill.

John and Floride Calhoun's master bedroom also functioned as a family sitting room. The massive American Empire mahogany bed was a wedding present; the coverlet that adorns the bed was made by the Calhouns' daughter, Cornelia. Her bedroom would have been the adjoining room, now staged as the nursery. The garden outside this room is still maintained in memory of Cornelia.



Thomas and Anna Maria Clemson were the final habitants of this room. She passed away in 1875 and he died in 1888 at the age of 81. Just a year later, a "high seminary of learning" was established at Fort Hill in accordance with his will.



SOUTHEAST BEDROOM



Andrew Pickens Calhoun and his sister, Anna Maria Calhoun Clemson, were often at odds with each other. Thomas G. Clemson had invested in his brother-in-law's plantation in Alabama and regretted that decision. Ironically, the Clemson's granddaughter Floride Isabella Lee of New York would later marry her cousin Andrew Pickens Calhoun, II, a grandson of Anna's eldest brother. As written in the family prayer book, following the marriage, "so ends the feud."



This room is mostly associated with the Calhouns' eldest son, Andrew Pickens or A.P. Calhoun (1811-1865). A.P. married his second wife, Margaret Green on May 5, 1836, and they had seven children. In 1854, A.P. purchased fifty African-American slaves from his mother, along with Fort Hill Plantation. Previously, he had also purchased from her a bright, 13-year-old Mulatto boy named Stephen for \$800. When A.P. died, there were 127 field slaves and 12 African-American slaves classified as servants or skilled laborers at Fort Hill.

Handwritten signature of Andrew P. Calhoun, dated 1867.

The southeast bedroom includes several paintings from Thomas Green Clemson's vast art collection, honoring his direction that the collection be displayed at the residence. Paintings include peasant scenes, copies of paintings of Beatrice Cenci (to the right of the bed) and Mary Magdalene (closest to door). A likeness of Queen Victoria, the niece of King Leopold I, hangs over the bed. King Leopold specifically granted permission to Clemson to commission artists to reproduce some of the paintings from the king's own private art collection, a testament to Clemson's prominent role in Belgium.

A.P.'s death, at the end of the Civil War, made Fort Hill a house of mourning when the Union troops came through Pendleton. Fort Hill was also a house of sickness. A.P. and Margaret lost a child and several slaves lost their lives to the same illness.

Although King Leopold I requested Clemson's reappointment as diplomat, a change in the political climate in Washington prevented his return to Belgium in an official diplomatic capacity. Clemson imported furniture from Belgium to sell in the Washington, D.C. area. Anna stored the remaining furniture before heading to South Carolina at the end of December 1864.



NORTHEAST CORNER BEDROOM



This bedroom may have been used by Patrick Calhoun (1821-1858), the Calhoun's second oldest son. Patrick graduated from West Point, serving as a major in the U.S. Army. He was also the brother that remained the closest to the Clemsons, as Anna documented in a letter to her daughter right before Patrick's death. Patrick never married, and he died from a lingering illness on June 1, 1858. He was buried at St. Paul's Episcopal Cemetery in Pendleton.



John C. Calhoun named his son after his father, Patrick Calhoun (pictured right).

Patrick Calhoun

The Clemsons purchased the mahogany sleigh bed while in Europe. Anna believed it would be more cost-effective to purchase the furniture than to rent it during their time in Belgium. A unique quilted coverlet with an applied floral decoration covers the bed. The oval French sewing cabinet is inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and the chest-on-chest would have been used as a linen press.



This room features a bright kimono wallpaper reproduced from the original. The oil painting Madonna and Child over the mantel was painted by Thomas Green Clemson, and he used Anna and their daughter, Nina, as his models. The other two paintings are copies of paintings from King Leopold I's personal art galleries. One is a representation of the Virgin and Child, and the other is a work that Torquato Tasso produced while he was in prison. Mr. Clemson commissioned these copies.

NORTHEAST CENTER BEDROOM



J. C. Calhoun



This bedroom, a part of the original 1803 cottage, likely belonged to the Calhouns' third son, John Caldwell Jr. (1823-1855). John Jr. was a physician who studied at the University of Virginia. He used early medical instruments such as cupping sets for bleeding and syringes. He and his second wife, Kate Kirby Putnam (1831-1866), had two children.

This room contains many pastoral scenes from Clemson's art collection, reflecting his interest in agriculture. The majority were done by Belgian artist Louis Robbé. The painting of the chickens in the back right corner is an original work by Clemson, and he used the adjacent barn scene as his model.



Following John C. Calhoun's death on March 31, 1850, his wife Floride moved to this bedroom. The walnut bonnet chest belonged to her, and the plaster bust atop the chest is Mars, the Roman god of war. This bust belonged to Thomas Green Clemson. The maple acorn bed was another Calhoun family piece. The sewing machine belonged to Anna Maria Clemson. Her daughter, Floride Clemson, wrote a poem entitled "That 'Blessed' Sewing Machine" that referred to this sewing machine.

That "Blessed" Sewing Machine.

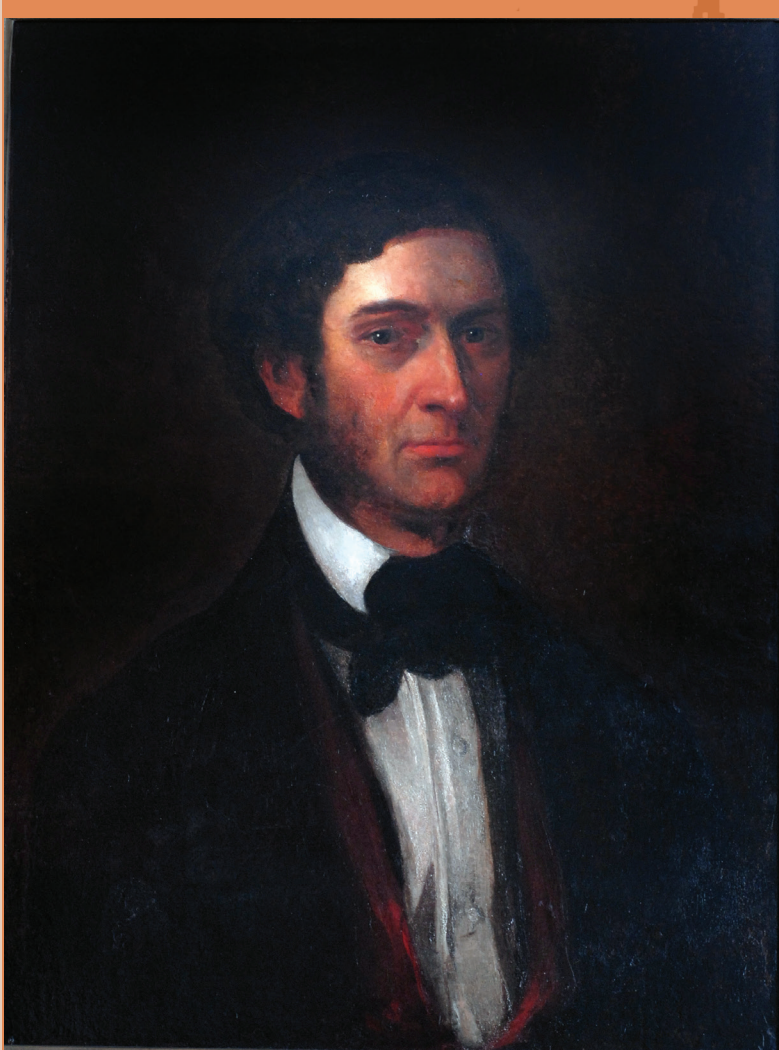
"So you've bought a machine! I'm so glad," says a friend:
"Now, for help with my work, upon you, I'll depend;
It will get through the sewing, I'll warrant my dear,
In less than a week, that once took you a year.
Here, I brought some things to run through, for I know,
That with those *blessed* comforts, its nothing to sew.
Pray make haste!"
Good bye.

ANNA MARIA CALHOUN CLEMSON BEDROOM



This room was Anna Clemson's childhood bedroom and was later used by the Clemsons as newlyweds, who initially lived here from 1840 to 1843, after escaping Philadelphia's cold weather. During this time, John C. Calhoun fostered Thomas Green Clemson's interest in scientific agriculture. The Clemsons' first three children were born at Fort Hill before the couple and their two surviving children moved to Cane Brake Plantation in Saluda.

Over the mantel hangs a self-portrait of Thomas Green Clemson. He was at least six and-a-half-feet tall, which is why William Knauff built the custom seven-foot long bed in this room. The dresser was also made by Knauff, the furniture maker hired by Floride Calhoun to craft furniture for Fort Hill. Next to the bed is Anna's Swiss oak sewing table. Thomas prized the white and red pair of European chairs. The massive armoire was also a part of the original Calhoun furniture.



Clemson purchased Canebrake Plantation and thirty African-American slaves from his wife's uncle in January 1844. Soon the Clemsons would travel to Europe, where they resided for six years while Mr. Clemson served in his diplomatic post as the chargé d'affaires in Belgium. In January 1872, they retired to Fort Hill after the loss of their last surviving children, Floride Clemson Lee and John Calhoun Clemson, whose photographs are on display in the oval frames on either side of the bureau. Marie Calhoun, a former African-American slave and companion of Floride Clemson, accompanied Floride to Carmel, New York, as her lady's maid and seamstress. After Floride Isabella's birth, Marie assisted in caring for the baby. When Floride Clemson Lee died in July 1871, Marie served as a mother to Floride Isabella Lee until her father, Gideon Lee, remarried, and her stepmother, Ella Lorton, a childhood friend of her mother, sent Marie to work for a family in New Orleans. Marie spoke French fluently.



Anna C. Clemson

NORTHWEST CORNER BEDROOM/DRESSING ROOM



The fourth bedroom likely belonged to the fourth Calhoun son, James Edward Calhoun (1826-1861), named after James Edward Calhoun (pictured right). James studied law, and he eventually went to California to seek his fortune. He died tragically, leaving no heir.

J. E. Calhoun



Pictured: Dress belonging to Susan Clemson.

Susan Clemson, an enslaved African-American at Fort Hill, was a teenager when the Clemsons were married in 1838, and she was given by the Calhouns to the Clemsons. Susan was Thomas Green Clemson's first slave. Later in life, Susan described sleeping on a pallet on the floor of this room most nights with a string tied to her wrist with the other end attached to the Clemsons' bed. Susan looked after the Clemson children, Calhoun and Floride. Her mother Daphne, another house slave at Fort Hill, was the wet nurse for the Clemsons' first three children. Both Susan and Daphne went with the Clemson family to Canebrake Plantation in Saluda, along with Susan's father Bill Lawrence. When Clemson decided to sell Canebrake, he requested that they choose their new owner; however, they chose to stay with the other Clemson family slaves.

This is the only bedroom in the home that does not have a fireplace since it was originally a dressing room. It would have also been used as an overflow room. The single Jenny Lind spool bed belonged to the Clemsons. The small liquor chest atop Clemson's overseas chest belonged to General Andrew Pickens and was used for traveling.

SOUTHWEST BEDROOM



as large as a porcupine, and a red streak up to his shoulder.
Your Father, and James, have just returned from the Mines.
They went during this inclement weather we had a few days
since. None more than I ever seen in Philadelphia and colder weather.
I rather think the coach has had something to do with it, if it is one
so different from any I ever saw, it has more the appearance
of a long streak of light through a storm. When I first saw it, it
was nearly across the horizon, but is gradually diminishing.
The house had quite a winter of disasters, first a fire, then
the house taking fire under the heat of the late fire, and
to burn us all up. He put a large coal of fire under William
Lowndes, following, fortunately, the south of the fire, then to the
drawing in time to save the house. He was taken of immediately, and
confessed the whole, but said after the fire under the pillow.
The house burned, and it was when the wind to turn down the
lid to take it out, but I told him that would have been too late. I intend
stripping him off the stage all off and shocked at the act, and said the
ought to have been hung, I think his Father is at the bottom of all
as soon as the alarm was given of fire, he took up his hat and
stick and ran off as fast as he could. Since this letter we are as
well as I would not like any one to see this about it. I have
left it a profound secret. If it was known, the secret would be
longer. It goes all day to be reminded to you particularly. I hope
I shall see him again. You would bring him a nice deep station,
on a large stand. Your dear home is coming out a little.
He walks a little faster and is leaning him to walk and cough.

Issey Calhoun, an African-American house slave, almost burned down the house by placing hot coals under the pillow in William's room; however, the smell alerted the household so that the flames were extinguished, saving the house. It is still debated as to whether this action was intentional or accidental. Issey was sent to A.P. Calhoun's plantation in Alabama following the incident, but, because of much objection from Cornelia Calhoun, she was brought back to Fort Hill in 1847. Issey was the daughter of Sawney Sr. and Tiller, who were both field slaves at Fort Hill, and she served as the childhood slave companion of Cornelia.

This final bedroom likely belonged to the Calhoun's fifth and youngest son, William Lowndes Calhoun (1829-1858). William was a graduate of South Carolina College, and he married Kate Putnam, the widow of his brother, Dr. John C. Calhoun Jr.

The chest, the poplar table and the pair of glass vases in this room belonged to the Calhouns. The small, red Windsor-style side chair belonged to the Clemsons, as did the three small paintings in this room. These paintings depict peasant scenes — one representing two old men smoking in a tavern and a pair portraying a couple entitled *The Quarrel* and *The Reconciliation*. The large painting above the mantel is a primitive-style painting of a young boy that was donated to Fort Hill by the Littlejohn family.



NURSERY



C. M. Calhoun

The nursery is adjacent to the Calhouns' master bedroom and is most often associated with their daughter, Martha Cornelia Calhoun (1824-1857). Cornelia, as she was known, fell from a swing as a child, sustaining a spinal cord injury that hindered her ability to walk. She never married, but was her mother's close companion. Despite multiple medical procedures, Cornelia's health never improved, and she died in her mid-thirties. She was buried at St. Paul's Episcopal Cemetery in Pendleton, and Mrs. Calhoun was later buried next to her grave. The Clemsons named their last child after Cornelia, and called her Nina.

This room features a three-sided crib, which was used by the Calhoun children and would have rolled up to the side of the adult's bed. The half-size mahogany bed and dresser were used by Floride Clemson, and they were given to her by her aunt Louisa Clemson Washington. The ship on the bed is a wooden model of the *U.S.S. Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") that belonged to Calhoun Clemson. The small round table beside the bed was at John C. Calhoun's bedside when he died in Washington, D.C. on March 31, 1850. The doll bed on the floor belonged to Anna Maria Calhoun Clemson, and the doll dresser was her great-granddaughter's.

*Andrew Pickens Calhoun was born
the 15th of October 1813 Bath, Calhoun Co. S.C.
Floride Pure Calhoun was born
the 24th of January 1814.
Jane Calhoun was born January 1816
Elizabeth Calhoun was born September
1819.
Anna Maria Calhoun was born the 13th Feb
1817 (Bath, Calhoun Co. S.C.)
Patrick Calhoun was born the 20th February 1821
in Washington D.C.
John C. Calhoun was born
on the 17th of May 1823 in Washington D.C.
Martha Cornelia Calhoun
was born 22 April 1824 in Georgetown D.C.
James Edward Calhoun was
born on the 22nd of April 1826
William Louides Calhoun
was born 13th August 1829
Bath Co. S.C.
at H. Hill.*

In addition to Anna and Cornelia, the Calhouns had three other daughters who died by the age of one: Floride Pure (1814-1815), Jane (1816-1816) and Elizabeth (1819-1820).

DRESSING ROOM (GUEST SUITE)



After all the additions to the home were completed in the 1830s, Fort Hill had three dressing rooms, which the family primarily used for grooming. These rooms also served as storage areas because of the lack of closet space. This dressing room was the first one added on by the Calhouns after they moved into the house in 1825. Fort Hill became Mrs. Calhoun's permanent, year-round residence in 1831.



When the Calhouns and Clemsons lived here during the Antebellum Period, the African-American house slaves would have maintained the dressing rooms by emptying the chamber pots, bringing heated water into the house, removing waste water and providing for any other needs of the family members.

The English ironstone foot tub with lotus petal design belonged to Floride Calhoun. The Sheraton-style washstand belonged to the Clemsons, and now holds a bowl and pitcher. The wooden towel rack is in a “hairpin” design and would have been used to hang towels. The galvanized metal tub with a sitting shelf was the Calhouns’ sitz tub.



- 1 - CALHOUN MANSION
- 2 - KITCHEN, STOREROOM
- 3 - SERVANT'S QUARTER
- 4 - SMOKE-HOUSE FOR CURE
- 5 - THREE SERVANT HOUSES
- 6 - PIGEON HOUSE
- 7 - OFFICE OR LIBRARY, 1831
- 8 - CARRIAGE HOUSE
- 9 - STABLES
- 10 - CARRIAGE DRIVERS
- 11 - GRAINERY
- 12 - SHEEP SHED
- 13 - OVERSEER'S HOUSE
- 14 - 210 FOOT, STONE
- 15 - TOM, THE GATE-Keeper
- 16 - RICE GROWN ONLY
- 17 - WATER MILL
- 18 - DAM AT HEAD OF MILL

IT IS SAID THAT IN WINTER TO CAMP IN FIELDS ALONG THE B

DRESSING ROOM (HALLWAY)

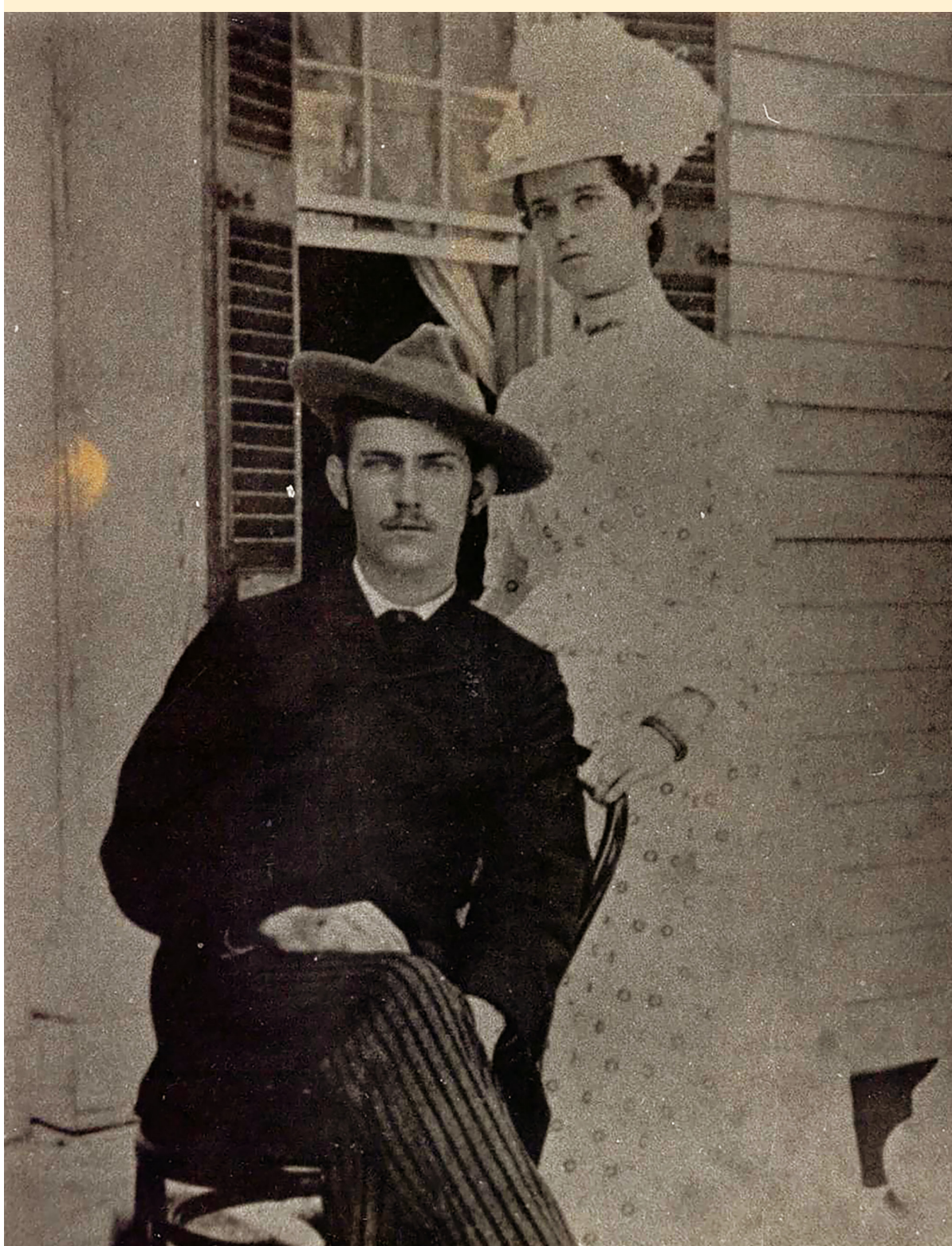


From 1825-1831, before Calhoun's wife and children permanently resided at Fort Hill, this room would have been used to store luggage that carried a six-month supply of books, clothing and other necessities back and forth between Washington, D.C., and the family's Bath Plantation in Abbeville, S.C.



The second dressing room features a metal semi-reclining washtub, which belonged to the Calhouns. It also features a washtub with a wide flange for sitting that was called a "hat bathtub" that belonged to the Clemsons. The black mahogany medicine chest on the shelf belonged to Dr. John C. Calhoun Jr.

This dressing room would have also served as a storage space, as seen by the trunk and pine box. The domed trunk belonged to Thomas Green Clemson and features his initials formed with metal tacks on the top. The wooden pine box belonged to John C. Calhoun and features his initials.



During Thomas G. Clemson's last years, his surrogate family was his housekeeper, Jane Prince, and her daughter, Essie Prince. Essie married Aaron Boggs at Fort Hill (pictured left).

FAMILY DINING ROOM/ ORIGINAL KITCHEN



This room served as a kitchen in the original manse, Clergy Hall. The large floorboards seen to the left of the fireplace are the original boards from the 1803 structure. The fireplace was once Reverend McElhenny's kitchen hearth. When the Calhouns moved into Fort Hill in 1825, they covered this cooking fireplace and Dutch oven, building an outside kitchen to prevent fires and unbearable heat in the summer. The original inside kitchen was converted into a family dining room; the cooking oven was changed into a fireplace. The original kitchen hearth was not uncovered until 1935. Just above the fireplace hangs Thomas Green Clemson's hunting gun.



The large painting between the windows is a prize painting from Mr. Clemson's art collection, believed by Mr. Clemson to be a Rembrandt. It is titled *St. Paul* or *The Philosopher* and was given by Mr. Clemson to his attorney, Richard W. Simpson, in his will. The large painting in the corner is a portrait of Patrick Calhoun, who was born at Fort Hill in 1854 when his father, A.P. Calhoun, moved his entire family from Alabama to run Fort Hill. A.P. is buried in the Calhoun enclosure in the Woodland Cemetery.

To the right of the fireplace is a photograph of Susan Clemson Richardson, an enslaved African- American woman who cared for the Clemsons' young children. This photograph shows Susan in the 1880's, when she worked for the Herlong family.



A warm, rustic interior scene featuring a wooden desk with a two-bulb lamp, a leather armchair, and a wooden bookshelf against a wood-paneled wall. A clock and a small framed picture are also visible on the wall.

A photograph of a room with wooden walls and floors. In the center is a large, dark wooden desk with drawers and a curved front. Behind the desk is a tall, dark wooden cabinet with glass doors and a roll-up top. To the left is a fireplace with a black mantel. To the right is a wooden armchair. The floor is covered with a large, colorful, patterned rug.

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PLANTATION KITCHEN



The Fort Hill plantation kitchen, built after 1825, was reconstructed in 1944. The original indoor kitchen was converted into a family dining room when the detached kitchen was constructed. Reconstruction efforts used materials from a 19th century plantation kitchen owned by the Pinckney family in Pendleton.

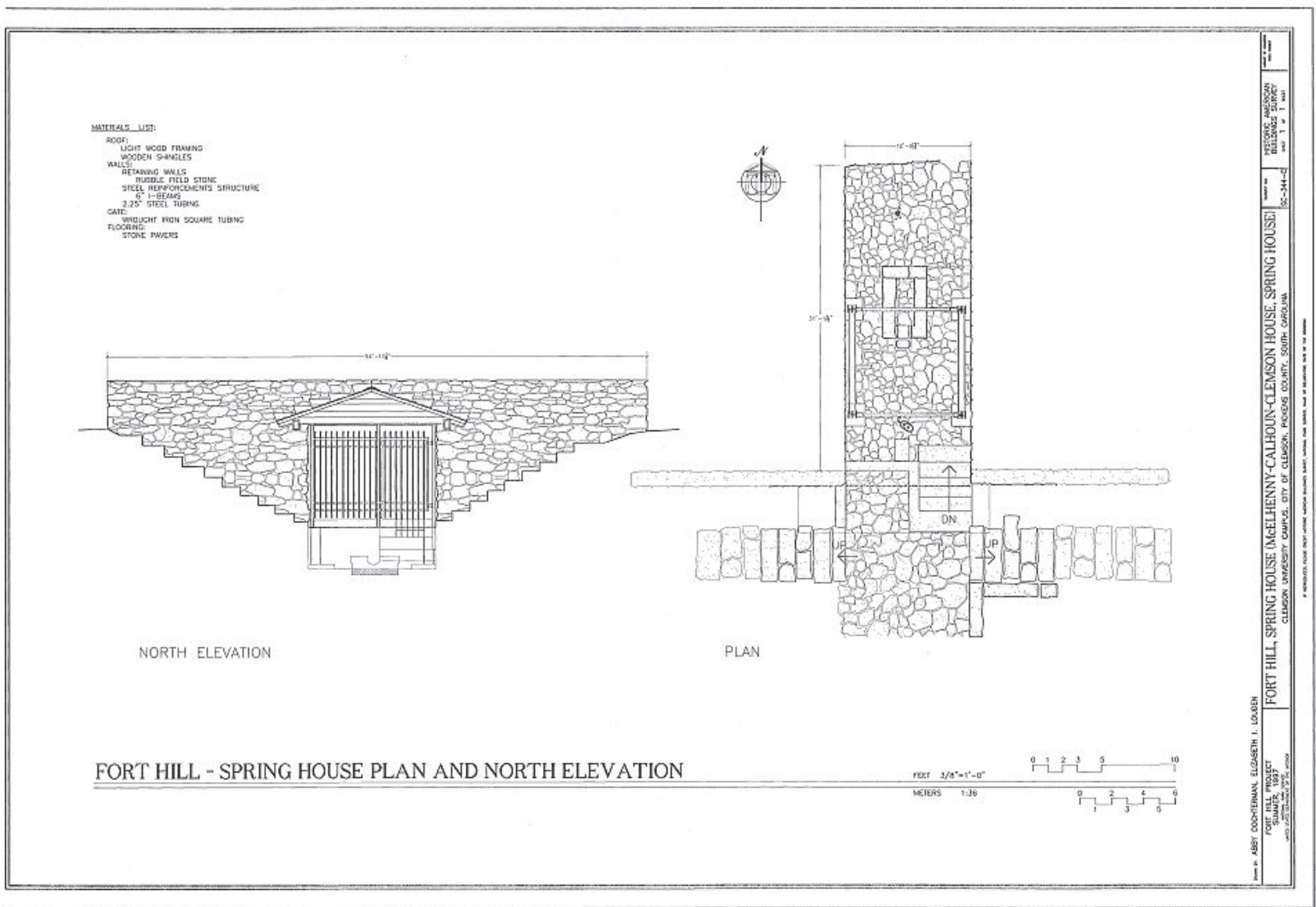
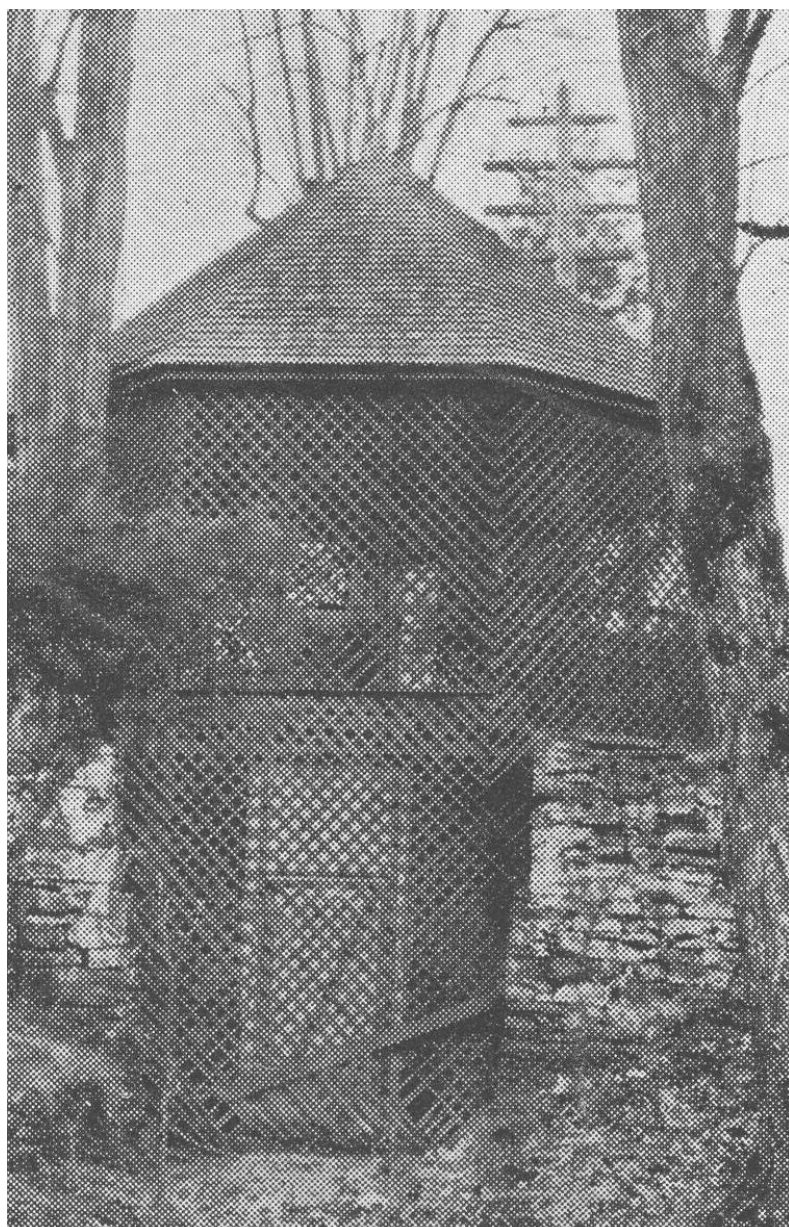


Enslaved African-Americans were primarily responsible for the cooking and other kitchen duties. At one time, an enslaved cook named Christy Calhoun oversaw the cooking. In 1854, Mrs. Calhoun retained ownership of Nelly to be her cook at MiCasa. The corner cupboard was made by an African-American slave at Fort Hill, possibly Ted Calhoun, a carpenter at Fort Hill in 1865. This space was also used during the four-day Christmas holiday when the slaves were given extra provisions and the kitchen for dancing.

Items in the kitchen used for cooking are original to Fort Hill. The original textile equipment, yarn winders, spinning wheels, and looms would have been used in the adjacent spin house and weave room buildings, and the large wash pots would have been used both inside and outside of a separate laundry building. Buildings such as these, as well as the original house and field slave quarters, no longer exist; however, stone foundations of early campus buildings were made from recycled field stones from the old field slave quarters.



SPRING HOUSE



“Just under the brow of the hill, in front of the house, bursts out a copious spring, whose drainage has cut a deep gully into the rocky slope. Over this spring was built a low, square house, the mossy roof of which is too low to obstruct the view from the piazza. Underneath, the rock was excavated into a large chamber, where the spring was curbed and taught a sober channel, cooling the air for the rows of pans of milk and the jars of butter that dwelt in the shady, semi-subterranean retreat. Stone steps led down to this dairy, and a phoebe-bird or two built a nest in, the rough portal. Beyond, a little way, four stout posts held a large pigeon-house, a ladder’s length above the ground, and beyond this stretched a clover field down to the river.”

– Scribner’s Magazine, 1881



The Fort Hill estate included a variety of outbuildings. The spring house is one of the original structures. This subterranean area was excavated into the hillside and at one time contained a flowing spring which provided fresh water. The cave-like structure was constructed of local stone to utilize the coolness of the underground for keeping food chilled and contained a cistern in the center. Milk and butter along with other food would be kept in the springhouse. A conjectural drawing of the estate shows a structure on top of the spring house which was described as a gazebo-type building and may have served as a pump house. Enslaved African-Americans were responsible for bringing fresh spring water into the mansion and removing waste water from the residence during the plantation era. The wrought iron gates are modern as is the additional steel supports installed to stabilize the structure.

