THE HIGH SEMINARY

VOLUME ONE
Tinted photograph of Thomas Green Clemson, ca. 1880.
Fort Hill Collection, Clemson University.
THE HIGH SEMINARY

1: A History of the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina
1889-1964

JEROME V. REEL
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Preface

The land-grant university is a creation of American government that has changed the United States and many other parts of the world. It gathered the threads of traditional learning and integrated them into the fibers of continuing scientific evolutions and the strands of ever-quickening technological changes. All this was in the hopes of promoting liberal and practical education for a higher standard of living.

What emerged has been truly amazing. Fostered by the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and advanced by a number of other federal statutes, the land-grant schools stand on several different types of foundations. Some rose on older public, traditional colleges in which the liberal arts dominated. Another smaller group was grafted onto older private colleges. Almost half were new creations, among them the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina.

For Clemson, the people who merged the land tract together form the first thread that runs through the entire history of the college. In the nineteenth century, the tract now considered the campus rested nearly alone in the northwest corner of South Carolina, isolated but with a geographic good fortune. Mountains that help seal the American East Coast from the lower half of the continent’s rich river basin soften into “the great blue hills of God” northwest of the Clemson tract. The landscape smooths out to the west and southwest so that the nineteenth and twentieth century rail lines and then concrete ribbons could pass around what became the Clemson campus. For the years 1889 to 1964, these roadways formed the paths young people coming from Washington, D.C., or Birmingham, Alabama, or from Savannah, Georgia, and the South Carolina cities of Charleston, Conway, and Columbia, traveled when coming to Clemson.

Uncertainty and angst dogged the first thirty years (1889–1917) of Clemson’s existence. Measured by the number of young men who enrolled, the college was successful. Measured by the successes in agriculture and engineering and by the successful expansion into textiles and architecture, the faculty performed admirably and grew stronger. Measured by the college’s efforts to reach the white people of South Carolina, the whole school did well. The support the leaders of Clemson gave the state’s African American higher education institution and the efforts to include the state’s college for women marked a grace of decency. But the weaknesses in the school administration up until 1910, along with the economic conditions and political jostling in the state and region, caused the college to scramble beyond the state to maintain momentum.

Clemson’s service to the nation in two world wars and its aid to the state in drought and depression (1917–1945) dominated its outreach during its second period of existence. At the same time, its student body doubled, its faculty in-
creased, its reputation built (in spite of the shaky years 1920–1925). The magnificient commitment and sacrifice in World War II remain a precious part of the school’s record.

America deepened its own commitment to its rhetoric of freedom and equality before the law, which would require true soul-searching and change for the nation, the state, and for Clemson. Openness, reorganization, and flexibility were required of Clemson: its faculty, its students, and its alumni. They met and even exceeded the challenges of these years (1945–1964) while holding fiercely to a deeper and richer heritage.

Yet, upon reaching that goal, Clemson still would have challenges. It was little like most of the other land-grant schools. It was small. It was heavily male. It was heavily white. But it had proved its capability both to change and to remain.
Acknowledgments

“You’re going to title the Clemson history The High Seminary?” Joe Turner half in jest asked, “That’s a phrase from Mr. Clemson’s will, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Well, how long should it take?”

My simple-minded reply was, “Oh, I should be able to have it done in four years.” It took much longer. Joe and his wife, Cathy Campbell Turner, have been the closest of friends to my wife, Edmée, and me for four of five decades here in Clemson.

Some years passed, and I received notice from Clemson University’s Advancement Division that Joe and his business partner, Kelly Durham, had made a generous gift to the Clemson University Foundation to support my research and writing of the university’s history. Kelly grew up in town and attended Clemson before a stint in the army. Joe also had served in the army after college. They became the “Tiger angels” for the project, and I am ever grateful to these men and their families.

So I, a British medieval historian, set to the task of thinking about a school founded as a land-grant college, one of the major contributions of the United States to the world’s higher education tradition. Of course, as a medievalist, I had long realized that the origins of universities lay in the quest of the scholar for truth, whether presumed lost in the example of universal law or perhaps in the understanding of the divine. That meant that research was the first charge, so I began reading whatever I could find on the development of this particular type of institution, all the while keeping notes on what I read.

Fortunately, both my other research interests and my teaching took my wife and me regularly to many campuses in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. Literally, we “collected” campuses. British friends kindly introduced us to the various forms of higher education in use there. My shared role as a professor and an academic dean brought me into regular contact with similar academic offices from a great number of schools—of great variety—in North America. Seeing higher education through the eyes of these economists, literary scholars, mathematicians, agriculturalists, and lawyers helped broaden my own view of this institution.

At home, we are fortunate to have known many Clemson faculty families whose association with the university stretched back into the second decade of the twentieth century. Through our church we knew Clemsonians whose ties to this place began before World War I. They befriended us, and when we were with them, they frequently told tales (some of which seemed quite “tall”) that on occasion turned out to be verifiable. One of Clemson’s longest-lived families was
that of Mr. and Mrs. Preston Brooks Holtzendorff Jr. “Mr. Holtzy’s” memories of the YMCA enriched my feel for student life in the World War I and II eras. Our neighbors, the Ivy Duggans, fed us regularly, having as table companions their across-the-fence neighbors Roy and Edith Cooper. Mrs. Cooper came to Clemson as a toddler with her parents, Dr. and Mrs. William Hayne Mills, the first resident pastor of the Presbyterian Church. Readers will find that a few of these friendships and connections provide stories that color and even clear up some historical developments and points.

After I had been a faculty member long enough to be tenured, my first department head, Robert S. Lambert, whose studies focused on Loyalists in South Carolina, and Ernest M. “Whitey” Lander, a leading scholar in post-American Civil War southern history, joined me in proposing a short credit course on “Higher Education and Clemson.” We taught it first in 1978 and were determined to keep the course on a strong and high path, meaning independent research for the students. For myself, I learned much (and still do) from these scholars, and as the years moved on, student interests in the forms of their research reports and their questions caused me to turn what I heard or read about Clemson many different ways.

Until the years of Clemson College President Walter Merritt Riggs (1910–1924), Clemson school correspondence was neither organized nor preserved. Riggs, however, was interested in history, as was his young assistant, James Corcoran Littlejohn. Littlejohn himself proposed to write a Clemson history, and he began assembling various documents. His secretary, Mary “Tootsie” Mills Ritchie, was a stickler for accuracy and worked to produce error-free transcriptions of critical items. Like her sister, Edith Cooper, she had a keen memory and maintained an alumni obituary file that proved to be a wealth of information to me. Besides an important preserver and conveyer of the written word, Littlejohn also used his reel-to-reel tape recorder to capture memories of James H. “Red” McHugh, the campus engineer and construction supervisor, and B. Rhett Turnipseed, a member of the first graduating class, and he elicited members of the early classes for their written memories. He also tape-recorded the memories of William Greenlee, who grew up on the Fort Hill grounds and whose stories go back to the last years of the university’s founder, Thomas Green Clemson.

Eventually, Cornelia Graham, Clemson’s third librarian, began gathering these and other resources together into the collection that came to be known as the University Archives. The Archives is part of a much larger collection of manuscripts, recordings, rare and/or unusual books, and artifacts tended by Michael Kohl, the Special Collections director. Mike’s courtesy has opened the Special Collections reading room to my research and provided the space for my work. Directly overseeing the Clemson Archives is Dennis Taylor. He has been especially kind in helping me locate unusual letters that have borne on topics of my interest. The keeper of the photographs and artifacts that bear on Clemson, Susan
Hiott, has zealously and without murmur helped with selection and identification of photographs.

Other members of the Special Collections staff supported this work significantly. Linda Ferry, now retired, grew up in Clemson, and her memories of her father, mathematics professor John Lagrone, also a former mayor of the town of Clemson, enriched my knowledge of the community. Laurie Varenhorst, also the daughter of a professor and a member of the Special Collections staff, added as well to my accuracy. Carl Redd has shared his knowledge of the African American collection, which has helped my efforts in this study. Alan Burns, who specializes in the massive Strom Thurmond collection, helped guide me to the papers in that large group that bore directly on the university. Jennifer Bingham provided insight into some of the smaller sets of papers, and Virengia Houston used her contacts at the University of South Carolina library to expedite my requests to borrow and use some of the photographs in this book. Jim Cross, who has responsibility for the collections of the letters of the Clemson trustees, alumni, and public figures, also directed me to papers. For many of the athletic photographs, Tim Bourret, Clemson’s Sports Information director, Sam Blackman, his assistant, and others in the Athletic Department provided knowledge and identification.

In the 1990s, Clinton Whitehurst, a professor of industrial management, proposed developing a collection of interviews of leaders of Clemson in the post-World War II era. Don McKale, a thoughtful and highly published historian of World War II, Class of 1941 Memorial Professor of History at Clemson, and the editor of *Tradition*, which studied the presidents of Clemson, conducted some twenty illuminating interviews for the project. I was privileged to use the DVDs of those interviews. They are housed in Special Collections.

The Clemson University Emeritus College Advisory Board expanded that idea, and emeritus faculty continue to interview other retired Clemson folk to aid in this montage. More than ninety people, many absolutely vital to Clemson’s development, have been video-taped (or agreed to be) talking about each one’s “personal Clemson,” building a rich legacy of the school’s more recent fifty years. The interviewers are listed in the bibliography with their subjects. My thanks to all. Vital to this effort was the audio-visual staff headed by Al Littlejohn and his assistant, the now-retired Fred Tuck. The people behind the cameras who frequently joined me on the road were Lance McKinney and Glenn Spake, while back at their offices Beverly Arp and Karen Blackman handled the permission paperwork, the disc preparation, and the business details of that enterprise.

Then, to manage the enormous amount of documentation and track down federal and state documents, deeds, writs, and court records, Andrew Land, Evan Nooe, and Alex Crunkleton, all graduate students in Clemson’s History Department, were far more than “useful”—“essential” would be a better term.

Drew, currently a college faculty member in the Atlanta suburbs who did his undergraduate and graduate work at Clemson, developed the census tables,
revealing the patterns of male-female, rural-urban, and black-white population splits in South Carolina over the past 130 years. Together, we discussed the data and worked to extract ideas.

Evan, an undergraduate from the University of Florida, was a wiz at identifying both federal and state statutes and regulations that pertained to all universities, all public universities, all land-grant colleges, or Clemson specifically. Evan is now pursuing his doctorate in history at the University of Mississippi.

Alex did his undergraduate work at Georgia Southern University and came to Clemson to study for his master’s in history. He has worked most closely on the patterns of student, faculty, and staff backgrounds of degrees, gender, and ethnicity. From these data, he created charts and graphs to aid the reader, but the reader must understand that these data fluctuate on a daily, even hourly basis. We have attempted to identify the high mark in each year to demonstrate the workload placed on the teaching, research, faculty, staff, and facilities. Alex also helped with textual reading and the selection and captioning of pictures for this work.

My other regular research assistants included my grandson, Thomas Reel Adams, who helped work through a number of manuscript collections to identify materials for transcription or photographic copying. He was excellent! His mother, Helen Adams, my oldest daughter, is a member of the Advancement team and frequently helped with the contacting of alumni for this work. Stanley B. Smith, the university registrar, provided information on non-graduates who attended Clemson, while Robert Barkley, our admissions director, provided the contacts that led to Mrs. Kelly Traynham’s gift of the George Washington Carver correspondence to Special Collections, a pleasant surprise that emerged from this project.

My beloved friend of seventy years and my loving wife of fifty of those years, Edmée Reel, traveled with me by plane and car to Vermont, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Auburn, Starkville, Chicago, Atlanta, Columbia, Anderson, Pickens, Walhalla, Charleston, and more where we worked side-by-side with archivists at libraries and depositories noted in the bibliography. But as the terra cotta chimney plaque at the Hanover House reads, “Peu à peu….”

My students in Creative Inquiry classes have aided me by studying aspects of leadership as manifested in the college’s commandants, honors winners, student publications editors, and more. Faculty and alumni have offered memories, some captured on DVD, which have been given to the Special Collections, others in conversations, scrapbooks, letters, manuscripts, and papers. These are thanked in the footnotes.

Because I grew up in a benighted (or perhaps beknighted) age when girls took typing and boys took wood and machine shop, I do not type. But as a medievalist and a one-time frequenter of H. M. Chancery, the Public Record Office, I learned Caroline miniscule (in extremis) cursive hand, thus secretaries needed to translate the same into a court hand print. Mrs. Barbara Rogers and Mrs. Linda Bridges, two wonderful ladies of Clemson University, began the work of typing my hand-
written documents, aided on a few occasions by Ms. Angie Keaton. However, Mrs. Paula Rahn Reel, my daughter-in-law, who helped with some of the deed research for this work, undertook the heavy typing, correcting, and improving, draft after draft. Her husband, Jerome “Jay” Reel, my son, served as the hanapercourier, shifting chapters back and forth to their home in Anderson.

Deborah Graham Dunning, manager of editorial services in the Creative Services Department, has been the kindest editor a writer could have. In many ways, she shaped my ablative absolute-riddled prose into something far better. Reading behind her for historical accuracy was Rod Andrew Jr., professor of history at Clemson and author of two very well-received books in post-Civil War southern history. He was especially helpful in my understanding of the student walkouts between 1902 and 1925 and military discipline at the college. Michael Kohl, Special Collections director, also read the text and pointed my way to overlooked materials. As a reader, he brought a strong sense of chronology to the work. Don McKale, professor emeritus of history at Clemson, Class of ’41 Memorial Professor of Humanities, and recipient of the Class of 1939 Award for Excellence, also assisted me as a reader. McKale, a highly published historian of World War II and author and/or editor of three studies on Clemson history, the history of Fort Hill Presbyterian Church, the study of Clemson’s presidents (to which Michael Kohl also contributed a chapter), and a study of the Clemson Class of 1941, provided aid far too great to detail in such a limited space. To these four I owe much.

Other members of the Creative Services staff who have been critical to the production of this work are David Dryden, the director, who designed the dust jacket; M. Elizabeth Newall, editor of *Clemson World* magazine, who provided proofreading and editorial assistance along with office manager Arizona Black and Creative Inquiry students Taylor Reeves, Victoria Witte, and Laura Good; John Mounter, production manager, who served as our liaison with the printer; and Judith Morrison, *Clemson World* art director, who aided with layout and photography selection. Patrick Wright, Creative Services photographer and a man with whom I have worked on several projects, trudged across campus to capture the images in the color signature and others throughout the book. He alone got to ride in the bucket truck to snap the beautiful photos of the Rudolph Lee grotesques and tiles on Riggs and Sirrine halls, respectively. The identification of the former fell to Alex Crunkleton and me based on the information and photographs extant in the Special Collections. Mike Hubbard, professor emeritus of textile science, provided the explanations of the Sirrine Hall ceramic tiles. Charles Gooding, professor of chemical engineering, explained the molecule that Willard Hirsch depicted on Earle Hall.

At the Clemson University Digital Press, Wayne Chapman, the director and executive editor of the Press and the Clemson Center of Electronic and Digital Publishing, editor of the *South Carolina Review*, and professor of English at Clemson, oversaw the typesetting of Christina Cook and the specialized image
manipulation and illustration setting done by Charis Chapman. Provost Dori Helms funded half the graduate assistant support for the work, while the Durham-Turner gift funded the other half and all the archive and travel costs.

Through the support of many people in Alumni Relations, I have made contact with and received help from many Clemson alumni scattered around the nation. Further, Alumni Relations has stood behind the financing of the publication of this book and its distribution to the Clemson Family.

Each of the above and others were important to this publication. I cannot thank each one enough. The dedication is the hardest part of a book to write, but this work truly belongs to four who genuinely exemplify the Clemson ethos—Joe Turner ’71, Debbie Dunning ’75, Kelly Durham ’80, and Edmée Reel ’82.

Deo Gratia,
Jerome V. Reel
Abbreviations

# number
A&M Agricultural and Mechanical
AAU Amateur Athletic Union
AB Latin form of BA, Bachelor of Arts
ACC Atlantic Coast Conference
AEC Atomic Energy Commission
AEF American Expeditionary Forces
AIA American Institute of Architects
AM Latin form of MA, Master of Arts
API Alabama Polytechnic Institute
b box
B. born
BA Bachelor of Arts
BLS Bachelor of Library Science
BS Bachelor of Science
c. circa
CAC Clemson Agricultural College
Capt. Captain
CMP Cresap, McCormick and Paget
Col. Colonel
CUA Clemson University Archives
CUL Clemson University Libraries
CUL.SC Clemson University Libraries, Special Collections
D. died
DAR Daughters of the American Revolution
D.C. District of Columbia
Dr. Doctor
DVM Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
ed(s). editor or edited by
et al. et alia ("and others")
f folder
FHA Federal Housing Administration
GEB General Education Board
Gen. General
GI Government Issue and slang for a member of U.S. Armed Forces
GPA grade point average
GPR grade point ratio
ID identification (used to indicate a special card)
IFC Inter Fraternity Council
IPTAY I Pay Ten A Year (original manifestation)
Jr. Junior
LLB Bachelor of Laws(s), the first professional degree taken by an aspiring lawyer
LSU Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College
Lt. Lieutenant
M. married
MA Master of Arts
Maj. Major
MD Doctor of Medicine
MLS Master of Library Science
Mrs. Mistress
MS Master of Science
MSS manuscripts
NAACP National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAB National Accrediting Board
NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association
n.d. no data
no. number
OYA One Year Agriculture
PhD Latin form of Doctor of Philosophy
POW Prisoner of War
P.R.C. People’s Republic of China
Prof. Professor
PWA Public Works Administration
RAC Rockefeller Archive Center
Rev. Reverend
ROTC Reserve Officers Training Corps (1916)
RPI Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
S Series
SACS Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (also known as Association of Colleges and Schools of the Southern States)
SAT Scholastic Aptitude Test
SATC Student Army Training Corps
SC Special Collections
SCA&M Popular acronym for South Carolina State College
SCDAH South Carolina Department of Archives and History
SCIAA South Carolina Intercollegiate Athletic Association
SEC Southeastern (Athletic) Conference
SIAA Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association
SLED State Law Enforcement Division
SREB Southern Regional Education Board
ss subseries
St. Saint
U.N. United Nations
U.S. United States
U.S.S. United States (Steam) Ship
UDC United Daughters of the Confederacy
UNC University of North Carolina
USC University of South Carolina
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
USMA United States Military Academy
v. versus
vol. volume
VPI Virginia Polytechnic Institute (and State University)
VMI Virginia Military Institute
WPA Works Progress Administration
YMCA Young Men’s Christian Association