A map of the town of Pendleton as it appeared during the 1880s and 1890s. Ernest McPherson Lander Papers, CUL.SC.
CHAPTER II

New Winds, New Will
1886–1889

Autumn 1886 settled over the town of Pendleton as the westerly running train stopped at the depot to unload shipments from points to the southeast. Its crew needed to make only a few more stops before they would reach the terminus at Walhalla and rest before arising the next morning to begin their return run. Passengers had boarded and exited all along the line until the junction at Anderson. Here, the midstate line joined the westerly line to head west, and the passengers for Greenville and Spartanburg transferred and continued due north. At Pendleton, a few passengers, mostly from Anderson, left the train. Among them was a traveler from Trenton, a man with no sight in his left eye, who stepped from his rail carriage onto the platform. He was Benjamin Ryan Tillman, who had been making a reputation for himself as an opponent of the political forces that had controlled South Carolina since 1876. He was a stirrer of the new wind.

South Carolina politics had been a seething cauldron since the death of Senator John C. Calhoun in 1850. Prior to the Civil War and divided unequally between secessionists and unionists, the white minority reunited in what many knew was an effort to preserve slavery and which many others understood as the defense of their homes. They put aside all the class divisions of puritans and cavaliers, yeoman and manorial masters in that cause. But their effort failed. The older leaders attempted to retain control with a slightly changed program of limited economic franchise for African Americans but almost no political participation for them. The Republican congressional leaders rejected that solution in what came to be called “congressional reconstruction.” The congressional insistence that universal adult male suffrage be embedded in a state’s constitution if it were to be readmitted to the Union led to the new South Carolina Constitution of 1868. It guaranteed males equal political rights and public (although not necessarily integrated in race and/or gender) education. South Carolina historian Walter Edgar has noted, “With the exception of one integrated school in Kershaw County and several in Richland County, the remainder of the state’s public schools were segregated.”

White Reaction

After the ratification of the new South Carolina constitution, one unconscionable blow to many South Carolina whites was the appointment in 1869 of two
African Americans as trustees of what had been renamed the University of South Carolina (USC). Some faculty resigned, and students began to withdraw. The first African American student enrolled only in 1873, and by 1875, the student body was less than 10 percent white. Further, the government had opened an agricultural and industrial training institute in Orangeburg next to Claflin College, a school opened in 1869 by northern Methodists for African American students. To support these ventures, South Carolina would avail itself of the Morrill Land Grant Act endowment interest.³

White South Carolinians generally withdrew from public life, whether in politics or education. A number left and moved west. Others, however, realized that because the new constitution had transferred the weight of taxation from business transactions to land, they still held the strings of the public purse. They refused to pay taxes, thereby reducing the public treasury. At the same time, political corruption drained what public money there was into private purses. Edgar called it a "sordid record," noting the magnitude of the raid on the state treasury.⁴ The national depression of 1873, which wiped out such bank savings as there were throughout the South and elsewhere, made the financial problems worse.⁵

The South Carolina gubernatorial and the United States presidential elections were scheduled in 1876. Even though many white South Carolinians wanted to seize state government by force, some Democratic Party leaders, particularly Wade Hampton III, urged the use of the ballot. The Democrats nominated Hampton, a constitutional unionist before secession and a Confederate general by war’s end, for governor. He favored male suffrage, limited by an educational requirement.⁶

Prior to the elections, several other actions besides the integration of USC led to the inflamed public mood. First, even against the advice of Republican Governor Daniel Chamberlain, a Massachusetts native, the general assembly elected William J. Whipper and Franklin J. Moses, two men generally thought to be corrupt, as circuit judges in 1875. Second, eight months later in Hamberg, an incident between two young white men and the mainly African American militia resulted in gunfire and several deaths during the exchange. A hostile white mob gathered and overwhelmed the militia. After the whites had taken the African Americans captive, the captors murdered six of their new prisoners. In the crowd of white belligerents was the twenty-nine-year-old Benjamin Ryan Tillman.

At this point, Tillman was not a major player in South Carolina’s political scene, but later he would boast of his participation in the crowd witnessing the killing of the six African Americans as a plank in the platform on which he stood. His deep contempt for African Americans, whom he later referred to as the “mud-sill,” has almost obliterated the memory of what reforms he helped produce in education, including his role in founding Clemson College, his contribution in the establishment of Winthrop College, and his frequently overlooked interest in public schools.⁷
The presidential electors and gubernatorial elections in late 1876, which were marred by violence and voting irregularities, left the outcome in South Carolina in great dispute. The U.S. House of Representatives finally ruled that the electors from South Carolina pledged to Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes had been chosen. Hayes, after he took office, withdrew federal troops from South Carolina, effectively recognizing Wade Hampton III as governor. The new legislature and governor closed the University of South Carolina, ending that irritant to the white elite, and a legislative committee began to sort through the shambles of the state treasury records. However, the legislative committee’s report conveniently did not include the names of prominent white Democrats who also profited from the theft. That “sin of omission” appears to have contributed to the notion of the total and unselfish motives of the “Bourbon Restoration,” so called because the chief counselors of Wade Hampton were “former Confederate generals” to whom, as Walter Edgar wrote, “land [was] still more important than commerce…. ” They were called “Bourbons (for the French royalists who resumed power after Napoleon and acted as if nothing had changed)….”

The general assembly, after much debate, finally passed the bill to reorganize USC as a university with two campuses, one in Columbia called South Carolina College, and the other an institute dependent on Claflin College in Orangeburg. One board composed of four ex officio and voting members—namely the governor, the state superintendent of education, and the education committee chairs of the house and the senate—and seven legislatively elected trustees, who would serve four-year terms, would govern both schools. Further, the act directed that the trustees establish an agricultural department at the Columbia campus. The Act of 1879 (An Act to Provide for the State University), however, did not set a date for an opening. That would not happen until late December 1879.

Then, in February 1880, the USC trustees created the college structure. A president would have, among others, two lead officers: the foreman of the farm and the foreman of mechanics. Trustee James H. Rion, who framed the structure, called for four chairs: chemistry and experimental agriculture; geolo-
gy, mineralogy, botany, and zoology; mathematics and natural philosophy (physics); and English language, literature, and belles-lettres (the humanities). Initially, no diplomas were offered in either agriculture or engineering (mechanics). One could conclude that the trustees believed those fields ineligible for collegiate status. However, the majority of the funds used to pay the school’s costs were derived from the Morrill land-grant funds.11

By 1882, critics, led by Tillman, decried this as fraud. If, in the Act of 1879, the legislature meant that agriculture and mechanics were to be taught, then to the critics, the fraud originated in 1882 when the trustees did away with the positions of foremen of the farm and of mechanics. Those positions were replaced with five new chairs: ancient languages, modern languages, agriculture and horticulture, history and political economy, and mental and moral philosophy.12 Whatever else was meant, the changes greatly diminished mechanics. For agriculturists, however, the appointment of John M. McBryde as the agriculture professor was a good sign. McBryde had served as chair of agriculture at the University of Tennessee, was considered the best agriculturist in the South, and was an excellent administrator.13 It was a hopeful signal to the state’s agricultural interests.

From the autumn of 1882 to 1890, McBryde worked to broaden the college from the classical Anglo-American curriculum that was favored by the antebellum elite toward new and useful curricula. Not only were there three-year studies for the bachelor of arts, but extra time and study could lead to the master of arts degree. The bachelor of science degree was offered briefly but abandoned. As hopeful as the program sounded, the general assembly was neither able nor inclined to fund McBryde’s vision. In fact, by 1884–1885, no certificates had been awarded in engineering, while the enrollment in agriculture and chemistry (for certificate and for short courses) numbered ten students. The total enrollment that year in all programs and at all levels was 213, while the total state appropriation was $20,700 (2009 equivalent $489,193).14

Rise of the Upstate

At the same time, two major developments rapidly moved South Carolina’s economic bases from the Lowcountry to the Upstate. The first was in transportation. Railroads connected points of commerce, whether agricultural or industrial. The major lines connected the Sandhills to Washington, D.C., through Richmond to Columbia and on to Savannah or Augusta. In the Upstate, the Southern line, which also ended in Washington, D.C., had pushed through York, Spartanburg, and Greenville before crossing Georgia to Atlanta and on to New Orleans. Within the state, local lines began to connect smaller towns to the larger junctions. This development favored the lands above the sharply defined change from the Coastal Plain to the Sandhills, or the fall line.15
Above the same fall line, the land rose rapidly toward the mountains and the eastern Continental Divide. Abundant water running downhill was the source of energy. And cheap energy meant good sites for textile mills. Two clusters of mills emerged in the early 1880s. The first appeared in Aiken, Lexington, Orangeburg, and Sumter counties. The second, in the Piedmont, clustered the mills more densely in Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg, York, and Chester counties. These were the same two belts favored by the railroads. Further, in 1880, the investors in both regions were heavily South Carolinian.\(^{16}\)

But to extend this prosperity required a more educated work force—both scientifically and technologically—than inhabited South Carolina. To keep abreast of mechanical improvements, a population that could translate oral or written instructions into lightly supervised actions was needed. Above that, a layer of instructors and supervisors had to manage and maintain the increasingly complicated machinery. As long as the colleges produced only lawyers, physicians, teachers, bankers, and classicists, as fine as these might be, desired economic growth would not occur. And although McBryde and a few in Columbia attempted to move education toward broad general improvements, the state lawmakers did not follow suit.
The average South Carolina family, however, was engaged in farming, the business of planting, tending, gathering, and selling products of the earth. It was clear that much of what was legislated or taught in Columbia made little change in their status. If anything, the changes since 1860 only made their lives more meager. Even nature seemingly conspired against those farmers, whose well-being depended directly on the harvest. From 1881 (or shortly after the triumph of the old Confederate elite), a succession of droughts and insect invasions had added to the farmers’ misery.

**Agricultural Societies in South Carolina**

As Alexis de Tocqueville recognized, Americans were association makers. In agriculture, associations emerged already in the early Federal period. The S.C. Society for Promoting and Improving Agriculture and Other Rural Concerns, founded in 1785 by Lowcountry planters, was among America’s oldest. In the Upstate, the Pendleton Farmers’ Society (1815) had a wide array of members, most of whom were farmers. The membership included a number of holders of large properties, including Thomas Pinckney Jr. and John E. Colhoun; men whose holdings were more modest in size, including C. W. Miller and John Green; and those who shared farming with other interests, including John C. Calhoun’s relative and teacher Moses Waddel. In 1866, this society approved a pamphlet calling for a scientific educational institution. They printed and distributed the pamphlet, but nothing immediately happened.

A broader demand for such an institution was needed. By 1871, the Patrons of Husbandry (the Grange), a midwestern, semi-secret farmers’ association, opened a large number of Granges in South Carolina. However, the Grange did not embrace the sponsoring of political action, and almost as quickly as it appeared, it dissipated. In its place, several other types of organizations appeared. One, the S.C. Agricultural and Mechanical Association, had local groups. It drew members from both the older elite and from the mercantile and town leadership. The farmers’ associations were another new voice. Locally organized, they were loosely bound to each other and were racially separated into “white” and “colored” alliances.

On August 6, 1885, a statewide meeting of the S.C. Agricultural and Mechanical Association convened in Bennettsville in conjunction with the remnants of the Grange. Tillman, the founder and president of the Edgefield Agricultural Association, delivered a speech, more accurately a challenge, that caused an informal split of the state white Democratic Party structure into two distinct groups. He launched an attack on the “planter-lawyer-businessman-ex-confederate officer clique,” whom he characterized as the enemy of the yeoman farmer. He had multiple plans to aid the common farmer. Some were thinly disguised efforts to further himself or perhaps his oldest living brother, George Dionysius. Some, however, bore a resemblance to the land-grant concept. He would come to believe a separate agricultural
college a necessity, pointing to the absence of progress at the Columbia institution. Also he demanded the establishment of agricultural experiment stations.¹⁹

*Agricultural Experiment Stations*

Using biological and chemical analyses to study and measure efforts to improve plants and animals was not new, but few instances existed of the use of public funds to finance such efforts. A European example generally cited was the 1852 Kingdom of Saxony combining laboratory investigations with a royally sponsored experiment station (*Landwirtschaftlich Versuchsstation*). The first use of this “practical research” in the United States appeared in 1857, when the Connecticut State Agriculture Society hired German-educated Samuel W. Johnson to analyze the claims of the makers of fertilizer, publish the results, and inform society members of the validity of the various claims.²⁰

At about the same time, Thomas Green Clemson had sent a letter to the magazine, *American Farmer*, noting the results of a series of tests on the use of Peruvian guano (decomposed sea fowl dung) on his Maryland farm plantings. He concluded, attested to by neighboring farmers, that whether or not the reputed fertilizer was used, the crops produced showed no difference.²¹ And just as the Civil War stopped Clemson’s agricultural work, so it halted the work of Johnson in Connecticut.

A decade after the war, the state of Connecticut contracted first with Wesleyan College in Middletown and later with Yale at New Haven to host the newly created laboratories called the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.²² Within the decade (1877–1887), state-financed agricultural experiment stations opened in California (1877), North Carolina (1877), Massachusetts (1878), New York (1880), New Jersey (1880), Ohio (1882), Tennessee (1882), Alabama (1883), Wisconsin (1883), Louisiana (1884), and Maine (1885). It is no wonder that a similar idea appeared in Tillman’s speech in August 1885.²³

Tillman also demanded increased funding for agricultural education and for a separate college for the teaching of agriculture. The idea
of a college whose primary purpose was the teaching of agriculture, with the other disciplines offered in support, was also not singular to Tillman. Farmer dissatisfaction in Virginia, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Alabama, and Indiana had led to small farmers’ demands that their states separate agricultural colleges from designated public colleges (in the instances of those just mentioned) or in some of the northeastern states, separate the agricultural schools from the private and usually denominational colleges that received state support.

Of course, Tillman’s speech was a sensation and was carried, and widely commented upon, in most of the newspapers in South Carolina. Certainly, interested observers in Pendleton, including Thomas Green Clemson and members of the Pendleton Farmers’ Society, such as R. F. Simpson’s son, Richard Wright Simpson, read the speech. Another was Clemson’s lawyer, J. H. Rion.

**The Will of 1883**

James Henry Rion had first entered Clemson’s life when Rion’s mother came to Pendleton to work as the housekeeper at the Pendleton Hotel in the early 1840s. Floride Colhoun Calhoun wanted a housekeeper for Fort Hill and contacted Mrs. Rion, who moved to Fort Hill with her son, James Henry. They lived at Fort Hill, where John C. Calhoun took an interest in the boy, helping to finance his education at South Carolina College. When James completed his studies, he read the law and, by 1853, was a practicing attorney. During the Civil War, he held the rank of major and took a very active part in the defense of Charleston, serving in the Seventh Infantry Battalion (SC). After the war, he and his family lived in Winnsboro.24

Rion had become one of Thomas Clemson’s legal and financial advisors. Clemson kept all his stocks and bonds in Rion’s office in Winnsboro, and in 1883, Clemson asked Rion to draft a will for him. After Clemson received the draft, which had been composed according to his instructions, he wrote Rion on April 27, 1883,

> I have received the draft of my will drawn up by you in accordance with my instructions, but after further consideration I have determined to make certain alterations in the form or draft sent me….Nothing contributes so much to the advancement of a people in civilization as a knowledge of the natural sciences and their application to the practical uses of life and it is my sincere desire to aid in such a laudable object by founding at Fort Hill a Scientific Institute embracing the following departments or schools, namely a department of mathematics; a second department of geology and mineralogy with especial reference to the art of mining; a third department of chemistry as applied to agriculture and the useful arts; lastly, a department of modern languages.25
Clemson considered the properly managed 800-plus-acre Fort Hill might be productive enough to support the school, but he added,

the importance of such an institution in developing the material resources of the state by offering to the youth the advantages of scientific culture and that I do not underestimate the intelligence of the legislature of a State ever distinguished for its liberality in assuming that such appropriations will be made as may be necessary to supplement the fund resulting from the annual product of the estate.

Clemson then proposed to give the state (that is, the general assembly and the governor) seven years from the date of his own death to accept the conditional gift. Should the state refuse the terms of his will, then Clemson specifically bypassed his heir (granddaughter Floride Isabella Lee), his heir’s guardian (Gideon Lee), and/or his heir’s husband. (Because Floride Isabella was twelve years old and not married, the clause was only to foreclose future litigation.) The land, house, furnishings, and other appurtenances, if that were necessary, were to be given to an association of South Carolina women selected by Mrs. James H. Rion or, if she had already died, then by her daughter to preserve the memory of John C. Calhoun. Clemson’s last set of instructions established a trust to aid his housekeeper, Jane Prince, and her daughter, Hester. Clemson signed the will on August 14, 1883.

One could see a few vague or unclear phrases in Clemson’s concept for a college. First, when Clemson listed in his will the fields to be taught, the introductory “namely” might serve to limit the subject fields to those specified. Only two phrases provided real openings for change. The first was the phrase “useful arts,” which could be construed to mean almost anything. The second was the phrase “modern languages,” which eliminated the classical forms of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin but not the modern manifestations of them. Whether that vague wording could open the way to the study of literature and history could be the subject of legislative debates and suits and counter-suits. Another question involved who would govern or direct the “Fort Hill Scientific Institute.” Did Clemson expect the legislature, the University of South Carolina trustees (who had jurisdiction over South Carolina College and the Agricultural and Mechanical Institute loosely attached to Claflin College), or some other body of legislative creation or designation to make the decisions?

The Meeting of 1886

In the summer of 1886, the trustees of USC apparently decided to award Clemson an honorary doctorate. Rion, who served on the USC board, must have recommended the degree. Was the honor a bit of honey or perhaps glue to keep Clemson and his wealth within the reach of those who might have dreamed of a
multicampus university? The structure was in existence; the dual campus in Columbia and Orangeburg, the example. The closed normal school had partisans, and like agriculture, the need was obvious as a result of the current constitution.26 That would leave the question as to the future of the Citadel issue to be resolved. Would it continue a separate institution or a part of the enlarged university?

Regardless, Clemson had taken an interest in Tillman’s ideas about a separate college for the study of agriculture. As a result, he invited Tillman to Fort Hill to discuss the possibility. For that reason, Tillman had come by train to Pendleton, where he was met by Clemson’s carriage, horse, and driver. It is hard not to imagine that the driver was the sixteen-year-old African American Bill Greenlee (1870–1972), who worked for Clemson, taking care of his carriage, carriage house, and the trappings.27 The road from the Blue Ridge Railroad depot, located south of Pendleton’s Main Street, carried the driver and his guest to Queen Street, past the Methodist parsonage, turning westward to pass Richard Wright Simpson’s law office and Mrs. S. T. Sloan’s home, and then toward Fort Hill.28 The road was not good, and while most of the streams were shallow, Eighteen Mile Creek always presented a challenge to ford. The nearly four-mile road finally came to the
first of several gates that required opening, passage, and latching before proceeding. But Fort Hill finally came into view through the thicket.

Upon Tillman’s arrival at Fort Hill, Clemson welcomed him while his luggage was placed in an upstairs bedroom. Mrs. Jane Prince had prepared the evening meal, and the two men dined. No doubt they talked about the meeting scheduled the next day; however, whatever else might have been discussed is lost. Tillman (1847–1918), at thirty-nine years of age, was by far the younger. Clemson was forty years his senior. This was the first and only time the two men would ever meet.

The next morning, the second guest invited to Fort Hill that autumn arrived, Daniel K. Norris (1846–1905). Only a year older than Tillman, Norris knew Clemson from the Pendleton Farmers’ Society. Originally from St. Matthew’s Parish in the Orangeburg District, he attended local schools there. During the Civil War, he served in the Second South Carolina Regiment under the command of Gen. Joseph Johnson. After suffering a wound at Bentonville (March 19–21, 1865), he remained in military service until Johnson’s surrender on April 26, 1865. He married in 1877, and with his wife, Bessie Caldwell, from Abbeville, he moved to Anderson County in January of that year. A strong community leader, he had a large farm, Hickory Flat, just outside Pendleton.29

The third guest that day was Richard Wright Simpson (September 11, 1840–July 11, 1912). Simpson came from a family of lawyers. His father, Richard Franklin Simpson, practiced law and had bought 1,500 acres on Three and Twenty Mile
Creek. An overseer and slaves farmed the land. It was through the elder Simpson’s wife, Mary Wells, that the Taliaferro (pronounced “Toliver”) homestead in Pendleton came into Simpson’s possession. Richard Franklin Simpson had served as a U.S. senator and signed the S.C. Ordinance of Secession. After the Civil War, he served on the Pendleton Farmers’ Society committee with Thomas Clemson to draft an appeal for support of agricultural education.

Richard Wright Simpson was well educated. He attended Miss Mary’s School in Pendleton until he was eight years old and then attended the Pendleton Male Academy. Upon finishing that course of study, he enrolled in Wofford College, a Methodist school in Spartanburg. While a student at Wofford, he became a Methodist and practiced that faith diligently all his life. Wofford had admitted Simpson as a sophomore with twenty-four other students in his class; he participated actively in the Preston (Literary) Society. Wofford awarded Simpson the AB degree in 1861. Almost immediately, he became engaged to his sweetheart, Maria (Mary) Margaret Garlington, whom he had known since he was seventeen.

While Simpson was at Wofford, Maria had attended the Spartanburg Women’s Academy. Shortly after the engagement, he joined the Third South Carolina Regiment. In the fall of 1861, he caught measles near Fairfax Court House, Virginia, and never regained his strength. By 1863, he had returned to South Carolina, where he and Maria married on October 2 in Laurens. At the time, Maria was so ill she came downstairs from her bedroom only for the ceremony.

Following the Civil War, the young Simpsons found themselves penniless, but they owned land. Richard Wright made what money he could by mending wagons and shoeing horses. “Now,” he said, “I know what poverty meant.” That same year, 1865, he made a “solemn obligation with my God, that I intended from there to devote myself to the amelioration of the poor.” Simpson’s wholehearted devotion to Clemson’s legacy stemmed directly from this vow, for he virtually put his practice aside upon
Clemson’s death and committed himself to fulfilling what Clemson wanted. And it was in his understanding of that vow that he formed the Democratic Club in Pendleton and aided in formation of similar clubs throughout the district. They were political and “military company” groups. By 1868, Simpson had prospered enough to buy the Frost place adjacent to his father’s land. Because of his growing leadership in the county, he was elected to the state legislature in 1874.

The election of 1876 was hotly contested between the Republicans, whom Simpson called the “Radicals,” and the reemerging “straight-out” Democrats, led by Wade Hampton, a former Confederate officer. When settled, Governor Hampton called a special session of the legislature. The Democrats controlled the house, and the Republicans controlled the senate. The state stood deeply in debt; Simpson, because of his business acumen, was named chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

Against the background of political maneuvering, the South Carolina College, which had operated as an integrated institution, closed. C. G. Memminger, a legislator from Charleston and part of a group Simpson described as the “low country set,” proposed its reopening and that it be named the “Land Grant College.” Simpson opposed the designation, which helped to defeat Memminger’s bill. It would, however, pass into law in 1880. Simpson was not happy. In his memoirs, he noted his goal “to secure any permanent relief for the great mass of people,” which

must be obtained through education. I had devoted all my influence to secure the adoption of measures that were to establish an Agricultural College. I talked the matter over with some friends and they agreed to back and support me. My purpose was to establish this college in the upper part of the state amidst the white counties….It was necessary to make it different from the South Carolina College.30

He would eventually prevail.

Simpson further noted that when Tillman came to the forefront as the “leader of the Reform Movement and called a convention, I [Simpson] wrote him and urged him to drop every other plank in their platform but one: that one was a demand for an agricultural college.” This he did, and the first battle was won. “The opposition would be furious, coming from many major state newspapers, the backers of South Carolina College,” now retitled, “The University of South Carolina,’ the backers of the Citadel, and the supporters of the several denominational colleges in the state.” Simpson continued to remember in memoirs he wrote for his children:

Now I must go back a little. When the people were beginning to mutter against the selfish, class legislation for some years prevailing, and the Reform Movement
was beginning to take shape, Colonel Thomas G. Clemson, the son-in-law of John C. Calhoun, the owner of and residing upon Fort Hill, the homestead of Mr. Calhoun, invited me and several other gentlemen, one of whom was Tillman, to dine with him. After dinner, he handed me a paper and asked me to read it and see if there was anything wrong in it. (I had during these years quietly practiced law)….I was surprised to see it was a copy of his will.

When I read it, I told him there was something very wrong with it. He, in his will, had donated Fort Hill and his property to the State, to establish an Agricultural College. But Colonel J. H. Rion, Clemson's attorney…who wrote the will, had so worded the will, either by accident or intention I do not say, as to render it unlikely to establish such an institution.

Simpson cited two serious defects. First, the will specified a limited number of courses to be taught at the proposed college. While it did not prevent the teaching of other subjects, Simpson pointed out that some members of the state government probably would attempt to limit the teaching only to those fields. The second concern involved the fallback clause, which offered an alternative disposition should the state not receive the gift. The estate would pass into the hands of Rion’s wife, who received the charge to select other ladies to manage the estate as a memorial trust. When Clemson heard Simpson’s concerns, he asked Simpson to write a codicil. Simpson demurred and suggested that Clemson ask Rion to do it. The meeting ended and the guests left.

The Will of 1886

Simpson probably visited Clemson regularly over the next months, and Clemson’s confidence in Simpson grew. But Rion had handled all of Clemson’s investments besides his will, and Clemson decided to move them. Simpson, at Clemson’s request, went to Rion’s office to collect the various bonds, securities, and other investments, which Simpson remembered amounted to $100,000. Simpson drafted the new will, and Clemson asked Simpson to serve as its executor. Simpson felt it might be a conflict of interest, since he was serving as Clemson’s financial manager. Clemson, however, disagreed, and Simpson concurred. Simpson also served as the lawyer for the Bank of Pendleton and Blue Ridge Railway.

Simpson delivered the will to Clemson, who signed it and had it witnessed on November 6, 1886. In the remaining year and a half of Clemson’s life, he added one codicil on March 16, 1887. The new will specifically revoked the 1883 will. The new document urged that the school be “modeled after the Agricultural College of Mississippi.” Clemson continued that he wished to “establish an agricultural college which will afford useful information to the farmers and the mechanics…. ” The college was to be governed by trustees. “I desire to state plainly that I
wish the Trustees of said institution to have full authority and power to regulate all matters pertaining to said institution—to fix the course of studies, to make rules for the government of the same and to change them, as in their judgment, experience may prove necessary….”

The will appointed seven life trustees who acted as a self-perpetuating corporation, consisting of Richard Wright Simpson, D. K. Norris, B. R. Tillman (the only three men Clemson personally knew), M. L. Donaldson, R. E. Bowen, J. E. Wannamaker, and J. E. Bradley. If the state accepted the gift, then the legislature could name up to an additional six trustees who would serve for fixed terms. If after three years the state had not accepted the gift, then the seven named life trustees were to create a private school, “Clemson Scientific School” or “College.”

Even more extraordinary was what the will did not say. It did not limit admissions by state (South Carolina), by gender (male), or by race (white). This was most unusual given the era and climate in which the will was drafted, and it was unusual given the sentiments, at least, of Tillman.

For the remainder of his life, Clemson attempted to arrange for the writing of a biography of John C. Calhoun. Rarely did Clemson leave Fort Hill. Toward the end of his life, he took an interest in Christianity, a topic to which he had paid scant attention prior to this point. Clemson died on April 6, 1888; he was buried beside his beloved Anna in the churchyard of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Pendleton. Simpson handled the necessary arrangements. On April 20, 1888, Simpson carried Clemson’s will to the courthouse in Walhalla for probate, and a bitter statewide argument ensued.

Notes
1. Andrew, Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior to Southern Redeemer, 413.
2. Edgar, South Carolina, 390. Edgar’s discussion of the African American and white activities during “radical” or “congressional reconstruction” is well worth reading. He notes the local white reaction to a racially integrated public school in Charleston.
5. Ibid., 396–402.
6. Andrew, Wade Hampton, 312–313.
7. Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 64–71. The reader should note that Kantrowitz’s study does not offer itself as a comprehensive study of his subject. Its purpose is to study Tillman’s attitude and political actions toward African Americans.
11. Ibid., 101–103.
12. Ibid., 103. Hollis cites the USC trustees’ minutes, February (n.d.), 1882.
13. Ibid., 103–108.
14. Ibid., 119. The “per student” appropriation was $96 (or $2,300 per student in 2009 dollars).
16. Ibid., 455–462.
18. Ibid., 72.
19. CUL.SC.MSS 80 S 5 b 1. Tillman’s files contain, among other things, his scrapbooks. Many of these contain newspaper clippings, some of which are reported transcriptions of speeches. Box 1 contains five scrapbooks, numbered I–V. Given the acidic nature of newspaper, the copy is very clear. Volumes I and II contain material beginning in the spring of 1885. The text of Tillman’s August 6, 1885, Bennettsville speech (vol. II) sets out his proposal: 1. To create an experimental farm; 2. Make the “South Carolina University” board follow the law and establish a practical agricultural college with teachers prepared to teach practical agriculture; 3. Put farmers (as opposed to planters) on the college board; 4. Ensure an agricultural commission composed of farmers selected from the various regions of the state; and 5. County and state farmers’ institutes supported by the state treasury.

Needless to say, Tillman received criticism to which he responded with an attack on the S.C. Agricultural and Mechanical Society (Charleston *News and Courier*, November 30, 1885). D. P. Duncan of Union County, president of the society, struck back in a somewhat testy fashion in the *News and Courier* dated December 11, 1885. After a vitriolic response by Tillman in the same journal (December 18, 1885), the editor declared a truce, which did not hold. Tillman continued stumping the state addressing the Clarendon Agricultural Society and helping orchestrate the summoning of another farmers’ convention for April 29, 1886. A. B. Williams, the editor and proprietor of the *Greenville Daily News* (March 18, 1886), commented, “Mr. B. R. Tillman shows a good deal of hard, horse sense in his reply to the attack made on him by Secretary of State Lipscomb.” Williams then supported Tillman’s basic plans. As to be expected, Tillman was the main speaker at the April Farmers’ Convention in Columbia, widely carried in newspapers (for example, see the Newberry *Observer*). The Winsboro *News and Herald* speculated that the entire program was to propel George Dionysius Tillman (1826–1902), B. R.’s older brother by twenty-one years, into the governor’s office. In the meantime, B. R. Tillman sent his address to Stephen D. Lee, then the president of Mississippi Agricultural College, whose response was highly supportive of the effort to establish a separate agricultural and mechanical college. Tillman had taken that stand December 9, 1885, in a letter to the Charleston *News and Courier*. In it he used Ohio as the example.

23. Ibid., 16–17.
25. CUL.SC.MSS 2 b 5 f 21. This and the following transcription are from Clemson’s holograph. I have extended the abbreviations, placed careted phrases with the text and have ignored stricken words or phrases. Further, in the interest of brevity, I have not presented the entire three-page letter but have summarized those intervening passages.

26. The post-Reconstruction government in the Act to Provide for the State University in Section 25 stated, “It shall be required, and it is hereby made the duty, of the Trustees of the University to open and establish an Agricultural Department in said University.” See Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 89.
28. CUL.SC.MSS 280, oversize folder: map of Pendleton, South Carolina.
30. CUL.SC.MSS 96 f 41: typewritten memoir of Richard Wright Simpson. Also is a draft holograph of the “Rion” August 1883 unsigned Clemson will commencing with Item 6. The items that addressed the school would have been items 1, 2, and 3.
31. See the will in the appendix.