The last quarter of Clemson’s existence as a college saw much change—in the architecture and in the gender and the ethnicities of the students. And as this volume illustrates, change can be very good, indeed!
Epilogue
1889–1964

The College Era Ends

Seventy-six years had passed since Thomas Green Clemson died at Fort Hill, and the seventy-fifth anniversary of South Carolina’s acceptance of Mr. Clemson’s gift that led to the establishment of the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina rapidly hastened to the forefront. In three-quarters of a century, eight presidents guided nearly 22,000 students to various college degrees and achievements. Well over a thousand faculty patiently (usually) taught subjects as diverse as differential calculus or nouns and verbs. Cadets studied the intricacies of European history, while female students learned and taught organic chemistry. Three of the four oldest college buildings still stood; by their sides, modern buildings fit closely to the red hills.

Clemson served the state. Hundreds of Clemson graduates taught in schools and colleges across the state and beyond. Others worked as community leaders with women, youth, men, and children in small communities and towns of size. In addition to the many thousands Clemson College served directly, Clemson’s sons and daughters had improved the food on almost every person’s table, upgraded rural sanitation, and helped build schoolhouses, roads, and communications systems for all South Carolinians.

Furthermore, Clemson served the nation and the world. In several legislatures and congresses, Clemsonians helped make decisions that propelled civic governments. They helped build America’s power plants, businesses, hospitals, and homes. And they helped supply and speed food to the tables of America.

Yet, within this glow of triumphalism, flecks of difficulty could be seen. The apparent harmony of the contemporary American age, forged in the difficulties and compromises of the 1920s and 1930s and tempered in World War II, showed signs of coming apart. Some Americans were not “buying in” to this age of the white middle class. The gender gap was not closed by admitting a few women or even by building a women’s residence hall, although that was a hopeful start. Nor could America’s racial divide be crossed by letting a few students enter a door. Not even the issues of social or economic disparity could be eliminated by imposed uniformity.

Economic prosperity, attainable by any, lay at the base of Mr. Clemson’s charge. And that would take tolerance, patience, and change if the institution he called “the high seminary of learning” would achieve his charge.