

Fort Hill, Office
(McElhenny-Calhoun-Clemson
House, Office)
Clemson University Campus
Clemson
Pickens County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-344A

HABS
SC,
39-CLEM,
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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1A

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE South Carolina	COUNTY Pickens	TOWN OR VICINITY Clemson
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Fort Hill, Office		HABS NO. SC-344A
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE McElhenny-Calhoun-Clemson House, Office		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) Clemson University Campus		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) ca. 1825	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Unknown	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Used as a law office, library and plantation office by John C. Calhoun. Architecturally, the building is an interesting example of a small, Greek Revival office.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Greek Revival		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Frame, sheathed in clapboards and fush siding		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Rectangular; approx. 18' x 24'; pedimented portico on main facade; gable roof		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Slender Tuscan columns support the entrance portico.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) One-room plan, with small vestibule flanked by closets; an elliptical arched opening connects the vestibule and office; oak panelled.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Restored as part of historic house museum complex.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) part of the Fort Hill complex which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Druscilla J. Null, HABS	DATE 7/16/84	

ADDENDUM TO:
FORT HILL, OFFICE
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORT HILL, OFFICE (McElhenny-Calhoun-Clemson House, Office)

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This report is an addendum to a one page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1984.

Location: Clemson University Campus, Clemson, Pickens County, South Carolina. Fort Hill and its dependencies sit in the heart of the campus grounds. The office is south of the house; the site is close to the intersection of Fort Hill Street and Calhoun Drive.

Significance: The office on the premises of Fort Hill served as John C. Calhoun's private library.

Description: Calhoun's office was built around 1825. A late nineteenth-century sketch shows the small structure and provides a look inside. The office is a one and a half story, wood-frame structure over a cellar. The office is heated by an exterior end chimney made of brick and covered by stucco. Aesthetically the one-room building is distinguished by a Greek Revival-style portico with four Tuscan columns. The columns also are wood.

The office is essentially a rectangle measuring 20' x 20' with the addition of a porch that is 6' x 20'. The foundation consists of fieldstone walls and brick piers. The exterior walls are sheathed in clapboards with flush siding under the portico. The structural system is wood-frame construction and overall the office is good condition with the exception of some floor bounce.

Approached by steps made of cut stone, the office is entered through a door cut into its north facade. The door is paneled. In the east and west sides of the house is a window placed in correspondence to one another, each opposite the other. These are nine-over-nine double hung sash and have louvered shutters. A well-proportioned gable roof with cedar shakes covers the structure and a simple cornice runs along the eaves.

Inside, the floor consists of random-width pine boards. For the walls and ceiling, the interior finish is characterized by darkly grained wood, with even darker grain outlining the various structural features. Three of the four walls have built-in bookcases which also have been grained. The mantel also is somber; it is painted black. The baseboards and the door and window surrounds are free of ornament. Visible on the door are ghosts of hardware formerly on its inside.

Historically, the fireplace heated the office space. No modern heating or cooling system exists in the office although electricity extends to it. A single bulb placed above the door and another light above the porch are the only artificial light sources on the office site. For protection of the building, a fire suppression sprinkler system and security system have been installed.

The historical landscape design includes plant and architectural features. A walk of square brick pavers connects the office to the rear of the house. It is lined with four large hackberry trees and a parasol tree. Tradition suggests that a nearby tree is the varnish tree given to Calhoun by Commodore Stephen Decatur, however, it may have been a parasol tree. There are grist mill stones on either side of the office while a low stone wall and steps terrace its west side. Two large deadora cedars flank the rear of the office. Also present was a flowering cherry tree, a crepe myrtle, and boxwood bushes. A storm destroyed a large Franklinia tree but it has been replaced by a young tree of the same specimen.

**ADDENDUM TO
FORT HILL, OFFICE
(McElhenny-Calhoun-Clemson House, Office)
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History: In his sacred abode, John C. Calhoun prepared his speeches and penned his literary work. Calhoun commanded much admiration from friends and foes alike for the articles written in this space. Calhoun's doctrine of nullification and states' rights, in particular, reflected his use of the office for it was dubbed the "Fort Hill Address." Calhoun wrote this piece on 26 July 1831.

Today, the decorative arts displayed in the plantation office correspond to Calhoun's political career. The provenance for the desk, for example, is in its presence in Calhoun's Abbeville, South Carolina, law office. The Senatorial chair adjacent to the desk belonged to Calhoun; it was used while he served in the United States Senate. To the right is another desk which was a gift from the people of South Carolina upon his election to the Vice-Presidency in 1824. It is made from Swiss oak that was elaborately (hand) carved in Europe. Also tied to Calhoun are the high back leather upholstered chair, andirons, fender, library stepladder, settee and chair, and the maps.

In the library were two volumes of the *Recordings of the Senate* as well as an eighteen volume set of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. These references were joined by a book press with a wheel turn, now seen in the middle of the room. Likenesses of Calhoun displayed in the library include a steel engraving placed over the mantel, a silhouette over the bookcase, and a plaster bust. Calhoun's nephew, Ransom Calhoun, drew the illustrations of Erie Canal while he was a student at West Point; and Calhoun's grandson Patrick is depicted in the marble bust.

In the hall of the main house today are Calhoun's plantation-style desk and banjo clock. Both items were taken from the office.

Sources: There are early views from *Scribners Monthly* as well as other historic photographs.

Historian: William D. Hiott, Summer 1997.