

# Keowee, Plantation Home of John Ewing Calhoun

## 1798 , South Carolina

<http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=9529>

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### Keowee, Plantation Home of John Ewing Calhoun

Probably the most elaborate plantation home in the district was Keowee, originally built 1792 as the summer home of United States Senator **John Ewing Calhoun** and his wife **Floride Bonneau Calhoun**. It later became the residence of their son, Colonel **John Ewing Calhoun, Jr.**, brother of Mrs. John C. Calhoun. The imposing white frame house had a circular portico supported by tall, stately columns. It stood on a high hill overlooking the headwaters of the Seneca River, the Keowee and Twelve Mile Rivers. In the spring, when hundreds of white dogwoods bloomed on the grounds, Keowee was a scene of enchanting beauty. The remains of Keowee Heights are contained within the present Clemson University Experimental Forest.

Colonel Calhoun was an able financier and served at one time as state treasurer. Workers on the plantation supposedly said that Calhoun was so rich he shod his horses with silver horseshoes. The extensive plantation included a small cloth-making plant. (Source: *The Pendleton Legacy* by Beth Ann Klosky, pg 53.)

The only information regarding the appearance of Keowee comes from *Keowee Waltzes*, composed by Martha Calhoun, daughter of John Ewing Calhoun. Martha pictures the home as being a splendid example of the large, southern, Colonial type of architecture, with tall columns supporting the entrance portion. Brick used in construction was brought from England. The handrails of the stairway were of ebony brought from the West Indies.

Calhoun enjoyed shooting and collected guns, which he kept in a favorite cabinet in his study. From the portico one could look down upon the famous stables and racetrack in the bottoms below the house. Here John Ewing Coalhoun bred and raced his thoroughbreds, and here, the favorites were shod with silver. Racing his favorite horses, always ridden by his chosen race-rider, was his passion. John Ewing Calhoun's wife was the sister of Warren F. Davis, and the considerable fortune she brought into the marriage enabled her husband to indulge in the luxuriate mode of living for which he was noted. The extensive entertaining at Keowee is said to have been extremely lavish, with many African Americans on the plantation dressed in satin liveries to wait upon the important guests of the house. (Source: *Tales from the South Carolina Upstate: Where the Cotton & Peaches Grow* by Nancy Rhyne, 2007, pg 23.)

Sadly, in the late 1920s or early 1930s a fire destroyed the house. However, the remnants of Keowee provide a point of special interests in the Clemson forest. The house is represented by foundation works and is surrounded by a diverse assortment of mature trees. In the valley across the road are the remains

of the spring house, and on a nearby hill is the family cemetery where John Ewing Colhoun and his family are buried. (Source: *Quiet Reflections: The Clemson University Forest* by John S. Garton and C. Thomas Wyche, 2007.)