

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1991

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hart, Thomas E., House, and Kalmia Gardens

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 624 West Carolina Avenue

not for publication

city, town Hartsville

vicinity

state South Carolina code SC

county Darlington

code 031

zip code 29550

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic Resources of Hartsville, SC, c. 1817-c. 1941

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Mary W. Edmonds
Signature of certifying official

3/4/91
Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, SC
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

entered in the
National Register

William Byrum

5/3/91

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Landscape/Garden

Domestic/Secondary Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Museum

Landscape/Garden

Recreation and Culture/Museum/Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic/I-House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Thomas E. Hart House is located at 624 West Carolina Avenue in Hartsville and is part of Kalmia Gardens. The house is an excellent local example of an I-House. Built c. 1817, change through time is seen in the replacement of window sash and the one-story rear addition made c. 1932. Begun in 1932, Kalmia Gardens is the only known historic botanical garden in South Carolina. This property is representative of Hartsville's historic public facilities.

The Thomas E. Hart House is of heavy timber frame construction with weatherboard siding. It is two-stories with a rectangular plan, lateral gable roof, and exterior end chimneys. The five bay symmetrical facade has a central entry. The broken side lights and transom, and two-over-two double-hung-sash windows reflect c. 1932 alterations. A one-story, hip roof porch extends across the full facade and wraps to the right elevation. It features square wooden pillars with beaded corners and a slat balustrade. The facade beneath the porch is clad with flush board siding which follows the porch to the right elevation. Paneled wainscoting extends the length of the facade and right elevation. Significant interior features include paneled wainscoting and carved mantels of differing designs in each of the four original rooms.

A one-story addition was made to the rear c. 1932.

The property immediately surrounding the Hart House includes a c. 1932 frame, hip roof, building which contributes to the historic character of the property, and a non-historic, small, frame, tool shed which is non-contributing.

Kalmia Gardens consists of 28 acres of natural and planted flora, and designed features such as a pond and paths. The garden is located on an eighty-foot bluff on Black Creek. This unique topography creates the setting for the indigenous growth of mountain laurel (*kalmia latifolia*), which is the main theme of the garden. Approximately 150 other plant species are found in Kalmia Gardens. In accordance with Mrs. May Roper Coker's goals, seven of South Carolina's eleven native plant communities have been established in the garden: Swamp Forest, Aquatic Vegetation, Shrub Bog (Pocosin), Grass Sedge (Savannah), Sand Hill, Old Field

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture
Exploration/Settlement
Landscape Architecture
Science

Period of Significance
c. 1817-1842
1932
1934-35

Significant Dates
c. 1817
1932
1935

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
Hart, Thomas E.
Coker, May Roper

Architect/Builder
Coker, May Roper (Kalmia Gardens)
Harbison, Thomas G. (Kalmia Gardens)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Thomas E. Hart House is significant as an excellent local example of an early nineteenth-century I-House and for its association with Thomas Edwards Hart (1796-1842), the prominent Darlington County planter for whom Hartsville was named. The house is a central feature of Kalmia Gardens, which is significant as a designed botanical garden of the early twentieth century and is the only known such garden in South Carolina.

The house was built c. 1817 by Hart, soon after he moved to this site on Black Creek and acquired a tract of some nine hundred acres. Hart was a native of Society Hill, in the northeastern portion of present-day Darlington County. "Capt. Hart owned at one time a large quantity of land," his grandson and namesake Thomas Hart Law recalled in 1911, "including both the considerable plantation where he resided, and the plantation afterwards owned by my father, and much of that now owned by Major Jas. L. Coker, where the Town of Hartsville is located, and extending on both sides of Black Creek. In addition to farming on these lands, cultivated by his slaves under overseers, he also conducted a country, or crossroads store." Hart was the first postmaster in the area, operating it in his store from 1838 to 1842, and the community was named "Hartville" or "Hartsville" as early as 1837. He also served as justice of the peace, chairman of the board of free schools, and captain of a local militia company, and though he had no formal medical training, even served the Hartsville community as a doctor. Hart's death in 1842, at the age of forty-seven, was believed to have been hastened by financial reverses which forced the sale of most of his property. Most of his holdings, including the house and some twelve hundred acres, passed to his brother-in-law, John W. Lide, who held them in trust for Hart's widow and children. (1)

Through Lide's ownership, Hannah Lide Hart retained the house and surrounding property until 1859, when she sold it to Thomas C. Law, a son-in-law. It later passed through a succession of owners until 1932, when the house and forty-four acres were acquired by Dr. William Chambers Coker, botanist at the University of North Carolina and member of

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

SC Department of Archives & History,
Columbia, SC

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 30 acres

UTM References

A

1	7
---	---

5	8	1	4	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	8	0	3	2	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

1	7
---	---

5	8	1	5	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	8	0	2	8	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

C

1	7
---	---

5	8	1	1	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	8	0	2	8	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D

1	7
---	---

5	8	1	0	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	8	0	3	1	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nomination is shown as the broken line labeled "Thomas E. Hart House and Kalmia Gardens" on the accompanying map, "City of Hartsville," drawn at a scale of 1" = 500'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the house, historic outbuilding, and historic gardens.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Tracy Power, NR Historian/Julie Turner, NR Architectural Historian

organization SC Department of Archives & History date 13 June 1990

street & number PO Box 11669 telephone (803) 734-8610

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29211

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Community, and Great Forest. Plant species include: azaleas, yellow jessamine, dogwood, sparkleberry, hawthorne, tulip popular, crabapple, and camellias.

Two sets of wrought iron gates (c. 1935) mark the entry of Kalmia Gardens at the Thomas E. Hart House. Designed in the Art Nouveau style, the gates feature stylized camellia flowers and leaves. The name "Kalmia Gardens" and the initials "MRC" (May Roper Coker) and "DTF" (thought to be for Mrs. Frank Tydlesley, the artist) also appear in the design. Each pair of gates are hung on solid brick posts constructed by Wilmot Barry, who worked for the City of Hartsville for many years.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Hartsville's most prominent family. He then gave the house and property to his sister-in-law, May Roper Coker (1890-1976), the wife of David Robert Coker, founder of Coker Pedigreed Seed Company. Mrs. Coker made several alterations to the house c. 1932, including a one-story rear addition.(2)

In addition to its association with Thomas E. Hart, by the early twentieth century the property was locally well known for its topography and its indigenous plant life, both of which were unusual in the Pee Dee region of the state. A steep eighty-foot bluff behind the house, overlooking Black Creek, is a rarity in the predominately flat and gently rolling country of northeastern South Carolina. This bluff is an excellent environment for mountain laurel, which grows abundantly here and which gave the property its local name of "Laurel Land." Dr. Coker wrote that "the beautiful flowers against the rich green leaves in spring make this plant unsurpassed in ornamental value . . . The finest [specimens] are now along the creek below the paper mill and at Laurel Land and above."(3)

Mrs. Coker's interest in gardens and in South Carolina's native plants led her to plan and develop a botanical garden on the property. Kalmia Gardens, named for the native mountain laurel, or *kalmia latifolia*, was planned by Mrs. Coker with the assistance of botanist/landscape gardener Thomas G. Harbison, of Asheville, North Carolina, and Dr. Coker. The gardens took advantage of the flourishing mountain laurel; encouraged the growth of other native plants; and introduced new plants, most notably azaleas and camellias. Harbison helped build a small pond in 1933-34, and introduced many plantings of azaleas in 1935. Mrs. Coker purchased additional land, maintained both the native and introduced plants, and opened Kalmia Gardens to the public in 1935. The entrance gates were crafted in Wales at that time as a gift for Mrs. Coker, and were designed by Mrs. Frank Tyldesley of Llandndno, Wales.(4)

"We intend eventually to make it not only a beautiful garden which will compete with the famous Charleston gardens," David R. Coker wrote, "but to make it as well a botanist's laboratory and observatory where many of the rare plants of this general section can be discovered." Kalmia Gardens was an immediate success, and Coker observed as early as May 1935 that "the garden is already attracting considerable attention and we have had over 5000 visitors this spring, many from a distance."(5) In 1936 a radio broadcast titled "The Spirit of Hartsville" called the gardens "a delight to the botanists, a joy to lovers of beauty and a blessing to her community. This garden is a symbol of Hartsville, a reminder of the deep scientific interest and the true love of beauty of [the Coker family]."(6)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

In 1965 Mrs. Coker gave the property, consisting of the house and twenty-eight acres of gardens, to Coker College in memory of her late husband; the college has maintained Kalmia Gardens since that time as a public botanical garden. (7)

NOTES

(1) J.L. Coker, Hartsville: Its Early Settlers: The Growth of the Town with Sketches of its Institutions and Enterprises (Hartsville: Pee Dee Historical Society, 1911; Reprint Edition, Hartsville: Hartsville Messenger and Press, 1976), p. 15; see also pp. 4-5, 15-16; National Archives Microfilm Publications, Record of Appointments of Postmasters 1832-September 30, 1971: South Carolina: Abbeville-Greenwood Counties, Microcopy 841, Roll 114 (Washington: National Archives, 1973); Horace Fraser Rudisill, Darlington County: A Pictorial History: From the Photographic Archives of the Darlington County Historical Commission (Norfolk: The Donning Company, 1986), pp. 112-13; Eliza Cowan Ervin and Horace Fraser Rudisill, Editors, Darlingtoniana: A History of People, Places and Events in Darlington County, South Carolina (Columbia: R.L. Bryan, 1964; Reprint Edition, Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1976), pp. 57-60, 61; Darlington County Deed Book G, p. 277, Deed Book L, p. 449, Deed Book O, p. 70, Darlington County Records, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.; Sara Law Jones, "Transcript of Some of the Papers Pertaining to the Family and Plantation of Captain Thomas E. Hart of Hartsville, So. Carolina. 1770-1890," unpublished typescript, 1959, in Research Files, Kalmia Gardens of Coker College, Hartsville, S.C.

(2) Coker, p. 16; Jones, "Transcript of Some of the Papers . . . of Captain Thomas E. Hart;" C.K. Dunlap, Jr., "A History of Kalmia Gardens, Hartsville, S.C.," unpublished typescript, 2 April 1984, in Research Files, Kalmia Gardens of Coker College, Hartsville, S.C.; Darlington County Deed Book T, p. 315, Deed Book HH, p. 311, Deed Book 71, p. 75, Deed Book 81, p. 749, Deed Book 115, pp. 572, 575, Deed Book 109, p. 23, Deed Book 180, p. 574, Darlington County Records, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.; George Lee Simpson, Jr., The Cokers of Carolina: A Social Biography of a Family (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute for Research in Social Science, 1956), pp. 238-245; "William Chambers Coker," in The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography . . . Volume XLII (New York: James T. White and Company, 1958), pp. 323-24; "David Robert Coker," in The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography . . . Volume XXIX (New York: James T. White and Company, 1941), p. 99.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

(3) Dunlap, "A History of Kalmia Gardens;" William Chambers Coker, The Plant Life of Hartsville, S.C. (Columbia: The State Company for the Pee Dee Historical Society, 1912), pp. 7, 18, 53-54.

(4) Dunlap, "A History of Kalmia Gardens;" George Sawyer, Jr., "Handbook for Tour Guides at Kalmia Gardens," unpublished typescript, April 1984, in Research Files, Kalmia Gardens of Coker College, Hartsville, S.C.; "Kalmia Gardens: A Gift With a Past and a Future," Coker Notes (Hartsville: Coker College), Spring 1965, 3-4; Lucile Boswell Neely, Hartsville: Our Community, Revised Edition (Columbia: R.L. Bryan, 1965), p. 311.

(5) David R. Coker to Fred E. Lowry, 1 March 1935; Coker to W.A. Law, 1 March 1935; Coker to W.C. Coker, 1 March 1935; Coker to Ellison A. Smyth, 4 April 1935; Coker to T.G. Harbison, 26 April 1935; Coker to Fred E. Lowry, 28 May 1935, David R. Coker Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

(6) "The Spirit of Hartsville: Radio Address Delivered Friday Night Over Radio Station WBT, Charlotte, N.C. By A.L.M. Wiggins, Chairman Hartsville Community Center Building Commission," quoted in Hartsville Messenger, 27 February 1936.

(7) Dunlap, "A History of Kalmia Gardens;" Sawyer, "Handbook for Tour Guides at Kalmia Gardens;" "Kalmia Gardens: A Gift With a Past and a Future," 3-4; Neely, p. 311.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

PHOTOGRAPHS

Section number _____ Page 1

Name of property: Thomas E. Hart House and Kalmia Gardens
(Historic Resources of Hartsville
multiple property submission)

Location of property: Hartsville, South Carolina
Location of negative: South Carolina Department of Archives and History
Photographer: Staff, SC Dept. of Archives and History
Date of photograph: May 1990

1. T.E. Hart House
Front Facade
2. T.E. Hart House
Oblique
3. T.E. Hart House
Porch Detail
4. T.E. Hart House
Mantel Detail
5. Kalmia Gardens
Gate
6. Kalmia Gardens
Black Creek on the Low Trail
7. Kalmia Gardens
High Trail
8. Kalmia Gardens
Pond