United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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
   city, town Hartsville
   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
   2
   Noncontributing
   1
   Total
   buildings
   sites
   structures
   objects

   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
   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
   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.
   See continuation sheet.
   removed from the National Register.
   other, (explain:)
   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

[See continuation sheet]
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

[See continuation sheet]
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 # ____________________________
Record # ____________________________

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

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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'.

Boundary Justification

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

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
city or town Columbia
telephone (803) 734-8610
state SC zip code 29211
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.
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]."\(^6\)
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


(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.


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Continuation Sheet

PHOTOGRAPHS

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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>T.E. Hart House Oblique</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>T.E. Hart House Porch Detail</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>T.E. Hart House Mantel Detail</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Kalmia Gardens Gate</td>
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<td>Kalmia Gardens Black Creek on the Low Trail</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Kalmia Gardens High Trail</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Kalmia Gardens Pond</td>
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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