The oldest portion of the Peter and Comfort Clemmons House was built ca. 1805 when Peter and Comfort moved to what was then Rowan County from Guilford County. Peter was born in Accomack County, Virginia, in 1749 and moved to North Carolina from Delaware in 1777. Peter and Comfort had fourteen children, all of whom were born before their relocation to Rowan County. Peter, described as “Merchant of Clemmonsville” in some deeds, opened a store, ran a grist mill on Little Creek, and farmed. He published a book called “Poor Peter’s Call to His Children” in 1812. A devout Quaker, Peter filled the book with advice on living a holy and religious life, including chapters on the “Danger of Bad Council,” “Advice to Sons,” and “Christian Life.” Having freed his own enslaved people eighty years before Emancipation, he also included a chapter on the “Injustice of Slavery.” The village was named Clemmonsville after him in 1824, though the “ville” was later dropped.

The long, two-story, weatherboarded house has a porch that spans the entire street façade. Multi-pane sidelights and a transom surround the entrance on the west side. Brick chimneys with corbelled stacks and a metal roof provide visual interest. The chimney that rises through the interior of the house has three fireplaces on the first floor and four on the second, providing heat to seven different rooms. Interior detailing reflects the staged development of the house, with late Georgian/early Federal elements in the original ca. 1805 section and Greek Revival elements in the ca. 1850 addition.

Peter Clemmons’ great-grandson, Edwin T. Clemmons, was born in Clemmonsville in 1826 but attended school in Salem. He was awarded a mail route that ran from Salem to Jefferson in 1851. First based in Salem and later Asheville, Edwin sold his Clemmonsville land holdings in 1855. Over the next decades, he expanded his business, eventually offering stage service across North Carolina. One of his finest coaches, the Hattie Butner, was named for his wife. It is on permanent loan to the Village of Clemmons and can be seen in the Village Hall. The Hattie Butner is the inspiration for the village seal. Having no heirs, at his death in 1896, Edwin left the balance of his estate to the Southern Province of the Moravian Church to build a church and co-ed boarding school in Clemmons. The first Clemmons School sat in the southeast corner of the Peter and Comfort Clemmons House yard.

In 1868, Henry W. Fries bought the property from Confederate veterans, merchants, and brothers Adolphus A. Moss and Columbus W. Moss, who had gone bankrupt. It is
likely the Moss brothers owned the house and land by 1860 because the 1860 Census records them living next to each other in Clemmonsville. That year, Adolphus was a 39-year-old merchant with four children who owned real estate worth $2,000 and had a personal estate valued at $11,690. Counted as assets in his personal estate, the 1860 Slave Schedule records that Adolphus owned two Black adults and six Black children: one man, one woman, four girls, and two boys. The youngest girl was just three months old. His land included a single “slave house.” Younger brother Columbus Moss was 27 years old, owned real estate worth $1,100, and had a personal estate valued at $7,590. He had two children in the household, his own and an enslaved 10-year-old Black girl.

Henry W. Fries lived almost his entire life in Salem and was a prominent Moravian and businessman. In 1846, Fries joined his brother in business at the F & H Fries Wool and Cotton Mills. Fries served as a Commissioner of the town of Salem, trustee of the Moravian Church, president of the Northwestern North Carolina Railroad, director of the North Carolina Railroad, director of the Wachovia Loan and Trust Company, and director of the Fries Manufacturing and Power Company. He had a multitude of real estate investments, including the Clemmons House. He never married and passed away in 1902.

James Peter “J.P.” Sprinkle bought the house and 400 acres from the Henry W. Fries Estate for $5,090.52 in 1903. Sprinkle moved in with his wife and three daughters the following year, after the renters vacated. Sprinkle owned and operated Clemmons Lumber Co. Fannie Sprinkle, one of J.P.’s children, graduated from Clemmons Moravian School – funded by the estate of Edwin Clemmons – in 1906. She then received a teaching certificate and taught school. In 1917, Fannie married Henly M. Ogburn. Henly had several jobs, including operating a grocery store, gas station/convenience store, and employment at Hanes Knitting. Fannie and Henly lived in the Clemmons House, where she provided care for her aging parents until her father’s death in 1955. Fannie and Henly’s son, James Ogburn, and his wife, Frances, retained ownership until their son, Robert “Bobby” Ogburn, inherited the house in 2019. Bobby protected the house with the donation of a historic preservation easement to Preservation Forsyth before selling it to a couple with plans to rehabilitate the house in 2020.

This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission web site: www.ForsythCountyHRC.org