



My Century in History: Memoirs

Thomas D. Clark

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When Thomas D. Clark was hired to teach history at the University of Kentucky in 1931, he began a career that would span nearly three-quarters of a century and would profoundly change not only the history department and the university but the entire Commonwealth. His still-definitive *History of Kentucky* (1937) was one of more than thirty books he would write or edit that dealt with Kentucky, the South, and the American frontier.

In addition to his wide scholarly contributions, Clark devoted his life to the preservation of Kentucky's historical records. He began this crusade by collecting vast stores of Kentucky's military records from the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. His efforts resulted in the Commonwealth's first archival system and the subsequent creation of the Kentucky Library and Archives, the University of Kentucky Special Collections and Archives, the Kentucky Oral History Commission, the Kentucky History Center (recently named for him), and the University Press of Kentucky.

Born in 1903 on a cotton farm in Louisville, Mississippi, Thomas Dionysius Clark would follow a long and winding path to find his life's passion in the study of history. He dropped out of school after seventh grade to work first at a sawmill and then on a canal dredgeboat before resuming his formal education. Clark's earliest memories—hearing about local lynch-mob violence and witnessing the destruction of virgin forest—are an invaluable window into the national issues of racial injustice and environmental depredation. In many ways, the story of Dr. Clark's life is the story of America in the twentieth century. In *My Century in History*, Clark offers vivid memories of his journey, both personal and academic, a journey that took him from Mississippi to Kentucky and North Carolina, to leadership of the nation's major historical organizations, and to visiting professorships in Austria, England, Greece, and India, as well as in universities throughout the United States.

An enormously popular public lecturer and teacher, he touched thousands of lives in Kentucky and around the world. With his characteristic wit and insight, Clark now offers his many admirers one final volume of history—his own.

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