

Dockery, Claudius ^[1]

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by Michael J. Fawcett, 1986

5 Apr. 1865–14 Jan. 1941

Claudius Dockery, lawyer, public servant, farmer, and, briefly, historian and diplomat, was born in Mangum, Richmond County ^[2], the son of Confederate Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Hart Dockery ^[3] and Sallie Dumas Dockery and the grandson of "General" Alfred Dockery ^[4]. Young Claudius followed in his father's footsteps by attending The University of North Carolina ^[5], where he was president of the Dialectic Society ^[6], a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Phi Delta Phi fraternities, and an editor of the University Magazine ^[7]. Graduating in 1887, he was appointed to the faculty as instructor in Latin. During his one-year term the precocious Dockery produced a remarkable historical essay, "A Criticism of Accepted Historical Opinions of Governor Gabriel Johnston ^[8]'s Administration." In this perceptive document, presented to the North Carolina Historical Society in May 1888, he argued that the progress credited to the colonial governor who served from 1734 to 1752 was actually stimulated by factors beyond Johnston's control.

Dockery and his father were both Republicans. When their party regained the presidency in 1889, Benjamin Harrison appointed Oliver Dockery as consul general to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, then ruled by King Don Pedro. Claudius was his father's deputy. The Dockerys were recalled when Democrat Grover Cleveland ^[9] replaced Harrison in 1893.

After receiving a University of North Carolina law degree in 1894, the younger Dockery returned to his native Richmond County where he was register of deeds from 1894 to 1897. He was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1896; apparently he also continued to serve as state prison director under Governor Daniel L. Russell ^[10], a Republican. Dockery held the latter post until 1901, when Russell was replaced by Democrat Charles Brantley Aycock ^[11]. This departure marked the end of Dockery's political career, for the Democrats under Aycock and Furnifold M. Simmons ^[12] were determined to keep both blacks and Republicans ^[13] "in their place." Under presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, he served as U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of North Carolina—a federal appointive office. From 1912 until his death he was a member of The University of North Carolina Trustee Executive Committee; he also held membership on the building committee for the third university infirmary, Abernethy Hall. In his last years he also practiced law.

A leader of the state Republican party, Dockery served on its executive committee during the Taft administration and was a delegate to the 1920 Republican National Convention in Chicago.

On 16 Apr. 1900 Dockery married Maude May Ryder of New York. She bore him two children, Claudius, Jr., of Greensboro ^[14] and Mrs. Calvin L. (Dorothy) Dickinson of Santa Rosa, Calif. Dockery was a Baptist and a member of the Odd Fellows.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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