

Clark, John Washington ^[1]

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by David Clark and Charles W. Eagles, 1979

5 Oct. 1887–18 Apr. 1969

John Washington Clark, textile manufacturer, businessman, and civic leader, was born in [Raleigh](#) ^[2] to Susan Washington Graham and [Walter Clark](#) ^[3], chief justice of the [state supreme court](#) ^[4]. At age fourteen Clark enrolled in [North Carolina State College](#) ^[5] and was graduated in 1906 with a degree in textiles. In 1908 the Philadelphia Textile School (later Institute) awarded him a degree in cotton manufacturing. After graduation Clark returned to North Carolina and became manager for Erwin Cotton Mills.

In 1923 Clark and his brother, [David](#) ^[6], bought a cotton mill and a [gristmill](#) ^[7] in Franklinville and established Randolph Mills. In 1939 Clark acquired Locke Cotton Mills of Concord and merged them with Randolph Mills. Clark served as president of the [Southern Textile Association](#) ^[8]. His other business interests included a printing operation next to the Franklinville Mill, a flour and feed mill in Franklinville, a hatchery and broiler business, and a chicken processing plant. He also managed the 4,000-acre Ventosa Plantation in Scotland Neck.

Active in local and state affairs, Clark in 1924 founded and gave the first books to the Franklinville Library, the first in [Randolph County](#) ^[9]. He also established a thirty-acre park for the town. He was an early advocate of flood control on the [Roanoke River](#) ^[10], which led to the building of the John H. Kerr Dam on Buggs Island. Clark served on the board of directors of the [Greensboro Daily News](#) ^[11] and was active in the Rotary Club, the [Methodist](#) ^[12] church, and the [Democratic](#) ^[13] party.

He served on the Board of Trustees of the Consolidated University of North Carolina for thirty years, and in 1961 the [General Assembly](#) ^[14] made him an honorary lifetime trustee. He was also on the Board of Trustees of North Carolina State College, and he presided over the college's General Alumni Association in 1945–46. At North Carolina State College, Clark was a founder and director of the Textile Foundation and a director of the Agricultural Foundation, the Engineering Foundation, and the Hofmann Forest. Called an "outspoken advocate of segregation" by the Associated Press, Clark in the 1950s fought integration of North Carolina State College.

Clark married Nannie Elizabeth Wright of Durham, and they had five children. He died of a heart attack in Asheboro and was buried in the Methodist Cemetery in Franklinville.

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