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Clarence Carroll Clark Papers

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1909-1981

2 boxes (1 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 393



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Ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1911, Dr. Clark accepted the position of director of the Chapel of the Comforter in Greenwich Village, New York, a mission that abandoned its traditional Christian practices in favor of the teachings of theosophy. A prolific writer and lecturer, Clark stressed in his work the similarities between Eastern and Western religions, and emphasized his belief that unity among religions would bring about a spiritual re-awakening throughout the world. After serving as director of the Chapel of the Comforter for more than forty years, Clark retired in 1950.

Clark's papers document his career as a professor of English, Episcopal priest, Theosophist, and Director of the Chapel of the Comforter in Greenwich Village, N.Y. Consisting of correspondence, lecture notes, and selected writings, the collection chronicles Clark's religious beliefs and his passion for the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

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Background on Clarence Carroll Clark

Born in Baltimore, Md., in 1875, Clarence Carroll Clark graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 1896 with a degree in English literature before earning his doctorate at Yale (1903). Although he began on a standard course into the academy, teaching literature at Bryn Mawr College from 1903 to 1911 and rising to the rank of assistant professor, Clark left his scholarship behind to enter the ministry.

Ordained as an Episcopal priest by the Episcopal Diocese of New York in 1911, Clark soon took up his duties at the Chapel of the Comforter on Horatio Street in Greenwich Village, New York, pastoring to a working class flock. Although founded as a traditional Christian mission sixty years before, the Chapel of the Comforter had become highly influenced by Theosophical thought by 1909, and Clark's was given responsibility not only for leading the chapel, but a theosophical parochial school at the request of some prominent members, including Genevieve Griscom, H. B. Mitchell, and Ernest Temple Hargrove, former president of the Theosophical Society of America.

Clark remained in ministry at the Chapel of the Comforter until he retired in 1950, becoming a prolific writer and lecturer on literary topics, weaving the themes of faith, interfaith dialog, spirituality, and world religions into his work. Publishing regularly in the *Theosophical Quarterly*, Clark explored the similarities of Eastern and Western religious traditions, emphasizing the unity of religions as a spark for a greater spiritual awakening in the world. Clark's grounding in literature and love for poetry also led him to become an interpreter of Emily Dickinson, about whom he wrote "only a deeply religious person can understand and appreciate" her.

Following his retirement in 1950 and the closure of the Chapel of the Comforter, Clark moved uptown into the Episcopal Retirement Home near Columbia University. He continued his studies and writing for several years, delivering a memorial service for Ray Ethan Torrey, a beloved botany professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a student of Theosophy. Clark's parishioners endowed a Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard in 1958.

At the age of 89, Clark moved to a retirement cottage in Pomfret, Conn., that had been built for him by one of his former parishioners, George Woodbridge. Clark remained there until his death in May 1973.

Scope of collection

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Inventory

Biographical

1911-1968

Box 1: 1

Biographical: obituary

1973 May 16

Box 1: 2

Chapel of the Comforter

1912-1942

Box 1: 3



Clarence C. Clark, ca.1920

Chapel of the Comforter: music

ca. 1948

Box 1: 4

Correspondence

1910-1960

Box 1: 5

Correspondence

1962-1971

Box 1: 6

Correspondence: Sewall, Richard

1971

Box 1: 7

Photographs

Box 1: 8

Photographs: Chapel of the Comforter

ca. 1925

Box 1: 9

Photographs: Clark family

Box 1: 10

Prayers and services

1912-1947

Box 1: 11

Prayers and services

undated

Box 1: 12

Prayers and services

undated

Box 1: 13

Sermons

1933-1960

Box 1: 14

Sermons

undated

Box 2: 1

Sermons

undated

Box 2: 2

Theosophical Quarterly articles: Edmund Burke; Bolshevik verse; Shelley and Keats; Personality and individuality; A sermon for St. Mark's Day; My twenty first convention; Wordsworth; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Charles Johnston; On living by principle; Theosophy in sermons

1919-1938

Box 2: 3

Theosophical Quarterly articles: Thomas Traherne; The hidden life of the soul; The spiritual element in XXth century poetry; The heart of France; Cyclic law in art; French literature and the war; The sunshine of October afternoons

1909-1919

Box 2: 4

Writing: Emily Dickinson

1957-1981

Box 2: 5

Writing: Emily Dickinson

undated

Box 2: 6

Writing: Emily Dickinson

undated

Box 2: 7

Writing: Emily Dickinson newsclippings

1968-1972

Box 2: 8

Writing: lecture notes

1932
Box 2: 9
Writing: lecture notes
undated
Box 2: 10
Writing: lecture notes
undated
Box 2: 11
Writing: lecture notes
undated
Box 2: 12

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Raymond P. Tripp, Jr., Aug. 1997.

Digitized content

Some photographs from the collection have been digitized and may be [viewed online in Credo](#).

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2017.

Language:

English

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Cite as: Clarence Carroll Clark Papers (MS 393). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Chapel of the Comforter (New York, N.Y.)

Dickinson, Emily, 1830-1886

Episcopal Church--Clergy

Theosophy

Contributors

Clark, Clarence Carroll [main entry]

Genres and formats

Photographs

Sermons

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