



# Tell Us Your Story

Roberta Clark Rogers

My paternal grandfather, Orrin Melville Clark, was born in 1870 in Lake Zurich, Illinois, while his family was traveling west by wagon train, seeking a better life. His father died in 1880. His mother eventually remarried, and the new family moved to South Dakota.

Although an eloquent speaker, my grandfather did not speak much about his childhood, especially the poor and difficult years in Deadwood, the wild epicenter of the Black Hills gold rush. Evidently, a prominent citizen recognized him as a young man with potential and took him under his wing. He had him tutored and helped facilitate my grandfather's attending Andover, Yale University, and Yale Law School on scholarships, changing the course of his life.

My grandmother, Georgette Francesca Durkes, was born in Paris of a German father and French mother. She met my grandfather, thirteen years her senior, on a train in Europe. When he proposed, her parents, wanting to know more about this American, wrote to the "Mayor of Brooklyn" asking for a reference. By this time my grandfather was a practicing attorney in New York. We don't know whether the mayor ever wrote a reference, but Orrin and Georgette did marry in 1904.



Photo: Orrin and Georgette Clark

