

ARTHUR WATTS CLARK (1923-2023) COMMENTS ON "DOWNTOWN BY HISTORY AND CHOICE"

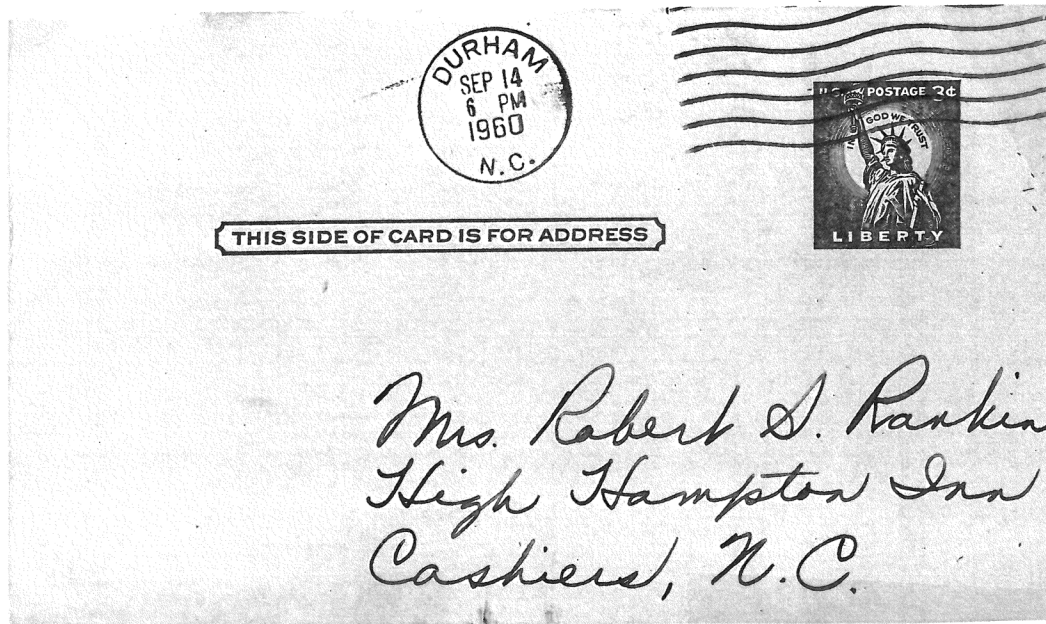
In 3 cents postal card dated and postmarked September 14, 1960, addressed to Dorothy (Ms. Robert S.) Rankin then in Cashiers, NC, Arthur Clark reported on the historic congregational meeting held the previous evening at First Presbyterian Church. He was then an elder representative on the Executive Committee of the church's Long-Range Study and Planning Committee. The committee charged him and Diaconate representative Watts Hill, Jr. to draft what became known as the Clark-Hill Report. Both were related to the church's foremost benefactor George Washington Watts. Their Report offered four options the first of which was to remain downtown and substantially improve the physical plant while option 3 endorsed selling the church property and relocating the church to a new site and physical plant in the city's southwest suburbs. Whatever choice was made, the Report insisted that the congregational vote must constitute "an overwhelming majority." The larger Executive Committee voted over one dissent in the Diaconate (Watts Hill, Jr.?) and one dissent in the Session (Arthur Watts Clark, Sr.?) to present only option 3 to the congregational meeting. That meeting's proceedings and its ramifications are the subject of Arthur Clark's timely postcard:

Dear Dorothy

Wednesday 14 September [1960]

At the congregational meeting last night the vote was 207 in favor of the resolution [to relocate] and 139 opposed. In other words, those present voted about 60-40 in the affirmative. Though this obviously constitutes a majority, it is certainly not an overwhelming expression of determination to relocate. And 346 was not a particularly impressive turnout [1960 congregational census=947]. The meeting was long, and there was a good deal of discussion. It was, however, not acrimonious.

As you may well know, the picture is vastly complicated by [Rev,] Kelsey's [Regen's, 1941-1960] impending move. I believe we have every reason to fear that he will not be with us two months hence. Unless something alters the apparent course of events, he will accept the call from Richmond's [VA] First Church. [Dissolution of his relationship with First Church reluctantly approved in a congregational meeting held on October 16, 1960] I'm very much afraid that the die is cast. We miss you. Have fun. Arthur



Wednesday, 14 Sep 60.

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As you may well know, the picture now is verily complicated by Kelsey's impending move. I believe we have every reason to fear that he will not be with us two months hence. Unless something alters the apparent course of events, he will accept the call from Richmond's First Church. I'm very much afraid that the die is cast. We miss you. Have fun. Ann

Credit: Donation June 14, 2023 by Mrs. Battle Rankin Robinson of Georgetown, DE of First Church-related items collected by her mother, Dorothy (Mrs. Robert S.) Rankin who served as Assistant Choir Director.

Submitted by Peter Fish, FPC Historian and Archivist