

B&C BOOKS

JAMES L. CLARK — A Lifetime of Adventure



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RENOWNED AS A SCULPTOR, taxidermist, scientist, conservationist, and one of the pioneers in developing natural habitat displays at the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. James L. Clark started early in pursuit of art and adventure. Born in 1883 in Providence, Rhode Island, he was a high school drop-out who got his start as an apprentice at the Gorham Company working under artists designing silver pieces. His highly developed skills earned him a position at the American Museum of Natural History while still only seventeen years old.

Progressing rapidly, James L. Clark was soon a department head and the first "boss" of Roy Chapman Andrews. Clark and Andrews collaborated in creating the giant shale display which became famous at the museum. Clark's skill at taxidermy came to the attention of Carl Akeley, who was then at the Field Museum in Chicago. Akeley was a pioneer in taxidermy that accurately displayed animals in a natural form. He was impressed with Clark and invited him to work under him in Chicago where over a

period of several months, Clark learned Akeley's methods.

Restless in a desire to seek adventure, Clark resigned from the American Museum to participate in safaris with A. Radclyffe Dugmore and later with Cherry Kearton, both renowned wildlife photographers. His reputation became such that he later mounted several of the elephants shot by Theodore Roosevelt for the African Hall elephant display conceived by Carl Akeley. This display was completed by Clark after Akeley's untimely death in the Belgian Congo in 1926.

In 1910, at the ripe old age of 27, Clark established his taxidermy studio in New York which was highly successful. He collaborated with Akeley to develop a camera especially suited to wildlife photography, which they turned into a successful commercial venture. His reputation as a sculptor grew as well.

Returning to the American Museum of Natural History, Clark made 20 or more expeditions worldwide on behalf of the museum. One of the most famous was the Morden-Clark expedition in 1926 which covered nearly 8,000 miles from the Indian Ocean to the Yellow Sea. During the arduous journey on yaks, horseback, foot, and camels, Morden and Clark narrowly escaped death at the hands of Mongols just south of the Altai Mountains, where the captured explorers were brutally tortured. William Morden's book

Across Asia's Snows and Deserts (1927) recounts their adventures. It has become a classic on the subject of Marco Polo sheep (*Ovis poli*), which they had sought extensively in the Russian Pamirs.

James Clark was a pioneer in developing a scoring system which would better evaluate North American big game trophies. His system was first copyrighted and published in 1935, and a revised version was published in 1945. He later participated in the committee which developed the Boone and Crockett scoring system. A regular member of the Boone and Crockett Club, Clark wrote chapters for the 1939 records book on the care of trophies in the field and on the care of mounted trophies. These chapters appeared in all the records books through 1964.

James L. Clark wrote three books. His *Trails of the Hunted* (1928) told of his museum work and expeditions up to that time. He was a leading world authority on wild sheep and his book, *The Great Arc of the Wild Sheep* (1964), has been eagerly sought after by sheep hunters. His final book, *Good Hunting* (1966), traced his 50 years collecting and preparing habitat groups for the American Museum. Three years after finishing this book, Clark died in New York City at the age of 85. ▲ ▲ ▲

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Trails of the Hunted (1928)

The Great Arc of the Wild Sheep (1964)

Good Hunting (1966)



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