



Stephen C. Clark, Sr.

Founder of the Fenimore Art Museum and The Farmers' Museum

Stephen C. Clark Sr., a visionary art collector, leading businessman, philanthropist, and founding trustee of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, played a pivotal role in building the cultural institutions in Cooperstown, NY, including the Fenimore Art Museum—to which he donated his outstanding collection of American Folk Art and a group of important American painting—The Farmers' Museum, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Stephen was also instrumental in relocating the New York State Historical Association to Cooperstown and provided the institution with a permanent home.

Heir to the Singer Sewing fortune of his grandfather, Stephen Carlton Clark, and his brother Robert Sterling, were raised in New York City. The two brothers inherited their parents' interest in collecting art and supporting living artists, and instilled a profound passion for collecting.

Throughout his adult life, Stephen continued to play a visible role in the art world, holding an active position in the arts community of New York, and often trading paintings to make new acquisitions, and loaning to a variety of institutions. He gave works to public institutions throughout his life and did so strategically, keeping strong suites of works together and selecting works by artists to enhance existing collections. Personal interests drove Stephen's collecting, but he began to acquire works with the intention of strengthening the existing collection of institutions and was dedicated to serving as a major patron to living artists. While he chose works that ranged in artistic styles, Stephen had a strong interest in Modernism and was especially attracted to works that show a sense of directness, intellectual rigor, and a highly personal vision.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Stephen Clark expanded the Fenimore's holdings, acquiring significant artwork such as *Eel Spearing* by William Sidney Mount (1845), and establishing the museum's collections of American art as some of the most important in the country. Stephen Clark bequeathed the Fenimore its current home, the Fenimore House, a neo-Georgian mansion on Otsego Lake. The Fenimore House was constructed in 1932 by Stephen Clark's brother, Edward S. Clark, on land once occupied by novelist James Fenimore Cooper's early nineteenth-century farmhouse.

Foundations set up by Stephen remain active today and reinforce his commitment to philanthropy. Based in Cooperstown, the Clark Foundation, founded by Stephen, supports local institutions and provides college scholarships to young people in the area. Stephen was also central to the development of the Cooperstown Graduate Program, a joint training program for museum professionals of the State University of New York College at Oneonta and the New York State Historical Association.

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