Mrs. Octavia Elnora Head Clark: Administrator, community leader was the wife of the first president, Dr. Joseph Samuel Clark and mother of the second president, Dr. Felton Grandison Clark of Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

She was born in Monroe, Louisiana in 1880 and her parents were the Reverend William Head and Mary Jeanette Amos. She grew up in a family in which there were nine children, three girls and six boys – Ada, Octavia Elnora, William, Daniel, Isaac, Albert, Lorenzo, Percy and Etta Lee. She completed her elementary schooling at Trenton School in Quachita Parish, and one of the elementary school teachers at that time was Joseph Samuel Clark. At that time, he was employed by the Reverend William Head, Octavia Head’s father, to teach at a church which was pastored by Reverend Head. In October of 1896, Octavia Head entered Leland College in New Orleans, Louisiana for one year. This was also the same year in which Joseph Samuel Clark entered the fourth year of the college preparatory course at Leland College. He had given up teaching to return to school. In 1897, Octavia Head transferred to Coleman College where she graduated from the Normal Department of Coleman College, located in Gobsland, Louisiana in June 1899. Her first and only teaching job before marriage was at the China Grove Common School near Grayson in Caldwell Parish in Louisiana. Also at this time Octavia became engaged to Joseph Samuel Clark. They were married on December 29, 1901.

The couple arrived in Baton Rouge on December 31, 1901 and took up residence at the Baton Rouge Academy. Joseph S. Clark had just recently been hired as principal of the Academy. Mrs. Clark assumed the responsibilities of teaching Music and English at the Baton Rouge College, where she remained until February, 1914.

When Southern University relocated to its present site in 1914, Dr. Joseph S. Clark was appointed to head the Institution and Mrs. Clark left the Baton Rouge College. She joined the teaching staff at Southern University on its opening day as its first Registrar and first Director of Music.

Mrs. Clark was supportive of her husband and son. She served as hostess when both Dr. Joseph Samuel Clark and Felton Grandison Clark entertained at home.
Mrs. Octavia Clark was recognized for her speaking ability, her interest in the welfare of Southern University, and she worked with both her husband and son to promote the progress of Southern University.

Mrs. Octavia Clark retired in 1925. She was a member of the Mount Zion First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She died on April 29, 1959.

Mrs. Octavia Elnora Head Clark is interred on the campus of Southern University.

The dormitory Octavia Hall is named in her honor on the campus of Southern University.


Clark, Octavia Head. *Personal Papers* Archives and Manuscripts Department, John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
