



# Pulling Strings: The Legacy of Melville A. Clark

*Linda Pembroke Kaiser*

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In *Pulling Strings*, Kaiser explores the extraordinary career of Melville A. Clark (1883–1953), a musician, inventor, entrepreneur, community leader, and collector whose colorful story is largely unknown.

Beginning with an account of Clark's musical family, Kaiser chronicles the founding in 1859 of the Clark Music Company, of which Melville Clark became president in 1919. Originally just a tinkers shed, the business ultimately moved into a six-story building in the center of Syracuse. The music company celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2010. Clark also combined his talents as a gifted musician and astute entrepreneur to start the first Syracuse Symphony Orchestra.

Kaiser recounts the development of the Clark Irish harp, the first portable harp manufactured in the United States, that could easily play accidentals. There were other Clark inventions, such as the first nylon strings for instruments. In addition, Clark designed balloons that the British used in 1918 to drop more than 1,250,000 pamphlets over Germany. Clark's story unfolds in fascinating detail: a musical encounter with President Wilson, entertaining President F. D. Roosevelt, a visit to Buckingham Palace to present Princess Elizabeth with a music box, and the journey of a Clark Irish harp to Antarctica with Admiral Byrd.

Lavishly illustrated, *Pulling Strings* not only uncovers the life of a musical genius but also sheds light on a forgotten chapter in Syracuse history.

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