

MEMORIAL

Bion A. Dodge
(1859 - 1934)

Ramsey County Bar Association

March 31, 1934

MEMORIAL TO BION A. DODGE PRESENT-
ED AT THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL MEETING
OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIA-
TION AT ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.
MARCH 31, 1934.

Bion A. Dodge was born March 4, 1869, at Stoughton, Wisconsin. When he was about two years old he went with his father and mother by covered wagon up the Platte River to Pike's Peak in Colorado, where his father engaged in mining for several years. The vicissitudes of pioneer life in that hostile Indian country were ever afterwards subjects of intense interest to the Dodge family, although Bion was too young to remember them himself. The family returned east and lived in New York State and in Chicago for a time, and then came to Owatonna, Minnesota, where Bion graduated from high school in 1875. He then attended Northwestern University in Chicago, where he graduated from the law school in 1881. He practiced law in Chicago for a year or two, and then went to Milbank in Dakota Territory, where he practiced until 1889, serving for a time as County Attorney, and also as Probate Judge. From 1889 until 1898 he practiced law in St. Paul, and he then joined the Klondyke gold rush to Alaska, where he lived until 1918. In Alaska he served as Assistant United States Attorney at Fairbanks, and afterwards as United States District Attorney. While in Alaska he was also actively interested in mining and transportation activities, and for a time conducted a newspaper at Fairbanks. In 1918, on the death of his father at St. Paul, he was obliged to abandon his Alaskan practice and interests and return to St. Paul to care for his aged mother. He engaged again in the practice of law here, and lived in St. Paul until his death on March 18, 1934. He was a member of the bar of the State of Illinois, the Territory of Dakota and State of South Dakota, the State of Minnesota, of the supreme court of the United States, of several United States Circuit Courts of Appeals and of the United States District Court of Minnesota. He

never married, and left surviving him a sister, Miss Lulu Dodge of St. Paul.

Bion Dodge was a man of our very best pioneer type – one of that class of men whose integrity and ability were influential factors in shaping the character of the pioneer communities in which they served. He was a sound lawyer, with the keenest sense of the ethical responsibilities of his profession, and no one could know his long without being impressed with his impregnable integrity. He was so well a thoroughly educated man, having stored his mind with much good reading.

And yet he was a quiet and gentle soul. He came to Dakota Territory in the early boyhood of the Chairman of this Committee, and for years he and his family were next-door neighbors of ours. I was too young at the time to understand or appreciate the sterling qualities of his character, but I did know, from my earliest acquaintance with him, that he was a man who was unusually kind and attentive to children, and in later years I came to know that this was merely the reflection of the essential goodness of the man and the soundness of his character.

Fishing and hunting were his chief recreations. When he came to Dakota Territory in the early 60s the country was a virgin buffalo grass prairie, and the plentitude of upland game was something difficult to exaggerate. He never lost the interest which he acquired in the out-of-doors in those early years. He was a famous hunter in those days, and afterwards in Alaska big game hunting became his hobby. Guns and fishing tackle were his cherished playthings, and he was a real authority in those matters. He was also a pioneer radio expert and enthusiast, and built his own radios. His stories of Alaskan adventures on the trail and in the mining camps of the Klondyke days were a delight to his friend, and in his later days, when misfortune and ill-health became his lot, these reminiscences of his earlier active life were a comfort and a blessing to him.

He was a dutiful and faithful son, a man courageous and faithful in the face of adversity, a fast friend of those who merited his friendship, a good lawyer and citizen in the best sense of those terms; and his friends will always cherish the memory of the privilege which has been theirs to having known him. To his sister who survives him we extend our sincerest sympathy.

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN F. FITZPATRICK
JOHN CHRISTOPHERSON
HORACE H. GLENN (Chairman)
Committee

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Posted MLHP: July 15, 2010.