

MEMORIAL

FOR

EDWIN S. THOMPSON
(1852 – 1932)

RAMSEY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

APRIL 15, 1933

EDWIN S. THOMPSON

Edwin S. Thompson, for many years a member at the Ramsey County Bar, died at the home of his son in Detroit, Michigan, on the 22nd day of July, 1932. He was born in Delafield, Wisconsin, in 1862, and was slightly over eighty years of age at the date of his death.

His father, James Thompson, was born in the Shetland Islands and came to America at an early age, and for many years was engaged as a captain of sailing and steam vessels navigating the Great Lakes.

Mr. Thompson's mother, Margaret Dawson Thompson was born in Tillicoultry near Sterling, and within sight of the historic Sterling Castle in Scotland. Mr. Thompson's ancestry, therefore, was of the Highland Scottish strain, of which sturdy and adventurous race he possessed many characteristics.

He was educated in the public schools of Hudson and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and also spent one year in a private academy, the name and location of which we have been unable to ascertain. Wherever he obtained his education it was quite thorough and complete in several respects. He was quite proficient in the German language and was a good Latin scholar, and his knowledge and appreciation of the English tongue and literature was of a high order. He was a devotee of the poetical muse and very well versed in the best English poetry.

Mr. Thompson's legal education began in Hudson, Wisconsin, in the office of a Mr. Glover, then a leading member of the bar of St. Croix County, Wisconsin. Later he came to St. Paul and pursued his legal studies in the offices of Messrs. Brisbin and

Palmer, who were then among the leaders of the Ramsey County Bar. He was admitted to practice at the Ramsey County Bar in the year 1872, while not yet 21 years of ages. We have been told by some of the old timers who knew him then that at the time of his admission to practice he was one of the most brilliant and promising young members of the profession in St. Paul. He was a handsome young man, possessed of great physical strength and a fine physique, and a mind which was strong and analytical. He had a good memory and an ample vocabulary and gave promise of becoming a brilliant and successful lawyer.

Shortly after his admission to the bar he moved to Pine City, Minnesota, where he practiced his profession and also became engaged in local politics and was elected County Auditor of Pine County, which office he held one term. He was, however, of an adventurous disposition and tinged with wanderlust and could not seem to reconcile himself to staying long in one place, and as a consequence he left Pine City and for some years was a wanderer in far places through the West and Southwest parts of America. For some time he was located in San Francisco, where he practiced law a little and was also a paragrapher on one of the leading San Francisco dailies. Also for a time he followed the sea and was purser on ships plying from San Francisco to Peruvian ports.

Some time after this we find him in Butte, Montana, then a raw frontier mining camp, and here he remained for thirteen years, during which time he engaged in the practice of law and served as prosecuting attorney for Silver Bow County, Montana.

Toward the end of this period he suffered an accident which seriously handicapped him for the rest of his life. It was during the time the buffalo were being slaughtered. Mr. Thompson was an expert rifle and pistol shot, fond of hunting and had a remarkable collection of firearms of various sorts. He enthusiastically engaged in the sport of hunting buffalo on

horseback and while hunting buffalo he was thrown from his horse and suffered an injury to his spine which caused a partial paralysis of his right leg. He was never able to get relief from this infirmity and it remained a serious disability the rest of his life. After this accident he for a time abandoned the law and traveled extensively throughout the Southwest seeking relief from his infirmity, but about the year 1886 he returned to St. Paul and again entered upon the law practice and here he remained so engaged until the year 1925, when failing health compelled him to cease from his labors. In that year he moved to Eveleth, Minnesota, and in 1927 he again moved to Detroit, Michigan, where, as stated, he died July 22, 1932.

In 1894 Mr. Thompson was married to Miss Minnie Harris of Lake City, Minnesota, and is survived by his widow and his son, Allan Thompson, a successful young lawyer now practicing his profession in Detroit, Michigan.

Mr. Thompson was a man of strong and deep-seated sentiment and much of his conduct was motivated by sentiment rather than by sober calculating reason. Like his highland Scottish ancestry, he was capable of strong, lasting and dependable friendships and also of inveterate animosities. To his friends he was ever faithful and loyal; to his enemies he showed no quarter and asked none from them. But he was a fair fighter and never addicted to deceptive or underhand tactics. In the sphere of his practice he was a thoroughly equipped lawyer. His practice was largely in the field of negligence and no member of this bar was better versed in the common law of negligence and the common law of master and servant. His pleadings, though sometimes unnecessarily verbose and somewhat flamboyant, were rarely demurrable and usually stated a good cause of action or defense and it was seldom, if ever, that he failed to make a case for the jury. Though fundamentally a generous and kind-hearted man, he was possessed of a rather sardonic sense of humor. It is related that once, upon being solicited by a committee of the bar for a contribution to a fund

being raised to defray the funeral expenses of a deceased and unfortunate member of the bar, he willingly contributed his quota of five dollars and remarked that he had a list of a few other members of the profession to whose funeral expenses he would gladly contribute a much greater sum.

Perhaps his most outstanding characteristic was his courage and the remarkable persistence with which he uncomplainingly pursued his labors in spite of the very serious physical handicaps he suffered during the latter years of his life. Mr. Thompson was a unique and interesting figure among the lawyers of St. Paul. He belonged more to a past era than to present times. He was typical of the old frontier type of lawyer and of a time when a lawyer's business was largely confined to the trial of law suits and every law suit was a battle to the finish. He left a few enemies and many friends. The former will soon forget their grievances, real or imaginary, but his friends will long remember him with interest and friendly affection.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Frederick N. Dickson

/s/ Linus O'Malley

/s/ M. F. Kinkead

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