

# JOHN O. BARKE

(1850 - 1921)

The following biographical sketch of John O. Burke appeared in the second volume of John W. Mason's *History of Otter Tail County, Minnesota*, published in 1916:

## JOHN O. BARKE.

One of the oldest members of the Otter Tail county bar is John O. Barke, who has been a practicing attorney in Fergus Falls for the past thirty-five years. In addition to the law practice, Mr. Barke has given his attention to the sale of city real estate and farm lands. Since its establishment, in 1892, he has been secretary and trustee of the Park Region Lutheran College. John O. Barke was born near the city of Stavanger, Norway, November 12, 1850. His father, Ove J. Barke, was a farmer and contractor in Norway, who emigrated to America in 1870. He came West and settled in Story county, Iowa. Mr. Barke's paternal grandfather, John O. Barke, served in the Norwegian army during the war between Sweden and Denmark. Mr. Barke's mother, before her marriage, was Ellen Anderson, also a native of Norway, whose people were farmers in their native land.

Reared on the home farm, John O Barke received a common-school education in Norway, and then took a short course in a Latin school at Stavanger. Shortly after completing his education he came to America, and for a time was a student in the Luther College at Decorah, Iowa. Later he attended the North Missouri State Normal School, and from time to time he taught school that he might earn enough money to pay the expenses incident to com-

pleting his education. During all this time, however, he was giving considerable thought and attention to the study of law, and in 1878 entered the law department of what is now Drake University, at Des Moines, Iowa, and was graduated from that institution in June, 1880, with the degree of Bachelor of Law.

In 1880 Mr. Barke came to Otter Tail county and opened a law office in Fergus Falls, having been admitted to the practice of his profession in Minnesota and Iowa the same year. Mr. Barke has followed the active practice of law for thirty-five years, and is now one of the oldest members of the bar in Otter Tail county.

In 1882 John O. Barke was married to Bertha Nelson, a native of Illinois, and the daughter of Seward Nelson, a native of Norway. Mr. and Mrs. Barke are the parents of five children, namely: Ellen J., a teacher; Dr. Owen S., a dentist, who died in May, 1914; Arthur R., who is associated with his father in the practice of law; Ralph J. and Bertha G., who live at home with their parents. Mr. and Mrs. Barke and their children constitute a delightful family, and all enjoy a large measure of popularity in Otter Tail county.<sup>1</sup>

Barke maintained an active law practice in Fergus Falls for several more years until he succumbed after a lengthy illness on Monday evening, January 24, 1921. The *Fergus Falls Daily Journal* carried his obituary the next day:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Mason ed., II *History of Otter Tail County, Minnesota* 62-3 (1916).

<sup>2</sup> *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, January 25, 1921, at 4. The *Journal's* description of the Barke children differs from Mason's.

# JOHN O. BARKE IS CALLED TO REST

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Prominent Citizen and Attorney  
Died at His Home in This City  
Monday Evening.

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Passes at Age 70 Years, and En-  
tire Community Will Mourn  
His Death

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This community was saddened Monday evening by the death of Mr. J. O. Barke, who has been one of its best and most highly respected citizens for the past forty years. Mr. Barke has been in failing health for two years, and his death while not entirely unexpected, is a sad blow to his family and to the city in which he has so long made his home. He underwent two operations about two years ago, but never fully recovered his health. Pernicious anemia has been developing and was the ultimate cause of his death. He was able to be up and about until last Tuesday, when he took a turn for the worse and he has been slowly sinking since that time. He lost consciousness about 2 o'clock Monday afternoon, and passed to the life beyond at 3:55 in the evening. He has been a patient sufferer during his illness and his death, as befitted his life, was calm and peaceful.

John O. Barke was born at Stavanger, Norway, Nov. 12, 1850, and came to the United States in the month of May, 1870, settling first in Story county, Iowa. He attended

Luther college at Decorah, the North Missouri State Normal school and later the Drake University at Des Moines, Iowa, graduating from the law department of the last institution in 1880, and coming to Fergus Falls in August of that year. He immediately opened a law office here and has practiced law ever since. He has also been interested in various business enterprises.

He was married Feb. 14, 1882, his bride being Miss Bertha Nelson of Cambridge, Iowa, who survives him. He is also survived by four children: Miss Josephine Barke, who is a member of the faculty of the Moorhead Normal; Arthur R. Barke, who is engaged in the bond brokerage business at Denver, Col., Ralph J. Barke who is in partnership with his father here, and Mrs. H. A. Kroeze, formally Miss Gladys Barke, now of Jackson, Miss. Another son, Owen S. Barke, died in 1914.

Mr. Barke was a member of the First English Lutheran church of this city and was an earnest Christian. He was actively interested in the affairs of the church and of every other institution that meant the upbuilding and moral development of the city. He took an active part in securing the location of the Park Region Luther College here and was secretary of the college corporation from its establishment until he resigned because of failing health a few months ago. He was vice president of the American State bank of this city up to the time of his death, and was alderman from the Third ward several years ago. He was the type of citizen that this or any other city can ill afford to lose. ■

