

MEMORIAL

JOHN STEARNS CROOKS

(1876 - 1933)

ST. PAUL BAR ASSOCIATION

April 13, 1933

M E M O R I A L

of the

SAINT PAUL BAR ASSOCIATION

in memory of

JOHN STEARNS CROOKS

John Stearns Crooks was born at Detroit, Michigan, July 10th, 1876, and died at Farmington, Minnesota, on January 2nd, 1933. His parents are Samuel S. Crooks and Caroline (Coryell) Crooks, both of whom survive and have long been highly esteemed citizens of this city. The ancestors of the former were Scotch Presbyterians in Argyleshire. In 1718, a colony of one hundred and eighty families, including the Crooks family, sailed for America and became pioneer settlers in various parts of New England. The American progenitor, Samuel Crooks, took up his abode at Hopkinton, Massachusetts, in 1719 where he and his descendants resided for more than a century. At this place, on April 30th, 1851, Samuel Stearns Crooks, father of the subject of this memorial, was born. Under the tutelage of his father, a pioneer of the American Shoe Industry, he acquired a thorough knowledge of that business. In October, 1872, he moved to Detroit, Michigan, and on June 18th, 1883, came to St. Paul bringing with him not only his infant son, John, but also more than one hundred persons to establish the Minnesota Shoe Company, the first manufactory of fine shoes in the State of Minnesota. The maternal grandfather of John S. Crooks was a native of Pennsylvania. Chafing under the restraint of being bound out to learn the blacksmith trade, he took refuge in Canada and settled at Newmarket where John's mother was born.

John received his early education in the schools of St. Paul. During vacations he worked at his father's trade, and as a boy made more than three hundred pairs of shoes. A pair of baby shoes made by him in 1891 are still preserved and treasured by his parents. However, John was by no means

enamored with shoe making. Before leaving high school he had definitely decided upon the career of a lawyer. He entered the University of Minnesota and graduated with the Class of 1898. As a student he exhibited the same traits which marked his course in after life. He was industrious, conscientious and thorough, commanding the respect of both his classmates and instructors. During this time he was associated as a student in the law office of Clapp & McCartney in the old German-American Bank Building. Upon graduation from law school he immediately opened an office for himself. The following year he married Grace Williams White, to whom he remained deeply devoted until her death on July 17th, 1932. Entering the commercial field Mr. Crooks soon enjoyed a large practice and at one time represented over one hundred wholesale houses, employing several stenographers and clerical assistants.

In later years he gave up commercial work and confined his practice to Probate work and office consultations in order that he might have leisure to enjoy gardening and flower culture. During this period he settled some large estates and many important legal matters were submitted to his care. His love for flowers, the call of outdoor open life, and the pleasures of home gradually drew him away from his chosen profession and the last ten years of his life were devoted chiefly to the growing of flowers. With the assistance of his accomplished wife he organized the Rainbow Gardens on Montreal Avenue near Cleveland, specializing in the "Iris", known from ancient times as the "Rainbow Flower". In 1922 he purchased forty acres of land at Farmington, Minnesota, where he had ample space and opportunity to carry on his favorite work. Here he grew twenty acres of gladiolis, the iris, peonies, and many other flowers in great abundance.

Mr. Crooks had a strong logical mind coupled with a robust body. He was not easily fatigued. Along with his physical and intellectual make-up went courage of two kinds, - a passion for justice and a sense of obligation to his clients. Orderliness was the rule of his office. He prepared his cases carefully, sifted out the controlling facts, diligently looked up the authorities, and came into Court with a brief which was a credit to himself and of real value to his client's cause. As a counselor his advice was safe. He was not cast down by defeat or unduly elated by success. He was in no sense a braggart or ambitious to be the central figure. Fundamental simplicity, lack of the

apparent spectacular quality, courtesy and quiet modesty were natural and not forced attributes of his character.

Ho insistently refused to run for public office. The prizes of political life were empty to him in comparison with homely virtues of domestic life. He loved his home; he loved nature, as well as individuals, and felt the charm of its beauty; he was kind to those about him and true to his friends.

The last years of his life were beclouded by the death of his wife and by a lingering illness, which gradually undermined his robust body until he disappeared from view into the Great Beyond.

His aim in life is best described in the familiar words of the poet:

MY AIM

I live for those who love me, whose hearts are kind and true,
For the heaven that smiles above me and awaits my spirit too;
For all human ties that bind me, for the task that God assigns me;
For the bright hopes yet to find me, and the good that I can do.

I live to hold communion with all that is divine
To feel there is a union 'twixt Nature's heart and mine
To profit by affliction, reap truth from fields of fiction,
Grow wiser from conviction, and fulfill God's grand design.

G. Linnaeus Banks.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Fred'k L. Bright Chairman

/s/

/s/ John P. Kennedy

/s/ Charles E. Elmquist

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