

# “A Caution to Frontier Lawyers”

*The Minnesota Pioneer*  
February 20, 1850 & March 6, 1850

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## FOREWARD

BY

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Judge David Cooper fined Michael E. Ames (1822-1861) and Morton S. Wilkinson (1819-1894) \$5 apiece on February 14, 1850, for something they did in his courtroom in Stillwater. They may have the distinction of being the first lawyers to be disciplined in this state.

The regulation of lawyers in nineteenth century Minnesota—particularly their discipline, suspension and disbarment—is a story that waits to be told. It is avoided, we suspect, because it requires resurrection of acts by lawyers that are ugly and embarrassing to the profession: embezzlements, thefts, forgeries, etc.

How courts and eventually an administrative agency assumed control over lawyers’ behavior, inside the courtroom and out, is interrelated with two other late nineteenth century phenomena: the establishment of law schools, which formalized legal education, and the rise of bar associations, which among other objectives sought to establish and enforce ethical standards and increase the professional reputation and dignity of lawyers.

The following articles appeared on the second pages of the February 20 and March 6, 1850, issues of *The Minnesota Pioneer*. They were written by James M. Goodhue, the indefatigable editor of that newspaper. His spelling, emphasis and punctuation are not changed. Though reformatted, they are complete.

An earlier version of the rules of court, handwritten in 1849, that Goodhue mentions can be found at the Minnesota Digital Library Website. ■

# THE MINNESOTA PIONEER

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA,

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Wednesday Morning, February 20, 1850.

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Proper Fine.—Judge Cooper fined two lawyers five dollars each at *His* bar, last Thursday, at Stillwater, in *His* court, for disputing in *His* presence. They did not come to blows at all ; but His Honor no doubt considered, “this is *infra dig!*”

# THE MINNESOTA PIONEER

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA,

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Wednesday Morning, March 6, 1850.

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A Caution to Frontier Lawyers.—We were at a loss to know, by the violation of what rule Messrs. Ames & Wilkinson were fined at the late term of “the Washington Court,” in Stillwater. By reference to the 7th rule of the Supreme Court, it appears that attorneys are required to conduct themselves in a “*cautious*” manner; and this rule probably governs the “Working Court.” They were therefore no doubt fined for rashness.



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