

**“ Melville & Mason:
The First Law Firm in Fergus Falls ” ***

in

HISTORY

OF

**Otter Tail County
MINNESOTA**

ITS PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS

JOHN W. MASON

Editor

With Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and
Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families

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B. F. BOWEN & COMPANY, Inc.

Indianapolis, Indiana

* MLHP editor: The first item that follows appeared on page 693, the second on page 584, of Mason's two volume history of Otter Tail County. Though reformatted, it is complete. The author's spelling and punctuation have not been changed.

THE FIRST LAW FIRM IN FERGUS FALLS.

Lawyers may come and lawyers may go, but some go sooner than others. It was forty-five years ago this summer that the first law firm in Fergus Falls came into existence and one member of this first firm is still practicing in the city. In an old ledger, yellow with age and mellow with time, the historian found the following interesting document, a contract which carries with it its own explanation:

Fergus Falls. July 5, 1871.

Be it remembered, on this 5th day of July, A. D. 1871, that we, the undersigned, attorneys-at-law, have entered into a general co-partnership under the firm name and style of Melville & Mason, on the following conditions: 1st, said firm to commence business on the day above written; 2nd. to remain the same under said name and style for one year from said date; 3rd. each member to receive an equal share of all fees; 4th, to defray equally all necessary expenses for the maintenance and convenience of said firm; 5th, to engage strictly in the practice of law; 6th, each pledges himself upon his honor to attend strictly to business in an honorable manner.

Bert Melville
J. W. Mason

In an earlier chapter entitled "Reminiscences by John W. Mason," the author recalled the demise of his firm:

Soon after coming to Fergus Falls, I formed a partnership with Bert Melville under the firm name and style of "Melville & Mason, Attorneys at Law." These two legal lights burned in unison till a few weeks later, when one went out. He extinguished and distinguished himself one night by eloping with another man's

wife, and the burden of a precarious practice fell upon the junior member of the firm.



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