

MEMORIAL

TO

EDWARD HOWARD MORPHY
(1856 - 1934)

RAMSEY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

APRIL 20, 1935



E. HOWARD MORPHY

ST. PAUL.

MORPHY, BRADFORD & CUMMINS, LAWYERS.

(1915)

IN MEMORIAM

OF

EDWARD HOWARD MORPHY

EDWARD HOWARD MORPHY was born September 26, 1856 at Brantford, Province of Ontario, Canada.

His father was Samuel M. Morphy and his mother was Amelia Lumsden.

Mr. Morphy was married January 20, 1886 to Edith Mary Morphy, who died at St. Paul, November 24, 1931. Mr. Morphy died at St. Paul December 9, 1934, and is survived by his daughter, Miss Olive E. H. Morphy.

Mr. Morphy received his academic education at Upper Canada College and studied law at Osgood Hall, Toronto. He was called to the Ontario Bar in 1880, and to the Manitoba Bar in 1882.

He practiced law at Toronto until 1882, and in that year moved to Winnipeg and joined the firm of Bain, Blanchard & Mulock.

He retired from that firm in July, 1886, and moved to St. Paul and organized the firm of Morphy & Ewing, which continued until his death as Morphy, Ewing & Ewing; Morphy, Ewing & Gilbert; Morphy, Ewing & Bradford, and Morphy, Bradford, Cummins & Cummins.

Mr. Morphy was a member of the Ramsey County Bar for half a century. This fact seems to call for a brief review of its early beginning, struggles and triumphs, which cover a period of one century, beginning in 1838, when Henry H. Sibley hung up his shingle as an attorney and counsellor at law at Mendota. He was the first lawyer, the first judge, and the first governor of this state.

Commissioned as a Justice of the Peace in 1836, he exercised the functions of a court of law with jurisdiction over what now forms all of Minnesota West of the Mississippi River, a part of Iowa, and a large

part of North Dakota and South Dakota.

Colonel Sibley, in 1862, was commissioned by President Lincoln as a Brigadier General for gallant and meritorious service in the field.

In the pioneer days of the association there were no stenographers, typewriters or telephones. Pleadings, motion papers, briefs and records were written in longhand and laborious copies by the same process.

There were no law schools in the state. The law student absorbed a knowledge of the law while serving as a law clerk and by perusal of Blackstone and Kent's Commentaries, and, possibly, a few text books.

The death of Mr. Henry C. James in 1931 closed the last chapter of the pioneer days of the Bar Association of 1874.

It was said in the memorial to him that so far as is known, no lawyer practicing in that year survived.

Mr. Hiram P. Stevens, in Andrew's History of St. Paul, published shortly after Mr. Morphy came to St. Paul, says:

"The Bar of St. Paul was long enjoyed an enviable reputation for the high personal and professional standard which has prevailed among its members. Two circumstances have contributed largely to this result. One was the fact that as the capital at the territory and state, the sessions of the Supreme and Federal Courts and of the Legislature have here afforded superior advantages for the development of the practitioner and for instruction and incentive to the student. The other was the ability and elevated character of the pioneers at the Bar."

There is no exaggeration in Mr. Stevens' statement. The standard of the pioneer days has been carried through all the years that followed. This may account, in some degree, for the achievements of many of its members who have made history in this community, state and nation.

The Bar of Ramsey County can boast of many distinguished lawyers and jurists — the much beloved judge who sat on

this bench for nearly half a century, and who carries on in the presence, on the same bench, of a most worthy son, the high character and ability of the judges who now serve and those who served during the past century.

We call to mind our members, who have served this country in the Civil Wars and in all the wars that followed; in both branches of the Legislature, and Congress, governors of the state, attorney general, judges of the Supreme Court, and of the Federal District and Circuit Courts of Appeals, and in Washington a Justice of the Supreme Court; Attorney General; Secretary of State, and Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

Mr. Morphy at once identified himself with important civic and political affairs of this city and state. His efforts continued during his residence here of nearly half a century.

He was a member of and one of the followers of the Old Chamber of Commerce and of the original St. Paul Commercial Club.

He was appointed in 1888 by the British Government as Vice Consul at St. Paul. This consulate had jurisdiction over all of Minnesota and the Dakotas. He served until 1902 with credit to the great country he represented.

Mr. Morphy built his homestead on the Mississippi River Boulevard in 1908 and kept open house down to the time of his last illness.

This Association, on several occasions, enjoyed the delightful hospitality of Mr. Morphy and his family.

In the brief period of his practice in Toronto and Winnipeg, he gained the confidence and respect of the members of his profession there, and built up an important clientele among large Canadian and English interests. The legal matters of these clients, and practically all Canadian and English interests, in Minnesota and the Northwest, came to Mr. Morphy at St. Paul.

He loved his profession, and respected it, and delighted in its study and practice.

His work was most systematic. Everything was done with the greatest care and caution but no time was wasted.

He was a wise and sound counsellor, an able trial lawyer before court or jury, man of unusual ability.

He stood for all that is best in legal tradition.

He was an active member of St. John's Episcopal Church — a man of the highest integrity and irreproachable private life.

Mr. Morphy was a man of distinguished personality and unfailing courtesy toward all with whom he came in contact. He brought with him from his native country the high respect for law and established authority which characterizes the British Nation, and which contrasts strongly with the critical and often flippant attitude assumed toward our own courts and government. Devoted to his family, and of unswerving loyalty to his friends, he was generous and unselfish to an unusual degree.

His death leaves a scar upon the legal profession — upon the social life, which he animated and adorned, and upon the adopted country, which he served with love and devotion, for more than fifty years — a scar which will be healed and hidden only the alchemy of time.

April 20, 1935.

/s/ Morton Barrows
/s/ Geo. B. Edgerton
/s/ A. E. Horn
Committee.

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[The following letter is enclosed with the Historical Society's copy of the Memorial to Edward Howard Morphy]

PHILIP GILBERT
LAWYER
714 GUARDIAN BUILDING
ST. PAUL, MINN.

May 18, 1935.

Mr. Wm. W. Cutler,
E.901—1st National Bank Bldg.,
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dear Sir:—

Your letter of May 4th relative to errors in the Memorial to Edward Howard Morphy, presented April 20, 1935, by the Ramsey County Bar Association to the District Court, was received in due course.

The errors to which you refer relate to the firm names of the several partnerships to which Mr. Morphy belonged from the time he became a resident of St. Paul in 1886 until his death in December 1934. Of themselves, these firm names are not of much importance but if erroneous they become of importance.

I understand that the Committee presenting the Memorial, obtained information from previous published records, listed in the Historical Society's library. Such being the case a correction of these errors should not be, and cannot be, considered as any criticism of the Committee.

My desire and qualification to correct the errors, arise from the fact of my long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Morphy. I came to St. Paul in May 1886, a month or two before Mr. Morphy. As a clerk, I entered the Office of George W. Crawford, Lawyer with whom Mr. Morphy corresponded relative to the formation of a partnership for the practice of law in St. Paul.

Mr. Morphy did come to St. Paul in 1886, but so far as I know no partnership with Mr. Crawford was consummated. To support the corrections which should be made, I cite the R. L. Polk & Company St. Paul City Directories for the years 1887 to 1934, as hereinafter indicated:

In the Directory for 1886-87
George W. Crawford is listed as a lawyer,
455 Drake Blk.
E. Howard Morphy listed as a lawyer,
455 Drake Blk.

They were not listed as Partners and in 1887 Mr. Crawford left St. Paul for Chicago.

PHILIP GILBERT
LAWYER
714 GUARDIAN BUILDING
ST. PAUL, MINN.

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1. The Directory for the years 1887-88-89 lists Morphy & Gilbert, Lawyers, 455 Drake Blk.
2. For the years 1890-91-92
Morphy Gilbert & Morphy, 455 Drake Bik. and 607 Manhattan Bldg.
3. For the years 1893-94-95-96,
Morphy Ewing Gilbert & Ewing, 609-10-11 Manhattan Bldg.
4. For the years 1897-98-99,
Morphy Ewing & Gilbert, 606-610 Manhattan Bldg.
5. For the years 1900-1901,
Morphy & Ewing, 808-610 Manhattan Bldg., and thereafter.
6. For 1902 to 1913
Morphy Ewing & Bradford
7. For the years 1914 to 1925
Morphy Bradford & Cummins
8. For the year 1926
Morphy, Bradford, Cummins, Jackson, Cummins & Lipschultz.
9. For the year 1927
Morphy, Bradford, Cummins, Cummins & Lipschultz.
10. For the years 1928 to 1934
Morphy, Bradford, Cummins & Cummins.

My memory is clear as to firm names, numbered 1 to 6 inclusive, and as to their order of succession. However, as to all firm names and their order of succession and as to all dates, I have examined the St. Paul City Directories and refer to them as corroborative of the foregoing data.

Sincerely,

/s/ Philip Gilbert

PG/k

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Posted MLHP: July 8, 2011;
Photograph from *Men of Minnesota* 192 (1915)
added May 16, 2015.