

Memorial

For

William D. Abbott

[July 13, 1859 : January 8, 1921]

Winona County Bar Association

District Court

Third Judicial District

Winona, Minnesota

September 19, 1921

Your Honor and Gentlemen of the Winona County Bar:

Death has stricken another member of the Winona County Bar; William D. Abbott, a member of this Bar has fallen into the “sleep that no pain shall wake,” and the public business of this Court is now suspended that his friends may have an opportunity to pay proper respect to his memory.

In the observance of this long-established custom we meet as members of a common family. It is very fitting that those who for many years had participated in the practice of law with Mr. Abbott should bear witness to those manly qualities, that lofty conception of duty and devotion thereto which entitled him to a place among the foremost lawyers of this State. There is a rule to say naught but good of the dead but a better rule would teach us to speak nothing of the dead save that which is true. It is this latter rule that your committee will observe today.

Mr. Abbott was born at Clinton Falls, Minnesota, July 13, 1859. He received his early education at Pillsbury Academy from which institution he was graduated in 1876. He then went to Carlton College and by his own industry paid his expenses through this institution from which College he was graduated with honors in 1883. After having completed his academic course he studied law in the office of Sawyer & Sawyer at Owatonna and was admitted to the Bar in 1885. He practiced law for seven years in Waseca and on account of his exceptional ability as a lawyer, was called to the law offices of the late Lloyd Bowers, who was at that time attorney for the Chicago & Northwestern Railway Company at Winona, Minnesota. Upon Mr. Bowers having accepted the position of General Solicitor for this Company in the Summer of 1893, Mr. Abbott formed a partnership with L. L. Brown and later S. H. Somsen was admitted to the firm, known as Brown, Abbott & Somsen, with which firm he remained in active practice until his death January 8th, 1921.

Mr. Abbott was united in marriage to Miss Lorena M. Adams of Prairieville, Minnesota, on October 7th, 1886, who with his daughter, Helen, now Mrs. C. J. Miller, survives him. For several months he was afflicted with valvular leakage of the heart which eventually caused his death. In spite of this certain fate of which he was aware, he continued his practice of law until the end, death overtaking him in his office while engaged at the work of his profession.

He was staunch and true to his friends and no sacrifice was too great for him to make on their behalf.

While he was a man of affairs in business, he loved his country and her institutions and was proud of her growth and prosperity. He was honest in all matters; just to both friend and foe, and pure in purpose and morals. His life was one of strict integrity, and his private character without stain. His benevolent nature made him the friend of all mankind, and he was generous in his helpfulness to all the needy and deserving. Sincere and earnest, he intended always to do right and to render to every one his dues. He was faithful to his convictions, true to his friends, devoted to his family, and always acted under a sense of duty. We shall miss him, the people of this State will miss him, his family will miss him more than all but he has left us a legacy of good examples, to the people of this community a record of faithful and honorable service as a lawyer, and his family a good name and sufficient fortune honestly acquired.

To the grief stricken widow and daughter we can only commend the language of inspiration: "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

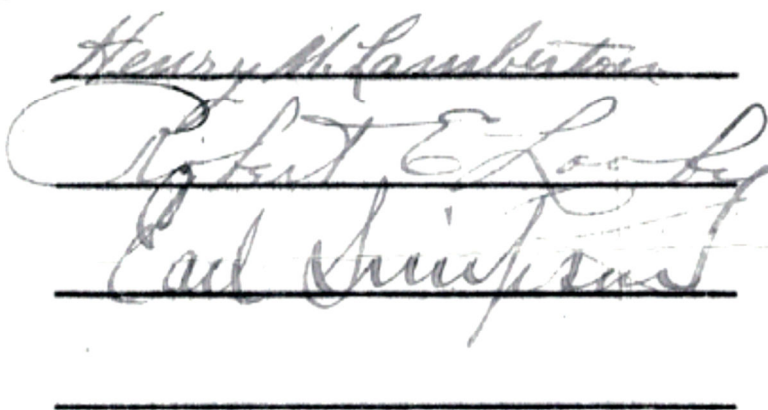
In submitting this memorial to our departed friend, we bid him farewell in the full confidence that he is gone—

Out of the shadows of sadness,
Into the sunshine of gladness,
Into the light of the blest;

Out of a land very dreary,
Out of the world very weary,
Into the rapture of rest.

NOW THEREFORE, your Committee submits the following resolution:—

Be It Resolved, That the foregoing memorial be adopted and that the same be spread upon the minutes and made a part of the record of this Court and a copy thereof be sent to the widow and daughter of our beloved friend, William D. Abbott.



The image shows three handwritten signatures in cursive script, each written on a separate horizontal line. The signatures are: Henry M. Lamberston, Robert E. Lecky, and Carl Simpson. Below the third signature, there is an additional blank horizontal line.

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Appendix

1. Funeral notice, *Winona Republican-Herald*, January 10, 1921.
2. Editorial, *Winona Republican-Herald*, January 10, 1921.
3. Memorial, Minnesota State Bar Association Proceedings (1921).
- 4 Profile in *History of Steele and Waseca Counties, Minnesota: An Album of History and Biography* (1887).
5. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Winona County, Minnesota* (1895).
6. Judge Arthur H. Snow, “Bench and Bar of Winona County” in *The History of Winona County, Minnesota* (1913).

**1. Funeral notice, The Winona Republican-Herald,
January 10, 1921 (excerpt).**

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Court Pays Honor

At the opening of the January general term of the District court this morning fitting recognition was taken of the death of Mr. Abbott, for over 25 years a member of the Winona county bar. Attorney H. M. Lamberton notified the court of the passing of Mr. Abbott and it was determined and so announced by Judge Callaghan that out of respect to Mr. Abbott's memory there should be no session of the court Tuesday afternoon, which would permit Judge Callaghan and the members of the bar to attend the funeral services.

Bar Association Plans Tribute

Prior to the formal opening of the court the members of the Winona County Bar association held a meeting in the court room and appointed a committee consisting of H. M. Lamberton, Earl Simpson, D. T. Tawney and Robert E. Looby, to prepare a suitable memorial concerning Mr. Abbott. This at a later date will be presented to the court and will be spread upon its minutes. The members of the bar also decided to attend the funeral services to be held Tuesday afternoon and to send a suitable floral tribute from the Bar association.

**2. Editorial, The Winona Republican-Herald,
January 10, 1921.**

WILLIAM D. ABBOTT.

Nothing in the realm of certainties is more positive than death, and yet when it does arrive, and especially if it comes suddenly, relatives and friends of the departed find it most difficult to adjust themselves to the loss.

The late William D. Abbott's unexpected demise last Saturday came to this community as a distinct shock. It develops that Mr. Abbott and those close to

him knew that his physical condition was not favorable to long life, but the community was totally unprepared.

William D. Abbott was a man of sterling principles and of the keenest mentality. He stood well toward the top in the legal fraternity of Minnesota, and this position was attained and held by close attention to the details of his profession.

In politics Mr. Abbott was known as a progressive Republican, and in this as in other subjects in which he was interested he had decided views. His influence for good on the political trend about him has been felt on several occasions.

Mr. Abbott's valuable counsel and friendly presence will be missed by a wide circle of friends in other parts of the state as well as in Winona. The rest that is now his has been earned by service well performed.

3. Memorial, Minnesota State Bar Association Proceedings (1921).

WILLIAM D. ABBOTT.

William D. Abbott of Winona, Minnesota, died January 8th, 1921, while at his desk at work. Mr. Abbott was sixty years of age and was born at Clinton Falls, Minnesota, a graduate of Pillsbury Academy of Owatonna, later reading law in the office of Sawyer and Sawyer. He was admitted to the bar in the same city, in 1884.

He was married in 1886 to Miss Lorena M. Adams, who with one daughter, Helen, survive him.

He began the practice of law in Waseca in 1885, and in 1892 entered the office of Lloyd W. Bowers at Winona, who was the Attorney for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Company, and in 1900 when Mr. Bowers moved to Chicago as their general attorney, the firm of Brown, Abbott and Somsen was formed, which firm from that time on, represented the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Company in the divisions west of Winona. He remained with that firm in the active practice until his death.

Mr. Abbott was County Attorney for Waseca County from 1888–1890, and in his belief was an outspoken Republican.

Mr. Abbott was one of the strongest attorneys in the state, and was aggressively active in the practice of his profession throughout his whole life.

His indomitable energy, strong will power, and his persistence made him one of the strongest court lawyers in the First District.

He was a man reserved in social contacts, yet staunch and true in all his friendships. He stood for high principle and once convinced of the right was outspoken and fearless in denunciation. An unconquerable soul dominated all his activities from the early days of boyhood to the final hour. His life is a testimony to the power of unflinching purpose, and an unbending tenacity that characterizes the greater men of the world.

4. Profile in *History of Steele and Waseca Counties, Minnesota: An Album of History and Biography* (1887).

W. D. Abbott, of the firm of Sawyer, Abbott & Sawyer, is one of the prominent attorneys of Waseca. He is a native of Clinton Falls, Steele County, Minn., and is the son of Asa J. and Mary (Piper) Abbott. He was reared on his father's farm, attending the district schools when his help was not required at home. Entering the Pillsbury Academy of Owatonna, he graduated there from in 1879, and then attended the Carleton College. In September, 1883, he commenced reading law with Sawyer & Sawyer, of Owatonna, and applying himself diligently to his studies was duly admitted to the bar, in Steele County, June 5, 1884. He remained in that city until March, 1886, when he came to Waseca, and opened the present office of the firm, the other members of which remained in Owatonna. October 7, 1886, he was united in marriage with Lorena M. Adams, of Rice County, this State. Mr. Abbott is a member of Waseca Lodge, No. 44, Knights of Pythias, of which he is the present chancellor commander.

5. Portrait and Biographical Record of Winona County, Minnesota (1895).

W. D. ABBOTT, a member of the law firm of Brown & Abbott, of Winona, was born in Steele County, Minn., July 13, 1859. His grandfather, William Abbott, was born in the town of Sanbornton, N. H., in 1800, in the same house which was the birthplace of his son, A. J., and his entire life was passed on the old homestead farm, where he died at the age of forty-five. His father was a native of Pembroke, N. H., and spent his entire life in the old Granite State, dying in Sanbornton at a ripe old age. He was a son of Samuel Abbott, who long prior to the Revolution removed from Andover, Mass., to Pembroke, where he spent his remaining days. He located among the Indians, who were sometimes troublesome, and experienced all the hardships and privations incident to life on the frontier. Farther back than Samuel Abbott, the ancestry of the family cannot now be traced.

A. J. Abbott, the father of W. D., was born in Sanbornton, N. H., in 1829, and after arriving at years of maturity wedded Mary H. Piper, also a native of that city, and a daughter of Daniel Piper, who spent his entire life in the Granite State. Mr. and Mrs. Abbott there lived until 1856, when, hoping to better their financial condition, they emigrated westward and made a home in Steele County, Minn., where the father followed farming during his active business life. He still resides on the old homestead, but is now retired. He went to the county in an early day and is numbered among its honored pioneers.

W. D. Abbott spent his early life in the county of his nativity, and the common schools afforded him his first educational privileges. There he became familiar with the "three R's," and later took a preparatory course in Pillsbury Academy. Subsequently he continued his studies in Carleton College, of Northfield, Minn., from which he was graduated in 1883. Having studied law, he entered upon the practice of his chosen profession in Waseca in 1885, and there continued in active business until the fall of 1892.

At that time Mr. Abbott came to Winona and entered the law office of Lloyd W. Bowers, who was then the attorney for the Winona & St. Peter Railway Company, and with him continued until June, 1893, when Mr. Bowers was appointed General Counsel for the Chicago & North-Western Railway Company, and removed to Chicago. Mr. Abbott then formed a partnership with L. L. Brown, under the firm name of Brown & Abbott, and this connection still continues, the firm occupying the law office of Wilson & Bowers. They received the appointment as attorneys for the Winona & St. Peter Railway Company, and are also successfully engaged in general law practice.

Mr. Abbott was married, in the fall of 1886, to Miss Lorena M. Adams, daughter of Thomas Adams, a farmer, residing near Faribault, Minn. She was one of five children, and comes of a family which for several generations past has resided in Vermont. Both Mr. and Mrs. Abbott are highly respected citizens of this community, and have a large circle of friends in Winona.

6. Judge Arthur H. Snow, “Bench and Bar of Winona County” in *The History of Winona County, Minnesota* (1913).

William D. Abbott, of the firm of Brown, Abbott & Somsen, attorneys, was born in Clinton Falls, Minn., July 13, 1859, son Asa J. and Mary H. (Piper) Abbott. After attending the common schools, he entered Pillsbury Academy at Owatonna Minn., from which he graduated in 1879, and then went to Carleton College, at Northfield Minnesota, from which he graduated in 1883. Subsequently he read law with Sawyer & Sawyer, at Owatonna, and was admitted to the bar in October, 1884. He practiced law in Waseca, Minn., for a while and came to Winona in 1892. From 1893 to 1900 he was a member of the firm a Brown & Abbott. Since 1900 he has been a member of the firm of Brown, Abbott & Somsen. At one time he was county attorney of Waseca county, and he has figured in many important cases. He belongs to the Minnesota State Bar Association, and to the Winona County Bar Associations.

Fraternally he affiliates with the Masons and the Knights of Pythias. Socially he is connected with the Arlington and the Minne-o-wah clubs.

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**Posted MLHP: September 3, 2016;
sections 4-6 added, May 30, 2020.**