

Judge Frank C. Barnes

(1889 – 1963)

In 1917, at the age of 28 and only one year after starting a practice in Fergus Falls, Frank Barnes was appointed municipal court judge. He resigned a few months later to enlist in the army; after being discharged, he returned to Fergus Falls, and was reappointed to the municipal court, where he served until 1928, and later from 1940 to 1953, when he was appointed judge of probate and juvenile court. He held that post until September 1, 1963, when he retired.

In 1924, the following profile of a youthful Judge Barnes appeared in the fourth volume of *Minnesota and Its People*, written by former governor Joseph A. A. Burnquist, who had appointed him to the bench seven years earlier :

JUDGE FRANK C. BARNES.

Judge Frank C. Barnes, one of the younger members of the legal fraternity of Fergus Falls, has firmly established himself in public regard as an able exponent of his profession and is serving as municipal judge, an office for which he is well qualified. He comes of an old colonial family of Virginia but was born in Manchester, Illinois, December 12, 1889, a son of A. C. and Kate F. (Mock) Barnes. His great-grandfather in the paternal line made the journey from Kentucky to Illinois in 1829 with ox team and wagon and among the articles which he brought with him to his new home was an old flint millstone, which is now one of the heirlooms of the family.

Frank C. Barnes was reared in his native town and there attended the grammar and high schools, afterward becoming a law student at Wesleyan University, from which he was graduated in 1915. For a short time he was connected with the railway mail service in Illinois, later coming to Moorhead, Minnesota, but returned to Illinois in the latter part of 1915. In 1916 he again came to Minnesota, settling in Fergus Falls, and in the following year was appointed municipal judge by Governor Burnquist. He occupied the position until October of that year, when he enlisted for service in the World war, and after receiving his training was assigned to Headquarters Company, Three Hundred and Forty-ninth Infantry, sailing for France with that organization on July 8, 1918. He remained

overseas until May, 1919, when he was ordered home, and at Camp Dodge, Iowa, on the 11th of June was released from military duty. He returned to Fergus Falls and on August 6, 1919, was reappointed to the office of municipal judge. He has since presided with ability over that court, dispensing justice with an even hand. He has a thorough knowledge of statute and precedent and his mind is analytical and logical in its trend.

On July 12, 1917, Judge Barnes was united in marriage to Miss Mrytle R. Penticoff, a daughter of C. A. and Emma Penticoff, the former a successful manufacturer. Mr. and Mrs. Barnes are members of the Federated church and she is serving as treasurer of the Ladies Aid Society. She is one of the social leaders of Fergus Falls and is president of the Reading Club, worthy matron of the Eastern Star, and also belongs to the Schuman Club. Judge Barnes is a member of the American Legion and is the master of Corner Stone Lodge No. 99, A. F. & A. M., while his professional relations are with the Otter Tail County and Minnesota State Bar Societies and the American Bar Association. He has received the strong endorsement of the citizens of Fergus Falls because of his able and impartial administration of the law, and has gained an enviable reputation in a profession which calls for a keen intellect and requires unremitting application, good judgment and a constantly widening comprehension of the relations and responsibilities which go to make up civilized society. ¹

Judge Barnes died on Wednesday, December 11, 1963. The following day, the *Fergus Falls Daily Journal* carried the story on its front page:

Frank C. Barnes Dies on Eve of Birthday

Frank C. Barnes, who retired as probate judge September 1, died at his home, 811 South Court, last night. He would have been 74 years old today.

For the past several weeks, Mr. Barnes had been hospitalized

¹ Joseph Alfred Arner Burnquist, IV *Minnesota and Its People* 167-8 (Chicago, S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1924).

in Rochester and Fergus Falls. He was released from Lake Region Hospital yesterday so he could observe his birthday at home.

Mr. Barnes began practicing law in Fergus Falls in 1916. He served as judge of municipal court from 1917 to 1928 and from 1940 to 1953.

He was appointed judge of probate and municipal court in January, 1953, following the death of Judge J. N. Haagenon and served until his retirement September 1.

Mr. Barnes took a prominent part in community affairs, particularly in the American Legion and the Republican party.² ■



Posted MLHP: March 22, 2011.

² *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, December 12, 1963, at 1 (photo of Judge Barnes and a paragraph regarding the funeral arrangements are omitted).