

**MEMORIAL**

**TO**

**BURR D. BLAIR**

**( MAY 11, 1858 - JULY 10, 1940 )**

**DISTRICT COURT  
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
WINONA COUNTY**

**WINONA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

**SEPTEMBER 16, 1940**

# BURR D. BLAIR

(1858 - 1940)

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(Memorial prepared by Herbert M. Bierce, in behalf of the Winona County Bar Association for presentation to the District Court of Winona County at the opening of its September 1940 General Term.)

The death of Burr D. Blair occurred July 10, 1940, in a hospital in Minneapolis, due to pneumonia which followed a cold which he had contracted while returning by airplane from New York where he had attended the wedding ceremony of his daughter. Mr. Blair was a member of the local bar in active practice for nearly a quarter century but retired therefrom when he entered the banking business in which line of work his law training was very helpful. As he and his family had been living away from Winona for many years, the fact that he had been an honored lawyer in this community was not known to many of the present bar. During his practice his offices were located in the building at the Northeast corner of Third and Center Streets. The family residence was at 325 East Fifth Street, now the site of St. Martin's school.

Burr D. Blair was born in a log cabin on a farm in Saratoga township in Winona County, May 11th, 1858, a son of George W. and Melissa (Deuel) Blair. The ancestry is Scotch. The family name is very well known in the County for his father was a successful farmer who operated a large farm, a substantial residence eventually replacing the earlier cabin. Burr was the second child in the family, an older brother, George N., the first white child born in Saratoga township, carrying on the family

farm after the father's death. There were three sisters, his juniors, in the family.

After the usual rural schooling then available, supplemented by hard farm work, Burr entered the high school at Ann Michigan, and then studied at the University of Michigan for a while. He taught school for some time, then studied law and was admitted to practice in Albany, New York, where he opened an office in 1889, but a year later returned to Minnesota and opened his office in the city of Winona. He was early interested in the Winona Savings Bank as a trustee, then as vice-president, and when a vacancy occurred in its treasurership (later termed cashier) he was elected to that position about 1913 and thereupon closed his law office. At that time the banking house was in the building on Center Street now occupied by the Western Union Telegraph Co. It was during his service with the bank that the imposing structure on Main Street was erected. When the Winona Savings Bank and the Winona National Bank, which had been affiliated by reason of mutual ownership, were consolidated he resigned on May 8, 1928. Not long thereafter he moved from Winona and in time built a home near Onamia in this state, close to the shore line of Mille Lacs where he then made his home.

In March, 1898, Mr. Blair was married to Clara Gardtzen, a native of this city, and to them three children were born, Alice, Ernst and Burr, junior, all now residents of New York City. They survive him, the widow continuing her residence at Onamia.

Mr. Blair's mature years were devoted to many acts of public service. In 1899 he was elected a member of the School Board from the third ward, serving two four year

terms, and during one year of service was its president. He ever retained a special interest in the educational work of Winona. On January 7th, 1905, he was appointed a member of the Library Board and was reappointed regularly, continuing until he resigned January 18th, 1929, after his removal from the city. On November 6th, 1909, he was chosen secretary of that Board and on July 16th, 1910, its president and retained that office until his retirement. In July, 1909, he was appointed by the Mayor as a member of the Board of Municipal Works, and was elected its president on May 4th, 1914, likewise continuing as the head of this Board until his retirement December 9th, 1926. During the World War he was active in various lines of war work service.

Professionally he was a member of this Association, of the Minnesota State Bar Association, and of the American Bar Association. In whatever line of public service his activities were directed he gave to each the best of his efforts, carefully studying the work incident to his duties, and the heavy duties imposed upon him from time to time won him public commendation. His religious affiliation was with the First Congregational church of Winona, where he served as a deacon for fourteen years. In politics he was a Democrat, but maintained an independent attitude rather than a partisan. During its existence he served as treasurer of the Winona Industrial School, a social service work carried on in the East side of Winona before industrial subjects of instructions were introduced into the public and parochial schools. For twenty-five years he was a member of the Saturday Night Club, a men's literary organization, and presented annually a scholarly discussion upon some subject of his choice.

Mr. Blair was essentially a home lover and was a devoted husband and father. His law practice was chiefly of an office nature and his work was performed thoroughly and conscientiously. His personal habits were exemplary.

All who knew him, and his friends were numerous, felt a personal loss when he crossed the Great Divide. ■

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