

Memorial

For

George Morton Bleeker

{ November 19, 1861 – April 21, 1936 }



**Hennepin County Bar Association
District Court
Fourth Judicial District
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

January 30, 1937

George M. Bleecker

1861 – 1936

Memorial prepared and read by George B. Leonard
January 30, 1937

George M. Bleecker was born on November 19, 1861, on his father's farm near the village of Whippany, New Jersey. He died on April 21, 1936, at St. Petersburg Florida, at the age of 74, following an illness which had kept him from active practice for about two years. His body was interned at Lakewood Cemetery in this City.

George Bleecker was a son of Henry Ellis Bleecker and Phoebe W. Cook Bleecker. He was a descendent of a pioneer Dutch family of New York. During the latter half of the eighteenth century the Bleecker family had a farm home located at what is now the intersection of Broadway and Bleecker Street in the down-town section of New York City.

Upon his graduation from the Village Academy at Whippany, he heeded the call of Horace Greeley, who was exhorting the young men of the East to go West and grow up with the country. So, at the age of 19, he struck out for the West, landing at Sioux City, Iowa, whence he made his way shortly thereafter to the budding young city of Minneapolis.

During the years 1883 and 1884 he was earning his way through the University of Minnesota as a special student in the Liberal Arts College. There was no law school at the State University at the time, nor any law college in the State. A young man either had to read law in a law office to qualify for admission to the Bar, or present a degree from a Law College or School of another State. In those days the Ann Arbor Law School had the widest reputation in the West. The connection of Judge Thomas M.

Cooley, author of "Constitutional Limitations", as a professor with that school, give it prestige and fame. George Bleecker entered it in 1885. He successfully completed a full course by 1887, and received from it the degree of LL.B. Then followed his admission to the Minneapolis Bar the same year.

The boom the City was going through at the time, and the great activity in real estate called for a high grade of legal talent in that field. Seagrave Smith, who later became a Judge of this Court, and Sampson A. Reed were outstanding lawyers in that field of the law. Young Bleecker received his first four years of training in their office; then followed a short clerkship in the Probate Court of this County. It was to the practice of real estate and probate law the George Bleecker at first devoted most of his attention, but as his practice grew he took in banking, corporation other branches of the law.

For a short time, in the middle nineties, he was associated with E. E. Witchie, under the name of Witchie & Bleecker, in the Boston Block, which, along with the Temple Court, housed many outstanding law firms of those days. In later years, beginning with 1929, he was associated with Lauren C. Babcock, and his son, John D. Bleecker, under the firm name of Bleecker & Babcock, remaining a member of that firm until his death.

During the almost fifty years of his practice, Mr. Bleecker enjoyed the confidence and esteem both of the members of the Bar and of the Bench. He was always civil to his adversary, tolerant with the opposite view, courteous, and invariably found common ground with others who disagreed with him or represented adverse interests. It was no task when one found him on the other side of a dispute or lawsuit to call him to the conference table, openly and frankly discuss with him both the issues of

law and fact involved without in the least running the risk of being taken advantage of.

Not infrequently he was called on to serve either as an arbitrator, and more often as umpire, by laymen as well as opposing counsel. His good, sound and practical judgment, gained from many years of association with a great variety of people helped him compose differences and settle many important disputes, which otherwise would have found their way into the court room and clogged the already overcrowded court calendar.

A busy practitioner all his life until his last illness, Mr. Bleecker nevertheless found and took time for social and public activities. In 1893 he served a term in the Legislature. In 1913 he became a member of the first City Civil Service Commission, on which he served until the year 1918. In 1919 he was appointed a member of the Minneapolis City Planning Commission, on which he served until 1929, when he resigned to accept a reappointment of the Civil Service Commission. He was active in the affairs of the Bar and gave unstintingly of his time to the promotion of its welfare. In 1925 he was elected President of the Hennepin County Bar Association.

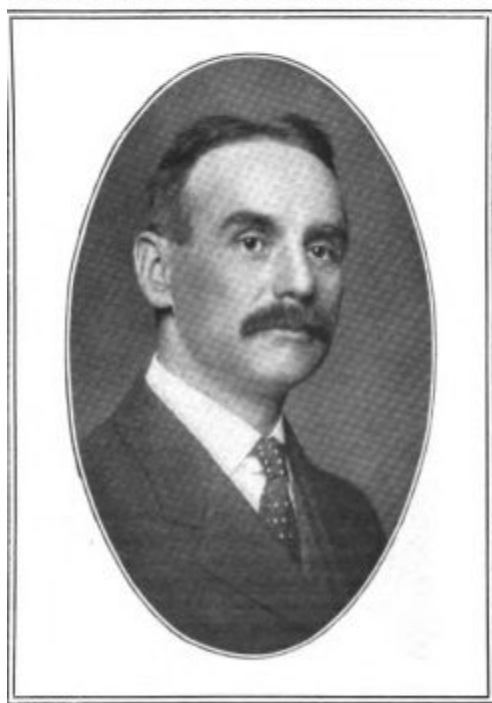
He was a member of the Masonic Lodge and of the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks. His church affiliation was with the St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Minneapolis.

He leaves surviving him his wife, whom as Mary Frances Martin, he married in 1888, and four children: his son, Warren T. Bleecker, residing in St. Paul, his son, John D. Bleecker, a practicing lawyer, residing in Minneapolis, his daughter, Dorothy Strong, of Pomona, California, and his daughter Phoebe Bleecker Dee, of South Lincoln Massachusetts. ◇

Appendix

The following profile of Bleecker is in "Courts and Lawyers of Minneapolis," Chapter 12 of Horace B. Hudson's *A Half Century of Minneapolis*, published in 1908. The entire chapter is posted separately on the MLHP.

BLEECKER, George Morton, was born at Whippany, New Jersey, on November 19, 1861, being descended from one of the earlier Knickerbocker families who settled on Manhattan island. He attended



SWEET, PHOTO

GEORGE M. BLEECKER.

the public schools and Whippany Academy, and after coming to Minneapolis, in 1883, entered the University of Minnesota and continued special work during that and the following year. His legal education was acquired in the law department of the University of Michigan, which he entered in 1885. After graduating in June, 1887, Mr. Bleecker returned to Minneapolis and was admitted to the bar of Minnesota in December of that year, and has practiced in this city continuously since that date. With the exception of three years, from 1894 to 1897, when he was associated with

Edward E. Witchie, Mr. Bleecker has practiced alone. His clients include a number of the larger corporations of the city and state and his practice extends into the state and federal courts. Mr. Bleecker has not taken an active part in political affairs, but has had a lively interest in good politics, and has twice been called upon to serve the public. He served as clerk of the Probate Court of Hennepin County during the years 1891 and 1892, and was also a representative in the State Legislature during the

session of 1893, and would probably have received further honors had he not been a democrat living in a republican district. Mr. Bleecker is married (his wife was Mary Frances Martin) and the family attend the Episcopal church. He is a member of several of the social and fraternal organizations of the city, including the Masonic and Odd Fellows bodies and the Order of Elks. ◇

Credits

The photograph of Bleecker on the first page is from *Men of Minnesota* (1915), that on page 5 is from *Men of Minnesota* (1902). Both are added by the MLHP.



Posted MLHP: September 5, 2016.