

Memorial

To the Life of

Alvord Calvin Egelston

September 28, 1860 – July 24, 1938

Hennepin County Bar Association

Memorial Services

Minneapolis, Minnesota

February 11, 1939

Alvord C. Egelston

(1860 – 1938)

Covered wagons and outskirts were for your sites in Ilion. Located on the old trail followed by homemakers from New England on the long trek to the Northwest Territory, gossip from the old was there traded for the stories of adventure in the new land. Ilion and was a small but a typically American village. Its inhabitants for the most part were descendants of that kindly but hardy race who in early times lived along the Atlantic coast. The romance of history was in its hills, its trees and its streams. In turn, Indian, English and American soldiers had there lighted their campfires. The police was not unknown to the French. It was just the spot for a boy with an imagination.

Even as late as 1860 we may well imagine the local historians telling of times when drums sounded along the Mohawk. We may well believe that in those days the dark clouds that were soon to were burst forth in in the storm that was rebellion were anxiously watched and studied in the quaint and peace-loving town. In these surroundings, while secession was threatened and slavery debated and five weeks before Lincoln was elected, Alvord Calvin Egelston was born. The times were stirring and the events to follow important but for the present they did not influence or disturb the future lawyer and scholar.

A meager education was the best that Ilion could supply, but it would be supplemented later by the Cloversville High School. Times were hard, funds must be supplied, conditions in the

rural schools of the Adirondack's region were primitive but by careful management the annual earnings of a teacher would cover the expenses of a year at Union College at Schenectady. Mr. Egelston alternates one year as a teacher in the mountain schools, the next as a student in college. Nor does he neglect the social side. He joins Beta Theta Phi.

But even as a graduate from Union College, positions are not easily secured. Politics he avoids. There is much that is not quite right in Government. Indeed, people question the integrity of those highly placed in Government and business. Black Friday and that Jay Cooke Company failure are not forgotten. Then there is the Grant & Ward affair and the tragic era of the South. These and other shadows darken the outlook for business in the East.

Mr. Egelston was a product of his time. The spirit of the adventure seizes the lad just out of his teens. Young men have been talking lately about going West. It may be the stories of Lincoln or the earlier urgings of Greeley. On to Chicago in the Fall of 1885. Again the schools supply a position.

Minerals are found in Michigan. The Indians tell of copper deposits in Northern Minnesota. That there is a strange story being told to the effect that the English, Canadian and American Commissioners, by mistake in locating the international boundary, gave rich lands to our State. Minneapolis is a growing city. Flour and lumber are its products. The wheat lands of the West and the forests of the North promise for years

to come to supply raw materials for the mills. Mr. Egelston listens to the call. He must go farther West, and the Fall of 1886 finds him on his way.

Even while studying the law in the office of Stryker and Campbell, the public schools of Minneapolis supply much needed funds. Admitted to the Bar in the Spring of 1887 he is launched on his professional career.

If progress is slow at first, the foundation is solid. Gradually clients begin to seek him out. Slowly his circle widens. From many fields they come. Banking, insurance, real estate, lumber, probate and other branches of the law claim his attention. There is no substitute for industry. A firm constitution in no wise prevents tireless application. Documents will be revised and amended. The finished product will reveal the character of the man. Law is a concept of precedent, logic and experience, an ideal to be attained. Financial gain is not a goal. Say success is not measured in money. Accomplishment, achievement is worth more than money. What the occasion demands he can strike hard and to a purpose.

Was it in the study of mathematics that he learned to be exact in all things? Respect for the profession and for the rights of others was inherent. Bred in the traditions of the Constitution his respect for the Courts was a Colonial inheritance. Did the eloquence of Webster and the learning of Story give dignity to the profession in the 80's? Did the lawyers of those days inherit independence and dignity from Marshall and Taney?

But the law was not his exclusive field of endeavor. The church claimed his attention too. For fifty years he was affiliated with the First Presbyterian Church, first as a deacon and then as an elder. While still a young man, he worked in the mission schools even while a member of the war choir of the First Baptist Church

Among his intimates and in his home no somber realist was he. No burdens of the world will weigh him down. All is laughter, song and gaiety. Full of fun, a boy in love with life and the world. His humor was as gentle and as the dew. Perhaps his outstanding quality was an unfailing kindness; "The sympathetic mind that exults in all the good of all mankind."

In 1902 at Fonda, New York he married Elizabeth Dockstander. New York was called. With his wife and daughter, Elinor Stewart Egelston, he there visited when occasion permitted his childhood home, but his adopted state was truly his home. Quietly and gently the influence of his character was felt in the social, in the business and in the political life of his city and state.

What the fever called life has burned out. If he had a fault, and faults attend us still, "his failings leaned on virtue's side." He would not advance his own interest. He could not project himself into the limelight.

What of his philosophy? Never forgetting to be careful, for he radiated sunshine, he might well have made his own words of the unknown poet.

Let me do my work each day; and if the darkened hours
of despair overtake me
May I not forget the strength that comforted me in the
desolation of other times.
May I still remember the bright hours that found me
walking over the silent hills of my childhood,
Or dreaming on the margin of the quiet river, when a
light glowed within me
And I promised my early God to have courage amidst the
tempests of the changing years.
Spare me from bitterness and from the passions of
unguarded moments--
May I not forget that poverty and riches are of the spirit--
Give me a few friends who will love me for what I am; and
keep ever burning before my vagrant footsteps the
kindly light of hope--
And though age and infirmity overtake me,
And I come not within sight of the castle of my dreams,
teach me to be thankful for life and fortunes olden
memories that are good and sweet,
And may the evenings twilight find me gentle still.

Respectfully submitted

Daniel J. Foley

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